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'THE EDUCATION QUESTION' FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ADIVASIS: CONDITIONS, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

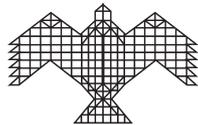


NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

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PERSPECTIVE OF ADIVASIS:
CONDITIONS, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report has been submitted to UNICEF, New Delhi by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore. It is based on a review project undertaken as part of the Education Portfolio of the institute. Drawing on secondary data, insights and ideas from an all-India consultation meet at NIAS, four regional / zonal consultations, data from a project in Chamarajanagar district (Karnataka), and select reviews of educational programmes, this report presents a broad perspective of Adivasi education in India. While we recognise that the educational challenges faced by the tribal people of North-East India are significant and require immediate attention, they could not be represented adequately in this report. We hope an in-depth study of educational issues of the North-Eastern region can be taken up separately.

We would like to clarify that while this report is an appraisal of the policies, administrative structures, institutions and programmes that are intended to cater to the educational needs of Adivasis, it is not meant to be a summative review of their educational status. Reversing the dominant 'deficit approach', by which the lack of adequate educational attainment is typically ascribed to Adivasis themselves, this report situates itself within the context of the varied forms of displacement, disenfranchisement and violence, which mark the lives of most Adivasis. The challenge of the 'education question' among Adivasis is sought to be understood through an analysis of the policy orientations, structures and processes of educational administration, institutions and the constraints within which they operate and the myriad in-built forms of exclusion of the dominant education system. In addition, some attention is paid to the impact of mainstream education on the lives of Adivasis and the continued marginalisation of their knowledge, culture, languages and lives. Our review of the policies, administrative structures, institutions and their impact indicate that the Adivasis receive the lowest cost, poorest quality and indifferently administered education.

Based on these details, this report highlights the following as key problems:

- Overall, the mainstream education system does not recognise the contemporary conditions, predicament, diversity of aspirations and needs of most Adivasis.
- Systemic (political, policy, administrative levels) marginalisation and invisibilisation of Adivasi interests account for the failure to provide adequate, relevant and quality education at all levels (elementary, secondary and higher) to most Adivasis.
- The education administration apparatus that oversees the delivery of educational programmes has been developed and deployed in a mode of assimilation and domination which only reproduces the range of inequalities and disadvantages that most Adivasis face.
- The paucity of competent monitoring and accountability structures has negated the possibility of complete utilisation of the new allocations of increased funds and programmes developed for Adivasis, thereby reducing the positive impact that might have been possible.

- Diverse administrative experimentation including local governance, decentralisation and community participation has been introduced as policy reforms, but local governance has not been implemented in reality.
- Institutions (such as Ashramshalas, Tribal Research Institutes) developed and deployed primarily for Adivasis are inadequate in their reach, content, and functioning. There is an urgent need to re-think the orientation, operation and impact of these institutions.
- The neglect of Adivasi knowledge forms, languages and cultural practices has been detrimental to the cultural core of Adivasis and to the knowledge corpus of the nation.
- New curricular approaches such as multilingualism and locally-specific education have been few and far between. Retaining the positive ethos of Adivasi life-worlds while also enabling them to engage with the larger world continues to be the major challenge.
- Affirmative Action/Reservation programmes for Adivasis (as Scheduled Tribes) in higher educational institutions have not translated into assuring them improved access to education nor have they resulted in net benefits for the community as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the key challenges and problems of the existing education system and in order to make equality of educational opportunity for Adivasis a reality, the following recommendations are made to re-vision, re-structure and re-constitute the educational system, so that it can cater to the needs and aspirations of Adivasis and also enable them to be equal and empowered citizens of India.

(a) Policy: Broad-based democratic exercises should facilitate the development of comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the existing problems. Viewed from this perspective, it would appear that the Adivasis have not received detailed attention in education policy making. Their invisibilisation needs to be addressed by formulating new initiatives (at the Central and State levels) that are integral to the policies of the dominant education system and are also stand-alone policies. This would involve creative development of programmes that are built around the knowledge, identity and languages of Adivasis, which would, however, also enable their participation in the larger society. New realities including large scale seasonal migration must be addressed by facilitating more open structures of schooling and educational access. Recognition or certification of varied knowledge forms and innovative learning, leading to a diversity of livelihoods and vocations needs to be facilitated.

(b) Structures: The need for synchrony between the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and other allied ministries where a plethora of programmes (many in discord with each other) are deployed is urgent. The linkages between central schemes and their state-based implementation need to be streamlined.

(c) Institutions: The functioning of the Tribal Research and Training Institutes (TRTIs), and the Ashramshalas needs to be revisited so as to make them engaged and responsive institutions. In many cases, the introduction of new institutions including those run by private agencies and religious and welfare groups needs to be reviewed. The lack of monitoring of such institutions poses a problem and may in the long run be detrimental to the broader philosophy of education. New institutions should involve participation, decision-making and monitoring by Adivasi communities. Democratic decentralisation in the true sense will involve community inputs and ownership. Strengthening of School Monitoring Committees is also a way to ensure this.

(d) Administration: The following steps need to be undertaken so as to democratise, professionalise and facilitate transparency in the educational system for Adivasis:

Establish a special cell for Adivasi education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development or set up a desk with a Special Officer supervising all programmes, funds and data related to Adivasis and their education.

- Currently, Ashramshalas/Vidyalayas etc., are run by several administrative units (Education Department, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Zilla Parishad, Forest Department, ITDA among others). There is an urgent need to review the functioning and impact of these institutions and facilitate changes, so that these schools are not parallel and inadequate (as they are at present). Instead, efforts should be made to ensure that they are comparable in funding, functioning, administration and impact.
- Bridge the huge information gap that exists between various schemes of the different ministries and the people, so that the schemes may be better utilised.
- Revisit the current classification of Scheduled Tribes /Denotified Tribes, particularly in the context of its variations across many states. Rethinking of official classification is also crucial in order to make sure that the most vulnerable communities are not excluded as they may fall out of these categories.
- Address hurdles in obtaining caste/tribal-certificates. Issues of seat capturing (in educational institutions) by newly classified 'Scheduled Tribes' and the problem of representation needs to be addressed.
- Develop a specialised cadre of teachers for Adivasi areas with focus on recruiting representative members from varied Adivasi communities. Emphasise improved teacher training (including integrated and multi-language abilities, new pedagogies etc.), professionalism, equal pay and career growth opportunities to such teachers. Develop additional teacher education programme/modules including incentives for teachers working in Adivasi schools.
- Improve processes and periodicity of reviews of programmes. Allow for in-built monitoring and review processes by educationists, elected representatives and members of civil society groups.

(e) Innovations in curricula, pedagogies, texts and certification: Most innovations in education have been generated by alternative schools and by a small number of individuals and organisations. The innovations include new teaching-learning materials, pedagogies and some texts. These need to be enhanced and programmes to facilitate inter-institutional sharing and dissemination of such innovations must be given priority and fund support. Scaffolding these innovations, instead of subjecting them to bureaucratic norms, will go a long way in enhancing innovative educational schemes for deprived groups.

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INTRODUCTION: 'THE EDUCATION QUESTION'

The National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, through its *Education Portfolio* initiatives, seeks to link research with advocacy and policy analysis. This report, resulting from NIAS' engagement with the *Education Portfolio*, is an attempt to provide a framework with which to approach and understand the 'education question' among Adivasis. The absence of a comprehensive all-India perspective paper/report on the issues related to education of Adivasis and the urgent need to interrogate the impact of the dominant education system on the lives of marginalised and disadvantaged groups compelled us to undertake this project. In addition, our experiences and reflections after a five-year long (2002-2007) involvement with an action research project that sought to enhance elementary education, especially in the Ashramshalas in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka¹ highlighted for us not only the complexities and challenges that Adivasis face with the dominant education system (in its provisioning, administration, content and impact), but also indicated the need to initiate policy and programmatic changes at state and national levels. This report pays attention

to the larger political-economic contexts in which most Adivasis live; it identifies trends, reviews policies, flags key issues and suggests alternatives that can be taken forward.

The report has been developed after a national level consultation at NIAS (September 27-28, 2010) with educationists and representatives from Adivasi organisations followed by several regional consultations with various personnel from state departments of education and tribal welfare, Adivasi groups, members of social movements and the civil society at large (See Appendix I for a summary of zone-wise trends and concerns). Another consultation was held at the Adivasi Academy, Tejgadh, Gujarat to review key issues, consolidate the report, and review main recommendations. Due to unavoidable circumstances, we could not hold regional consultations in the states of Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. With regard to the North-East region, we acknowledge that the educational challenges of the Tribals of this region are a matter of national concern. However, given the mixed nature of the educational attainments of the North-East region's tribes, and the specificities

1 The project entitled, 'District Quality Education Project (DQEP)' or *Vidyankura*, was developed at National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore and was supported primarily by the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai. Details of the project and its outputs are available on the website: [<http://59.90.235.217/site/vidya.htm>].

and complexities of the North-Eastern hill states, it is important to have a separate review report to give due consideration to the problems of this region. We hope UNICEF and other organisations will take up such a review.

1.1. Beyond Access: Understanding 'the Education Question'

Most studies pertaining to education of Adivasis often document with concern their low levels of access, enrolment and achievement. Yet, such a perspective— of either the absence or failure in education— draws primarily on a 'deficit approach', in which the peculiarities and perceived shortcomings of a community are deployed to explain and/ or frame the problem rather than to question or analyse the dominant system. In undertaking a review of education among Adivasis we seek to go beyond the conventional approach that rests entirely on assessing 'educational achievement' in terms of the parameters of enrolment, retention and achievement (ERA). While useful in some ways, such an approach becomes locked into compulsions of producing a discourse of 'educational outcomes' that is often de-linked from a host of allied processes that shape the very outcomes of education. As we chart a trajectory that goes beyond strictly-defined and inflexible approaches, we seek to foreground a method that relates educational issues with that of the economic, cultural and political conditions in which most Adivasis live. In this context, we invert the question: 'Why have Adivasis failed to access education?' and instead consider 'Why and how has the dominant system failed to provide quality education

to Adivasis'? Further, interrogating the very quality of education requires us to consider the impact of such education on Adivasis. To what extent has access to education and educational opportunity endowed Adivasi communities as a whole? As reports across the nation indicate, in a period of intense fragmentation and dispersal of Adivasi communities, there is little evidence to indicate any holistic and integral consolidation of Adivasi lives through education. Instead, given partial and limited access, there is growing inequality within Adivasi communities. As a result, education is increasingly becoming a 'contradictory resource' making possible upward mobility for only a few and creating or reinforcing social divisions.² How can education be promoted so as to act as a 'substantial good' retaining the positive elements of Adivasi communities, while also preparing them for the larger political-economic contexts in which they live?

In interrogating the impact of the dominant education system on the largely marginalised and disadvantaged groups of Adivasis, we have attempted to review the policies, programmes and educational institutions that are specifically intended for them. The opening questions we have posed, therefore, relate to the connection between mainstream/dominant systems of education and Adivasi life-worlds and life opportunities. In the course of our analyses, we have sought to identify some issues and perspectives, which we hope can lead towards fashioning of new and alternative programmes to promote a meaningful and viable education system that would take seriously the interests and needs of Adivasis.

2 See Froerer, Peggy. 'Education, Inequality and Social Mobility in Central India', *European Journal of Development Research*, advance online publication, 8 September 2011 (doi:10.1057/ejdr.2011.43)

1.2. Demographics: Identities and Terms/Nomenclatures

The term 'indigenous' is not officially recognised in India since it would mean that a majority of Indians are non-indigenous, non-original inhabitants of the Indian territory. Such a position flags the politics and power in the very process of naming, identification and classification of people by the State. 'Tribal', 'Adivasi', 'Scheduled Tribe (ST)', 'Vanvasi' and 'Girijan' are the terms that are used in India to refer to the indigenous communities, though each of these terms has its own history and rationale.³ For the purposes of this report, we use the term 'Adivasi' to refer to groups identified as 'Tribals,' 'Scheduled Tribes' and 'Denotified Tribes' across India⁴.

There are more than six hundred Adivasi/ Tribal⁵ communities in India and most of them are among the most disadvantaged social groups. As per Census 2001⁶, the Adivasi/ Tribal population of India was 84,326,240 of which 77,338,597 people were in rural areas and 6,987,643 in urban areas. A total of seventy-five districts record more than 50 per cent Adivasi/ Tribal population. While forty-one of these districts are in the North-

Eastern region of India, other states including Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have three or more districts with Adivasi/ Tribal populations that amount to more than 50 percent of the district population. The states with large percentage of tribal population include Mizoram (94.5 percent), Nagaland (89.1 percent) and Meghalaya (85.9 percent), while the state of Goa has the lowest proportion of tribal people (0.04 per cent).⁷ Among the Union Territories, Lakshadweep (93.2 percent) has the highest percentage of tribal population, while Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the least (8.3 percent). However, in terms of numbers, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have much higher tribal populations than the smaller states where tribal people constitute a majority. Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Pondicherry and Punjab have recorded zero Adivasi population. Sarchhip district in Mizoram has the highest proportion of population (98.1 percent), while Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh has the lowest (0.01 percent).⁸ Scheduled Tribes in rural areas constitute the most numbers below the poverty line although their position vis-à-vis the Scheduled Castes is

3 There is also the politics of appropriation, which is closely attached to these terms. Vanvasi (forest dwellers) and Girijan (Hill dwellers) have been increasingly used in recent years by the Hindu right to foreground the Sanskrit-based cultural interpretation, which sees Adivasi communities as part of the larger Hindu fold. The practice of 'renaming' helps erase the question of indigeneity of Adivasi communities on the one hand while articulating the 'politics of claiming' on the other.

4 Given that the Indian government uses the terms 'Scheduled Tribe (ST)' and 'Tribal', these terms also occur in this report, particularly in connection with the discussion of official discourse

5 Since the term 'Tribal' is preferred in the Sixth Schedule areas of the North-East, we use both the terms in this section.

6 At the time of writing this report, provisional data from 2011 were available, but not the disaggregated data.

7 Source: 'Statewise Tribal Population Percentage in India (2001 Census).' Available at: <http://tribal.nic.in/index2.asp?sublinkid=699&langid=1>. Accessed on: February 13, 2011.

8 Census of India 2001. Available at: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/scst.aspx. Accessed on February 13, 2011.

slightly better when it comes to urban areas. As per official estimates, in Odisha, 75.6 percent of the tribal rural population lived below the poverty line; and in urban areas, in both Odisha and Uttarakhand more than 60 per cent of the tribal population was below poverty line.⁹

1.3. Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes

Denotified Tribes¹⁰ and nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNST) have rarely come into the purview of independent India's policy-making process. In fact, few of these tribes have been enumerated,¹¹ and even those that have, are included in the existing administrative-social groupings (e.g. Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes). Further, the classification varies across states. Even the 2011 Census has not considered counting them. In February 2010, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Registrar General and the Census Commissioner on a petition by a person from the DNST community, requesting the court to

direct that these communities be classified and enumerated in the second phase of Census 2011. India's Draft National Policy on Tribals (2006) also does not include any discussion on the plight of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes. A National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes began functioning only in 2006 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. Maharashtra is among the few states to have identified and classified the DNSTs and also made separate reservations for them.¹² Surprisingly, the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes does not provide a list of these tribes on its website.¹³ In the year 2006, the ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment constituted a Technical Advisory Group to look into the problems of DNST communities and deliberate on specific measures and recommendations. Appendix II provides an overview of the DNST communities and information about the advisory group and its recommendations.

9 Source: Planning Commission. 'Percentage of Population (Social Group wise) Below Poverty Line by States 2004-05. From Ministry of Tribal Affairs website. Available at: <http://tribal.nic.in/index1.asp?linkid=333&langid=1>. Accessed on February 13, 2011.

10 Denotified Tribes are those tribes that had been listed under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, passed by the British government on the recommendation of the 'Thuggee and Dacoity Department,' which had observed that certain tribes in north India, such as the Meenas of Shajanpur village in Punjab, were systematic and habitual offenders who needed to be dealt with by bringing about a separate law. The law was repealed in 1952, on the basis of the Ayyangar Committee's recommendations, and the tribes were 'denotified.'

11 Various sources put the numbers of DNST at around 60 million and the numbers of Nomadic and Denotified Tribes at around 300 and 200, respectively.

12 Vimukta Jati/ Denotified Tribes: 3per cent; Nomadic Tribes – B (28+7 tribes): 2.5per cent; Nomadic Tribes – C (1 caste – Dhanger): 3.5per cent; Nomadic Tribes – D (1 caste – Vanjari): 2per cent (Source: [http://www.firstfoundation.in/socio_casteslist_Maha.htm#Nomadic Tribes \(NTs\)](http://www.firstfoundation.in/socio_casteslist_Maha.htm#Nomadic Tribes (NTs)))

13 Available at: <http://ncdnsnt.gov.in/> Accessed on April 10, 2011.

2

CONTEXTS AND CONDITIONS OF ADIVASI LIFE-WORLDS

2.1. Erosion

Over the past decades, several tensions and contradictions have developed between Adivasis and the Indian State, particularly with respect to the questions of representation and participation. This largely emanates from the fact that the standard constitutional and policy orientation towards Adivasis stems from protectionist and idealised definitions that arose from the influence of Verrier Elwin over Nehru and on the subsequent post-colonial nation's relationship to 'tribes'. Recent movements among Adivasis and tribals have been critical¹⁴ of this construction of the 'tribal genius' and have questioned the resulting isolation and in-built indifference to their life conditions and have subsequently asserted the need for more equal opportunities. Yet, despite these criticisms it is only fair to recognise that early policies of tribal autonomy, even when not fully implemented or upheld, have provided for a veneer of state-based protectionism that have enabled a modicum of independence, recognition, and cultural rights. Such policies also resulted in varied histories of the march of modernity over Adivasis.

