

Socio- Psychological, Economic Conditions and Educational Backwardness of Tribes: A Study on Selected Tribes of Kerala

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Abstract

Kerala is the cynosure of world attention as it gets encomium in the development debate centered on human development. Its development approach encapsulated in the ‘Kerala Model’ stands now historically vindicated. That the model is inclusive, equitable and sustainable has been accepted far and wide. The centerpiece of the ‘Model’ is its broad social base. However, notwithstanding the pats on the back for enabling to attain an HDI (Human Development Index) closer to that of highly developed societies, the ‘Model’ is used to conceal many dark areas. Most specifically, there is insufficient attention devoted to honestly addressing and analyzing the problems faced by marginalized communities, especially the tribal folks despite continuous emphasis on policy circles. Sending children to school is a social norm in Kerala, the State that has achieved cent percent literacy and where the health and HDI indicators are comparable to that of United States. Is this true for the tribal communities?

Kerala introduced several tribal education schemes right from the inception of development planning. As a result, literacy rate among the tribesfolk has improved considerably. Yet, the gap in literacy of the tribal community compared to other groups in the State is still large. The positive discrimination aimed at bringing this group at par with other communities in the State has found success, albeit slowly. The representation of tribes in secondary education, higher education and employment is far from satisfactory. In this context, a micro level study is conducted to understand the reasons for the lagged performance of tribal community in the matter of education in Kerala.

The major findings of this study indicates that the main factor accounting for low educational achievements and low aspirations on the part of the tribesfolks is their poor social and economic condition. In addition to their economic condition, the inter-community differences in socio-economic conditions and the status of education are wide among them. Most of the government incentives for their educational purpose are under- utilized.

Keywords: Awareness of educational schemes, utilization of schemes, adequacy of incentives, attitudes towards education, inter-tribal and intra-state variation in tribal education.

Introduction

Education, being a process to bring about the all-round development of a nation, has a significant role in the realization of national integration. Laying emphasis on the above fact, our governments, both the Central and the States, have paid due attention to the promotion of education among our citizens, especially among the marginalized ones. Article 46 of the Indian Constitution states that, 'the State shall provide special care to the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people'. The Report of the Education Commission (1964-.66), categorically states 'the education of the backward classes in general and of the tribesfolk in particular is a major programme of equalisation and national integration. No expenditure is too great for the purpose' (Government of India, 1966). The Third Five-Year Plan document in its introduction to the section on education, notes thus: 'Education is the most single factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress in creating a social order founded on values of freedom, social justice, and equal opportunity' (Government of India, 1967). Realising these facts, the Government of India and the State Governments have been implementing various special education schemes and programmes for the socio-economic development of the tribesfolk. Tribesfolk have had some educational and health improvement since the 1930s though critical gaps still exist as between tribesfolk and non-tribesfolk (Singh, 1982). According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes in India is 58.96 per cent, while that of the general population is 72.99 per cent.

Kerala introduced tribal education schemes right from the inception of Development Planning. As a result, literacy rate among the tribesfolk has improved considerably. Yet, it still lags far behind the general literacy level in the State. Compared to the general literacy rate of 94.00 per cent in 2011, the literacy rate of tribesfolk was 75.80 per cent. Glaring inequality in literacy exists between the males and females, and it widens at higher levels of education. The low literacy rates may be due to several factors: ineffectiveness of the educational schemes; inadequacy of funds; non-utilisation or under-utilisation of funds etc. The Report on the Tribal Sub-plan (1994-.95) of Kerala states that, for general education, only 33.38 per cent of the provision was utilised. In the case of technical education, the record is worse: only 17.80 per cent was utilised (Government of Kerala, 1997). This revelation leads one to think of the reasons for under-utilisation. Are the tribesfolk unaware of the educational development schemes? Are they utilising these facilities properly? Are the schemes suitably designed? Is it possible to improve the schemes, increase awareness, and ensure efficient utilisation? We seek to address these questions in this study.

Review of Literature

For a proper analysis of the research question, the review of earlier studies helps a lot. The paragraph follows makes an attempt to appraise previous studies to give a suitable frame work to the present study.

A few studies which point out that tribesfolk are apathetic and indifferent to education and that they lack the required motivation are that of, Renuka Roy Committee (1959), Ambasht (1965), Das Gupta (1963), Sachidananda (1967), and Rathnaih (1977). Their living in areas isolated from the mainstream society is also pointed out as a causal factor (Kailash, 1991). Another set of studies under this type has pointed to economic status and lack of educational opportunity of the tribesfolk as the inhibiting factor. The studies on Purus of Manipur (Das, 1945), on Ho-Tribal Children (Majumdar, 1950), in the Sakharshet area of Maharashtra (Mutatkar, 1994) and on primary school children of Orissa (Singh and Nayak, 1997) may be cited as examples.

