

# Challenging Issues of Tribal Higher Education in Kattiwada, Alirajpur (M.P.) India

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**Abstract** - The objective of the paper is to analyse the status of tribal higher education with gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates in Kattiwada, Alirajpur (M.P.). India is a home to a large variety of indigenous people. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. This constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country (Census of India, 2011). Education is one of the primary agents of transformation towards development. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. It is an activity, or a series of activities, or a process which may either improve the immediate living conditions or increase the potential for future living. Scheduled Tribes in India are generally considered to be 'Adivasis,' meaning indigenous people or original inhabitants of the country. The tribes have been confined to low status and are often physically and socially isolated instead of being absorbed in the mainstream Hindu population. Psychologically, the Scheduled Tribes often experience passive indifference that may take the form of exclusion from educational opportunities, social participation, and access to their own land. All tribal communities are not alike. They are products of different historical and social conditions. They belong to different racial stocks and religious backgrounds and speak different dialects. However, the mainstream Hindu population considers the general tribal population as primitive, technologically backward, and illiterate. Since the 16th century, the tribes have been perceived as sub-humans who live under primitive conditions. All the reasons are the route cause of the alienation of tribal's in higher education. By giving more emphasis on other activities in the tribal hamlet, they are ignoring the value of Higher education.

**Index Terms** - Higher education, tribal area, Adivasis, Kattiwada, Scheduled Tribes, tribal communities.

## INTRODUCTION

India is homeland to a number of tribal communities with diverse eco-cultural, socio-economic, and geographical backgrounds. According to the 2001 Census, Scheduled Tribes (notified by the Government of India under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution) constitute 8.14% of the total population of the country, numbering 84.51 million. In the state of Kerala, 1% of the total population is tribal population, comprising of 36 unique Scheduled Tribes (ST) whose livelihoods are also varied: hunting-gathering, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, contract labour, etc., are some of them. According to the 2001 Census, the literacy rate of the Scheduled Tribes of India is only 47.10%. Against the National literacy rate of 65.8%, this is appalling. Even in the State of Kerala with a high literacy rate at 90.92%, that of the Scheduled Tribes is far behind, at only 64.5%. Realizing that Scheduled Tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, a host of programmes and measures have been initiated ever since independence of the country. Education of ST children is important not just due to a Constitutional obligation to equality of its citizen or special entitlements to ST, but because it is a crucial input in the nation's strategy of total development of tribal communities. However, despite nation's efforts to ensure constitutional equality, dignity and development that they themselves wish for, the tribal people have lagged behind in education owing to external as well as internal constraints, socio-economic and cultural background of the tribals and

psychological problems of first generation learners etc.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of related literature is pre-requisite to actual planning of any scientific research. It allows the researcher to acquaint himself with current knowledge in the field or area in which he is going to conduct his research.

Description of Kattiwada area and its challenges

1 Geographic, socio-economic, cultural, political information

KDB is in the newly (17/05/08) formed Alirajpur District (carved out from Jhabua District) in Western M.P., bordering Gujarat in the West and surrounded by Alirajpur's development blocks of Bhabra, Jobat, Alirajpur and Sondwa. The southern part of the Western spurs of the Vindhya mountain-range passes through KDB. The whole block drains via Orsang towards Narmada River. The area is some 300 to 600m above sea-level.

KDB is known as Cherapunji of M.P. due to heavy rains during monsoon (the record is at 150", the average of the past 10 years at 70") and as Kashmir of M.P. due to its beautiful landscape.

Some 300km<sup>2</sup> are reserved forests, which are moderately dense with wildlife in a small number (leopard, bear - in bordering Gujarat is a bear sanctuary, hyena, fox, deer, monkeys, hare, peacock, kite, hawking etc.), minor forest produce (bamboo, mahua, tendu, kashew, chironji etc.) and rich (although dwindling in number) in medicinal plants (some 350 species). The land is deluded, hilly, the soil is low in depth as well as fertility, half of the total block is cultivable land.

97% of the population of KDB is tribal: Bhilala and Bhils (both ST) and subtribes Dhanuk and Nayka (both SC). KDB has the highest %age of tribals of all blocks in M.P. The forest has been the primary source of livelihood besides a single rain-fed crop (Kharif). Despite the richness in natural resources the socio-economic conditions of the tribals is continuous bad as they cannot generate a satisfying remuneration for their work. The Kharif crop barely yields enough food for the families so more than 50% of the tribals have to migrate during the lean season - mainly to neighbouring Gujarat (in some villages up to 100% of the workforce - partially including their children). Just

2% of the cultivable land is irrigated and under Rabri (winter-)crop and a very small area under summer crop. The area under Rabri has significantly increased in the villages where KCID is active. Remoteness has been one of the reasons for the area's backwardness.

