

## Reasons Behind the Educational Degradation Among Santal Women in West Bengal

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### ABSTRACT

Education is a powerful force that is essential for empowerment and social transformation. But Santal women in India are still facing significant challenges in education. Despite the various government initiatives and policies, the literacy rate of Santal women and the school stay is still very low. This research has searched the main reasons for educational degradation among Santal women, which includes Social-cultural policies, financial constraints, inadequate educational infrastructure and linguistic barriers. The results of the study suggest that financial hardship, patriarchy policy and linguistic barriers are widely hindering the educational achievement of women. Also, bad infrastructure, long journeys to school and limited awareness of government schemes are increasing the problem. This research is cultural -based Implementation of inclusive education, advanced policies, social -based intervention and digital education and professional training highlight the importance of national alternative education models. The research contributes to policy development, educational planning and women -centered tribal empowerment strategies. This is to ensure inclusive and fair education for Santal women, and to achieve their long-term socio-economic development Highlighting the need to take urgent steps to be helpful.

**Keywords:** Santal women, education, gender inequality, government policies, socio-cultural norms.

### 1. Introduction:

The educational backwardness of Santal women is a long-standing problem, reflecting various unresolved aspects of the education system not only within the Santal community but also within the wider society. The Santal people, who live in the eastern part of India, particularly in states like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha, face various obstacles in their education system. Several social, cultural and economic factors are implicated in the educational crisis of Santal women. Several steps have been taken by the government and private institutions to create interest in education among this population and to increase the pace of their education. However, the literacy rate among Santal women is still relatively low. Some primary problems such as financial constraints, family pressures, religious and cultural barriers in the society, and lack of training of teachers, etc., are the main reasons for these problems. Education is a fundamental right and a major driver of social and economic development. However, access to quality education remains a major challenge for marginalized communities in India, such as the Santal tribe, especially Santal

women. Lack of education is a chronic problem among the Santal people, who are one of the largest tribal groups in India, mainly living in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Assam. Despite government efforts, Santal women do not complete their high school education, and access to higher education remains limited for them, due to social, cultural, economic and infrastructural barriers.

The tribal groups of India, who are the oldest inhabitants of the country, face many challenges, especially in the field of education for Santal women. Although the government has launched various welfare schemes, the literacy rate of Santal women is still much lower than the national average. This article analyses the main reasons for the plight of Santal women in education. The tribal communities of India still face various challenges, despite being the original inhabitants of the country. Most are poor, and it is difficult for them to access the basic amenities they need to survive. Most of them survive on forest products and low-quality food. Proper clothing is also a luxury for many, and medical facilities are far away. They have been exploited and displaced throughout history, and they are still being used politically, but their situation has not changed significantly.

Although the government has established various welfare programs, along with dedicated offices and officials for tribal development, significant gaps remain in implementation. Despite substantial financial allocations, the expected progress is not being achieved. One of the major obstacles in their advancement is a lack of awareness and education. Without education, it becomes difficult to resist exploitation and injustice. However, tribal children often struggle to access proper schooling, primarily due to the lack of instruction in their native languages. Even those who manage to receive some education often find it difficult to integrate into mainstream society. Removing this barrier of ignorance through education is crucial for their development and empowerment.

## **2. Statement of the Problem:**

Education is very important for the development of society, and it can change people's lives. However, education has become a major challenge for Santal women in India. Despite various policies and schemes adopted by the government, the literacy rate among Santal women is still very low. This problem is not only economic or social, but also has many cultural, linguistic and infrastructural barriers. Santal women usually drop out of school primarily due to family obligations, economic crisis, physical insecurity and early marriage. Moreover, since the curriculum in schools is not based on the Santali language, they easily lose interest in education and do not achieve good results. Also, most Santal families live in rural or hilly areas, where secondary and higher education institutions are difficult to reach. As a result, many Santal girls are deprived of educational opportunities. With all these problems, Santal creates a huge barrier to the education of Santal women, causing them out of the mainstream of society. The main purpose of this study is to identify the main reasons for the education of Santal women and to evaluate the effectiveness of government policy. Despite various government initiatives and policies, the

literacy rate of Santal women and educational achievements are still low. This problem is from multiple aspects Influence, including socio-cultural outlook, financial crisis, lack of infrastructure, linguistic barriers and implementation of policies.