In an early study on Bhils, Naik(1950) noted that the arrangements in existence for their formal education were irrelevant and ineffective. The same author in another study pointed out that the schemes could be made use of only by the better off sections of the tribesfolk (Naik, 1959). Another major drawback of the schemes was the lack of adequate initiatives in them to arouse the interest of the target groups and to attract them to education. In fact, the majority of the target groups remain unaware of such schemes (Subrahmanian, 1986). Non-utilisation of funds was also a major handicap which led to dropping out of children of the target communities from schools (Fuchs, 1982). A comprehensive study on tribal education was carried out by the NCERT (1994) covering five states including Kerala. It was found that in Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra between 43 and 55 per cent of male siblings of school-going children interviewed continue to be in school while the percentage of female siblings continuing school is marginally or significantly lower. Helping parents with their work/occupation, looking after younger siblings and minding the house are three most important household chores done by school-going children. Yet another study reiterates that in spite of all the loud rhetoric on the empowerment of SC/STs, there has not been a total transformation in their lives (Ambrose Pinto, 2000).

The interest in the tribal situation of Kerala began as early as in the closing decades of the 19th century. The earlier studies were undertaken by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists. Enquiries specifically on the living conditions of tribes began after independence. Problems of educational development of tribesfolk received attention only still later. Among the earlier studies, the pride of place goes to Thurston (1897) who brought to light valuable information on Paniyans. According to him, intrusion of plainsmen into settlements of Paniyans had begun by the 1850s. The plainsmen were purchasing land together with Paniyans as chattels to be used as slaves on their

cultivable lands. A later study by Thurston was on the traditions, belief systems, customs, and religious practices of the various tribal communities (Thurston, 1907).

Ananthakrishna Iyer's (1937) study on the tribes of Cochin and Travancore had discussed in detail the socio-cultural dimensions of tribal life. The anthropological studies made by Ayyappan on various tribal communities such as the Nayadis (Ayyappan, 1937) and other aboriginals (Ayyappan, 1948) of Malabar are also well known. Ayyappan has referred to the lack of educational facilities in Wayanad and the aversion of Paniyans and Kurichians in the area to send their children to school. Another study on similar lines was the one on Kadars of Cochin, which also gave attention to the educational problems of the community (Ehrenfels, 1952). Another study on tribal life came out in 1962 (Luiz, 1962).

A government-appointed committee during the mid-1950s enquired into the living conditions and economic travails of the tribesfolk of Travancore and Cochin. The Committee came up with recommendations for development schemes for Muthuvans, Hill Pulayas, and Kadars of Cochin. Educational development schemes, particularly development of vocational education, received specific attention among its recommendations (Government of Travancore- Cochin, 1956).

After the formation of Kerala (in 1956), the educational problems of tribesfolk have received greater attention of the government, as is evidenced by the appointment of various Commissions and Committees. The Evaluation Committee on the Welfare of Backward Communities brought out a report in 1963 which made several suggestions for the school and college education of children of these communities including a hike in fee concessions (Government of Kerala, 1963). The Nettoor Commission and Kumara Pillai Commissions were concerned with the question of reservation of jobs for backward communities in Kerala. These commissions recommended, inter alia, provision of larger educational facilities to children of the concerned communities (Government of Kerala, 1965; Government of Kerala, 1970).

Unemployment including unemployment of the educated was found rampant among the tribesfolk. It was also observed that among them, educational levels were low, non-utilisation of educational concessions was high, aversion to technical and job-oriented courses was severe, and awareness about job opportunities was low (Government of Kerala, 1983).

Apart from the governmental agencies, a few individual scholars also have looked into socio-economic and educational problems of tribesfolk in Kerala, in recent years. Some of these studies have looked into educational performance of tribal students at the high school stage (Nayar, PKB, 1975; Ashok, 1989) at the college level (George, 1975); others have looked into the reasons for backwardness and identified lack of educational facilities as one of the major reasons (Rajendran, 1978); some studies looked at the problems of drop out among tribal students (Krishnan, 1999); still

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others trace the historical roots of the present-day problems of tribesfolk, such as land-use alienation, labour bondage, and indebtedness (Mathur, 1977); at least one scholar pointed out that tribesfolk in south Kerala are more developed than their counterparts in north Kerala (Kunhaman, 1980) and that the difference arose primarily from the differences in the patronage extended by the rulers of these two areas during the British period (Kunhaman, 1982). Inter-community variations in socio-economic and educational status (Paul, 1989; Balakrishnan, 1989; Krishnan, 2004) and gender differences in educational levels among tribesfolk (Basheer, 1994) have also come up for research.

Varghese (2002) in her doctoral study concluded that even though both the government and non-government agencies working for the upliftment of tribals, even today, a large number of tribal families are not yet been benefited by these agencies. The author emphasized the need for giving high priority to the field of education, both formal and job oriented for the empowerment of tribals. George (2011) in his paper made an attempt to find out the exclusionary trends in education, especially in higher education. Getting admitted in unaided educational institutions for SC/ST are very difficult. Surprisingly, the share of SCs and STs in Industrial Training Centers (ITC) run mostly without any financial assistance from government and also it is much lower than in the government owned Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). The author further argues that it is not poverty or other financial constraints alone that stops the way of SCs and STs getting enrolled in professional educational institutions. The SCs and STs is having very limited number in the political sphere of Kerala is an important reason why their voices are being unheard.

