

# **Problem Statement and Prospects of Tribal Girls' Education A Study of Madhya Pradesh**

JAYANTA KUMAR BEHERA\*

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## **Abstract**

*“Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela)*  
*The development of a nation depends upon its ability to create skilled human resource through the promotion of quality education among its citizens. It is with this objective that the educational programmes had been initiated to promote education in unserved habitation envisaging special interventions for children belonging to these tribal areas. But, not much success could be achieved, due to some major problems. However, the government has continued its efforts and diverts more grants for the uplift of the tribals' education in various tribal areas. The present paper shows that inspite of the persistent efforts, the tribal communities lag behind the general population in education. It must be admitted that tribal girls' education still has low achievement levels and falls way behind the expected levels. The present paper aims to investigate the actual condition of the tribal girls' education in the district and the different obstacles in the path of the girls' education. The paper also tries to explore the measures taken by the government to improve the present situation and attitudes of the family members towards their girls' education in tribal areas of Dindori district, Madhya Pradesh. The inputs and interaction from the tribal girls, parents, and teachers of the schools in the study areas are brought out in this description. Tribal education is still a matter of great concern in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, there is a need to pay more attention to tribal education in general and girls' education in particular, as only this can motivate them to better their future life.*

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\*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Anuppur, Madhya Pradesh 484 887, India.

**INTRODUCTION**

Education imparts knowledge. The knowledge of self identity and the human environment will infuse a sense of confidence, courage, vision and ability among the weaker sections of the society to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, and avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them (Pradhan, 2011). Education is considered the basic need for human development as it can enhance the capability of an individual to improve one's quality of life. In the pre-independent India, the British government had no direct programme for the education of tribals in general and girl children in particular. The dawn of independence ushered in a new era in the field of women's education in general, and tribal women, in particular, in the country. With the adoption of the Constitution, the promotion of education of Scheduled Tribes (STs) has become a special responsibility of the central as well as of the state governments. The Indian Constitution assigns a special status to the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Traditionally referred to as Adivasis, banvasis, tribes, or tribals, realising that the STs are one of the most deprived and marginalised groups with respect to education, a host of programmes and measures were initiated ever since Independence. Elementary education is a priority area in the tribal sub-plans from the Fifth Five Year Plan. Education of the

ST children is considered important, not only because of the constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for the total development of tribal communities.

As a result, achieving universalisation of elementary education has gained considerable attention from policymakers and implementers. Education has become a fundamental right, free and compulsory for children aged between 6–14 years, mandated by the 86th constitutional amendment, the Right to Education Act 2009 and Article 21A, which has become operational from 1 April 2010. It puts the onus of sending children to school on parents rather than the state. Apart from this, the governments have proclaimed that “the education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice, but also it accelerates social transformation”. Accordingly, there has been a phenomenal expansion of our educational system in terms of institutional facilities and other infrastructure for the tribal women. Under Article 46 of the Constitution, the government is committed to promote, with special care, the educational as well as economic interest of the weaker sections of the people in general and of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in particular (Pattajoshi, 2010, pp. 53–56). Various government programmes have led to progress, although the country has not achieved 100 per cent literacy. The levels of literacy are high among the upper

strata of the society, but illiteracy remains a serious issue for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Castes and Muslim minority groups. In short, meaningful access to education varies widely by geographical location, caste, class, gender and poverty (R. Govinda and M. Bandyopadhyay 2008).

The girls from the ST communities face serious development neglect, particularly evident in the status of primary education across India among different tribal groups. Today, with the enforcement of the right to education universal primary education is a national agenda. For the scheduled tribe population in India, the literacy rate increased from 8.53 per cent in 1961 to 58.96 per cent in 2011 for STs, while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.30 per cent in 1961 to 72.99 per cent in 2011. Literacy rate increased by 11.86 percentage points from 2001 to 2011 for STs and 8.15 percentage points for total population during the same period. Literacy rate has however, all along been lower both for male and female STs as compared to SCs and the total population. Male-female gap in literacy rate decreased from 24.41 percentage points in 2001 to 19.18 percentage points in 2011 for STs and for the total population; it declined from 21.59 percentage points in 2001 to 16.25 percentage points in 2011. Among states, Mizoram (91.5 per cent) and Lakshadweep (91.7 per cent) have the highest literacy

rate for STs, while the lowest literacy rate was observed in Andhra Pradesh (49.2 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh (50.6 per cent). Accordingly, the tribal female literacy rate also varies across states and Union territories such as from 37.3 per cent (lowest) in Rajasthan to 89.5 per cent (highest) in Mizoram (Pradhan, 2011). Except Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manipur, Meghalaya, Daman and Diu, Goa, Assam and Kerala, all other states and UTs have the women literacy rate below the national level of 64.64 per cent (Registrar General of India, Census, 2011). The drop-out rates for tribal girls are higher than those for boys in tribal population. The drop-out rate for tribals at the secondary level is as high as 87 per cent and for the girls it is almost 90 per cent. Consequently, there is a negligible per cent (0.06 per cent) of tribal women in institutions of higher education. However, various factors are responsible for the slow progress of the educational development of tribal women.

Lack of meaningful access to education is a major concern in Madhya Pradesh, which has generally been regarded as an educationally 'backward' state. The state has witnessed considerable expansion of educational facilities and unprecedented increase in enrolment of students over the last few decades. The present paper makes an attempt to analyse the problems in the field of tribal girls' education and suggests

measures for the development of education among the tribals in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh in India. On the basis of an empirical study conducted in the tribal areas of Dindori district, some of the observations are presented. Education is an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. The policies have to focus on inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies. Education also prevails in illiterate societies, where it is imparted orally and by mass behaviour. A member of the primitive society learns to earn one's livelihood, to do good work, to obey the spiritual beings and also superstitions, etc., from the elders of the society and is bound by its laws and regulations. This is their education. Hence, education can play the role of a "catalyst" in bringing sea change in the social, political, and economic fields. One of the important reasons for the failure of development activities in the society by various developmental agendas is the prevalence of acute illiteracy and ignorance, combined with superstitions among the rural masses (Malyadri, 1990, pp. 3–7).

### **REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES**

Before the development of survey tools, seek out the existing educational service statistics to avoid duplicating efforts or collecting data unnecessarily. A thorough literature review can tell us what is already known and suggest areas that need further exploration. Jha (1987) did an

evaluation study on tribal women's education which included all the staff of campus—principal, faculty, hostel superintendent, ex-students and present students of Tribal Research Institute, Bhopal, with the intention to evaluate the role played by the campus in the education of tribal women. He found the following major obstacles responsible for the slow growth rate of tribal women's education. It has no building even after six years of establishment. Also, there was no proper facility for practical training for different subjects, nor proper attention given to physical education, sports, cultural activities and hygiene. Ethiraj (1993) studied rural parents' opinion on girls' education to find out whether there exists any significant difference between the sub samples of rural parents in respect of their opinion towards girls' education. The study revealed that there was significant difference between fathers and mothers. Men had a more favourable attitude. There was a significant difference between literate and illiterate parents. Sharma (1994) studied the educational attitude of tribal students towards education in comparison to non tribals. The major findings were the following—there exists a significant difference in the attitude of tribal and non tribal students. Caste and religious factors made a significant difference in the attitude of students hailing from different categories.

