

## Chapter VII

### EDUCATION

Education is the most important element in the development of any community. The role of education as an investment in human resources has been increasingly recognised all over the underdeveloped and developed countries.<sup>1</sup> Education has special significance for the weaker sections of the society which are facing a new situation in the development process to adjust themselves properly to the changing circumstances. For them, education is an input not only for their economic development, but also for promoting in them self confidence and inner strength to face the new challenges. The Scheduled Tribes have fallen victims to the exploitation of the middlemen, merchants and moneylenders on account of their illiteracy and ignorance. The need for their educational development, therefore, assumes prime importance to save them from economic exploitation and to help them in their around development.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, education enables them to cross the social, psychological and economic barriers under which they have been labouring for centuries and millennia. Denying this basic input to the members of these communities is a denial of the very right to participate as an equal partner in the national life.<sup>3</sup> In this context, selection and dissemination of information and education could play a dual role, that of helping the community to appreciate existing protective

measures; and of ensuring that the various economic benefits available from numerous schemes and growth impulses generated by Plan efforts also reach them.<sup>4</sup>

7.02 It is in realisation of this social and economic dynamics that universal and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14 is enshrined in the Constitution as a Directive Principle. Education is expected to develop full potential of every child in the country so that an equitable place could be claimed by every one according to merit. Universalisation of education has been accepted as a goal in all formal forums including the successive Five Year Plans. Nevertheless, the pace of universalisation has been extremely slow compared to the critical role of education in the social equity and justice and objectives set in the Constitution itself.<sup>5</sup>

7.03 Educational advancement can be taken to be the best indicator of the development of the community. The most important single indicator in this regard is the literacy rate which is estimated as a part of census operation once in every decade.<sup>6</sup>

7.04 With the efforts made so far, a comparison of progress of percentage of literacy among tribals during past five decades is instructive :

**Table 7.1 : Distribution of Percentage of Literacy during different Census**

Census	Total literacy Percentage	ST literacy Percentage
1931	07.50	00.75
1961	28.29	08.54
1971	34.50	11.29
1981	36.20	16.35

Source : Report of the Working Group on Development of ST during Seventh FIVE YEAR PLAN (1985-90), Ministry

of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1984, p.145.

Between 1931-71, the disparity between the national literacy and Scheduled Tribes literacy percentage continued to grow, while in the decade 1971-81 it has come down somewhat as compared to the gap in the decade 1961-71. Nevertheless, one cannot fail to notice the painfully slow progress the tribal education has been making. This is also evident from the figures of enrolment of S.T. children.

**Table 7.2: Percentage of Enrolment of Tribal Students in Different Classes (Number in Lakhs)**

Years	Classes		
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X
1955-56	10.45	1.24	0.54
1970-71	24.63	3.79	1.71
1980-81	46.60	7.42	2.66
1983-84 (estimated)	54.00	10.00	3.86

Source : Report of the Working Group on Development of Scheduled Tribes during Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), Govt. of India, Min. of Home Affairs, 1984, p.145..ls2

7.05 An important decelerating factor has been heavy dropout rates particularly in the elementary stage notwithstanding several incentives and improvement in educational infrastructure in the tribal areas.<sup>7</sup>

7.06 In West Bengal, the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes is much lower than the state average as per 1981 Census, 13.21% among the S.T. as against 48.12% for the rest. The literacy rate among the S.T. girls is appreciably lower being only 5.01%.<sup>8</sup>

7.07 The Fifth Five Year Plan attempted to make a new break in educational planning with the innovation of Minimum Needs

Programme. A specific time bound task was accepted for universalisation of education. The draft Five Year Plan 1978-83 which gave effect to Revised Minimum Needs Programme proposed in Elementary education to cover 100% children in the age group of 6-14 (90% coverage by 1983) and half of additional enrolment in the non-formal system. In adult education, the proposal was to cover all adults in the age group 15-35 of years.<sup>9</sup>

