

# TRIBAL EDUCATION IN NORTH EASTERN STATES OF INDIA

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## Abstract

Education is the key to achieve sustainable development and so a steady investment in human capital goes a long way in nation building. Unequal education tends to have a negative impact on economic efficiency and social consistency. The issue of equity mainly affects disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). As far as the North Eastern Region of India is concerned, in the majority of the eight states tribal literacy rate is much lower than the literacy level of the States as such. This indicates that the educational status of the tribals in this region is a matter of grave concern. This Paper examines exclusively tribal literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, drop out ratio and gender parity index in the North Eastern States of India. It also examines the releases of grant-in-aid and the number of beneficiaries under the scheme of post-matric and pre-matric scholarship for ST students. Interestingly, the present study also found that the literacy rate of the tribals in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland is higher than that of the total population in those states. At the outset, a study on the status of education among STs in north eastern part of India would help us to understand the extent of social inclusiveness in that region.

**Keywords:** tribal, education, literacy, dropout rate

## Introduction

Education is the key to achieve sustainable development and so steady investment in human capital goes a long way in nation building. There are mounting empirical evidences pointing to contribution of education to economic growth (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964; Psacharopoulos, 1984). Unequal education tends to have a negative impact on economic efficiency and social consistency (Ozturk, 2001). In a developing economy like India, the issue of equity mainly affects disadvantaged groups like the SCs and STs. In particular, tribes who constitute 8.6 % of the total population (Census, 2011) are the most affected group. This can be

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seen from the findings of the census report (2011) indicating the literacy rate of tribes was only 58.96 % as against the literacy rate of total population (72.99 %) with a gap of 14.03 %. As far as the North East Region (NER) is concerned, the STs constitute 56.11 % of the total population. Their literacy rate (76.76%) is lower than that of the total population (78.51 %). This indicates that the educational status of tribes is a matter of concern in the region which comprises of eight states viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. There are a good number of studies on education in India (Ganguly, 2016; Sandeep *et al.*, 2017) and in the North Eastern states (Biswas, 2008; Singha, 2013; Prasad, 2015). However, studies on tribal education in the North East Region (NER) are inadequate. In this backdrop, a study on the status of education among STs in NER would help us to understand the extent of social inclusiveness in the state.

### Literacy trends

Literacy rate is defined as the percentage of literates among the population aged seven years and above (Census, 2011). At the all-India level, there has been considerable increase in the literacy rates of tribals from 47.1 % in 2001 to 59.0 % in 2011 (Table – 1). Simultaneously, the literacy rates of the tribals of the NER have also increased during the study period. Moreover, the literacy rate of the North Eastern States is higher than the all-India average during the entire period of study. According to the census of India 2011, the literacy rate of the STs of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya is higher than total literacy level of their respective states. This may be due to continuous efforts of the respective state governments to develop the educational level of their deprived people. However, the gap between the literacy rates of the general population and that of the ST population in Tripura is the worst in the NER. This probably indicates below par performance of the state in comparison with other states of the region.

**Table – 1: Literacy rate of total population/ STs – North Eastern States / India: 2001 – 2011**

States/ Country	Literacy rate -2001		Gap in Literacy rate	Literacy rate -2011		Gap in Literacy rate
	Total	ST		Total	ST	
<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	54.34	37.04	17.3	65.4	64.6	0.8
<b>Assam</b>	63.25	62.52	0.73	72.2	72.1	0.1
<b>Manipur</b>	70.53	65.85	4.68	76.9	72.6	4.3
<b>Meghalaya</b>	62.56	61.34	1.22	74.4	74.5	-0.1
<b>Mizoram</b>	88.80	89.34	-0.54	91.3	91.5	-0.2
<b>Nagaland</b>	66.59	65.95	0.64	79.6	80.0	-0.4
<b>Sikkim</b>	68.81	67.14	1.67	81.4	79.7	1.7
<b>Tripura</b>	73.19	56.48	16.71	87.2	79.1	8.1
<b>India</b>	64.84	47.10	17.74	73.0	59.0	14.0

Source: Census of India, 2011

**Table – 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio of STs – North Eastern States / India: 2013-14 to 2015-16**

