

## Socio-Economic Dimensions of Education among the Betta Kuruba: Anthropological Insights from Mysuru District, Karnataka

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### KEYWORDS

Betta Kuruba; Scheduled tribe; Karnataka; Education; Mysuru

### ABSTRACT

*This research attempts to explore the socio-economic dimensions of formal education among the Betta Kuruba, a forest-dwelling tribal community living in the fringe areas of Rajiv Gandhi National Park in Karnataka. The study was conducted across 3 Betta Kuruba haadis (settlements) in Mysuru district of Karnataka. A mixed methods research approach was adopted to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the study site. Primary data were gathered using standard techniques, namely observation, household survey schedule, and extensive semi-structured and open-ended interviews with key informants. The study found that the current top-down approach of the government is not bearing any fruit which is evident by the poor enrolment rates of tribal children in schools. The study suggests a region-based, grassroots approach to overcome the bottlenecks in the current education system in order to enable the Betta Kurubas to improve their socio-economic status and find better opportunities in the future.*

### Introduction

Although tribal communities constitute about 6 per cent of the world population, they are among the 19 per cent of the world's poorest. The World Bank estimates the average life expectancy of tribal communities to be 20 years lower than that of non-indigenous people worldwide. They are usually considered the weakest section of the human population in terms of various socio-economic factors such as illiteracy, abject poverty, and inadequate access to public infrastructure. In order to overcome such problems, the United Nations have undertaken a series of programmes since 1994 under the 'Declaration of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People' aimed at consolidating international cooperation in mitigating problems associated with human rights, development, environment, health and education (Rath 2006). Despite an increasing global recognition of tribal rights, socio-economic exclusion and marginalization of tribal communities is common place. In the recent decades, threats to the full realization of the rights of tribal communities have increased owing to the forces of liberalization, economic globalization, and climate change.

In the Indian context too, tribal communities are undeniably economically under-developed, and the process of their marginalization can be traced to the intrusion of British colonialism, which quickly detected in the forest that was home to tribals, great potential for appropriation of resources. Huge tracts of forest-lands were cleared by both the British and Zamindars for commercial crops such as rubber, coffee

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and tea and they also authorized contractors to cut down trees in the forests. As a result, the tribal people were bereft of their livelihoods as many of them subsisted by hunting and gathering and eked out a living by practicing shifting cultivation. Interaction with mainstream society exposed the tribal people to problems they were unprepared to handle, such as sexually transmitted diseases and alcoholism. (Bara 2002). There has been further marginalisation of tribal communities due to 'development' activities such as the construction of large dams or the sale of timber in the post-Independence period, despite the Constitution of India protecting the rights of the Scheduled Tribes and providing adequate reservation in legislature, education, and government employment (Jai Prabhakar 2018). Thus, the planning process in India during the last 70 years has failed to narrow the disparity between the tribal and non-tribal populations.

The socio-economic dimensions of tribal education in India are multifaceted. First and foremost, there is a significant gap in enrolment and retention rates between tribal and non-tribal populations (Rupvath 2016). According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) 75<sup>th</sup> round, the overall literacy rate for tribal populations was 59%, significantly lower than the national average of 74% (Velusamy 2021). Dropout rates are also high among tribal students, particularly girls. This can be attributed to various factors such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, cultural barriers, and the absence of a conducive learning environment. Socio-economic status is an economic and social combined total measure of a person's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation; however, it is more commonly used to depict an economic difference in a society as a whole. The socio-economic status of any group is determined significantly by the levels of development it has achieved in health, education and employment. While the paper seeks to analyse the socio-economic status of the Betta Kuruba tribal community living in the fringes of Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka, the main objective of the paper is to understand the socio-economic dimensions of formal education among the Betta Kurubas in the backdrop of a globalization and privatization.

### **Tribal Scenario in Karnataka**

The southern Indian state of Karnataka is home to about 4.2 million tribal people who account for about 6.95% of the total population of the state. There are 50 different tribal communities identified by the Government of India of which 14 tribes including two Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are autochthons of the state. The prominent tribal groups of Karnataka include Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba, Yerava, Soliga, Hakkipikki, Nayaka, and Siddi. Majority of the tribal areas in the state face a myriad of problems such as lack of basic needs and sustainable livelihoods. Historically, tribal economy in Karnataka was based on subsistence agriculture and/ or hunting and gathering. In the present context however, they are mostly engaged in agriculture and unskilled labour work. The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka is worrying as it has consistently been lower than that of the total population. While the overall literacy rate of Karnataka is 60.4% and 76.2% in rural and urban areas, tribal literacy is about 65.7% and 51% in rural and urban areas respectively (Roy *et al.* 2015).