According to Oommen and Shyjan (2014), the idea of social inclusion in India if taken beyond the realm of rhetoric can be made a meaningful component of integrated strategic planning and decentralised governance. The paper tries to argue that local governments constitutionally mandated to 'plan for economic development and social justice' at the local level are eminently qualified to take up the task of working towards the goal of social inclusion. In the study, using the BPL Survey data 2009 for Kerala which was mostly patterned on the Socio-economic and Caste Census 2011 are used to construct an indicative model to illustrate the tremendous possibilities that lie ahead towards achieving the goal of social inclusion in this country. It is possible to identify gram panchayats by SC, ST and Fisher folk and initiate action to remedy various dimensions of deprivations by household.

Joy, Jobin and M.Srihari (2014) attempted to understand the hidden reasons for the increasing school dropouts among the ST students of Wayanad district of Kerala with special reference to the Paniya Tribe. Qualitative analysis and case studies were assessed to elicit the reasons for the increase of tribal dropout rate in the district. The major reason pointed out for the increased dropout rate is the lack of awareness on the value of education among the scheduled tribes. From this

situation, it is obvious to implement effective awareness and motivation programs for the tribal people to acknowledge the value of education.

Nithya (2014) narrates the plight of tribals specifically in the new economic reform era. She argues that deprivation land and forests are the worst forms of oppression which indigenous people experience. It is argued that even after sixty years of the formation of the state, tribal still continues to face all kinds of oppression and remains as the most marginalized community in Kerala. The new economic reforms coupled with the developmental project and developmental dreams of the state has brought further deprivation among tribals and it increased the developmental divide between tribal and non-tribal in the state. Author examines that the instrument of globalization has not brought any positive impact in fulfilling the intended goal of social security to the tribals. Paul, Binu.P (2013) underlined that though not the only factor, the higher opportunity costs of education at high school/higher secondary school going age among tribal community plays an important role in the increased drop out at that age group.

The preceding review shows that educational status of tribal communities remains lower than that of the rest of the community. However, specific and reliable answers to the questions of awareness and utilisation of available educational development facilities for the tribesfolk are rarely available. All the studies have looked into the factors which account for the lingering educational backwardness of tribes' folk. Two types of factors have been identified; (i) those which pertain to the tribes folk themselves and (ii) those which relate to the schemes. In this juncture, this study is positioned to provide some empirical evidences towards these questions.

Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study is to understand the marginalization of tribal communities in the sphere of education in Kerala. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the status of tribal education in Kerala,
2. To understand the factors inhibiting the education of tribals,
3. To analyze whether there exists inter-tribal differences in the attainment of education, and ,
4. To probe into the inter-regional and intra-regional status of tribal education in Kerala

Methodology and Data Source

Both primary and secondary sources have been explored for collection of data. Primary data have been collected from the selected tribal households. A multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure was adopted to select the households. The study was confined to Wayanad district of Kerala that is chosen on well-founded grounds. First, it is the homeland of the most primitive and

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smallest of the tribal communities on the Indian mainland (Singh, 1977). Secondly, Wayanad has the highest tribal concentration in the State. Finally, Wayanad is one of the districts with poor tribal literacy. The Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) survey conducted in Wayanad has identified five major tribes in the district, viz., Paniyan, Adiyar, Kuruman, Kurichian, and Kattunayakan. Together, they account for 73 per cent of the total tribal population of the district. As the present study focuses on the inter-tribal differences in educational aspirations, the first task is to locate the area where all the above mentioned tribal communities are living. So, in the first stage, the Community Development Block in which all the major tribes are found has been identified. Of the three Community Development Blocks in Wayanad, only in Mananthavady Block do all the major tribes live. Hence, it is selected in the first stage. In Mananthavady Block, all the major tribal communities could be seen only in three panchayats, viz Panamaram, Thavinhal, and Thirunelly. From these, one panchayat, i.e., Panamaram, has been selected randomly for intensive study in the second stage. It is the most backward panchayat in the district that has the concentration of all the major tribal communities of Wayanad. A sample of 250 households from the selected communities has been selected from the Panamaram Grama Panchayat. According to the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), 46 per cent of the tribal households are of Paniyans; 19 per cent are of Kurumans; 15 per cent are of Kurichians; 13 per cent are of Kattunaykans, and 7 per cent of Adiyans. Sample households were selected by giving these percentages as weights. The maximum number of members was limited at 100 and the minimum at 30. Accordingly, the sample of 250 tribal households has been distributed among the five communities: Paniyans (100), Kuruman (48), Kurichian (38), Adiyar (32), and Kattunayakan (32). The sample covers about 15 per cent of the tribal households of the Panamaram panchayat.

The secondary sources include publications of the State Planning Board, Department of Economics, Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP), and Department of Tribal Development, Census reports, information available with institutes such as KIRTADS, and books and journals. Together with these, critical and objective observations made by the researchers are also used to supplement the data.

