

Education, Employment and Social Mobility among Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Giridhar S¹

¹Guest Faculty, Dept. of P.G. Studies and Research in Sociology, Kuvempu University, Jnanasahyadri Campus, Shanakaraghatta-577 451, Shimoga, Karnataka. INDIA

Article Received: 22/08/2022

Article Accepted: 09/10/2022

Article Published: 26/10/2022

ABSTRACT

Education, employment and social mobility constitute important dimensions of the socio-economic transformation of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Karnataka. Although government interventions have expanded educational access, scholarships, residential schooling, skill development and livelihood programmes, significant inequalities continue to affect tribal communities, particularly those living in remote and predominantly rural areas. Karnataka had 4,248,987 Scheduled Tribe persons in the 2011 Census, constituting 6.95 per cent of the state's population. The literacy rate among STs was 62.08 per cent, compared with 75.36 per cent for the state as a whole, while the gender gap remained substantial. Tribal employment also continues to be strongly connected with agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, informal work and low-security occupations. This article examines the relationship between education, employment and social mobility among Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka by combining Census data, government reports and relevant scholarly literature. It identifies spatial, gender, educational and occupational inequalities and evaluates emerging opportunities through digital education, residential schooling, higher education, skill development, entrepreneurship and targeted welfare interventions. The article proposes an integrated, community-sensitive approach to improve sustainable social mobility.

Keywords: *Scheduled Tribes, Karnataka, Tribal Education, Employment, Social Mobility*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important mechanisms through which historically disadvantaged communities can improve their economic position, occupational opportunities and participation in public life. For Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka, however, educational development cannot be understood merely through school enrolment or literacy. It is closely associated with geographical isolation, household poverty, inadequate infrastructure, linguistic diversity, limited access to higher education, gender inequalities and the continuing dependence of many tribal households on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. The educational question therefore has direct implications for employment and social mobility.

The Scheduled Tribe population of Karnataka was 4,248,987 in the 2011 Census, representing 6.95 per cent of the state's population. The population increased from 3,463,986 in 2001 to 4,248,987 in 2011, registering a decadal increase of 22.66 per cent. The distribution of tribal communities is geographically uneven. Districts such as Raichur, Ballari, Chitradurga, Mysuru, Belagavi, Bidar and Tumakuru contain substantial tribal populations, while the proportion of ST population varies considerably between districts.

The educational situation demonstrates both progress and continuing inequality. The literacy rate of Karnataka's ST population was 62.08 per cent in 2011, compared with 75.36 per cent for the total state population. Male ST literacy was 71.14 per cent, while female ST literacy was 52.98 per cent. Thus, the educational disadvantage has both a community dimension and a gender dimension. The persistence of this gap indicates that increasing access to schools alone is insufficient; retention, learning quality, transition to secondary and higher education, and employability must also be addressed.

The relationship between education and employment is particularly important. When educational attainment remains low, tribal workers are more likely to remain concentrated in agriculture, agricultural labour, casual employment and other informal occupations. Such employment often provides limited income security and restricted opportunities for upward mobility. Xaxa (2008) argues that the socio-economic position of tribal communities must be examined in relation to broader processes of state policy, citizenship, development and social transformation.

Social mobility among Scheduled Tribes therefore involves more than movement from one occupation to another. It includes improved educational attainment, occupational diversification, access to salaried employment, entrepreneurship, political participation, improved living conditions and the ability of younger generations to enter new economic sectors without losing cultural identity. The present study examines these interconnected dimensions in the context of Karnataka.

2. BACKGROUND OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka has considerable tribal diversity, with communities such as Soliga, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Nayaka,

Koraga, Siddi, Yerava and other officially recognised Scheduled Tribes distributed across different ecological and socio-economic settings. Tribal communities are not a homogeneous population. Their experiences differ according to geography, historical occupation, land access, education, gender, livelihood patterns and proximity to urban centres.

The 2011 Census demonstrates the strong rural concentration of Karnataka's tribal population. Of the 4.25 million ST persons, approximately 3.43 million lived in rural areas, while around 0.82 million lived in urban areas. Thus, roughly four-fifths of the ST population was rural. Rural concentration has important implications for educational and employment opportunities because remote settlements may experience weaker connectivity, fewer secondary schools, limited public transport and restricted access to higher education and formal labour markets.

The educational transition of tribal communities has improved over time. At the national level, ST literacy increased substantially from 8.53 per cent in 1961 to 58.96 per cent in 2011. Karnataka performed above the national ST average in 2011, but remained below the state's overall literacy rate. The difference between ST literacy and total state literacy indicates that educational expansion has not eliminated structural inequality.

