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**INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA:  
EXAMINING THE STATUS AND CHALLENGES**

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**ABSTRACT**

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India represent a diverse group of indigenous communities who have historically faced social, economic, and political marginalization. The Indian government recognizes the unique vulnerabilities and disadvantages faced by these communities and has implemented specific constitutional provisions and policies to safeguard their rights and promote their development. The status of Scheduled Tribes in India is primarily governed by the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which provides for the administration and governance of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes. The Constitution also mandates the creation of Scheduled Tribes Commission (STC) to investigate and monitor the welfare and progress of these communities. Under the Constitution, certain privileges and protections are extended to Scheduled Tribes. These include reservations in legislative bodies, educational institutions, and government jobs to ensure their representation and participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, affirmative action policies such as reservations in public employment, educational scholarships, and welfare schemes are implemented to address historical injustices and bridge the socio-economic gap between Scheduled Tribes and other communities. The government has also established specialized institutions and bodies to address the specific needs of Scheduled Tribes. The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) serves as a constitutional body to safeguard their rights, protect their interests, and promote their socio-economic development. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, programs, and schemes for the welfare and upliftment of Scheduled Tribes.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India refer to specific indigenous communities or tribes that have been historically marginalized and disadvantaged. They are recognized and listed by the Indian government under the category of Scheduled Tribes, as per the provisions of the Constitution of India. The scheduled tribes have a unique cultural and social identity, distinct languages, and traditional customs and practices that have evolved over generations.

The status of Scheduled Tribes in India has been a subject of concern due to their historical marginalization and the need for affirmative action to ensure their inclusion and development. The Indian government, recognizing the social, economic, and educational backwardness of these communities, has implemented various measures to uplift them and safeguard their rights.

The Constitution of India provides special provisions and safeguards for Scheduled Tribes. These provisions include reservations in legislatures, educational institutions, and government jobs to ensure their political representation and socio-economic empowerment. Additionally, specific welfare schemes and programs are designed to address their needs in areas such as healthcare, education, housing, and livelihood opportunities.(Raghavendra, R. H,2020).

Despite the efforts made by the government, challenges persist in improving the status of Scheduled Tribes in India. Many tribal communities continue to face issues such as poverty, illiteracy, land alienation, displacement due to development projects, and inadequate access to basic amenities. There is also a need for greater awareness and recognition of their cultural rights, traditional knowledge, and sustainable development practices.

To address these challenges, the government and various organizations are working towards the inclusive development of Scheduled Tribes. Efforts are being made to enhance access to quality education, healthcare services, skill development programs, and livelihood opportunities. Initiatives promoting the preservation of tribal culture, language, and traditional practices are also being undertaken.



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The status of Scheduled Tribes in India is an ongoing concern, and concerted efforts are being made to bridge the socio-economic and educational gaps. Recognizing the diversity and uniqueness of these communities, it is essential to ensure their active participation and empowerment for a more inclusive and equitable society.

## **2. NEED OF THE STUDY**

The study of the status of Scheduled Tribes in India is of utmost importance for several reasons.

it helps in understanding and addressing the historical and present-day marginalization and discrimination faced by these communities. By examining their socio-economic conditions, access to basic amenities, educational attainment, and healthcare outcomes, the study can shed light on the specific challenges that Scheduled Tribes encounter.

The study is crucial for policy evaluation and formulation. It allows policymakers to assess the effectiveness of existing government schemes and programs targeted at Scheduled Tribes. By identifying gaps and shortcomings, policymakers can make informed decisions to improve the design and implementation of policies, ensuring better outcomes for these communities.

The study contributes to the promotion of social justice and inclusivity. It highlights disparities and inequalities, bringing attention to the need for affirmative action and targeted interventions to uplift Scheduled Tribes. It can help advocate for the rights and well-being of these communities, leading to policy changes and reforms that address their unique needs.

Furthermore, the study is essential for cultural preservation and recognition. Scheduled Tribes possess rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and practices. By studying their status, researchers can identify the challenges faced in preserving their cultural identities and promote policies that protect and celebrate their distinct traditions.(Lancet, T,2014).

