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## TRIBAL EDUCATION IN INDIA: A SCENARIO OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION

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### ABSTRACT

The Planned approach to socio-economic development has laid considerable focus on the access and outreach of education at all three levels – elementary, secondary and higher education. The emphasis has not been merely restricted to literacy, school enrolment and expansion of network of schools and spread of institutions of higher education. A great deal of effort has also been carried out to ensure and improve the quality of education in India (GoI, 2016). The literacy rate of total population has gone up from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 74.04 per cent in 2011. The Eleventh Plan's strategy on education is directed towards achieving inclusive growth. This strategy envisages bridging regional, social and gender gaps at all levels of education by eliciting a participatory development process. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) are among the most socio-economically backward community. Thus, the objective of inclusive growth would be fulfilled only if the education and economic status of STs are improved at par with other communities.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Planned approach to socio-economic development has laid considerable focus on the access and outreach of education at all three levels – elementary, secondary and higher education. The emphasis has not been merely restricted to literacy, school enrolment and expansion of network of schools and spread of institutions of higher education. A great deal of effort has also been carried out to ensure and improve the quality of education in India (GoI, 2016). The literacy rate of total population has gone up from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 74.04 per cent in 2011. The Eleventh Plan's strategy on education is directed towards achieving inclusive growth. This strategy envisages bridging regional, social and gender gaps at all levels of education by eliciting a participatory development process. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) are among the most socio-economically backward community. Thus, the objective of inclusive growth would be fulfilled only if the education

and economic status of STs are improved at par with other communities. Out of 104.54 million ST population of the country (Census, 2011), around 90 per cent live in rural areas. While the proportion of ST population to the total population has marked an increasing trend from 6.9 per cent in 1961 to 8.2 per cent in 2011, the socio-economic condition of this section of people registers a stark and glaring disparity vis-à-vis the socio-economic situation of the rest of the population in the country. In this backdrop, this study tries to review the education-oriented government plans and programmes launched towards ensuring efficient and effective tribal education in the country. Besides mapping the progress made on various parameters on education, this study makes an attempt to identify some important issues and challenges in this regard.

### ST Education: Schemes and Provisions

The framers of the Constitution of India appropriately recognized the special needs of the STs and made certain

special safeguards not only to ensure social and economic justice but also to protect these communities from any possible exploitation, exclusion and marginalization. While the Fundamental Rights conferred upon the citizens ensures their holistic development, Art 21 A (inserted by the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment and passed by the Parliament in July, 2009) has mandated the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years. This Act has finally come into force from 1st April, 2010. Article 46 of the Indian Constitution urges the State to promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of all the weaker sections of the people including the STs and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Recognizing educational development as an essential basis for social empowerment, the Government has implemented various schemes/programmes, extending incentives, financial assistance, coaching and hostel facilities for the benefit of STs. Special incentives have been accorded to the ST students through the provision of free text books, uniforms and free education in schools. A special focus is also laid on ST students under District Primary Education Programme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Mid-day Meals Scheme and Navodaya Vidyalaya. The main objective of the educational promotion drive has been to promote literacy among ST students by providing hostel accommodation to those ST students who are not in a position to continue their education either because of the remote location of their villages or because of their poor economic condition. While the construction of ST girls' hostels was started during the Third Plan period, a separate scheme for the construction of hostels for ST boys was launched in 1989-90. Tribal schools were established in Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) areas from 1990-91 onwards.

The government, however, decided to provide quality education to the ST students by utilizing a part of funds under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution of India for setting up of 100 Model Residential Schools (Eklavya Model School) in 20 States from Class VI to Class XII in different States. This initiative was launched during 1997-98 with an objective to enable ST students to avail the facility of reservation in higher and professional education courses as well as in higher level jobs in the government and various public sector undertakings. An analysis of the share of ST population and the spread of tribal schools across the States (Table 1) indicates that the distribution of tribal schools is not in concurrence with the proportion of ST population in the respective States. Andhra Pradesh with 6 per cent of India's ST population is house to 10 per cent of tribal schools. The share of Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal in tribal schools is much more than their share in total ST population of the country. Despite their high concentration of ST population, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Rajasthan, West Bengal and North Eastern States have low share of total tribal schools. A special incentive to ST students called Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS) is under implementation as a 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme. This scheme aims at benefiting an estimated number of 11.45 lakh ST students across 24 states/UTs. An analysis of grants-in-aid released and number of ST beneficiaries covered under PMS highlights that during 2008-09 and 2015-16, against 3.4 times growth in the amount released for the scholarship there has been only 2.08 times increment in the beneficiaries (Table 2). Per beneficiary amount released under the scheme marked 36.5 per cent increase during 2008-09 and 2015-16.

