



## MYTHS AND REALITIES OF TRIBAL EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY



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**Abstract:** *Education is the key to developmental process and also influences demographic behaviour. Jammu and Kashmir is homeland to a number of tribal communities with diverse eco-cultural, socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. These Scheduled Tribes experience passive indifference that takes the form of exclusion from educational opportunities and social participation. Education has been considered as a lever to raise one's position in the society as well as a tool to fight against poverty and ignorance. The present paper explored the current status of education among scheduled tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. Despite constitutional protection and assurances, even after two and a half decades, their educational status is far lower than the total literacy of the State and also lower than literacy rate of scheduled tribes at national level. There is an essential need to make serious efforts by government, non-government organizations and other local bodies to augment the pace of development in tribal education of Jammu and Kashmir.*

**Key Words:** Myths, Realities, Education, Tribal and Exploratory

### INTRODUCTION

India is country to various tribal groups with assorted socio-cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and underestimated groups in India. Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India alludes to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution (Rahi, 2011). Oxford

Dictionary characterizes tribe as “a group of people in a primitive or uncouth phase of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor”. The dictionary of Anthropology defines a tribe as a social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization. The most acceptable definition of tribes in the Indian context is propounded by D.N. Majumdar (1958). According to him, “a tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations”.

Jammu and Kashmir is an abode to quite a number of tribal groups, who have settled down in every alcove and corner of this hilly countryside (Gul & Sheikh, 2014). The tribal people and their places, the tribes and their customs, their cultures, their means of communication, or simply their culinary arts, makes the tribes of J&K stand out from the rest of Indian tribesmen. The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir has notified twelve tribal communities as the scheduled tribes. Eight communities--- Balti, Bot, Beda, Brookpa, Garra, Changpa, Mon and Purigpa, among them were given this status in 1989; And Gujjars, Bakarwals, Gaddis and Sippis were notified as the scheduled tribes vide the constitution (Scheduled Tribes) order (Amendment) Act,1991. All the twelve scheduled tribes were enumerated officially for the first time during the census 2001, recording the population of 1,105,979. As per the census 2011, the total population of the Scheduled Tribes in the state is 1,493,299, comprising 11.9% of the total population of the state and about 1.43% of the total tribal population of the country (Sofi, 2014). Most of these tribes are found in Ladakh region of the State. However, the Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes are mostly found in Jammu and Kashmir provinces of the State. The demographic statistics of scheduled tribes in India and Jammu And Kashmir State are presented in the following table:

**Table: 1 Demographic Statistics of Scheduled Tribes in India and Jammu and Kashmir (2001 and 2011)**

S. No	State	Total population	S.T. population		Decadal Growth Among STs	% of STs in the State to total State population	% of STs in the State to total ST population in India
			2001	2011			
1	India	1210569573	84326240	10,42,81,034	23.66	8.61	---
2	J&K	12541302	11,0,5979	14,93,299	35.00	11.90	1.43

*Source: Census Reports of India, 2001 & 2011*

Education is viewed as a standout amongst the most essential and potential instrument for the advancement of a country. Contemporary society can't perform its attempt of economic development, technological improvement and social movement without completely exploiting the capacities of its Nationals. Educationists thus make every effort to develop fully the intellectual potential of the students and make efforts to see that their potentialities are fully acknowledged and channelized for the benefit of the individual in general and that of the society in particular (Sameena, 2015). Although literacy levels of STs have improved, the gap in literacy levels, both for tribal men and women, has not declined significantly. In fact the gap increased between 1971 and 1991, falling thereafter, to a little above the 1971 level. Table II below illustrates a comparison between the literacy rates of the Total population and the STs, from Census 1961 to Census 2011:

**Table: II**

Comparative Literacy Rates of STs and Total Population of India (in per cent)						
Category / Census Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total Population	28.30	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
Scheduled Tribes	8.53	11.30	16.35	29.60	47.10	58.96
Literacy Gap	19.77	18.15	19.88	22.61	18.28	14.03

