

Research Paper

Voice towards Education: A Study of the Educational Status of the Sabar Community

Shaktipada Mahato and Laxmiram Gope*

Department of Education, Sidho- Kanho- Birsha University, West Bengal, India

*Corresponding author: laxmiram.1122@gmail.com (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0688-2812)

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ABSTRACT

Sabar is a most backward tribal community of Bengal. Educationally they are deprived and marginalized. Through this study, it is reflected that their educational status is very low, and day to day they deviate from education. In Sabar society education is just a luxurious phenomenon, they think that education is not for them. So, in this perspective, they don't want to get education. They found a huge discrepancy between education and real-life situations. According to the Sabar community schooling became a burden it failed to sustain them. Hence this paper knows the current educational status of the Sabar community in the Purulia district and the researchers also find some important causes of the educational gap among the Sabar community and simultaneously give insight into possible methods of educating among the Sabar community. This study was conducted on 10 Sabar villages and data was collected through randomly selected survey methods about ten (10) Sabar villages (Para) like Akarbad, Maldhi, Kudha, Kashidhi, Bamni, Panchara, Shalbani, Kendapara, Shirkabad, and Dhumurdhi. 100 Sabar people (above 18 years old) are included in this study as a sample. The study significantly shows the educational status of the Sabar community in Purulia district.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① The Sabar community, one of the most marginalized tribal groups in Bengal, faces many educational challenges, and they are much more deprivations than any other community.
- ① A comprehensive survey across ten Sabar villages in the Purulia district reveals that 87% of the community remains uneducated.
- ① The Sabar people view education as a luxury and are detached from their day-to-day life activities. According to them, modern education cannot help them fulfill their basic needs; thus, education fails to meet their survival needs, leading to high dropout rates.
- ① Major barriers to education in the Sabar community include extreme poverty, geographical isolation, cultural practices, and language barriers.
- ① Government initiatives like scholarships, residential schools, and tribal-specific curricula have had limited success in improving literacy rates among the Sabar people.
- ① The study emphasizes the need for culturally relevant, community-centric educational policies to uplift the Sabar tribe and promote long-term educational engagement.

Keywords: Education, Community, Sabar Community

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Now education become a fundamental right of every Indian citizen, everyone has the right to education, not only education but quality education, which helps them to sustain themselves in this era. But in the context of the Sabar community education awareness is very low, Sabar people don't go to receive education because of their thought that modern competition challenging world. Formal education will not be able to feed them and themselves. So, day by day excluding from mainstreaming education mind and lack of education they become socially and economically deprived.

In this situation researcher wants to know the exact education status of the Sabar community, in the selected village of the Purulia district and researcher also tries to find out the cause of low literacy levels among the Sabar community, why they are not interested, and what is their basic negligence. Researchers also root causes of education. Our Indian constitution is considered as a safeguard of social economic and educational justice. Following are the main causes why the Indian constitution gives prior importance to equal educational opportunity concerning caste, tribe, social status, economic status, geographical barriers, etc. Our constitution also said in article 21-A that providing free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen years is a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. Article 45, nestled within the Directive Principles of State Policy, serves as the cornerstone for the establishment of free and compulsory education in the nation. This constitutional provision articulates the commitment of the state to ensuring education accessibility for all. It delineates that the state shall endeavour to provide, within ten years from the commencement of this constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

West Bengal is home to a diverse array of tribal communities, each contributing to a vibrant tapestry of cultural heritage, traditional practices, and distinct socioeconomic realities. Despite the richness of their traditions, these communities face various challenges, including obstacles in education, limited economic

opportunities, and difficulties in accessing healthcare services. Almost 40 types of tribal are located in West Bengal (Wikipedia).

Notable among these groups are the Sabar, Santals, Mundas, Bhutias, and Oraons. The tribal communities in West Bengal share a profound connection with their natural surroundings, and their ways of life are intricately woven with traditional practices centered around agriculture, hunting, gathering, and fishing. Each tribe maintains a unique cultural identity, expressed through its language, music, dance, art, and festivals, all of which are celebrated with tremendous enthusiasm and a strong sense of community spirit (Textbook, 2023).

The majority of tribals in West Bengal depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood. They cultivate small plots of land using traditional methods. Access to education, skills training, and alternative sources of income is often limited, making them vulnerable to exploitation and poverty. Several government schemes aim to improve the economic well-being of tribal communities, such as providing land rights, promoting self-help groups, and facilitating access to markets (Ghosh, 2019).