The current predicament of a vast majority of Adivasis is one of sharp erosion in their livelihoods and their life-worlds. Despite assurances of autonomy (the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, the Panchsheel, PESA 1996, Forests Rights Act 2006) and attempts of focused addressal of Adivasi and Tribal issues (including the establishment of an umbrella outfit, the National Council for Tribal Welfare), there are counter structures and programmes that defy the enabling of genuinely decentralised autonomy and the guarantee of democratic participation. For instance, the recently approved 'Integrated Action Plan' in Tribal areas overrides the representation of Adivasis in local issues in decision-making processes and arrogates powers of governance to bureaucrats and specialists.

In addition to such contradictory and conflicting measures, the forces of fast-expanding capital, along with the top-down deployment of development models have resulted in large scale displacement in Adivasi regions. Global capital's access to mineral wealth has also intensified violence of various forms and degrees¹⁵.

14 For example, see Biswas, Prasenjit and Suklabaidya, Chandan. *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-east India*. New Delhi: Sage. 2008.

15 For an overview of the manifestation of forms of violence see, Mehrotra, Deepti. *Burning Bright: Irom Sharmila*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 2010.

Conditions of conflict are further complicated by intra- and inter-tribe tensions and differences. The internal complexities include the following:

- The growing distantiation between ecological and social complexes, which has disrupted the earlier symbiotic relationship between livelihoods and cultural life (and the in-built safety nets)¹⁶.
- The spread of economic models in which Adivasis occupy the lowest rung, oftentimes bearing high levels of risks and disadvantages.
- The loss of local and community-based food security and the growing need for the State to provide basic needs.
- The deployment of state-based institutions and systems, which simultaneously assimilate and dominate them.
- The growing trend of subscribing either to identity (and primordial) politics and/ or religious fundamentalism, which envelop them in different ways.
- Under conditions of widespread displacement of Adivasis from their provenance, there is need to recognise that large numbers of them are no longer in livelihoods or contexts that are primarily forest or agriculture based. Instead, many now eke out lives as daily wage workers and have a presence in construction sites, commercial agriculture, plantations

and in the domestic service sector catering to the urban areas and industrial belts. In all of these Adivasis are integrated into the most precarious and insecure regimes of casual and informal labour.

- There is a growing trend among educated Adivasi youth, due to lack of opportunities, to allow themselves to be 'lumpenised' or to be roped into varied forms of violence.

In addition to all these patterns and trends, we highlight some dimensions of erosion, which have reached alarming levels. Conditions and forms of violence against Adivasis have become extant and are particularly visible in the mineral rich central Indian belt, which is now experiencing intense forms of violence between State and anti-State forces.¹⁷ The result is the widespread destruction of Adivasi homes, livelihoods and larger support structure including health care, schools and spaces for civic action.¹⁸ The disruption of livelihoods and widespread displacement has imposed further hardships on the already fragile food security of Adivasi families. Adivasi children form the majority in conditions of poverty and suffer from multiple forms of deprivation, which include education, nutrition, immunisation and civic facilities (of water, shelter and sanitation)¹⁹. Malnutrition, especially among young children, and intensification of child labour has become rampant in the region.²⁰ Another serious issue

16 See Ratnagar, Shereen. *Being Tribal*, Delhi: Primus Books. 2010.

17 The arrest of Soni Sori in October 2011 and subsequent physical torture at the hands of the police is a grim reminder of the violence that routinely gets unleashed upon Adivasis.

18 See report by Nandini Sundar (2010); as also reports in various journals and newspapers. One journal that has consistently reported on the violence in the region and the impact on children and schooling has been *Tehelka*. See Vol. 7 Issue 50, 2010 for details.

19 See Rustagi, Preet, Mishra, Sunil Kumar and Mehta, Balwant Singh. *Scheduled Tribe Children in India: Multiple Deprivations and Locational Disadvantages*. IHD-UNICEF Working Paper Series(8). 2011.

20 See Rustagi et al (2011) and country reports of World Food Programme, Available at: <http://www.wfp.org/countries/india>.

that has not received adequate attention is that of the trafficking of children from the tribal belts into other regions. Distanced from their families, living in places that are vastly different from their provenance and exploited in various forms, the rights of these children are violated in multiple ways. A lack of community control over access to resources, sustainable livelihoods and autonomy was highlighted by the report of the National Committee on Forest Rights Act²¹. More recently, a summary of the contemporary predicament of Adivasi communities in India has been made by the Supreme Court judgment in the Salwa Judum case²². Referring to the conditions of Adivasis in the central Indian belt, the judgment states, “The primordial problem lies deep within the socioeconomic policies pursued by the State on a society that was already endemically, and horrifically, suffering from gross inequalities.”²³ The judgment goes on to highlight the exploitation of forest and mineral resources by Indian and transnational companies and the overwhelming forms of violence that have been perpetrated against the Adivasis²⁴.

It is in the context of such forms of displacement, disenfranchisement and violence, together with the lowest levels of ‘educational achievement’ that we must now turn to the ‘education question’

among Adivasis. Thus framed, the ‘education question²⁵’ must enable us to respond and direct our attention to a series of sub-questions: How and what type of educational practices can be envisaged? What purpose and impact must education have? How can education enable the addressal of the range of disadvantages that most Adivasis face? What knowledge forms, from the local cultures and from the external worlds will facilitate and contribute to their abilities to be autonomous and equal citizens? How can education scaffold and retain advantageous elements of their culture and yet enable them to engage with varied forms of modernity and democracy?

In order to address these problems, it is important to review and assess what the impact of mainstream education has been on Adivasi life worlds. To this end, the key questions we would like to raise are:

- What has been the impact of the dominant and current educational system on Adivasis?
- What are the systems, institutions, programmes and processes by which the dominant system undertakes to provision education for them?
- What accounts for the much lower and

21 Ministry of Environment and Forests, *Manthan: Report of the National Committee on Forests Rights Act*. A joint committee of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Government of India: 2010.

22 Supreme Court of India (*Writ Petition (Civil) No 250 of 2007. Nandini Sundar and others Versus State of Chhatisgarh*). Supreme Court of India, 2011.

23 Ibid. (Section 71, pp.51)

24 Ibid.

25 We acknowledge Nandini Sundar’s seminal essay, which focused on the “Adivasi Question”. See Sundar, Nandini ‘Social and Political Exclusion, Religious Inclusion: The Indigenous ‘Question’ in Indian Education’, *Report. Asian Anthropology*, Vol. 9. 2010.

poorer educational and career opportunities among Adivasis?

- What are the alternatives that can facilitate the establishment of more relevant and appropriate educational practices?

Keeping these foundational questions in view, this report provides an analysis of policies and administrative structures, and assesses the impact of various educational institutions and programmes.

EDUCATION POLICY: INVISIBILISATION, EXCLUSION AND SYMBOLIC INCLUSION

As stated in the opening section, the questions and concerns of Adivasi education must go beyond what appears on the surface, even as the surface scenario is deeply disturbing. By engaging with the larger, complex questions, we can perhaps obtain a better understanding of ‘why’ and ‘how’ the statistics of education among Adivasis indicate ‘low achievement’. It would be useful to also reiterate the points made earlier about the fact that the current conditions of Adivasi education are neither ahistorical nor separate from realities of governance. The official policy in education, for instance, tells us a story of ‘invisibility’, ‘exclusion’ and ‘tokenism’ when we begin to examine it from the Adivasi point of view. The reality of our public education, with all its components including policy making at the top, subsequent mediations at every stage and implementation at various levels have rarely addressed the concerns of Adivasis.

Systematic exclusion in education has been carried over from the restrictive caste codes that determined who had access to learning, knowledge production and practice. In the 19th century, with institutionalisation of teaching and learning in India under the British, schools became places to educate young learners in a variety of subjects and skills. For the historically

outcaste communities however, the caste character of the formal schooling system became a crucial determinant that affected their access, understanding and participation in education. By design and through overt and covert practices, education became part of the systematic exclusion of non-elite students. For instance, the present formal education system is such that Adivasis can hardly identify, enjoy, thrive and participate in educational institutions. Neither the makeup of the education system nor the lack of participation by Adivasis is by accident. This brings us to the condition of ‘invisibilisation’ that also marks the educational experience of the disadvantaged. Even as they participate in formal education as students, teachers, parents, staff and school administrators, Adivasi people can never hope to find Adivasi knowledge, ethos, traditions, histories and languages as part of their educational experience.

In addition to the impact of these forms of erasure and silence, Adivasis are portrayed in stereotypical ways that are based on perceptions of their primitiveness and closeness to nature. Continued legacies of exclusion and invisibilisation loom large on the discourse of inclusion of Adivasis in all forms of public life including educational institutions. Recent

official discourses of inclusion and diversity have been largely symbolic gestures since they do not acknowledge, let alone address the historic and systemic aspects of exclusion of Adivasis. Such forms of inclusion of disadvantaged communities are not framed within the political-ethical commitment to social justice. As a result, the celebration of inclusion does not give voice and decision making power to the oppressed.

Why is the educational experience of Adivasis marked with a characteristic absence in policy literature? What accounts for the limited attempts of textbook analysis from the perspectives of Adivasis? Why have there not been significant and comprehensive impact studies? While centralised policy-making in its generic character has consequences for all, those become severe for disadvantaged communities. In addition to centrally supported plans, a host of schemes and programmes are initiated by state governments, which add to the complexity of studying policy and its impact. India's public policy on indigenous populations shares close links with that of the colonial policy, which sought to plug the tribal economies into western models of capital accumulation. The colonial regime exercised massive land-grab in the tribal belt, simultaneously attempting to 'settle' the tribes and classify them. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 became part of the successive legislation that described some tribal communities as 'habitually criminal', thereby enforcing restrictions on their movement and keeping surveillance. The criminalisation of tribes occurred in the aftermath of several tribal revolts against the British on issues of land,

forests and autonomy. The Bhil revolt (1818), the Kol rebellion (1833), the Santhal rebellion (1855), the rebellion of 1857 and the Birsa Munda rebellion (1895) were among the many forms of organised resistance against the British, the money lenders and outsiders. In the early 20th century, a number of tribal communities joined forces with the non-cooperation movement and attempted to forge a political space within the Congress party around Adivasi issues. Colonial policy on education was driven by forces of enlightenment and the necessity of workforce creation. The first policy document dealing with education, the Charter Act (1813), hoped to revive 'the encouragement of the learned natives of India ... for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India' (Naik, 1997; Kumar 2006:24)²⁶. Taking the argument of 'cognitive superiority of English education' further, the first education commission chaired by F.W. Hunter (1882) called for a 'downward filtration of western scientific knowledge' with tribals at the very end of the hierarchy. A blend of English and vernacular schools were established by the end of 19th century and these institutions catered to different types of needs. The idea of forming a national system of education also began to take root around this time, largely as a response to the political climate that tied reforms to nationalism. Consequently, the first Congress of National Education at Wardha in 1937 approved the proposals on 'free and compulsory education', 'mother-tongue as the medium of instruction', skill-based education and self-sufficient schools. Building on the concept that

26 See: Kumar, Ravi. *The Crisis of Elementary Education in India*. New Delhi: Sage. 2006. Naik, J. P. *The Education Commission and After*. New Delhi: APH Publishing. 1997.

mass education is a political project, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was formed and the committee drafted a report on Post-War Educational Development in India, also called the Sargeant Report, in 1944. The committee put forward the idea of equality of educational opportunity, calling explicitly for a common system. But as these documents reveal, the expected and desired students/beneficiaries of English education were upper castes and classes who were historically part of the process of teaching and learning. While missionary schools had been set up in several predominantly tribal regions since the 19th century, the policy and public texts on education rarely paid attention to the particularities of tribal education.

3.1. Adivasi Education in the Post-Independence Era

The imprints of colonial governance accompanied with logics of unbridled capitalism can be seen easily in the official discourse, particularly as it relates to questions of Adivasi autonomy, self-governance, legitimacy and claims of authentic history. The official stance of the independent Indian State on issues such as land tenure, natural resources and cultural identity of Adivasis is fraught with tensions and contradictions. The orientations with which education pertaining to the Adivasis is designed and deployed can be explained in terms of the following three lenses that we believe have been part of much of the cultural politics of post-colonial education policy: Nationalism, Culturalism, and Development Discourse.

3.2. Nationalism and Educational Policy

Adivasis have found themselves to be the object of state-crafted knowledge regarding

administration, policy, legal provision and general discourse of welfare. In response to the large tribal population and their demands, the post-colonial state positioned itself within the two opposite-ends of policy: Integration and Isolation. The ambivalence becomes especially clear in the context of the ‘five principles of governance of Adivasi region’ proposed in 1955. The ‘Panchsheel’ principles, often hailed as a welcome step towards the policy of respect and autonomy of tribal regions, were a product of the changed geopolitics including decolonisation and recognitions of autonomy in/of newly emerging frontiers. The five principles include:

- 1) No direct imposition of rules on tribal areas.
- 2) No encroachment on tribal lands and forests.
- 3) Encouragement of tribal administrative structures.
- 4) Refrain from over-administration of tribal areas.
- 5) Long term development strategies over short-term.

In reality, however, the Indian state engaged in a host of actions contrary to the five principles. As highlighted earlier, a series of policies, political trends and economic priorities have been put in place, but have not led to the realisation of the stated policies of tribal autonomy, self-determination and rights to sustainable living. The impact of these have been that educational policies have also reflected the larger subversions of Adivasi interests and have not recognised the autonomy and specific requirements of Adivasis and have instead made them an appendage of a larger dominant system. How these dominant structures and institutions of educational policy

and administration impact on Adivasis is evident in the dismal functioning and impact of these institutions (elaborated in later sections of this report).

3.3. Culturalism

A rather loaded word, the construct of 'culture' is used liberally and loosely to define and identify the Adivasi. The folklore, art and cultural practices of 'tribals' are often the only way in which their life is understood by dominant groups. Their culture is seen either as exotic and unique, or as backward and outside modernity. Such representations overlook the diversities and the specificities of cultural complexes of different tribal societies. In addition, there has also been an oversight of history of change within these societies and their relationships to dominant societies. In such contexts, the deployments of culture as a tool of resistance and assertions for new identities have also been overlooked.

While most policies in India recognise the rights of Adivasis to a culturally embedded education (including language), in reality much of it has not been realised. The fact that the content, orientation, curricula, syllabi and texts are all primarily from the dominant society testifies this.

3.4. Development Discourse in Education

In the last two decades, there have been some shifts in the objectives and goals associated with the promotion of mass, elementary education. For one, it is firmly embedded within the growing currency of the discourse of development and economic growth that rests on a set of identifiable

and measurable traits. Simply put, greater access and higher levels of education is understood to be connected to informed personal and public choices, democratic participation and economic betterment. Articulated initially by numerous international and transnational groups, the development discourse in education has now become commonplace. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), Education for Development (E4D) and Education for All (EFA) are some of the major turns in this shift. While the discourse is logical and well-intentioned, it has slowly shifted the perception of education towards being primarily a measurable enterprise. The instrumentality attached to learning, as per this model, renders education into goal-specific process.

Additionally, being a prized 'development' cause, the field of education has become susceptible to large numbers of private, commercial and philanthropic interests. In the context of promoting education among Adivasis, the logic of 'development' shares its purpose with long-standing views that necessitated mainstreaming Adivasis 'for their own good.' Thus, education is considered to be the staircase that will lead Adivasis towards development and out of poverty. In this case, the conceptions of 'development' and 'education' are rather constraining and generate two contradictions. On the one hand, the focus on the developmental model seeks to integrate Adivasis into the dominant society/nation through forms of submissive assimilation. On the other hand, since the dominant education system does not challenge structural inequalities, the subordinate position of these marginalised groups is reproduced.²⁷

27 We draw on a larger sociology of Indian education to indicate how broad-based and universal access to education has not translated into equitable social opportunities for all.