Level of Education	North Eastern States / India	2013-14			2014-15			2015-16		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
<b>Primary (I-V)</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	131.25	131.56	131.4	131.19	131.48	131.33	129.71	129.34	129.53
	Assam	130.05	134.38	132.15	131.49	136.03	133.71	118.96	122.02	120.46
	Manipur	140.65	146.55	143.49	120.41	126.18	123.18	115.75	120.9	118.22
	Meghalaya	137.84	142.74	140.26	141.12	145.19	143.12	143.55	147.72	145.61
	Mizoram	132.1	127.9	130.04	128.68	124.12	126.44	127.66	123.86	125.9
	Nagaland	118.16	123.1	120.54	97.93	101.65	99.72	95.89	99.77	97.76
	Sikkim	137.4	119.93	128.78	125.99	108.42	117.32	115.62	98.89	107.37
	Tripura	117.04	117.72	117.37	112.9	113.5	113.19	110.15	111.28	110.7
	<b>India</b>	<b>114.4</b>	<b>111.91</b>	<b>113.18</b>	<b>110.61</b>	<b>108.15</b>	<b>109.41</b>	<b>107.78</b>	<b>105.65</b>	<b>106.74</b>
<b>Upper Primary (VI-VIII)</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	112.8	117.54	115.18	120.55	128.08	124.31	126.48	135.15	130.81
	Assam	111.72	117.66	114.63	112.74	120.28	116.43	109.43	115.09	112.19
	Manipur	83.02	88.58	85.68	89.56	97.17	93.2	95.98	104.37	99.99
	Meghalaya	101.93	120.47	111.07	113.95	132.16	122.92	127.2	148.01	137.43
	Mizoram	122.75	120.91	121.85	131.22	129.1	130.19	138.78	136.07	137.46
	Nagaland	101.17	108.66	104.76	94.2	102.13	98.01	97.55	106.61	101.87
	Sikkim	125.49	150.58	137.85	132.24	153.76	142.82	14.01	163.86	151.77
	Tripura	109	107.11	108.09	114.5	115.02	114.75	123.05	124.73	123.86
	<b>India</b>	<b>90.48</b>	<b>92.24</b>	<b>91.33</b>	<b>93.03</b>	<b>95.16</b>	<b>94.05</b>	<b>95.36</b>	<b>98.18</b>	<b>96.71</b>
<b>Elementary (I-VIII)</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	125.09	126.79	125.93	127.77	130.37	129.06	128.71	131.17	129.93
	Assam	123.4	128.27	125.78	124.76	130.37	127.5	115.57	119.56	117.52
	Manipur	120.72	126.57	123.53	110.14	116.57	113.22	109.42	115.64	112.4
	Meghalaya	126.12	135.46	130.72	132.6	141.1	136.78	138.62	147.81	143.14
	Mizoram	129.01	125.62	127.35	129.48	125.69	127.62	131.19	127.53	129.4
	Nagaland	112.34	118.2	115.16	96.71	101.81	99.16	96.42	101.91	99.06
	Sikkim	133.09	131	132.06	128.17	124.18	126.2	123.85	120.6	122.25
	Tripura	114.26	114.09	114.17	113.43	114	113.71	114.28	115.54	114.89
	<b>India</b>	<b>105.89</b>	<b>105.02</b>	<b>105.47</b>	<b>104.39</b>	<b>103.65</b>	<b>104.03</b>	<b>103.41</b>	<b>103.09</b>	<b>103.25</b>
<b>Secondary (IX-X)</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	82.63	76.81	79.7	88.02	83.34	85.66	91.96	87.84	89.88
	Assam	91.7	95.81	93.73	94.09	98.32	96.18	98.28	101.51	99.88
	Manipur	57.73	61.48	59.55	63.32	65.03	64.15	65.08	68.41	66.7
	Meghalaya	64.67	76.5	70.57	73.39	85.88	79.62	80.83	94.8	87.79
	Mizoram	101.67	102.82	102.24	104.42	106.48	105.44	108.61	111.58	110.08
	Nagaland	63.08	67.61	65.27	59.44	65.39	62.31	69.02	74.79	71.8
	Sikkim	82.48	107.02	94.65	99.79	124.07	111.83	107.99	135.41	121.58
	Tripura	109.6	101.8	105.81	113.66	108	110.91	115.11	114.97	115.04
	<b>India</b>	<b>70.29</b>	<b>70.11</b>	<b>70.2</b>	<b>71.75</b>	<b>72.58</b>	<b>72.15</b>	<b>73.74</b>	<b>75.38</b>	<b>74.53</b>
<b>Senior Secondary (XI-XII)</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	61.64	59.94	60.78	65.77	64.04	64.89	66.1	64.3	65.2
	Assam	44.88	43.47	44.19	45.28	44.41	44.86	52.03	49.16	50.63
	Manipur	36.97	36.76	36.86	41.36	38.69	40.03	42.7	42.22	42.46
	Meghalaya	17.61	25.7	21.64	30.38	40.21	35.27	38.6	46.9	42.74
	Mizoram	47.74	50.34	49.02	51.34	51.42	51.38	55.39	59.23	57.29
	Nagaland	32.09	29.31	30.72	32.55	31.09	31.83	36.86	36.3	36.58
	Sikkim	51.47	66.03	58.79	58.88	77.45	68.23	61.2	79.62	70.48
	Tripura	30.71	23.9	27.46	33.37	26.95	30.29	34.53	29.28	32.01
	<b>India</b>	<b>36.72</b>	<b>34.08</b>	<b>35.44</b>	<b>39.76</b>	<b>37.76</b>	<b>38.79</b>	<b>43.76</b>	<b>42.44</b>	<b>43.12</b>
<b>Higher Education</b>	Arunachal Pradesh	33.0	32.3	32.6	35.1	33.0	34.0	34.4	33.2	33.8
	Assam	17.2	16.9	17.1	19.4	17.2	18.2	20.8	18.0	19.3
	Manipur	24.6	25.0	24.8	22.2	19.6	20.9	20.9	18.5	19.7
	Meghalaya	13.7	16.8	15.3	14.9	19.8	17.4	15.7	18.4	17.1
	Mizoram	24.4	23.1	23.8	24.1	23.5	23.8	25.6	23.5	24.5
	Nagaland	12.3	13.8	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.9	13.5	14.8	14.1
	Sikkim	17.1	25.8	21.5	19.6	29.3	24.5	20.0	28.8	24.5
	Tripura	1.1	0.7	0.9	13.9	7.6	10.5	12.9	9.1	10.9
	<b>India</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>

