

The Changing Trend of Tribal Education in West Bengal with Special Emphasis on the Girl Students

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Abstract

Education is an investment towards development. Gender gap in education is common among the backward classes of people in India. Aim of this study is to understand the recent trend of tribal education among the Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal. Study covered four districts from different zones of West Bengal. These were Alipurduar from north, Birbhum from central part, Purulia from west and South 24 Pargana from the southern part. The selected villages were chiefly inhabited by the tribal population. Secondary data related to tribal education were collected from Census of India (2011) and Statistics of School Education (2010-11), while primary data were collected through field work in four districts. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were followed. A structured schedule was used for collection of household level data, which covered education related questions. Personal interviews with the teachers, parents and case studies of the students supplemented the quantitative data. Fourteen different tribal groups were studied in the selected areas during field work. Secondary sources suggest educational backwardness and gender gap among the tribal population. Findings show district wise and community specific variation in status of education among the studied population. A positive development was observed in case of girl's education. The gender gap is gradually decreasing. Among many factors responsible for this changing trend, major was development programmes meant for girl's education in West Bengal.

Keywords: Education; Tribal girls; Gender gap; Development Schemes; Change.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important lever for social, economic and political transformation. It is one of the essential requirements for man-making and nation building. One of the avenues to speedy development is education (Sachhidananda 1992). Challenges of Education - A policy Perspective (1985) notes that, "Education helps to bridge the gap of disparities between people, socio-economic groups and region and thereby reduces



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disintegrative tensions. It develops human resources, which has a multiplier effect on utilization of all other resources. Then it is an investment in development". The National Education Policies (1968, 1986, 1992) in India emphasized on three critical issues – equity, accessibility and quality. Russell (1932) in his divergent theories of education noted that "education is to be considered rather in relation to the community than in relation to the individual". Venkataiah (2001) noted that tribal education is not a different kind of education, it is to suit the special needs and aspirations of the tribal groups who are in different stages of development. Education is therefore, an input not only for economic development but also for inner strength of the tribal communities so that they can meet the new challenges in terms of some degree of quality (Bhowmick 2000). In West Bengal there are 40 enlisted Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities, although the number of individual tribal group is 47. As per 2011 Census they constituted 5.8% of the total population of the state and their population was 5296953. They inhabited 1241874 households of the state. The sex ratio of the state's ST population was 999, higher than the sex ratio of the STs of India. The literacy rate of the total population in West Bengal was 77.08%, while the literacy rate of the STs in West Bengal was 57.93%. The female literacy rate was 47.71% only, while male literacy rate was 68.17% (2011 Census). Different studies suggested that the enrolment rate among the Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal was low and dropout rate was high at various levels. They faced problems like socio-economic backwardness, instruction in foreign language, toughness of syllabus, lack of assistance from the teachers, stagnation, distance of the school, inequality in enjoyment of educational facilities etc. (Yadappanavar 2003, Ambasht 1970, Chaudhuri 1992, Kurup 1992). Some studies also pointed out towards the gender gap in education. A study on the education of tribal women in North Bengal reflected higher dropout rate of the girls compared to the boys. The reasons are absenteeism of the girls, preferential treatment for the boys in the family etc (Roy 2005). Girl's education is a neglected issue in most of the tribal families. High dropout rate among girls was often due to early marriage and imposition of family responsibilities (Kurup 1992, Debbarman 1992).

It is a fact that there is gender gap in education among the backward classes of people which include the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But there is lack of recent studies on the impact of newly implemented governmental programmes for tribal education in West Bengal. This paper tries to

find out the recent trend of tribal education in the state of West Bengal and the impact of governmental schemes on education of the tribal girls.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was collected from the Census of India, 2011 and Statistics of School Education (2010-2011). The primary data was collected from fieldwork done in four districts of West Bengal. The four districts were selected from four different zones of the state and on the basis of high concentration of tribal population in respect of the total population of the district as per Census of India, 2011 in the respective zones. From northern zone, district Alipurduar was selected having 25.62% of the tribal population which was highest among all districts. Alipurduar is part of Duars, bordered by a country Bhutan and a state of Assam. It has forest and hilly regions. District Purulia was selected from the western zone having 18.45% of the tribal population. Purulia is situated at Jungle Mahal and share border with Jharkhand (erstwhile Santhal Parganas district of Bihar). From the central zone district Birbhum was considered having 6.92% of the tribal population. Birbhum is also bordered by Jharkhand and situated at north-central zone of West Bengal. Although there is very small concentration of Scheduled Tribe population in the southern zone, but for the purpose of the study district South 24 Pargana was selected which had 1.19% ST population. Major part of South 24 Pargana falls under Sundarban sharing border with Bangladesh. It has a rich history of migration of thousands of tribal people from different parts of India to clean up the jungle areas and to make it fertile land for agriculture during the early Zamindari period. All four districts are important in terms of different historical and socio-economic background of the tribal population.

From these districts one or two blocks were selected on the basis of highest concentration of the Scheduled Tribes. From the selected blocks, villages having high tribal population were purposively selected. An effort was made to select the villages having different tribal population in different districts to get variation among different tribal groups.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected during field work. Both structured and unstructured schedules were used during data collection. Data on educational status was

collected through structured schedules from the families having at least one student. In depth interview was taken from the students, specially who are getting government benefits for education. Group interviews were conducted with the tribal students at different schools. The

school teachers were interviewed to know the gap between tribal and non tribal students. The infrastructures available in the studied areas were observed. The study was done in the year 2017. The details of studied area and population are given in Table 1.