3.5. Constitutional Obligations, New Policy Directions

It is useful to take a look at education policy since independence in order to understand the place Adivasis and other marginalised groups hold, the nature of affirmative action for disadvantaged groups and the reforms proposed to address historical and current unequal structures. As for the classification of Adivasi groups as Scheduled Tribes, Article 342 (1 and 2) of the Constitution lays out the context in which ‘tribal’ groups can be notified as Scheduled Tribes. Accordingly, the Parliament can determine the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) from time to time. Similarly, the provisions for administration of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes have been incorporated in the Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.²⁸ Taking stock of the education of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), the position paper developed by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT)²⁹ states that the main challenge before the newly independent Indian state was to address the historical wrongs through policy measures in education. “In its effort to offset educational and socio-historical disadvantage, the Indian State conceived a range of enabling provisions that would facilitate access to and ensure retention

of SC and ST children in school.” Provision of basic access remained the priority during initial Five Year plans with considerable expansion of enabling interventions after the Fourth Plan.³⁰

The following constitutional provisions are useful in thinking about the guarantee of education for Adivasis. In more general terms, the fundamental right to education has been incorporated under Article 21A of the Constitution and mother-tongue education for minority groups is ensured under Article 350A. Articles 15(4), 29 (1 and 2), 30 (1, 1A and 2) and 46 of the Indian Constitution contain the State’s commitment to education of SC/ST children. For instance, Article 15 highlights the State’s commitment for the advancement of “...socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.” Cultural and educational rights of the minorities have been protected under Articles 29 (1 and 2) and 30 (1, 1A and 2) including the right to set up educational institutions. Finally, Article 45 focuses on the promotion of “educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.”³¹

One of the serious challenges of education policy making in India is the concurrent listing

28 See. Article 342 (1) The President may with respect to any State or Union territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory, as the case may be (2) Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

29 For a list of position papers prepared by NCERT, see: http://www.ncert.nic.in/rightside/links/focus_group.html

30 See: National Focus Group on Problems of Scheduled Caste [sic] and Scheduled Tribe Children[sic]: http://www.ncert.nic.in/new_ncert/ncert/rightside/links/pdf/focus_group/position_paper_on_sc_st.pdf

31 See: The Constitution of India. Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice. [<http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/coi-indexenglish.htm>]

(as both a central and state subject) of education, which does generate a variety of schemes and programmes but does not necessarily lend itself to integrated reviews, accountability, development of programmes or cater to the needs of the marginalised in respective states or regions. This ultimately affects the educational experience and opportunities, especially of marginalised populations. Issues of school-distance, language and nutrition continue to be important determinants of access to education in tribal areas. But these rarely receive adequate attention. Reflecting the diversity of structures in different states, a growing trend in recent years can be seen in the uneven growth of private, voluntary organisations in education sector³².

In the last sixty-four years since independence, low levels of enrolment at the primary levels and lower learning achievements were two of the biggest challenges before the Indian education system. Non-universalisation of primary education and uneven selective expansion of education institutions continue to have a severe impact on disadvantaged communities. While the National Policy on Education (NPE 1968) recommended 6 per cent of the GDP expenditure on education, in reality the State spent just about 2.5 per cent on an average over the years. In the 1960s, the Kothari Commission (1966) followed by the National Policy on Education (1968) made a convincing case for universalisation of elementary education and formation of a common school system.³³The

three-language formula advocated by the Kothari commission has been responsible for the current multilingual educational model in states as the three-language position was upheld by subsequent education commissions.³⁴ In doing so, however, questions of Adivasi language have been put on hold or have never been factored in adequately. In a move towards increasing decentralisation on the one hand, and reduced State-provision on the other, the National Policy on Education (1986) had a set of provisions impacting tribal education:

- a. Elementary schools in Adivasi areas a priority.
- b. Curricula and instruction in Adivasi languages.
- c. Increase in Ashram schools.
- d. Tribal youth to be encouraged to take up teaching in schools.
- e. Introduction of non-formal system of schooling in Adivasi areas.
- f. Schemes at the Centre and State levels for ST students.

The NPE (1986) brought up the idea of 'non-formal' stream of education as a viable policy option. Following NPE, local districts became important units in educational management. During this time, India's economic policy began to witness a shift from a state-interventionist model restricting foreign direct investment and foreign trade to that of liberalisation of nationally controlled services.

32 Despite the spread and presence of various national and international aid and philanthropic groups in tribal and Adivasi education, there have been no systematic reviews or assessments of these programmes.

33 See: " Education Commissions and Committees: A Retrospect": <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/W/16/0W160301.htm>

34 See the summary of Kothari Commission report: <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/W/16/0W160401.htm>

In addition to educational access, which has dominated policy attention for a long time, matters of pedagogy, curriculum, language of instruction and teacher education also deserve focus and attention. In this respect, the position paper on ‘Tribal Education’ prepared by members of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) highlighted a workable direction that would involve:

1. Emphasis on multilingual education not only as instructional strategy, but also as a ‘holistic approach.’
2. Textbook production, publication at large in tribal languages.
3. Curriculum needs to shift from the promoter of high culture to that of depiction of tribal life.
4. Inclusion of Tribal/Dalit folklore, lesser-known languages.

With the passage of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, Article 21A has now been translated into legal obligation on the part of the state. In what follows, we present three significant policy initiatives of recent times that will have an impact on education among Adivasis.

3.5.1. Right to Education (RTE)

Passed in 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) provides for free and compulsory education for children between the ages 6 and 14. The Act includes a range of measures that are important in thinking of education of the disadvantaged communities:

1. Local authority is responsible for providing education
2. Steps to be taken to enroll drop-out students in age appropriate classes
3. Infrastructural support including buildings, learning materials
4. Necessary teaching support including well-trained teachers
5. Establishment of norms for teacher training and certification
6. Greater role of School Management Committees in:
 - a) Monitoring the workings of the school
 - b) Recommending school development plan
 - c) Monitoring grants
7. Comprehensive Quality Enhancement plans for ST areas

While RTE fulfills the constitutional mandate and provides ground for recognising education to be ‘non-purchasable’ and a ‘right for all’, some provisions in the Act raise concerns. Fixed norms about school infrastructure, greater standardisation of teaching, recruitment, teacher education and credentials are cases in point. Given that an alternative, sustainable vision of Adivasi and Tribal pedagogy opposes standardisation and regimentation of learning, some of the provisions of RTE need to be thought over. In a short report entitled ‘A Space for Alternate Schools’, the alternative educators in the country lay out the perils of standardisation and its anticipated impact on the very philosophy of non-mainstream, alternative education.³⁵ Greater standardisation, the report

35 The note entitled “A Space for Alternate Schools”: Note on behalf of alternative schools with regard to certain provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009” was put together by several organisations and individuals working in the domains of alternative education. The document can be found here: www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/RTE_alt.pdf

cautions, does not translate into greater levels of actual learning. Further, the most significant contribution by alternative schools has been their curricula that have been local, diverse, and experiential. As for the education of Adivasis, the 'one size fits all' approach to teacher education, pedagogy and curriculum and classroom instruction has demonstrably failed and it need not be reinforced through RTE.

Some of the points outlined above are corroborated in a recent research report carried out by Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children, based on their work in tribal districts of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.³⁶ Based on their findings, regarding the enforcement of provisions of the Right to Education Act in select districts of the two states, the report states that a large number of Adivasi children who should be enrolled in elementary schools continue to be outside, unenrolled, or are dropouts. The following findings of the report particularly stand out:

- Quality of educational institutions for ST children is low. In particular, the quality of residential schools/Ashramshalas "is shockingly below the minimum standard of human dignity for any child."³⁷
- In what seems to be a serious violation of the right to education, the primary schools in Adivasi districts have almost become dysfunctional.
- Teacher retention, qualification and quality in the region are abysmally low.
- Arbitrariness and ad-hoc decisions continue to play a role in teacher recruitment.

- Mid day meals programmes have been crucial in increasing enrollment in rural and tribal areas. However, the facilities and management of the programme leaves much to be desired.

3.5.2. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)

Following Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) that set in motion greater access and quality measures in elementary education, the RMSA was introduced as a critical component towards universalising secondary education. Given that India has over nine crore students in the age-group of 14-18 years, the RMSA was brought in to ensure good quality and affordable education. The refashioning of secondary education is expected to occur through an emphasis on vocationalisation and other specialised learning that can give economic results. Spelling out the urgency of reviving secondary education, the Prime Minister, in his Independence Day speech in 2007, focused on devising innovative ways of planning secondary education.

"...The physical, financial, pedagogical and human resource needs [for universalizing secondary education] are quite different...We also need to recognize the role currently being played by the private sector and policy design must factor this in...Special attention would need to be paid to Districts with SC/ST/OBC/Minority concentration. The recommendations of the Sachar Committee need to be seriously considered while planning for this programme" (Framework for RMSA, 2009).³⁸

36 See : Dhaatri. 'A Report on the Status of Primary Education of Adivasi Children in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa in the Context of the Right to Education Act 2009'. (unpublished report) 2012.

37 Ibid (pp.13)

38 See: Framework for Implementation of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. Chapter 1[http://education.nic.in/secedu/Framework_Final_RMSA.pdf]

As such, the Eleventh Five Year Plan set the following targets for Secondary Education: (1) Raise Minimum Levels of Learning to class X (2) Ensure quality secondary education with focus on Science, Mathematics and English (3) Aim towards major reduction in gender, social and regional gaps in enrolments, dropouts and school retention (Framework for Implementation of RMSA, pp. 16-17)³⁹.

3.5.3 New Policy Directions:

Decentralisation and Local Governance

Large-scale reforms, loosely based on the ideas of decentralisation, participatory governance and public-private partnership dominated Indian political universe since the late 1980s. The passage of the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1992 is historical in the experimentation of political decentralisation in the country. The subsequent re-orientation of public policy introduced three significant units of administration—village, block, and districts through which decentralisation could operate. Devolution of powers, democratisation of the delivery system and greater role(s) of the Gram Sabhas are some of the ways in which the transfer of power has taken shape. In line with the 73rd amendment, the subsequent enactment of Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) sought to provide legislative powers in Gram Sabhas, particularly in matters of planning and management of natural resources and adjudication of disputes in accordance with prevalent traditions. With the model of self-governance at its core, PESA presented political opportunities for Adivasi communities that were

a clear break away from erstwhile policies that (in principle) supported the Adivasi right to self-rule, but never enabled it to become reality. PESA viewed Adivasi communities as legitimate units of governance who have voice in exercising their command over natural resources and who can make use of the minor forest produce (section 4). Similarly, the Panchayats at various levels and the Gram Sabhas have been given powers to monitor the performance of State institutions including schools, health centers, drinking water facilities etc.

Community-driven management and decentralised power structures have been common threads between PESA, Joint Forest Management (JFM) programmes and Forest Rights Act (FRA 2006). Through JFM the forest department and village community enter into an agreement to jointly protect and manage the forest. Despite its departure from complete state-control of the forests, JFM practices are yet to be fully participatory and democratic. In their review of the JFM, the Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) states that “despite many claims about its ‘success’ and ‘people friendly nature’, in practice, JFM has proven to be a dangerous scheme that has been used mainly to deprive people of their rights.”⁴⁰ The much talked about Forest Rights Act (FRA) recognises three types of rights: 1) land rights 2) use rights 3) rights to protect and conserve. By way of land rights, the act recognizes an individual’s rights to live in and cultivate forest land that was occupied prior to December 2005. Those without a land record at hand but who have cultivated land can claim up to 4 hectares (Section 3[1]) and this

39 Ibid.

40 See http://www.forestrightsact.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=400055

also includes the land that is part of the dispute between forest department and cultivators. Since its inception in 2006, numerous studies on FRA (legal analysis, case studies and fact-finding reports) have drawn attention to the ways in which the 'horizontal decision making' gets routinely sidestepped in practice with forest officers taking the lead in decision-making.

The decentralised governing structures, be it PESA, JFM or FRA present huge gaps between the objectives and reality. The subversion of stated provisions is not simply the matter of 'what goes on the ground politics', it can also be seen as a part of the design.⁴¹ Some of the important factors contributing to the present crisis include:

- There is an absence of enabling structures for participation and local governance in the face of intimidation and resistance from politically dominant classes.
- The introduction of participatory models accompanies a much stronger and contradictory push towards private capital and mining interests in Adivasi areas.
- Two different ministries in charge in the Union Government--the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are virtually functioning in isolation.
- Growing militarisation of Adivasi areas, large scale displacements and migration have had a distressing effect on the lives of Adivasis.

3.6. International Trends in Indigenous Education

Since the 1980s, several indigenous movements, political articulations and identity assertions have been gaining momentum in different parts of the world. Significant to this formation is the Zapatista uprising of 1994 in Mexico that gave a powerful language to indigenous struggles. Resisting the nexus between global businesses and the State, the movement brought to the fore questions of resources, armed struggle and limits of mainstream political engagements. Similarly, the Maoris in New Zealand have gained political and social recognition for reviving their language (including the gradual and incremental integration of Maori into all levels of formal education) and cultural heritage. There are now significant movements which seek to address the ways in which indigenous people have been subject to processes that have led to the loss of land, resources, identities and to the erasure of knowledge forms. In such contexts, alternative teaching/learning processes and the revival of some cultural institutions (especially those that are collective in nature) are locations from which critique and possibilities of alternative indigenous education can be advanced.

The United Nations' declaration of 1994-2004 as an international decade of indigenous people was a significant moment in growing visibility of indigenous organisations and issues world wide. It brought attention to historical and present

41 For an excellent analysis of the politics of local governance in PESA areas, see: Dandekar, Ajay and Choudhuri, Chitragada. "PESA, Left-Wing Extremism and Governance: Concerns and Challenges in India's Tribal Districts". Ministry of Panchayat Raj, 2010. Also, for the critique of FRA, see: Gopalakrishnan, Shankar. Conservation, Power and Democracy In *Seminar* (613), 2006. Retrieved from: http://www.india-seminar.com/2010/613/613_shankar_gopalakrishnan.htm

legacies and shared memories of indigenous populations. Importantly, it recognised the central role education played in addressing the problems of marginalisation and discrimination of indigenous communities. To offer a corrective to historical wrongs, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution, calling all member-states to:

... adopt measures in cooperation with Indigenous People, to increase knowledge, starting at the elementary-school level and in accordance with the age and development of schoolchildren, concerning the history, traditions, culture and rights of Indigenous People, with special emphasis on the education of teachers at all levels, and adopt measures to restore indigenous place names...⁴²

The United Nations declaration on the “Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (1994)⁴³ opens up by acknowledging the history of colonisation, re-colonisation and dispossession of the lands of indigenous people. Highlighting the agency, interests and needs of indigenous communities, Articles 13 and 14 of the declaration discuss education:

Article 13: Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit for future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions,

philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Article 14, Paragraph 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

Along similar lines, indigenous organisations across the globe have engaged in developing curricula, establishing centres of indigenous language research and making innovative uses of technology to articulate indigenous cultural politics⁴⁴. These initiatives form a small part of the growing international mobilisation around questions of indigeneity. The government of India is signatory to the UN resolution, but has not been forthcoming with respect to realising and implementing the resolution.

3.7. Multiple Marginalisations: Political Structures and Budgetary Trends

The marginalisation of Adivasi issues including education is manifested at multiple levels and sites, each of which feeds into the other. While electoral politics builds on the vote banks of Adivasis, concerns pertaining to them are rarely central in parliamentary processes.

42 See: Education in the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples. [<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/echoes-16-02.html>]

43 For the full text, see: <http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/per cent28symbolper cent29/e.cn.4.sub.2.res.1994.45.en?opendocument>

44 See. Cleaver, Henry. *New Media Technologies and the Zapatista Idea*. 2008. Retrieved from: <https://webpace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/zaps.html>

3.7.1. Questions asked in the Lok Sabha on Adivasi Education

Given that the Question Hour (QH), the first hour of every session of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha is considered to be an “inherent and unfettered parliamentary right of members”⁴⁵ and that it offers a means to exercise a check on governmental policies, it is instructive to see the frequency and types of questions raised on the floor of the parliament regarding education among Adivasi communities. During the question hour of the 14th Lok Sabha (years from 2004-2008), a total of 79 questions were raised to the Minister of Tribal Affairs and 28 to the Minister of Human Resources Development. During the proceedings of 15th Lok Sabha (year 2009 onwards), thirteen questions have been raised so far that relate to education of Adivasis. A quick glance at the questions asked over the last seven years allows us to understand that most queries about Adivasi education have sought to obtain rather generic information from the ministry. Most frequent questions asked in the parliament fall in the following categories:

- (a) Information about literacy and schooling in ST communities
- (b) Number of institutions in Adivasi region (Ashram schools, model schools, universities)
- (c) Information about centrally sponsored schemes in education for Scheduled Communities
- (d) Schemes in vocational and higher education

There are, on rare occasions, questions asked about the curricula, but those are asked in a

way to reproduce dominant understanding. For instance, in the year 2011, a question was asked “whether matters regarding Indian ideals, great personalities and moral values are included in the syllabi” and the HRD minister responded by stating that the current curriculum emphasises inculcation of moral values and those enshrined in the Constitution, with a focus on “strengthening our cultural heritage and national identity.” (Lok Sabha, House of the People 2011)⁴⁶. This is consistent with the absence of questions on Adivasi linguistic diversity, multilingual curricula or distinct knowledge traditions and their relationship with education. In the last seven years, two questions were asked about discrimination of ST students in educational institutions seeking government’s response. A rather direct question and sub questions raised in the year 2006 are the following:

- (a) Whether the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes or Government has received representations alleging discriminations in AIIMS/IITs/IISC Bangalore and IIMs;
- (b) If so, the details thereof; year-wise and institute-wise; and
- (c) The measures being taken by the Government to set right the injustice meted out to ST students?⁴⁷

The response by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, however, tends to individualise the issue by stating that (a) In one case, the allegation of discrimination proved to be untrue (b) In the second case, the ministry found out that the denial of admission to a student in IIT

45 See: Parliament of India. <http://164.100.24.207/LssNew/our%20parliament/par5.htm>

46 See: <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/Questions/questionlist.aspx>

47 Ibid

Kharagpur was discriminatory and the ministry intervened by making sure the said student is accommodated in the institute.