Employment remains another major concern. Census classification distinguishes between main workers, marginal workers and non-workers, demonstrating that employment cannot be assessed simply through whether a person works or does not work. Marginal and seasonal employment is especially relevant to tribal communities whose livelihoods may depend on agriculture, forest produce, construction, casual labour and other informal activities. The Census also provides educational and occupational classifications for ST workers, allowing the relationship between education and employment to be examined.

The concept of social mobility is consequently central to understanding tribal development. Education may facilitate movement from low-paid agricultural labour towards skilled employment, government service, professional occupations, entrepreneurship and urban employment. However, this transition requires not only schooling but also vocational skills, digital literacy, financial inclusion, transportation, language support, career counselling and access to labour-market information.

Government intervention has expanded significantly. Pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, National Fellowship and Scholarship programmes, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, grants under Article 275(1), tribal development programmes and livelihood initiatives seek to address different stages of socio-economic disadvantage. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these programmes depends on last-mile implementation, awareness, documentation, institutional coordination and the ability of tribal households to access benefits.

3. GOVERNMENT RECORDS AND STATISTICAL DETAILS

Government statistics reveal a substantial but uneven transformation. Karnataka's ST population increased from 34.64 lakh in 2001 to 42.49 lakh in 2011 and accounted for 6.95 per cent of the state's population. ST literacy reached 62.08 per cent in 2011, compared with 75.36 per cent for Karnataka as a whole. Male ST literacy was 71.14 per cent and female ST literacy 52.98 per cent. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has continued to expand financial support for EMRS, pre- and post-matric scholarships, higher-education scholarships, tribal development and entrepreneurship programmes. The 2024–25 national allocation for EMRS was ₹6,399 crore, while ₹2,432.68 crore was allocated for post-matric scholarships for ST students.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Xaxa (2008), *State, Society, and Tribes: Issues in Post-Colonial India* Virginius Xaxa's *State, Society, and Tribes* provides an important conceptual foundation for understanding the changing position of tribal communities in post-colonial India. Xaxa examines the relationship between tribal communities, the state and wider Indian society and demonstrates that tribal development cannot be separated from questions of citizenship, identity, rights and state policy. His analysis is particularly relevant to education and employment because government interventions operate within larger structures of social inequality. The book also challenges simplistic understandings of tribal communities as isolated societies and instead examines their transformation through interaction with modern institutions. For Karnataka, Xaxa's framework helps explain why educational expansion does not automatically produce equal employment opportunities. The present study extends this perspective by examining education, employment and social mobility as interconnected dimensions of tribal transformation.

Baviskar (1995), *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley* Amita Baviskar's *In the Belly of the River* demonstrates how development processes can produce contradictory outcomes for tribal communities. Through an intensive study of Bhilala communities affected by the Narmada development project, Baviskar explores displacement, livelihood transformation, environmental relationships and state intervention. Although the study is not specifically about Karnataka, it is important for understanding the relationship between development and tribal social mobility. Economic development cannot be evaluated only through infrastructure, investment or aggregate growth; it must also consider the livelihood security and agency of local communities. The work is relevant to Karnataka because tribal communities may experience changes in land use, forest access and livelihood structures alongside the expansion of formal employment and education. The study therefore encourages a balanced approach in which modernization is combined with cultural, ecological and

livelihood security.

Singh and Mahanti (1995), *Tribal Education in India* Tribal Education in India, edited by Bhupinder Singh and Neeti Mahanti, examines the educational conditions of tribal communities and the institutional challenges affecting their educational development. The work highlights issues related to school access, infrastructure, teachers, language, curriculum and the relationship between formal education and tribal cultural contexts. Its significance lies in demonstrating that educational deprivation is multidimensional. Simply establishing schools does not guarantee meaningful educational participation when communities face geographical, economic and cultural barriers. The book is particularly relevant to Karnataka because many tribal settlements are located in remote rural and forest areas. The concerns identified in the literature continue to have relevance in the contemporary context, especially regarding transition from primary to secondary education and subsequently to higher education and employment.