Tribal Education: An Overview

As in other parts of the country, the tribes in Kerala constitute a weaker section of the population. Tribal concentration in Kerala is very low and they constitute only 1.14 per cent of the total population. In all, there are 35 communities recognized as Scheduled Tribes in the State. Tribal communities remaining at the pre-agricultural stage of development and with very low literacy rates are recognised as primitive tribes by the Government of Kerala. Cholanaikas,

Kattunaykans, Kurumbas, Kadars, and Koragas are the primitive tribes in the State. They together constitute nearly 4.8 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribe population in the State. Owing to peculiar settlements and occupational orientations, the Scheduled Tribes are concentrated in certain regions of the State (Narayanan, 1973). The Western Ghats region that dominates the cultural geography of Kerala is an area where most of the tribes live. The district-wise population of tribesfolk in Kerala revealed that about 70 per cent of the tribal population in Kerala resides in four districts viz. Wayanad (37.40 per cent), Idukki (13.99 per cent), Palakkad (10.89 per cent), and Kasargod (8.33 per cent)

Majority of them is engaged in the collection of minor forest produce. Their basic disability is rooted in their physical isolation and associated psychological insulation. (Dube,1977). The tribesfolk in Kerala have undergone various kinds of exploitation for long periods of time and their life is characterized by poverty and misery. As Indra Deva (1983) puts it, indiscriminate contact with uprooted people from various cultural backgrounds has led to sexual as well as economic exploitation. The report submitted in 1997 to the Government of Kerala by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Committee stated unequivocally that sexual assaults and crude abortion methods were widely practiced by the affluent upper castes on the tribal women of Wayanad, Idukki, and Palakkad districts. In Waynad alone, the number of unwed mothers is more than 400. The social structure of the tribal society continues to stagnate; it has no inherent capacity of change; and its members have no occupational mobility even under conditions of fast-changing production relations (Bardhan, 1973).

The tribal communities in Kerala stand at unequal levels of socio-cultural development. Among them, Mala Arayans, Kanikkars, Kurichians, Ulladans, and Uralis are comparatively advanced. Kattunaykans, Thenkurumans, Paniyans, Hill Pulayas, and Naykans are the most depressed among them (Government of Kerala, 1979). The tribal economy, from time immemorial, has remained forest-based. The forests provide everything for their existence. Their day starts and ends with the battle for food and they seldom find time to earn for other essential needs, says Luiz (1962). Easy availability of forest land provided them sufficient opportunities to practice slash and burn type cultivation (shifting cultivation) for long periods. Large-scale immigration of settlers and continued deforestation has disturbed the subsistence economy of the tribesfolk and rendered the traditionally cultivating tribesfolk landless (Government of Kerala, 1984). Landless labourers among tribesfolk are found more in the northern districts of Kerala because of in migration to tribal settlement of peasants from the Travancore area. The burning issue of tribal Kerala at present is their land alienation and thirst for owning land. The tribesfolk of Kerala were food gatherers and hunters, shifting cultivators, farm labourers, and agriculturists (Mathur, 1977). At present, most of them are

agricultural labourers. The proportions of tribesfolk in all other occupations are small. Their work opportunities, even in the agriculture field, are shrinking.

As a prelude to our detailed discussion of the educational status of tribesfolk in Kerala, we may situate the problem against the all-India perspective.

Tribal Education: An all-India Perspective

The tribal population, which forms 8.36 per cent of the country’s total population in India, is distributed across the different regions unevenly. Large intra-zonal and inter-zonal variations exist among the tribes in language, culture, and ethnicity. The tribes of the Southern zone are numerically small, semi-nomadic, and more under- developed socially and economically than their counterparts in the Eastern and the Central zones of the country (Ushadevi, 1983).

In pursuance of the Directives of the Indian Constitution and its special provisions, the Governments, both at the Centre and at the States, have been implementing special programmes for the socio-economic development of the weaker sections. The Indian Constitution has specially provided for the safeguard of the interests of the weaker sections and for their protection from social injustice and exploitation (articles, 46, 275, 300, 332, 335, 338, and 340). Article 45 guarantees free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 within 10 years of adoption of the Constitution.

Despite such efforts by the Central and the State governments, the Scheduled Tribes do not seem to have made appreciable headway in literacy and education. A few States, particularly in the North-Eastern regions, have achieved high levels of literacy among Scheduled Tribes, levels exceeding even those of the general population. The trend of tribal literacy has, however, been continuously on the increase, despite regional differences in the rates of increase. Kerala ranks the sixth in terms of tribal literacy, the States with higher ranks being Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Sikkim, Andaman and Nichobar islands, Nagaland, Manipur and Himachal Pradesh. Wide disparity exists in the literacy rate as between the general population and Scheduled Tribe population. Disparity is found as between the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes also. The details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Literacy Rate among STs and All Social Groups in India (1961-2011)
(Figures are in percentages)

Census Year	Scheduled Tribes			All Social Groups		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57

1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.6	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84
2011	68.53	49.35	58.96	80.89	64.64	72.99

Source: Census of India, Various years

Tribal Education in Kerala

Kerala is one of the States that gives due emphasis to human resource development. A large share of government expenditure is devoted to education. The concerted efforts over several decades, of various agencies - the state, voluntary agencies and religious organizations – have taken Kerala to high levels of educational achievements. The State spends about 26 per cent of its budget on education. Kerala ranks third among the States in India in this respect. The average for all the States taken together is only about 11 per cent.