There are numerous pressing questions that demand attention and response by both the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. While the apathy and lack of attention to matters of education in Adivasi areas is hardly a surprise, we believe that the following questions should have been raised on the floor of the parliament:

- Why has the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) not met the mandatory 8 per cent of its allocation?
- How many reviews have been undertaken of institutions, programmes and policies designed for Adivasi areas?
- What measures have been put in place to check teacher absenteeism?
- What steps have been taken to ensure that teachers serving in Adivasi areas are aware about the issues, culture and languages in the area?
- What steps have been taken to ensure that seasonal migrants in the Adivasi regions receive education?

3.7.2. Budgetary Allocation

Emanating from the invisibilisation and tokenism of Adivasis in policy production are the administrative structures and processes that bear the limitations of inadequate attention,

lack of concern for representation and quality. A pattern of marginalisation of the interests of Adivasis can be discerned across the spectrum of administrative structures and decision-making processes. Much of this is evident in the budgetary allocations, implementation of schemes, and the review mechanisms that are meant to monitor these programmes.

Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for Scheduled Tribes is one of the main mechanisms through which funds are allocated to a particular region in accordance with the proportion of Adivasi population. Under TSP, a total of 8 per cent of the budget funds are allocated to be spent on schemes and programmes in Adivasi regions. While there was an overall increase in the union budget on education in the year 2011-12 and the budget also sought to earmark specific allocation for Tribal Sub Plan, there was virtually no increase in the student fund through post-matric scholarships and residential stipends.⁴⁸ The demands for infrastructural developments, transportation facilities and establishment of vocational training institutes have also not received financial assistance. Research by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2010) and other reporting agencies demonstrate that the allocation of funds under Tribal Sub Plans have in fact, less than the mandatory 8 percent.⁴⁹ The table below shows the shortfall in the funds allocated to Scheduled Tribes.

48 In the questions asked in the Lok Sabha, it is revealed that the funds for National Overseas Scholarships Scheme for ST students have dropped down in recent years.

49 See: Budgeting for Dalits and Adivasis: <http://www.cbgaindia.org/index.php>

Table1: Plan Allocation Earmarked for Scheduled Tribes from the Union Budget:

Year	A	B	
	Total Plan Allocation Earmarked for Scheduled Tribes [in Rs. Crores]	Total Plan Allocation of Union Govt. (excluding Central Assistance to State & UT Plans) [in Rs. Crores]	A as Percent of B
2004-05	2,382	85,061	2.8
2005-06	4,175.5	10,9,900	3.8
2006-07	5,564.9	1,29,804	4.29
2007-08	7,447	1,52,313	4.89
2008-09	8,771	2,08,252	4.21
2009-10	8,600.73	2,33,919	3.67
2010-11	12,226.22	2,84,284	4.30

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) from the analysis of the Union Budget 2011-12.

4

EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION: STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

At the national level there is no single body that has exclusive charge of the administration of education for Adivasis. This is in contrast to the fact that the Government of India has specialised administrative structures and officials who oversee the functioning and management of elite institutions such as that of the Lawrence Schools in Sonavar and Lovedale, which cater primarily to children of defence officers, Samitis that manage the Central Schools (catering to children of central government employees), Tibetan schools and the Navodaya Schools (magnet schools in each district). In addition, there are cells and / or special officers who oversee the functioning of institutions such as that of the IITs, IIMs, IISERs and similar institutions of national excellence. In contrast, given the numbers spread and problems faced by Adivasis, there is no special desk or supervisory authority to administer and cater to the educational needs of Adivasis.

The formation of the Ministry for Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in 1999 was an important moment for

enhancing the administrative structures for Adivasi concerns. But, the MoTA is a low status ministry in the larger hierarchical ordering of political and administrative systems and lacks sufficient presence, clout and power. Both MoTA and MHRD are involved in education, albeit in different domains. Infrastructural support to schools and hostels and operation of various educational schemes falls under the purview of MoTA.⁵⁰ For a majority of schools in Adivasi regions, it is the MHRD that is in charge of recruitment, curricula, grants, teacher-training (in most cases) and monitoring.

The problems of the low status and inadequate functioning of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are replicated right down to the state and local levels. Since most of the funds allocated to MoTA are linked to facilitating Article 275 (1) or given under the special central assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan (SCA to TSP),⁵¹ and are therefore allocated to other departments, there is little or no accountability as to how these funds earmarked for Adivasis are spent. Although concerns for

50 The following are centrally sponsored schemes in Adivasi and Tribal education: 1) Construction of Ashram schools 2) Construction of hostels for ST boys and girls 3) Mid-Day Meals 4) Post-matric scholarships 5) Vocational training centres in TSP 6) Schemes to bridge gender gaps in select tribal regions 7) Grants for tribal development cooperatives/TRIFED 8) Grants to tribal research institutes 9) upgradation of merit students.

51 See p. 6 of MoTA document available at: <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkfile/File1257.pdf>

low educational achievement by SCs and STs are reiterated in most MHRD documents and policy papers, the schemes and programmes developed to address these problems are not region, group or site specific. In most cases, the lack of in-built accountability and the absence of tailored programmes have meant that the funds allocated for such targeted programmes have largely failed to realise their goals.

This problem is manifested in the way in which the Department of Tribal Welfare and its officers function at the district level. Although the department also comes under the PRI, and the CEO of the Zilla Panchayat is supposed to oversee its activities, there is little accountability and an absence of periodic reviews. This has resulted in widespread corruption and inadequate functioning of these departments. Several positions in the department remain unfilled; besides, inadequate numbers of teachers is one of the most significant problems faced by the Ashramshalas. Further, in 2003, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes was established through a constitutional amendment that replaced the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with two separate commissions for SCs and STs – NCSC and NCST – the latter coming into operation from February 2004. The NCST has subsequently, as mandated, submitted four annual reports to the President. But none of them have been published, pending their approval by the Parliament.⁵²

4.1. Reservation Policy and Monitoring

A conspicuous consequence of the limited and poor monitoring abilities of the MoTA is that

despite 'reservations' or 'affirmative action' being one of the key policies to facilitate educational opportunities, there is no database or review mechanism to assess, support or supervise the implementation of such policies in the various educational institutions across the nation. Although it is common knowledge that most reserved category seats meant for STs are unfilled, especially in technical and professional educational institutions (both for students and faculty), there has been no National level review to either understand what accounts for this gap or efforts to address the problems and institutional dynamics as to why this is so.

4.2. Certification: Process and Contestations

Getting certificates to prove 'tribal' identity has become a challenge for many groups. In our consultations in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, the participants cited the travails that they experience in getting certification, which could entitle them to a range of benefits including access to schools and colleges. The non-standardised norms across the states, the variations in the procedures and the bureaucratic hurdles faced by several groups have not been addressed by the MoTA and by the state departments for tribal and social welfare. In addition to the tedious process and the growth of fake certification, the onus of proving 'tribal identity and origin' is placed on the Adivasis themselves.

Recent populist measures in which various non-Adivasi groups have been granted 'tribal' status also adds to the problems. The more deserving groups with genuine roots and claims to being 'tribal' are being crowded out of the benefits

52 Source: National Commission for Scheduled Tribes website: <http://ncst.nic.in/index2.asp?slid=490&sublinkid=280&langid=1>

that accrue to the groups who are declared as 'tribal', based on collective demands and political mobilisation. Here again, the failure on the part of MoTA to have strict norms and processes by which the identification and legal status of 'Tribes' is decided, stands out.

4.3. Institutions

A range of institutions have been established to cater to the governance/administration of Adivasi areas and to facilitate the delivery of development and welfare programmes including that of education. However, their structure, functioning and abilities to either govern or deliver welfare programmes are severely limited and many now stand as ossified structures without adequate reasons for their continuity. Some of these institutions/programmes are the Tribal Research and Training Institutes and the Integrated Tribal Development Agency.

4.3.1. Tribal Research and Training Institutes (TRTI)

There are eighteen Tribal Research and Training Institutes (TRTI) across the country with varying nomenclature, scope and structures. The following are the primary areas in which TRTIs engage: (a) conducting ethnographic studies (b) undertaking evaluation of various development initiatives (c) documenting social and cultural processes in Adivasi regions (d) working towards preservation of Adivasi cultural heritage (e) verifying 'jati' certificates. Many of the TRTIs are moribund, unable to deliver on the objectives for which they were established. The report by the National Centre for Advocacy Studies

(NCAS), Pune, on the functioning of the Tribal Research and Training Institute in Maharashtra highlights some of these problems.⁵³ Some of the inadequacies it has identified may be relevant to other TRTIs as well. By locating the TRTI in a city rather than in a tribal majority area, the institute loses the opportunity to connect with the people it is meant for. By restricting its research offerings to dominant languages, the institute fails to inform the very people whose languages it hopes to research and protect. Besides, the institute's interaction with grassroots organisations is cursory at best and thus fails to provide an opportunity for tribal people to use it as a forum for discussing issues of concern to them in their own dialects/ languages.

In addition, the entrenched bureaucratic tradition of the institute also keeps the institute aloof from the people whose culture and life-worlds it is meant to preserve and promote, resulting in a disjuncture between its portrayal and representation of Adivasi reality and the actual lived reality of Adivasis. There has also been some debate over the need to redefine the kinds of research a TRTI should undertake. Rather than restrict it to ethnographic research and documentation of extant practices, it is suggested that the TRTIs can also undertake the tasks of uncovering some of the pressing challenges before Adivasi communities - seasonal migration, large scale displacements, questions of adequate healthcare and education and so on. 'Potentialities of these institutions are not being harnessed fully', notes the Planning Commission in its mid-term appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan⁵⁴, and adds that the TRTIs should be

53 Kavadi, Shirish. 'Tribal Research and Training Institute, Pune: An Assessment,' *National Centre for Advocacy Studies*, Pune, 2009.

54 See p. 182 of Planning Commission's 'Mid Term Appraisal for Eleventh Five Year Plan.' Available at: http://www.planningcommission.nic.in/plans/mta/11th_mta/pdf/MTA_comp11th.pdf

designated as nodal agencies for coordinating efforts at research in each of the zones: East, West, North-east, South, and Central. The possibility of TRTIs also acting as centres for information and knowledge dissemination and as agencies of advocacy for Adivasis has not been encouraged. Instead, TRTIs have evolved into one more government bureaucratic institute with little or no engagement with the lives and interests of Adivasis.

4.3.2. Integrated Tribal Development Programme/ Agency

The purpose of delineating areas with tribal concentration as ITDP areas (or ITDA as it is known in some states) was to enhance their socio-economic development through income generating schemes and infrastructure development. Though publicly accessible data on the performance of the 194 ITDPs is not easy to come by, a brief assessment of one of the more active ITDPs in Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh, highlights the fact that schemes designed to cater to 'local needs' may not necessarily be a panacea for grassroots' problems. The College of Teacher Education (Tribal Welfare) in Bhadrachalam has had graduates from 26 different tribal communities, who have gone on to secure teaching jobs in the tribal areas falling within the ITDA limits. However, the courses in traditional arts, such as wood carving and bamboo craft provided by the Vocational Training Institute at Yetapaka near Bhadrachalam is finding it hard to rope in students, who are more interested in enrolling for courses in jeep driving and mechanics. This is despite efforts made by the institute in hiring expert artisans from Tripura and Chhattisgarh to train the students in the intricacies of bamboo and wood craft work and provision made for

selling the handicrafts produced through the ITDA run outlets in Bhadrachalam as well as through exhibitions and fairs across the state.

4.3.3. National Council for Tribal Welfare

In addition to the establishment of the Ministry for Tribal Affairs, there have been, over the years, a number of initiatives to provide umbrella administrative and policy support to Adivasis. A recent initiative has been the National Council for Tribal Welfare (NCTW), constituted in September 2010, with the Prime Minister as the chairperson. The objective of this body was to coordinate the activities pertaining to tribal welfare that were being handled by various ministries. The body was to have representatives from various ministries concerned with tribal welfare: the Ministers for Tribal Affairs, Finance, Agriculture, Home Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Environment and Forests, Human Resource Development, Rural Development, Woman and Child Development, Culture, Mines, Coal and Power and the Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission, the Chief Ministers of Schedule V and Schedule VI States, two experts to be nominated by the Prime Minister for two years, and the Secretary, Department of Tribal Affairs, as Member-Secretary. The ministries of social justice and empowerment under whom the National Commission on Denotified and Nomadic tribes functions, as well as the Panchayati Raj ministry which is responsible for the operationalisation of PESA, however are not represented on this council. The NCTW held its first meeting in January 2011 and finalised the agenda of the council, which fall under three major areas: formulation of a National Tribal Policy, implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and implementation of the provisions of

PESA Act, 1996. However, the simultaneous deployment of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP)⁵⁵ in 2010 in many districts of Adivasi regions especially where Maoist mobilisation has gained currency, only overrides the potential of the NCTW to act as a collective and clearing house for the key issues pertaining to tribals.

Based on our observation of these multiple institutions, structures and processes, we can summarise that on the whole the institutional apparatus for delivering education to and for

Adivasis remains parallel, inadequate and inappropriate. Some efforts such as that in Odisha, to converge the activities and plans of seven departments to achieve universalisation of elementary education in the state are noteworthy. However, much more attention needs to be paid to the very lack of orientation to cater to the needs of the Adivasis and to facilitate their representation and voices. Increasing bureaucratisation has rendered these structures even more problematic and the delivery of the range of goods, services and benefits even more difficult.

55 IAP is supposed to focus on implementation of PESA and FRA. However, a centrally sponsored action plan of financial assistance to select Maoist affected districts speaks of growing militarization and protection of business interests in the name of addressing 'development deficit' in the region. The plan that seeks to build on PESA does not adhere to one of the important provisions of that law: "consultation with the community".

IMPACT OF EDUCATION: RECORD OF DEFICITS?

Literature and data on educational achievement of Adivasi students have shown that the average performance of such students at all levels continues to be below par. States such as Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh, which have a much larger number of Adivasi people continue to record poor educational attainments. In basic literacy attainments, the Adivasis are far behind the national average— 47.1 per cent Adivasi literacy against the national average of 64.84 per cent (2001 Census).

Disparity in Adivasi literacy rates among various states is quite high, ranging from 28.17 per cent in Bihar to that of 92.16 percent in Lakshadweep.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the gross enrolment rate at the elementary stage (Class I to VIII) of Adivasis is higher than the national average (86.1 for Scheduled Tribes and 84.8 for the total population although female enrolment rates are slightly lower for the Scheduled Tribes). This indicates that a large proportion of Adivasi children, who eagerly set out for school drop out before they even complete the elementary

**Table 2: Literacy among Scheduled Tribes and among all Social Groups
(in percentage)**

Year	Scheduled Tribes			All Social Groups		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs: <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkFile/File884.pdf>

56 *Selected Educational Statistics*, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2004..

stage. In general, we find that as the level of education increases, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) decreases for both boys and girls. It is also interesting to note that the GER of boys and girls is comparable in classes I-IV but the gender gap increases significantly with higher levels of education. Kerala shows a very high GER for girls in higher classes both among Adivasi and non-Adivasi girls. In contrast to the North-East Indian states and Kerala, Bihar shows a dismal picture. Here, the enrolment ratio for girls in higher levels of school education is only 8.5 per cent for the Adivasi population whereas it is 18.77 per cent for the general population.

5.1. Inadequate Provisioning and Training of Teachers

In the context of a dramatic expansion of schools in India in recent decades, one of the recurring problems has been the absence of a well-trained, qualified teaching force. The shortage of teachers is more intense in rural and tribal regions where schools also struggle with enrolment and retention of students. As participants in our consultation in Chhattisgarh pointed out, location becomes crucial to the presence of teachers in schools. Given that many teachers in Adivasi schools are not local residents, the teachers posted in remote areas are likely to be absent. Oftentimes, contract-based teachers are viewed as solutions in these cases. In the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan *para-teachers* (variously known as *Shiksha Karmis*, *Shiksha Mitras*, *Shiksha Sahayaks*, *Gurujis*, etc.) are the predominant members of the teacher fraternity, especially those allocated to Adivasi areas.