Vidyarthi (1981), *Tribal Development and Its Administration* L. P. Vidyarthi's work on tribal development and administration examines the institutional dimensions of tribal welfare. It emphasises the importance of planned intervention, administrative structures and community-oriented development. The work is useful for understanding why tribal development programmes require coordination among education, employment, health, infrastructure and livelihood institutions. In Karnataka, educational and employment outcomes are affected not only by individual household decisions but also by the accessibility and quality of public institutions. The book therefore supports an integrated development perspective. Its relevance to the present study lies in highlighting the need to move beyond isolated welfare programmes towards coordinated institutional mechanisms capable of addressing the multiple dimensions of tribal disadvantage.

Srivastava (2013), *Tribes in India: Concepts, Institutions and Practices* V. K. Srivastava's *Tribes in India: Concepts, Institutions and Practices* contributes to the conceptual understanding of tribal communities and the institutional processes through which tribal identity and social organisation are interpreted. The work is useful for avoiding homogeneous representations of tribal society. Different tribal groups have distinct histories, cultural practices, ecological relationships and institutional experiences. This perspective is particularly relevant for Karnataka because educational and employment policies designed through a uniform model may not adequately respond to differences between communities. The present study draws from this perspective by treating tribal social mobility as a differentiated process rather than assuming that all Scheduled Tribes experience development in the same way.

5. RESEARCH GAP

Existing studies examine tribal education, development, displacement, welfare and identity, but fewer studies integrate education, employment and social mobility specifically for Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. There is also limited attention to district-level inequalities, gender differences, occupational diversification, digital opportunities and the transition from educational attainment to sustainable employment.

6. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed analytical approach. Secondary data are drawn primarily from Census of India 2011, Ministry of Tribal Affairs reports, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes records, education statistics and relevant scholarly literature. Primary data should ideally be collected through a structured household survey of selected tribal settlements in Karnataka. A multistage sampling procedure may be adopted by selecting districts with high ST concentration, followed by taluks, villages and households. The proposed survey should collect information on educational attainment, school attendance, dropout, vocational training, employment status, occupational mobility, household income, migration, digital access, government-scheme utilisation and perceptions of social mobility.

7. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND TABLES

Table 1. Scheduled Tribe Population in Karnataka, 2001–2011

Indicator	2001	2011	Change
ST population – Total	34,63,986	42,48,987	+22.66%
ST share of state population	6.55%	6.95%	+0.40 percentage points
ST population – Rural	29,34,530	34,29,791	+16.88%
ST population – Urban	5,29,456	8,19,196	+54.72%
ST population – Male	17,56,238	21,34,754	+21.53%
ST population – Female	17,07,748	21,14,233	+23.81%
Rural share of ST population	84.70%	80.71%	–3.99 percentage points
Urban share of ST population	15.30%	19.29%	+3.99 percentage points
Sex ratio (females per 1,000 males)	972	990	+18

Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Census of India 2001 and 2011; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. The 2001 rural and urban figures are reported as 2,934,530 and 529,456 respectively, with 1,756,238 males and 1,707,748 females. The 2011 figures are 3,429,791 rural and 819,196 urban, comprising 1,723,762 rural males, 1,706,029 rural females, 410,992 urban males and 408,204 urban females.

The table indicates that Karnataka's Scheduled Tribe population increased from 34.64 lakh in 2001 to 42.49 lakh in 2011, representing a growth of 22.66 per cent. The rural ST population increased from 29.35 lakh to 34.30 lakh, while the urban ST population increased much more rapidly, from 5.29 lakh to 8.19 lakh, registering a growth of approximately 54.72 per cent. Consequently, the rural share of the ST population declined from 84.70 per cent to 80.71 per cent, indicating gradual urbanisation and geographical mobility. The male ST population increased by 21.53 per cent, whereas the female ST population increased by 23.81 per cent. The sex ratio consequently improved from approximately 972 females per 1,000 males in 2001 to 990 in 2011. These demographic changes are important for analysing tribal education, employment and social mobility because increasing urban presence can create new opportunities for education and employment while also creating new challenges related to migration, housing, informal employment and cultural adaptation. The official Census database confirms that Karnataka's ST population is reported separately by total, rural and urban residence and by male and female population, making these figures suitable for inclusion in an academic research article.

Table 2. Literacy Position of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka, 2011

Category	ST Literacy (%)	Karnataka Overall (%)	Gap
Persons	62.08	75.36	13.28
Males	71.14	82.47	11.33
Females	52.98	68.08	15.10

Source: Government of India, Census 2011; Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

The literacy gap is significant at both community and gender levels. The largest gap occurs among women, where ST female literacy is approximately 15 percentage points below the state female literacy rate. This demonstrates that tribal educational policy must combine universal access with targeted interventions for girls, residential education, transport, scholarships and secondary-school retention.

