



31. **Concepts, Indicators and Paradigm of Rural Development**
- Dr. Tandale S. S. ----- 180
32. **Tribal Art: Economical Growth**
- Dr. Suvarna Barde ----- 183
33. **Comparative Study on the Work Participation Rate and Income levels of tribal and non-tribal peoples: A Case Study in Birbhum District, West Bengal State.**
- Dr. Tarit Kanti Sen ----- 189
34. **Socio-Economic Condition of Tribal Women in Nandurbar District of Maharashtra**
- Uttam J. Sonkamble ----- 198
35. **As Migration Trails Structure Tales: Mannan Legends of Origin**
- Veena R. Nair ----- 203
36. **The National Education Policy and Obstacles to Higher Education in Tribals of Nandurbar District in North Maharashtra**
- i) Atish R. Mehetre, ii) Dr. Vilas V. Thakare ----- 208
37. **Rural and Urban Welfare Schemes of Tribals: A study**
- Dr. Madhav Shankar Waghmare ----- 217
38. **Draupadi : A Tribal Consciousness**
- Dr. Pundlik S. Nalinde ----- 220
39. **Recreational Activities and Traditional Sports**
- Dr. Sonali Kakde-Patil ----- 224
40. **An Empirical Analysis of Tribal Women Empowerment in Tribal Community in Birbhum District of West Bengal, India**
- Sonalal S. K. ----- 229

INDEX

1. **Mahatma Gandhiji's Thoughts for Economic Development of Rural India in 21st Century**
- Dr. Harish B. Badwaik ----- 7
2. **Empowerment of Rural and Tribal Women**
- Dr. Anushree Mahurkar ----- 12
3. **Epic Strokes: Kunbi's Resonance in Goa's Tribal Art, Culture and History**
- Sangeeta Rajaram Kadam ----- 16
4. **The Opportunities and Challenges of Tribal Entrepreneurship in the Region of UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (DNH & DD): A Pilot Study**
- i) Amar Vangad, ii) Dr. Rajesh Kumar Pandey ----- 21
5. **Exploring Socio-cultural Dynamics In-depth Analysis of Rural and Tribal Communities**
- Archana Singh ----- 29
6. **Reflection of Rural Life in Nissim Ezekeil's *Night of the Scorpion***
- Arun Malhari Jadhav ----- 37
7. **Implementation of Nucleus Budget Scheme in Nandurbar District**
- i) Mr. Gaikwad Bablu Nandu, ii) Dr. Borgaonkar Varsha Hemant ----- 39
8. **The Impact of PMAY-G on the Development of Tribal Community: A Case Study in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal**
- Bhumidhar Roy ----- 49
9. **Employment Opportunities for Tribal Community through Tribal Tourism (with references to Madhya Pradesh)**
- i) Dr. Hitesh M. Dadmal, ii) Mrs. Chitra Bashani ----- 56



The National Education Policy and Obstacles to Higher Education in Tribals of Nandurbar District in North Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT :

Nandurbar is located at the North Western tip of Maharashtra. Bhil, Pawara, Kokani, Mavachi, Dhanka etc. are the tribal communities found in Nandurbar district which are geographically, socially isolated and economically weaker communities. They live a miserable life without sufficient resources and have lot problems like unemployment, illiteracy, housing insecurity and poor nutrition. The educational performance of the tribal students is much lower than the other peoples even with all efforts. Recently the Central Government has launched the National Education Policy 2020 which would bring the enormous changes into the existing education system. Looking at the National Education Policy framed by the ministry of HRDC, it seems that the students into tribal area would face several obstacles as there is a huge difference between the rural tribal and urban education system. The curriculum, teaching methodology and teaching-learning strategies should be developed appropriately for the purpose of inspiring tribal students to pursue an education. The present research article entitled National Education Policy and Obstacles to Higher Education in Tribals of Nandurbar district in North Maharashtra underlines the future challenges the tribal students would face in respect with the higher education and it also

highlight how these challenges can be minimized.

