

INTRODUCTION

Societies are never static; change occurs in all societies irrespective of types or locations.

Social change is any sort of change in a society. It may be the deviation from the traditional norms or may be changes in the functional aspects of a society. Changes in societies continue as an essential ingredient of societal life. But even though some kinds and degrees of social change are universal in human experience, in modern times they are marked by certain characteristics.

A noticeable trend towards planned change is observed in the present day societies. The emphasis is on properly introduced changes. This is discernible in the higher proportion of contemporary change which is planned or issues from the secondary consequences of deliberate innovations.

Bhatnagar¹ pointed out that Lester F. Ward was the first sociologist to have observed that education also played a significant role in the process of planned social change. Now-a-days, the

urgency of planned growth and also tendency towards mass education, especially because of spread of democracy, have resulted in the growth of popularity of educational planning in developing countries for properly introducing changes in the different aspects of the societies. "It is now generally accepted that an educational system, particularly in the developing countries, should reflect much more closely the emerging shape of social and economic development."²

In contemporary societies, education is carried out through a large and highly complex formal organisation. It has clearly established goals, defined structures and procedures for reaching these goals. On the part of society, it is thus an organised effort. Some sociologists hold the idea, "Education can be planned for social change."³ The divergence of opinions in regard to the question of relation between education and social change is, however, no less distinct and manifest. Three distinct approaches are noticed in this regard. According to Marxist framework, change in and through education is not possible without prior change in the social structure. Education is a dependent variable. On the other hand, functional framework which does not establish the primacy of one factor over the other, suggests that education is external to the process of social change.

Between these opposing thought lies the third one which states that simultaneous transformation of social and educational system is possible.

In India, spread of formal education has been considered as one of the important factors in achieving rapid social and economic development. This is noticeable since the adoption of the Constitution of India and more particularly the launching of development plans. The trend of thought and pattern of expenditure and training for improving quality of human resources through higher investment in human beings are being maintained. The first two five year plans laid emphasis on the importance of development of human resources; the fourth plan was categorical in this regard. It was suggested that "Reforms in the educational system should help the growth of initiative and enterprise, make for horizontal and vertical mobility, open up wider opportunities for employment and enable the lowering of caste, class and regional barriers so that a purposeful change towards an egalitarian society can be brought about."⁴ The fifth Five Year Plan also proposed an integrated and comprehensive programme of educational development in order to achieve social transformation, promote economic growth and accelerate progress towards socialism.⁵

In the broad context of the constitutional commitment to ensure socio-economic development and to follow up actions in the wake of National Education Policy passed by the Parliament of India in 1968 underlying the priority areas in expanding education in the countryside, spread of formal education became a necessary pre-condition for country's developmental process. This expansion explains the question of social investment by the nation to achieve socio-economic growth. It postulates increase in job-opportunities, productivity, economic development and social justice. In a word, higher expenditure in formal education is made in order to increase returns both to the individuals and to the community.

The genesis of commitment of the Government to provide educational facilities as also to ensure educational progress, especially among the scheduled communities, lies in the country's formal-legal measures. Educational expansion, therefore, forms the major programme of special development of these backward classes. Since Independence, the Government of India endeavours to ameliorate the socio-economic condition of down-trodden communities of the country. The Directive Principles of State Policy as enshrined in the Constitution of India, provides among other

things, that "the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."⁶ Not that alone, the Constitution provides also for the procedure of making notification of lists of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as per Articles 341 and 342 respectively of the Constitution. In a word, it was made an incumbent upon the Government to initiate legislative, administrative and also educational measures to ameliorate their socio-economic condition. Social thinkers, sociologists as also anthropologists all alike are equally concerned with the problem of development of these scheduled communities. N.K.Bose, the noted Indian anthropologist, suggested to all those who were engaged in the welfare work of the scheduled communities to try through education to change these communities. According to him, "..... we should perhaps be better advised to try through education and organisation to help all scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to modern themselves largely through their own efforts."⁷