Sujatha (1994) undertook a micro level study to find out the underlying

causes of absenteeism, stagnation and waste among the Yanadi tribe in Andhra Pradesh. She found that absenteeism was more among Yanadi girls in both mixed villages and tribal colonies whereas the difference between girls and boys in tribal colonies was negligible. Mitra and Singh (2008) studied trends in literacy rates and schooling among the Scheduled Tribe women in India. The sample of tribal women in India revealed that the high status of women among the tribal groups in the north-eastern states has important effects on the literacy rates, enrolment ratios and dropout rates of girls in that region. High poverty rates pose significant obstacles in attaining literacy and education among tribal women in India. However, large differences in literacy rates in various states in India show that social and cultural norms, proximity to the mainstream Hindu culture, and the role of women are also important determinants in achieving literacy among tribal women.

### **PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY**

In India, many studies have revealed the educational development of tribal girls measured by quantitative indicators like enrolment, literacy rate and educational facilities. While literacy has been recognised as an important tool of empowerment and also to bring about socio-economic changes in any society, the tribal society has been greatly disadvantaged and the tribal girls are enormously handicapped. Though the

governments have taken several steps for the development of tribal education projects and schemes, much remains to be done. The progress achieved in this field is far from satisfactory. The welfare programmes have not been effective due to inadequacies in the administrative machinery, lack of sensitive, trained management, lack of general preparedness for large investments, deficiency in accounting systems, procedural delays and lack of proper monitoring and evaluation on the one hand. On the other hand, there are different issues like poverty, health and sanitation, weak resource base, low socio-economic status, parents' illiteracy, lack of access to information and facilities provided by various governments, lack of motivation and their inadequate participation in institutions which are mainly responsible for depriving tribal girls from quality education. They are not able to participate in the process of development, as they are not aware of most of the programmes, policies, and its benefits in their standard of living and their overall upliftment in the society. This is mainly due to the high incidence of illiteracy and very low level of education and understanding among the tribal people.

The constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education to all children has not yet been fulfilled. Educational experts admit that this failure is mainly due to the slow progress of education among girls, SCs and STs. Moreover,

the tribals have no faith in formal education. The low educational status of tribal women is reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and higher dropouts in the school. It is also true that the fruits of development fail to reach the weaker sections of our society despite our planned efforts. Therefore, it is essential to educate tribals in general and tribal girls in particular with special government and non government initiatives.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was undertaken to understand the present status, vulnerabilities, threats and gaps in the fulfillment of universal primary education for the children of tribals in Madhya Pradesh, India. The study was initiated with the following objectives.

1. To understand the current status and delivery of education for tribal girl children
2. To study the attitude of the parents towards their daughters' education
3. To identify the gaps and challenges which currently exist in the school of tribal areas
4. To examine the major steps taken by the government to eradicate barriers to tribal education

The rationale behind the choice of the district is that the tribals of Dindori district have the lowest female literacy, greater gender disparity and dismal retention with high dropout rate.

The parameters taken for the study include the overall tribal situation in the district, number of schools available, schools with percentage of ST enrolment, out of school children among overall community as well as ST community, gross enrolment and net enrolment ratio at the primary and upper primary level, dropout rate, retention rate and transition rate, pupil-teacher ratio and number of male and female teachers of all government schools including the tribal schools. Accordingly, the ambitions of this paper are principally analytically descriptive. The present paper discusses the problems relating to the objective of this study, methodological framework adopted and the rationale thereof. The paper also deals with the overall tribal scenario in the state and looks at the gender dimension of education of tribal children followed by the analysis of the elementary education of tribal girl child in the selected district. The concluding section ends up with summarising the analytical stakes. Therefore, in the paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the present status of educational facilities availed by tribal women and women in Dindori district and the family's attitude towards their girls' education as well as government initiatives for their development.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Field surveys have been undertaken in 44 remote tribal villages and forest areas in Baiga, Gond, Koal, Pradhan,

Dhulia, Bhoomia and Agaria tribes in Karanjia and Bajag blocks of Dindori district. These tribes have been living there for centuries, being far away from the mainstream in their relatively isolated, inaccessible, less fertile and less agriculturally productive regions of forests, hills and mountains. As far as development is concerned, these tribal groups are as marginalised and continue to be techno-economically backward. The district of Dindori has a special distinction of accommodating about one-sixth of the total tribal population of the State. Tribals only constitute 64.30 per cent of the district and thus, it stands fourth among all 50 districts of the State with highest proportion of tribal concentration. Dindori district is located in the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh and touches Chhattisgarh (Official website of Dindori district, 1998).

The survey sample is the set of respondents who are selected from a larger population through the multi-stage random sampling method for the purpose of participating in the survey. They are studied to gain information about the population as a whole. The sampling plans address the general ability, certainty and precision of results by defining who is included in the survey, how many people are needed and how respondents are selected. The study is mainly based on primary data collected from selected respondents in the affected district of Dindori. The researcher has conducted his study in two blocks of the district, that is

in Karanjia and Bajag. Under these blocks, 24 Gram Panchayats (GPs) were selected. It was decided that 300 sample households would be interviewed, covering all the 44 villages and 32 schools from the 24 GPs and equal number of samples taken from each village and school. One hundred and twenty eight samples taken from 32 schools with an average of 4 respondents (including teachers and students) per school means each school gives 4 respondents to be selected at random. For the remaining 172 samples, the researcher interviewed parents, panchayat leaders, and women self help groups (SHGs). Data were collected from the selected respondents through multi-stage random sampling procedure. The selected sample respondents were contacted at their respective residence and the required primary information was collected.

The database of the study comprises primary data collected through interview schedule of structured and unstructured questions and focus group discussions related to educational development and interface. The researcher visited the local government offices and met field functionaries at the block level of the Education and Tribal Welfare departments, perused their monitoring tools, information and field data available in their offices. During the collection of the data, some important aspects like enrolment, attendance and dropout, delivery systems, infrastructural availability, social policy and State services

were also focused. Information with respect to occupation of the parents/guardians, distance of the residence from the school, socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries was also obtained.

Intensive secondary data was collected for this study from various sources and a major part of the analysis of the study is based on the secondary data collected. For secondary data, official perspectives and feedback on tribal education, the researcher primarily engaged with the government department of school education, tribal welfare department, report on selected statistics, published by the statistic division and Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi. Secondary data collection sources included government offices at the state and district level, Tribal Welfare Department at the state and district level through the Integrated Tribal Development Agencies. Several field trips were undertaken for collection of data during different seasons. Information was gathered through oral interviews of the local tribal people. This data then can be analysed quantitatively or qualitatively depending on the objectives and design of the study. Survey can be designed specifically to gather information about knowledge related topics. The study primarily looked at the interventions and delivery of education services in government schools located in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh. The

two main parameters on which the study was based are stated below.