Santal women often leave school due to initial marriage, household duties, financial constraints and security concerns. Also, their educational performance is bad because of the non -cultural inclusive curriculum and Santali language -based education and They lose interest in participating in formal education. The difficulty of secondary and higher education institutions located in the mountain area further enhances the problem. This study will identify the main reasons for the deterioration of Santal women's education and the effectiveness of the current policies will be evaluated.

### 3. Literature review

Sudarsan, A. (2024). Tribal Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment: An Indian Perspective.

Sudarsan discusses the complexities and multifaceted aspects of the empowerment process of Santal women in her study. She argues that empowerment is a multi-faceted process that deals with the need to increase women's control over resources and participation in decision-making in various social spheres. However, this process is quite difficult for Santal women, as they face cultural, economic, and social barriers.

Mahapatra, L.K. (1994). Tribal Education in India. In her study, Mahapatra shows that among the Santals of India, educational progress is hampered by traditional customs and reforms. Early marriage and patriarchal social norms within Santal families reduce girls' participation in education. This social structure discourages girls' interest in education and makes it difficult for them to attend school.

Xaxa, V. (2001). Protective Discrimination: Why Scheduled Tribes Lag Behind. In her research, Exa highlights the cultural and structural barriers to education for Santal women. She specifically points out that Santal women are disadvantaged in education due to patriarchal society and traditional practices. These social and cultural barriers work against their educational opportunities, which hinders their equal rights.

Roy, B. (2015). Economic Factors and Tribal Education in India. Roy in her study analyzed the role of financial constraints in the education of Santal women. According to her, Santal families are very poor and for them, paying for schooling is a major problem. The cost of schooling, uniforms and transportation often become an additional burden for them. Lack of financial support also hinders the continuation of education.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2020). Status of Tribal Education in India.

The report of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs of India discusses various government initiatives such as the 'Sarav Shiksha Abhiyan' and the 'Eklavya Model Residential School'. Although these projects were designed to improve the education of the Santal people, there are various obstacles

in implementation. Due to lack of proper planning and proper implementation, it has not been possible to increase the pace of education in the Santal region.

Gupta, S. (2017). Effectiveness of Government Schemes for Tribal Education. Gupta critically examines the shortcomings of government schemes aimed at improving tribal education. His study points out that corruption, inefficiency, and lack of awareness often prevent these programs from reaching the intended beneficiaries. Funds meant for tribal education are frequently mismanaged, resulting in poor school infrastructure, insufficient teachers, and delays in scholarship distribution, which contribute to low enrollment and high dropout rates in Santal communities.

Sharma, R. (2019). Gender and the Education of Tribal Women. Sharma's study analyzed the impact of gender discrimination and inadequate facilities on the high dropout rate among Santal girls. In particular, issues such as lack of toilet facilities, teacher shortages, and poor infrastructure hinder girls' school attendance. In addition, the social disadvantage that Santal girls face hinders their educational progress. Sharma noted in her study that the quality of education for Santal women can be improved through proper governance and improvement of schools.

Sarin, A. (2021). The impact of social norms on the education of Santal women. Sarin's study discussed the impact of social norms on women's education in Santal society. She highlighted that deeply ingrained social beliefs and cultural attitudes hinder the education of Santal girls. In Santal families, girls are usually engaged in household chores and their educational needs are considered to be less important. These cultural barriers limit educational opportunities for Santal girls and exacerbate gender inequality.

Desinkar and Sturt. (2003). found that seasonal migration has a major impact on the education of Santal children. Frequent relocations with their families lead to irregular school attendance, which leads to gaps in their education and increases dropout rates. The impact is particularly severe for girls, who have to take care of their younger siblings when their parents go out for work. As a result, they are more involved in household chores than in school. This series of disruptions ultimately limits the quality of education, literacy rates and future life progression of Santal children.