Table 1: The studied area and population

Name of districts	Name of blocks	Name of villages	Name of community	No. of households	No. of individuals			
Alipurduar	Madarihat	Dhumchi Rabha basty	Rabha	65	302			
			Mech	1	3			
			Titi forest basty	Chik Baraik	5	28		
			Kharia	3	20			
			Munda	2	7			
			Oraon	11	50			
			Tamang	2	8			
	Kalchini	Purba Satali	Chik Baraik	1	4			
			Mech	20	83			
			Munda	1	1			
			Oraon	52	220			
			Tamang	2	10			
			Santal	7	34			
			Toribari	Dukpa	16	100		
			Birbhum	Bolpur	Panchshowa	Kora	66	256
					Sirisdanga	Santal	50	176
Md. Bazar	Nabalakhi	Santal			29	152		
Kusumkandar	Santal	51			237			
Purulia	Manbazar II	Poradih	Bhumij	34	136			
			Mahali	3	11			
			Mahalidih	Santal	54	237		
			Mulian	Kora	6	23		
	Bandwan	Karpa	Mahali	14	61			
			Bhumij	39	164			
			Haludboni	Savar	50	242		
			South 24 Parganas	Canning II	Balircharpara	Bedia	74	313
Gosaba	Rajat Jubili Tipligheri	Munda	91		406			
Basanti	Mati Sardarpara	Bhumij	9		46			
		Oraon	59		251			
Grand Total				817	3581			

Studied Area and Population

The present study limits itself to the study of the educational status of 14 tribal groups. The name of these communities are Bedia, Bhumij, Chik Baraik, Dukpa, Kharia, Kora, Mech, Mahali, Munda, Oraon, Rabha, Santal, Savar and Tamang. Total population covered under study was 3581 inhabited in 817 households. The field work was carried out in

the 16 villages of four districts mentioned above. Among these four districts maximum number of households was covered from South 24 Parganas. Most of the studied families had poor economic background as their income and expenditure varied from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000 per month. Apart from agriculture, the studied population mainly depended on labour works. The adult males were mostly day labours, while the females were mostly

engaged in household activities. Some of the tribes were found to pursue their traditional practices. For example hunting and gathering by the Savar and craft making by the Mahali of Purulia. The tribes of Sundarban like Munda and Bhumij (Rajat Jubili Tipligheri and Mati Sardarpara) depended on fish and crab collection. Majority of the families possessed homestead land, but no agricultural land. A good percentage of individuals spoke tribal language which included Santali, Rabha, Kurukh, Sadri, Mech/Bodo and Dukpa.

FINDINGS

General trend

In general females were educationally backward than the males in India and West Bengal. As per Census of India, 2011 the gender gap in literacy rate of the STs in West Bengal was 20.46%. Age specific data on literacy rate suggested that the gender gap increased with age.

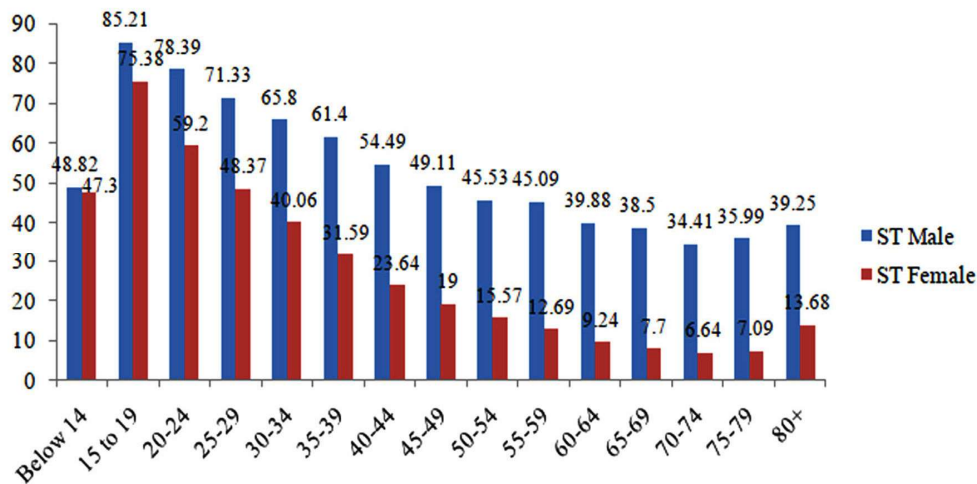


Chart No. 1: The gender gap in literacy rate *Data Source: Census of India, 2011*

The percentage of ST female graduate and post-graduate were lower than the males in West Bengal (Chart No. 2).

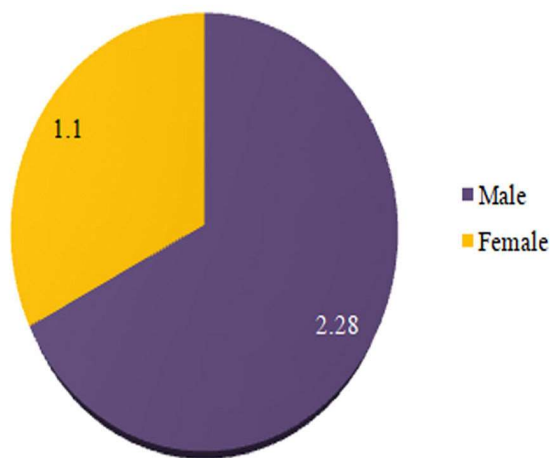


Chart No. 2: Gender gap in higher education (graduate and above)

Data Source: Census of India, 2011

Even if we compare male and female attending educational institution in West Bengal the same difference could be observed (Chart No. 3).

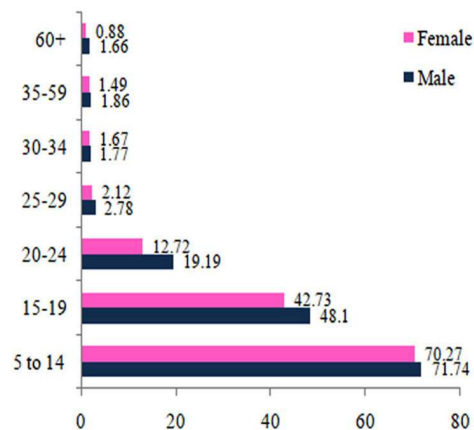


Chart No. 3: Persons attending educational institutions

Data Source: Census of India, 2011

Gender gap was also vivid in case of dropout rates at various educational levels (Chart No. 4).