KEYWORDS: Education, Policy, Obstacle, Tribal.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Bhil, Pawara, Kokani, Mavachi, Dhanka are the major tribal communities found in Nandurbar district of North Maharashtra, India which are commonly known as Adiwasi. They live a miserable life mostly in forest and hilly areas without sufficient resources and have lot problems like unemployment, illiteracy, housing insecurity and poor nutrition. Nandurbar is located at the north western tip of Maharashtra which consists of six tehsils viz. Akkalkuwa, Akrani, Taloda, Shahada, Nandurbar and Navapur. The literacy rate of the district is 54.31 % which is lower than the State (82.3 %). Nandurbar is one of the least urbanized Adiwasi district having 16.7 % of its population in urban areas where as 45.2 % of the state population lives in urban areas. Education related many issues were faced by tribal communities. Hence government is trying to resolve all these issues by implementing specific laws (Patel, 2023).

Present study aims to discuss the major problems and difficulties encountered tribal communities, specifically focusing on their educational challenges. The literacy and higher education of the economically and socially

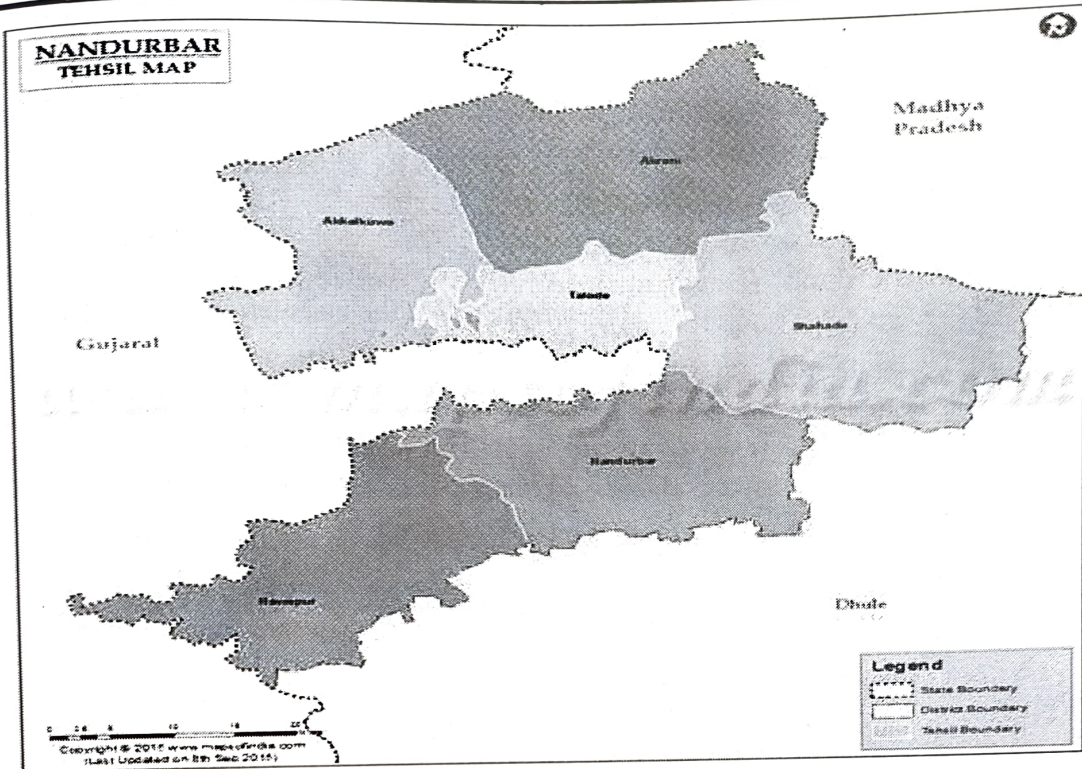


Figure 1- Tehsilwise Map of Nandurbar District

backward sections in India are important indicators of their future development. In accordance to the studies on tribal education, policymakers gave little priority to culturally relevant education. This has caused dropouts of tribal students and directly affected their general academic status (Brahmanandam and Bosu, 2016). According to Sahu (2014), the tribes have lower literacy rates and poorer levels of education compared to the general population. The Indian Education System can be easily divided into rural and urban as far as the available infrastructure, availability of schools and colleges, availability of information and communication technology, funding to acquire modern technologies, social and educational atmosphere and differences between the financial conditions of rural tribal students and urban parents are concerned. Due to economic prosperity and difference in socio-educational conditions the rural tribal students can be easily differentiated. During the implementation of National Education Policy 2020, it is very important to point out these basic differences.

In short it can be asserted that there should be separate provisions for the rural tribal and urban students considering their socio-economical and educational background. In the present research, an attempt has been made to examine the challenges that rural tribal students will face during their higher education in the context of the National Education Policy 2020. Additionally, the research article also highlights ways to minimize these challenges.