The economic logic of poorly paid para teachers is at the core of the institutionalisation of such temporary teaching contracts. On the margins of this logic lies the motive of 'enabling local community'. Both these motives are clearly articulated by the National Committee for Education Ministers which in its defense of para teachers states that: "The economic argument that was presented for para teachers is that with this[sic], provision of teachers as per requirement is possible within the financial resources available with the states. The non-economic argument is that a locally selected youth, accountable to the local community, undertakes the duties of teaching children with much greater interest. The accountability framework is well defined and by making the local authority as the appointing authority, the para teacher's performance assessment is the basis for his/her continuance."⁵⁷

The basic minimum educational qualification required for a para teacher in remote area schools is Higher Secondary (12th standard). In most of these states, para teachers also do not require pre-service professional training. In cases where they do receive pre-service training, the duration is limited and varies from state to state. This occurs despite the fact that the scheme is being implemented under SSA. They also have regular on-job training, but that is not enough and there is no follow-up to it, to see the effects of training. Also, given that many para teachers work in remote areas, in largely single teacher schools, they do not have colleagues guiding them about teaching. It is very clear from states such as Chhattisgarh that the para teacher phenomenon is far from being an exception or a 'fill in' measure. For, in Chhattisgarh, it has been

57 Government of India, Report of the National Committee of State Education Ministers under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Human Resource Development to Develop the Structure and Outlines of Implementing Universal Elementary Education in a Mission Mode, MHRD, New Delhi, July 1999, (22-23)

part of the larger economics as the state has frozen regular appointments of school teachers.

In addition to the problem of sufficient numbers and adequate training of teachers, the absence of a cadre of Adivasi teachers also poses problems. Deployment of teachers to remote areas, generating community-based activities, and acting as role models have all become challenges. The data on teachers' caste/tribe status is also confusing. While reviews at district levels often record the lack of Adivasi teachers, national level data indicates that ST teachers compose 14.1 per cent of the total teachers at the school level (with 8 percent being the average size of the Adivasi population).⁵⁸ One reason for this contradiction in 'records' against 'reality' also lies in the fact that several of the groups, which are now recognised as 'Scheduled Tribes', are not really representative of Adivasis. States such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat also record slightly higher proportions of Adivasi teachers as compared to their total population in the states.⁵⁹ Yet, these states, particularly Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand face the problem of high teacher absenteeism, the absence of schools in remote settlements, and the absence of Adivasis in significant positions of administration and authority in the education department. For instance, in Bastar district, the number of Adivasi teachers in primary schools is about 50

per cent of the total teachers employed at that level. But in schools with secondary and higher secondary classes, the number of tribal teachers drops to less than 20 per cent of the total number of teachers employed.⁶⁰ Data for states such as Madhya Pradesh indicate low numbers of Adivasi teachers (15 per cent versus that of 20.3 per cent of Adivasis in the total population)⁶¹ and this is manifested across the districts of the state where schools are primarily manned by teachers from various castes. In some districts, although a fair number of Adivasi teachers are employed by primary schools, their numbers reduce at the level of secondary and high schools.

5.2. Content and Orientation in Curricula and Pedagogy

The serious problem of the absence of knowledge forms, information, and details pertaining to Adivasis have been documented by several scholars and it is best represented by Krishna Kumar's essay, 'Learning to be Backward'.⁶² The representation of Adivasis in stereotypical negative terms as 'backward' people, outside the pale of progress, has meant that elementary education has only reinforced stereotypes and further marked the Adivasis in discriminatory terms. Taking cognisance of this, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 highlighted some of the concerns and the possibilities in its report, which focused on education among 'Tribals'.⁶³

58 NUEPA, *Elementary Education in Rural India: Where do we stand? Analytical Tables 2009-10*. NUEPA: New Delhi. 2011.

59 Chhattisgarh has 33.32 percent, Jharkhand has 27.1 per cent; and Gujarat 18 per cent of Adivasi school teachers as compared to their total population of 31.0, 26.0, and 14.0 per cent of total Adivasi population respectively. NUEPA. 2011.

60 Source: NUEPA's District Report Cards, Vol. 1 & 2, 2005-06.

61 NUEPA, 2011

62 Kumar, Krishna. 'Learning to be Backward,' in *Social Character of Learning*. pp. 59-79. Sage, New Delhi. 1989.

63 See 'National Curriculum Framework 2005.' Available at: <http://www.ncert.nic.in/html/pdf/schoolcurriculum/framework05/prelims.pdf>

To start, the NCF stresses the need to “enter the world of formal learning through the language of [the] home and environment.” It also talks of “marrying socially acquired competences and skills with academic pursuits in our educational institutions.”⁶⁴ Both the points mentioned above carry salience in the context of education of Adivasis. As for the questions of language, the existing policy calls for the adoption of children’s mother tongues – including Adivasi languages – as the medium of instruction in the primary classes, a promise held out to linguistic minorities by Article 350 A of the Constitution.

Besides language, another alienating feature of the dominant education system is its privileging of text-based learning over work-related knowledge and skills. According to NCF 2005, by introducing curricula that give importance to both kinds of learning, it is hoped that marginalised sections will ‘gain a definite edge’ over their more privileged peers to whom reading and writing come more naturally and easily. ‘Differences between students must be viewed as resources for supporting learning rather than as problems. Inclusion in education is one of the components of inclusion in society. Schools, therefore, have a responsibility of providing a flexible curriculum that is accessible to all students,’ notes the NCF,⁶⁵ adding, “The oral lore and traditions of craft are a unique intellectual property, varied and sophisticated, preserved by innumerable groups in our society. By including these in the curriculum for all children, we could provide them with windows

of understanding and kernels of ideas, skills and capabilities that could be worked into forms and inventions that could enrich their own lives and society. School privileges the literate, but cannot afford to continue to ignore the oral.”⁶⁶

Making a radical departure from run-of-the-mill suggestions, the NCF 2005 emphasises the need to re-orient the study of the social sciences from the perspective of marginalised groups. It also stresses the need to provide sufficient orientation to teachers to enable them to break away from entrenched stereotypes such as regarding Adivasi students as backward and uneducable and their parents as lacking in interest and commitment towards educating their children— notions that lead to discriminatory practices in the classroom and abuse by other students. In this regard, the policy suggests activities such as preparation of biodiversity registers and health manuals with useful inputs from Adivasi children whose communities are rich repositories of knowledge about the environment, about the medical uses of various plants, and so on. ‘We need to examine how the rich work knowledge base and skills of marginalised children can be turned into a source of their own dignity as well as a source of learning for other children. This is especially important in the context of the growing alienation of the middle-upper-class children from their cultural roots and the central role played by the education system in aggravating and accelerating this process,’ reiterates the NCF.⁶⁷

64 Ibid. Foreword. p.iv

65 National Curriculum Framework 2005, p. 16-17.

66 Ibid, p. 27.

67 Ibid, p, 60.

The problems of teaching-learning and the inadequate provisioning of 'quality' education are also manifested at higher levels. While this is true for much of the population, the problem is more daunting for reserved category students for whom performance at higher levels becomes more challenging. Even in a state such as Kerala, with relatively high levels of access to education, the Adivasis (who form only one per cent of the total population in the state) face enormous challenges. Describing some of these, Nampoothiri⁶⁸ indicates how poor quality education and training at elementary and secondary levels, compounded by the lack of cultural and social capital at the family and community level, mean that a large proportion of students drop-out from professional courses. The problems that such students face in most educational institutions are a result of the interlinked disadvantages, which manifest in the following characteristics:

- Are primarily from schools with low academic levels.
- Suffer from poor social and communication skills
- Possess low aspiration levels
- Are from disadvantaged economic backgrounds
- Lack mentoring support from parents who are, by and large, not well-educated and if in formal employment are primarily Class IV employees.
- Lack Social/Cultural capital which could have enabled them to lead more engaged on-campus lives and in other educational contexts.

5.3. Zones of Deprivation: 'Educationally Backward Districts'

The limitations outlined above - institutional, pedagogical, infrastructural, and administrative - in the educational provisioning for Adivasis are more comprehensively captured in the conditions of 'educationally backward districts'. As per norms set by the University Grants Commission (UGC), educationally backward districts are those that have literacy rates below the national average (65.4 per cent according to Census 2001). The UGC identified 374 educationally backward districts, based on the criterion of Gross Enrolment Ratio.⁶⁹ While a quarter of the backward districts are classified as 'tribal', some other categories include 'border', 'hilly' and 'forested' regions, making several overlaps. The conditions in these districts include: remoteness of the locales inhabited by Adivasis and Tribals and hence infrastructural inaccessibility and social alienation, which manifests itself in the form of educational disadvantages and poverty. These are not stratified categories and each kind of disadvantage causes and impacts the others in many ways. Even a brief acquaintance with the ground realities through field visits makes one aware of the bleakness of the Adivasi worlds and the failure of the state. Even in a state such as Chhattisgarh which has a majority of Adivasi population, with a large proportion in the hilly and forested tracts, a significant proportion of schools are on the roadside and are located primarily along the state highways between Raipur-Bhilai and Bilaspur.

It is from this perspective of locating education within the overall processes of governance

68 Nampoothiri, D.D. 'Confronting Social Exclusion Adequately: A Critical Review of CREST Experience vis-à-vis the Reservation Scenario in Kerala's Higher Education,' Working Paper. *CREST, Kozhikode*, 2011.

69 <http://www.ugc.ac.in/notices/listedulowGERstatewise.pdf>

that we consider here the conditions in some of the most backward districts in the country, selecting one district from each zone (See table below). All the districts are officially classified as predominantly tribal: Tribal population in the selected districts accounted for more than 50 per cent of the total district population. Khammam was the lone exception, with 26 per cent of the population reported to be Adivasi. Significantly, the Planning Commission, in identifying the most backward districts, mentions 'high SC/ST population as one of three markers, the other two being 'low wages' and 'low productivity.'⁷⁰ This could be taken as an indication of the State's awareness of the strong link between deprivation and Adivasi population. It may also be noted that Khammam, Bastar and Koraput are among the sixty tribal and backward districts selected this year (financial year 2010-11) for development under the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) of the Centre.

All the districts, including Khammam, have literacy rates lower than the respective state's

literacy rates. In correlating this with the percentage of tribal population in the selected districts, the educational 'backwardness' or what should be recognised as multiple forms of disadvantage of the Adivasi population becomes apparent.

All the districts showed significant decadal growth in general literacy rates between 1991 and 2001 and the figures were particularly encouraging with respect to female literacy. However, literacy rates, particularly female literacy was dismal across the districts, particularly in Koraput where it was a shocking 8.4 percent in 2001 (Compare this with the general literacy rate at the time of the first Census (1951), which was 16.67 percent).⁷¹

Another continuing concern is the student drop out at post-primary levels. Although this is true for all categories of students, the sharp drop in the enrolment of Adivasi students—post primary school is alarming. Predominantly tribal Nandurbar district in Maharashtra is a

Table 3: Literacy Rates in Select Backward Districts

Name of district	State	Zone	Overall district literacy rate*	Female tribal literacy rate*	Tribal population to district population (%) *
Khammam	Andhra Pradesh	South	57.72	27.6	26.5
Koraput	Odisha	East	36.3	8.4	49.6
Nandurbar	Maharashtra	West	56.1	32.2	65.5
Bastar	Chhattisgarh	Central	45.5	23.1	66.3

*As per Census 2001.

70 http://nrega.nic.in/Planning_Commission.pdf

71 The literacy rate of the tribal population in 1961 was 8.53 per cent, with female tribal literacy rate being just 3.16 per cent. Even at the time of the 2001 Census, less than 50 per cent of the tribal population was literate. (Source: Census 2001 and 'Fifty Years of Educational Development: A Review,' Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India (n.d).. Available at: <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/x/51/HR/51HR0101.htm>)

case in point. In the last decade, the enrolment of Adivasi students in Nandurbar dropped from 83.5 percent to a shocking 53.1 percent. This is consistent across the nation where one sees a steep fall in the enrollment levels from primary to secondary levels but more so in the Adivasi belts. Recent reports pertaining to provisional analyses of Census 2011 data reveal that the 233 districts with a higher than average Adivasi population and many of them among the most backward districts of India, have a far better child sex ratio than the rest of the country. While this highlights the absence of gender-based discrimination, a negative marker amongst most dominant groups, it also raises questions about how provisioning of education may mark the entry of gendered discrimination. Trends indicate that Adivasi girls are more educationally disadvantaged and this may reflect the institutional and structural deficits in access and retention rather than of cultural hesitation in sending girls to school. Recent initiatives such as the one by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) provides financial assistance to non-governmental and other voluntary organisations to establish educational complexes in low literacy areas for development of literacy among Adivasi women. Khammam, Bastar and Koraput are among the districts that have been identified under the scheme, called, 'Strengthening education among ST girls in low literacy districts.'

5.4. Amnesia⁷²

While access and quality of education at all levels remain a serious challenge, there are

also equally grave concerns about learning and knowledge loss that are results of the dominant education system. Long associated with myriad forms of knowledges from that of ecology, agriculture, medicine, craftwork and artisanship to that of a body of folklore, songs and poetry, the knowledge pool of Adivasis is fast depleting. In what is a call to urgent action, Ganesh Devy⁷³ highlights the importance of such knowledge forms:

..the communities that we have so far seen as 'marginal' communities, the Adivasis and the DNTs, the coastal people and the hill people, have with them as yet the collective memories of coping with the environment and sustaining it. They still have with them, stored in those languages that our developmental logic is unwittingly destroying, paralogies of the universe which can be of immense help in averting the feared end in sight (2010: 29).

Recent attempts at revival and retrieval of Adivasi knowledge are triggered more by newfound commercial interest in works such as Gond painting, rather than in the possibilities of integrating these bodies of knowledge into the worlds of everyday practice or sustaining them as elements of the life-worlds of Adivasis. That there is a wealth of knowledge waiting to be tapped and utilised in both local contexts and those that can have economic value has been documented by studies⁷⁴. For example, the extant forms of knowledge pertaining to

72 Drawn on the terms, Amnesia and Aphasia, as used by Ganesh Devy (2010)

73 Devy, Ganesh. Inclusive Education: A View of Higher Education in India. *Public Lecture Series, NIAS*, 2010.

74 Chaudhuri, Buddhadeb, 'Role of Tribal Crafts in Tribal Economy', In Buddhadeb Chaudhuri (ed.), *Tribal Transformations in India: Vol I*. Inter-India Publications. 1992.

ecological conservation, agriculture, medicine, and horticulture are yet to be documented and fully legitimised as formal bodies of knowledge. Given global trends in development of intellectual property rights including establishment of Geographical Indicators, the potential of tapping Adivasi knowledge systems and gaining a range of rights and economic benefits remains unrecognised⁷⁵. The museumisation of Adivasi handicrafts, without attendant programmes to render these into educational encounters or as bases to legitimise and reclaim these, have only rendered them into archaic and/ or exotic objects.

5.5. Aphasia

Of equal concern are trends where the languages of Adivasis are fast being displaced and lost by the growth of formal education. This has occurred despite a long standing constitutional provision that offers linguistic minorities the right to express, learn, teach and run educational institutions in their respective languages. For instance, the Article 350 (A) of the Constitution declares, "It shall be the endeavor of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities." As such, Article 350 (B) provides for the appointment of a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by and to be accountable to the President. Additionally, Articles 29 (1) and 30

also confer rights on linguistic minorities to take steps to conserve their language and to set up educational institutions to provide instruction in their language/s.

However, these Constitutional promises have remained more or less on paper as attempts to provide education in the tribal languages have been sporadic and isolated. This, despite the numerous studies worldwide, that have highlighted the benefits of being educated in the mother tongue, at least in primary school and other studies in India which have indicated the problems of learning that have resulted from the imposition of learning in non-home language. Some experiments in creating textbooks in tribal languages for the primary class students in India, particularly in the states of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, have been initiated but comprehensive reviews of such efforts are awaited. After declaring Kok Borok as the official language, the state of Tripura has been developing textbooks in Kok Borok, which has been widely reported and appreciated. As far as teacher training modules and handbooks in Adivasi languages and dialects are concerned, Assam was among the first states to have prepared separate teaching materials for the Bodo language in 1995. Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh, the teachers' handbooks entitled 'Bridge Language Inventory' (BLIs) have been prepared in three Adivasi languages viz. Gondi (Shahdol and Betul district), Kuduk, (Raigarh) and Bhili (Dhar). Identified teachers were given training in using BLISs in their classrooms. Other states including Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat have also engaged in preparing

75 See Finger, Michael and Schuler, Philip, *Poor People's Knowledge: Promoting Intellectual Property in Developing Countries*. Wash, D.C: Oxford University Press.2004.

the bridge materials and language resources.⁷⁶ The Department of education in Chhattisgarh introduced basic texts in seven Adivasi dialects but our review of some of these books indicates that while the books are colourful and inviting, not much thought has been given to even basic cultural nuances since the children and others portrayed in book through a series of images are made to look extremely urban and non-Adivasi. Thus despite being in the same dialect, the problems of representation remain.