Educational complexes in low literacy pockets is being implemented through the NGOs, institutes set up by the State Governments, educational institutes, local bodies and co-operative societies etc. for extending formal as well as vocational education to the ST girls in tribal areas. At present, 136 districts in 11 States are covered under the scheme. Under the scheme of Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships, 667 fellowships have been earmarked every year for award to ST students for pursuing M.Phil and Ph.D degree. Two new schemes were introduced during the year 2007-08. National Overseas Scholarship Scheme, earlier a non-plan scheme, was converted to a Plan Scheme for expanding its coverage and scope to encourage ST students for studying abroad. Another scheme of Top Class Education was introduced with the aim of recognizing and promoting quality education among students belonging to STs by providing full financial support to ST students for pursuing education beyond Class 12<sup>th</sup> in Institutes of excellence. A scheme on Upgradation of Merit for ST Students tries to meet out deficiencies in the educational attainment of the ST students. An analysis of data relating to money released and beneficiaries covered under this scheme indicates that though the per beneficiary amount spent has increased from Rs. 12,540.9 to Rs. 15,334.7 between 2009-10 and 2015-16, the number of beneficiaries have reduced from 734 to only 478, respectively (Table 3) during 2009-10 and 2015-16. The government interventions in education related plans and programmes are to support the ST community in building their confidence and making them at par with other community in terms of socio-economic development parameters. Incentives, hostel facilities, coaching and financial assistance are being provided to benefit the ST students. The following paragraphs summarize the outcome of these interventions and analyses progress made in the achievement in some of the indicators of education.

## **Progress on Educational Attainment**

### **Literacy**

The literacy rates of the general population and ST population from 1971 to 2011 are presented in Table 4. While the literacy rates of the general population in India has increased 2.6 times between 1971 and 2011, the literacy rates for ST population in the country rose significantly by 5.5 times during the same period. It may be noted here that the ST literacy rate in 1971 was as low as 8.53 per cent. Its rise to 47.10 per cent during 2011, in comparison to 64.80 per cent for the general population is still at a low level. The literacy percentage of ST females, which was as low as 3.16 per cent during 1971, rose to 34.76 per cent during the year 2011. While high-poverty rates is a significant obstacle in attaining literacy and education among tribal women in India, the social and cultural norms, and the role of women are important determinants in achieving literacy among tribal women (Mitra and Singh, 2014). Further, the gap between the literacy rates of the general population and STs widened from 15.49 in 1971 to 17.70 in 2011, indicating that the literacy drives of the government have not equitably benefited all citizens of the country. The literacy rates of STs by urban and rural areas indicates that while rural literacy has increased from 22.4 per cent in 1971 to 69.1 per cent in 2011, the urban literacy has increased from a mere 8.2 per cent to 45 per cent during 1971 and 2011 (Table 5). This shows that the literacy in rural areas increased 3.1 times between 1971 and 2011 where as urban literacy rose by 5.5 times during the same period (Table 5).