Various researchers have conducted studies on the challenges of higher education, including Brosnan (2001), Albrini (2006), Malik and Shabbir (2008), Arnseth *et al.* (2010), Mukerji and Tripathi (2010), Baser *et al.* (2017), Arthur-Mensah (2020), Bonini (2020) and others.

2. TOPOGRAPHY OF NANDURBAR DISTRICT

On 1st July 1998, Nandurbar district was separated from Dhule district. It lies between 21° 00' 00" N to 22°00'30" N Latitude and 73°31'00" E to 74°45'30" E Longitude. The Adiwasi district covers a total geographical area of 5955.00 sq.



km. It is bordered by Dhule district in the South and East, Gujarat State in the West and Madhya Pradesh State in the North. Nandurbar district is included in Nashik division. It comprises nine towns and 943 villages spread across six tehsils including Akkalkuwa, Akrani (Dhadgaon), Taloda, Shahada, Nandurbar and Navapur. According to 2011 Census, the population of Nandurbar district is 1648295 and the population density is 277 persons per sq. km. It has sex ratio

favouring in males i.e. 978. (Ahire and Chaudhari, 2016).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The secondary data collected from the District Census Handbook of Nandurbar District, 2001 and 2011 is the main base of this research paper which was used to study literacy rate, male-female gap in literacy rate and the literacy rate have been calculated by using following formula (Ahire and Chaudhari, 2016).

$$\text{Literacy in Percentage (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of Literates (above 06 years)}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

An extensive survey has been made in Nandurbar district to analyze obstacles in tribal education regarding National Education Policy 2020 including the socio-economic conditions, availability of school and colleges, availability of information and communication technology, gender inequality, communication issues, academic barriers etc. as well as ways to empower higher education in tribal area are also highlighted in the current research article.

4. RESULTS :

4.1- LITERACY RATE STATUS IN TRIBALS OF NANDURBAR DISTRICT

According to district Census Handbook of

Nandurbar District, the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe peoples in Nandurbar district was 54.31% in 2011, varying by tehsil as well as gender. Table-1 and Figure-2 reveals that Taloda tehsil has the highest literacy rate 59.19%, attributed to educational awareness. This is followed by Akkalkuwa tehsil with a literacy rate of 57.78%, Navapur tehsil at 55.17%, Nandurbar tehsil at 54.45%, and Akrani at 52.10%, while Shahada tehsil has the lowest literacy rate at 49.07%. The variation in literacy rates among tribals is attributed to the socio-economic effects of the surrounding population.