## **3. Government initiatives for scheduled tribes**

The Government of India has implemented several initiatives and programs aimed at the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes (STs). These initiatives encompass various sectors,



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including education, healthcare, livelihood, infrastructure, and cultural preservation. Some of the prominent government initiatives for Scheduled Tribes are: (Naik, A. K, 2015).

**Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP):** The Tribal Sub-Plan, renamed as Scheduled Tribes Component (STC) in 2017, is a strategy that mandates earmarking a portion of the total plan outlay of the central and state governments for the socio-economic development of STs. It aims to bridge the development gaps and address the specific needs of tribal communities.

**Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Plan:** SCA to TSP is a financial assistance program provided by the central government to states with a significant tribal population. It aims to supplement the efforts of states in implementing developmental activities in tribal areas.

**VanbandhuKalyanYojana:** Launched in 2014, the VanbandhuKalyanYojana focuses on the holistic development of tribal communities across various sectors, including education, healthcare, livelihood, and infrastructure. It aims to improve the quality of life and bridge the gaps between tribal and non-tribal populations.(NCSC,n.d.).

**Ashram Schools:** The government operates Ashram Schools, also known as residential schools, in tribal areas to provide quality education to ST children. These schools offer accommodation, food, and education, with a focus on preserving tribal culture and languages.

**Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):** EMRSs are fully residential schools specifically designed for tribal children in remote areas. These schools provide quality education, including science and technology subjects, and focus on the all-round development of students.

**Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** The Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme provides financial assistance to ST students studying at the post-secondary level. It covers expenses such as tuition fees, books, and maintenance allowance, enabling tribal students to pursue higher education.

**Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED):** TRIFED is a national-level apex organization working to promote the economic development of tribal communities by supporting and marketing tribal products. It aims to provide better market access, fair prices, and sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal artisans and forest dwellers.

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PESA Act: The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), grants special powers to tribal gram panchayats in scheduled areas. It empowers them to manage their natural resources, protect their customs and traditions, and participate in local governance.

These are just a few examples of the government initiatives for Scheduled Tribes in India. The government continues to introduce and implement various programs and policies to uplift and empower tribal communities, promoting their socio-economic development and preserving their unique cultural heritage.

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Maity, B. (2017).** Comparing health outcomes across Scheduled Tribes and Castes in India provides insights into the disparities and challenges faced by these marginalized communities in accessing healthcare services and achieving good health. Both Scheduled Tribes and Castes experience social, economic, and political marginalization, but their specific circumstances and needs differ due to historical and cultural factors. This abstract focuses on understanding the health outcomes of Scheduled Tribes and Castes, including factors that contribute to disparities and potential strategies to address them. It explores existing research and data to identify the key issues and highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve the health status of these communities.

**Kumar, J. (2013).** The status of women's education in India has undergone significant changes over the years, but challenges still persist. Historically, women in India faced limited access to education due to various social, cultural, and economic factors. However, efforts have been made to promote gender equality in education, resulting in improvements in women's educational attainment. In recent decades, there has been a noticeable increase in women's enrollment in schools and colleges. The government of India has implemented various policies and initiatives to promote girls' education, including the Right to Education Act, which ensures free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14.

**Bhasin, V. (2007).** Efforts are underway to uplift tribal women and address their unique needs. The government, in collaboration with NGOs and civil society organizations, has implemented



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various schemes and programs specifically targeting tribal women, such as the Van Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, and the Tribal Sub-Plan. These initiatives aim to improve their socio-economic conditions, health, education, and overall well-being. While progress has been made in addressing the challenges faced by tribal women in India, there is still a long way to go. Enhancing access to education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and social empowerment are crucial for improving the status of tribal women. By recognizing and valuing their unique contributions, preserving their cultural heritage, and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes, India can work towards achieving gender equality and overall development for tribal communities.

**Raghavendra, R. H. (2020).** This abstract focuses on the literacy and health status of Scheduled Castes (SCs), also known as Dalits, in India. SCs have historically faced social and economic marginalization, leading to disparities in education and health outcomes. Understanding the current status of SCs in these areas sheds light on the challenges they face and the efforts made to address these disparities. Regarding literacy, while there has been progress, there remains a significant gap in literacy rates between SCs and the general population. Factors such as poverty, limited educational infrastructure, social discrimination, and restricted access to quality education contribute to lower literacy levels among SCs. However, government initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and scholarships specifically targeting SC students aim to bridge this gap and provide educational opportunities.