The literacy rate among tribal communities in West Bengal is lower than the state average. Poverty, geographical isolation, and language barriers contribute to this disparity. Limited access to quality schools, lack of teachers familiar with tribal languages and culture, and high dropout rates hinder educational attainment. Initiatives like scholarship programs, mother-tongue education, and residential schools are being implemented to bridge the educational gap (Chakraborty, 2019).

The tribal population in West Bengal comprises approximately 8.6 million individuals, constituting about 7% of the total state population. Despite their significant presence, the literacy rate among tribals lags behind the state average. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate among tribals in West Bengal stands at 57.97%, in stark contrast to the overall state average of 79.21%.

Table 1: As per the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, the following were listed as scheduled tribes in West Bengal

Sl. No.	Tribes	Sl. No.	Tribes	Sl. No.	Tribes	Sl. No.	Tribes
1	Asur	1	Garo	1	Korwa	1	Mru
2	Baiga	2	Gond	2	Lepcha	2	Munda
3	Badia, Bediya	3	Gorait	3	Limbu(Subba)	3	Nagesia
4	Bhumij	4	Hajang	4	Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	4	Oraon
5	Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	5	Ho	5	Lohara, Lohra	5	Parhaiya
6	Birhor	6	Karmali	6	Magh	6	Rabha
7	Birjia	7	Kharwar	7	Mahali	7	Santal
8	Chakma	8	Khond	8	Mahli	8	Sauria paharia
9	Chero	9	Kisan	9	Mal Pahariya	9	Savars
10	Chik Baraik	10	Kora	10	Mech	10	Tamang

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheduled_Tribes_in_West_Bengal.

Several factors contribute to the low literacy rate among tribals in West Bengal, including:

- (a) **Poverty:** Numerous tribal families face financial constraints that hinder their ability to send their children to school.
- (b) **Location:** Many tribal communities reside in remote areas, creating a geographical barrier to accessing educational institutions.
- (c) **Language:** The predominant medium of instruction in schools is often Bengali, a language not spoken by many tribal communities.
- (d) **Cultural factors:** Certain tribal communities adhere to traditional beliefs and practices that may discourage or impede the pursuit of education.

To address these challenges, the West Bengal government has initiated various schemes aimed at improving tribal education. These initiatives encompass:

- (a) **Providing scholarships and stipends:** Financial support is extended to tribal students to facilitate their educational pursuits.
- (b) **Establishing residential schools:** Specialized educational institutions have been set up to cater specifically to the needs of tribal students.
- (c) **Recruiting tribal teachers:** Hiring educators from tribal backgrounds helps bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps in the learning process.

- (d) **Developing tribal-specific curricula:** Tailoring educational content to align with the cultural context of tribal communities enhances engagement and relevance.

While these schemes have demonstrated some success in enhancing tribal education, significant challenges persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to address them comprehensively.

Sabar is a primitive and marginalized tribal community in Purulia district. The Sabar people (also Shabar and Saora) are one of the Adivasi of the Munda ethnic group tribe who live mainly in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. During the British Raj, they were classed as one of the 'criminal tribes' under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871, and still suffer from social stigma and ostracism in modern times (*Rediff on the Net: Dilip D'Souza on the Sabar Tribe*, n.d.). The Sabar people live close to nature and have their special ways. But sending kids to school hasn't always been easy. Poverty, working to help the family, and sometimes not feeling welcome at school could keep kids from learning. Their main income source is hunting and food collecting from forests.

It is clear from the table 2 that they are always busy collecting food and maintaining basic needs. There is no time to get an education, education is a waste of time.

Table 2: Economic life among the Sabar Community in Purulia district

Income Sources	Description
Hunting	The Sabar people traditionally hunt a variety of wild animals, including deer, boar, and small animals.
Gathering	The Sabar people gather a wide range of edible plants, fruits, roots, tubers, honey, and wild animals from the forest. These products provide them with essential food and nutrition.
Fishing	The Sabar people fish in rivers, streams, and ponds, using traditional methods such as nets, spears, and traps.
Slash-and-burn agriculture	The Sabar people practice slash-and-burn agriculture, also known as jhum or shifting cultivation. They clear small patches of forest, burn the vegetation to enhance soil fertility and plant their crops. This method of cultivation has been practiced by the Sabar people for centuries and is adapted to the local environment.

Table 3: Decade-wise Education rate of Scheduled Tribes in India

Year	Literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe (%)	Literacy rate in India (%)	Gap (%)
1961	8.5	28.3	13.8
1971	11.3	34.5	18.2
1981	16.4	43.6	19.9
1991	29.6	52.2	21.6
2001	47.1	65.4	18.3
2011	9.0	74.0	14.0

Sources: Census of India (2011).