Table-1 : Status of Literacy Rate in Tribals of Nandurbar District (2011)

Sr. No.	Name of Tehsil	Status of Literacy in Tribals			Gap in Male-Female Literacy Rate
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Akkalkuwa	64.58 %	51.03%	57.78 %	13.55 %
2	Akrani (Dhadgoan)	58.74 %	45.52%	52.10 %	13.22 %
3	Nandurbar	63.95 %	45.23%	54.45 %	18.72 %
4	Nawapur	63.34 %	47.24%	55.17 %	16.10 %
5	Shahada	58.96 %	39.33%	49.07 %	19.63 %
6	Taloda	67.59 %	51.01%	59.19 %	16.58 %
Nandurbar District		62.53 %	46.25%	54.31 %	16.28 %

Source: District Census Handbook, Nandurbar (2001 and 2011)

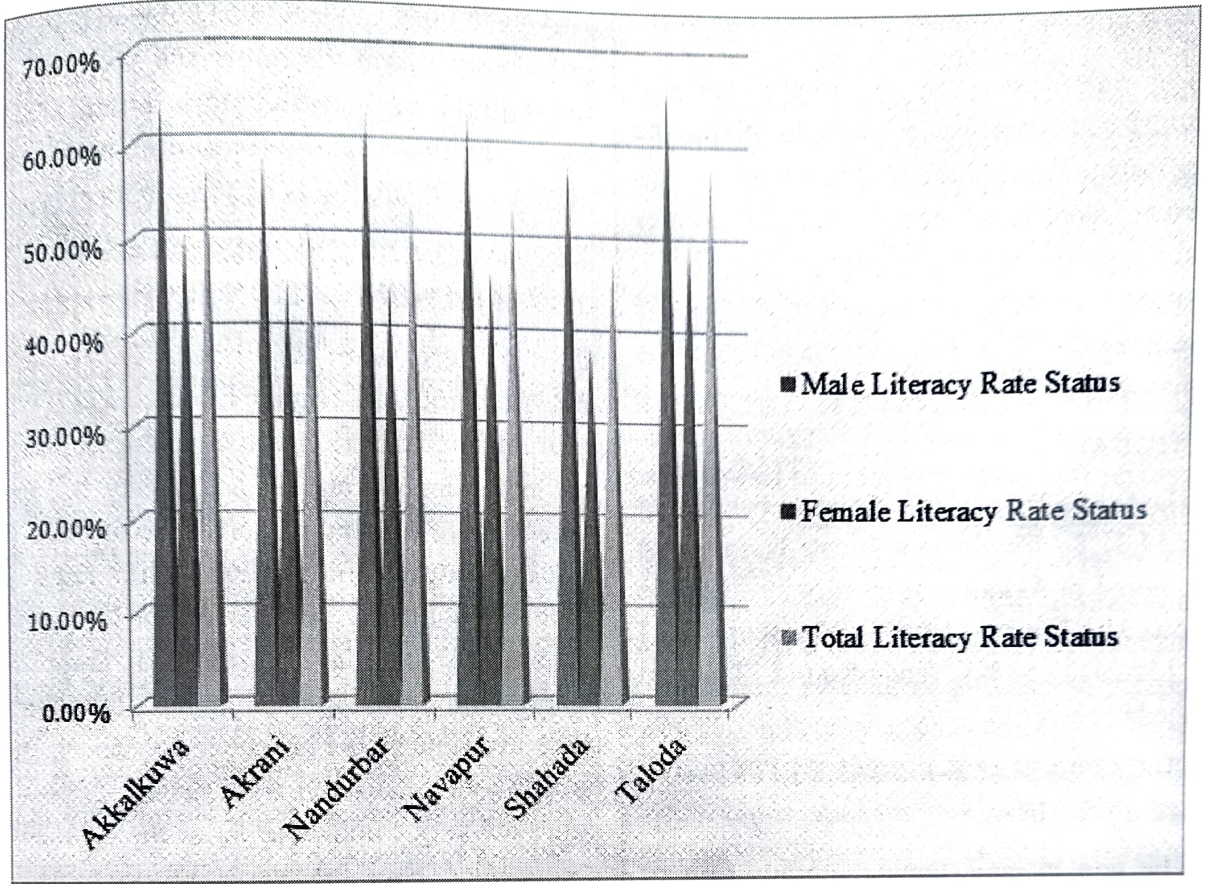


Figure- 2 Status of % Literacy Rate in Total and Tribals of Nandurbar District (2011)