*Source: Registrar General of India*

For the Scheduled Tribe Population in India, the literacy rate increased from 8.53 percent in 1961 to 58.96 percent in 2011 while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.30 percent in 1961 to 72.99 percent in 2011. The above table pin

pointed the lower literacy rate among the tribal's of India as the recorded literacy gap of 14.03 as per census 2011.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Singh and Ohri (1993) opined in their study that the educational status of tribal's should be improved. The study suggested improvement can be made on the basis of data related to education available from various sources, identifying tribal groups for initiating innovative educational programmes at the micro-level. The role of mass media also needs to be assessed in the educational development of tribal's. Suri (2014) showed in her study that socio-economic and educational status of Gujjar and Bakarwal is not satisfactory as compare to other sections of society. The study further states that educational backwardness amongst tribals, which is one of the key factors for their poverty, ignorance and overall backwardness. Ambasht (1970) mentioned in his study that the main cause of illiteracy among Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes are social distance between the teacher and the pupil in the tribal areas. Rani (2000) observed in her study that due to the language barrier the tribal children especially girls are unable to establish communication link with the teacher and thus leading to the termination of their education in some point or the other. Tufail (2004) in his article found that high "dropout" rates among tribal girl children. The study analysed that due to wrong medium of instruction, the appointment of non-tribal teachers in tribal areas and communication gap between the teachers and tribal children are the causes of high dropout rates in tribal schools. Gupta and Farhat (2012) conducted a study to identify the problems of tribal students in secondary schools. The findings of the study revealed that the tribal students had more problems with regard to their parents and family followed by personal, infrastructural and facilities, academic and teachers related. The individual problems faced by students were low social status of the parent, illiteracy of parents, cultural backwardness of the family and low educational levels of the siblings and nomadic life of parents. Chalam (1993) studied on educational policy for human resource development, and concluded that there is a need of educational reforms for the development of scheduled tribes.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To explore the current status of education among scheduled tribes in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To identify the problems and critical issues of tribal education in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. To suggest remedial measures for improving tribal education in Jammu and Kashmir.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study is mainly based on secondary data. The main sources of data are; the Census reports (2001 and 2011), Data of Registrar General of India, Reports on Selected Educational Statistics and Statistics Of School Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Government of India, New Delhi), Websites, Research Articles and Books.

## **RESULTS / ANALYSIS:**

### **1. Current Status of Education among Scheduled Tribe in Jammu and Kashmir**

Education forms an important component in the overall development of individuals, enabling them to greater awareness, better comprehension of their social, political and cultural environment and also facilitating in the improvement of their socio-economic conditions. These hold true in the case of the Scheduled Tribes. The overarching principle of universal free compulsory education is enshrined in Article 45 and Article 46 of the Constitution of India enjoins upon the Indian State the responsibility of taking 'special care' of educational interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Gul & Khan, 2014). At the time of Independence, these governing provisions ensured that the educational needs of the tribal's were met with. Living in remote terrains and on the periphery of other social groups, the tribal's were culturally exclusive. As compared with non-tribal population, tribals were considered most backward sections of the society. The literacy rate of tribal population in J&K is only 50.60 per cent which is far lower than the average literacy 58.96 percent of tribal at national level. The literacy rate of male of tribal's of J&K (60.6 percent) is much lower than the male tribal's at national

level (68.53 per cent). Also the literacy rate of female tribal's (39.7 per cent) of J&K is low in comparison to female tribals at national level 49.35 per cent (Census, 2011) as shown in Table III.

**Table: III Comparative Tribal Literacy Rates of Jammu and Kashmir and India**

Literacy Rate	2001			2011		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
National	59.17	34.76	47.10	68.53	49.35	58.96
J&K	48.2	25.50	37.50	60.6	39.70	50.60
Literacy Gap	10.97	9.26	9.60	7.93	9.65	8.36

Source: Census Reports of India, 2001–2011.

In Jammu & Kashmir the overall literacy rate of the STs as per the census 2011 is 50.6% which is much lower than the national average of 58.96% aggregated for all STs. Male and female literacy rates 60.6% and 39.7% are much below if compared to those recorded by all STs at the national level (68.53% and 49.35 %). It can be further seen from the above table III that the State increased in the tribal literacy rate from 37.50% to 50.60% in the span of 10 years (2001 to 2011). The State tribal literacy is lower than the National average as per the recently concluded Census and also the literacy gap is (8.36). The analysis has brought this fact to the fore that the efforts put in by the Government through various tribal education schemes to reach to the far-flung areas and bring down literacy gap has materialized at ground level yet there is tremendous scope for bringing further improvements with focused attention.

**Table IV Comparative Literacy Rates of STs (2001-2011)**

Comparative Literacy Rates of STs (in per cent) 2001-2011		
Category / Census Year	2001	2011
Total Population	55.5	67.2
Scheduled Tribes	37.5	50.6
Gap in Literacy rate	18.1	16.6

Source: Census Reports of India, 2001–2011.