Several schemes have been envisioned to bring these marginalized communities at par with other communities, especially in the field of education. Schemes for providing better educational facilities to bright ST students., Bharath /Kerala Darshan programme to ST Students, Post -metric hostels for Tribal Students., Training On Information Technology, Â Post-Metric Scholarship, Vocational Training Institutes, Award of Research Fellowship in various aspects of Tribal Development, Up gradation of merits of ST students, Special Incentive to Brilliant Students, Repairs and Maintenance of Tribal Hostel., Construction of Hostels for Boys and Girls., Purchase of Land for construction of hostels., Running of Model Residential/Ashram Schools., Grants to High school going SSLC/Plus-2 failed students for studying in tutorial, are some of the notable programmes for the special benefit of the tribal folk. Table 2 gives details on the attainment of Kerala with respect to literacy in various categories.

Table 2: Growth of Literacy: Kerala, 1971-2001 (in per cent)

Category	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
General	60.42	70.42	89.81	90.90	94.00
Scheduled Castes	42.10	55.96	79.66	82.70	88.00
Scheduled Tribes	25.72	31.79	57.22	64.40	75.80

Source: Census of India, Various years

The tribes of Kerala have been exposed to formal education only recently. Their response to formal education and programmes of literacy has varied from community to community (Moniz Raza 1985). It was noted in the early 1960s that while among the Pulayas, Mala arayans, Irulas, and Kanikkars, the percentage of literacy (according to 1965 figures) was about 20 to 25 per cent, it was only about 10 per cent among Kurichians, Kurumans, Mannans, Maratis, and Kattunaykans and as low as 5 per cent among the Paniyans, Muthuvans, Adiyans, and Eravallans. (Krishna Iyer, 1962).

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After two decades of special efforts by the government for the betterment of education among tribal population, the level of literacy among them remained awfully low in the State (Government of Kerala, 1984.) It is usually held that the incentives provided by the government, voluntary organisations, and other agencies for the educational development of tribesfolk through special programmes and literacy drives have not yielded significant results in Kerala. Of course, there have been variations in the intensity of effort put in by the different agencies in different regions. Tribal literacy is, in general, lower in the northern districts than in the southern districts of the State. Kottayam (90.7 per cent) has the highest tribal literacy and Palakkad(47.0 per cent) has the lowest. About two-thirds of the districts in Malabar region have literacy rates lower than the State average. It is to be noted that more than 65 per cent of the tribal population of the State lives in the Malabar region. The literacy status of tribal communities is highly evident as per the information provided in Tables 3, 4,5 and 6 .

Table 3: Gap in Literacy in India and Kerala

State	1991			2001			2011		
	Total	ST	Literacy Gap	Total	ST	Literacy Gap	Total	ST	Literacy Gap
Kerala	89.80	57.20	32.60	90.90	64.40	26.50	94.00	75.80	18.20
India	52.20	29.60	22.60	64.80	47.10	17.70	73.00	59.00	14.00

Source: Census of India.

Table 4: Enrolment of ST Students at different levels in Various schools (2010-11)

Level	Govt. Schools	Aided Schools	Unaided Schools	Total
LP School	8651	9527	240(1.30)	18418
UP School	9385	13486	242(1.05)	23013
High School	6130	5767	536(4.31)	12433
Higher Secondary	18581	5959	278(1.12)	24818

Note: Figures in brackets are percentage to total

Source: DPI, Kerala

The information on the enrolment of the ST students in various schools management-wise shows that unaided schools are inaccessible to the ST students. This is a matter of great concern in Kerala where the public sector activism in the education sector is fading. The marginalized communities like the tribals cannot find a chance in the private sector dominated education sector which is fast appearing in the state. Hence, the closure of government and aided sector educational institutions on whatever reasons, the impact of such a decision will be badly affected on the educational aspirations of the tribal communities.

As a continuum of Table 4, we have made an effort to understand the share ST students in various schools, management-wise. Of the total students in Government Schools, about 3.28 per cent are tribal students. In the case of private aided schools, the tribal students constitute 1.28 percentages of total schools students. In the case of tribal enrolment in unaided schools, it is a pity to note that only 0.36 per cent of the total students in such schools hail from the tribal group.