Nayak (2016). frequent migration of Santal families from Jharkhand and West Bengal causes severe disruption in the education of children. Due to their inability to attend school regularly, their studies are disrupted and many drop out prematurely. Rural schools, lacking essential amenities such as bridge courses or flexible curricula and child-centered learning, cannot sustain these children. Girls are further disadvantaged, as they often have to take care of younger siblings and do household chores.

#### **4. Research gap:**

Research on the educational status of Santal women is relatively limited. Although there are various studies on tribal education in India, most of them consider the 'tribal society' in a holistic framework, where Santal women are not seen separately. As a result, their specific problems,

challenges and needs have not received sufficient importance in the research discussion. The government has launched projects such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, etc., which aim to expand education in tribal areas. But there is almost no detailed research on how effective such initiatives have been at the field level and how successful their practical implementation is in rural areas inhabited by Santals. In many cases, Santal women are still deprived of educational opportunities due to the gap between policy and practical implementation. Government initiatives do not yield the desired results, especially due to poverty, social barriers and infrastructural crisis. On the other hand, information technology, mobile-based education or community schooling are creating new possibilities in education. However, specific research on how to advance the education of Santal women through such digital and alternative education is still lacking.

### **5. Objective of the study**

1. To Assess the Educational Status of Santhal Women
2. To Identify Socio-Cultural Barriers Affecting Education
3. To Analyze Economic Factors Influencing Educational Degradation
4. To Evaluate the Role of Educational Infrastructure and Accessibility

### **6. Hypothesis**

1. Socio-cultural, economic, factors significantly contribute high dropout to the educational sector.
2. Traditional gender roles and early marriage significantly increase school dropout rates among Santhal women.

### **7. Methodology of the study**

A mixed systemic research method can be adopted to analyze the cause of education in Santal women, where the quantitative and qualitative techniques will be combined. Through this, we will not only get statistical information, but will also have deep ideas and perceptions about the education of women, which are related to social, cultural and economic reasons.

Information To be collected, such as: India's census, tribal ministry report, National Sample Survey (NSS) data etc. All these sources will review the literacy rate, admission statistics and the disruption of education. This study will be very important to explore the reasons behind the disruption of Santal women's education.

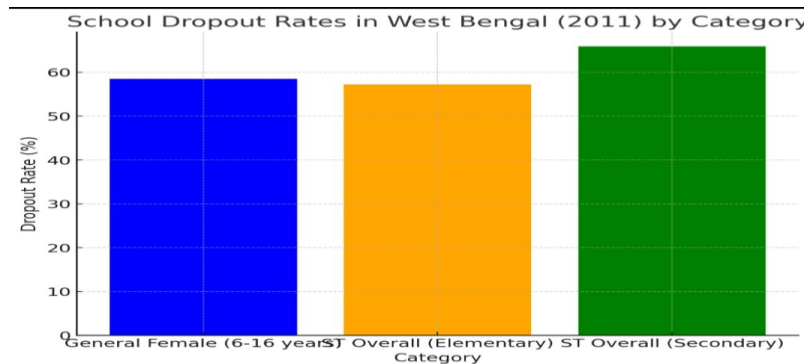
### **8. Educational status of scheduled tribe women in West Bengal:**

According to the 2011 census, the rate of direct school dropout for Santal women has not been determined. However, by analyzing the tendency for female students to dropout and existing information about education among the scheduled tribe people, there are some important ideas about the education situation of Santal women, because the Santals are the largest indigenous community in West Bengal. Overall between 6-16-year-old girls in West Bengal The dropout rate

was about 58.5 percent in 2011, which indicates that more than half of the school girls were not able to continue their education. When particularly focusing on the schedule tribe people, the situation becomes more worrying. About 35.3 percent of the indigenous children at the primary level have left the school, which reached 57.2 percent after the initial level. At the secondary level, the dropout rate reached 65.9 percent, which Indicates a large fall in terms of continued participation in school.