Maize, Rice and Urad Dal are as staple food also the most grown items, although in the last years an increasingly number of farmers also grow vegetables, other dals and cash crops like peanuts, sesame, cumin, cotton etc. KICD has always been making efforts for not only economic but also nutrition improvements.

KDB is culturally rich and some of the tribal values and morals have been preserved. The Adivasi Panchayat has still strong roots. The five major festivals - Navai, Diwasa, Panga, Bhagoria and Divali - have more significance to crops, partnership and wish fulfillment than religion. They are all celebrated in their traditional, ritualistic ways. For the last seven to eight years the community has been forced from outside to increased idol worshipping. A lot of conversions and forceful reconversions has been happening during the last 150 years.

Mahua and Tadi are available in plenty at festive times and marriages making use and abuse of liquor equal among men, women and children. This is not only a customs issue but also a poverty one - food grain is neither available nor affordable for these in average seven members of a family throughout the year. So they drink the free and abundantly available Tadi, which keeps them sleepy and less hungry saving a meal a day. Poor families say they would need one additional quintal of food grains per season had they not Mahua and Tadi - winter and summer crops given for free by nature!

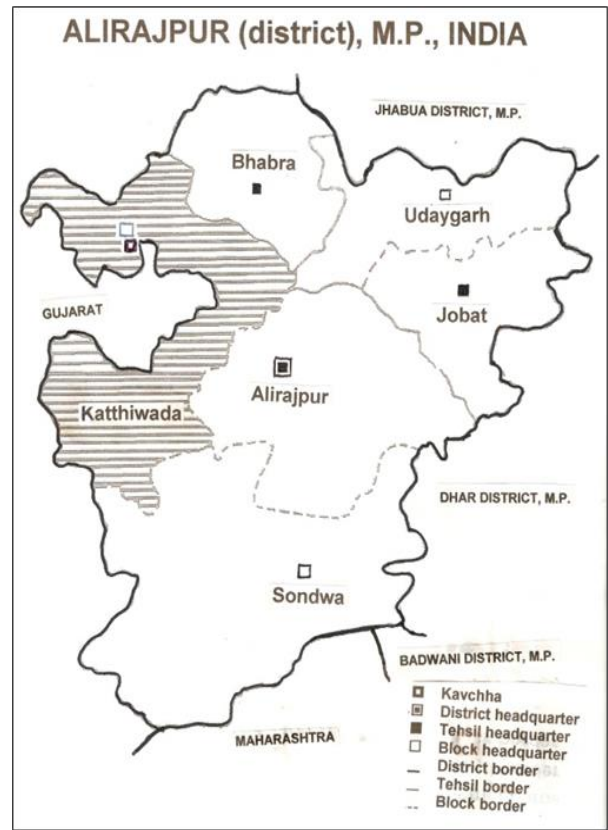
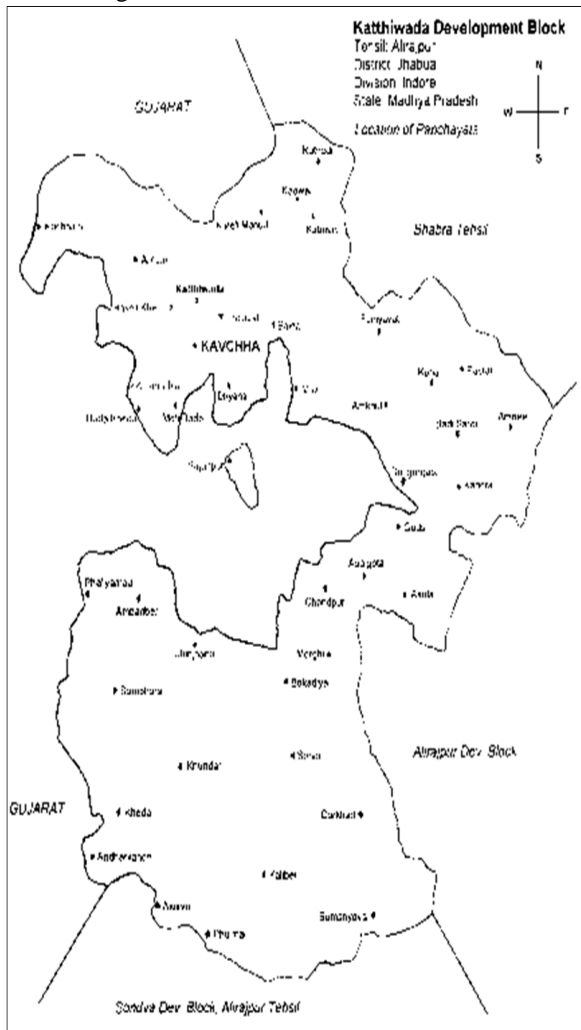
Politically people are kept (in addition to their own ignorance, illiteracy, disinterest etc.) unaware and misguided by one party since independence until 2002. Then worse came by another party, which poisoned their minds (especially of youth) and provoked them on comunal grounds. Although it is a 5th scheduled district and reserved for ST/SC but politicians, the influential, rich, higher class and traders control them from behind the curtain under whose shelter criminals, wood- and liquor mafia are also active. Corruption has been rampant and implementation of development programmes and schemes are to a large extent mere manipulation of statistics and happen to some extent on paper. Politicians and burocrats are very skillful in this game.