The tribal population in India, however, show a wide variation in the nature of their social organisation, economic system as also geographical placement. It is observed, "The socio-economic conditions and cultural elements of those living with caste Hindus, since centuries, have undergone some change. But their brethren, claiming the same descent but living in interior hills and forests, still observe most of the customs and conventional practices."⁸

The diversity in geographical placement as also the economy on which they depend are, thus, different in different regions and even from tribe to tribe. It is likely, therefore, that societies with different setting and structure of scheduled tribes may not "react and respond identically to the same external causation."⁹

The introduction of educational macro-structures as a means of socio-economic development at the local level may adopt a different course with different categories of scheduled tribes depending on the specificity of their setting. Hence it is likely that connected problems faced by the tribals in the wake of spread of education may not only assume an inter-tribe feature but also intra-tribe one. The present enquiry is concerned with the problems that emerge as a result of interactions of macro and micro-structures in the educational field of scheduled

tribe communities. The main focus of the analysis lies in assessing the impact of national educational process on the tribal population in different socio-economic setting. Theoretically, the study is concerned with the influence of education on the aspects of stratification, power structure and social structure of scheduled tribe communities.

Educational achievement which is a process aspect of socio-economic development is the focus of our enquiry. Throughout the study the emphasis is on institution-attitude-expectation aspect which is likely to reflect the trend of their change and development. It is assumed that both status and power in the various institutions of tribal societies are changing because of the impact of education. The nature of institutional frame work is generally interpreted and understood in terms of status and power. The changing pattern of status and power has obvious reflection on the process of social change.

It is very likely that spread of education may lead to the growth of structural duality¹⁰ among the scheduled tribe population. New bases of statuses and loci of power may emerge. Also new institutional framework and disorganisation of old ones may become necessary. The process of replacement of the traditional institutions by new base like education

may not, however, be complete and as a result of this under conditions of social change, co-existence of different sectors such as a disorganised traditional one and unbalanced and unintegrated modern one may be seen. The role of education at the different setting and structure of scheduled tribe population tends to assume different forms in accordance with the nature of inter-dependence of education with the larger social system. However, it tends to be enough to remark at this stage, as some sociologists have pointed out, that, "the growth of education, though conditioned by the economy and social structure, is likely to be a stimulus to change."¹¹

In such a situation, an assessment of the impact of education on scheduled tribes at different levels may be illuminating. It will give an idea whether process of socio-economic development of scheduled tribe population has been facilitated by the spread of education and if so, what is the rate of impact of education at different levels ? Do all of them realise equally the importance of education ? Are they becoming conscious of modern and rational values towards their major social institutions ? Do they break-away from their traditional occupational pattern and show the trend of upward inter-generational

occupational mobility ? Only after ascertaining and analysing the impact of education on scheduled tribe population under different settings, the answers to these relevant and other related questions may be made.

UNITS OF STUDY

In order to study the comparative impact of education on social change among scheduled tribe population of different categories under different economic setting, tribal communities of a tea estate and a nearby village have been selected. The selection of these units are based on certain considerations. One of considerations is that the tea estate should have scheduled tribe population of migrated origin only and the village should have scheduled tribe population of both migrated as also indigenous origin. In matters of selecting the units of study care is taken that they are representative units in all respects so that the micro-study should have the scope for generalization at the macro-level. The present study has, therefore, been confined to the following areas :

(a) Nimitjhora Tea Estate where migrated Scheduled Tribe population of Chotanagpur origin significantly occurs.

(b) Hendarbari Village where indigenous as also migrated scheduled tribe population are significant.

Both the units viz. Nimitjhora Tea Estate and Hendarbari village under Kelchini P.S. of Jalpaiguri District are selected for detailed case studies.

Here a question is likely to arise as to the matter of selection of the units of study from one of the districts of North Bengal region while in the region four other districts are also included and where a sizeable number of scheduled tribe population reside. To this, the answer is that the present study is essentially concerned with the assessment and analysis of the impact of education on scheduled tribes belonging to different economic setting and it is in the district of Jalpaiguri where such an objective situation prevails. The reports and studies of educational backwardness of the scheduled tribes of North Bengal as a whole or district-wise notwithstanding, there is hardly any comparative study of the differential impact of education on them in different economic setting.