- Access for which the primary indicators were enrolment and retention, school dropout rates and out-of-school children, attitudes of parents towards their children's education (especially for girls' education)
- Quality for which the primary indicators were physical infrastructure of schools and hostels, security and safety of students, teacher capacities and training, quality of education material, curriculum and innovations

### **TRIBAL SCENARIO OF THE STATE**

According to the Census 2011, there are 31,22,061 total households in the state. The total tribal population in Madhya Pradesh is 1,53,16,784 with males constituting 77,19,404 and females 75,97,380, that is 21.1 per cent of the total population of state and 14.7 per cent of India's total tribal population. There were 46 recognised tribal communities and three of them notified as particularly vulnerable tribal groups (Bhil, Gond and Kol) in the State (Tribal Health Bulletin, January, 2014). Literacy rate among tribals is 50.6 per cent and among males and females, 59.6 per cent and 41.5 per cent respectively. According to the 2011 Census of India, the decadal growth rate of the ST population during 2001–2011 is 25.2 per cent which is higher than the state's decadal growth rate (20.3



per cent). Bhil is the most populous tribe with a total population of 46,18,068, constituting 37.7 per cent of the total ST population. Gond is the second largest tribe, with a population of 43,57,918 constituting 35.6 per cent. The next four populous tribes are Kol, Korku, Sahariya and Baiga respectively. These six tribes constitute 92.2 per cent of the total ST population of the State. Pardhan, Saur Bharia, and Bhumia have a population ranging from 1,05,692 to 1,52,472; together, they form 3.2 per cent. Four tribes, namely, Majhi, Khairwar, Mawasi and Panika having population in the range of 47,806 to 81,335 account for another 2.2 per cent of the ST population; remaining thirty three tribes (out of total of 46 tribes) along with the generic tribes constitute the residual 2.5 per cent of total ST population. Tribes having population below 1,000 are 12 in number. Dindori district had a population of 7,04,525. Males

constituted 49.95 per cent of the population and females 50.05 per cent (Census of India, 2011).

Table 1 shows that out of the total population of the district, about 95.37 per cent live in rural areas and 4.63 per cent live in urban areas, obviously depicting that Dindori district has rural category population in an almost overwhelming majority, far in excess to the state and national proportions (73.5 per cent and 72.99 per cent respectively). Annual population growth for the district is 1.35 per cent per annum, which is less than the average growth rate in Madhya Pradesh (2.43 per cent) and India (2.14 per cent) as per Census, 2001. The above table reveals that 86 per cent of the total population is living in the Dindori block. 100 per cent of the total population is living in Amarpur, Samanapur, Bajag, Karanjia and Mehendawani blocks of Dindori district. 91.59 per cent of population is living in the Shahpura block.

**Table 1**  
**Block wise Rural and Urban Population of Dindori district**

Block	Total Population	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	% of Rural Population to Total Population
Dindori	1,24,430	62,557	61,873	1,07,008	17,422	86
Amarpur	60,704	30,308	30,396	60,704	–	100
Samanapur	69,891	35,221	34,670	69,891	–	100
Bajag	71,611	36,224	35,387	71,611	–	100
Karanjia	75,001	37,676	37,325	75,001	–	100
Shahpura	1,12,297	56,331	55,966	1,02,849	9,448	91.59
Mehendawani	66,796	33,399	33,397	66,796	–	100
Dindori District	5,80,730	2,91,716	2,89,014	5,53,860	26,870	95.37

Sources: District Perspective Plan Year 2007–08 to 2011–12 and Census, 2001

**Table 2**  
**Block-wise Scheduled Tribe Population of Dindori district**

Block	Total Population (Ref. Tabl 1)	Total ST Population	Male (in Rural areas)	Female (in Rural areas)	Total in Rural areas	Urban	% of ST Population to Total Population
Dindori	1,24,430	68,105	31,733	32,123	63,856	4,249	54.73
Amarpur	60,704	40,680	20,126	20,554	40,680	–	67.01
Samanapur	69,891	44,686	22,309	22,377	44,686	–	63.94
Bajag	71,611	50,070	27,709	22,361	50,070	–	69.91
Karanjia	75,001	51,182	23,396	27,786	51,182	–	68.24
Shahpura	1,12,297	67,447	32,596	33,303	65,899	1,548	60.06
Mehendawani	66,796	51,277	25,503	25,774	51,277	–	76.77
Dindori District	5,80,730	3,73,447	1,83,372	1,84,278	3,67,650	5,797	64.30

Sources: District Perspective Plan Year 2007–08 to 2011–12

Table 2 shows that out of total population 64.30 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes are living in the district of Dindori. The district has seven blocks; covered by large number of tribes and most of the tribes belong to the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups. If we compare the rural tribal population with the urban tribal population, we can find that it is highest in rural areas then urban areas. The above table reveals that 98.44 per cent (3,67,650/3,73,447×100) of the total tribal population are living in the rural and forest areas. The district has a large tribal population (64.30 per cent), 29.87 per cent of the population belongs to other categories, while SC (5.83 per cent) population is very less (Census, 2001). It was found that the female sex ratio is slightly higher than the male ratio. The above table reveals that 54.73 per cent of STs live in the Dindori block. About

67.01 per cent live in Amarpur block, 63.94 per cent live in the Samanapur block, 69.91 per cent of tribals live in the block of Bajag; particularly this block is dominated by Baiga tribes (PVTGs). 68.24 per cent of tribals are in the Karanjia block 60.06 per cent live in the Shahpura block and 76.77 per cent of tribals live in the block of Mehendawani block.

### **Status of Tribal Girls' Education**

The plan for tribal education should be prepared keeping the fact in mind that existing schemes could be dovetailed to maximise the outcome. Existing critical gaps of infrastructure and qualified manpower should be practically envisaged in a manner that the formulated planning exercise may encompass all the vital areas responsible for bringing the tribal education at par with the national level. Education plays a particularly important role as a foundation for

girls' development towards adult life and in enabling girls and women to secure other rights. Girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. Education helps men and women claim their rights and realise their potential in the economic, political and social arenas. It is also the single most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Everybody has the right to education, which has been recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. As a minimum, States must ensure that basic education is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable for all. The right to education for tribal girls is one of the most critical of all rights. The right to free and compulsory primary education, without discrimination and of good quality, has been reaffirmed in all major international human rights conventions. Gender inequality in education is extreme. The convention on the rights of the child and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women establishes it as a basic human right. In order to achieve the Universal Primary Education, it is very essential to adopt some major components that include 'Early Childhood Care Education', Universalisation of Elementary Education, reduction in school dropout rate, and promoting Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. In order to improve the literacy rate in the State, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been implemented in all the districts with three objectives, that is, universal

enrollment, retention and quality of education. SSA is Government of India's flagship programme for the achievement of Universal Elementary Education in a time-bound manner. Similarly, for reduction of the gender gap and greater participation of girls in education, two special schemes, the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level launched in the state in 2006 and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya launched in the state in August, 2004 have been implemented in educationally backward blocks of the State. However, despite improvements over the last decade, the state still has a large number of out-of-school children of school age who remain excluded from educational institutions for various reasons. The persisting problems of tribals in Madhya Pradesh can be resolved through women's education.