The issue of generating and promoting texts and teaching-learning materials in Adivasi dialects and languages needs to be comprehensively reviewed. Trends indicate that Adivasis themselves may not fully appreciate or demand learning in their mother tongues. Such observations have emanated from an experiment

involving mother tongue education through specially developed text books to the Soliga tribal children of Karnataka, as they did not find support among the community members. Although adult members of the Soliga Tribe were eager to preserve their culture and were clear that the school's role in this endeavour was crucial, they felt that their livelihood needs mandated learning in the dominant/ State language, Kannada. The ways in which learning in different languages needs to be both phased and layered so that the wealth of Adivasi languages (and the identities and source of knowledges etc.) can be retained while also enabling them to integrate into the dominant languages (either the state languages or Hindi and English) continues to be a major challenge. Both educational policy and the varied programmes at all levels need to reckon with this issue.

76 Gautam, Vinoba, Education of tribal children in India and the issue of Medium of Instruction: A Janshala experience. *SIL International*. 2003.

DOMESTICATION AND ASSIMILATION: THE IMPRINT OF DOMINANT INSTITUTIONS

6.1. Residential Schools/ Ashramshalas

At present, a significant proportion of basic education is received by Adivasis through government established and managed residential schools. Traditionally, there have been culturally specific and embedded learning institutions of Adivasis, especially those designed to socialise, train and 'educate' youth in their own forms of knowledge. But these have themselves been rendered defunct. The case of the erosion of the *morung* among Nagas, and the *ghotuls* among Gonds are cases in point. In the promotion and spread of the government sponsored and standardised residential schools lie some of the key problems in the provisioning, orientation and impact of formal education on the Adivasis.

There seems to be no definitive and comprehensive history of the establishment of Ashramshalas.⁷⁷ A brief overview indicates some were initiated in the late nineteenth century as a way to educate, reform and bring tribals into the Hindu fold. Concentrated first in the Central India (now Madhya Pradesh and

Chhattisgarh) belt and then in Gujarat, the first Ashramshalas were established in the mid-1800s as either forms of colonial administrative or Hindu nationalist attempts at reforming tribal peoples. Continuing in various ways through State support, there has recently been a spurt in the growth of residential schools for Adivasis. Apart from the older ones, established by either reformers and or nationalist freedom leaders, there are now Ashramshalas that are fully government run, operated on grant-in-aid basis and in recent years a number of them initiated by private trusts and organisations. The last decade has seen more attention being paid to the conditions and workings of the Ashramshalas, including that of the agenda of seeking to conciliate tribals in the hinterland. For example, Gujarat has now promulgated a new *Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojan* -- a policy that seeks to appease and integrate Adivasis into the state's development agenda.⁷⁸ In addition, linked to new state-level policies that encourage public private partnerships in education, some states have initiated public-private Ashramshalas. Most of the older Ashramshalas are continuations

77 Joshi, Vidyut, 'A Century of Tribal Education in Gujarat', In *Tribal Education in Gujarat*, eds. Ghanshyam Shah et al. Ajanta Publications: New Delhi. 1985.

78 According to the official sources, rupees 15000 crores are earmarked for this plan over five years. See: http://www.narendramodi.in/news/news_detail/1140

largely by default and are clearly sub-standard institutions offering education of questionable quality and standards. The expansion of such institutions over the past decade is linked to the pressure that the Education for All (EFA) goals and objectives have placed on the State through a heavy emphasis on access and retention, rather than a holistic approach and response to the Adivasi needs and demands.

There are also state-based variations in the administration and functioning of Ashramshalas. In some states, the Ashramshalas are linked to the Department of Education and receive support in terms of allocation of funds, teachers etc., but they are subject to review and monitoring by the department of Social Welfare (e.g. Kerala). In other states, e.g. Karnataka, the Ashramshalas are completely under the administrative purview of the Department of Social Welfare or the Department of Tribal Affairs, which occupies low status in state governance and accountability structures. Their functioning and delivery mechanisms are consequently largely overlooked. There are several problems in this model, in which all responsibilities starting from the construction of buildings to their management (including that of schooling and education) are left to departments that receive the least priority in the administrative-political-public triangulation.

The cadres of teachers for the Ashramshalas in many of the states are recruited primarily as 'daily wage' teachers for only nine months of the year and receive salaries calculated on a daily wage rate. They are 'released' during the summer when the Ashramshalas close and they are not seen as accountable to the department during these months. But, the

same teachers are recruited again over the years. Lack of training in education (pedagogy, content, materials development, understanding children, institutional management etc.) at the entry level itself and the failure of the Education Department to include Ashramshala teachers in teacher training programmes has meant that the teachers do not have the capacity for innovative pedagogy. High teacher absenteeism, including that of 'rotation absence', where teachers stay away from school and / or present themselves through a system of 'understanding' among each other is also widely prevalent.

Despite many Ashramshalas being more than two decades old, there are very few teachers and wardens from among the Adivasis or tribals themselves. A glaring problem is also the absence of women teachers and wardens in many of the schools, which also house girls of various ages. Since most Ashramshalas near the hamlets are only up to Standard V and the schools or Ashramshalas up to standards VIII or X are relatively farther from their hamlets, enrolment and attendance at such high schools is poor. In fact, the failure to extend all Ashramshalas up to Std VIII would become a violation of the RTE Act as these schools are the only ones available within the vicinity of many of these hamlets. One reason why large pools of children are either out of schools and / or in conditions of child labour is directly linked to the fact that no schools are available after Std V.

6.1.1. Conditions of Ashramshalas

Most Ashramshalas are poorly run and managed and their very establishment as 'low cost hostels' for Adivasis is one of the reasons. Reports of starvation, ill-treatment and inadequate

teaching-learning have been widespread. Periodically, there are cases of children running away from Ashramshalas, of rape and abuse of young girls and death by food poisoning in the hostels and reports of rampant ill health.

Ashramshalas have also become easy targets for experimental drug trials as evident in the recent case in Khamman district, Andhra Pradesh, where, tribal girls were among the 14,000 girls in the age group of 10-14 years who were vaccinated with the three doses of HPV vaccine (an experimental drug for cervical cancer prevention). Over 120 girls overall suffered from adverse side effects, which included epileptic seizures, severe stomachache, headaches and mood swings. There have also been reports of early onset of menstruation following the vaccination, heavy bleeding and severe menstrual cramps. Investigations indicated violations of medical ethics and protocol in subjecting the girls to

the vaccine in which no consent was received from the parent and or girls and no follow-up or emergency medical facilities were provided. In a region where doctors themselves have a scarce presence, the drug trials on these girls indicates the vulnerability of the Ashramshalas and other residential centres where Adivasi students are expected to reside.⁷⁹

6.1.2. Allocations to Ashramshalas

Generally, amounts allocated for Ashramshalas are low. In Maharashtra, the government allocates Rs. 750 per month as cost per child (of which Rs. 500 is for the direct expenses of the child and Rs 250 factored as administrative expenses). That the amounts allocated per child is based on close calculations that make for provisioning the minimum is evident from the following chart which lays out details of daily dietary allocations for children in an Ashramshala in Odisha.

Table 4: Monthly dietary expenses of a boarder-student from an Ashramshala in Salaguda, Odisha

Sl. No.	Details of materials	Quantity per time	No. of times	Price per kg	Amount per day
1	Rice	250g	2	Rs.2.00	Re. 1.00
2	Dal	40g	2	Rs.46.00	Rs.3.68
3	Vegetables	133g	2	Rs.10	Rs.2.66
4	Oil	15g		Rs.66	Re.0.99
5	Salt & Fuel				Rs.25.00 per month
6	Fish/ Mutton/ Egg	Weekly once			Rs.30.00 per month
7	Breakfast/ tiffin				Rs.2.00

Total dietary expenses per month = Rs.365.00 per student

79 'Indian Journal of Medical Ethics,'Vol. VII (1), January - March 2010. Available at: <http://www.ijme.in/pdfs/181de38.pdf>, and report dated March 14, 2010 available at: <http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/2423/59/>

Several studies indicate inadequate functioning of Ashramshalas as schools and problems in the provisioning of food and other support materials meant for residential students. The District Quality Education Programme (DQEP) / Vidyankura⁸⁰ team's five-year long detailed study of twelve Ashramshalas in the Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka indicated that most allocations are not necessarily transferred to the children. Leakage and siphoning of rations, stationery, toiletry and other items meant for children is common. The location of most Ashramshalas in remote areas, the absence of supervision and the in-built system of 'percentages' (allocation of cuts for various levels of officers) within the administrative system of the Department of Social Welfare mean that such leakage is both the norm and the accepted form of functioning of the larger bureaucracy.

Ashramshalas are also of various levels— most are only up to Std V. The few students who do make it to the higher levels are unable to sustain attendance by staying in the 'matric hostels' run for all reserved category students (SC, ST, and OBC) and drop out rates are very high. If conditions of the Ashramshalas and the treatment of the children there are wanting, then the orientation and teaching-learning levels are just as problematic. Based on their original objectives, most Ashramshalas remain sites for sanskritisation that begins with changing Adivasi names to Hindu names.

Another trend that can be seen in many parts of the country is private Ashramshalas. Some of them appear to be focusing on the education for children of Denotified Tribes such as the Pardhis in Maharashtra. Websites of some of these institutions indicate a heavily sanskritised syllabus, although the section under sports focuses on developing the 'inherited skills' (e.g. of acrobatics and sports). Private and NGO-based and managed schools including residential institutions have also been established, but there are no reviews or assessments of their functioning and impact on Adivasi families and communities.⁸¹ Large networks of schools such as the Ekal Vidyalayas, Vidya Bharati and others⁸² have also been established by Hindu organisations in the central Indian belts and there are no comprehensive reviews of their functioning. In addition, new public-private partnerships between state governments and private/corporate agencies are promoting the establishment of schools in the disadvantaged areas catering primarily to Scheduled Tribes and yet there are no transparent and easily available reviews or records of their functioning.

The impact and imprint of Ashramshalas as dominant educational institutions for Adivasis can be represented in the summary of what nearly fifty years of institutional and government-delivered education has done for the Adivasis. In a study conducted over four years⁸³ (2004-2008), P. Veerbhadranaika collected data and

80 See: <http://www.nias.res.in/research-schools-socialsciences-epp.php>

81 This includes the fact that the allocation of funds to such agencies by the MoTA is also not contingent on reviews of these organizations and their accountability for the funds received.

82 Others include those such as the Vanavasi Kalyan Seva Ashram (outside Delhi), Sewa Dham, Vidya Bharati, the Vivekananda Girijana Kalyan Kendra etc.

83 Details are from the doctoral dissertation: 'A Sociological Study of Ashramshalas in Chamarajanagar district', submitted to Mysore University by P. Veerbhadranaika (2010).

details related to the functioning and impact of Ashramshalas and the life conditions of several Adivasi families and their hamlets in the district of Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Home to four Adivasi groups (Soliga, Kadu Kuruba, Jenu Kuruba, and Yerava), the district houses the largest number of Ashramshalas in the state. Of the twenty-one government run Ashramshalas and one established and run by an NGO that cater to the hamlets (*podu*) scattered across the hilly tracts of the eastern ghats, most are residential facilities with schooling only up to Std V. While the problems of the Ashramshalas are similar to those in other states, the impact of provisioning basic education that is poor in quality and which has not in any real way benefited the Adivasis is visible in the following factors:

- Overall, the conditions and functioning of the Ashramshalas leave much to be desired. Despite recent improvements in physical infrastructure, there is a severe shortage of trained teachers, adequate and healthy food supplements and an institutional environment that could provide meaningful learning.
- A large number of youth, primarily educated up to Std V and some up to Std VII choose to migrate out to large cities and are employed in bakeries, chips-making units, grocery shops etc. Few opt to stay back in the hamlets or be engaged in the forest-cum-agricultural livelihoods of their parents.
- There is an absence of any understanding of democratic processes, institutions and their rights. The youth are unable to engage in debates and discussions related to the Forest Rights Act or to the establishment of a new tiger reserve in their area, which again portends their displacement.

- Very few of the Adivasis are represented in the taluka and zilla panchayats and are unable to represent the concerns and needs of the community.
- In the context of schools, even the 'literate' Adivasis (those who have received basic education) are unable to be active members in the administration and management of the Ashramshalas.
- The spread of popular culture and consumerism holds many youth in thrall and are now key sources of their identity and personhood.

Such trends have been described for other regions also and concern about the growing lumpenisation of educated tribal youth, their entry into mass organisations that seek to utilise their physical presence and the negative impact on families, communities and regions have been expressed. Overall, the above trends and conditions in education and its impact on the life-worlds of Adivasis, once again indicates that the educational system developed and deployed for Adivasis remains parallel, inadequate and sub-standard. A further scrutiny of these educational levels and trends indicates that learning loss and knowledge loss is one of the major challenges that Adivasis face.

6.3. Eklavya Model Residential Schools

More recently, the Ministry Of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has been promoting the establishment of model residential schools called 'Eklavya Model Residential Schools' (EMRS) which are to overcome the limitations of the other residential schools and the day schools run by either the Department of Social Welfare and or the Department of Education. Mukhopadhyay's (2005) review of eight Eklavya Model Residential

Schools in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and West Bengal⁸⁴ indicates that despite the promulgation of broad-based parameters for the establishment of a hundred EMRS across the country, only a few were functional and most were in various stages of construction. As schools, there was little or no localisation with attention to either content and teaching-learning approaches or to the management of the institutions. As with other government schools, the EMRS were sites for routinised teaching-learning in the conventional classroom methods, but with inadequately trained teachers and poorly paid or part-time principals. In his conclusion, Mukhopadhyay indicates that these EMRS now suffer from 'loss of vision resulting in the trivialization of a beautiful concept into ordinariness, losing the meaning of 'model' school for others to emulate.'⁸⁵ States such as Chhattisgarh have also introduced new model schools (CBSE syllabus and English medium) in all the districts but the lack of hostel facilities in many of them have meant that they are not accessible to students from the interior and remote areas.

6.4. Education of Adivasi Girls and Women: An Overview

Girls and women in Adivasi families and communities seem to be further disadvantaged

in accessing education (See Table 5). The educational deprivation and literacy gaps for Adivasi girls have been particularly debilitating since the literacy gap between Adivasi men and women has increased over the years; from that of 16.67 per cent to 24.41 per cent between the years of 1961 to 2001⁸⁶. This is a contradiction since, typically Adivasi families did not discriminate against girls and women and this is evidenced by the positive gender ratio, which was overall and until recently better than the national average.⁸⁷ Such a contradiction needs to be unpacked since the forms of exclusion and deprivation may stem more from limitations and problems at the level of institutions and educational programmes rather than from that of discrimination or problems at the level of the family. Data indicate that although there has been an improvement in access and enrolment, the differences between the genders are stark. While the abysmal rates of 1961 – male literacy of 13.83 per cent as against female literacy of 3.16 per cent have been replaced by much healthier figures 59.17 per cent and 34.76 per cent respectively in 2001, rural Adivasi women in 2001 registered a literacy percentage of only 32.44. Girls and women's access to education continues to indicate large gaps at higher levels, including in professional education.

84 Mukhopadhyay, Marmar. 'Eklavya Model Residential Schools: A Study Report', *National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration*, New Delhi. 2005.

85 *Ibid.*, p.3

86 See the analyses by the AFPBAE report, *Tribal Education in India: Need for Follow Through*. Asia South Pacific Basic and Adult Education: Mumbai. 2007.

87 A recent, troubling situation is the declining sex ratio even in the tribal districts. The districts of Nandurbar and Gadchiroli, which had 961 and 966 girls per 1,000 boys, respectively, in 2001, have registered sex ratios of 932 and 956 in 2011. In Nashik, another district with a sizeable tribal population, the drop is particularly stark, as child sex ratios have plummeted from 920 to 882 between 2001 and 2011. Source: <http://timesofindia.india-times.com/city/mumbai/Worrying-slip-in-edge-kept-by-tribal-areas/articleshow/8094625.cms>

Table 5: Literacy Rates of ST Population by Sex and Urban/ Rural, 1961 To 2001⁸⁸

Year / Region	Scheduled Tribe Population (%)		
	Male	Female	Persons
1961			
Rural	13.37	2.90	8.16
Urban	30.43	13.45	22.41
Total	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971			
Rural	16.92	4.36	10.68
Urban	37.09	19.64	28.84
Total	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981			
Rural	22.94	6.81	14.92
Urban	47.60	27.32	37.93
Total	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991			
Rural	38.45	16.02	27.38
Urban	66.56	45.66	56.60
Total	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001			
Rural	57.39	32.44	45.02
Urban	77.77	59.87	69.09
Total	59.17	34.76	47.10

Source: Census of India

Trends indicate that while there is a hundred percent enrolment of Adivasi girls at the primary level, there is a steep drop in enrolment between the primary and upper primary classes (although the drop out rate of tribal students between classes one and eight has been declining) (See Table 6).

Table 6: Dropout rates of ST students at Primary & Elementary stages 2001 to 2004-05

Year	Primary (I-V)			Elementary (I-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2001-02	51.0	54.1	52.3	67.3	72.7	69.5
2002-03	50.8	52.1	51.4	66.9	71.2	68.7
2003-04	49.1	48.7	48.9	69.0	71.4	70.1
2004-05	42.6	42.0	42.3	65.0	67.1	65.9

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05, MHRD.

88 Compiled from 'Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05,' Statement 11.5, Ministry of Human Resources Development.