Table 5: Share of ST Students in Schools under Different Managements

	Government	Aided	Unaided
2004-05	2.3	1.0	0.3
2007-08	2.7	1.1	0.3
2009-10	3.1	1.3	0.3
2010-11	3.3	1.3	0.3

Source: Ibid

Table 6: Drop Out Rates of ST Students- 2010-11

	Class I-IV			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
India	37.2	33.9	35.6	54.7	55.4	55.0	70.6	71.3	70.9
Kerala	--	--	--	9.1	8.5	8.8	31.2	27.1	29.1

Source: Statistics of School Education 2010-11

A perusal of the drop-out rate of ST students as given in the table points towards an alarming issue. It is true that the drop-out ratio is low in Kerala, compared to the All India level. Even in Kerala, the drop-out ratio is the highest in the High School level. As mentioned in several studies in the paper, the opportunity cost of schooling is very high among the tribal population. Hence, by the time they attain the age of 12 and above, they go for labour than to school. Sufficient economic support is the only way to retain the tribal students in schools after a particular stage.

Employment of Tribal folks as Teachers in various Schools

In Kerala, one of the most sought after employment opportunity is in the educational institutions. It is in this context, information have been collected to understand the representation of tribal folks in various schools. The data given in the table clearly shows that only in government schools, the tribals are adequately represented. They are conspicuously absent in Unaided schools and private aided schools. In the CBSE and ICSE schools, their representation is abysmally low. All these are indications of the marginalization of the tribal community in one of the vital sector of the Kerala economy. Despite the constitutional and other measures in existence, the plight of the tribal communities is pathetic even in a society like Kerala where we always speak about inclusive society.

Table 7: Number of Teachers in Various Schools in Kerala (2010-11)

Schools	Total	SC	ST
Kendriya Vidyalaya	1277	107	22(1.92)
Jawahar Novodaya	330	33	1(0.30)
CBSE	21801	246	0(0.00)
ICSE	6271	37	3(0.05)
Government	52405	5063	617(11.77)
Private Aided	101965	355	51(0.05)
Unaided	13692	179	1(0.00)

Note: Figures in brackets are Percentage to Total

Source: DPI, Kerala

Tribal Education in Wayanad—The Study Area

The history of education in Wayanad starts with the arrival of the settlers from the plain lands. Till the settlers come, the tribesfolk had not heard about any formal education system. During the British period, when Wayanad was under the Malabar district of the former Madras State, a few educational institutions run by private individuals and Christian Missionary organizations existed. The large influx of settlers during the first half of the 20th century transformed the socio-economic and cultural scenario of the district. All the ecclesiastical sections of the Christian community started schools in the district. Therefore, formal education began to spread in different parts of Wayanad.

The first school in Wayanad, the precursor of the present Upper Primary School, Mananthavady was established in the year 1869. By 1900, there were six schools in the region. Besides Christian missionaries, some influential communities of Wayanad such as the Goudas also started schools. The Malabar District Board also started schools during the late 1940s and early 1950s. After the formation of the present State of Kerala, 26 schools were begun in 1957 in several remote areas of Wayanad. The government has ever since then shown keen interest in the educational progress of this area, which became a separate district in the 1980s. Until independence, education had remained the privilege of the elite group of the area. After independence, universal primary education became the declared objective of the State. Class education has turned into mass education, with special emphasis on the education of the backward group. In the process, the literacy rate among the tribes of Wayanad has also improved substantially; although it still has to go a long way to reach the lengths reached by the other sections of the population in the district.

Tribal settlements do not have adequate educational facilities. There are only 0.39 schools per 1,000 population (Lakshmanan, 1995). In Kerala, there is a school for an average population of

2,387; in Wayanad, the corresponding number is 2,591. Further, while the State has a school for an average area of 3.2 sq.km, in Wayanad there is a school for only 8.07 sq.km. The average number of students per school in Wayanad is 532 whereas in Kerala, it is around 481. As transport facilities in the district are unsatisfactory, the children find it extremely difficult to reach out to schools (Lakshmanan, 1995).

In all the Five-Year Plans, educational development of tribes received priority. It is therefore necessary to examine why they still remain educationally backward. One of the major reasons must be the peculiar nature of their habitations. Majority of the Scheduled Tribes lives in remote areas far away from educational institutions. Another reason is the inhospitable social and economic conditions of the tribal settlements (Government of Kerala, 1996-.97). As many as three-fifths of the Scheduled Tribe households in the district were below the poverty line according to a survey conducted by the Rural Development Department (Government of Kerala) in 1992. Another factor that hinders the development of education among tribal community is parental lethargy. Again two-thirds of the adult population of the tribesfolk is, in general, illiterate (Government of Kerala, DPEP Draft Project Report, 1994). They neither give importance for the education of their children; nor do they insist on the regular attendance in classes by the children who happen to be enrolled. Most of the tribal pupils being first generation learners, their home environment is not congenial for education. Their dwellings lack facilities for study - no study room, no furniture, not even proper food. The position of tribal literacy in the district in comparison with the State and all-India level is attempted in Table 8.

Table 8: Status of Tribal Literacy in the study area vis-à-vis Kerala and India

Region	Total	Male	Female	Gender Gap in Literacy
Wayanad	58.2	66.0	50.6	15.3
Kerala	64.4	70.8	58.1	12.7
India	47.1	59.2	34.8	24.4

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Field level Experiences

It is in this context that we have carried out a study in the Wayanad District of Kerala. As mentioned elsewhere, the analysis is mostly carried on an inter-tribal framework so that a proper policy outline can be thought of.