The Sabar community’s locations are not static, and their settlements can evolve due to various factors like land availability, resource access, and government initiatives. Nevertheless, in some places, the Sabar community is seen permanently like Akarbad, Maldhi, Mairadhi, Kudha, Kashidhi, Bamni, Vashapara, Janra, Tilabani, Panchara, Kashipur, Shalbani, Kheriadhi, Kendapara, Bandhi, Shirkabad, Banjara, Dhumurdhi, Fuljhor, Beldhi, Kultar, etc. These northern blocks in Purulia are home to pockets of Sabar settlements, who often practice hunting and gatherer traditions, living in close harmony with the surrounding forests. The society is growing and developing the nation gradually but the Sabar community has not changed till now. Their culture and customs have not adjusted education, it is only time and money waste. Many NGOs are working on how to improve their education.

National Educational Status of Tribal (ST)

As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India stands at 74.3%. Although this figure remains below the national average of 82.1%, it signifies a remarkable advancement compared to the mere 16.3%

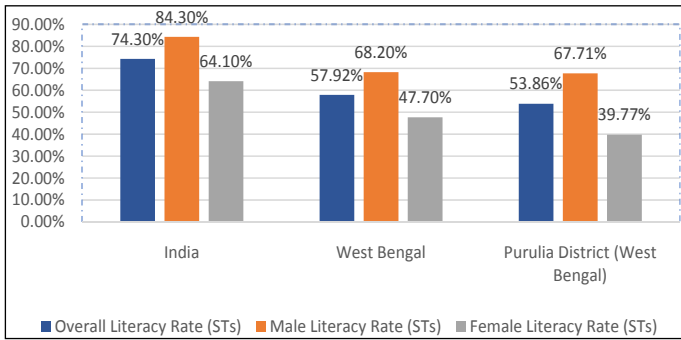
literacy rate recorded in 1951. This increase underscores the positive strides made in promoting education within tribal populations, reflecting a substantial improvement over the decades.

Literacy Rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, West Bengal, and Purulia:

The literacy rates presented here are based on the 2011 Census, the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, West Bengal, and Purulia district. The data is based on the 2011 Census. The above table shows that the Purulia district lags respectively to India or West Bengal in Education.

Table 4: Present Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes (STs), Census 2011

Location	Overall Literacy Rate (STs)	Male Literacy Rate (STs)	Female Literacy Rate (STs)
India	74.30%	84.30%	64.10%
West Bengal	57.92%	68.20%	47.70%
Purulia District (West Bengal)	53.86%	67.71%	39.77%



Census: 2011.

Fig. 1: Overall Literacy Rate in India, West Bengal, and Purulia

The literacy rate for STs is lower than the literacy rate for the general population in all three locations. However, there has been some progress in recent years, and the literacy rate for STs is now higher than it was in 2001.

Methodology of the study

This study is based on a descriptive survey type and data was collected by door-to-door visiting. Data was collected from randomly ten (10) Sabar villages (Para) like Akarbad, Maldhi, Kudha, Kashidhi, Bamni, Panchara, Shalbani, Kendapara, Shirkabad, Dhumurdhi. 100 Sabar people (above 18+ years old) are included in this study as a sample.

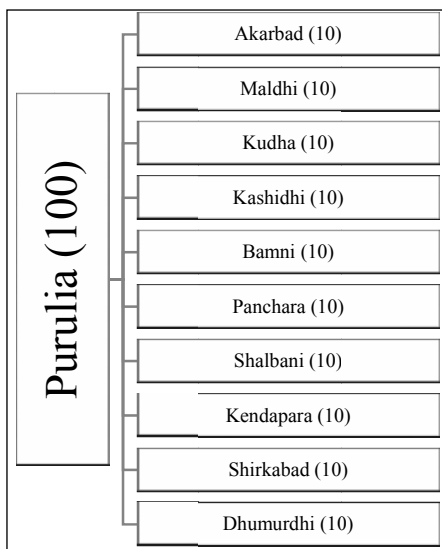


Fig. 2: Flow chart of sampling design

For the study, 100 Sabar (50 male & 50 female) were taken on a random basis to conduct this study.

Analysis of data

The analysis is an important part of the research. This study researcher analysed the collected data for the educational status of the Sabar Community in the Purulia district.

Purulia’s literacy rate has steadily increased over the years. As of the 2011 census, it stands at 64.48%, with significant improvement in female literacy from 23.24% in 1991 to 37.15% in 2011 (Khan, 2021).