At higher levels of education, only a few thousand girls have enrolled across all faculties, which are only a small percentage of the numbers eligible (See Table 8). Programmes which have relatively fewer girls include a sharp difference in the numbers who access B.A courses. Women account for only 36.16 percent of the total ST students enrolled in B.A. courses while they are underrepresented in engineering and in the polytechnics.⁸⁹

6.4.1. Schemes for Education of Girls and Women

The scheme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya has been in operation since 2004 and it sought to set up all-girls schools in educationally backward blocks.⁹⁰ Taking Census 2001 as the base, such areas were defined as those having a rural female literacy less than the national average of 46 per cent and those having a gender gap in literacy that was higher than the national average of 22 per cent. Since 2008-09, there seems to have been a convergence of the KGBV, SSA and the then newly introduced scheme of 'Strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts.' According to a teacher educator in the Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, less than one per cent of the KGBVs follow the norm of ensuring that 70 percent of the students enrolled are from Adivasi communities.⁹¹ It was also mentioned in the discussion that the KGBVs follow what is popularly known as a '*HAL-MAL-LAL*' system (High Activity Learning,

Medium Activity Learning and Low Activity) to identify candidates for the various courses such as tailoring, candle making, cooking, etc. Depending on their aptitude for learning, which was thus categorised, the girls were allocated to the various vocational courses being offered in the KGBVs. NCERT's report of the national consultation meet on KGBVs, conducted in August 2008, stated that a major issue for KGBVs was to reflect on how knowledge is constructed and how it links with the lived reality of the students,⁹² particularly as the *raison de etré* of the institution is to bring education to those girls who have dropped out of the system as well as those who have never been enrolled – both of which reflect on the drawbacks of the existing system of education. In this context, it is ironical that the KGBV system uses the same textbooks as the formal education system, which failed to attract the interest of many students. The NCERT report also pointed out that a major lacuna in the present system was the absence of linkage of KGBV courses to institutes of higher or vocational education.

In addition to the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme, a community-level effort through the Mahila Samakhya programme has been undertaken by the State to empower tribal girls and women. Following the recommendations of the National Policy on Education, 1986, the Mahila Samakhya programme was introduced as a pilot in ten

89 The data available needs to be scrutinized for authenticity. It is not clear why and how there are more women than men in M.Com. Courses while there are significantly less women at the bachelor's levels and in other courses.

90 NUEPA's 2008 Country Analytical Review

91 The teacher educator was participating in the NIAS-Shiksha Sandhan's east zone consultation meet on Adivasi education, organised in January 2011.

92 Prof. Krishna Kumar at the national consultation on KGBV, Department of Women's Studies, NCERT, August 11-12, 2008.

districts spread across three states – one each in the north, centre, and south and west zones. It is now spread across ten states and covers 9000 villages in 60 backward districts, many of them with large tribal populations. The programme seeks to both empower women and educate them about their rights. A direct impact of this programme, which operates through ‘*sanghas*,’ or women’s collectives, is the enrolment and retention of more numbers of girls in schools where the programme is in operation. Reviews from various assessment reports on the impact of Mahila Samakhya indicate an overall improvement in empowerment and opportunities for women in Adivasi areas along with a decrease in discrimination.⁹³ But the impact is limited and is yet to be spread across the nation. Additionally, there have been more schemes introduced under SSA and DPEP for disadvantaged groups and particularly for girls from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In fact, according to a study by NUEPA, more than 60 per cent of the students in DPEP districts are from these social groups.⁹⁴

A recent initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in operation since April 2008 is a scheme to strengthen education among Adivasi girls in low literacy districts. Under this, fifty-four districts across thirteen states have been identified. The cut-off female literacy percentage for the selected districts has been fixed at 35 per cent, but at least three districts, all of them in Odisha have reported literacy rates of 10 per cent or less: Malkangiri (7.5 per

cent), Koraput (8.4 per cent) and Rayagada (10.1 per cent). A significant feature of the scheme is that two per cent of the total budget for the scheme is required to be set aside by the ministry for monitoring and management of the scheme.

6.5. Institutions of Higher Education

Trends related to higher education indicate a mixed pattern. Adivasi student enrolment in at least two southern states (Andhra Pradesh and Kerala) seems to be much better than the national average. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand also do well. Remarkable, however, is the performance of Adivasi boys in Uttar Pradesh (See Table 7). There is a near 100 per cent enrolment, though less than a quarter of the girls in the 18-24 age group go on to study after completing higher secondary (See Table 7).

Table 7: Gross Enrolment Ratio of ST Students in Higher Education (2005-06)

States/Uts	Higher Education (18-24 years)		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Andhra Pradesh	13.19	4.70	8.55
Arunachal Pradesh	11.15	7.07	9.05
Assam	7.91	3.98	5.89
Bihar	7.61	2.67	5.20
Chhattisgarh	5.47	2.74	4.07
Goa	-	-	-
Gujarat	8.92	5.60	7.26
Haryana	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	20.03	16.66	18.34
Jammu & Kashmir	8.09	7.83	7.97

93 Executive Summary of National Evaluation of Kerala Mahila Samakhya Programme.’ Available at: <http://education.nic.in/ms/KeralaES.pdf>); ‘Empowering Education: the Mahila Samakhya experience.’ Available at: portal.unesco.org

94 Source: National Portal Content Management Team, Reviewed on: 19-01-2011

States/Uts	Higher Education (18-24 years)		
Jharkhand	2.02	1.02	1.51
Karnataka	6.58	4.01	5.36
Kerala	9.97	13.34	11.78
Madhya Pradesh	11.35	6.32	8.81
Maharashtra	9.94	6.66	8.31
Manipur	12.16	10.67	11.41
Meghalaya	10.68	10.94	10.81
Mizoram	7.40	6.90	7.15
Nagaland	6.92	3.90	5.48
Odisha	3.16	0.32	1.69
Punjab	-	-	-
Rajasthan	8.53	2.72	5.70
Sikkim	9.53	10.11	9.82
Tamil Nadu	5.91	3.10	4.40
Tripura	4.60	2.23	3.35
Uttar Pradesh	99.93	22.12	61.03
Uttarakhand	19.83	14.88	17.36
West Bengal	4.83	2.40	3.55
A&N Islands	4.45	4.45	4.45
Chandigarh	-	-	-
D&N Haveli	0.00	0.00	0.00
Daman & Diu	-	-	-
Delhi	-	-	-
Lakshadweep	0.00	0.00	0.00
Puducherry	-	-	-
INDIA	8.55	4.70	6.60

Source: 'Selected Educational Statistics 2005-06,' Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development. Government of India.

6.5.1. Schemes in Higher Education

Although the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) offers a range of schemes for higher education, there are several problems associated with these schemes. For example, the lack of broad-based information and processes to access

these schemes mean that it is mostly the more advantaged and well-positioned STs (those with links to power; having relatives in the ministries or with English education) who usually benefit from these. Schemes such as the ones for facilitating higher education in science and technology for enrolling in doctoral programmes overseas and for training as commercial pilots (all of which are administered by MoTA), are also restricted to those who already have received better educational opportunities.

In-built biases and forms of exclusion mean that schemes are not accessed by the most deserving. For example, the 'Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship' is provided to students who wish to pursue their M.Phil or Ph.D degrees. A clause in the statement of rules pertaining to the fellowship⁹⁵ says that 667 fellowships will be provided every year and in case fellowships are not availed of in a particular year, they will be carried forward to the next year. Reading between the lines, it is apparent that there is an assumption that there may not be sufficient numbers of Scheduled Tribe candidates who can apply for this scholarship. This clause has to be seen in the light of other scholarships available to non-ST candidates; the competition in these cases is so intense that the selection process has to 'eliminate' candidates through a single- or even multi-step examination / interview. This speaks volumes about the level of educational development of the tribal people and the gap in the State's commitment and sincerity to the cause.

Another example of how exclusion is in-built is evident in the scheme of 'Top class education'

95 Ministry of Tribal Affairs, available at: <http://tribal.gov.in/index2.asp?sublinkid=425&langid=1>. Accessed on April 13, 2011.

for Adivasi students which is a scholarship that provides for a student's higher education at 127 identified institutions⁹⁶ across the nation. The tuition fees as well as other living expenses will be provided for five Scheduled Tribe students at each of these institutions, after they have been duly selected by these institutions through the requisite selection process. Except for Assam, the entire north-east is absent from this list of select institutions. States like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are also under-represented.

In both physical and financial terms the scheme has been performing far below par. According to the Planning Commission's mid-term appraisal of the eleventh Five Year Plan, less than 500 students had benefited during the first three years of the Plan, as against a target of around 10,000 students for the Plan-period. The expenditure was around 4.02 crore, which was around 5.9 percent of the outlay of 73.80 crore for the scheme.⁹⁷

Table 8: Faculty-wise Enrolment of ST Students (2005-06)

Faculty	Schedule Tribe		
	Girls	Boys	Total
Ph.D/D.Sc/D.Phill	760	760	1,520
M.A.	10,328	14,703	25,031
M.Sc.	1,803	2,737	4,540
M.Com.	4,176	3,802	7,978
B.A/Hons	76,161	1,34,416	2,10,577
B.Sc/Hons	18,705	34,622	53,327
B.Com/Hons	18,475	29,465	47,940
BE/BSc(Engg)/B.A	14,949	42,241	57,190

Faculty	Schedule Tribe		
	Girls	Boys	Total
Medicine*	8,372	10,944	19,316
B.Ed/BT	4,054	5,318	9,372
Open Univ	30,325	59,702	90,027
Polytechnic	4,163	11,834	15,997
Others**	8,372	10,944	19,316

*Includes dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, Ayurveda and Unani, Homoeopathy, etc.

**Not included in any specified faculty

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept. of Higher Education, Government of India <http://education.nic.in/stats/statses.asp>

The establishment of the Indira Gandhi Tribal University in 2007 at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh with a regional branch in Manipur also reaffirms the lack of focus on Adivasi interests. The very name of the University, its orientation and its functioning, calls for serious review. A review of the courses offered by the University indicates a replication of mainstream disciplines and the established bureaucratic structure of administration and management. Apart from courses in 'tribal medicine' and a department in 'tribal studies' (that incorporates art, literature, culture, languages, history, museology, and 'traditional medicine'), none of the departments (a total of ten) seem to have focused on innovative or novel courses and bodies of knowledge. What role and position do Adivasis themselves have in such an establishment, what significance can such a university have for scaffolding their knowledges and identities or in addressing the limitations of the dominant system are all questions that need to be addressed.

96 The breakup of the institutions is as follows: Engineering: 52; Medicine/Dentistry: 13; Law: 5; Management: 21; Other specialized streams such as commercial pilot, hotel management, etc: 36.

97 'Mid-term appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan,' Planning Commission, p. 207.

Other initiatives at the level of higher education include the recent attempts to establish centres for the study of exclusion in universities so as to support the academic performance of students from these backgrounds. How such cells would function and what impact they would have on the learning and achievements levels of students from reserved category caste and tribal backgrounds are yet to be assessed.

6.5.2. Iron Ceiling? Employment Barriers

A key result of providing inadequate and largely poor quality education at all levels is visible in the fact that very few Adivasis make it to professional and more visible high status jobs. An iron ceiling, constituted first by poor quality education right from elementary level to that of higher levels, high elimination rates at various levels and then compounded by the lack of cultural and social capital mean that high status employment opportunities remain few and far between, for Adivasis. The inability of many institutions of higher education and employment, where 'reservations' or positive discrimination policies are supposed to be implemented, to fill their quota of 'reserved ST seats', indicate the dearth of qualified personnel among the Adivasis. The results of such an

'iron ceiling' in the career and employment opportunities of Adivasis is evident in the low numbers represented in key administrative positions and in the private sector.

6.5.3. Administrative Positions

The number of officers presently working as Secretary, Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary and Director in the Government of India and the number of SC/ST officers on these posts and their percentage as on December 11, 2009, as per the information available is given below:⁹⁸

6.5.4. Employment and Social Mobility in the Private Sector

A first-ever caste census of India's human resources has revealed that the proportion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees in the private sector in some of the most industrialised states hardly reflects their strength in the general population of those states.⁹⁹ The only exception is Tamil Nadu, which ranks number one in industrialisation and employment (by number of factories and persons according to the Annual Survey of Industries 2008-09) where Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) account for almost 18 per cent of the industrial workforce and 20 per cent of the state's population.

Table 9: SC and ST officers in the Government

	Secretary	Additional Secy.	Joint Secy.	Director
Total No. of officers	88	66	249	471
No. of SCs	00	01	13	31
percentage of SCs	0.00	1.52	5.04	6.20
No. of STs	04	01	09	09
percentage of STs	4.55	1.52	3.49	1.80

98 Source: <http://indiacurrentaffairs.org/number-of-scst-officers-in-government-of-india/>

99 Source: <http://www.scststudents.org>

Table 10: State wise share of SC and ST in population vs. their share in industry

State	Industry Rank ¹	SC/ ST in industry ²	SC/ ST in population ³	Gap
Tamil Nadu	1	17.9	20.0	2.1
Maharashtra	2	5.0	19.1	14.1
Andhra Pradesh	3	17.1	22.8	5.7
Gujarat	4	9.0	21.9	12.9
Uttar Pradesh	5	17.0	21.2	4.2
Punjab	6	21.0	28.9	7.9
Karnataka	7	8.9	22.8	13.9
Rajasthan	8	14.0	29.8	15.8
West Bengal	9	20.0	28.5	8.5
Kerala	10	14.2	10.94	3.26
Haryana	11	19.0	19.3	0.3
Madhya Pradesh	12	11.0	35.5	24.5
Delhi	13	15.0	16.9	1.9
Uttarakhand	17	22.0	20.9	-1.9
Himachal Pradesh	21	12.0	28.7	16.7
Puducherry	23	13.2	16.2	3.2

¹ Industrialisation rank based on Annual Survey of Industries 2008-09.

² Share in percentage of workforce based on CII survey.

³ Share in percentage of population based on Census of India 2001.

Summary of Educational Schemes for Adivasis:

The fact that, despite the plethora of schemes the Adivasis continue to record low levels of access and achievement indicates the internal problems in the orientation, functioning and impact of these schemes and programmes. Recent attempts to address these inbuilt problems have also not been successful. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's 'Tribal Development Plan' drawn up in 2007, has instituted several mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation, including the ones by academic institutions and autonomous institutes. Yet, the annual joint review missions do not provide detailed assessments of the programmes and

schemes nor are audits of the functioning of the institutions built into these annual exercises.

It is, therefore, not as much a dearth of innovative schemes as lacuna in implementation that requires addressal. Convergence between various schemes, documenting good practices through field studies and facilitating data collection and research, besides close monitoring of the schemes' operationalisation are key to initiating innovative programmes and facilitating attitudinal changes. That there is an overarching limiting factor in-built into all the policies, schemes and programmes for Adivasis can be surmised from the fact that they have been allocated the lowest in cost, poorest in quality and among the most

indifferently administered institutions to care for their interests.

The challenge ahead is to recognise the deep-seated biases and distortions of the current mainstream education system and to re-vision new approaches and methods by which the rights of Adivasis to an equitable and meaningful education can be realised. The existing gaps represented mostly in the large

numbers of non-literate Adivasis can be seen as the very opportunity to initiate programmes that can undo the structural and systemic injustice done to them. The way ahead must be built on the anvil of democratic consultations, forging responsive institutions and facilitating the retention of the advantages/worthiness of Adivasi cultures while also enabling their rights to be equal and participant citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the key challenges and problems of the existing education system and in order to make equality of educational opportunity for Adivasis a reality, the following recommendations are made to re-vision, re-structure and re-constitute the educational system, so that it can cater to the needs and aspirations of Adivasis and also enable them to be equal and empowered citizens of India.

(a) Policy: Broad-based democratic exercises should facilitate the development of comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the existing problems. Viewed from this perspective, it would appear that the Adivasis have not received detailed attention in education policy making. Their invisibilisation needs to be addressed by formulating new initiatives (at the Central and State levels) that are integral to the policies of the dominant education system and are also stand-alone policies. This would involve creative development of programmes that are built around the knowledge, identity and languages of Adivasis, which would, however, also enable their participation in the larger society. New realities including large scale seasonal migration must be addressed by facilitating more open structures of schooling and educational access. Recognition or certification of varied knowledge

forms and innovative learning, leading to a diversity of livelihoods and vocations needs to be facilitated.

(b) Structures: The need for synchrony between the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and other allied ministries where a plethora of programmes (many in discord with each other) are deployed is urgent. The linkages between central schemes and their state-based implementation need to be streamlined.

(c) Institutions: The functioning of the Tribal Research and Training Institutes (TRTIs), and the Ashramshalas needs to be revisited so as to make them engaged and responsive institutions. In many cases, the introduction of new institutions including those run by private agencies and religious and welfare groups needs to be reviewed. The lack of monitoring of such institutions poses a problem and may in the long run be detrimental to the broader philosophy of education. New institutions should involve participation, decision-making and monitoring by Adivasi communities. Democratic decentralisation in the true sense will involve community inputs and ownership.

Strengthening of School Monitoring Committees is also a way to ensure this.