It is observed that both in Malda and West Dinajpur districts, scheduled tribe population belong to agrarian economy and though in the district of Darjeeling there are quite a large number of scheduled tribe population belonging to both agrarian and industrial economy, absence of variety of such communities in Darjeeling district is a constraint for the purpose of the study. So far as the district of Cooh Behar is concerned, only a handful number of scheduled tribe population occurs. On the other hand, a large conglomeration of scheduled tribes of different ethnic origin as also the different economic setting is found in the district of Jalpaiguri alone. The point of importance in selecting the units of study, therefore, does not lie so much in coverage of scheduled tribes of the different districts of North Bengal as in the coverage and scope for assessment of the differential rate of impact of education on scheduled tribes of North Bengal in different economic setting which Jalpaiguri alone suitably provides for the study.

Nimtihora Tea Estate : It was founded in the year 1912 for cultivation, processing and producing tea under Kheiribari Tea Company with its registered office at Jalpaiguri. Situated at a distance of about 20 Km west of Alipurduar Town, it is encircled by Para forest in the east and Menderbari village in the west under Kalchini P.S. of Jalpaiguri district. More than eighty percent population of the estate belong to migrated scheduled tribe communities of Chetnagpur origin.

Menderbari village : The village includes utter Menderbari, Daksin Menderbari, Menderbari forest under Kalchini P.S. of Jalpaiguri District and is situated at the outskirts of the tea estate. Indigenous tribal communities such as Mechas, Rabhas are settled in the village side by side with migrated ones such as oraos, mundas and others.

Both the units are thus located within a geographical continuity with exposure to, more or less, same forces of modernization but under different socio-economic setting. While in the former most of the workers are engaged as plantation workers on wage-payment basis under statutory provisions, workers in the latter are engaged mostly in the rural unorganised sector.

The problems of the area, educational achievement, group dynamics as also social conflicts of these communities are already known to the researcher because of the contacts with them in course of organising and conducting Educational programme under Workers Education Scheme for the last eight years. Due to this it is easier for the researcher to collect information from different sources connected with the research project.

ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

Educational advancement among the population under study is not uniform. It seems to have relation to their social setting. The problem of educational advancement as also its impact upon their social structure, obviously, has to be viewed with different types of social organisations, economy etc. in mind. The impact of education on stratification, leadership pattern, social conflicts etc. among the scheduled tribes under different setting is sought to be ascertained.

The study first attempts to ascertain the spread of education among the population under study with special reference to the following broad areas :

- (i) The nature of progress in education among scheduled tribes of North Bengal;
- (ii) Differential rate of progress, if any, among them;
- (iii) Effect of education on job performance and economic opportunities;
- (iv) Effect of education on social life-family structure, marriage rituals.
- (v) Effect of education on political life and emergence of political elites from educated class, political movements, if any.

It is generally held that education has a direct bearing upon the thought-patterns of individuals. With more information and knowledge, an educated person is likely to have modern attitudes towards life and living. Also it is held that education influences the status and power structure of a society. It helps for intergenerational upward occupational mobility.

Some of the possible inferences of the present study are drawn from the above trend and they are noted as below :

- (i) Education is likely to bring about a

change in the attitude of the scheduled tribe population from traditional to modern.

- (ii) Education may help to forge some traditional roles and take up some new ones.
- (iii) The educated persons are likely to give lesser importance to marriage rituals, bride-price etc.
- (iv) The educated persons are expected to choose educated people as their leader, so that with greater spread of education the pattern of traditional leadership is likely to undergo changes.
- (v) Education is likely to bring about changes in the stratification system of the tribal communities in the region.
- (vi) The factor education has probably affected two types of tribal communities in two different ways.
- (vii) Educated persons are likely to give leadership to Trade Union activities/ peasant movements.

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(viii) Education has brought in conflict between traditional and emerging leaders.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in the study may be divided into two parts. The first part is based on survey technique. A house-hold and educational survey schedule was prepared covering social and demographical factors. The entire survey was based on house to house visit of the Sch. Tribes under investigation. The second part consisted of an attitude test of the population in relation to certain variables, with a view to ascertaining the impact of education.