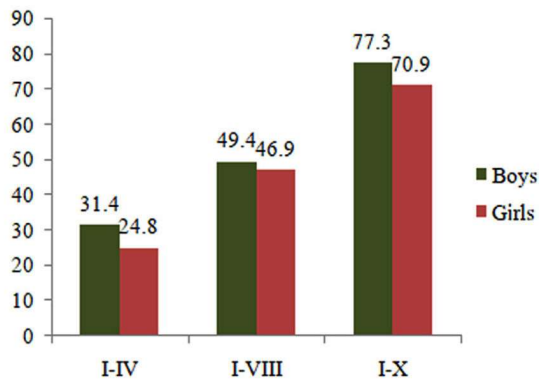


Chart No. 4: Gender gap in dropout rate at different levels
Data Source: Statistics of School Education, 2010-2011

All these suggested that tribal women are still fighting to minimise the gap. Some basic reasons for this gender gap were general reluctance towards girl's education, economic problem in the family resisting girls to attend school, early marriage of the girls, lack of awareness regarding education, lack of interest of the girls in education, family problems like ill health of the parents, taking care of siblings, problem of communication and ill treatment by the teachers. Moreover, cultural constraints like belief on boys as earner and not on girls' works as the most igniting factor for restricting education of the tribal girls.

The Santal has the highest concentration in West Bengal and their literacy rate was 54.72%. The highest literacy rate among all the tribes of West Bengal was recorded among the Magh (88%) and lowest among the Gorait tribe (32%). Highest female literacy rate among all tribes was recorded among the Lepcha (77.93%), while lowest was among the Gorait (22.62%). The general trend shows high literacy rate among the hill tribes and less gender gap (Census, 2011).

Education and Development:

It is a known fact that education has always been considered as the most important tool of human development. Compulsory primary education was given priority in the 5th Five Year Plan of India (1974-1978). Besides ensuring more enrolment in school, scholarship facility in higher education was also included in this plan period. This plan period was important for the Scheduled Tribes of India as Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) was envisioned as the most important approach for improving quality of life of the tribal people. Special funds were approved for

development of tribal education. With the passage of time various new approaches and programmes on tribal education were implemented in India and in different states. On 12th Fifth year plan of CSS, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was taken up. SSA aimed at universalization of elementary education in a time bounding manner, as mandated by the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children between ages of 6 to 14 years (estimated to be 205 million children in 2001) is a fundamental right.

National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-day-Meal) was launched in 1995. The scheme was covered by National Food Security Act, 2013. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes under government, government aided, local body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres, Madrasa and Maqtabs supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the ministry of labour.

Apart from some basic and universal educational schemes, there are some special schemes for the tribal students. To understand the changing trend in education among the tribes of West Bengal, it is important to know about the development programmes. The special programmes for education are as follows:

Sikshashree: Sikshashree is a new scheme for the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe students (ST) studying in classes V to VIII implemented during 2014-15 by merging the existing schemes of book grant and maintenance grant. The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to SC and ST students to improve the participation in Pre-matric stages and minimize the incidence of drop-out at pre-matric stages. Each student is paid Rs. 800/- per year whose annual family income is less than 2.5 lakh.

Kanyashree: Kanyashree's core objectives are to ensure girls education in school and delay their marriages till at least 18 years. Kanyashree's approach is also simple: it uses a social safety net mechanism that has shown a high degree of success in transforming the lives of children and adolescents in several countries in the world. The scheme has two cash transfer components. The first is an Annual incentive of Rs. 750/- to be paid annually to the girls in the age group 13 to 18 years (studying in Class VIII equivalent or above for every year that they remained in education, provided they are unmarried at the time. The second is a One-Time

Grant of Rs. 25,000/-, to be paid after a girl turns 18, provided that she was engaged in an academic or occupational pursuit and was unmarried. The term 'education' encompasses secondary and higher secondary education, as well as the various vocational, technical and sports courses available for this age group. Given that children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are more vulnerable to child marriage, the scheme is open only to girls from families whose annual income is Rs. 1,20,000/- or less.

Hostel grant for ST students residing in School attached Hostels: Each ST student residing in the hostel gets hostel grant for 10 months only @Rs. 750/- per month. Thus the total amount of grant for each students is Rs. 750 x 10 = Rs. 7, 500/- only in a year. The aim of this scheme is to provide opportunity to ST students to grow up in an academic environment free from the hazards of undertaking long journeys for attending their schools.

Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

EMRS started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas in order to enable them to avail of opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors. The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students. Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII. Hitherto, grants were given for construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution.

There are 7 EMRS in West Bengal in 7 districts, namely Bankura, Birbhum, Dakshin Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Jhargram, Paschim Bardhaman, and Purulia. The sanctioned quota in each EMRS school is 420. In West Bengal there were 2345 students in these 7 EMRS, which included 1274 (54.33%) boys and 1071 (45.67%) girl students as per available data. In Dakshin Dinajpur and Jhargram the girl students outnumbered the boy students (Table 2).

Table 2: List of EMRS with number of students in West Bengal

Sl. No.	District	Block/Taluka	Village/Habitation	Name of the EMRS	No. of students enrolled (2017-18) (Sanctioned quota-420)				
					No. of Boys	%	No. of Girls	%	Total
1	Jalpaiguri	Nagrakata	Nagrakata	EMRS Nagrakata	225	58.90	157	41.10	382
2	Bankura	Khatra	Mukutmonipur	EMRS Mukutmanipur	174	51.03	167	48.97	341
3	Purulia	Manbazar - II	Susunia	EMRS Susunia	196	57.82	143	42.18	339
4	Paschim Bardhaman	Kanksa	Raghunathpur	EMRS Raghunathpur	205	60.12	136	39.88	341
5	Jhargram	Jhargram	Satyabanpalli	EMRS Satyabanpalli	153	49.04	159	50.96	312
6	Birbhum	Bolpur Sriniketan	Kankutia (Mehedipur)	EMRS Kankutia	176	52.23	161	47.77	337
7	Dakshin Dinajpur	Banshihari	Kumarsai (Buniadpur)	EMRS Kumarsai	145	49.49	148	50.51	293
Total					1274	54.33	1071	45.67	2345

Data Source: Official website of Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Ashram Hostel: Ashram Hostels for both SC and ST students are set up within the campus of the recognized schools. Students (both boys and girls) reading in Class I to X usually get admission into such hostels subject to availability of seats. For maintenance, the students are paid at the rate of Rs. 750/- per month for the entire academic year. They also get Rs. 92/- per month for other expenses. In addition, they are given cots, bedrolls, garments, soap, kerosene out of the fund made available by

the Department. This benefit can be availed by the students whose annual family income is below Rs. 36000/-. There are a number of Ashram hostels distributed in different districts of West Bengal. For example there are 35 such hostels in Purulia district.

