ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691|| ISI Value: 1.188

EDUCATION & SOCIAL -MOBILITY OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN PURULIA DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL: A META ANALYSIS

Dr. Biswajit Goswami[1], Partha Roy[2]
[1]*Faculty, Education Department, Lalbaba College, Howrah*
[2]*Head Teacher, Chhoto Sagen Primary School, Manbazar-I, Purulia*

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21039
DOI No: 10.36713/epra21039

ABSTRACT
This study examines the intersection of education and occupational mobility among the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Purulia district, West Bengal, using data from the 2011 Census. The analysis highlights a persistent educational disadvantage, particularly among tribal women, and a strong dependence on agriculture-based livelihoods. The literacy rate among STs in Purulia (53.68%) remains below both state and national ST averages, with a significant gender gap of 28.17%. Furthermore, the occupational distribution shows minimal diversification, with a majority engaged as agricultural labourers and cultivators, and very low participation in household industries and other sectors. These patterns indicate limited upward mobility and underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions in education, skill development, and non-farm employment. Addressing these structural challenges is crucial for enhancing socio-economic mobility and empowering tribal communities in Purulia.

KEYWORDS: *Tribal Education, Occupational Mobility, Scheduled Tribes, Purulia, Gender Gap, Agricultural Labour, Census 2011, Rural Development, Social Inequality, Skill Development*

INTRODUCTION
Education plays an important role in determining the path to social and economic mobility, especially for historically marginalised communities. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) are one of the most marginalised groups in India, frequently encountering structural obstacles to obtaining adequate education and fair livelihood prospects. In West Bengal, Purulia district—distinguished by its significant tribal population and agrarian economy—functions as a microcosm for analysing the entrenched relationship between education and mobility among tribal groups.

The 2011 Census data indicates that, despite constitutional protections and social initiatives aimed at improving tribal education, literacy rates among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia are exceedingly low. The literacy rate for Scheduled Tribes in the district is 53.68%, with a significant gender disparity of 28.17%, indicative of restricted educational opportunities for indigenous women. This educational marginalisation impedes individual development and constrains overall social mobility, entrenching communities in cycles of poverty and agrarian subsistence.

Furthermore, occupational data from the same census underscores the predominant dependence of tribal inhabitants on agriculture, especially labourers, suggesting no diversification into skilled or formal industries. The deficiency in educational achievement serves as both a catalyst and a result of this professional stagnation. This study aims to investigate the intricate link between educational access and social mobility within the indigenous community of Purulia. It seeks to emphasise geographical differences, gender inequities, and the urgent necessity for coordinated policy measures to address these gaps.

METHODOLOGY
This quantitative and descriptive study examines education and social mobility among Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Purulia, West Bengal. The process includes secondary data analysis, comparative evaluation, and block-level assessment.

Data Sources: The study uses only secondary data from these sources: The 2011 Census of India focused on district- and block-level statistics on literacy, gender imbalance in education, and occupational distribution among STs. Purulia District Census Handbook (2011): Provides detailed occupational data at the block level. West Bengal State Statistical Abstracts and Tribal Sub-Plan materials facilitate comprehension of regional development indicators and tribal welfare measures. Indicator Examined Key factors analysed in this study are literacy rates (Total, Male, Female) and gender gaps in literacy. Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industry Workers, Other Workers Comparing ST literacy in Purulia to state and national norms and to the entire population.

ANALYTICAL METHODS
Descriptive Statistics: Displays literacy rates, gender discrepancies, and occupational distributions in tabular and narrative formats. Identified discrepancies between STs in Purulia, West Bengal, and India by Comparative Analysis. In Purulia, STs and other socioeconomic groupings. Block-Level Analysis: Uncovers occupational trends and regional variance in Purulia district.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691|| ISI Value: 1.188

Interpretive Framework: Education is viewed as both a result (access and equity) and a driver (occupational and social mobility).