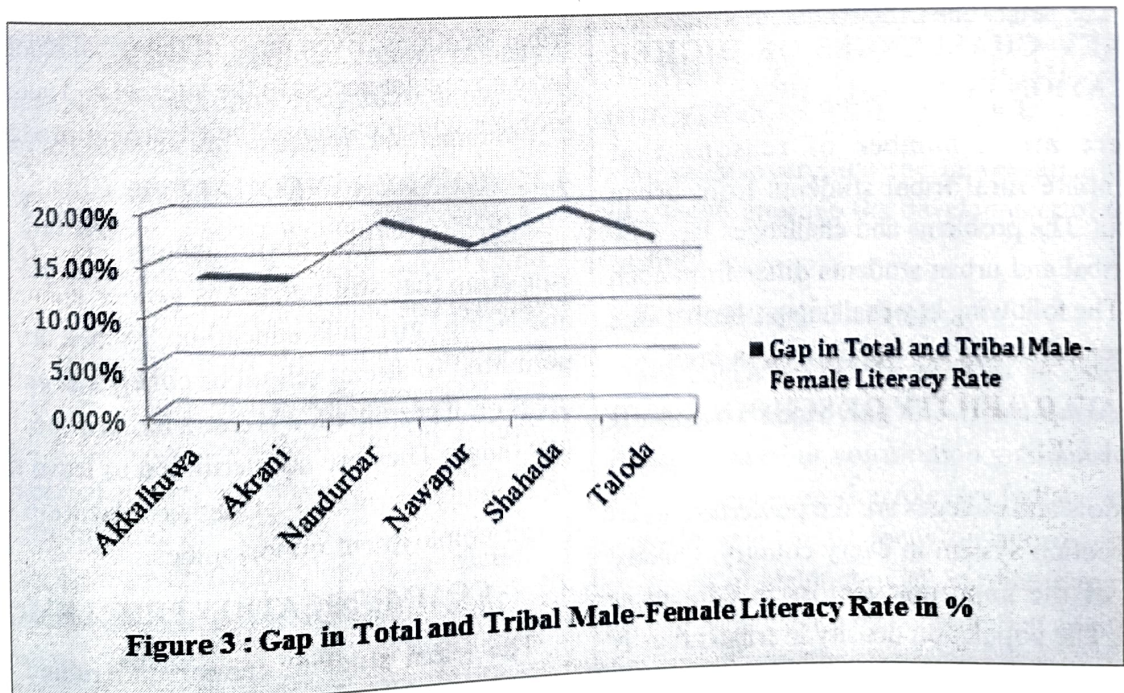


Figure 3 : Gap in Total and Tribal Male-Female Literacy Rate in %



4.1.1- MALE LITERACY RATE STATUS IN TRIBALS:

The male literacy rate of tribal peoples of Nandurbar district was 62.53% in 2011. The highest male literacy rate among six tehsils was noted in Taloda tehsil with 67.59 % followed by Akkalkuwa (64.58 %), Nandurbar (63.95 %), Navapur (63.34 %), Shahada (58.96 %) and Akrani (58.74 %).

4.1.2- FEMALE LITERACY RATE STATUS IN TRIBALS:

The female literacy rate of Nandurbar district was 54.31 %. The highest female literacy rate was noted in Akkalkuwa tehsil with 51.03 % followed by Taloda (51.01 %), Nawapur (47.24 %), Akrani (45.52 %), Nandurbar (45.23 %) and Shahada (39.33 %).

4.1.3- GAP IN MALE-FEMALE LITERACY RATE IN TRIBALS

The gap in male-female literacy rate of Nandurbar district was 16.28 % in 2011 which noted highest in Shahada tehsil (19.63 %) and lowest in Akrani tehsil (13.22 %) (Mahajan and Bhoi, 2023).

4.2- KEY CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRIBAL AREA:

There are a number of reasons that differentiate rural tribal students from urban students. The problems and challenges faced by rural tribal and urban students differ from each other. The following key challenges of tribal area in higher education are highlighted in brief.