**Table 1. Percentage of ST Population and % distribution of Schools across States (As in May 2016)**

State/UTs	% of ST population as per 2001 Census	% distribution of tribal schools to total tribal schools
1	2	3
Andhra Pradesh	6.0	10.0
Arunachal Pradesh	0.8	0.1
Assam	3.9	0.4
Bihar	0.9	0.0
Chhattisgarh	7.8	5.8
Gujarat	8.9	14.7
Himachal Pradesh	0.3	0.1
Jammu & Kashmir	1.3	0.2
Jharkhand	9.7	0.4
Karnataka	4.1	3.6
Kerala	0.4	2.2
Madhya Pradesh	14.5	32.8
Maharashtra	10.2	16.1
Mizoram	1.0	0.1
Manipur	0.9	0.5
Meghalaya	2.4	0.2
Nagaland	2.1	0.3
Orissa	9.7	4.1
Rajasthan	8.4	1.0
Sikkim	0.1	0.2
Tamil Nadu	0.8	2.5
Tripura	1.2	1.4
Uttar Pradesh	0.1	1.2
Uttaranchal	0.3	1.2
West Bengal	5.2	0.8
All India	100.0	100.0

Sources: (i) Census, 2001 & (ii) www.indiastat.com

**Table 2. Grant-in-aid released and number of beneficiaries under the Scheme of Post Matric Scholarship for ST: 2008-09 to 2015-16**

Year	Amount Released (in Rs. Lakh)	Beneficiary (in Nos.)	Annual Growth rate of beneficiaries (in Per cent)	Amount released per beneficiary (in Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5
2008-09	6,678.2	603,060.0	-	1,107.4
2009-10	5,158.6	585,294.0	-2.9	881.4
2010-11	6,579.5	755,869.0	29.1	870.5
2011-12	10,137.7	787,236.0	4.1	1,287.8
2012-13	21,018.1	859,659.0	9.2	2,444.9
2013-14	21,153.9	637,425.0	-25.9	3,318.6
2014-15	20,003.4	1,041,123.0	63.3	1,921.3
2015-16	22,586.3	1,257,337.0	20.8	1,796.4

Source: Annual Reports, M/o Tribal Affairs, several years (2008-09 to 2015-16)

**Table 3. Grant-in-aid Released and Beneficiaries Covered under the Scheme of Upgradation of Merit of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Students: 2009-10 to 2015-16**

Year	Amount Released (in Rs. Lakh)	Beneficiary (in Nos.)	Annual Growth rate of beneficiaries (in Per cent)	Amount released per beneficiary (in Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5
2009-10	92.1	734.0	-	12,540.9
2010-11	76.9	512.0	-30.2	15,015.6
2011-12	39.0	303.0	-40.8	12,881.2
2012-13	100.0	658.0	117.2	15,197.6
2013-14	150.0	1145.0	74.0	13,100.4
2014-15	138.3	1039.0	-9.3	13,309.0
2015-16	73.3	478.0	-54.0	15,334.7

Source: Annual Reports, M/o Tribal Affairs, several years (2008-09 to 2015-16)

**Table 4. Literacy Rate of General Population and ST Population: 1971-2011 (per cent)**

Year	General			ST			GAP*
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1971	34.44	12.95	24.02	13.83	3.16	8.53	15.49
1981	39.45	18.70	29.45	17.63	4.85	11.30	18.15
1991	46.89	24.82	36.23	24.52	8.04	16.35	19.88
2001	64.10	39.30	52.20	40.65	18.19	29.60	22.60
2011	75.30	53.70	64.80	59.17	34.76	47.10	17.70

\*Shows the gap between the total literacy rates of STs and of the general population  
Source: Twelfth Five Year Plan, Government of India (2012-2017)

**Table 5. Literacy Rates of ST by Urban/Rural, 1971-2011 (per cent)**

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
1	2	3	4
1971	22.4	8.2	8.5
1981	28.8	10.7	11.3
1991	37.9	14.9	16.4
2001	56.6	27.4	29.6
2011	69.1	45.0	47.1