**Mohindra, K. S., & Labonté, R. (2010).** This systematic review aims to provide an overview of population health interventions targeting Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India. STs represent indigenous communities that have historically faced social, economic, and health disparities. Understanding the effectiveness of population health interventions in addressing the health needs of STs is crucial for improving their overall well-being. The review utilizes a systematic search methodology to identify relevant studies from academic databases and grey literature sources. The selected studies are then critically appraised to evaluate the interventions' design, implementation, outcomes, and impact on the health status of STs. Preliminary findings indicate that population health interventions targeting STs in India encompass a range of approaches.



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These interventions include but are not limited to health education programs, immunization campaigns, maternal and child health initiatives, access to clean water and sanitation, nutrition interventions, and healthcare service delivery models tailored to the specific needs of STs.

**Hamid, T., &Vaida, N. (2017).**This study investigates the nutritional status of Scheduled Tribe (ST) women belonging to the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities in Kashmir, India. These communities, characterized by their traditional pastoralist livelihoods, face unique socio-economic and environmental challenges that can impact their nutritional well-being. The study employs a cross-sectional design, collecting data on various indicators of nutritional status, including anthropometric measurements, dietary patterns, and micronutrient deficiencies. A sample of Gujjar and Bakerwal women of reproductive age is selected through a systematic sampling approach from different regions of Kashmir. Preliminary findings indicate that the nutritional status of ST women in the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities is of concern. Anthropometric measurements reveal a high prevalence of undernutrition, including low body mass index (BMI) and stunting among women. Dietary assessments indicate inadequate intake of essential nutrients, particularly protein, iron, and vitamins.

## **5. STATUS AND CHALLENGES**

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India are indigenous communities recognized and protected by the Constitution of India. They are given special status and constitutional safeguards to preserve their distinct cultures, languages, and traditions. The STs are also known as Adivasis or tribal communities and constitute a significant portion of India's population. (Brahmanandam, T., &BosuBabu, T, 2016).

### **Status of Scheduled Tribes in India:**

**Constitutional Safeguards:** The Constitution of India provides special provisions for the welfare and development of STs. These include reservation of seats in legislative bodies,

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educational institutions, and government jobs. The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution specifies areas where tribal populations are concentrated and grants special administrative powers to tribal-dominated regions through the establishment of autonomous councils.

**Protective Laws:** Various laws and acts have been enacted to safeguard the rights of STs, such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which provides protection against discrimination and atrocities.

**Development Initiatives:** The government has initiated several programs and schemes to promote the socio-economic development of STs. These include the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), the Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Plan, and the VanbandhuKalyanYojana, among others. These initiatives aim to address issues related to education, healthcare, livelihood, and infrastructure in tribal areas.

### **Challenges faced by Scheduled Tribes in India:**

**Land Alienation:** Land acquisition, displacement, and encroachment on tribal lands remain significant challenges. Many Adivasi communities have lost their traditional lands due to infrastructure projects, mining activities, and illegal occupation. This leads to their marginalization, loss of livelihoods, and cultural disintegration.

**Poverty and Economic Disparities:** A large number of STs continue to live in poverty and face economic disparities. Limited access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities further exacerbate their socio-economic conditions. Lack of skill development programs and inadequate market linkages hinder their economic progress.

**Lack of Quality Education:** Adivasi communities often face barriers to education, including inadequate schools, lack of infrastructure, and shortage of qualified teachers. High dropout rates, low literacy levels, and a lack of access to higher education contribute to the educational backwardness of tribal communities.

**Healthcare and Malnutrition:** STs experience poor access to healthcare facilities, leading to higher morbidity and mortality rates compared to the general population. Malnutrition, especially

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among tribal children, is a persistent challenge, attributed to poverty, inadequate food security, and limited access to healthcare services.

**Social Exclusion and Discrimination:** Despite legal protections, STs face social exclusion and discrimination. They often experience prejudices, stereotypes, and biases that hinder their social integration and equal participation in society. This discrimination manifests in various forms, including violence, exploitation, and deprivation of basic rights.