4.2.1- AVAILABILITY OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES:

Schools and colleges are the powerhouses of the education system in every country. Quality is one of the important factors in education system. The population density in tribal areas is much lower than that in urban areas. Consequently, there are more schools and

colleges in urban areas than in tribal areas. However, it is evident that compared to the population density, schools and colleges are inadequate or insufficient in tribal areas. Moreover, there is a significant difference in the available infrastructures between both areas.

4.2.2-AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY:

In modern time, ICT is one of the most important tools in Higher Education. Various emerging digital platforms and tools are the latest and important educational instruments. ICT and the advanced learning resources are the need of modern education system. This need is underlined during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Nowadays, in most of the rural colleges the computers and internet facility has made available by the college management. But its ratio with the students is not suitable. Network issues are very common as far as the tribal area is concerned. Even the internet service provider companies are not eager to solve network problems of the tribal area.

Unfortunately these advanced and computer based learning resources are not available in tribal locations. Even most of the tribal students have no regular access to the internet and android mobiles which can ease their learning process.

4.2.3- GENDER INEQUALITY:

One of the major issues in tribal education that still persists is gender inequality and lack of girl child education. Women are not permitted to attend school or colleges in certain areas or, if permitted, it is restricted to a specified age range. They are not permitted to leave their community in pursuit of higher education and better employment opportunities.

4.2.4- COMMUNICATION PROBLEM:

The tribal students cannot understand the official or regional language spoken by the teacher in the school and colleges. Their mother



tongue is the only language they speak. They only understand their mother tongue, and they perceive the teacher's language as foreign. (Vinu, 2021).

4.2.5- FINANCIAL ISSUES:

Low incomes not only affects the stability of the family but also affects the education of the children which makes education as a secondary priority. Education is often viewed as a cost instead of investment by tribal peoples. They would prefer the children to work hard in order to earn money. When it comes to higher education, the lack of suitable colleges nearby compels students to contemplate relocating to cities, thereby increasing their expenses. As a result, enrollment rates are low, while dropout rates are higher.

The low income in tribal area is one of the major issues faced by rural parents. As most of the parents have limited income source they cannot afford today's costly education for their children. Obviously, most of the tribal parents give their first priority to complete the basic needs of their families than education.

4.2.6- ACADEMIC BARRIERS:

Tribal education is accorded greater priority under the New Education Policy 2020, however it is away from being properly implemented. Dropout rates, stagnation, the distance between home and school, a strict evaluation system, a lack of communication between parents and teachers. An unattractive curriculum and syllabus that do not align with the tribal region or surroundings, a lack of tribal development and education policies, persistent student failure, rigid school hours, an uninteresting school environment and infrastructure, shortage of teachers, issues with the medium of instruction, inexperienced teachers, fear of teachers, unappealing instructional methods, insufficient teaching-learning strategies, lack of funding for extracurricular activities, inadequate funding

from both the Government and Tribal Affairs, scarcity of educational resources, poor facilities for teacher training, inadequate scholarships and holidays that do not correspond with the tribal economy are some of the academic barriers for tribal student's education. (Baidya and Barik, 2023).

4.2.7- PERSONAL FACTORS:

Students at school differ widely in terms of their personalities and behaviors. Tribal students can face a range of obstacles for which they are unable to find solutions within the surroundings of the school, colleges and the entire educational system. Personal factors are crucial in the educational system for students to succeed at all stages. Negative views of parents and students on education, illiterate or low-literate parents, feelings of insecurity in educational institutions, shy nature of the students, fear of studying, lack of interest in studies, fear of teachers and examinations, irregular attendance, repeated failure, poor health conditions, bad company, alcohol addiction, etc. are some personal factors and challenges contributing to the unsuccessful outcome of tribal education in the North Maharashtra region. (Baidya and Barik, 2023).

4.3- WAYS TO EMPOWER HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRIBAL AREA

We must overcome the below-mentioned obstacles to improve the development of tribal education.