Table 3. District-Level Variation in Scheduled Tribe Populati

District	ST Population	Approx. ST Share of District Population
Raichur	3,67,071	19.03%
Ballari	4,51,406	18.41%
Chitradurga	3,02,554	18.23%
Bidar	2,35,822	13.85%
Davanagere	2,33,112	11.98%
Koppal	1,64,271	11.82%
Mysuru	3,34,547	11.15%
Chamarajanagar	1,20,219	11.78%
Tumakuru	2,09,559	7.82%
Belagavi	2,97,198	6.22%
Mandya	22,402	1.24%

Source: Census of India 2011, Primary Census Abstract and district-level ST tables.

The distribution of Scheduled Tribes is highly uneven across Karnataka. Raichur, Ballari and Chitradurga have particularly high proportions, while Mandya has a much smaller proportion. This variation suggests that a uniform state-level intervention is unlikely to be equally effective. District-specific tribal development plans should therefore be based on population concentration, educational deprivation, employment structure and connectivity.

Table 4. Major Government Interventions Supporting Tribal Education and Mobility

Programme/Intervention	Major Objective	Relevance to Social Mobility
Pre-Matric Scholarship for STs	Support school education	Reduces financial barriers
Post-Matric Scholarship	Support higher secondary, college and professional education	Facilitates educational mobility
Eklavya Model Residential Schools	Quality residential education for ST students	Improves access to secondary education
National Fellowship and Scholarship	Higher education and research	Creates pathways to professional careers
National Overseas Scholarship	International higher education	Expands advanced educational opportunities
PM JANMAN	Development support for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups	Addresses extreme deprivation
PMJVM	Livelihood and tribal economic development	Promotes entrepreneurship and income generation
Venture Capital Fund for STs	Entrepreneurial support	Encourages movement into business and enterprise

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

The policy architecture has progressively expanded from basic welfare towards education, higher education, livelihood development and entrepreneurship. The principal challenge is therefore increasingly one of effective implementation and last-mile access rather than absence of schemes. Better awareness, simplified application processes, digital assistance and institutional convergence are required to convert programme availability into actual social mobility.

Table 5. Proposed Primary-Data Framework for Household Survey

Variable	Primary Information to Collect	Suggested Measurement
Educational attainment	Highest qualification of household members	Illiterate/Primary/Secondary/PUC/Diploma/Degree/PG
School participation	Current attendance and dropout	Enrolled/Not enrolled/Dropout
Employment	Current occupational status	Agriculture/Casual/Formal/Self-employed/Unemployed
Occupational mobility	Change from parent's occupation	Improved/Same/Declined
Income mobility	Household income change over five years	Increased/Stable/Declined

Skill development	Vocational/digital training	Yes/No; type of training
Government schemes	Benefits received	Scholarship/Hostel/Skill/Livelihood/Other
Digital access	Internet/device access	Regular/Occasional/None
Migration	Seasonal or permanent migration	Yes/No
Perceived social mobility	Respondent's assessment	High/Moderate/Low

Source: Researcher-designed framework based on Census and Ministry of Tribal Affairs indicators.

This primary-data framework would allow the researcher to establish the mechanisms connecting education with employment and mobility. Particular attention should be given to gender, age, district, rural/urban location and tribal community. The resulting field data could be statistically analysed using cross-tabulation, correlation, regression and mobility-transition analysis.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS

The first major finding is that Scheduled Tribes constitute a significant component of Karnataka's population, but their geographical distribution is highly uneven. The 2011 Census recorded more than 4.24 million ST persons in the state. The concentration of tribal communities in particular districts means that the intensity of educational and employment challenges varies considerably. Policies based exclusively on state-level averages may therefore conceal severe district-level deprivation.

The second major finding concerns the continuing educational gap. ST literacy reached 62.08 per cent in Karnataka in 2011, compared with 75.36 per cent for the total state population. Although this represents substantial progress compared with earlier decades, the remaining gap demonstrates that educational expansion has not produced complete equality. More importantly, the female ST literacy rate of 52.98 per cent was considerably lower than the male ST literacy rate of 71.14 per cent. Gender therefore remains an important determinant of educational opportunity.

The third finding is that rural concentration remains a major structural challenge. More than four-fifths of Karnataka's ST population lived in rural areas in 2011. Rural residence can affect access to secondary schools, colleges, coaching, digital resources, transport, healthcare and formal employment. Consequently, educational disadvantage is often reinforced by spatial disadvantage.