The household and educational survey of the entire/population of both levels was undertaken to /st ascertain the nature and extent of progress in education, effect of education on job-performance, on religion, family etc. among the migrated and indigenous tribal population.

As the study is concerned with the impact of education, it was felt necessary to have sufficient number of educated persons and illiterate persons in

the sample to which the attitude test was to be administered. In the census enumeration, the population was divided into different age-groups. Children, in the study includes all persons below fifteen years of age, adolescent refers to persons between fifteen and eighteen years. Adults are those persons who are above eighteen years of age. It was observed that the spread of education was significant among persons belonging to adult age-group.

The sample of the population to which the questionnaire was administered was drawn from the adult age-group only in view of the objectives of the study and with the following considerations :

- (i) Adults, speaking in general way, either had already completed the course of education or would exhibit little or no further chance of coming through the process of education any more. (ii) Further, they had already formed their personality, attitudes, beliefs etc. which were less susceptible to further changes (iii) The reflexions of adult behaviour on the elements of any social structure were likely to be ubiquitous and enduring.

In this connection, illiterates included illiterates and those persons below primary educational level; educated included those with primary and higher levels.

It was found that the number of illiterate adult persons was very large, while that of the educated persons was very small. In the tea garden as many as 442 male and 486 female adults were illiterates and in the village such numbers were 414 and 378 respectively. This means that the total number of illiterate adults was 1720. On the other hand, in the tea garden 202 male and 53 female adults were educated and in the village 92 male and 38 female adults were educated. In view of large number of adult illiterate persons, it was decided that systematic random sampling would be done in the following manners.

Systematic random sampling was used to select a sample from both illiterate and educated adult persons. Every sixth illiterate adult person and every third educated adult persons were included in the sample population. In total 415 adult persons were included in which 207 were illiterates and 128 persons educated.

Table 1.1 shows the number of adult persons in the sample.

Table 1.1 - Sample population

Levels	Educational status					
III.	Educated					Total
	Upto Primary	Upto Middle	Upto Sc.	M.S. or above		
Nimtikhore T.E.	135	57	22	5	1	240
Mandarhari village	132	24	11	6	2	175
Total :	267	81	33	11	3	415

(Ill. - Illiterate; Sc. - Secondary;
M.S. - Higher Secondary).

A questionnaire was administered to the sample population. The questions were framed after a pre-test under the following broad headings. The respondents were asked to give their opinions as to each of the statements of the questionnaire as agreed, undecided or disagreed.

1. Family : It includes questions on joint family system, place of women in it, family planning etc.
11. Leadership : The respondents were asked questions on the emergence of leadership, leadership qualities, role of leaders, political involvement etc.

III. Education : In this connection questions such as right to education, female education, free and compulsory education, status of educated persons etc. were included.

IV. Occupation : Questions on traditional occupation, right to work, unemployment problem, mobility were asked.

V. Religion : In this portion, the respondents were asked question on fatalism, secularism, visit to religious places etc.

In course of administering the questionnaire and also in other different occasions, non-participant type of observation was employed. This had also helped a lot in the collection of data on the families and their ways of life.

Further in order to understand the role of educated persons in their Trade Union/Rural Workers movement and the like, a few educated persons were randomly selected for case studies. The total number of such case studies were nineteen.

SPREAD OF EDUCATION AMONG SCHEDULED TRIBES OF
WEST BENGAL/NORTH BENGAL - A STATISTICAL ACCOUNT.

The people of tribal communities are found in every district of West Bengal and their number is quite large. As per 1961 census, 41 communities enlisted as scheduled tribes in West Bengal had 20,54,081 persons as their population or 5.88 percent of the total state population. An increase in their number was recorded in 1971 census and it rose to 25,32,969 accounting for 5.72 percent of the state population and 6.62 percent of the total scheduled Tribe population in the country.