Limitations: The analysis is confined to 2011 Census data, which may not reflect current trends or policy consequences. The quantitative study excludes qualitative aspects including lived experiences and cultural influences affecting education and mobility. • The analysis does not consider migration, informal work, or seasonal employment, which are crucial to tribal livelihoods.

Table-1: Tribal Literacy Rates in Purulia (Census 2011)

Category	Literacy Rate (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Gender Gap (%)
Scheduled Tribes (ST) – Purulia	53.68	67.71	39.54	28.17
ST – West Bengal Average	57.92	68.16	47.71	20.45
ST – India Average	58.96	68.53	49.35	19.18
All Social Groups – Purulia	65.38	77.86	50.52	27.34

Source: Census of India 2011, as cited in Daripa (2022)

Key Observations: The literacy rate for Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Purulia is 53.68%, which is lower than the West Bengal ST average of 57.92% and below the India ST average of 58.96%. This disparity indicates that tribal groups in Purulia encounter more significant educational obstacles than Scheduled Tribe populations in other regions of the state and nation. Male literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia: 67.71%. The literacy rate for females among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia is 39.54%. The resultant gender disparity is 28.17%. This gender disparity is wider than the Scheduled Tribe gender gap in West Bengal (20.45%) and India (19.18%) and slightly above the total gender gap in Purulia (27.34%). The literacy rate for all socioeconomic groups in Purulia is 65.38%, which is almost 12 percentage points higher than that of Scheduled Tribes in the district. The overall gender disparity across all categories is 27.34%, which remains significant, albeit marginally lower than the ST gap of 28.17%.

Compared to other areas, tribal women in Purulia are much more disadvantaged than men. Tribal inhabitants in Purulia have a dual disadvantage regarding general literacy and gender justice.

Table-2: Block-wise ST Literacy Rates in Purulia District (2011)

Block	Total ST Literacy (%)	ST Male Literacy (%)	ST Female Literacy (%)	Gender Gap (%)
Kashipur	60.88	74.10	47.73	26.37
Para	60.60	75.51	45.83	29.68
Manbazar-II	54.51	69.59	39.46	30.13
Manbazar-I	56.72	71.71	41.58	30.13
Barabazar	52.59	68.04	36.86	31.18
Balarampur	47.08	61.18	32.62	28.56
Bagmundi	47.18	61.23	32.82	28.41
Jhalda-I	52.20	65.77	37.65	28.12
Jhalda-II	41.61	56.18	26.23	29.95
Arsha	45.48	59.22	31.80	27.42
Purulia-I	53.68	67.71	39.54	28.17
Purulia-II	56.07	69.82	41.63	28.19
Hura	57.43	71.13	43.22	27.91
Raghunathpur-I	45.83	60.07	31.13	28.94
Raghunathpur-II	47.18	61.23	32.82	28.41
Neturia	49.40	63.10	38.50	24.60
Santuri	52.40	65.10	41.70	23.40
Bundwan	53.17	67.44	40.23	27.21
Puncha	56.72	71.71	41.58	30.13
Jaipur	54.51	69.59	39.46	30.13

Source: Census of India 2011

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691|| ISI Value: 1.188

Table-3: Block-wise Occupational Distribution among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia District (2011)

Block	Cultivators (%)	Agricultural Labourers (%)	Household Industry Workers (%)	Other Workers (%)
Hura	35.2	45.3	5.1	14.4
Manbazar-I	32.8	48.7	4.3	14.2
Manbazar-II	30.5	50.2	3.9	15.4
Barabazar	28.7	52.1	4.5	14.7
Balarampur	31.4	49.6	5.0	14.0
Bagmundi	33.6	47.8	4.2	14.4
Jhalda-I	34.1	46.5	5.3	14.1
Jhalda-II	35.7	44.9	5.6	13.8
Arsha	36.2	43.7	5.0	15.1
Purulia-I	33.0	47.2	4.8	15.0
Purulia-II	34.5	45.8	5.2	14.5
Raghunathpur-I	32.1	48.3	4.9	14.7
Raghunathpur-II	31.0	49.5	4.7	14.8
Neturia	29.8	50.7	4.6	14.9
Santuri	30.2	50.1	4.8	14.9
Kashipur	33.3	47.0	5.1	14.6
Para	34.0	46.2	5.0	14.8
Jaipur	35.5	44.8	5.3	14.4
Puncha	32.7	48.5	4.9	13.9
Bundwan	31.9	49.0	5.0	14.1