(d) Administration: The following steps need to be undertaken so as to democratise, professionalise and facilitate transparency in the educational system for Adivasis:

- Establish a special cell for Adivasi education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development or set up a desk with a Special Officer supervising all programmes, funds and data related to Adivasis and their education.
- Currently, Ashramshalas/Vidyalayas etc., are run by several administrative units (Education Department, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Zilla Parishad, Forest Department, ITDA among others). There is an urgent need to review the functioning and impact of these institutions and facilitate changes, so that these schools are not parallel and inadequate (as they are at present). Instead, efforts should be made to ensure that they are comparable in funding, functioning, administration and impact.
- Bridge the huge information gap that exists between various schemes of the different ministries and the people, so that the schemes may be better utilised.
- Revisit the current classification of Scheduled Tribes /Denotified Tribes, particularly in the context of its variations across many states. Rethinking of official classification is also crucial in order to make sure that the most vulnerable communities are not excluded as they may fall out of these categories.

- Address hurdles in obtaining caste/tribal-certificates. Issues of seat capturing (in educational institutions) by newly classified 'Scheduled Tribes' and the problem of representation needs to be addressed.
- Develop a specialised cadre of teachers for Adivasi areas with focus on recruiting representative members from varied Adivasi communities. Emphasise improved teacher training (including integrated and multi-language abilities, new pedagogies etc.), professionalism, equal pay and career growth opportunities to such teachers. Develop additional teacher education programme/modules including incentives for teachers working in Adivasi schools.
- Improve processes and periodicity of reviews of programmes. Allow for in-built monitoring and review processes by educationists, elected representatives and members of civil society groups.

(e) Innovations in curricula, pedagogies, texts and certification: Most innovations in education have been generated by alternative schools and by a small number of individuals and organisations. The innovations include new teaching-learning materials, pedagogies and some texts. These need to be enhanced and programmes to facilitate inter-institutional sharing and dissemination of such innovations must be given priority and fund support. Scaffolding these innovations, instead of subjecting them to bureaucratic norms, will go a long way in enhancing innovative educational schemes for deprived groups.

APPENDIX: I

ZONE-WISE REVIEW OF ISSUES PERTAINING TO EDUCATION AMONG ADIVASIS

The following are issues/themes/questions/ideas which emerged while we undertook a review of literature and data pertaining to education among Adivasis across the nation. Some of these were drawn on for the regional consultations. Further work and attention needs to be paid to understanding these important trends and challenges. In addition, we have identified some common questions and issues that are pertinent to all the regions and States (including the North-East) within them. These include:

(A) Introductory Inquiry on Policy

1. What is the history of educational policies for Scheduled Tribes? What are some of the recurring themes in this discourse?
2. What programmes, schemes are introduced for education of STs since independence? Which ministry anchors these programmes?
3. How different are programmes and schemes across states?
4. What is the language policy in each state?
5. Does each of the states have separate departments for Adivasis?
6. How have social movements taken up questions of Adivasi education?
7. What are some of the innovative educational schemes in education of STs?
8. What are the review mechanisms in each of the states and the linkages between the state departments and MoTA?

ZONE-WISE REVIEW

CENTRAL ZONE

[Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand]

1. Are there state specific policies on education for Adivasis, since they form a sizeable number in these states?
2. Impact of displacement in the case of the Sardar Sarovar dam on children and youth, their estrangement from their life worlds and traditional knowledge systems and their negotiations with the modern education system?

3. How can the linkages be read/ understood between the naxal movement, Operation Green Hunt and the high literacy rate and the progress of education in central Indian states?
4. Why is the Gond community in Chhattisgarh performing poorly (in education) in comparison with that of the Gonds of Maharashtra?
5. In 1982, the Bhopal Bharat Bhavan opened with a substantial collection of Bhil, Gond and Bastar art works. In keeping with this recognition of Adivasi art, have there been steps subsequently to include it in the school curriculum? How is the art collection used? What are the linkages to the promotion of such art knowledge and skills to that of alternative livelihood possibilities?
6. There are more than a dozen state-sponsored schemes for education of Adivasi children in Chhattisgarh. Many of them are of recent origin and are scheduled to run till the end of this decade. What has been the impact of schemes such as *Chatragrih Yojna* and *Kanya Saksharata Protsahan Yojna*?
7. There have been reports of the takeover of schools by the armed forces in some of the regions in the zone. How have the Adivasi children and their schooling been affected by the prevailing environment of insecurity and unrest?
8. What are the linkages between the Indira Gandhi Tribal University and students in these states? How have students and the larger society benefited from this University?

EAST ZONE

[Odisha, Bihar and West Bengal]

1. In Bihar (districts now in Jharkhand), West Bengal and Odisha the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tribal girls is very low when compared to the general female population (e.g., At higher education levels in Bihar, recent statistics show that the GER for tribal girls is 8.53 percent, whereas for the general population girls it is 18.77 percent). What are the factors – cultural/ social/ other – that account for this situation? Are any special measures in place – special schemes/ scholarships/ awareness programmes – to address this?
2. In recent times, religion has become an extremely sensitive issue in the east zone. In this context, what has been the role played by religious organizations in educating the disadvantaged, particularly the tribal people?
3. There have been several social movements in the region, particularly against multinational mining corporations. Many of these struggles have been led by Adivasis. What has been the impact of collective organising on the state politics?
4. Odisha has pioneered initiatives in mother tongue language education for Adivasis including community-based development of syllabi. Reviews of this programme (MLL) and the findings will be central to extending the programme to other states.
5. An attempt was made to introduce a COMMON SCHOOL policy in Bihar. Reviews of the status of this policy and its implications for Adivasis needs to be made.

WEST ZONE
[Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra]

1. Have there been impact assessment studies of Gujarat's Van Bandhu KalyanYojana programme?
2. The attendance rates of Adivasi students in the primary schools of Rajasthan are among the poorest across the nation (57.84 percent). Though it improves at middle school (70.81 percent), the disparity between the general category students (81.14 percent) and the tribal students is still large. What could be the reason for this?
3. In 2003, a report on the working of integrated tribal development projects in Rajasthan indicated that delay in the disbursement of scholarships was one of the reasons for the increasing drop out of Adivasi students. Has there been an improvement in the situation subsequently? How far could this be a factor in other states as well?
4. In Maharashtra, Mahadev Kolis are doing very well and Bhils and Gonds are not. Does the fact that the Bhils are predominantly rural and more Kolis are urban than the other tribes have a bearing on the attitudes towards education? Or, does it facilitate easier access to educational institutions
5. In Maharashtra, Bhils and Gonds enroll in large numbers at the primary stage. What are the reasons for their drop out subsequently? Can we draw a comparative data map of the communities' economic status, physical conditions of their settlements and consequent level of access to schools and hostels, etc.
6. Do the Gonds and Bhils on either side of the M.P-Maharashtra border reflect the differences between the two states on developmental indicators? What is their comparative performance in education?
7. In Gujarat, civil society initiatives such as the Adivasi Academy at Tejgadh have been conducting innovative programmes with a focus on Adivasi languages. What is the impact of this programme and the possibility of its impact on mainstream education programmes?

NORTH
[Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand]

1. As per the Census, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand are predominantly rural. Many of the tribes in these states are nomadic and pastoral. The question is as to how can the problems of nomadic and rural communities be adequately addressed? What are the steps being taken in this regard?
2. In Himachal Pradesh, mobile schools had been initiated for the children of nomadic tribes who spend half the year in the hills and the rest of the year in the plains. But these schools do not seem to be operational any more. How did these schools function and why were they closed?
3. Considering that the Adivasi communities constitute nearly 11 percent of Jammu & Kashmir, are there any administrative mechanisms in place for attending to their issues? (Jammu & Kashmir,

it appears, does **not** have a separate ministry to look after tribal affairs, despite the sizeable tribal population).

4. In Uttarakhand, the formation of a Tribal Advisory Committee was apparently approved by the Centre recently. Has it become operational? What are its initial steps in education?
5. The Institute of Tribal Studies was set up a little more than a decade ago at the Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. Its contribution in the area of education needs to be reviewed.
6. Both Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir are to get Indian Institute of Management campuses 2012. What could be the impact of this on the higher education scenario in the north zone?
7. A major initiative by the Jammu and Kashmir government has been to translate classics from other Indian languages into Gojri to give the Gujjar people access to major works of literature. How has this project been received? Have similar projects been proposed or implemented for other tribal languages?
8. Are there differences in the achievement levels of Adivasi populations of different faiths in Jammu & Kashmir? What data is available on education levels classified on the basis of religion: Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist?
9. The Gaddi tribes live in both Himachal Pradesh and in Jammu and Kashmir. How is the comparative performance of the Gaddi students in the two states? Are other tribes similarly represented in both states? And are their performances comparable?
10. Eight communities in Ladakh have been listed among scheduled tribes. About a decade ago, the Students’ Education and Cultural Movement of Ladakh began producing Ladakhi textbooks and extending mathematics and science education in Ladakhi to students of all ages. How far has this helped the tribal population?

NORTH-EAST

[Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura]

1. Higher educational opportunities in the north-east region are still far from sufficient or satisfactory. What is the performance of existing central universities such as NEHU and how far have they bridged the accessibility gap?
2. How far have religious institutions and organisations influenced the state of educational development?
3. Given the multiplicity of tribal languages in the north east, what would be the best way to provide mother tongue language education in mixed classrooms? Is there demand for such education from the tribal communities, considering their above average educational achievements in the prevailing systems and their ability to preserve their language and tradition as well?
4. What are the language policies of each state in the region and what are its linkages to education?

5. The compulsory imposition of Hindi up to the eighth standard and its impact on the students needs to be reviewed.
6. Since a large proportion of teachers are from other parts of the country, whose presence is increasingly felt in the schools, colleges and universities, what has been their impact?
7. Increasing numbers of students from the north east region are opting for higher education in metropolises. What is the impact of such 'education migration' on the region?
8. How do migrant students cope in the regions/cities where they study? What are the difficulties they face and what are the support systems available to them? How far is the movement of large numbers of students to the 'mainland' helping the north east people integrate with the rest of the country?
9. How many returns to the states in the North East to study, work or settle down in other ways?
10. In the context of the continued unrest in large parts of the north east region, how has the educational achievement and the educational experience of the students been affected?
11. How education is facilitated among the Adivasi tea garden workers in the north east?
12. There are fourteen universities in north east India and about 600 colleges of arts, science and commerce. Five of these universities are in Assam which also has more than 50 percent of the colleges. How does the uneven distribution affect the higher education scenario in the north east region?
13. The important central institutions in the North East Region are IIT, Guwahati; NERIST [north eastern regional institute of science and technology], Itanagar; NIT, Silchar; four more central universities are also planned in addition to NEHU. What has been the impact of these institutions on higher education in the region?
14. KokBorok schools in Tripura are said to have brought children to schools, and retained them through elementary school. Have there been similar tribal language initiatives in other regions of north east India? What are the lessons to be learnt from this example with regard to training teachers to speak in the tribal language or employing more tribal teachers?
15. The movement for Nagalim (greater Nagaland) is also attempting to revive Naga language and cultural institutions. What impact will this have on educational opportunities and trends? This is important in the context of the state's insistence on English/Hindi being the medium of instruction at all levels.
16. The Tripura Tribal Development Academy's role in promoting KokBorok in schools has been documented. What are the roles of similar academies/ departments in other North East Indian states? How do they distinguish themselves from ministries/ departments that are already engaged with tribal welfare issues and what are their interactions like?
17. In Mizoram, tribal people have educational achievements that are far above the average national performance. What could be the reasons for this? Does the high tribal population percentage in these places have a bearing on this?

SOUTH

[Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Indian Ocean Islands]

1. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have high general literacy rates, but the state's overall performance has not percolated to the Adivasi people. Why does the disparity persist? Has there been any attempt to identify reasons for the disparity between average and Adivasi education standards and methods to bridge the gap?
2. Kerala shows a very high GER for girls in higher classes, both among tribal women and the general population. Are there any special incentives/ schemes/ other measures that have facilitated this?
3. What has been the effect of insecurity and unrest in the border areas between Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh on the schooling of Adivasi children?
4. Currently, the Ashramshalas of Karnataka are administered by the Dept. of Social Welfare with a cadre of un-trained and non-regular teachers. What are the obligations of the dept. of education to integrate the Ashramshalas within its purview (enabling the Dept. of Social Welfare to maintain only the hostels)?
5. What is the state of the large numbers of residential schools and hostels (including those in cities and towns) that are marked for Adivasis?
6. As far as higher education of the Adivasi population is concerned, a unique phenomenon is noticed in Kerala: the number of girls doing their post-graduation outnumbers the boys in all disciplines – Arts, Science and Commerce. What schemes have worked for greater participation of women in Kerala?
6. In Andaman & Nicobar, a recent proposal was made by a member of the Parliament to place the Jarawa children to study in residential schools as the only way of ensuring their progress. What is the significance of this proposal that involves forcible estrangement of the children from their life worlds?
7. After much criticism, the directorate of tribal development was established in Tamil Nadu in 2000-01. How does the new department function especially in relation to monitoring and supporting educational programmes?
8. The Tribal Welfare Department, Andhra Pradesh, has been using a technology-mediated Performance Appraisal System to keep track of its various schemes for tribal welfare, including educational schemes, e.g. Assessment of Gurukuls. What has been the response to technology and how effective has it been as a monitoring and assessment tool?
9. The Kerala government has extended support for CREST's [Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation, Kozhikode] supplementary education programmes for scheduled communities. Reports and assessments indicate a positive impact of this programme on the career opportunities of students. How can this programme be replicated in other states?

APPENDIX: II

DENOTIFIED COMMUNITIES; RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Communities classified as denotified largely follow traditional occupations; many are street entertainers such as acrobats, singers, dancers and tight ropewalkers; or mendicants, fortune tellers and animal trainers; nomadic pastoralists, moving between states with their herds of cattle, sheep, camel, goat and yak; itinerant traders in salt, baskets and other cane and bamboo-ware or in services such as roof-thatching and stone cutting. In a changing and fast-paced world relying on money economy and materiality, their work as independent artistes and artisans, typically not bound by time or wages for work done, not only does not elicit respect, but invites suspicion from 'settled' societies, who often mistake them for criminals. Sporadic incidents of stoning and lynching of tribals belonging to the DNST communities has been reported in the press in recent years, though many more such incidents go unreported and the perpetrators unpunished.

A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on DNSTs constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment¹⁰⁰ in 2006, under the chairmanship of Ganesh N Devy, looked at the problem of these tribes from a historical perspective and suggested various measures for the amelioration of their condition. A primary recommendation of the TAG is the urgent need for a comprehensive national list of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes and communities on the lines of the official Schedules that are in use by the administration for identifying other tribes and castes in order to provide them benefits under special schemes conceived for them. The TAG has also made several recommendations pertaining to the educational development of the DNSTs, 99 per cent of whom are illiterate according to its report.¹⁰¹ Besides providing midday meals, instituting separate reservation and establishing residential schools, the TAG also recommends that the mandatory requirement of domicile certificate be waived in the case of these tribes as they seldom have ration cards or other markers of identity because of their nomadic lifestyle. This rule is also pertinent in the context of the Right to Education Act which relies on the idea of 'neighbourhood schools' to provide education, particularly in rural areas. But children of migrant communities do not belong to any neighbourhood as such. Consequently, all schools should be asked to facilitate their admission and

100 See Report: 'Recommendations of the Technical Advisory Group', 2006. Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/933435/TAG-Report>

101 'Recommendations of the Technical Advisory Group, 2006.' p. 16.

the 'neighbourhood' rule should not be held against them as these communities are not tied down to any village or town.

The TAG report also makes special mention of some innovative schemes conceived by certain State Governments to facilitate education among tribal populations: The Jammu & Kashmir government had introduced special coaching classes for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students in the ninth to twelfth standards. The TAG recommends that similar classes be introduced by all the states, wherever there is a settled DNST population and the report also commends Himachal Pradesh's experiment of employing 'travelling teachers' who would move with the nomadic groups to ensure children had a regular schooling despite the lifestyle of their parents and an additional advantage of this scheme was that children would not have to be separated from their community.

Considering the DNST as a distinct group, the TAG recommends that plans made for them should distinguish between communities with a settled lifestyle and those who are nomadic. The TAG report is also sensitive to the distinctive cultural knowledge of the tribes and recommends that all efforts be made to preserve this knowledge by undertaking capacity building measures and facilitating technical improvement of their traditional skills so that they can continue to make their livelihoods independently, though more fruitfully. This last recommendation is indeed relevant for all Adivasis whose traditional knowledge systems deserve special attention in the UN's second decade of the world's indigenous people, which began in 2004.

However, as Devy notes in a letter to Balkrishna Renake of the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (NCDNST), "Merely suggesting Schemes and Programmes applicable to the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes will not result in any action unless a corresponding provision is made for funding support to run such Schemes and Programmes¹⁰²". And, one may add provision for continuous monitoring and evaluation, which additionally allows for incorporating the lessons learnt from implementation at the grassroots.

102 'Recommendations of the Technical Advisory Group', 2006, p. 5.

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