Of these 41 communities, three communities namely Buthudi, Benjer and Binjhiera were deleted from the list in pursuance of the "The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes orders (Amendment) Act, 1976." As a result, there are 38 communities which are declared as Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal and they are as follows :

Asur, Ureon, Karmali, Kisan, Korwa, Kora, Kherwar, Khond, Geraik, Garo, Gond, Chakma, Chik Baraik, Chero, Nagesia, Parhalya, Birjia, Birhar,

Badia, Baiga, Bhutia (Kagstay, Toto, Tibetan etc.),
 Bhumi, Magh, Malpaharia, Mahli, Mahali, Munda, Mech,
 Mru, Rabha, Lepcha, Lodha-Kheria or Kheria, Lohara
 or Lohara, Savar, Sauria Paharia, Santal, Majong, Ho.

The concentration of the population
 belonging to these communities reveals an important
 trend. This may be seen from the following table.

Table 1.2 West Bengal population, 1971

Districts	Total population		ST population		
	Total percentage to the total		Total	Percentage to the Scheduled Tribe population of the state	Percentage to the total population of the district.
	1	2	1	2	3
Calcutta	3148746	7.11	2406	0.09	0.08
Cooh Behar	1414183	3.19	10611	0.42	0.75
24 Parganas	8449482	19.06	137191	5.42	1.62
Jalpaiguri	1750159	3.95	426595	16.92	24.49
Darjeeling	781777	1.76	108586	4.29	13.89
Nadia	2230270	5.03	31799	1.26	1.43
West Dinajpur	1859887	4.20	221317	8.74	11.90
Purulia	1602875	3.61	313793	12.39	19.58
Burdwan	3916174	8.83	228805	9.02	5.84
Bankura	2031039	4.62	208735	8.24	10.28
Birbhum	1775909	4.01	125250	4.94	7.05
Malda	1612657	3.64	130715	5.16	8.11
Murshidabad	2940204	6.63	38947	1.54	1.32
Midnapore	5509247	12.43	442963	17.49	8.84
Howrah	2417266	5.45	3364	0.13	0.14
Hooghly	2672116	6.48	100084	3.95	3.49

(Source : Paschim Bangar Adibasi Nirdeasika, 1977)

It is indicated that the districts of Midnapore, Jalpaiguri, Purulia, Burdwan and Bankura represent 17.49 percent, 16.92 percent, 12.37 percent, 9.02 percent and 8.24 percent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the state. This means that approximately seventy five percent of Scheduled Tribe population of the state are represented by these five districts and the remaining twenty five percent of the scheduled tribe population are represented by other districts. Further, it is also indicated that in relation to the total population of the district, scheduled tribe population in the districts are quite large in Jalpaiguri (24.49 percent), Purulia (19.58 percent), Darjeeling (13.89 percent), West Dinajpur (11.90 percent) and Bankura (10.28 percent).

Another aspect about the pattern of concentration of ST population is noticeable. Communities such as Lepcha, Bhutia are not significantly found outside the district of Darjeeling. Garo and Rabha mostly occur in Cooch Behar and Koch in Jalpaiguri. Santals, Oraons, Mundas are, however, widely dispersed in all the districts of the State. It is said that "The mongoloid tribal communities such as Lepchas, Bhutias, Mechas, Rabhas and Garos etc.

are mostly concentrated in North Bengal whereas the Proto-Australoid tribal communities such as Santals, Bhumijs, Oraons, Mundas etc are dispersed throughout the state."¹² It is to be noted, therefore, that the concentration of ST communities in North Bengal presents some interesting feature.

Before going into the study of this aspect, a passing reference with regard to the region of North Bengal seems to be relevant. The area of North Bengal is coterminous with the area of Jalpaiguri Division which was created by the government of West Bengal vide notification No. 998 G.A. dated the 4th March, 1963. It consists of the five out of the sixteen districts of the state viz Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda on the Northern side of the Ganges.

In North Bengal, the mongoloid tribal communities are found residing side by side with the so-called Proto-Australoid tribal communities. Most of the communities of the latter category are of Chotanagpur origin, engaged in tea gardens as plantation workers or settled in the villages either as ex-teegarden workers or forest workers. Hence the people of tribal communities in North Bengal may be

classified broadly into Mongoloid or Indigenous ST communities and Proto-Australoid or migrated ST communities, according to their place of origin. It is, however, to be noted that a large number of tribal population of migrated origin are, now, local born.