As people feel cheated by the government they cheat back as much as they can during project implementations. Gram Sabha was not known to the majority of people until recently and people do not trust formally elected Panchayats.

2 Demographic details:

2.1 126 villages (3 abandoned), 49 Panchayats, 110 km North-South distance (in the centre 1/3 of this distance belongs to Gujarat), 40 km East-West extension. Only bigger villages have houses concentrated along a main road, otherwise the houses are scattered, spread over 527 Faliyas (clusters), spread up to 7 km distance. There are 5 to 500 households per village.

2.2 Population: 110 000 (according to KICD's own survey for Five Year Perspective Plan, 2005). Out of total 34 237 families 10 173 are BPL. Some 70% of the farming families own less than one acre.



Education: Literacy:

23% total, 19% female - according to official numbers; de facto less than 8% are literate. Still there are many villages without a single literate adult. School enrolment Education Department statistics show 100%; some 50% of children attendance: children are really enrolled out of whom several attend school irregularly. No serious attempts are made to improve the situation. Drop out 0% reported, but very high. Especially girls drop out latest by 5th standard - causes: household duties, gender-insensitive teachers, no functioning latrines, start of menstruation. Boys drop-out because of wish to earn money before 8th, marriage, lack of interest or capacity etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the educational facilities available to the tribal students in higher education in Kattiwada, Alirajpur(M.P.)
2. To study the constraints in tribal higher education
3. To find out the causes of Drop-out among Tribal students in Kattiwada, Alirajpur(M.P.) for higher education .
4. To document the policies and programmes initiated by the Government to improve the Higher educational attainments of Tribal students.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is a positive relationship between the cultural factors and educational attainment among tribal students in Kattiwada, Alirajpur(M.P.).
2. There is an exclusionary disparity between the STs and non STs in terms of enrollment and attainment in higher education.

MAJOR CHALLENGES OF THE AREA

1. Low socio-economic status: - Tribals enjoy low socio-economic status. Miller (1988) has identified four major classes of variables such as cognitive variables, physical variables and motivational variables where disadvantaged learners show poor performance as compared with the advantaged groups.
2. Work related Migration 60-75% (depending on quality of monsoon) of the working population have to migrate for one to eight months during a

year. The latter ones only come back for the big festivals.

3. Child labour: mainly domestic - girls in household (mothers tend to leave their household duties completely on adolescent daughters), boys in agriculture. Many children migrate with their parents; when share cropping or on construction sites they also work with them - sometimes for free but also for their own earnings (a 4-year old girl was reported to have worked in a cotton field earning Rs 1 000.-- during the season).
4. Poverty 56% BPL (Census 2003); therefore community demands such interventions, which take care of their basic needs. KICD's experience: According to present living standards poverty is very high.
5. Child marriage very high; although it is also related to their low life expectancy; girls are in many cases elder to boys; run away marriages are also forced by girls.
6. Domestic violence: moderate; it increases during the Tadi season of 4 - 5 months; females are equally dominant and aggressive.
7. Drug abuse liquor- (Mahua, Tadi, IMFL) as well as tobacco- and gutka consumptions are very high. Abuse of harder drugs in the area is not known to KICD.
8. Health malnourishment, mono-diet, anemia, high IMR, low weight, very low level of attention and retention; poor health services are a major challenge - ½ of KDB is underserved and understaffed. The CHC had for the last 10 years only 1 doctor on 4 posts! ANMs and AWWs are not enough effective.
9. Migration 60 - 75% (in some villages up to 100%) of the labour force (14 - 40 age, sometimes also elders not being looked after) migrate mainly to Gujarat for 1 - 8 months. Many children and adolescents go with their families and friends, leaving schools in big numbers each year.
10. Working culture generally it is low, particularly in government departments and Panchayats. The presence of most departments is not felt. A bribe is expected for any work. If you don't give and you are without influence you have to wait - sometimes very long. KDB is seen as "Kala Pani" and being posted there quite often is a punishment. Always trying to save their energy,