Source: Educational Statistics at a glance 2018, MHRD, Govt. of India

### **Gross Enrolment Ratio:**

The most suitable contextual indicator to study educational status of the states in the region is its student enrolment rate. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for a class-group is the ratio of the number of persons in the class-group to the number of persons in the corresponding official age-group (Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2016). After the enactment of Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009, the overall enrolment of students has moved up at the all-India level. In order to have more clarity on the enrolment of tribals in the various states of the region, probing is done on the variable under consideration between the region and the rest of the country for the period 2013–14 to 2015-16 (Table 2). At the primary level, the GER of ST students of the North Eastern states is far better than the all-India tribal figures except in Nagaland; the same kind of trend can be witnessed for Classes I to VIII. It has to be highlighted that at upper primary level, all the states of the region including Nagaland compare favourably with all-India level. However, for all other levels of education the GER of Nagaland tribal students compare unfavorably with the all-India level. It is interesting to note that for all class groups under consideration, the GER of ST students in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram and Sikkim is higher than the all-India tribal figures. However, the GER falls drastically when it moves from higher to lower class groups, thus highlighting the need for differentiated strategies to address the shortfall in educational system. A gender wise comparison indicates that the GER of the ST girls of upper primary and secondary levels are higher than that of the ST boys in India during 2015–16. Similarly, in almost all the states of the region the ST girls have performed better than their counterparts. But that does not hold well for the remaining levels of education.

### **Drop-out Rates**

Drop Out is a critical indicator reflecting the inability of a given social group to complete a specific level of education. In terms of tribal drop-outs there is a marked disparity between the region and the rest of the country (Table 3). The Table below reveals that at the national level for Classes I to VIII, the dropout rate among the girls was higher (55.4 %) in comparison to that of the boys (54.7 %); but the situation was contrary for primary classes where more male children were dropping out of school during the year 2010–11. As far as the states of the region are concerned, the dropout rate of girls is higher than that of boys in Manipur for both primary and elementary level of education. However, the position of ST girls is better than their

counterparts in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim. At the outset, the drop out rates for Classes I to V in NER states is better in Assam and Sikkim than the all-India performance; and in the case of Classes I to VIII, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura are lagging behind the all-India figures.