Source of Income

The majority of tribal households have annual income of less than Rs.6,000. Of them, nearly 20 per cent is extremely poor, having an annual income of less than 2,000. There are only a few (3.2

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%) households with more than Rs.11,000 as annual income to be considered above the poverty line. About 60 per cent of the income of the tribal households accrues from wage labour. Agriculture contributes 22 per cent and salaries only 8 per cent.

Table 9: Sources of income of tribal households

Source	Adiyan	Kattu nayakan	Kurichian	Kuruman	Paniyan	Total
Agriculture	20.2	15.2	29.3	25.6	20.4	22.4
Wage labour	72.7	73.9	33.5	54.8	66.5	60.4
Salary	0.0	0.0	29.6	6.8	4.5	8.1
Other income	7.1	10.9	7.6	12.8	8.6	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey data

Pattern of Expenditure of tribals

An enquiry in to the pattern of tribal’s expenditure reveals that about two-thirds of the expenditure of the tribal households is incurred for food. Educational expenditure is on the average less than six per cent. Kurichians have distinctly different expenditure patterns; they spend a lower percentage on food and a high percentage on education, than other tribal communities do.

Table 10: Expenditure pattern of tribal households (%)

Items	Adiyan	Kattu nayakan	Kurichian	Kuruman	Paniyan	Total
Food	69.3	68.2	56.0	64.0	65.6	64.6
Clothing	8.6	10.5	10.1	10.2	12.6	10.6
Education	4.2	3.8	10.2	6.3	3.4	5.5
Medicine	6.4	8.0	9.7	7.4	7.9	7.5
Others	11.5	9.5	14.0	12.1	10.5	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey data

Literacy Status of Tribal Households

In the context of the present study, we have elaborately probed in to the literacy status of tribal households. It is found that most of the heads of households in the sample are illiterate. The range of illiteracy is from three-fourths in the case of Kattunayakans and Paniyans to less than two-fifths in the case of Kurichians.

Table 11: Literacy status of tribal head of households

Tribal community	Illiterate	Literate	Total
Adiyan	62.5	37.5	100.0
Kattunayakan	75.0	25.0	100.0
Kurichian	36.8	63.2	100.0
Kuruman	47.9	52.1	100.0
Paniyan	76.0	24.0	100.0
Total	62.8	37.2	100.0

Source: Survey data

As a result of the low educational status of the heads of households, and several other inhibiting factors such as poverty, inaccessibility to schools, and poor performance at school, the literacy of the tribesfolk in the sample households is also found to be low. Only 54 per cent of the members in the surveyed households are found literate. Illiteracy is found to be above 50 per cent among Kattunayakan, Paniyan and Adiyans communities. More than two-thirds of the literate populations in the sample, have only primary, or less than primary schooling. About 30 per cent have secondary education. The proportion of tribesfolk who have gone beyond the school is extremely low, only two per cent. Inter-community differences in educational levels among the tribesfolk in the sample are also found to be large.

Table 12: Literacy status of tribal household members

Tribe	Illiterate			Literate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Adiyans	19.7	31.3	51.1	32.0	17.0	49.0
Kattunayakan	24.4	31.5	55.9	22.0	22.0	44.1
Kurichian	5.6	13.3	18.9	40.0	41.1	81.1
Kuruman	21.9	24.5	46.4	30.6	23.0	53.6
Paniyan	22.8	30.1	52.9	27.3	19.8	47.1
Total	19.6	26.7	46.3	30.1	23.8	53.7

Source: Survey data

Awareness of educational incentives

Attempts by the Government of India to improve the educational status of tribes dates back to early 1940s. A special provision was made for the first time in the Central Budget in 1944 for providing scholarship for students of backward communities including Scheduled Tribes. Despite the genuine efforts made by various agencies to promote their education, the Scheduled Tribes continue to remain educationally backward. The past few decades have seen a plethora of schemes for development of the tribesfolk and tribal education. Schemes from the pre-primary education to the higher education stage are envisaged for their upliftment.

A probe into the awareness of the tribals about these schemes revealed that most of them are aware of a few schemes viz., lump sum grant, monthly stipend, hostel facilities, incentive grant to parents and students and kindergarten. However, a sizeable section is unaware of several other schemes in operation. In general, they seem to know of schemes available in their villages or in the villages nearby, but remain ignorant of schemes implemented in far off places. Only about one-fourth of the respondents know about vocational education and training and mobile employment exchange facilities. A large proportion of the respondents from the communities of Paniyans, Adiyans, and Kattunayakans are unaware of most of the educational development schemes. Kurichians and Kurumans have a higher level of awareness about most of the educational schemes.

Utilization of educational incentives

An enquiry was also made to know the utilization of educational promotion schemes meant for tribal population. Most of the educational schemes are yet to be utilized by the sample households. The important schemes made use by all the tribal groups are lump sum grants, monthly stipends, and incentive grants to parents and students. The schemes like special award for brilliant students, facilities for better education, Bharat Darshan and studies outside the state and vocational education and training programme were seldom utilized by them.