Merit Scholarship Schemes: The State Government runs two types of schemes (1) Merit scholarship scheme for ST students reading in classes IX to XII and (2) Merit Scholarship Scheme for ST girl students reading in classes V to X.

Pre-Matric Scholarship: The main objective of this scheme is to encourage the ST students for continuing in classes IX & X and to reduce drop out, especially in the transition from the elementary to secondary stage. This scheme for ST students has been implementing from the financial year 2013-14 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

Post-Matric Scholarship: The objective of this Scheme is to provide financial assistance to the students studying at post-secondary stages of education to enable them to complete their education. The scholarship is given for study of various recognized post-secondary courses pursued in recognized educational institutions.

Up-gradation of Merit for ST students reading on classes IX to XII: This scheme has been introduced to remove deficiencies in school subjects and specially for preparing ST students for competitive examinations required for entry into professional courses like Engineering and Medicine and other professional courses.

There are some others schemes run by the State and Central Government which aimed at the educational upliftment of ST students like Mahila Samakhya, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Information and Communication Technology in Schools, National means cum Merit Scholarship Scheme, National Scheme for Incentive to the Girl Child for Secondary Education etc.

The field situation

The four studied districts have different situations in terms of education. On the basis of 2011 Census, the highest literacy rate was recorded from Alipurduar district (88.94%) followed by South 24 Pargana (77.51%). The lowest literacy rate was found in Purulia (63%). The literacy rate of Birbhum was 70.7%. Now let us focus on the field situation in four districts of West Bengal.

It has already mentioned that 14 Scheduled Tribes were covered during the study in the selected areas. The highest diversity of tribal groups (The Chik Baraik, the Dukpa, the Kharia, the Mech, the Munda, the Oraon, the Rabha and the Tamang) was found in Aluipurduar district as there were both original inhabitants and migrant groups in this district. In Birbhum district only two groups were found viz. the Santal and the Kora, while in South 24 Pargana four groups were found namely the Bedia, the Bhumij, the Munda and the Oraon. Diversity of tribal groups was also found in Purulia as there were five tribal groups under study viz. the Bhumij, the Kora, the Mahali, the Santal and the Savar. The high percentage of population covered belonged to the Santal (23.35%) community followed by the Oraon (14.55%) and the Munda (11.56%) (Chart No. 5).

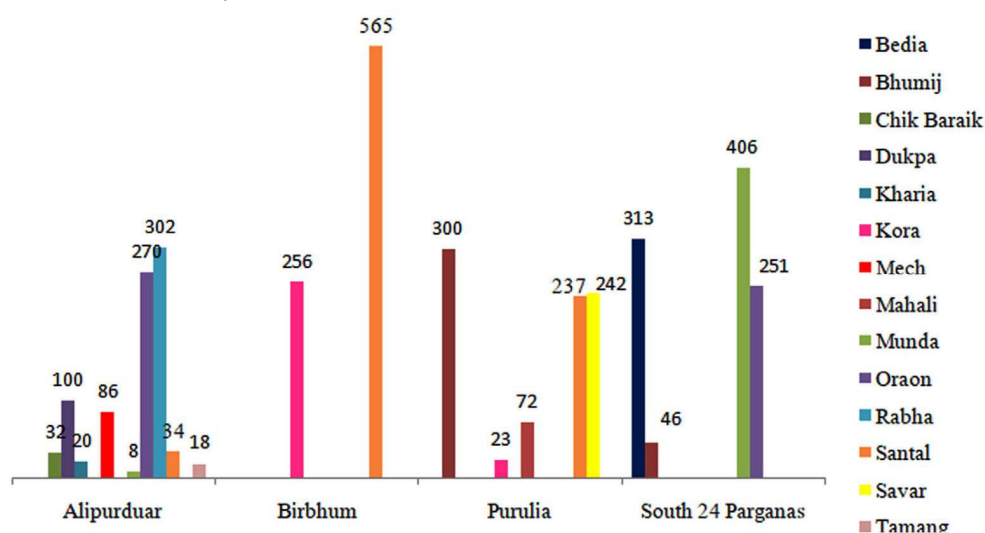


Chart No. 5: District wise distribution of the tribal population

Data Source: Field

Literacy rate and educational status of the studied population:

Among the studied population literacy rate of the people above 7 years of age was highest in

Birbhum district (66.43%) followed by Alipurduar district (63.46%). The lowest literacy rate was recorded from Purulia (53.29%). But it is very interesting to find that female (F) literacy rate

was higher than male (M) in South 24 Parganas (F-71.52%, M-51.82%) and Purulia (F-65.30%, M-41.21%). The literacy rate of the male was

higher than the female literacy rate in Alipurduar (F-60.73%, M-66.01%) and Birbhum (F-60.72%, M-66.01%) and Purulia (F-60.72%, M-66.01%) districts (Chart No. 6).