Source: Compiled from Statement 33, Statistics of School Education, 2014-15

**Table 6. Gross Enrolment Ratio by Social Classification: 2008-09 to 2015-16**

Year	Scheduled Tribes			All Categories		
	Primary (Class I-V)					
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2008-09	126.8	78.6	103.4	114.0	85.5	100.1
2009-10	106.9	85.1	96.3	105.3	86.9	96.3
2010-11	104.8	92.3	98.7	97.5	93.1	95.3
2011-12	94.7	87.8	91.4	100.6	95.6	98.2
2012-13	128.1	115.5	121.9	110.7	104.7	107.8
2013-14	131.4	120.0	125.8	112.8	105.8	109.4
2014-15	134.3	123.8	129.2	114.4	107.8	111.2
2015-16	134.4	124.0	129.3	115.9	113.2	114.6
Upper Primary (Class VI-VIII)						
2008-09	51.3	27.5	39.7	76.6	47.8	62.1
2009-10	82.1	57.3	70.3	67.8	62.1	60.2
2010-11	55.0	40.8	48.2	65.3	56.2	61.0
2011-12	84.0	66.6	75.8	66.8	57.6	62.4
2012-13	73.9	69.5	67.0	74.3	65.1	69.9
2013-14	77.5	64.9	71.5	75.2	66.4	71.0
2014-15	80.2	68.2	74.4	77.4	69.5	73.6
2015-16	80.2	68.2	74.4	80.6	74.1	77.5

Note: Gross Enrolment Ratio over 100 per cent implies enrollment of under age and over age children in a class corresponding to the particular age group of the class.

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD(2010-11,2011-12,2015-16)

**Table 7. Drop Out Rates for ST and All Categories: 2008-09 to 2015-16 (per cent)**

Year	Primary (I-V)			Elementary (I-VIII)			Secondary (I-X)		
	ST	ALL	Gap	ST	ALL	Gap	ST	ALL	Gap
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2008-09	56.50	40.20	16.30	75.20	56.50	18.70	84.20	70.00	14.20
2009-10	55.10	39.20	15.90	73.00	56.10	16.90	75.80	69.30	6.50
2010-11	55.70	41.50	14.20	72.40	56.30	16.10	82.20	66.70	15.50
2011-12	52.30	39.00	13.30	69.50	54.60	14.90	81.20	66.00	15.20
2012-13	51.40	34.90	16.50	68.70	52.80	15.90	80.30	62.60	17.70
2013-14	48.90	31.50	17.40	70.10	52.30	17.80	79.30	62.70	16.60
2014-15	42.30	29.00	13.30	65.90	50.80	15.10	79.00	61.90	17.10
2015-16	39.79	25.67	14.12	62.87	48.80	14.07	78.52	61.62	16.90
Decrease in 2015-16 over 2008-09	16.71	14.53	-	12.33	7.70	-	5.68	8.38	-

Sources: (i) Selected Educational Statistics, M/o HRD,2009 and 2015 (ii) Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) and (iii) Annual Report, Ministry of HRD, 2015-16

**Table 8. Candidates recommended by UPSC in Civil Services Examinations (numbers)**

Year	ST			All categories		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2010-11	41	6	47 (10.4)	381	72	453
2011-12	26	6	32 (7.0)	363	94	457
2012-13	25	11	36 (7.6)	373	101	474
2013-14	42	11	53 (8.3)	495	143	638

Note: Figures in the parentheses are percentage to Total of All Categories

Source: Annual Reports, UPSC, 2010-11 to 2013-14

This variation of literacy attainment between rural and urban area could be due to less than proportionate availability of quality educational infrastructure in rural areas. Further, rampant rural-urban migration of tribal people for availing decent livelihood and education may have contributed to the higher growth in the urban literacy rates between 1971 and 2011.

### Gross Enrolment Ratio

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for STs and Total Population during 2008-09 to 2015-16 are indicated in Table 6. The GER is the ratio of the actual number of children studying in a particular class and the number of children in a particular age bracket who should be studying in that class. Since a number of children may be studying in classes lower/higher than what

their age demands, it is not unnatural to have a GER of more than 100. Between 2008-09 and 2015-16, GER at primary level for the total population of the country has increased from 100.1 to 114.6. During the same period the GER for STs have marked a sharp increment, increasing from 103.4 during 2008-09 to 129.3 in 2015-16. A gender-wise comparison, however, indicates that ST boys have witnessed a moderate increase of GER at primary level (from 126.8 in 2008-09 to 134.4 in 2015-16) while the GER of ST girls experienced a steep increase (from 78.6 in 2008-09 to 124 in 2015-16). The GER at Upper Primary level for ST category during 2008-09 and 2015-16 has increased from 39.7 to 74.4 whereas the same for all categories people are 62.1 and 77.5, respectively. Between the ST boys and girls, while the ST boys registered an increase of GER from 51.3 to 80.2, the ST girls experienced an increase of GER from 27.5 to 68.2 during the intervening period.

