

Edited by Ghanshyam Shah  
and Joseph Bara

# SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EDUCATION IN INDIA

Scheduled Tribes, Denotified  
Tribes and Nomadic Tribes

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# Contents

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<i>List of illustrations</i>	vii
<i>List of contributors</i>	xi
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xiv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xvi
<b>1 Introduction: tribes in India and their education</b>	<b>1</b>
GHANSHYAM SHAH AND JOSEPH BARA	
<b>2 Tribal education in central India: conditions under colonialist and nationalist moves</b>	<b>32</b>
JOSEPH BARA AND ANUBHUTI AGNES BARA	
<b>3 Uneven growth and a hurdled path: education of the scheduled tribes in Chhattisgarh</b>	<b>56</b>
H. BECK	
<b>4 Strands of educational participation of scheduled tribes: the case of Jharkhand</b>	<b>71</b>
VIJAY BARAIK	
<b>5 Academic performance of the scheduled tribe students in West Bengal</b>	<b>85</b>
JOHN B. TIRKEY AND SUDASH LAMA	
<b>6 Under the shadow of prosperity: scheduled tribes in Gujarat</b>	<b>100</b>
J.C. PATEL	

  
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# Academic performance of the scheduled tribe students in West Bengal

John B. Tirkey and Sudash Lama

Scheduled tribes (STs) constitute 5.8 per cent of the total population of West Bengal. There are 38 notified STs in the state. Another two communities – Limbo and Tamang – were added to the list in 2003. According to the Census of India 2011, the literacy rate of the ST population is 57.92 per cent as against the 76 per cent general literacy rate of West Bengal. The urban population of the STs is only 8 per cent as against the 32 per cent urban population of the state. The ST is not homogenous in terms of language, culture, habitation and access to education and learning performance.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine similarities and differences in the socio-economic condition of ST and non-ST secondary and college students in urban and rural West Bengal. It is argued here that the students of urban areas are in an advantageous position compared to the rural students, which is reflected in their examination performance. Similarly, students studying in private schools and colleges belong to relatively better-off strata than the students of government institutions. With this purpose, we shall compare ST and non-ST urban and rural and government and private schools/colleges. It is an endeavour to analyse factors that contribute to the educational backwardness of the tribal population in the state in comparison to non-STs.

The STs in West Bengal inhabit two distinct geographical features: The first comprises the southern part inhabited by the major Santhal tribe, whose members live on agriculture and wage labour. The tribal-concentrated districts such as Midnipur (now Uttar Midnipur and Paschim Midnipur), Bankura and Birbhum remain neglected in terms of access to educational infrastructure and other developmental amenities. Second, the largest section of the tribal population in the northern region is concentrated in the tea plantation. The social environment of the tea plantation encouraged the education of the STs. Following the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR) study, the present study have been collected through an empirical field survey in the five sample districts of West Bengal using structured questionnaires (see the

  
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