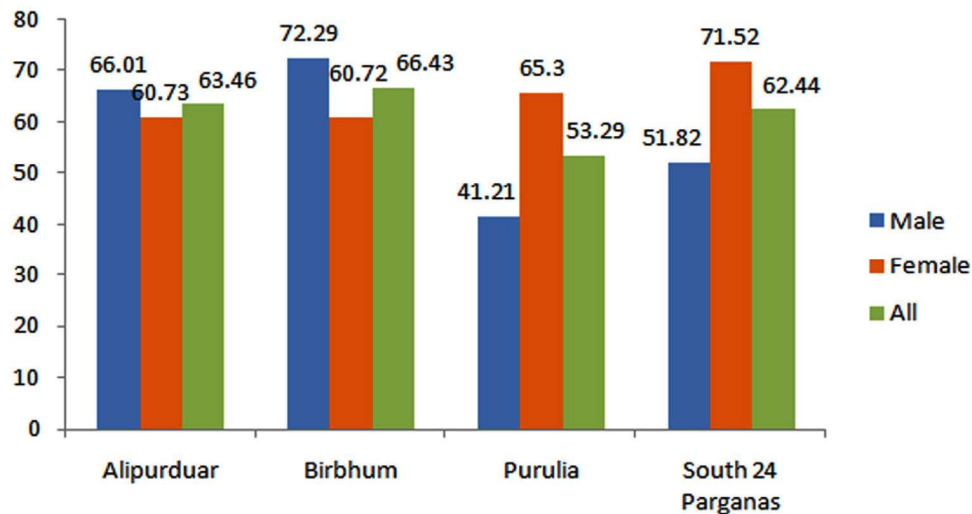


Chart No. 6: Comparative literacy rate of the studied population in four districts

Data Source: Field

That means total literacy rate was high in these two districts compared to the Purulia and South 24 Pargana because of marginal gender gap in literacy rate.

Let's connect the situation with literacy rate at different age groups of the studied population (that are below 24 years, 25 to 49 years, 50 years and above). The highest literacy rate was recorded at the age below 25 years in all the districts, which is

quite obvious. With the increasing age the literacy rate decreased. The lowest literacy rate above age group of 50 years was in Birbhum district (5.16%). Age group wise difference was maximum in this district. Alipurduar district shows highest literacy rate below 25 years among all four districts (83.99%) followed by Birbhum district (82.85%). Such development is the result of proper implantation of various schemes related to tribal education in these two districts (Chart No. 7).

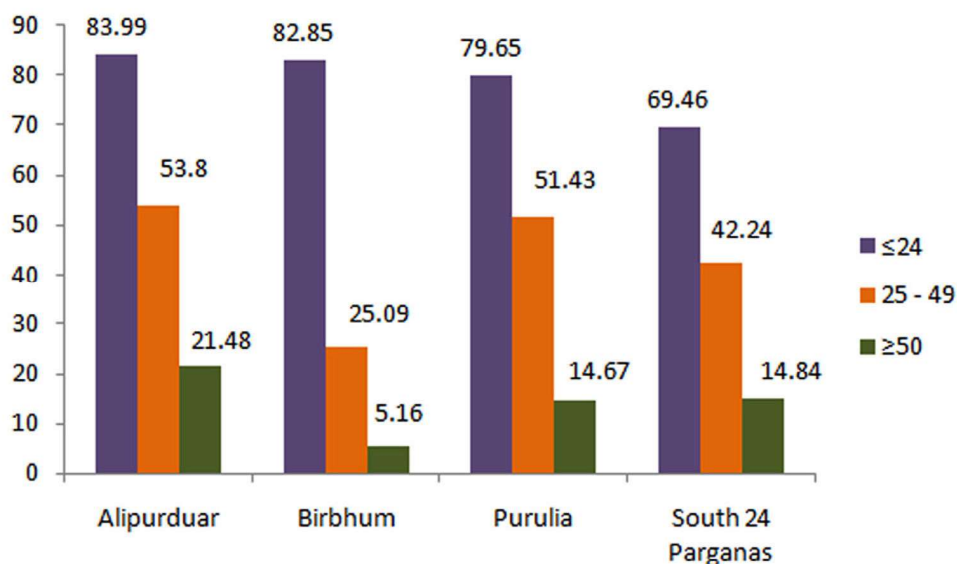


Chart No. 7: Age group wise literacy rate of the studied population

Data Source: Field

The educational status of the studied population of all ages in these four districts suggests that there is lack of graduates among all tribes in all four districts. No graduate female was found in Birbhum district. In Alipurduar district equal

number of male and females were found to have passed Madhyamik (5.06% each), while in other three districts gender gap is minimum. In all these districts males outnumbered the females in Higher Secondary education (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of the studied population according to their education level

Education level	Alipurduar (n=870)		Birbhum (n=821)		Purulia (n=874)		S 24 Pgs. (n=1016)		Total (n=3581)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Not attending school (0-4 years age group)	1.95	2.07	2.07	2.68	3.66	3.78	3.15	2.56	5.50
Can Not Sign (Non-literate)	13.22	16.09	17.42	24.36	14.19	21.17	10.04	16.93	32.98
Can Sign Only	2.76	1.03	1.71	3.53	2.63	3.43	3.54	3.44	5.59
Below Primary	1.26	0.92	1.71	3.41	1.60	1.72	1.67	1.97	3.55
Primary (Class I-IV)	11.26	11.03	9.26	6.09	9.73	7.55	10.83	5.91	17.90
Middle School (Class V-VIII)	13.68	8.62	9.14	6.46	8.81	5.38	13.68	9.84	19.13
Madhyamik (Class IX-X)	5.06	5.06	4.26	3.53	6.41	3.78	6.4	4.63	9.86
Higher Secondary (Class XI-XII)	2.53	2.41	2.44	1.83	3.43	2.17	2.95	0.89	4.64
Graduate and above	0.34	0.69	0.12	-	0.46	0.11	1.28	0.30	0.87
Total	52.07	47.93	48.11	51.89	50.92	49.08	53.54	46.46	100

Dropout rate and Reasons

Dropout rate was found to be low among females than males above 7 years of age in all four districts. On the contrary more girls are continuing their

education in Alipurduar and Purulia districts. Boys outnumbered the girls in other two districts, but the gender gap was low specially in Birbhum district (14%) (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of the studied population (above 7 years) according to people continuing education and dropout individuals.