**School Dropout Rates in West Bengal (2011) by Category**

Category	Dropout Rate (%)
General Female (6-16 years)	35.30
Overall (Elementary)	57.20
T Overall (Secondary)	65.90



**9. Reason behind the educational degradation among Santal women**

When discussing various obstacles to the educational status of women and their education, some important social, cultural and economic reasons come up, which limit their education opportunities. According to the census of 2011, the statistics and reality of these problems are as follows:

**9.1. Economic Inequality**

Most families in the Santal community depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Due to this economic crisis, girls' education is often given less importance. According to the 2011 census, the poverty rate in West Bengal was 19.98%, and it is even higher in rural areas. Because of this, Santal girls work to help their families, which leads to their lack of interest in education and they drop out of school.

## **9.2. Lack of Primary Education**

Many villages in the Santal area do not have adequate schools for primary education. According to the 2011 census, about 16.17% of children aged 6-14 in rural areas of West Bengal are not enrolled in school. This acts as a major barrier to education, as these villages are far from schools and lack transportation facilities.

## **9.3. Cultural Barriers**

There is a negative attitude towards women's education in the Santal community. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Santal males in West Bengal was 58.6%, but that of females was only 45.9%, reflecting social attitudes and cultural barriers to women's education.

## **9.4. Child Marriage and Motherhood**

Child marriage is a prevalent problem in the Santal community. According to the 2011 census, 29.4% of women in West Bengal were married before the age of 18, which hinders their educational opportunities. Child marriage forces girls to take on household chores and also start taking on motherhood responsibilities early, which prevents them from continuing their education.

## **9.5. Gender Discrimination**

Santal community women have limited educational opportunities compared to men. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of women in rural areas of West Bengal was 60.3%, while that of men was 75.4%, indicating discrimination against women and the dominance of men in education, employment, and other opportunities.

## **9.6. Lack of Special Schools**

There is a lack of special schools to cater to the cultural and linguistic needs of Santal women. According to the 2011 census, only 15% of schools in the Santal area of West Bengal offer instruction in the local language, which discourages interest in education. Girls are not interested in going to school because they are not taught in the local language.

## **9.7. Inadequate government policies**

Although the government introduces various policies and benefits, their effective implementation is often interrupted. According to the 2011 census and other government reports, only 20% of the government facilities in West Bengal reach rural areas. As a result, education opportunities for Santal women are still limited, especially in remote rural areas.

## **9.8. Impact of migration**

In Santal society, many families leave the cities for migration and employment. According to the 2011 census, about 14% of families in rural areas of West Bengal are migrant workers. Santal girls are usually forced to look after their younger siblings or help with other household chores, which prevents them from attending school and leads to dropouts.

## Santal Women's Educational Data (2011 Census)

Indicator	Total	Male	Female
Literacy Rate	77.1%	85.0%	69.6%
Literacy Rate in Rural Areas	70.5%	82.1%	60.3%
Women Married Before Age 18	29.4%	-	29.4%
Children Aged 6-14 Not Enrolled in School	16.17%	-	-
Santal Literacy Rate	47.0%	58.6%	45.9%
Schools Offering Education in Local Language	15%	-	-
Seasonal Migration Families	14%	-	-

### 10. Conclusion

Research on the educational status of Santal women is relatively limited. Although there are various studies on tribal education in India, most of them consider the 'tribal society' in a holistic framework, where Santal women are not seen separately. As a result, their specific problems, challenges and needs have not received sufficient importance in the research discussion. The government has launched projects such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, etc., which aim to expand education in tribal areas. But there is almost no detailed research on how effective such initiatives have been at the field level and how successful their practical implementation is in rural areas inhabited by Santals. In many cases, Santal women are still deprived of educational opportunities due to the gap between policy and practical implementation. Government initiatives do not yield the desired results, especially due to poverty, social barriers and infrastructural crisis. On the other hand, information technology, mobile-based education or community schooling are creating new possibilities in education. However, specific research on how to advance the education of Santal women through such digital and alternative education is still lacking.

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