- tribals take any shortcut they see - even if on long term it proves wrong.
11. Infrastructure Although recently a lot of improvements took place (NREGS, PM-Roads, BRGF even if badly implemented), but still very poor. Especially poor is electricity supply. Telephone is picking up because of mobiles. Broadband connection available but very unreliable and slow.
  12. Education is in real shambles; the way education is provided to the children in KDB can be seen as a crime against humankind. Half illiterate youth - having just passed 12th standard, bribing for the post, receiving 40 days of training - are set free to educate primary school children. The only thing what they teach them - unfortunately extremely successful - is to switch off their brains. Especially in more remote villages teachers are extremely irregular or not coming at all. Especially male teachers behave irresponsible and insensitive with girls at the beginning of their puberty, so many drop out latest by 5th standard. They also have a lot of non-school-related duties.
  13. Set-up of villages Except a few bigger villages with a continuous settling area most of them are spread in Faliyas (hamlets) with single standing houses. Usually inhabitants from one hamlet are all related to each other; contacts between the hamlets of one village are often scarce, sometimes hostile. Moving at night off the few existing roads is next to impossible also due to looting, the hilly areas and wild animals (bear, leopard) - especially during monsoon when the rivulets are overflowing - maybe for only few hours at once but given as main reason.
  14. Attitude of community is blaming, doubting, inactive, demanding support in cash, shying away from responsibility and participation; partially responsible for this attitude are also the methods used by as well as vested interests of implementers of development programmes during the last 60 years.
  15. Cultural appearance, typical individualistic character, genetic, socio-economic backwardness, superstitious; different priorities in life and working style compared to mainstream population. They live extremely in the "here and now" not thinking of future consequences.
  16. Tribal concepts of pleasure:- Tribals are giving more importance for their pleasure such as dance, music and other types of entertainments prevalent in the society.
  17. Existence of ethnic stereotypes: - Stereo typing is a natural and inevitable. It helps us to organize life. But such typing turns in to prejudice or stereotypes when based on little facts and it is used as a mechanism to establish the myth of racial or cultural superiority.
  18. Tribal concept of learning:- In most of the tribal cultures learning is an active pleasurable event mostly carried on among peers. But the existing system of education does not take in to account their learning style.
  19. Linguistic problems:-Tribal languages, except a very few, belong to Austro-Asiatic language family and are different from dominant non tribal languages of India which belong either to the Indo European or the Dravidian family. In most of the time tribals face acute problems in language.
  20. Problem of learning English: - Tribals need for English is great, they face problems in learning than their non-tribal counterparts. For tribals their typical use of regional languages interferes with English. For them English are 5th or 6th languages. There are no English teachers up to higher secondary level capable to form a grammatically correct sentence by themselves. The school buildings are too small and poorly equipped, mostly without electricity connections. Sanitary facilities are un-functional, which also turns especially girls away from going to school. Inactive AWWs are root of many problems. Still the education guarantee scheme is picking up. The number, especially of girls, going to middle and higher secondary schools is increasing.
  21. Problems in learning to read:-Tribals have long oral tradition. Their culture is oral. Their history, myths and traditions are orally handed down from generation to generation. Most of the language does not have scripts of their own; their oral tradition still continues to exist.
  22. Psychological problems: - Financial problems of the tribals always make the tribals in a very depressed condition. They have lots of wants and but the means to satisfying them is very less. It leads to many psychological issues

23. Academic and administrative problems: - Even though the number of programmes for the upliftment of tribal education is many, the percentage of people receiving these benefits is very less. Administrative authorities are always showing very neutral attitude towards the education of the tribals.
24. Indifferent attitude of tribal parents: - Tribal parents are mostly illiterate. They always show a very indifferent attitude towards the education of their children. They are interested in providing household responsibilities to their children a very early stage of their education. "The parents of these students do not have any relationship with the society outside and are unaware of the importance of education. All teachers are talented. Teaching such children is a herculean task".
25. Indifferent attitude of tribal teachers: Teachers do not take much effort to improve the educational level of the tribal students. Lack of communication, high level of absenteeism in the class, bad result in study, lack of attention in classroom by the tribals are some of the factors that has increased the indifferent attitude of the teachers towards the tribal students.
26. Indifferent attitude of tribal students: Students clearly said don't like someone forcing me to get up early in the morning. So, I was unhappy to go to school... Subjects like Malayalam and Science are good for me, but, English, Hindi and Mathematics are very tough. I could not follow English and Hindi classes. Whenever I commit mistakes, in front of others, teachers used to scold me, beat and pinch my ears. You ask others; almost 90% of the children have similar experiences. See, their beating caused swelling on my legs. Moreover, the staffs ridicule us by calling, adivasi Fed up with all these, my two friends and I decided to run away from the school. One day, we climbed on the compound wall and got on to the branch of a tree outside that was almost touching the compound wall, climbed down, and somehow or other managed to reach our settlement",

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