Districts	Gender	Population Above 7 years	Continuing Education		Drop out	
			n	%	n	%
Alipurduar	Male	409	111	27.14	150	36.67
	Female	382	110	28.80	112	29.32
	Total	791	221	27.94	262	33.12
Birbhum	Male	350	85	24.29	100	28.57
	Female	359	84	23.4	53	14.76
	Total	709	169	23.84	153	21.58
Purulia	Male	364	88	24.18	152	41.76
	Female	366	106	28.96	90	24.59
	Total	730	194	26.58	242	33.15
South 24 Parganas	Male	411	105	49.3	231	56.2
	Female	481	136	28.27	139	28.9
	Total	892	241	27.02	370	41.48

It needs to be mentioned that among the four districts highest concentration of tribe was in Alipurduar and Purulia and it indicates a positive development of female education in tribal society. In Alipurduar majority of the studied population belonged to the Rabha (P-302), a matrilineal tribe of West Bengal. The position of women in Rabha

society is respectful. This also effects girls' education positively. The Bhumij (P-300) formed the major portion of the studied tribal population in Purulia, who were found to be aware about education. The effective dropout rate below or at 14 years of the studied population was lower in case of girls in three districts except Birbhum, but the gender gap

is negligible. This indicates that the girls are more likely to complete their elementary education.

Highest dropout rate in case of both boys and girls was found in Purulia district (8.33%) (Table 5).

Table 5: Effective drop-out rate of the studied population (above ≤14 years)

Districts	Gender	Population ≤14 years	Drop-out	
			n	%
Alipurduar	Male	118	10	8.47
	Female	98	6	6.12
	Total	216	16	7.41
Birbhum	Male	97	2	2.06
	Female	115	3	2.61
	Total	212	5	2.36
Purulia	Male	122	11	9.02
	Female	118	9	7.63
	Total	240	20	8.33
South 24 Parganas	Male	144	7	4.86
	Female	118	2	1.69
Total		262	9	3.44

Dropout rate was high at secondary level (Class V to X) in all the districts (22.74%). Census data (2011) showed high dropout rate among the females compared to the males, but in the

studied areas dropout rate of the males exceeded female dropout rate at all three levels (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) in most of the districts (Table 6).

Table 6: Distribution of the studied population (above 7 years) according to drop out at different level

Educational level	Alipurduar (n=791)		Birbhum (n=709)		Purulia (n=730)		South-24 Pargana (n=892)		Total (n=3122)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Primary (Class I to IV)	3.16	3.29	2.26	1.41	2.74	1.37	3.59	2.35	5.12
Secondary (Class V to X)	12.14	8.85	10.58	4.65	14.66	9.04	18.29	11.21	22.74
Tertiary (After Madhyamik)	3.67	2.02	1.27	1.41	3.42	1.92	4.04	2.02	5.03
Total	18.96	14.16	14.10	7.48	20.82	12.33	25.93	15.58	32.90

This changing trend is the result of different development programmes like *Sikshasree*, *Kanyasree*, *Sabuj Sathi* etc.

While enquiring about the reasons of dropout it was found that the main reason was economic in case of both male and female. Involvement of the students in family earning process or non availability of required financial support led them to drop from school. Exception was seen among the females of Alipurduar district wherein the majority of the students dropped because of lack of interest in education, communication problem or lack of infrastructure etc. There was lack of infrastructure in some of the studied areas of Alipurduar district. For example there was no school within 10 km radius of Toribari village situated under Rajabhatkhawa Gram Panchayat. This was a hilly area covered with

forest and populated by the Dukpa population. The problem of communication was also an issue among the tribal students of Rajat Jubili Tipligheri under Gosaba block, South 24 Pargana. Early marriage of girls seems to be a common problem for the girls in all four districts. In Purulia district lack of interest, shyness and retention in one class were common factors behind dropout among all tribal students. Family problems including death or illness of the parents or guardians, involvement into household chores, reluctance of the parents etc. resulted in discontinuation of education irrespective of gender in all the districts. Lack of awareness regarding education was a major problem among the Savar tribe of Purulia. Remarkably lack of interest was more among males than in females in all four districts (Table 7).

Table 7: Reasons of drop-out among the studied population

Reason of dropout	Alipurduar (n=283)		Birbhum (n=153)		Purulia (n=263)		S 24 Pgs. (n=373)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Family problems	2.83	0.7	3.27	2.61	4.56	0.76	2.41	1.61
Economic problem	36.75	0.7	49.02	22.22	36.5	15.97	47.99	24.4
Lack of opportunity and awareness	5.3	5.65	3.26	1.31	3.8	4.18	3.76	2.14
Lack of interest	11.66	7.07	7.19	2.61	17.88	9.12	7.77	4.02
Early marriage	0.71	4.59	1.31	5.88	0.76	6.46	0.54	5.36
Total	57.25	18.71	64.05	34.63	63.5	36.49	62.47	37.53

In depth interview with the boys in a village of Purulia revealed their discontent against Kanyasree scheme as it only facilitates girls for higher education.

According to the students of the studied areas the problems of education is not only economic, rather there are many other issues too viz. bad behaviour of other students, medium of instruction in foreign language in school, problem in understanding some subjects like Mathematics and English mainly, health and hygiene problem specially for the girls due to non availability of proper toilet facility in schools, lack of the tribal teachers and low quality food served at school. The tribal students need special guidance from the teachers in school as they cannot afford home tuition. Special care should be taken by the school teachers especially regarding Math and English. The mid-day meal is a motivating factor for the poor tribal students. The quality of food should be maintained. Interview with the teachers in a school at Basanti block disclosed that instead of provision of mid-day meal and different scholarships the tribal students are irregular due to lack of interest and economic problem in the family.