The education system should make an individual better suited to the needs of the ever-changing dynamic world. The changes in the educational system should also reduce the social gaps by enabling proper recognition to whatever extent one is able to pursue or acquire a skill. The tribal communities have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. Especially the tribal women away from the main stream of national life, but they are not kept away from the impact of socio-economic changes affecting the society in general. In this process of change, the tribal woman are forced

**Table 3**  
**Trends in Tribal Literacy Rate in 1981–2011 (Dindori district)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Overall population Literacy Rate (%)</b>	<b>Overall ST literacy rate (%)</b>	<b>No. of ST Boys literacy rate (%)</b>	<b>No. of ST Girls literacy rate (%)</b>
1981	5,28,865 (19.9%)	38,316 (14%)	27,631 (16.18%)	10,685 (11.51%)
1991	5,11,849 (32.6%)	60,632 (21.57%)	45,118 (26.42%)	15,513 (16.71%)
2001	5,80,730 (54.2%)	2,09,563 (53.7%)	1,36,068 (69.4%)	73,495 (37.8%)
2011	7,04,524 (63.9%)	2,25,174 (59.96%)	1,32,143 (71.37%)	93,031 (48.86%)

*Note: Number outside the bracket denotes population, percentage inside the bracket is literacy rate.*

*Source: District Census Handbook Dindori, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 and Official Website of Dindori Dist, M.P.*

to adhere to certain norms which may even take away her freedom, her control over the traditional productive system, her house, family and children and even her own life. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages, and in order to empower them, there is a great need of providing opportunities, so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation. It is often alleged that the level of aspiration of these women as a group is low and they are quite satisfied with what they are and with what they have. It is most often not true only for the women folk but for everyone who feels helpless and frustrated. However, in order to develop and raise their level of aspiration, adequate educational opportunities are to be provided so that they get motivated to participate in the mainstream education and also ultimately learn to initiate their own programmes of development.

Dindori has an average literacy rate of 63.9 per cent, lower than the national average of 72.99 per cent. Male literacy is 75.47 per cent, female literacy is 52.41 per cent and, 16.02 per cent of the population is under 6 years of age in Dindori (District Census Handbook Dindori, 2011). Recognising the Census 2011, the overall literacy rate of tribals was 59.96 per cent whereas in 2001, it was 53.7 per cent; in 1991, it was 21.57 per cent and in 1981, it was 14 per cent. This is significantly lower than that of the general population and is even lower than the literacy rate of the SCs. In the Census of 2011, the literacy rate of tribal boys was 71.37 per cent; which was much lower than the State average literacy rate. The girl's literacy rate of 48.86 per cent was also the lowest of all social groups in terms of literacy. In Census of 2001, the literacy rate of tribal boys was 69.4 per cent and girls was 37.8 per cent. In the Census of 1991, the literacy rate of tribal boys was 26.42 per cent and girls

was 16.71 per cent. In the Census of 1981, the literacy rate of tribal boys was 16.18 per cent and girls was 11.51 per cent. It is seen that the literacy rate of the Scheduled Caste population of the district is 70.84 per cent. It is the highest at 80.71 per cent in Samnapur CD block and the lowest at 67 per cent in Shahpura CD block. The gap in male-female literacy rate is the highest (26.33 per cent) in Bajang CD block. The overall male literacy rate of the district (rural) works out to 83.11 per cent and it is 57.96 per cent for females (District Census Handbook Dindori, 2011). Education is considered to be at the heart of all development; it is evident that the education scenario among Scheduled Tribes is in a very bad shape. It is imperative to know about the gender dimension of the child population scenario, both for the general population and for the ST community in the selected district. The above record also shows that the trend in literacy rate during 1981 to 2011 is increasing simultaneously. If we compare, then we find that during the period of 1981 to 1998, it was undivided Mandla District that goes under Jabalpur subdivision) the literacy rate is 19.9 per cent. The literacy rate in 1991, is 32.6 per cent. Literacy rate in 2001, is 54.2 per cent and in 2011, is 63.9 per cent.

The Census reveals that the total male tribal literacy rate is 58.4 per cent and the female tribal literacy rate is 33.7 per cent in the district which is very low in comparison to

the male ratio. The male literacy rate among the major tribes of the district indicates that Gond has the highest percentage of literates (47 per cent) followed by Agaria (40.5 per cent), Dhulia (39.7 per cent), Pradhan (35.4 per cent), Bhoomia (31.9 per cent), Koal (27.1 per cent) and Baiga (24.3 per cent). Gond has also registered the highest girl's literacy. Baiga has the lowest percentage of literate girls', preceded by Koal and Bhoomia. The Census data has cleared that girls' literacy ratio is low in comparison to the boys' literacy ratio. Among the Gond tribe, the literacy rate of girls' is 30.8 per cent. The literacy rate of the total tribal population among the Dhulia tribe. The literacy rate is 27.6 per cent. Among the Agaria female tribe it is 24.7 per cent, 19.9 per cent among the Pradhan tribe girls, and 18 per cent among the Bhoomia tribe girls. It has been found to be 14.3 per cent among the Koal girl tribes, and 11.1 per cent among the girls of Baiga tribes of Dindori district, which is very low in comparison to other girl tribes of the district (Census, 2001).

Among the tribal literates, 44.7 per cent are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The proportion of literates, who have attained education up to the primary and middle level constitute 28.7 per cent and 13.7 per cent respectively. Literates, who are educated up to secondary/higher secondary level, have a share of 11 per cent only. Graduates and above are 1.5 per cent

**Table 4**  
**Levels of Education among the Major Scheduled Tribes: Educational levels Attained by STs**

Names of STs	Literate without educational level	Below primary	Educational levels attained				
			Primary	Middle	Matric/ Secondary Higher Secondary/ Intermediate	Technical & Non-technical Diploma	Graduate and above
All STs	4.4	40.3	28.7	13.7	11	0.4	1.5
Gond	5.4	40.4	29.4	12.8	14.8	0.4	1.3
Agaria	2.6	34.6	27	17.7	10.3	0.6	2.6
Dhulia	3.7	40	27.5	16	11.1	0.4	1.4
Pradhan	2.7	35.7	30.8	15.4	13.3	0.5	1.6
Bhoomia	4.6	43.9	30.6	11.4	8.3	0.3	0.9
Koal	5.1	46.2	28.6	11.2	7.8	0.3	0.8
Baiga	9.4	47.3	27.4	9.8	5.5	0.1	0.4

Source: Census of India 2011

while number of technical degree and technical diploma holders constitute less than half per cent (0.4 per cent). Among numerically larger groups, Gond has the highest proportion of matriculates followed by Baiga and Kolha.

The data on the education levels attained by all STs shows that the dropout rate is high after primary level as the percentage of middle level literates is half that of the primary level. It declines sharply from the higher secondary level onwards, as the percentage of students after matriculation drops down to nearly one-third in higher secondary or intermediate level. Out of total 21.4 lakh tribal children in the age group 5–14 years, only 9.8 lakh attend schools constituting 45.8 per cent. Alarming, as many as 11.6 lakh children in the corresponding age

group do not go to school. Among the major tribes, Gond and Bhoomia have more than half of the total children in the corresponding age group attending schools; this proportion is above 40 per cent among Agaria, Dhulia, and Koal tribes. The survey data indicates that 45.8 per cent of the total tribal children in the age 5–14 years are school going children. Among the Gond tribe, the school going children constituted 56 per cent. It was 41.6 per cent for Agaria, 46.5 per cent for Dhulia, 31.6 per cent for Pradhan, 52.5 per cent for Bhoomia, 44.8 per cent for Kolha and 36.8 per cent for Baiga (Census of India 2011). Educational levels among the major tribes of the study areas are very low in comparison to the other category of people. One of the major factors affecting schooling access is poverty.