7.08 The universal educational programme at the elementary stage in the case of tribal communities has to be much more than mere opening up of educational institutions. It was expected that the students belonging to these communities may have to be provided with free text books, midday meals, and in case of girls even a pair of uniform. As the children grow, they become economic asset to the family. It may be necessary, therefore, that they are provided suitable scholarships and stipends. It has to be ensured that if we cannot compensate the family, at least, education should not be a burden on a poor family.<sup>10</sup>

7.09 'One village, one school' may be considered workable or even satisfactory for educational planning in tribal areas. The planning unit for primary level education may comprise a number of hamlets or small villages in a well defined geographical area. For the sparsely populated tribal hamlets which are located in remote hilly and forest regions, Ashram schools, or residential type institutions have been worked out as an essential institutional structure for universal coverage of children in elementary classes since no other institution can be viable in the small hamlets. Thus an Ashram school, here, emerges essentially as a 'gap-filler' institution. Another role which can

be assigned to such schools is that of a 'pace-setter' institution or an institution providing quality education to the educationally backward tribal areas.<sup>11</sup> But even where Ashram schools have been a success, advantage has been taken by the emerging elite amongst the tribals or by limited number of children from average tribal families. Bulk of the children have remained outside the system.<sup>12</sup>

7.10 There has also been programme for non-formal education to bring unschooled children and drop-outs from formal education to the ambit of educational programmes. The programme envisages opening of new Non-Formal Educational centres and enrolment of more students, particularly stress being given on women enrolment. Under Adult Educational programme also specific outlay has been earmarked under the Tribal Sub-Plan out of scheme for 'Non-formal education' for the youths in the age group 15-25 years. The main thrust of the National Adult Educational Programme has been towards organisation of Rural Functional Literacy Project. The Adult Education Plan aims at setting of such projects, supply of learning materials, post literacy and follow up programmes to arrest relapsing of neo-literates into illiteracy.<sup>13</sup> However, the informal education can be an important supplement to formal education but cannot be a substitute for it. There should be a suitable blend of formal and informal educational inputs in all the areas.<sup>14</sup>

7.11 **The National Policy on Education (1986)** states in regard to the education of the Scheduled Tribes :

"The following measures will be taken urgently to bring the Scheduled Tribes on par with others :

(i) Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas. The construction of school building will be

undertaken in these areas on a priority basis under the normal funds for education, as well as under the NREP, RLEGP, Tribal Welfare Schemes, etc.

(ii) The socio-cultural milieu of the STs has its distinctive characteristics including in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underline the need to develop the curricular and devise instructional materials in tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over the regional language.

(iii) Educated and promising Scheduled tribesyouths will be encouraged and trained to take up teaching in tribal areas.

(iv) Residential schools, including ashram schools, will be established on a large scale.

(v) Incentive schemes will be formulated for the STs, keeping in view their special needs and life styles. Scholarships for higher education will emphasise technical, professional and para-professional courses. Special remedial courses and other programmes to improve Psycho-social impediments will be provided to improve their performance in verious courses.

(vi) Aganwadis, formal and non-formal and Adult Education Centres will be opned on a priority basis in areas predominatly inhabited by the Scheduled Tribes.

(vii) The curriculum at all stages of education will be designed to create an awareness of the rich cultural identity of the tribal people as also of their enormous creative talent".<sup>15</sup>

7.12 Similarly, the Operation Blackbord, which aims at substantial improvement in the facilities to be provided in all primary schools, has the following components:

"(i) Provision of at least two reasonable large rooms that are usable in all weather with a deep verandah, along with separate toilets facilities for boys and girls.

(ii) Provision of at least two teachers, as far as possible one of them a woman, in every primary school.