As per above table VI the State's decadal differential growth rate in tribal literacy rate (50.6%) is lower than that of total population (67.2%). This is due to higher base of tribal illiteracy rate in the State. It was 37.5% in 2001 in the State in comparison to total population 55.5%. Furthermore, table shows that during the span of ten years the State became able to reduce the literacy gap of 1.5% I.e. from 18.1 % to 16.6 %.

**Table V Ten States having literacy rates less than Country's average (58.96%) for ST population in Census 2011.**

States having ST literacy rates less than country's average for STs		
S. No.	State/UT	Literacy Rate
	<b>India</b>	<b>58.96</b>
1	Andhra Pradesh	49.2
2	Madhya Pradesh	50.6
3	Jammu & Kashmir	50.6
4	Bihar	51.1
5	Orissa	52.2
6	Rajasthan	52.8
7	Tamil Nadu	54.3
8	Uttar Pradesh	55.7
9	Jharkhand	57.1
10	West Bengal	57.9

Source: Census Report of India, 2011.

According to the table V, as per 2011 census, the State of J&K falls in the list of ten states having tribal literacy rates less than country's average (58.96 %) for ST population and reported that the tribal literacy rate of J&K is only 50.6 percent. Scheduled tribes are the main victims of illiteracy in J&K.

**Table VI District wise information on very low ST literacy rate less than States average (50.6%) for ST population in Census 2011**

S. No.	Name of District	Literacy Rate		
		Total	Male	Female
	<b>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>39.7</b>
1	Kishtwar	29.0	37.3	19.8
2	Kulgam	27.9	33.6	21.6
3	Pulwama	31.8	40.2	22.6
4	Ramban	35.4	44.8	24.8
5	Anantnag	34.1	41.9	25.5
6	Shopian	36.4	44.0	28.1
7	Baramula	43.7	56.5	28.7
8	Reasi	39.4	48.4	29.5
9	Udhampur	44.3	56.5	31.3
10	Doda	46.4	59.5	32.2
11	Ganderbal	43.6	53.4	32.4
12	Kupwara	43.8	53.5	33.1
13	Kathua	45.6	57.1	33.1

14	Badgam	41.4	48.7	33.5
15	Srinagar	45.8	54.4	34.6
<i>Source: Census 2011</i>				

It is quite clear from table VI that educational level among the tribal's of J&K is not impressive. The analysis shows that majority of the population is illiterate. As per the data, 15 districts of J&K having tribal literacy rate less than the Stats average tribal literacy 50.6 percent.

**Table VII GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER)- Scheduled Tribes**

	Primary (Classes I-V)			Upper-Primary (Classes 1-V)			Lower Secondary (Classes IX-X)			Higher Secondary (Classes XI-XII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Jammu & Kashmir	90.0	85.6	87.9	69.6	63.7	66.8	36.0	26.7	31.7	24.7	18.1	21.7
<i>Source: Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, 2013-14</i>												

As indicated in table VII the total enrolment ratio of tribal's at, primary, upper-primary, lower-secondary and higher-secondary as a whole are 87.9, 66.8, 31.7 and 21.7 respectively. The data further shows that the proportion of tribal enrolment decline sharply in higher level of education. The above date also shows huge gender gap in enrolment among tribal's at all stages of education as the recorded enrolment ratio of tribal girl is very low as compared to tribal boys.

**Table VIII Drop Out Rates of ST Students (2013-14)**

	Primary (Classes 1 -V)			Elementary (Classes I -VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Jammu & Kashmir	27.9	31.9	29.8	58.5	68	62.7
<i>Source: Statistics of School Education 2013-2014</i>						

It is unmistakable from the above table that there is a high dropout rate of scheduled tribes of J&K. It can be interpreted from the above table VIII that the dropout rate of tribal's is increasing from lower-primary to elementary (29.8% to 62.7%). It can be further interpreted from the above table that there is high dropout rate among tribal girls than tribal boys at both the stages of education.

**Table VIII Gender Parity Index of STs (2013-14)**

	Primary ( Classes I-V)	Upper-Primary (Classes 1-V)	Lower Secondary (Classes IX-X )	Higher Secondary (Classes XI-XII)
Jammu & Kashmir	0.95	0.92	0.74	0.64

*Source: Statistics of School Education 2013-2014*

The above table VIII shows the gender parity index of STs from primary to secondary. It can be interpreted that there is a continuous decrease in gender parity index from primary to secondary level of education (I.e. 0.95, 0.92, 0.74 and 0.64 respectively). It can further resulted from the above table that with higher stages of education GPI goes decreasing which is still a negative sign.