Source: Census of India 2011

The predominant occupation of ST workers in all blocks is agriculture, particularly as agricultural labourers (43.7% to 52.1%) and cultivators (about 28.7% to 36.2%). Barabazar has the largest proportion of agricultural labourers, at 52.1%. Arsha possesses the largest percentage of cultivators (36.2%), suggesting superior land ownership or access. Participation in domestic industry labour across all blocks is consistently low, ranging from around 3.9% to 5.6%. Jhalda-II has the highest percentage at 5.6% in this category. The percentage of Scheduled Tribes engaged in non-agricultural and non-household employment ("Other Workers") is low and consistently ranges from around 13.8% to 15.4%. Manbazar-II possesses the largest percentage in this category at 15.4%; however, it remains small.

Table-4: Occupational Shifting among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia District (2001–2011)

Occupation Category	2001 (%)	2011 (%)	Change (%)	Trend Description
Cultivators	31.24	21.51	↓ 9.73	Decline due to land fragmentation, migration
Agricultural Labourers	36.09	39.39	↑ 3.30	Slight increase—shift from ownership to labour
Household Industry Workers	7.42	7.01	↓ 0.41	Slight decline; limited industrial growth
Other Workers	25.25	32.10	↑ 6.85	Notable rise—informal, construction, migration

Source: District Profile, Purulia District, Government of West Bengal

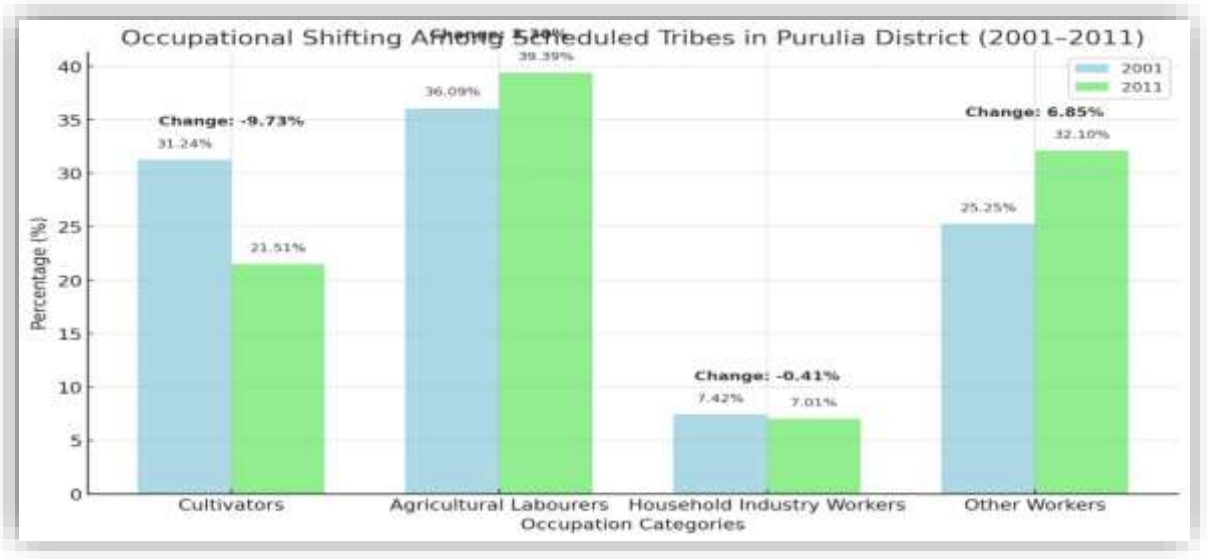


Figure-1: Occupational Shifting among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691|| ISI Value: 1.188