The children of the poor tend to be relegated to the margins of the system, and are eventually pushed out altogether. They do not go to school as they work to contribute to the maintenance of the family income and cannot avail the opportunity of learning. A closer analysis shows that economic impoverishment itself is deeply embedded in a discriminatory social structure. Tribal children contribute to the income and engaged in household activities for the family which inhibits school attendance.

### **Enrolment of Tribal girls**

The enrolment at the primary and upper primary levels of education over time has improved significantly but still more tribal girls are out of school as compared to tribal boys. The enrolment ratio at the upper primary level is much lower than at the primary level. A large number of tribal girls continue to dropout from the system before completion of an education cycle, which severely affects the efficiency of the elementary education

system. The tribal girls take more years to become primary graduates than ideally required. The unfinished task in terms of unenrolled and out of school children is a challenging one, rigorous efforts are needed to bring and retain them under the umbrella of education system.

According to Selected Educational Statistics, 2006–07, the total number of elementary schools in Madhya Pradesh was 1,35,440 in the same year (2006) and the number of students enrolled in these schools was 1,18,12,968 at the primary level and around 45,05,506 at the upper primary level. The research data reveals that 57 per cent girls of SC community in the age group 4–6 years enrolled in pre-primary school by the social group and 43 per cent of girls are not attending the school. 78 per cent girls of ST community in the age group of 4 to 6 years enrolled in pre-primary school by the social group and 22 per cent of children are not attending the school. 74 per cent girls of the OBC community in

**Table 5**  
**Children Enrolled in Different Types of Pre-primary School**

<i>Different types of pre-primary school</i>	<b>Category Wise</b>			
	<b>SC (%)</b>	<b>ST (%)</b>	<b>OBC (%)</b>	<b>General (%)</b>
Anganwadi/Balwadi	25	36	24	15
NGO	27	24	22	28
Private	18	08	28	46
Attached to Govt. School	30	34	26	11
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Household survey data, 2015

the age group of 4 to 6 years enrolled in pre-primary school by the social group and 36 per cent of girl are not attending the school. 59 per cent girls of general community in the age group of 4 to 6 years enrolled in pre-primary school by the social group and 41 per cent of children are not attending the school (Educational Statistics, 2006–07).

Different category of children (SC, ST, OBC and General) enrolled in different types of pre-primary school such as: *anganwadi/balwadi*, NGO, private and attached to the government schools in the study areas. The survey data reveals that 25 per cent of the tribal children in the SC community enrolled in the *anganwadi/balwadi*, 27 per cent of SC girls children are engaged in the NGO for getting their primary pre-education, 18 per cent of SC category girls children are studying in the private schools and 30 per cent of SC girls are attached to the government school. 36 per cent of the tribal children in the ST community enrolled in the *anganwadi/balwadi*, 24 per cent of tribal girls are engaged in the NGO for getting their primary pre-education, 8 per cent of tribal girls are studying in the private schools and 34 per cent of tribals girls are attached to the government school. About 24 per cent of the girls in the OBC community enrolled in the *anganwadi/balwadi*, 22 per cent of the OBC girls are engaged in the NGO for getting their primary pre-education, 28 per cent of girls are

studying in the private schools and 26 per cent of OBC girls are attached to the government school. 15 per cent of the girls in the general community are enrolled in the *anganwadi/balwadi*, 28 per cent of general category girls are engaged in the NGO for getting their primary pre-education, 46 per cent of general category girls are studying in the private schools and 11 per cent of general category girls are attached to the government schools. When we compare it in gender wise, it has cleared that out of 300 respondents only 231 (77 per cent) of tribal girls are attached to the *anganwadi/balwadi*. 141 (47 per cent) of the girls are engaged in NGO school. 138 (46 per cent) of girl's are attached to the private school, which are far away from the tribal belt. Through help of bus connectivity, they have to go to school and 141 (47 per cent) of tribal girls are attached to the government school, which are established nearby village. The most relevant data was collected from the survey that is most of the tribals girls are going to the school by private bus, which covers 5 km to 10 km This is a barrier in the way of tribal girl's education. They spent most of their valuable time going to school. Language is another barrier in the way of tribals girls' education. Teachers appointed in the school are not fluent in the tribal language. Syllabii and curricula of the school are beyond their knowledge, it is not an easy task for them to understand it. Another



important barrier is that the schools are far away from their residence.

### **Exploring Absenteeism**

The central characteristic of school education is the sustained and active participation of children in teaching-learning processes organised according to a pre-determined curriculum. Learning outcomes are to be viewed largely as the product of such organised learning experiences. To what extent is this taking place in the schools under study? This has been examined partly in terms of their attendance patterns. As part of the investigation, every child's recorded presence in the school register for the previous month was collected. Second, the actual presence of the child on the day of the visit was also taken to find out the average presence of children in the class and the school. Third, for each child, the responsible teacher was asked to indicate how regular the child has been; specifically, how many days did the child attend the school on average in a month. The analysis of data highlights the very high levels of overall absenteeism among students in all the localities. The rates of attendance are particularly low in Dindori district with many children missing a week or more of schooling each month. The most intriguing is that a high proportion of children are absent in Education Guarantee Scheme schools which are supposed to be established and managed by the local communities.

With such high incidence of student absenteeism, the official claim of a very small proportion of 'out-of-school' children sounds quite hollow. The data indicates that large numbers of tribal children fail to complete the elementary cycle of school and less than half reach the end of the elementary cycle. Many drop out, many others fail to progress from one grade to another, and others do not learn even the minimum expected competencies. The priority for policy is therefore, to move from increasing enrolment to achieving greater equity and quality.

The collected data confirm that many tribal children are unable to attend their school regularly. According to the school register, absenteeism is quite high in government schools. For instance, around 33.8 per cent of tribal children attended school regularly in Dindori. Interestingly, teachers do not seem to perceive the problem to be as serious as it is. A considerable number of tribal children were absent on the day of the visit to school. Between 25 per cent and 42 per cent were absent during head counts when schools were visited, suggesting that the data gathered from registers underestimated absence. The uniform structure and transaction of curriculum has put tribal children at a disadvantage. In respect to pedagogy, it has been found that the rigid systems of formal schooling, which emphasise discipline, routine norms, teacher-centred instruction,

etc., have made the children wary of school. This goes against the culture of free interaction and absence of force as embedded in the tribal ethos and culture prevalent at home. This has led to a sharp division between home and school leading to the lack of interest among the tribal children towards school, and research findings have shown this as a major factor behind non-enrolment. Another area is that the staying of tribal children in the relative's house, engagement in domestic work, inherent fear of tribal children towards the teacher, and their inability to establish a communication link with the teacher reflected in low attendance and high dropout rates. These are the important causes due to which they are not able to get the primary and upper primary education. This could be tackled to a great extent by using the regional language as the medium of instruction.