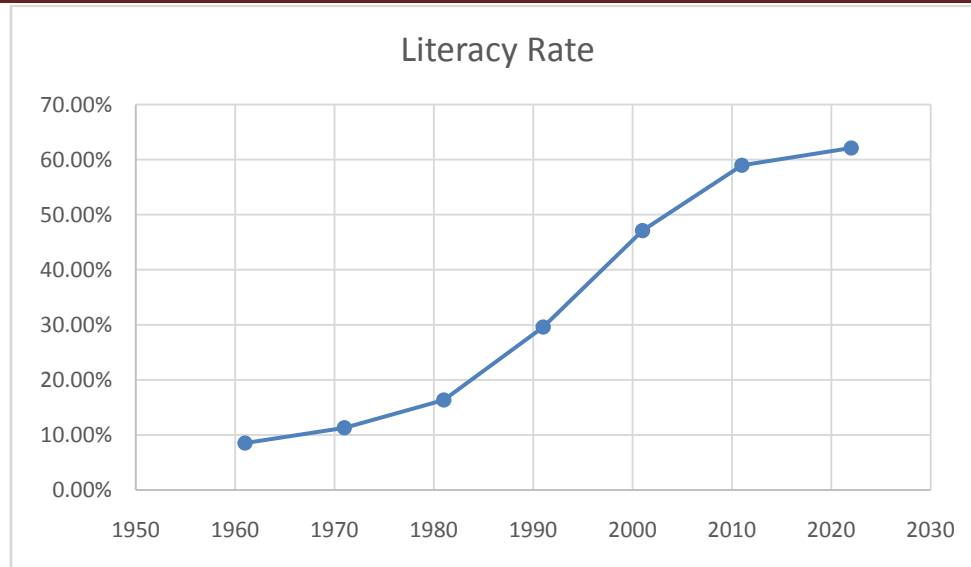
**Lack of Political Representation:** Despite reserved seats in legislative bodies, effective political representation of STs Remains a challenge. Limited political awareness, lack of resources, and the dominance of mainstream political parties often restrict their participation in decision-making processes.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach focusing on land rights, inclusive development, quality education, healthcare services, skill development, and addressing social prejudices. It is crucial to involve and empower tribal communities in the planning and implementation of policies and programs to ensure their sustainable development and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

## **6. Literacy rates among scheduled Tribe population in India between 1961 to 2022**

The literacy rate among the scheduled tribe population in India has increased significantly between 1961 and 2011. In 1961, the literacy rate among scheduled tribes was only 8.53%. By 2011, the literacy rate had increased to 58.96%. This represents an increase of over 50 percentage points.

The following table shows the literacy rates among scheduled tribes in India from 1961 to 2022:



The table provides information on the literacy rates of a particular region or country across different years. Here's a breakdown of the table:

**Year:** The column represents the specific years for which literacy rates are reported.

**Literacy Rate:** The column indicates the percentage of the population that is considered literate in each respective year. Literacy rate refers to the proportion of people aged 15 years and older who can read and write with comprehension in a given language.

In 1961, the literacy rate was 8.53%, indicating that only a small portion of the population was considered literate at that time. By 1971, the literacy rate had increased to 11.30%, showing a slight improvement in literacy levels over the decade. In 1981, the literacy rate rose further to 16.35%, suggesting a gradual but steady improvement in education and literacy. By 1991, the literacy rate increased significantly to 29.60%, indicating substantial progress in education and literacy efforts over the previous decade. In 2001, the literacy rate reached 47.10%, representing a substantial improvement in literacy levels within the population. By 2011, the literacy rate further increased to 58.96%, demonstrating continued progress in education and literacy programs. The last entry in the table is for the year 2022, with a literacy rate of 62.10%. This



suggests a continued upward trend in literacy levels, although it's important to note that this data point is projected, as the current year is mentioned as 2023. The table provides an overview of the increasing literacy rates over time, indicating improvements in education and access to literacy programs. However, it's crucial to consider other factors such as population growth, regional disparities, and the specific context in which these numbers are derived.