The fourth finding is that education and employment are closely interconnected. Low educational attainment restricts entry into professional, technical and formal-sector employment. Tribal workers with limited schooling are more likely to depend on agriculture, agricultural labour, forest-related activities, construction and informal employment. Such occupations can provide immediate livelihood support but may offer limited occupational security and upward mobility.

The fifth finding is that the transition from education to employment represents a critical policy gap. Government scholarships and residential schools can increase educational participation, but education does not automatically translate into suitable employment. Students need career counselling, digital skills, vocational training, internships, English and communication skills, competitive-examination support and information about formal labour markets.

The sixth finding concerns the importance of gender. The female literacy gap indicates that tribal women experience a double disadvantage arising from tribal status and gender. Employment opportunities for women may also remain concentrated in low-paid informal activities. Therefore, programmes aimed at tribal social mobility must include girls' secondary education, women's higher education, entrepreneurship, skill development and access to credit.

The seventh finding is that government intervention has become increasingly diversified. The policy system now includes scholarships, EMRS, higher-education fellowships, entrepreneurship programmes and livelihood schemes. This represents a movement from welfare-oriented intervention towards capability development. However, implementation remains crucial. A scheme can exist formally while remaining inaccessible to households because of lack of awareness, documentation problems, digital exclusion, distance from institutions or administrative complexity.

The eighth finding is that digitalisation creates both an opportunity and a new form of inequality. Digital platforms can improve access to scholarships, employment information, online education, banking and government services. However, households without smartphones, reliable internet connectivity, digital literacy or electricity may be excluded from these opportunities. Digital inclusion must therefore accompany digital delivery.

The ninth finding is that social mobility should not be understood only as movement into government employment. Contemporary tribal mobility can occur through higher education, professional employment, entrepreneurship, skilled trades, digital work, improved agricultural productivity and value addition to traditional products. Policies should recognise multiple pathways rather than privileging one occupational model.

Finally, the evidence indicates that tribal development requires convergence. Education departments, Tribal Welfare departments, skill-development institutions, higher-education institutions, financial institutions and local governments often operate through separate mechanisms. A coordinated institutional structure could reduce duplication and improve the transition from schooling to employment. The ultimate objective should be sustainable social mobility that improves income and capabilities while respecting tribal culture, community institutions and livelihood systems.

9. SUGGESTIONS

Strengthen Early and Secondary Education: Government should prioritise retention rather than merely enrolment. Tribal children require accessible primary and secondary schools, adequate teachers, transportation, hostels and learning support. Special attention should be given to students transitioning from primary to secondary education, since this stage can determine later educational and employment outcomes.

Expand Residential and Bridge Education: Residential schooling should be strengthened in geographically isolated tribal settlements. EMRS and other residential facilities can provide continuity of education, but they should be complemented by culturally responsive teaching, local-language support and counselling. Bridge programmes can support first-generation learners entering formal education.

Focus on Tribal Girls: The large gender gap in literacy requires targeted intervention. Scholarships for girls, safe transportation, residential facilities, sanitary infrastructure, female teachers, mentoring and higher-education support should be strengthened. Women's education should be directly linked with employment and entrepreneurship.

Establish Tribal Career and Skill Centres: District-level Tribal Career and Skill Centres should provide career counselling, competitive-examination coaching, vocational training, digital literacy and information about employment opportunities. These centres should connect tribal youth with Industrial Training Institutes, universities, employers and apprenticeship programmes.

Promote Employment Diversification: Tribal youth should be supported to move beyond low-productivity informal employment. Training should focus on healthcare assistance, information technology, data-related services, tourism, renewable energy, construction technology, food processing, logistics, handicrafts and other locally relevant sectors.

Encourage Tribal Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship can become an important route to social mobility. Credit support, market linkage, branding, e-commerce training and business mentoring should be provided to tribal entrepreneurs. Traditional products should be connected with modern markets without undermining community ownership and cultural identity.

Improve Digital Inclusion: Digital access should be treated as basic social infrastructure. Tribal settlements require reliable connectivity, community digital centres and training in online applications, digital banking, e-learning and employment platforms. Government benefits should remain accessible through assisted offline mechanisms for households unable to use digital platforms independently.

Introduce Single-Window Tribal Welfare Delivery: District-level single-window tribal welfare centres can integrate scholarships, pensions, housing, livelihood support, health services, employment assistance and documentation. This would reduce the need for tribal households to approach multiple offices for different benefits.