### **Problems related to Education**

This review clearly underlines that in spite of constitutional guarantees and persistent efforts, tribal communities continue to lag behind the general population in education. The reasons for this can be categorised as external, internal, socio-economic and psychological. The external constraints are related to problems and difficulties at levels of policy planning, implementation, and administration. One of the major constraints of tribal education at the level of planning is the adoption

of a dual system of administration. The tribal welfare department deals with tribal life and culture and administers development work at the local level, including education. But the tribal welfare department lacks expertise in educational planning and administration, in general and academic supervision and monitoring, in particular. On the other hand, the education department is the sole authority for planning educational development at the state level. It formulates implementation guidelines and instructions regarding curriculum, textbooks, teacher recruitment, transfer policies, and so on. In this, the department tends to formulate uniform policies for the entire state. The school calendar is a case in point, where vacations and holidays cater to the needs of the formal school set-up in a non-tribal context, with little consideration to the local context and tribals, festivals. This lack of sensitivity to their problems and failure in understanding tribal social reality, coupled with faulty selection and appointment of teachers in tribal areas, have resulted in poor performance and teacher absenteeism in tribal schools. Under the system of dual administration, absence of coordination and complementarity as well as inadequate scope for reciprocal use of respective expertise and experiences between the two departments has invariably stunted educational development among tribals. Internal constraints refer

to problems associated with the school system, relevance of content, curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, academic supervision, monitoring, and teacher-related problems, basically suitable teachers. Schools in tribal areas just function with bare minimum facilities.

The third set of problems relates to social, economic, and cultural background of tribals and psychological problems of first-generation learners. In a broad sense, these factors can be outlined as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding of the value of formal education, conflict and gap between the home and school, etc. Studies on educational deprivation of tribals girls have inevitably linked it to their poor economic condition and poverty. The main occupation of tribals is agriculture, practised where productivity remains very low. Consequently, the girl child plays an important role, contributing directly or indirectly to family income by participating in the family occupation and household works like cattle grazing and fuel and fodder collection, and taking care of younger brother and sister, etc.

Even though elementary education is deemed free, and additional incentives are given to tribal children, in practice, it is not free due to several reasons. First, the incentive schemes do not have full coverage, and thus, have limited value at the community

level. Second, many of the benefits do not reach the beneficiaries. Third, even though incentives like slates and uniforms are given, they are of poor quality and do not reach in time, thus nullifying the entire purpose. It should be noted that the impoverished economic status of tribals makes even the small amount of private expenditure involved in procuring writing material, clothing, etc., a serious burden on the family. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising if education is not given priority. In an economy dominated by struggle for survival, options are limited. Since education does not provide any visible and immediate benefit and tribals do not see beyond their present state, the participation of tribal children in education also becomes limited. Another reason for low participation is the opportunity cost involved, as the majority of non-enrolled children are required to work in households or family occupations. Even if the economic contribution of children is indirect, they certainly facilitate the participation of parents in the economic activity. In a way, it can be said that these problems seem to be adversely affecting the education of tribal children (Sujatha, 1994).

Language provides social, psychological and emotional expression of an individual in a society. But in the absence of knowledge on the tribal dialect, both students and teachers face the problem of communication and teaching-learning. Tribals speak

different languages and hence the problem of communication comes in the way of tribal education. It is found that tribal students are often ridiculed, humiliated and reprimanded for speaking in their own language, and are punished for failing to talk in their standard language or continuously lapsing back in the mother tongue (Nambissan, 1994, p. 2752). It is the regional and national language that reduces tribals to minorities in their own home. Educating children through the regional and national language is not wrong but the students should be familiar with their own language first to develop enthusiasm in education which in turn brings linguistic and social skills that prepares them for formal education in the future.

With a natural disposition towards the local dialect, tribal children are generally unfamiliar with the state language. As a child's first exposure to education, there is debate around the language used for instruction and communication. Tribal children have limited contact with the state language, and tend to speak in their own local dialect. Government schools, where the tribal girls are largely educated, use the state language for teaching and communication, which is most often not familiar to a tribal child at the primary and upper primary levels. They are thus, unable to fully comprehend classroom teaching and activities, read in the state language or understand the texts

properly. Gradually introducing the state language can boost enrolment, enhance linguistic capital as well as improve the children's potential in mainstream education systems. The use of the tribal language in the initial years helps development of a sense of comfort for the tribal girl. It must be the first language and taught as a means of acquiring knowledge of tribal culture, ethnicity, literature and the arts. The child is required to be exposed to the state language steadily, which is imperative for integration into mainstream schools and society (National Population Education, 1991-1996).

The survey data reveals that 35 per cent of tribal girls never enrolled in the school due to monolingual and bilingual at school. 51 per cent of girls enrolled in the school due to their own dialects and language at school. 14 per cent of tribal girls dropped out of the school due to bilingual language in the school. The data shows that the language used for teaching in the schools is also a prime factor for the enrolment of tribal children. A major reason for this is that in the study areas, the medium of instruction is the regional language. Most tribal children do not understand the textbooks, which are generally in the regional language. The appointment of non-tribal teachers in tribal children's schools is another problem. The teachers do not know the language the children speak and children do not understand the teacher's language. It is evident that

the number of bilingual schools are more in the State. The data indicates that there is a need for more number of monolingual schools in the State, particularly in these tribal dominated districts to enhance the enrolment of tribal children. The fact seems to be that the tribal children can relate to and internalise the education better in their own language and can be attracted to schools. It may be required to open more schools imparting education in the languages of the tribal children. The teaching materials and books should be in the local tribal languages and thus, the linguistic imposition may prove out to be detrimental to the realisation of the goal of universalisation of elementary education, reduction in school dropout rate, and promoting Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Considering the language issue faced by the tribal children in the tribal areas and with the aim to boost enrolment, the State Tribal Advisory Committee in the year 2006 decided to adopt ten tribal languages as the mother tongue based multilingual medium of instruction in the tribal districts.

It is observed that 65 per cent of teachers agree that distance is one of the obstacles that compels their parents to stop the education of their girls, whereas only 18 per cent of families provide all facilities to overcome the distance factor. It is because they have a strong background and determination for their girls' education. So here, the government should take initiatives to

establish more schools within a 2 km distance to the village. About 76 per cent of the respondents say that the present location and infrastructure is one of the serious obstacles, which affect the education of tribal girls, and this is the cause to change daughter's school by tribal families. About 24 per cent of the respondents still disagree with the statement that it is because their schools have proper location and facilities. After a critical analysis, it was found that 83 per cent of the teachers have revealed that the family's poor economic condition is one of the major problems in the path of their girls' education, whereas 17 per cent of the respondents do not think finance to be a problem for tribal families. Here, it may be derived that more than 77 per cent families have no idea about free opportunity of girls' education. On the other side, 62 per cent of the respondents realise that parents' illiteracy has a bad impact on their girls' education and future, and 38 per cent of the respondents deny this and state that it is because literacy programmes are not organised within the district properly.