The distribution of Scheduled Tribe population of North Bengal has been shown in the table below.

Table 1.3 Scheduled tribe population of North Bengal (1971)

District	Indigenous		Migrated		Total
	No.	% to the total	No.	% to the total	
Cooch Behar	2900	(4.39; 27.34)	7711	(0.93; 72.66)	10611
Jalpaiguri	19547	(23.56; 3.63)	413048	(49.54; 96.31)	420595
Darjeeling	44539	(87.48; 41.02)	64047	(7.68; 58.98)	108586
West Dinajpur	183	(0.28; 0.09)	221134	(26.52; 99.91)	221317
Malda	2833	(4.29; 2.17)	127882	(15.33; 97.83)	130715
Total North Bengal	66002	(100.00; 7.33)	833822	(100.00; 92.67)	899824

(Figures in brackets refer to percentages.

The first figure indicates percentage with reference to column and the second with reference to row total.)

From the table it is indicated that out of the total Scheduled Tribe population in North Bengal (899824), only 66802 persons or 7.33 percent occur in the indigenous category and the remaining 833822 persons or 92.67 percent are of migrated origin. Again, so far as the indigenous category is concerned, Darjeeling district alone constitutes 67.48 percent or 44,539 persons out of its total population and Jalpaiguri district represents 23.56 percent or 15,547 persons of the category. This means the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri have the largest number of Scheduled Tribe population of indigenous category. On the other hand, out of the total Scheduled Tribe population of migrated origin in North Bengal, as many as 4,13,048 persons or 49.54 percent of its total occur in the district of Jalpaiguri, followed by West Dinajpur (221134 persons or 26.52 percent) and Malda (127882 persons or 15.33 percent) and so on. The analysis of the distribution of Scheduled Tribe population of North Bengal thus shows that it is mainly in the district of Jalpaiguri where a sizeable number of persons of both the categories occur in relation to its total population.

Numerically eight tribal communities such as Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bhutia, Lepcha, Mech, Rabha and Garo are the major ones in North Bengal. Out of the total 899824 Scheduled Tribe persons in North Bengal, these eight tribal communities represent 7,00,967 persons and the remaining 198857 persons are represented by other thirty tribal communities. Again, in so far as community-wise total population in the state is concerned, each of these eight communities except Santals has more than half of its population in North Bengal. This may be seen from the table given below.

Table 1.4 Major scheduled tribes of North Bengal

	North Bengal	West Bengal	% of North Bengal to the total
Oraon	2,32,893	2,91,173	80%
Munda	1,04,650	1,98,701	53%
Santal	3,05,512	13,76,890	22.15%
Total Migrated Category	6,43,057	18,66,854	34.45%
Garos	1,326	2,623	51%
Bhutias	30,442	33,912	90%
Mech	10,387	10,862	96%
Rabhas	2,219	2,466	90%
Lepchas	13,536	14,568	93%
Total Indigenous Category	57,910	64,431	90%
Others unclassified	1,98,897	6,01,664	33.05%
Grand Total	8,99,824	25,29,969	35.52%

The table indicates that eighty percent of Oraons, fifty three percent of Mundas, fifty one percent of Garos and ninety or more percent of Shetias, Lepchas, Rabhas and Meches of West Bengal are habitant of North Bengal. In so far as Santals are concerned, they are only twenty two percent in North Bengal in relation to its total population in the state. However, the fact is that these communities combined represent more two-thirds of the total tribal population in the region. An understanding about these communities may, therefore, be helpful in making broad generalizations about tribal communities of North Bengal.

The expansion of education amongst Scheduled Tribe in West Bengal through different schemes is said to have been achieved to a considerable extent. Increase in their literacy rate from 0.7 percent in 1931 to 8.54 percent in 1961 apart, there has been perceptible impact in other levels also. Pointing out this trend of educational achievement among Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal, Ansi Kumar Das stated as follows :

"Before independence, there were hardly of few thousand Scheduled Tribe students reading in the primary stage of education in this state.