## 2. Problems and Critical Issues of Tribal Education in J&K

On the basis of previous research work and Govt. reports in the tribal areas, there are many major issues and problems in the field of tribal education in J&K.

- 1. Physical Barrier:** In J&K tribal habitations remain segregated from each other by some physical barriers like hills, nalas and forests. So these physical barriers create a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village (Gul, 2014).
- 2. Economic Condition:** Majority of tribal's in J&K lived their life in forests with their cattle and goats. The children are found to be helping their parents in domestic work. In this situation, parents do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools (Singh, 1993).
- 3. Attitude of the parents:** Tribal parents are basically illiterate. Their illiteracy does not permit them to understand the long term values of education. As education does not yield them any immediate economic return, they prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income and strengthens the family economy (Suri, 2014).
- 4. Inadequate infrastructure:** The condition of seasonal schools meant for the tribal nomadic children of Jammu and Kashmir is pathetic. There is no adequate infrastructure to run these schools. While the government claims that tents have been given to the seasonal centres besides blackboards, chairs and chalks etc., a visit to such seasonal centres in the higher pastures area depicted that there was no adequate infrastructure available to run these schools (Suri, 2014).

5. **Village Education Committee:** VECs have been constituted to preserve and monitor the functioning of the schools. Till now tribes are not aware of the role of the VECs. Neither the villagers nor the members of the VECs take any active interest to enhance enrolment and attendance of tribal children in primary school (Andrabi, 2013).
6. **Teacher Related Problems:** The tribal people have virtually no relationship with the teachers. Teachers do not get any accommodation facility in the tribal areas, which makes them irregular, which hampers the normal routine of a school (TRCF, 2015).
7. **Other Factors:** Extreme poverty, rough and tough living, early marriage system and Nomadic costumes were causing dark shadows over the future of lakes of tribal children residing in the most backward, hilly and border areas of Jammu and Kashmir (Gul, 2014).

### 3. Suggestions for Improving Tribal Education in J&K

The State and the Central Governments agencies should provide legal safeguards to tribal children of J&K and initiate some special schemes for their education and social transformation. Here under are some suggestions and policy measures necessary to be taken for the development of education and enhancement of tribal's in J&K:

1. Tribal education can be improved by the removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time.
2. All researches and Govt. reports highlighted that tribal's education can be improved by raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest. It requires adequate funding, well trained teachers, a school environment that promotes learning, and a social environment that values educated tribals.
3. Enhancement in Mobile schools in each district of state and accountability of the teacher at various levels. As so far one of the biggest drawbacks of the mobile schooling pointed out by various experts is the non accountability of teachers because on the upper reaches it is difficult to monitor the working of these schools for administration and therefore the teachers generally remain absent. Establishment of permanent schools near temporary residences of tribal areas.

4. Enhancement of admission quota in schools, colleges and professional institutions for tribal students.
5. 'Forced Schools' should be opened to educate the nomadic tribal children as most of the parents are not ready to send their kids to School owing to migratory way of life and low tribal economy.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Education is a key indicator of socioeconomic development. It also increases the knowledge and vision of a person. Equally, it is considered as an essential element in bringing change in social, political, economic fields in a society. Emancipation and upliftment of people can be achieved only through education. Indeed, the country's progress and development largely depend upon the educational attainment of its people. The main aim of educating tribal's is to change their cultural norms and patterns of life to make them economically independent, to organise themselves to form strong groups so as to analyse their situations and conditions of living, understand their rights and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of the entire tribal society. There is immense need to understand the context, and background of education system in J&K to address the question of providing equal access of education to tribal's. Tribal communities in the state have been historically denied of access to resources and opportunities. The present efforts of the government to bring these children into formal schools fail at two levels. Considering the low literacy among tribal's and high drop-out rates at elementary and higher levels, there is need of special focus on tribal's education, inclusive of context-specific traditional and innovative interventions. Keeping in view the educational backwardness, low rate of enrolment and high dropout rate among scheduled tribes the Government needs to encourage, NGOs and private sector to invest in education in order to contribute effectively to access to education in tribal communities. The government has to move fast to address their problems at the earliest.

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