(iii) Provision of essential teaching and learning materials including blackbord, maps, charts, a small library, toys and games and some equipments for work experience".<sup>16</sup>

7.13 The programmes in West Bengal in the realm of education include setting up of new primary schools, granting of various incentives, extension of teaching facilities, residential accomodation etc. The incentive schemes drawn up by the

Government for the tribal students are as follows :

- (a) Free supply of school dress to all tribal girl students of primary / basic junior schools in rural areas;
- (b) Free supply of text books to all tribal students of primary basic schools;
- (c) Holding sports and physical education in all primary basic schools;
- (d) Free distribution of slates and exercise books to all tribal students of primary/junior basic schools;
- (e) Free distribution of play materials to a percentage of tribal students of primary/junior basic schools;
- (f) Establishment of Ashram type hostels for tribal students;
- (g) Programme for Mid-day meal in primary/junior basic schools.

Education has been free for all upto secondary stage. The Scheduled Tribe students studying in secondary stage receive hostel grants, examination fees, compulsory charges etc. under Backward Classes Sector Programme.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 7.3 : Distribution of Literacy percentage of all communities and ST Communities in West Bengal and Darjeeling**

Comm- unit- ies	1961			1971			1981		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
<b>(West Bengal)</b>									
All	29.28	40.08	16.98	33.20	42.81	22.42	40.94	50.67	30.25
ST	6.25	11.20	1.76	8.92	14.49	3.09	13.21	21.16	5.01
<b>(Darjeeling)</b>									
All	28.70	40.15	13.46	33.07	41.75	23.33	42.52	51.58	32.37
ST	15.32	23.40	6.38	15.46	19.64	11.00	24.75	31.28	17.80

Source : Das & Saha, W.B., SC & ST : Facts & Information, Bulletin of Cultural Research Instt., Special Series No. 32, SC & TW Dept., Govt. of West Bengal, 1989, pp 226-228.

7.14 A survey of the selected villages and mouzas revealed that the primary schools in Sadhramjot, Mirjangla, Putimari, Nunujot, Baraghorla and Fulbarichhat were located within the

villages or within one kilometer of distance from villages; while the distance of primary schools from Palas, Pachkalguri and Maynaguri ITDP villages ranged between 2 to 3 kms; and in case of Kalamjot distance of school was stated to be more than 4 km. In all these primary schools, the medium of instruction has been in Bengali with one exception in Hindi.

7.15 The teachers employed in 9 primary schools out of 10 belonged to non-tribal communities from outside these tribal villages, while in other one private primary school managed by the Christian Mission, one Christian tribal had been employed. The attendance of teachers were reported to be regular in 3 (30%), irregular in 5 (50%) and not known in 2(20%) of the schools.

7.16 In the schools of Mirjangla, Putimari, Nunujot, Fulbarichhat and Mainaguri the primary school teachers were stated to be very 'irregular' in their attendance. Coming from different places outside the ITDP mouzas, many of them attended schools only twice or thrice a week and usually returned back after spending hardly two or three hours only a day. Tribals of these villages were of the opinion that the outsider non-tribal teachers took least interest in the education of their children.

7.17 A new school building was built at Mirjangla under the JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana). It had only one teacher who hardly turned up for classes. This explained why many tribal students were not sent to the school by their parents. At Nunujot, an old wooden structured school was seen existing in a dilapidated condition. The structure could not be used for a period of about of 4 months during rainy season which, in

addition, is preceded and followed by summer and Puja vacation respectively putting up another 3 months holidays. During rest of the time it was informed that the 'only' lady teacher of the school attended casually that even for about an hour daily. She was stated to be least interested in teaching tribal children.

7.18 It was also reported by the tribals that none of the schools in the selected villages provided free books or other reading, writing or learning materials in proper time which compelled the poor parents to purchase these materials locally. In the same village viz. Nunujot, free books had never been provided during last 5 years. Provision of mid-day meal was available though irregularly in 3 schools, while other 7 schools it was marked by absence altogether.

7.19 Of the 160 households canvassed for the study, only 130 had 345 members in family between 6 to 18 years of age. The following table gives the estimated Scheduled Tribe children in three age groups, 6-10, 11-14 and 15-18 years. These include the age group anticipated for univarsalisation of elementary education. This is further distributed sex-wise between school going and school not going children.