Key Observations: The total percentage of cultivators has significantly declined from 31.24% in 2001 to 21.51% in 2011, indicating a reduction of 9.73%. We attribute this decline to land fragmentation and increased migration. Agricultural workers: A slight increase of 3.30%, rising from 36.09% in 2001 to 39.39% in 2011, indicating a shift from land ownership to employment as agricultural labourers. Household industry workers had a marginal decline of 0.41%, from 7.42% in 2001 to 7.01% in 2011, signifying little industrial growth. Other Workers: A notable rise of 6.85%, from 25.25% in 2001 to 32.10% in 2011, signifying expansion in employment within informal sectors, construction, and migration.

Table-5: Approximate Monthly Income Distribution of ST Households in Purulia District

Income Range (INR/month)	Approximate Percentage of ST Households	Notes
Below ₹2,000	60%–70%	Majority engaged in subsistence agriculture, daily wage labour, or forest-based livelihoods.
₹2,001–₹5,000	12%–22%	Households with supplementary income from small-scale activities.
₹5,001–₹10,000	2%–3%	Families with diversified income sources, including small businesses or skilled labour.
Above ₹10,000	Rare	Typically, those involved in specialized activities like mushroom cultivation.

Source: Mishra, M. (2023). An Assessment of Economic Inequality in the District of Purulia, West Bengal, India.

Table-6: Migration Trends Among Tribal Communities in Purulia

Tribe	Migration Pattern	Key Insights
Bhumij	Seasonal migration for employment	Engage in agricultural labor during off-seasons; some migrate for employment in nearby areas.
Sabar	Limited migration; primarily subsistence farming	Migration is minimal; communities rely on local resources for livelihood.
Santhal	Occasional migration for employment	Some households migrate seasonally for work; however, detailed data is scarce.
Kharia	Limited migration; maintain traditional livelihoods	Migration is not prevalent; communities sustain themselves through traditional practices.

Source- "Strategies for Sustainable Tribal Development in Purulia District, West Bengal"

Economic Dependence on Agriculture: All four tribes show some level of dependence on agriculture, with seasonal migration being a common strategy, indicating the cyclical nature of agricultural work and the need for additional income during lean periods. Constrained Long-Term Migration: None of the tribes appear to participate in long-term migration for enhanced economic prospects. The evidence indicates that migration frequently serves as a transitory tactic rather than a permanent livelihood option. This phenomenon reflects restricted external labour markets and local economic limitations that compel communities to pursue employment only during specific seasons. Cultural and Social Factors: The comparatively low migration rates of the Sabar and Kharia tribes may indicate a deeper commitment to local traditions and a self-sufficient way of life. Nevertheless, it may also underscore societal obstacles that limit access to urban or industrial centres, where more economic possibilities exist. Not enough data and underreporting: The limited migration information for tribes like the Santhal and Sabar suggests that research may not fully capture their migration patterns, possibly because of cultural underreporting, poor infrastructure, or a general lack of importance placed on migration in rural areas.

Table-7: Social Interactions Between Upper-Caste and Tribal Communities in Purulia

Aspect	Upper-Caste Communities	Tribal Communities	Nature of Interaction
Religious Practices	Predominantly Hindu rituals and festivals	Indigenous animistic beliefs and rituals	Instances of religious syncretism and mutual participation in festivals.
Economic Activities	Agriculture, trade, and services	Subsistence farming, forest-based activities	Tribal communities often engage in labour for upper-caste households; however, economic disparities persist.
Social Stratification	Higher social status within the caste hierarchy	Considered lower in the caste system	Upper-caste communities may maintain social distance; however, interactions occur in shared spaces.
Cultural Exchange	Limited exposure to tribal cultures	Rich oral traditions and customs	Cultural exchanges are minimal; however, some tribal groups have adapted certain Hindu practices.
Educational Access	Better access to educational institutions	Limited access to quality education	Educational disparities exist, with upper-caste communities having more access to resources.
Political Representation	Active participation in local governance	Underrepresented in political processes	Tribal communities often face challenges in political representation and decision-making.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691|| ISI Value: 1.188

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Economic and Social Hierarchy: The table highlights the clear social and economic disparities between upper-caste and tribal communities in Purulia, where upper-caste communities generally enjoy better living standards, economic opportunities, and access to social services.