### **Infrastructure Facilities in Educational Institutions**

Infrastructure of tribal education refers to the quality of school provision, suitable teachers, relevance of content and curriculum, medium of instruction, etc. Large numbers of schools in tribal areas run without better infrastructural

facilities. The condition of the School's building is very bad. Schools lack basic infrastructural facilities. The schools basically have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls and non-pastoral floors. (Awais, Alam and Asif, 2009). In Ashram schools which are residential in nature, there is no space for the children to sleep. As a consequence, the classrooms turn into a dormitory and vice versa. In addition to poor maintenance of the school and classrooms, inadequate teaching-learning materials such as blackboards and chalks cause problems for the teachers and students in teaching and understanding the content. Shortage of sufficient number of teachers in the school is another negative aspect of tribal education. Appointment of teachers is required in the school. In reality, most of the primary schools in the tribal areas are single teacher-managed, whose presence in the school is more of an exception than a rule (Hasnain, 2004). The teacher feels isolated and unhappy and a disgruntled teacher is, certainly, not the best communicator of modern ideas and messages to tribal children. As regards the appointment of teachers, more and more appointments should be made from among the tribal population so that the teachers become accepted and they deal with the tribal students by using a more permissive and motivational approach. The existing teachers should be provided with adequate facilities and they should be properly oriented. The number

of teachers and the student-teacher ratio over time has improved significantly, but still, there are some schools that do not have sufficient number of teachers and instructional rooms. The number of female teachers over time improved significantly, but still their number is much lesser than their male counterparts. About 45 per cent of respondents agree on this point that insufficient number of women teachers within the school is one of the problems of girls' education. The remaining 55 per cent are till now not aware about the importance of female teachers in the educational system. Whereas 45-55 per cent respondents cited that girls' school and the language teacher are immensely necessary for tribal girls' education, the rest responded against it. It should be a must for the teachers to learn the tribal language and there can also be attempts at writing textbooks in tribal languages. Non-availability of trained, experienced and competent teachers has serious impacts on the learning level of children and teachers' absenteeism seems to be an additional problem. Teachers' absenteeism greatly hampers punctuality. The goal of universal elementary education cannot be achieved, without attaining the status of universal primary enrolment.

A few schools still do not have infrastructural facilities. However, majority of the schools lack even the most basic facilities such as drinking water and toilets; electricity

is available in only one out of five schools. The first impression one gets in the field is that schools have the necessary physical facilities. In fact, school buildings can be found in almost all villages. But good quality education requires several other facilities in the school. There are improvements taking place with respect to infrastructure, but this seems to be only in bigger habitations and in schools close to the main roads. The data suggests that most schools are not adequately equipped with the necessary facilities. The situation is most alarming in the schools located in the tribal areas. Beyond the lack of physical infrastructure, many of these schools are single teacher and single classroom schools practising multigrade teaching; some schools do not even have a blackboard. A library is a rare facility, available only in a few schools. More efforts are required to adequately create, utilise and make available alternative facilities in all unserved habitations and areas where out-of-school children concentrate. This clearly points out towards the need to establish a set of priorities in equipping schools with infrastructure and also the need to give urgent attention to ensuring the provision of basic facilities in tribal areas it is generally assumed that the availability of school is not a problem. With the enormous expansion that has been witnessed in recent years, research revealed that while expansion in facilities can be seen in these areas, it is quite uneven

across the areas and does not fully guarantee adequate access even to eight years of elementary schooling.

### **Attitude of Parents towards their Children's Education**

The illiteracy of tribal parents does not permit them to understand the long term values of education. As education does not yield them any immediate economic return, they prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income and strengthens the family economy. Further, a few parents, who have become aware of the values of education, fail to accord education to their children as they cannot afford the finances for it. The attitude of the parents to their children's education is both negative and positive. The negative attitude of the parents prevents their children from getting education, that is, less support in school work, low level of motivation and the result is poor self-esteem of children. On the other hand, the positive attitude of parents is beneficial to their children as in many cases, it reflects in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement scores in reading and writing.

The survey data revealed that 42 per cent of the respondents agreed that parents are realising the importance of education in their life and they are fully aware about their children's education. At the same

time, about 58 per cent respondents are realising that parents are yet to give importance to their girls' education properly. Amongst the families with positive attitudes, nearly 35 per cent are providing full support to their daughter whereas 75 per cent are still not clear about the role of education in the development of their children's future. About 15 per cent respondents gave the opinion that parents were playing their role as a teacher properly at home, solving many problems pertaining to their girls' education and facilitate their girls for their future education. However, more than 85 per cent of the respondents feel that parents are not aware of the necessity and influence of their role at home for the proper education of their girls. About 18 per cent of the parents have an understanding that they should take part in the decision making activities organised by the schools. It is noticed that there is a lack of awareness with 82 per cent of the parents about the utility of education for their life and living, which was observed by examining the teachers' perception. About 21 per cent of the parents are of the opinion that there is a need to participate for the scholarly improvement of the school environment that will enhance the system of education, in general and their girls' school, in particular. That means they have the idea about the participation influence on schools. At the same time, 79 per cent of the families still have no regular

participation to develop the school environment, which was revealed by the teachers. This shows that they need more awareness programmes on highlighting the benefits of participation. The education provided to tribal girls, is not so qualitative due to the lack of skilled teachers to transact the curriculum. So, the teacher and some changes in the curriculum are needed. It is revealed that 18 per cent of the families are curious for education of their daughters and provided all the requirements like tutor, cycle, etc., and 82 per cent of the parents are still required to develop their understanding about the requirements for their girls for proper education which was the perception of the teachers.

### **Gender Dimension of Education of Tribal Children**

There is enough evidence that investment in the tribal girl child results in making a better, healthier, happier, and more creative family, community and society (Nayar, 2011, 20). When family, schools, neighborhood and communities take this as the agenda for action, it is likely to result in a great contribution for the present and future generations of the nation. To make tribal girls' care and protection a reality for every tribal girl in every place, requires not only our resources and policies, but also our voices and actions. But more than that, love, respect and support for tribal girls must be the



reality of all our homes, schools and communities.

It should be noted that professional hierarchies and models of social mobility are surprisingly similar in all societies. As education and participation in society expand, the effect of social background weakens slightly (Dronkers, 1993), but this weakening can be different for students in different fields of study in education (Ayalon and Yogeve, 2005). The persistence of differences and inequality takes distinct forms, including both the social and economic values of schooling and also the contents and the format of each kind of education (Bills, 2004). Although the access of tribal girls to education has improved, patterns of access are gendered. More than half of the parents of tribal girls who never attended school were of the opinion that they do not need to send their girls to school. The reality of tribal girls' exclusion is further complicated by caste, religion, ethnicity and age. These percentages are less than the national level and thus, these are worrisome figures. Girls from poor, SC, ST and Muslim communities tend to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts, and a larger proportion of tribal girls than boys from these groups are denied access to schooling.