**Table – 3. Dropout Rates of Schedule Tribes– North Eastern States / India: 2010 – 2011**

States/Country	Classes I – V			Classes I – VIII		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	44.6	42.7	43.7	54.4	48.4	51.6
Assam	26.8	24.5	25.7	49.7	57.1	53.4
Manipur	47.5	55.4	51.3	74.3	75.7	75.0
Meghalaya	57.5	51.5	54.6	75.7	72.0	73.8
Mizoram	37.6	39.2	38.4	38.2	36.5	37.4
Nagaland	40.5	39.0	39.8	43.4	38.4	41.1
Sikkim	26.8	11.1	19.1	55.5	39.1	47.5
Tripura	41.6	41.5	41.5	60.4	62.8	61.6
India	37.2	33.9	35.6	54.7	55.4	55.0

Source: Statistics of School Education, 2010-2011.

### Gender Parity Index

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education. Analysis on GPI gains prominence because it provides a clear picture of gender equality in education. The all-India profile of STs shows that the primary and secondary classes have the highest GPI and the excepted GPI of higher education is the least (Table 4). The same kind of trend can be witnessed in almost all the states of the region except Sikkim where the GPI of ST students for higher education is not only better than other class groups but also the highest among the NER states for the study period. Over all in the states of the region, the share of the ST girls in all levels of education has shown improvement; however, in most cases, it is lower than that of the SC girls. The same kind of trend can be witnessed at the national level also.

**Table – 4: Gender Parity Index Comparison – North Eastern States / India: 2014-15 to 2015-16**

States/Country	Category	Primary		Upper Primary		Secondary		Senior Secondary		Higher Education	
		2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
	Overall	0.99	0.99	1.04	-	0.97	0.96	1.02	0.99	0.97	0.99
Arunachal Pradesh	SC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ST	1.00	1.00	1.06	1.07	0.95	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.94	0.96
Assam	Overall	1.03	1.03	1.13	-	1.16	1.15	1.08	1.03	0.93	0.90
	SC	1.02	1.03	1.06	1.06	1.12	1.10	0.98	0.96	0.94	0.91
	ST	1.03	1.03	1.07	1.05	1.04	1.03	0.98	0.94	0.89	0.87
Manipur	Overall	1.03	1.03	1.06	-	1.16	1.15	1.08	1.03	0.94	0.94
	SC	1.07	1.05	1.11	1.06	1.04	1.01	0.91	0.97	0.78	0.83
	ST	1.05	1.04	1.08	1.09	1.03	1.05	0.94	0.99	0.88	0.88
Meghalaya	Overall	1.03	1.03	1.16	-	1.16	1.16	1.26	1.18	1.07	1.04
	SC	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.09	1.17	0.75	0.80
	ST	1.03	1.03	1.16	1.16	1.17	1.17	1.32	1.22	1.33	1.18
	Overall	0.97	0.97	0.99	-	1.02	1.03	1.01	1.08	0.98	0.91

Mizoram	SC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.80	0.50
	ST	0.96	0.97	0.98	0.98	1.02	1.03	1.00	1.07	0.98	0.92
	Overall	1.03	1.03	1.08	-	1.07	1.08	0.97	1.00	1.06	1.10
Nagaland	SC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ST	1.04	1.04	1.08	1.09	1.10	1.08	0.96	0.98	1.13	1.10
	Overall	0.92	0.92	1.10	-	1.14	1.11	1.26	1.25	1.14	1.05
Sikkim	SC	0.97	1.01	-	-	1.25	-	1.16	1.14	0.70	0.62
	ST	0.86	0.86	1.16	1.17	1.24	1.25	1.32	1.30	1.50	1.44
	Overall	1.01	1.01	1.03	-	1.01	1.04	0.86	0.92	0.67	0.70
Tripura	SC	1.00	1.00	1.03	1.03	1.02	1.02	0.85	0.89	0.56	0.63
	ST	1.01	1.01	1.00	1.01	0.95	1.00	0.81	0.85	0.54	0.70
	Overall	1.03	1.03	1.09	-	1.01	1.02	0.99	1.01	0.92	0.92
India	SC	1.02	1.03	1.09	1.10	1.03	1.04	1.03	1.04	0.91	0.91
	ST	0.98	0.98	1.02	1.03	1.01	1.02	0.95	0.97	0.81	0.83

