**Secondary School Dropout among Schedule Tribes of Midnapur District – A Survey**

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 **ABSTRACT :**

*Education enlightens the individual and it ignites the students. Independent India requires citizens fully equipped with knowledge and skills and that is why the constitution of India made provisions for education to all. But unfortunately, in spite of those provisions for education, backward population cannot avail the facilities of education and dropout rate is high among them. The current research tends to find out the reasons behind the high dropout rate among schedule tribes secondary students of Midnapur district. The reasons which have been found out from the data are early child marriage, poor financial condition, apathy of parents, superstitious and strong religious beliefs, etc. though the infrastructure of the schools are more or less good in those places of Midnapur.*

**Keywords:** *Schedule Tribes, Constitution Of India, Dropout, Secondary Students, Education*

1. **INTRODUCTION:**

The task of education is to enlighten the individual. Swami Vivekananda has said, “It is manifestation of perfection already in man.” Every child is born with some potentialities which can be blossomed or developed through education.

In independent India the constitution ensures the right to education of all irrespective of caste, creed and sex. In different clauses of the constitution it has been stated clearly that there should be no discrimination on the basis of gender or caste or creed for admission in any educational institution.

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At the same time it was declared that within ten years of establishment of the constitution all children up to the age of fourteen years of age will be educated. But unfortunately from the Census report it is clear that the percentage of literacy among the girls is much less than that of the boys. Moreover, among the schedule castes and schedule tribes the percentage of literacy is very poor.

The population of India has been constituted with a number of races, tribes, castes, etc. Each of these tribes and castes has its own culture, heritage, folkways and mores. Schedule tribe is one of them which has its own culture, modes of behavior, tradition and socio-economic status. The 366 (25) clause of the Indian constitution separated schedule tribes from others for giving impetus to their speedy development in respect of health, education and economy.

It has been found in the Census Report 2011 that while literacy rate among general category is 83.35%, then rate of literacy among schedule tribe is 62.15%. The survey concentrated mainly in West Midnapur where the schedule tribes are found more.

1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE:**
2. To find out the reason behind school dropout among schedule tribe students
3. To find out the apathy of the parents
4. To find out the socio-economic conditions of the dropout students
5. To find out whether superstitions are reigning supreme and are the main cause of dropout or not

As it is survey type research the data has been collected from the block secondary schools where a number of schedule tribe students study. At the same time the parents of the dropouts also have been interviewed. In the remote villages the researcher had to face many odd events and obstacles.

The tools used in this study were interview schedule, questionnaires, and observations. The school admission records, attendance registers, from where the list or number of school dropouts has been calculated, and interview with the parents and family data blank have been filled up. The Census Reports of 2001 and 2011 have been observed.

The data collected from the schools of West Midnapur was analyzed and interpreted statistically and the findings are as follows:

* In most of the schools the percentage of schedule tribe students are more than general category and schedule caste category students.
* The number of schedule tribe students who were admitted in Class V in 2008, resulted in dropout in large number in Class X in 2013. The percentages of dropouts among schedule tribes are sometimes as high as 65% and 53% in comparison to the students of general and schedule caste categories.
* So far as the qualitative analysis is concerned the information which has been collected is related to the infrastructure of the school. Most of the schools are pucca and two storied. Rooms are more or less airy and equipped with blackboards, maps and charts. The drinking water is available through tube wells and tap water is found only in a few schools.
* Mid-day meals are provided by all the schools. Co-curricular activities are organized in almost all the schools specially sports, games and singing. Unfortunately there is no provision for “health check up” of the students except in one or two schools. Separate toilet facility for girls is available in all the schools.
* Parents of dropout students are either peasants or daily wage earners. A few are engaged in cottage industries and small scale industries. Parents are mostly illiterate and a few are secondary level passed (22%). A number of parents and other guardians support the early marriage of girls (66%) and are superstitious. They have strong religious beliefs (57%). Girls are not given much importance in the family and are not playing important role in decision-making or any serious matter of the family.
* Apathy of the parents regarding the school education of girls is a serious problem (69%) and is a strong cause behind school dropouts among schedule tribes.

**Parental opinions regarding secondary dropouts are found as follows**:

* Poor infrastructure of the school (12%);
* Financial stringency (41%);
* Early marriage of girl students (23%);
* Lack of literacy and consciousness towards education of the children (15%);
* Too many children in the family (11%).

The data from the school teachers, when analyzed, the following reasons are found for the dropouts:

* The parental illiteracy and lack of consciousness towards education of their children as well as superstitions and strong religious beliefs.
* Financially poor condition.
* Early marriage of the girl students.

Therefore the main reasons behind school dropout among the secondary level schedule tribe students occur due to the above reasons.

It can be suggested that if proper measures are taken to make the parents educated and conscious about the importance of educational development of their children, then the school dropout can come down in those places among the schedule tribes.

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