**Table 7.4 : Distribution of School going and School not going Children in Different Age-group**

Classification of children	Age and sex wise break-up									Grand Total
	6-10(Pry.)			11-14(Jr.)			15-18(High)			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
School going	44	18	62	17	12	29	14	5	19	110
School not going	53	64	117	21	29	50	30	38	68	235
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>345</b>

(M = Male, F = Female and T = Total)

It appears from the above table that of all the 345 children in the 'school going' age group of 6 to 18, only 31.88% were actually going to school while remaining 68.12% were not going. It may also be worked out that out of 110 school going tribal children, 75(68.18%) were male while only 35(31.82%) were female. Similarly among 'school not going' children, male and females were 44.25% and 55.75% respectively.

7.20 It is, however, alarming to note that among 6 to 14 years of 'school going' age group, i.e., within the age group for universalisation of elementary education set by the Constitution and also anticipated in the NPE (National Policy on Education), only 61(23.64%) boys and 30(11.63%) girls were continuing to go to school. In other words, 167(64.73%) children within this age group were not going to school. Again if the tribal girls are only taken into account within the same age group then 93(75.61%) girls were not attending schools. In higher age group of 15 to 18 years, i.e., high school or higher secondary school going age group, only 14(16.09%) boys and 5(5.75%) girls were attending while others had been dropped or discontinued or simply not going to school, thus setting an all high 78.16% tribal youths not attending schools. Thus an examination of the educational situation prevailing in the ITDP areas reveals a dismal picture regarding enrolment of tribal children, particularly females, inspite of infrastructural facilities and other incentives promised or provided as laid down either in the NPE or in the Operation Blackboard.

#### Reasons for not sending children to school.

7.21 Out of 160 tribal households canvassed, 30 households

did not send their children to schools either because they did not have any school going children or the children were under-aged. Among the other 130 house-holds, 235 children in school going age group were found being not sent. The reasons for not sending their children to schools as indicated by the respondents are summarised in the following table :

**Table 7.5 : Distribution of Responses Showing Reasons for not sending children to school**

Sl.No.	Reasons for not sending	No. of responses
1.	Distance of schools	11(8.46)
2.	Inconveniency with medium of instructions	20(15.38)
3.	Teachers irregular and hardly attend classes	19(14.62)
4.	Learning materials and other incentives e.g., books, mid-day meals, dresses etc. not available	08(6.15)
5.	Children required for domestic help and wage earning	49(37.70)
6.	Other reasons, e.g., being girl child, admission not found, drop outs	13(10.00)
7.	No response	10(7.69)
Total		130(100.00)

It would be observed from the table that 37.70 percent of the respondents mentioned that their children were required for domestic help and for wage earning. 15.38 percent and 14.62 percent respectively found inconveniency with medium of instruction and uncertainty or irregularity of teachers' attendance. 6.15 percent mentioned non-availability of learning materials and other incentives, while distant location of schools as another cause was cited only by 8.46 percent. Beside these, children being girl child or drop-outs of schools or not admitted etc. were the responses of 10 percent while 7.69 percent did not respond.

7.22 Considering that in spite of the availability of schools in most of the tribal villages, the tribals did not send their children to schools essentially for economic reason. It follows that in order to promote the education of children in tribal areas it is necessary that some supplementary income earning avenues, and other incentives are provided, the medium of instruction, at least, at primary school level should be made Hindi as preferred by the tribals themselves; the local tribal youths with requisite educational qualification or even with relaxation of qualification, if necessary, should be appointed as teachers of these schools. The incentives provided to them need to be implemented effectively and it should be ensured that the tribal children get them regularly at schools. Supply of books and other learning materials should be ensured within a fortnight of opening of schools for new academic session in order to avoid extra expenditure of parents.