Source: Educational Statistics at a glance 2018, MHRD, Govt. of India

## Grant-in-Aid

Grant-in-Aid is a financial assistance made available by the central government to the state government for a specific purpose. One of the main objectives of providing grants is to achieve equalization of educational opportunities and, in that sense, it becomes all the more important to analyze the releases of grant-in-aid for the ST students of NER and the centre (Table 5). In the period 2015-16, out of a total number of beneficiaries under post-matric scholarship scheme, about 20% were from NER alone; but, for the same period the number of beneficiaries under pre-matric scholarship scheme was only 8 % of the total. Assam is the most benefitted state from NER under post-matric scholarship scheme whereas Tripura has received more under pre-matric scholarship scheme during the study period.

**Table 5. Grant-in-Aid and No. of beneficiaries under the scheme of Post-Matric and Pre-Matric Scholarship for ST Students – North Eastern States/ India: 2014 – 15 to 2015-16**

States/ Country	Post – Matric Scholarship			
	2014 – 15		2015 – 16	
	Amount (in lakhs)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in lakhs)	No. of Beneficiaries
Arunachal Pradesh	2.29	630	1137.61	0
Assam	1114.00	102800	6748.28	116693
Manipur	3615.48	57828	3588.00	66928
Meghalaya	438.00	79011	3274.61	74608
Mizoram	886.00	62410	4927.91	57330
Nagaland	2329.59	40133	2646.34	45140
Sikkim	414.00	2705	400.00	3053
Tripura	974.82	22261	1700.00	28374
<b>India</b>	<b>58784.09</b>	<b>2106403</b>	<b>85714.55</b>	<b>2033741</b>
	Pre – Matric Scholarship			
Arunachal Pradesh	0.00	0	0.00	0
Assam	0.00	0	0.00	0
Manipur	496.05	40126	0.00	0
Meghalaya	0.00	0	0.00	0
Mizoram	0.00	0	0.00	0
Nagaland	0.00	0	851.47	42048
Sikkim	7.80	408	0.00	0
Tripura	678.75	44598	1303.60	53516
<b>India</b>	<b>19305.533</b>	<b>1118608</b>	<b>22868.95</b>	<b>1262068</b>

Source: Scheduled Tribes Annual Report, 2016 – 17

## Conclusion

This Paper has made an effort to study the educational status of the Scheduled Tribes in the North East Region of India at the macro level. The results of the study indicate that Literacy rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Drop out Ratio and Gender Parity Index of the tribes in NER has made qualitative progress; however, there are disparities among the states of the region; and this has to be dealt with exclusively. For instance, the gap in literacy rate of the total population and that of the STs in Tripura, its poor GER and dropout rates are matters of grave concern for the state authorities. In this case, the only solace is that the government has allotted more funds under pre-matric scholarship scheme. Even though the literacy rate of the tribals of Nagaland is second only to that of Mizoram, its GER is below the all-India averages. Therefore, this has to be taken care of with appropriate policy intervention. Assam and Sikkim are the only two states of the region that have consistently performed well in both GER and dropout rates. As a matter of fact, Sikkim is the only state which has better GPI for higher education among the ST students. Likewise, the performances of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are noteworthy in terms of student enrolment. However, all this progress can be considered significant only when it is compared with rest of the figures for the country; unfortunately the figures aforementioned pale in comparison with the all-India averages. We must insist here that the present study is limited in the sense that it does not takes into account of other important parameters like pass percentage of ST students in various disciplines at the level of higher education, their learning facilities and consequent outcomes. For the progress of tribal education, educational institutions should integrate teaching with the background and lifestyle of the tribals so that it would evoke in them interest in attaining higher standards of education. To conclude, designing and implementing region and area specific educational programmes and policies are the need of the hour to improve the educational status of the tribes in the North East Region of India.

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