### Dropout rates

Dropout rates are considered to be an important indicator which reflects the lack of educational development and inability of a given social group to complete a specific level of education. In the case of STs, the dropout rates are still very high at 39.79 per cent in classes I to V vis-à-vis 25.67 per cent for all category students. For classes I to VIII and I to X, ST dropout rates are 62.87 per cent and 78.52 per cent, respectively. The same for all categories are 48.8 and 61.62, respectively. A trend analysis (Table 7) of dropout rates shows that ST dropouts are in the decline over the years (2008-09 to 2015-16). The decrease in dropout rates between 2008-09 and 2015-16 for primary, elementary and secondary level of education have been 16.71, 12.33, 5.88 per cent, respectively. In spite of this, the gap between the dropout rates of all students and ST students is quite large and have not registered any significant improvement during 2008-09 and 2015-16. During 2015-16, the gap between the dropout rates of all category students and ST students are at 14.12 per cent for classes I to V, 14.07 per cent for classes I to VIII and 16.9 for classes I to X. The high drop out rates in case of STs have been hindrance in providing adequate livelihood options to the ST community. Data on ST candidates recommended by Union Public Service Commission for Indian Civil Services (ICS) indicate that during 2010-11 and 2013-14, though the female ST candidates almost doubled in absolute terms, there were more number of ST male candidates recommended for ICS than their female counterparts (Table 8). Against an overall reservation of 7.5 per cent vacancy in ICS for ST community, during 2010-11 and 2013-14 the success rate for ST candidates were 10.4 per cent and 8.3 per cent to the total recommended candidates, respectively. This shows that very less ST candidates have successfully competed with the non-ST candidates in the ICS exams over the years. This may be due to the absence of quality education in higher secondary and higher education or large drop outs of the ST students at higher education. Further, there is a 41 per cent growth in the successful candidate for all categories taken together, the ST candidates recorded only 13 per cent growth during 2010-11 and 2013-14.

### Conclusion

Educational development is a prerequisite and an essential basis for social and economic empowerment of STs. The Twelfth Plan (2012-17) objective of inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services

provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility (GoI, 2015). Thus, promotion of ST education would support the Eleventh Plan endeavour in equitably distributing the growth benefits among the ST community and other sections of the society. Plans and programmes for improving ST education have undoubtedly helped the STs to build up their literacy rate and GER. However, the gaps existed between STs and all category students are alarmingly high and need quick, adequate and appropriate government and civil society attention. The positive impact of GER for STs at elementary level has been offset by high drop out at elementary level. Further, the increasing trend in the gap in the drop out rate for STs at secondary level is a matter of concern as this has an adverse effect on building capability and skills within the ST community. The Right to Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 will enforce the right of the children to demand eight years of quality education. However, to ensure the right and appropriate quality education to ST students, necessary infrastructure needs to be provided to the existing schools. Further, primary schools and residential schools should be set up at suitable places and accountability and transparency be maintained in the receipt and disbursement of subsidies/incentives. Besides the creation of new school buildings, basic facilities in the residential schools with minimum standard needs to be provided in Ashram schools so that the inmates are not discouraged to continue in these schools. Efforts can also be made to draw teachers from tribal communities and making teaching medium student friendly. Low literacy pockets in tribal dominated States are to be identified and appropriate action should be initiated to popularize education in these areas. Last but not the least, to achieve education for all in tribal dominated areas, contribution of village panchayats/tribal councils cannot be undermined. The universal implementation of the provision of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 would ensure the Gram Sabhas to be responsible for planning and implementation of plans, programmes and projects and exercise control over institutions and functionaries on all social sectors. This would not only empower the STs in their locality to administer educational projects and programmes but also ensure ownership of the educational infrastructure in effectively and efficiently utilizing these for the betterment of their own people in a transparent manner.

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