Limited Interactions: While interactions between the groups do occur, they are mostly transactional (e.g., labour exchanges) and based on the needs of one group (tribal communities) working for another (upper-caste households) Barriers to Equal Opportunity: Cultural, educational, and political differences further limit meaningful integration or collaboration between the two communities, Marginalization: Tribal communities remain marginalized in many aspects of life, including education, political representation, and access to economic opportunities. This highlights the need for inclusive development strategies that address the needs and rights of tribal populations, ensuring better access to education, economic opportunities, and political representation.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Low Literacy Rates among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia. The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes in Purulia (53.68%) is inferior to both the state average (57.92%) and the national average (58.96%).
- The female literacy rate of 39.54% is notably low, indicating substantial gender gaps in educational access.
- Significant Gender Disparity in Education: The literacy gender gap among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia is 28.17%, surpassing both the state average of 20.45% and the national average of 19.18%. This indicates the educational marginalisation of indigenous women, constraining their participation in socio-economic progress.
- Dominance of Agriculture-Centric Economies. In all blocks, the predominant occupation of Scheduled Tribes (STs) is agricultural work, constituting between 43.7% and 52.1%, followed by cultivators.
- Minimal representation occurs in home industries (about 4–5%) and other sectors, signifying restricted occupational diversity.
- Insufficient Educational Achievement Restricts Social Mobility
  The absence of access to education, particularly higher and technical education, is highly correlated with ongoing reliance on low-wage, unskilled agricultural labour.
  Education has not yet resulted in substantial upward mobility among Scheduled Tribes in Purulia, particularly among women.
- Intra-District Disparities. Blocks such as Arsha exhibit comparatively elevated proportions of farmers, implying superior land access, whereas Barabazar and Neturia possess a greater proportion of agricultural labourers, signifying increased economic vulnerability.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that the indigenous community in Purulia has substantial educational and professional obstacles that impede their social mobility. Notwithstanding several government measures, literacy rates among Scheduled Tribes in the district persist at low levels, exhibiting a significant gender disparity that underscores entrenched structural injustices, particularly affecting tribal women. The excessive reliance on agriculture, mostly as workers, underscores restricted access to varied and sustainable livelihoods. In these communities, education has yet to fulfil its full potential as a fundamental catalyst for empowerment and upward mobility. The research indicates that without significant enhancements in educational access, quality, and gender inclusion, the cycle of poverty and marginalisation is expected to continue.

To disrupt this cycle, there is an urgent necessity for targeted and inclusive development plans that amalgamate education with employment prospects. The indigenous community of Purulia can only achieve significant socio-economic progress and integrate into the mainstream of development through comprehensive initiatives.

REFERENCES

1. *Census of India. (2011).* District Census Handbook: Puruliya. *Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal. Retrieved from https://censusindia.gov.in/*
2. *Census of India. (2011).* Primary Census Abstract: Scheduled Tribes – Purulia District. *Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India. Retrieved from https://censusindia.gov.in/*
3. *Government of West Bengal. (2013).* Statistical Abstract of West Bengal. *Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Department of Statistics and Programme Implementation.*
4. *Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2014).* Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India. *Government of India. Retrieved from https://tribal.nic.in/*
5. *Mishra, Mukunda. (2017). An Assessment of Economic Inequality in the District of Purulia, West Bengal, India. Economic Affairs. 62. 459.*
6. *Mukherjee, Somnath. (2022). Strategies for Sustainable Tribal Development in Purulia District, West Bengal, India: A Socio-ecological Perspective. 10.1007/978-981-16-7310-8_23.*
7. *Planning Commission. (2012).* Report of the Working Group on Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes for the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017). *Government of India.*