Adequacy of Educational Assistance

In a community where the opportunity cost of education is very high, the retention of tribal children in schools largely depends on the amount of assistance provided through schools. Understanding this fact, during the survey the opinion of tribal heads on the adequacy of education assistance through various schemes were collected and presented in the Table. Table 11 is a clear indication of the fact that almost all the heads of sample households felt the amount provided under the government schemes for the education of tribal children are grossly inadequate. In this respect, inter-community differences are found to be marginal.

Table 13: Adequacy of Educational Assistance

Tribal community	Adequate		Inadequate	
	No.	%	No.	%
Adiyan	4	12.5	28	87.5
Kattunayakan	0	0.0	32	100.0
Kurichian	2	5.3	36	94.7
Kuruman	4	8.3	44	91.7
Paniyan	8	8.0	92	92.0
Total	18	7.2	232	92.8

Source: Survey data

Drop out from schools

Drop out is a major issue among the tribal children. It is a clear indication of failure of the governmental provisions for the education of these communities. More than one-fifth of the tribal children in the school going age group are school drop-outs. Dropouts are higher among Adiyan, kattunayakan and Paniyan children. Most of the dropouts have been from the primary stage. Only 28 per cent of the dropped out children did so from the secondary stage. It is true that no single reason can be attributed to their dropout. In this background, the reasons as reported by the households are given in the table.

Table 14: Reasons for dropouts

Sl.No.	Reasons	Percentage
1	Economic reasons	38.0
2	Non-accessibility of schools	9.2

3	Disinclination towards education	26.8
4	Disabilities	14.3
5	Social reasons	3.7
6	Baby sitting	3.0
7	Others	5.0
	Total	100.0

Source: Survey data

The prime reason reported for dropout is economic backwardness. The other reasons are all manifestation of this primary condition of deprivation. More than one-fourth of the households reported apathy towards education as a major factor, apathy on the part of the parents and laziness on the part of children. As the tribesfolk live mostly in colonies, non-enrolment or non-attendance by one child will lead to non-enrolment or non-attendance by the other. The tribal children are found to be victims of a host diseases viz., tuberculosis, polio, viral fever and sickle cell anemia. Physical inaccessibility to schools is also reported to be an inhibiting factor. In some areas, a child has to walk 5 Km to reach a school and 16 Km to reach a college. The walk to school is often through dense forests. Withdrawal of female children for baby sitting rampant elsewhere in India was not cited prominently in the sample area. However, withdrawal for taking up paid work, particularly of boys is not uncommon. However, the option is the children's own. They are fond of quality dress, footwear, modern food and the gadgets of civilization.

Attitudes towards formal education

An enquiry was also made to understand the attitude of tribal households towards formal education, especially female education. It is interesting to note that majority of the households' surveyed indicated positive attitude towards education. Regarding the female education, the same trend is visible. They wanted their female children be employed as nurses, teachers and clerks in government departments. Hence, it is clear that the tribal communities have favourable attitude towards educating their wards and employed in government departments.

Conclusion

Education of tribal folks has become a major instrument of equalization and national integration. Since independence concerted efforts have been made by the government to improve the educational level of tribals through different incentives and special educational programmes. As a result of these initiatives, considerable progress has been achieved. But, it is a sad thing to note that the literacy rate of tribals is lagging even behind the Scheduled Castes. In a totally literate State like Kerala also the tribal literacy is on the lowest edge. Intra-state and inter-regional variation in literacy is still a great pain on the neck. In the context of Kerala, tribal and fishermen communities are

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treated as outlier communities. In the specific background of the present study, it can safely be concluded that the incentives provided by the government is inadequate in instilling in them the need for education, resulting in large dropouts and even non-enrolment. The awareness about the schemes for their development is found to be low and hence its utilization is also on the lower side. Most of the important schemes are found to be unattended by these communities. Hence, the study calls for urgent attention on the part of the government to bring the tribal community into the mainstream through visionary policies. The following suggestions have emerged from the study to make their educational development schemes more purposeful and productive.

- (i) Organizing awareness programs, improving the level of awareness are in need of urgent basis so that the maximum utilization of various government educational development schemes among tribals will be possible.
- (ii) The educational backwardness of tribals can only be improved if the state improves their economic condition.
- (iii) As the opportunity cost of education among the tribal students are found to be very high, sufficient attention should be given to this aspect while fixing the amount of educational incentives to these marginalized communities.
- (iv) The lump sum grants given to the marginalized communities like SC and ST are seemed to be lower than the scholarships given to communities coming under the Minority groups, considering the inflation rate. So, the current lump sum grant for STs should be replaced by scholarships similar to that of Minorities.
- (v) The intra-regional and inter-regional disparity in literacy standards can be solved only through region specific policies.
- (vi) A large number of tribal parents have no formal education. It calls for the urgent need for parental counseling.
- (vii) Finally, the mainstream communities themselves should feel that it is their duty to bring up the tribal communities out of their slumber in an era of inclusive growth.

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