There are substantial social, regional and gender gaps in literacy. Gender gap refers to the percentage share of tribal girls to the total enrolment both at the primary and

upper primary levels of education. The ST female literacy has increased from a very low level of 11.51 per cent in 1981 to 38.48 per cent in 2001, which is significantly lower than the SC and general female literacy. Though the ST male literacy has increased from 16.18 per cent in 1981 to 55.41 per cent in 2001, there is still a big gap between that and the general male literacy. The following Census data shows the gender gap in literacy in selected districts of Madhya Pradesh in 2011. The Census data depicts that the gender literacy gap in the state is 25.8 per cent. In terms of gender, Dindori district clearly gives a different picture of male and female literacy rate to the overall children and overall literacy rate. This leaves scope for a lot of empirical curiosity. Among all other areas of the district, only the rural areas are showing a visible variation between males and females (males being 68.9 per cent, females being 36.6 per cent and overall 52.8 per cent). However, it is also to be noted that urban areas of the district have a male literacy rate as 60.6 per cent, female literacy rate as 70.8 per cent and overall literacy rate as 81 per cent. The Karanjia and Bajag blocks of the selected district reveal that the overall literacy rate is 56.3 per cent, female literacy rate is 40 per cent and male literacy rate is 72.5 per cent. The data also indicates that the gender parity among the ST children in Dindori district is 31.7 per cent. The data also reveals that the gender literacy gap in rural areas

is 32.2 per cent and 19.8 per cent in urban areas. It has also recorded that 32.5 per cent of gender literacy gap is found in Karanjia and Bajag Blocks of the District (Census of India, 2011).

Bajag and Karanjiya have fewer girls than boys enrolled—about 48 per cent, but girls make up 52 per cent of those enrolled in Dindori. Further, percentages of girls amongst those never enrolled in the three clusters are 57 per cent in Bajag, 47 per cent in Karanjia and 54 per cent in Dindori. These percentages are less than the national level; nevertheless, these are worrisome figures. Girls from poor, SC, ST and Muslim communities tend to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts, and a larger proportion of girls than boys from these groups are denied access to schooling.

### **Government Initiative**

A number of schemes and programmes have been initiated or implemented, such as schemes of incentives, financial assistance, establishment of ashram schools, establishment of hostels for boys and girls. For the promotion of education among tribals, the government provides scholarships, coaching and allied schemes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The government has also established schools in some tribal areas. The students belonging to Scheduled Tribes are getting various concessions such as free tuition, stipends, scholarships, free

supply of textbooks, stationery and other equipments. Pre-examination training centres are established in some places to help them to appear for competitive examinations. In many tribal areas, mid-day meals are also supplied to generate interest for education among tribal children. For the Scheduled Tribes and also Scheduled Castes, 20 per cent of seats are reserved in technical education and relaxation is made in respect of age limit and qualifying marks (Rao 1995). In addition to this, the government also gives aid to voluntary organisations involved in the promotion of education among tribals. There are some ashram schools situated in study areas which provide both basic education and vocational training. In fact, ashram schools are greatly beneficial, especially, for the girl child. These are essentially residential schools with free boarding and lodging available to the pupil. In such residential schools, besides study, there is training in various crafts such as weaving, smithy, carpentry, tailoring, etc. As most of the tribes are poor, offer of free boarding and lodging along with training in various crafts attracts most of the tribes. Ashram schools have contributed to increase in the the attendance, reduction in the number of dropouts and ultimately increase in the literacy rate. Vocational training in various allied activities, helps in making girls self sufficient and self reliant. Ashram schools, besides other things, offer

a good environment for study and produced good results, better than ordinary primary schools. Apart from this, various state governments have also taken various steps to meet the educational development of tribal women and the tribal girl child.

In the survey areas, it is observed that only 47 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that tribal families and girls are getting proper benefit from different govt., awareness programmes regarding education. Accordingly, they have changed their mind-set. The remaining 53 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that there is a need for more number of awareness programmes with proper advertisement so the benefits can reach their district. This indicates that the govt., should take initiatives for the proper implementation of the programme. About 25 per cent of the respondents say that the stakeholders that is, know the up-to-date knowledge regarding facilities available for women education. However, the remaining 75 per cent of the respondents say, that the govt., should the still take initiatives for the proper advertisement and implementation of the ongoing programmes. Only 43 per cent respondents agree that parents have an idea about free education of girls in India. Whereas 57 per cent of the respondents said that the tribal society, has no awareness regarding this. As a result, they are not able to take the educational benefits of

the govt. that is meant for them. About 18 per cent of the respondents agreed that the beneficiaries have the knowledge about different educational scholarships and fellowships meant for women for better research and education that are going on in India and in their district. It is clearly reflected that there is a lot of work needed by the concerned govt. for giving clarity to the tribal families and women about the different opportunities available in India, stated by 82 per cent of the teachers. So then, they can avail it. They may be interested for education but due to lack of knowledge of different facilities available for them, they may be not motivated for giving education to their girls. About 78 per cent of the teachers agreed that literacy programmes and different micro projects are not effective for tribal parents and girls organised by the government. On this point, it may be concluded that the programmes are running on paper only but it has no physical existence or output for which it is meant. There is a need to supplement this with many more meaningful, need-based activities for ensuring their participation in the field of education.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

It is now time to seriously tackle the problems of low literacy rate among tribal girls' in and resolve the menace through positive and effective means. Some of the recommendations in this regard can be attributed through the following points. Efforts in these

directions will be very helpful in organising the programme of tribal education as well as promoting economic and other aspects of tribal development. Similarly, a clear policy for language use in schools has to be developed. Research evidence suggests that significantly fewer students drop out of schools in which the language of tribal groups is used for instruction at the primary level. Development of primers in the tribal dialect involving content from the local context will go a long way in ensuring children's active participation in the learning process in school. While there is a general need for improvement in the physical facilities in all schools in remote tribal regions, change in perceptions and outlooks of teachers about tribal children is equally important. Teachers must be sensitised to the cultural and behavioural strengths of tribal children and motivated to do their best for them in schools. Incentives should be initiated to attract effective teachers to work in tribal schools and to retain them there. Only such motivated teachers are likely to generate interest among tribal children towards schools education by attempting to link the contents of the curriculum with the existing realities of tribal communities through the use of innovative technologies. No doubt, the government allocates a large amount of money to promote education in tribal areas; however, there are delays in the process of implementation and

in some cases corruption handicaps the programmes and objectives of universal education. Hence, attention should be given for the speedy execution of policies, strict implementation of existing anti-corruption laws and making tribal-specific laws to check corruption in the tribal areas.

### **CONCLUSION**

Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well-being. It is not only applicable for boys but also for tribal girls. In the context of tribal girls' education, the findings are not a balance between boys and girls, the attitude of tribal families should modify positively and the government should take different steps that ensure a tribal girl's success in mainstream schools. The current policy framework of the participating states gives due emphasis to the medium of instruction in government schools in tribal areas and meeting the needs of sound education of tribal children in terms of the posting of teachers, development of textbooks and curricula, training of teachers, etc. Therefore, the paper recommends wide provision of girls' schools and school related infrastructure in Dindori district to ensure the attendance of teachers, special administrative and managerial

arrangements. The scheduled tribal children have poor ability with regard to concept acquisition and comprehension. Large scale failure of tribal children in general and their girl children, in particular, has been due to the learning difficulties and poor intellectual abilities. The display of poor performance of tribal girl children is mainly due to economic deprivation, malnutrition and low parental education and lack of early childhood care and proper environment as well as the lack of infrastructural facilities

in the schools, poor motivation of teacher and lack of administrative responsibility. The disadvantage suffered by the tribal girl children is quite evident from the above analysis of this paper. A large number of tribal girl children still remain out-of-school. The estimates of enrolments and attendance give reasonably sound reasons to believe that stipulated targets may not be achieved in the near future and that the universalisation of tribal girls' education continues to remain a distant dream.

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