**Non-Formal Education/Adult Education :**

7.23 Looking at the large number of illiterates among the tribals and heavy drop-outs among the school going children, the need for non-formal education assumes great importance. The Draft Tribal Sub-Plan of West Bengal(1985-90) incorporated to bring about unschooled children and drop-outs under the fold of non-formal education, now Non-Formal Education Centres have been proposed to be opened in Tribal areas under two centrally sponsored programmes. The Non-Formal Education Programme for the youths in the age group 15-25 will be continued during the Seventh Plan with emphasis on the obligatory training of instructors, supply of teaching and learning materials, fuels etc. for the success of the programme. The Rural Functional

Literacy Projects both under State and Central sectors will be so formulated as to eradicate illiteracy among scheduled tribes also through existing centres, voluntary agencies etc.'

7.24 At the time of survey, a few Adult Education centres, under the Non-Formal Education system, were identified in some of the selected villages where local educated unemployed youths were stated to have involved in teaching tribal adults. This has been a very positive and welcome move towards advancement of tribals. But these centres also, after working with initial enthusiasm, were reported to be existing in moribund condition ---- only sign board being hung written *Bayaska Siksha Kendra* (Adult Education Centre)--- could be seen. It was informed by the village people and also confirmed by Panchayat members that virtually they did not exist. Reasons given for the failure of these centres were not far to seek. They are: non-payment of adequate and timely allowances to teachers, non-availability of teaching and learning materials, domestic pre-occupation among adults causing absenteeism , lack of other infrastructural facilities etc. in such centres.

7.25 The problems of education in tribal areas, therefore, were manifold: lack of proper family orientation of students, non-adaptability to the school atmosphere, frequent absence of teachers, particularly in single teacher school, absence of students in classes on account of domestic works and helping in other economic pursuits, etc. They were also responsible for high rate of stagnation of tribal students at pre-matric level of study.

7.26 The problem was more acute in interior and inaccessible

students) studies according to the parents of the drop-outs. These were: (a) the child being required to help at home, (b) poverty and inability to afford education, and (c) their lack of interest in education. Among the conditions for rejoining as mentioned by the parents of drop-outs, the provision of teaching-learning materials and board and lodging ranked high. The quality of inputs and the functioning of schools, specially those which had a large percentage of ST students left much to be desired. Not only those talukas which had a predominantly ST population, had a very high percentage of single teacher schools, but the physical facilities like teaching-learning materials available at the school were not only inadequate but were also of very poor quality. But what was more shocking was that a number of schools, specially in tribal areas, had remained closed for certain period of time and in a number of cases these schools had not functioned since the beginning of academic year.<sup>19</sup>

7.30 The Commission for SC and ST viewed that the goal of universalisation of elementary education, increasing the literacy rates and reduction of drop-outs in STs cannot be achieved unless there is considerable enhancement in the investment on the Education Sector. The National Policy on Education, 1986 had laid down that the investment in education would regularly increase to reach a level of expenditure of 6% of the National income as early as possible, but the following table on the percentage allocation of outlays on education during successive Five Year Plans shows that after the Fourth Plan the percentage of allocation started declining.

**Table 7.6 : Planwise Percentage Distribution of National Allocation on Education.**

Plan	Years	Percentage of total Plan Outlay
First	(1951-56)	6.96
Second	(1956-61)	6.40
Third	(1961-66)	7.78
Annual Plans	(1966-69)	4.77
Fourth	(1969-74)	5.21
Fifth	(1974-79)	3.27
Sixth	(1980-85)	2.58
Revised Sixth	(1980-85)	2.58
Seventh	(1985-90)	3.54

Source :Report of the Commission for SC and ST (1985-86), Eighth Report, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1987 p.74.

7.31 The Commission, therefore, recommended that for the educational development, allocation on education sector should at least be 6% of the total national outlay, so that the programme of universalisation of education, improvement in retention rate among Scheduled Tribes, involvement of local agencies and special efforts towards increasing tribal female literacy are implemented with fair measure of success.<sup>20</sup>

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