Impact of the Development Schemes in the Studied areas

Interview with the tribal students in the studied areas revealed that government schemes do not reach in every corner of the state evenly. There might have two reasons; one lack of knowledge about the schemes among the tribal students and two uneven distributions of the schemes at the grass root level. The schemes that are helping students to continue education in their respective areas are Book grant/Dress Grant, Hostel grant, Kanyashree, Shikshashree, Sabuj Sathi, Pre-matric Scholarship, Post-matric Scholarship, ST Stipend, Minority scheme and others. It seems

that most successful scheme in West Bengal was Sabuj Sathi for the students of class IX-XII. The students get cycle for attending school under this scheme which solved the problem of communication. The major beneficiaries are girls in all four districts. Book grants and dress grants are very old schemes and people are aware of it. Both girls and boys are evenly benefitted by these facilities in the studied areas, but in the studied areas of South 24 Pargana highest percentage of students got these benefit (29.01% males and 22.22% females). In Alipurduar and Purulia districts girls outnumbered the boys. One important programme was launched in 2014 when the book grant and maintenance grants were clubbed together in the form of Sikshasree. Again this mostly benefited the girl students in all four districts. The most effective programme for girls' education was the Kanyashree for continuing higher education. Kanyashree was implemented in the year 2013 and changed the whole scenario of female education in West Bengal. The best result was seen in Alipurduar district (12.50%) followed by Purulia district (12.20%). The three schemes implemented during 2013 to 2015 that are Sabuj Sathi, Sikshasree and Kanyashree changed the trend of tribal girls' education in the state. Overall dropout rate of tribal girls decreased. Dropout for early marriage decreased due to implementation of Kanyashree. Graduation is no longer a dream for the girl students. However, very little percentage of individuals received hostel grant (0.98%), ST Stipend (2.68%), pre-matric scholarship (3.41%) and post-matric scholarship (2.44%). Besides pre-matric and post-matric grants are helping the tribal students in continuing education after class VIII. There was no beneficiary under pre-matric scholarship in Alipurduar district whereas no beneficiary under post-matric scholarship was found in Purulia district (Table 8).

Table 8: Distribution of the benefitted students according to various educational schemes

Name of the Schemes	Alipurduar (n=72)		Birbhum (n=94)		Purulia (n=82)		South 24 Pgs. (n=162)		Total (n=410)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Book grant and maintenance grant	15.28	16.67	26.6	17.02	17.07	20.73	29.01	22.22	43.41
Hostel grant	-	1.39	1.06	-	-	1.22	0.62	-	0.98
Kanyashree	-	12.50	-	6.38	-	12.20	-	6.17	8.54
Shikshashree	6.94	16.67	3.19	5.32	9.76	9.76	11.73	12.35	19.51
Sabuj Sathi	11.11	13.89	7.45	10.64	12.2	13.41	6.17	4.32	17.8
Pre-matric Scholarship	-	-	4.26	4.26	1.22	-	1.85	1.23	3.41
Post-matric Scholarship	-	2.78	6.38	1.06	-	-	0.62	-	2.44
ST Stipend	1.39	-	3.19	3.19	-	-	1.23	1.23	2.68
Minority scheme	1.39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.24
Other Scholarships	-	-	-	-	2.44	-	1.23	-	0.98
Total	36.11	63.89	52.13	47.87	42.68	57.32	52.47	47.53	100.00

But it was observed that Alipurduar and Purulia districts were in advance position in distributing other schemes to the tribal students.

The result was very much vivid in case of high literacy rate and less dropout rate among the ST girls (Table 9 & 10).

Table 9: Distribution of the studied population according to their education level

Education level	Alipurduar (n=870)		Birbhum (n=821)		Purulia (n=874)		S 24 Pgs. (n=1016)		Total (n=3581)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Not attending school (0 - 4 years age group)	1.95	2.07	2.07	2.68	3.66	3.78	3.15	2.56	5.50
Can Not Sign (Non-literate)	13.22	16.09	17.42	24.36	14.19	21.17	10.04	16.93	32.98
Can Sign Only	2.76	1.03	1.71	3.53	2.63	3.43	3.54	3.44	5.59
Below Primary	1.26	0.92	1.71	3.41	1.60	1.72	1.67	1.97	3.55
Primary (Class I-IV)	11.26	11.03	9.26	6.09	9.73	7.55	10.83	5.91	17.90
Middle School (Class V-VIII)	13.68	8.62	9.14	6.46	8.81	5.38	13.68	9.84	19.13
Madhyamik (Class IX-X)	5.06	5.06	4.26	3.53	6.41	3.78	6.4	4.63	9.86
Higher Secondary (Class XI-XII)	2.53	2.41	2.44	1.83	3.43	2.17	2.95	0.89	4.64
Graduate and above	0.34	0.69	0.12	-	0.46	0.11	1.28	0.30	0.87
Total	52.07	47.93	48.11	51.89	50.92	49.08	53.54	46.46	100

Table 10: Distribution of the studied population (above 7 years) according to people continuing education and dropout individuals.

Districts	Gender	Population above 7 years	Continuing education		Drop out	
			n	%	n	%
Alipurduar	Male	409	111	27.14	150	36.67
	Female	382	110	28.80	112	29.32
	Total	791	221	27.94	262	33.12
Birbhum	Male	350	85	24.29	100	28.57
	Female	359	84	23.4	53	14.76
	Total	709	169	23.84	153	21.58
Purulia	Male	364	88	24.18	152	41.76
	Female	366	106	28.96	90	24.59
	Total	730	194	26.58	242	33.15
South 24 Parganas	Male	411	105	49.3	231	56.2
	Female	481	136	28.27	139	28.9
	Total	892	241	27.02	370	41.48

Now, if we focus on the grants received by the students during different periods, it clearly depicts the developing trend. It was observed that there were no students in Alipurduar and Birbhum districts to receive any grant before 2005. During 2001 to 2005 only 1.33% girls received benefits during 2001 to 2005 in Birbhum, while only 0.78% girls from South 24 Parganas received some facilities. Sudden growth was observed only after 2011. This

was the year of political change in the state. Some of the schemes as stated earlier got shape only after 2013. Comparison among the four districts suggests that girls were more in number in receiving grants or government support than the boys in all three districts except Purulia during 2011 to 2015. The major development took place after 2016, because by that time people became aware and schemes were properly channelised. (Table 11).