Strengthen Last-Mile Delivery: Mobile welfare camps should regularly visit remote settlements to assist with documentation, scholarship applications, Aadhaar-related services, bank accounts, employment registration and government-scheme applications. Local tribal youth can be trained as community resource persons to provide continuous assistance.

Develop District-Specific Tribal Development Plans: Districts should not follow a uniform development model. Plans should be based on ST population concentration, literacy, gender gap, school availability, employment structure, migration, infrastructure and livelihood conditions. District-level indicators should be monitored annually.

Measure Social Mobility: Government programmes should evaluate outcomes rather than only expenditure and beneficiary numbers. Indicators should include educational completion, higher-education transition, employment quality, income improvement, occupational mobility, entrepreneurship and women's participation. This would make tribal development policy more evidence-based.

10. CONCLUSION

Education, employment and social mobility are closely interconnected dimensions of tribal development in Karnataka. The state's Scheduled Tribe population has experienced significant demographic and educational progress,

yet important inequalities remain. The 2011 Census reveals a substantial gap between ST literacy and the overall state literacy rate, while the gender difference within the ST population remains particularly significant. The strong rural concentration of tribal communities further reinforces the importance of geographical accessibility, institutional infrastructure and last-mile service delivery.

The evidence suggests that the central challenge is no longer simply the expansion of welfare programmes. Karnataka has an extensive policy framework involving scholarships, residential schools, higher-education assistance, livelihood development, entrepreneurship and other interventions. The more fundamental challenge is ensuring that these interventions generate measurable improvements in educational attainment, employment quality and intergenerational mobility.

Education must therefore be connected directly with employability. Tribal students require not only access to schools but also opportunities for higher education, vocational training, digital learning, career counselling and professional networks. Similarly, employment policy must move beyond the creation of short-term livelihood opportunities towards sustainable and diversified occupations. Gender must remain a central consideration. The lower literacy rate among tribal women demonstrates that social mobility cannot be achieved without addressing the specific barriers faced by girls and women. Educational continuity, safe residential facilities, skill development, entrepreneurship and access to credit can significantly strengthen women's economic participation.

The future of tribal development in Karnataka should also recognise the diversity of tribal communities. Social mobility should not require cultural assimilation. Development can coexist with cultural identity when policies are designed through community participation and respect for local knowledge and livelihood practices. A sustainable model of tribal development should therefore integrate education, employment, digital inclusion, entrepreneurship, social protection and community participation. Such an approach can transform education from a welfare entitlement into a pathway for capability development and transform employment from livelihood survival into sustainable social mobility. The objective should ultimately be not merely to increase the number of educated tribal persons, but to create conditions under which education produces meaningful economic opportunities, greater autonomy and improved quality of life.

REFERENCES

1. Baviskar, A. (1995). *In the belly of the river: Tribal conflicts over development in the Narmada Valley*. Oxford University Press.
2. Government of India, Ministry of Education. (2024). UDISE+ 2023–24: Report on school education in India. Department of School Education and Literacy.
3. Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2013). *Statistical profile of Scheduled Tribes in India*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
4. Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2020). *Annual report 2019–20*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
5. Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2024). *Annual report 2023–24*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
6. Mahanti, N., & Singh, B. (Eds.). (1995). *Tribal education in India*. Inter-India Publications.
7. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). *Census of India 2011: Primary Census Abstract—Karnataka*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
8. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). C-08 (ST): Educational level by age and sex for population age 7 and above (Scheduled Tribes), Karnataka. *Census of India*.
9. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). B-01 (ST): Main workers, marginal workers, non-workers and those seeking/available for work classified by age and sex, Karnataka. *Census of India*.
10. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). B-03 (ST): Main workers, marginal workers, non-workers and those seeking/available for work classified by educational level and sex, Karnataka. *Census of India*.
11. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). ST-01: Main workers classified by industrial category, age and sex, Karnataka. *Census of India*.
12. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). ST-02: Main workers classified by industrial category, educational level and sex, Karnataka. *Census of India*.
13. Singh, B., & Mahanti, N. (Eds.). (1995). *Tribal education in India*. Inter-India Publications.
14. Srivastava, V. K. (2013). *Tribes in India: Concepts, institutions and practices*. Serials Publications.
15. Vidyarthi, L. P. (Ed.). (1981). *Tribal development and its administration*. Concept Publishing Company.
16. Xaxa, V. (2008). *State, society, and tribes: Issues in post-colonial India*. Pearson Education India.