Their number now is almost 200,000. In the secondary stage there were 15,858 Scheduled Tribe students in 1962 but their number at present is about 30,000 indicating cent percent increase during one decade. Again, during 1962-63, there were only 268 Scheduled Tribe students in the post metric stage of education. Their number rose to 1,196 (1970-71) showing more than fourfold increase."¹³

In so far as the trend of educational achievement of Scheduled Tribes of North Bengal is concerned, it is observed that the indigenous tribal communities are generally far advanced than the migrated ones. While the rate of literacy among Oraons, Mundas and Santals were 9.74 percent, 9.21 percent and 9.93 percent respectively, the literacy rates among Lepchas was 29.90 percent, Shutias 23.46 percent, Meches 12.94 and Garos 12.81. It is, however, to be noted that the only indigenous tribe viz Rabhas is lagging behind their fellow-tribes with literacy rate of 6.39 percent (1971 census). Referring to these indigenous tribes, Das pointed out that, "these communities belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and constitute about 3 percent of the total ST population of the state. Their literacy levels are also quite high in comparison to the others. There is a wide gap

between the communities who have shown progress and those who have not."¹⁴ One of the possible reasons for low level of educational achievement among Rabhas may be due to the fact that a large number of the Rabha families inhabit in the forest settlements (Bastans) within or outskirts of the Reserve forests (Forest Rabhas), detached from and in remote contact with village Rabhas or Hindu Castes, Muslims and other tribes with little or no exposure to the forces of change.

The aim of different educational and welfare programmes to bring the Scheduled Tribes nearer to the standard of the general mass within a reasonable period still remains to be fulfilled. Even among the Scheduled Tribes themselves, there exists a wide gap in so far as literacy and livelihood conditions are concerned. It is observed that while 9.63 percent average was literate among the major Scheduled Tribes such as Breen, Munda and Santals of migrated category the percentage of literacy among the major Scheduled Tribes viz. Lepcha, Bhutia, Mech, Garo and Rabha under indigenous category was as high as 16.70 percent. Further, among the students who appeared at the Higher Secondary and School Final examination in 1973

from amongst the tribal communities, it was indicated that twenty percent of such students belonged to the indigenous tribal communities though they constituted hardly three to four percent of the total 57 population of the state. This may be seen from the following figures of students appearing in the Higher Secondary and School Final Examination in 1973 in the state.¹⁵

Oron	189	Garo	2
Munda	52	Bhutia	133
Santal	693	Mach	48
Kharis	-	Nabha	3
<u>Others</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>Lepcha</u>	<u>46</u>
Total :	934	Total :	232

This points out the trend that exists an inter-tribe difference in the level of educational advancement which is likely to lead to far reaching consequences including effects on their livelihood pattern. Now let us examine the livelihood pattern of these major tribal communities.

According to 1971 census, 53.92 percent Oron workers, 69.78 percent Munda workers and 89.44 percent Santal workers are engaged in the

the agricultural sector among Scheduled Tribes of migrated origin, 39.12 percent average are agricultural labourers (i.e. Landless cultivators) whereas such average percentage among tribals of indigenous origin is only 21.65 percent average. Thus it is seen that though the Scheduled Tribes of migrated origin depend more heavily on "agriculture" than their counterparts in the indigenous category, the former is far behind economically than the latter.

In the "non-agricultural sector" also the position of the tribal population under migrated category is not satisfactory because majority of them are engaged in non-gainful employment. Out of 29 percent average of Scheduled Tribe population of migrated origin in this non-agricultural professions, 21 percent (average) of them are engaged in livestock, fishery, forestry and plantation etc.; approximately 5.65 percent (average) are engaged in gainful professions like "services," trade, commerce and manufacturing other than household industry and the rest 2.35 percent average in other occupations. The indigenous tribal population, as in the case of agricultural sector, enjoy a much better position in non-agricultural sector also. Of the 41.35 percent average in the non-agricultural sector, only 17.23

percent average are engaged in livestock. Fishery forestry and plantation etc., followed by a higher portion 20.60 percent average in gainful professions such as 'services, trade and commerce and manufacturing other than household industry and the rest in other occupations.