Table 11: Year wise distribution of the studied beneficiaries

Year of receiving the Schemes	Alipurduar (n=72)		Birbhum (n=86)		Purulia (n=75)		South 24 Pgs. (n=129)		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Before 2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.78	0.28
2001 to 2005	-	-	-	-	-	1.33	-	-	0.28
2006 to 2010	-	-	-	1.16	-	-	-	0.78	0.55
2011 to 2015	8.33	19.44	15.12	15.12	20.00	14.67	14.73	15.5	30.66
2016 and after	27.78	44.44	36.05	29.07	30.67	25.33	37.98	29.46	65.47
Year not known	-	-	2.33	1.16	4.00	4.00	-	0.78	2.76
Total	36.11	63.89	53.49	46.51	54.67	45.33	52.71	47.29	100

It has also been observed that more girls from the studied areas received monetary benefits through different schemes in all three districts, except Purulia. Cycle was almost evenly distributed

among boys and girls, but in South 24 Parganas the percentage of girls receiving cycle is very low (4.07%). Other grants benefited both girls and boys more or less evenly (Table 12).

Table 12: Type of benefits received by the students in studied areas

Type of Schemes	Alipurduar (n=72)		Birbhum (n=100)		Purulia (n=92)		South 24 Pgs. (n=172)		Total (n=436)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Monetary benefit	9.72	33.33	17.00	24.00	21.74	13.00	16.86	18.00	37.61
Books/dress/ accessories	15.28	16.67	24.00	16.00	22.83	19.60	31.98	23.30	45.18
Cycle	11.11	13.89	8.00	11.00	10.87	12.00	5.81	4.07	17.20
Total	36.11	63.89	49.00	51.00	55.43	44.60	54.65	45.40	100

In case of schemes Purulia remained backward. One reason for this could be the indifferent character of the Savar tribe which constitute 27% of all tribes of the studied tribal population. A few students stated that sometimes they discontinue their education because of delay in receiving educational grants like *Sikshasree* and *Kanyasree*.

Although it is true that the development schemes for the students helped them to continue their

education, but it is also true that even after getting these facilities many students could not continue. In most of the cases the monetary grant is utilised for education purpose, but in some cases they use it for other purposes too. In depth enquiry into the matter revealed that a few students spent the money for personal expenses (4.30%) and household expenses (3.44%). The students often take private tuition (2.01%) with the money received from the government (Table 13).

Table 13: Utilization of the educational grants by the students in studied areas

Utilization	Alipurduar (n=72)		Birbhum (n=86)		Purulia (n=64)		South 24 Pgs. (n=127)		Total (n=349)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Education Purpose	31.94	58.34	47.67	45.35	45.32	35.94	45.69	37.01	86.51
Personal Expenses	-	-	2.33	-	3.13	1.56	1.57	6.3	4.31
Household Expenses	1.39	1.39	-	2.33	7.81	-	2.36	-	3.45
Not yet utilized	-	1.39	-	-	1.56	-	1.57	0.79	1.43
Private tuition	-	1.39	-	-	1.56	1.56	0.79	2.36	2.01
Others	1.39	2.78	-	2.33	-	1.56	0.79	0.79	2.29

Another important issue came up during the study. The benefit of the schemes directly reflected in the dropout rate. There was no

dropout case after receiving government benefit. The rate of drop out was minimum compared to the continuing students in all other districts (Table 14).

Table 14: Rate of dropout among the beneficiaries

Districts	No. of beneficiaries	No. of students	Percentage in respect of No. of beneficiaries	No. of Dropouts	Percentage in respect of No. of beneficiaries
Alipurduar	66	66	100.00	-	-
Birbhum	86	77	89.53	9	10.47
Purulia	62	53	85.48	9	14.52
South 24 Parganas	111	100	90.09	11	9.91
Total	325	296	91.08	29	8.92

GENERAL OBSERVATION & CONCLUSION

Secondary sources suggest backwardness of tribal education and gender gap in almost every corner of the country. Low literacy rate, high dropout rate and less participation of tribal girls in higher education are the issues related to socio-economic problems and cultural stereotypes. The present study in four districts of West Bengal shows a different picture of tribal education. There are a number of development schemes for education in West Bengal. Some of them are sponsored by central government and some are by the state government. The most effective scheme was mid-day meal facility for school students, because food attracted poor tribal students towards school. There are special hostel facilities and scholarships for the tribal students. Newly implemented schemes like Sabu Sathi, Sikshasree and Kanyasree are very effective for the tribal girls in the state. The four studied districts namely Alipurduar, Birbhum, Purulia and South 24 Pargana are situated at different zones having different socio-economic and historical background. The present study covered 14 different tribal groups in 16 villages in four districts, where increasing literacy rate was found among both tribal males and females.

Pursuing education was difficult in hilly terrains of Alipurduar district or forest regions of Sundarban. Minimum gender gap was observed in Birbhum and Alipurduar districts, while in Purulia and South 24 Pargana female literacy rate was much higher than male literacy rate. Young people were interested to continue their education inspite of innumerable constraints which forced them to drop from school at early age. Among the females the dropout rate is decreasing due to various facilities provided by the government. Kanyasree is the factor behind higher education among girls by discouraging early marriage. It has also been observed that while females are coming forward in some places, the boys are lagging behind. Because they have to take economic responsibility of the family at early age and they don't get scholarship like Kanyasree. Government schemes positively influenced the tribal students in Alipurduar district as the dropout rate was zero among the beneficiary students. Students utilised the money received as grant for education in most cases. But it is also true that in case of emergency they used the money for family needs which ultimately prevented dropout. In poor tribal family girl's education is no longer a dream, rather a reality. Myths can be broken with proper implementation of government schemes and development programme.

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