Year	All			Scheduled Tribes		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	8.53	13.83	3.16
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	11.30	17.63	4.85
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	16.35	24.52	8.04
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	29.60	40.65	18.19
2001	64.84	75.26	53.67	47.10	59.17	34.76
2011	73.00	80.90	64.60	59.00	68.50	49.40

### Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Tribe Students

Level/ Year	Primary ( I-V) 6-10 Years			Upper Primary (VI-VIII) 11-13 Years			Elementary (I-VIII) 6-13 Years		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
2015-16	109.59	113.39	111.52	90.94	92.21	91.59	102.72	105.52	104.15
2016-17	105.16	109.00	107.11	90.32	92.05	91.20	99.68	102.69	101.21
2017-18	106.23	109.26	107.77	92.74	94.64	93.71	101.24	103.84	102.57
2018-19	105.64	107.63	106.66	92.18	93.62	92.92	100.66	102.45	101.57
2019-20	106.57	107.63	107.11	93.01	93.93	93.48	101.54	102.58	102.08

Total enrolment in primary education (Grades I-V), regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official primary school-age population (6-10 +years) in a given school-year.

### Gross Enrolment Ratio for Scheduled Tribe Students

Level/ Year	Secondary (IX-X) 14-15years			Senior Secondary (XI-XII) 16-17years			Higher Education 18-23 years		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Female	Male	Total
2015-16	70.75	70.69	70.72	36.34	38.15	37.27	12.9	15.6	14.2
2016-17	69.65	69.52	69.58	33.79	34.67	34.24	14.2	16.7	15.4
2017-18	73.11	72.99	73.05	39.37	39.51	39.44	14.9	17.0	15.9
2018-19	75.85	74.87	75.35	42.70	41.80	42.24	16.5	17.9	17.2
2019-20	77.24	76.22	76.72	43.90	41.92	42.89	17.7	18.2	18.0



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## Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Scheduled Tribe Students

Level/ Year	Secondary ( IX-X)	Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	Higher Education
2015-16	1.00	0.95	0.83
2016-17	1.00	0.97	0.85
2017-18	1.00	1.00	0.87
2018-19	1.01	1.02	0.92
2019-20	1.01	1.05	0.97

Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Scheduled Tribe students has shown improvement at Senior Secondary levels as well as at Higher Education level. However, it has marginally increased from 2015-16 to 2019-20 at Secondary Level.

### 7. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problem Statement: Inclusion and Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India face significant challenges in achieving social inclusion and empowerment. Despite constitutional safeguards and affirmative actions, STs continue to experience discrimination, marginalization, and limited access to basic resources and opportunities. This problem statement aims to highlight the key issues that hinder the inclusion and empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India. educational disparities pose a major obstacle to the empowerment of STs. Limited access to quality education, inadequate infrastructure in tribal areas, and a lack of qualified teachers contribute to low literacy rates among STs. This hampers their ability to secure better livelihoods and participate actively in the socio-economic development of the country. economic inequality persists among STs. Many tribal communities rely on subsistence agriculture and traditional occupations, which often offer limited income and livelihood options. Insufficient access to credit, markets, and technology exacerbate this problem, hindering their economic progress and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. there is a pressing need to address healthcare disparities. STs often lack access to quality healthcare facilities, leading to high morbidity and mortality rates within their communities. Geographic remoteness, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and cultural barriers prevent them from receiving timely and appropriate medical care. STs face discrimination and social exclusion,



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leading to their limited participation in decision-making processes. Traditional power structures, stereotypes, and prejudice against tribal communities create barriers to their meaningful engagement in politics, governance, and public life. This hampers their ability to influence policies and decisions that directly affect their lives and well-being.(Staffer, T, 2017).

## **8. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the status of Scheduled Tribes in India is characterized by constitutional provisions, policies, and affirmative action measures aimed at safeguarding their rights, promoting their development, and addressing historical disadvantages. The government has established institutions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to ensure the welfare and progress of these communities. However, despite these efforts, challenges such as poverty, lack of access to quality education and healthcare, and displacement persist. It is crucial to continue working towards effective implementation of policies, infrastructure development, and empowerment of Scheduled Tribes to overcome these challenges and ensure their holistic well-being. By promoting social inclusion, preserving cultural heritage, and providing equal opportunities, India can strive for a more equitable and inclusive society for all its citizens, including Scheduled Tribes. The status of Scheduled Tribes in India reflects the government's commitment to addressing historical injustices and promoting the overall development of these communities. However, sustained efforts are required to overcome the socio-economic challenges and empower Scheduled Tribes to fully realize their potential and secure a brighter future.

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