Improved infrastructure: The district boasts a growing network of educational institutions, including 11-degree colleges, and one B.Ed. college, one polytechnic college, and one Industrial Training Institute (ITI). Several government and private schools cater to primary and secondary education.

Focus on tribal education: Recognizing the historically lower literacy rates among tribal communities, the government has implemented various initiatives like scholarships, residential schools, and special educational programs to bridge the gap.

While significant strides have been made, addressing the persistent challenges is essential to achieve inclusive and quality education for all children in the district.

Table 5: The tables show that the educational status of the Sabar community (out of 100) is the following:

Table 5: Observer data of education in Sabar Community

	Uneducated	I – IV	V-VIII	IX-X	XI-XII	Total
Male	41	4	2	2	1	50
Female	45	2	1	1	1	50
Total	86	6	3	3	2	100

Here are some observations about table 5:

- ❖ There are a total of 100 people observed in the table.
- ❖ There are 50 males and 50 females.
- ❖ The most common educational attainment for both males and females is uneducated (41 males and 45 females).

- ❖ There are very few people who have completed secondary school (IX-X) or higher (XI-XII).

The researcher selected 100 Sabar people as a sample from 10 Sabar villages which were Akarbad, Maldhi, Kudha, Kashidhi, Bamni, Panchara, Shalbani, Kendapara, Shirkabad, Dhumurdhi. Most Sabar people are not aware of the present education system and various policies towards education like Kannaya Shree, EFA (Education for All), and so on. The Sabar communities lag in all aspects of life. Therefore, researchers have to concentrate on the educational and social aspects of life.

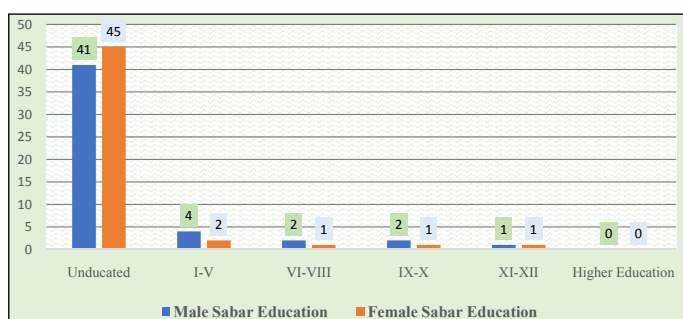


Fig. 3: The educational status of the Sabar community (male and female) is the following

Research shows that only six people (06% of Sabar people) have studied up to class I-IV out of 100 Sabar people. Three Sabar people (03% Sabar people) have studied up to class V-VIII, out of 100. Three Sabar people (03% Sabar people) have studied up to class IX and X out of 100 and only two Sabar people (2%) have studied up to class XI and XII. No one with higher education was found. Therefore, the researcher noticed that only 14% of Sabar people are educated 100, and the rest 87% peoples are uneducated.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the educational status within the Sabar community in Purulia district. While it suggests a high number of uneducated Sabar and a low overall completion rate for secondary school or higher, it is clear that at present the state of education of the Sabar community in Purulia district is very poor.

- ❖ **Literacy rates:** Compared to the national average and even the state average for tribal communities,

literacy rates among Sabar in Purulia are significantly lower. This gap is even wider when compared to non-tribal communities (*A Comparative Study of the Educational Status of Tribals in West Bengal: With Special Reference to the District of Purulia*, 2017).

- ❖ **Socio-economic factors:** Poverty, dependence on subsistence agriculture and manual labour, lack of awareness about the importance of education, and early marriage, particularly for girls, all contribute to low enrolment and completion rates.
- ❖ **Geographical barriers:** Remote locations, inaccessible terrain, and inadequate infrastructure like roads and schools further limit access to education.
- ❖ **Cultural factors:** Traditional practices and beliefs may not prioritize formal education, especially for girls.

Efforts and initiatives

- ❖ **Government schemes:** Programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and residential schools for tribal communities aim to improve access and quality of education.
- ❖ **NGOs and community-based organizations:** These groups work on raising awareness, providing supplementary education, and bridging the gap between the formal education system and Sabar communities.
- ❖ **Community initiatives:** Efforts by village elders and community leaders to encourage education, particularly among girls, are also playing a role (Mukherjee, 2014).
- ❖ In the end, we can say, there's progress, but challenges remain. While initiatives are making a difference, systemic issues, and deeply ingrained social and economic factors continue to hinder the educational progress of the Sabar community.

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