4.3.1- FREE EDUCATION:

Free education can be seen as an essential approach to improving the tribal education scenario. Since our constitution guarantees the right to proper education to every Indian citizen, the government must focus on improving the enrollment of children living in remote regions. This can be achieved by constructing additional schools and providing adequate resources and facilities. The government must also ensure that



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the percentage of children enrolled in school continues to increase until they reach the elementary education level.

4.3.2- USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES:

Modern technologies play a critical role in educational delivery. In today's modern and globalized society, where technology is continually evolving, everyone needs to keep up to speed with the latest technological advancements.

4.3.3- FACILITIES AND RESOURCES:

Another strategy for tribal education development is to provide adequate facilities and resources. The goal of education is to help people develop holistically. Access to resources is crucial for schooling too. Textbooks, stationery, labs, playgrounds and tables, among other resources must be in good condition and accessible to all students. This will help achieve the goal of education and also keep students in school.

4.3.4- LITERACY CAMPAIGN :

A literacy campaign must be carried out in various tribal communities to promote tribal education.

4.3.5- RELEVANT STUDY MATERIALS :

Students from tribal communities should be taught using relevant study materials in their local language.

4.3.6- SCHOLARSHIPS :

Different scholarships and stipends need to be offered to tribal students to enable them to attend schools and colleges.

4.3.7- RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES :

Residential schools should be established in tribal regions to address the transportation issue that currently exists.

4.3.8- SOCIAL SECURITY :

Social security should be provided to tribal students, especially girl students to enable them to attend schools and colleges.

4.3.9- REDUCTION IN THE HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

Household responsibilities of the tribal students should be minimized so they can focus on their study.

4.3.10- STOP EARLY MARRIAGES :

Early marriage is a major issue as after marriage, a girl becomes responsible for household work. Many girls drop out of education because their in-laws do not allow them to complete their education. Therefore, early marriages of tribal girl students should be stopped.

5. DISCUSSION:

Gautam (2013) studied the education of Scheduled Tribe in India and highlighted the programmes and schemes for promotion of education in Scheduled Tribe peoples. Ahire and Chaudhari (2016) studied the levels of disparity in literacy of scheduled tribes of Nandurbar district. Educational status among the Scheduled Tribes, issues and challenges were studied by Brahmanandam and Basu in 2016. Kotreshwaraswamy (2017) studied tribal education and related challenges in India. Mitra and Singh (2018) studied the trends in literacy rates and schooling among the Scheduled Tribe women in India. Gangele (2019) explored tribal educational status in India. Reddy (2021) made a detailed review on tribal education in India. Mahajan and Bhoi (2023) made spatial analysis of literacy rate among Scheduled Tribe Population in Nandurbar District. Bhavya and Somashekar made studies on education for tribal girl child and highlighted the merits and demerits of the educational facilities given to the tribal girl child in 2023.



An extensive survey has been made in Nandurbar district to analyze obstacles in tribal education like the illiteracy, socio-economic conditions, availability of school and colleges, availability of information and communication technology, gender inequality, communication issues, academic barriers etc. as well as ways to empower higher education in tribal area are also highlighted during present research article.

6. CONCLUSION :

Tribal area faces challenges in acquiring higher education due to a shortage of institutions and facilities, a scarcity of instructors, religious and cultural traditions, a significant distance between home and school and a general lack of understanding of the need for education. The development of schools and colleges in tribal areas, the provision of suitable infrastructure as well as other resources, the use of contemporary technology in education and the creation of awareness regarding the value of education are all ways to improve the current state of tribal education. Different government initiatives, policy makers and planners require immediate attention to solve this educational issue of tribal students and allocate additional funding in the Central and State education budgets for the development of tribal education. The tribal youths should be more actively involved in every activity of society and school as well as colleges, so that they can show their hidden talents and capabilities. The curriculum, teaching methodology, and teaching-learning strategies should be developed appropriately for the purpose of inspiring tribal students to pursue an education.

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