This shows that the achievements so far made by the tribal population of migrated and indigenous origin are not same in the field of literacy and gainful occupation for livelihood. It is, therefore not unlikely to observe that there exists a trend of inverse relationship between the educational achievement level and the engagement in the traditional agricultural sector. Further, yet another trend is discernible. Diversification of occupation pattern tends to occur with the spread of education.

In general it may, therefore, state that communities which are found to be educationally advanced represent a considerable portion of their workers engaged in 'services' and other jobs with better status. The achievement made by the indigenous tribes in the field of literacy and gainful occupation

for livelihood are comparatively better. A.K.Das observed that, "Four other communities namely, the Bhutia, Lepcha, Meoh and Rabha, have more "cultivators" (land owners and/share croppers) but less of "agricultural labourers" (landless persons) and a considerable portion of their workers is engaged in service."¹⁷ A change in their occupation pattern through service invariably signifies a change in position in social hierarchy because, occupational pattern is said to determine the social status and economic positions of individuals.

It is to be noted that differences at the inter-community level exist in respect of the educational and literacy attainment as also in the economic spheres. Some explain that geographically and culturally speaking the Scheduled Tribes are at widely different stages of social and economic development and their problems differ from tribe to tribe, area to area and suggest need-based education for first achieving economic stability for the less advanced sections. Others come out with the more emphatic statement that education and economy in the tribal society are inseparable. They adduce proof by

establishing the proposition that a large portion of wastage and dropouts can be explained in terms of the use of the children by the families for economic purposes.

From the above analysis it may be stated, in general, that those communities which are found educationally advanced are also economically better off. This is to say, that there exists a positive relation between economic status and educational achievement of these tribal communities. In other words it suggests that the educational progress of the less advanced communities is regulated by and dependent upon their 'economy.'

CHAPTER SCHEME

In the background given above, the study has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter opens with a discussion on role of education in socio-economic development of the country. It deals with in particular, some of certain very pertinent questions in this regard in so far as scheduled tribe communities are concerned. In the chapter, introduction to the topic, research problem, units of study, aspects covered and methodology adopted are discussed. Also a separate section on the state of education among the tribes of West Bengal, in general, and North Bengal, in particular is included.

The second chapter on "Situational Setting" deals with various aspects of units of study and discusses them under four different heads; area and population, education, economy and institutional participation. A summary of the whole discussion has also been added at the end of the chapter.

Chapter three makes a study, of "Educational influence and social change" among scheduled tribes in different categories. It covers the illiterate as well as educated persons' reactions and attitude towards a

number of important social institutions, like family, marriage, leadership, education, occupation and religion and deals with educated persons attitudes as also their actions in comparison to those of illiterate persons at different levels. Such a comparative study of their attitudes and actions is made with a view to find out the significant gap between them.

Chapter four, on "Analysis of social change among the scheduled tribes" makes a study of the impact of education on scheduled tribe communities at different levels. It deals with the influence of education on occupation structure of the population under study, their mobility and other connected problems.

Chapter Five, on "Case studies of educated Tribals" deals with their leadership to trade union activities/peasant movements etc. The important aspect of conflicting trends in tribal leadership and the resultant socio-psychological impact on the educated tribals form additional part of explanation on emerging tribal leadership.

The study on the impact of education on social change among the scheduled tribes of North Bengal ends with a summary and conclusions which sum up the main findings and draws certain broad conclusions, of course, in the light of the hypotheses.

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14. Ibid., p.397.
15. Badal Chandro Dey, "Stagnation at School leaving Stage among the students of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Non-scheduled Communities of West Bengal during 1973", in Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute, Government of West Bengal, vol. XIV, Number 3 and 4, 1980, pp.98-99.
16. The members belonging to Rabha community in the forest village are generally employed as forest labourers under regular paid plantation system of the Government Forest Department and they are given wages apart from land and house-sites according to the system. Since the employment potential is limited, quite a large number of the members of their families are engaged in cultivation.
17. A.K.Das, op.cit. p.397.