There are six major forest-dwelling tribal groups living in the fringe areas of Rajiv Gandhi National Park in Mysuru district. Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba and Soliga are believed to be autochthons of this geographical region. With the commencement of Project Tiger in 1973 and Kabini Dam, these tribal groups were relocated from the core conservation zones and dam areas and rehabilitated to the fringes of the national parks. According to the 1981 Census, the population of the Betta Kuruba was about 2,09,677. Their population in 1971 was 8192. The disproportionate spurt in their numbers is due to the removal of Area Restriction of Scheduled Communities in 1976. Figure 1 highlights the taluk-wise distribution of Scheduled Tribes in Mysuru district where Jenu Kuruba is the largest tribal group followed by Soliga and Kadu Kuruba respectively. The taluks of HD Kote, Hunsur, and Periyapatna have the highest number of tribal settlements owing to their proximity to Rajiv Gandhi National Park from where they were rehabilitated. Jenu Kuruba is listed as a PVTG while Kadu Kuruba and Soliga are

considered as forest-dwelling tribal communities. Jenu Kuruba and Kadu Kuruba are believed to share a common ancestor and have much in common in terms of socio-cultural life. Kadu Kurubas were the original inhabitants of the forests of Nagarhole and Kakankote in the Western Ghats of South India. They are found mostly in HD Kote taluk, Mysuru district and to some extent in the Dakshina Kannada and Hassan districts of Karnataka.

## Methodology

The study relies on primary data gathered during ethnographic fieldwork conducted among the Betta Kurubas for three months. Fieldwork was conducted using standard tools and techniques such as observation, and in-depth, informal interviews with the community members. The preliminary household survey was useful for gathering age, sex, occupational patterns, educational status, income, land ownership, expenditure, and clan affiliations etc. which helped the researcher to establish rapport with the people under study and construct an ethnographic profile. In-depth interviews with important members of the tribal community as well as the people helped the researcher in gathering information with respect to their social life, traditional socio-cultural setup, educational status and division of labour.

## Ethnographic Profile of the Betta Kurubas

The tribal community under study, the Betta Kurubas, are located in B.Matakere, Kempanaadi and Brahmagiri haadis of HD Kote taluk in Mysuru district of Karnataka. The Betta Kuruba of Girijan Colony, B.Matakere are the original inhabitants of the forests of Nagarhole and Kakankote in the Western Ghats of Karnataka and were relocated to their present location after the commencement of Project Tiger in 1973. In the Brahmagiri haadi, there are about 75 Betta Kuruba families, 30 Jenu Kuruba families, 40 Yerava families and 40 Paniyan families living exclusively in one colony. There is no intermixing i.e. every community has its specific area. The Betta Kurubas usually live in huts, houses with tiled roof or aluminium sheets in this haadi. These houses were constructed in 1983 that are old, dingy and not fit for habitation. Betta Kurubas are living exclusively in the Kempanaadi and there are about 44 families. There are three main streets and are lined by tiled houses and houses with aluminium sheet roofs and small huts.

The Brahmagiri haadi was established in 1983 after the initiation of Project Tiger in 1973. They are the original inhabitants of the forests of Baanuru and Gundre. After their evacuation, the Betta Kurubas were scattered across Mysuru and Kodagu districts in Karnataka and Kerala state. In 1983, the then district-in-charge by the name of Brahmadutta ordered the re-establishment of the haadi and it was named as Brahmagiri haadi in his memory. The Betta Kuruba settlement at Kempanaadi was established sometime before 1973 after their eviction from the forests of Baanuru and Gundre. The Betta Kurubas living in this haadi were relocated from their original settlements owing to the construction of Kabini Dam. To sum up, the Betta Kuruba of Mysuru district have had a history of dispossession and alienation due to developmental and conservation activities.

The Betta Kuruba are more commonly known as Kadu Kuruba in academic literature which is the name under which they have been included in the Scheduled Tribe list of the Indian Government. Betta Kurubas are a forest-dwelling tribal community with a long history and are to be differentiated from the larger Kuruba community that makes up about 9% of the total population of Karnataka state. The term Kadu Kuruba is synonymously used for Betta Kuruba. Aiyappan (1948) says:

*There is confusion of the name in regard to this tribe. Three names are recorded: Kuruman, Kurumban and Kuruban. Kuruba is the name of the large shepherd community on the Karnataka plateau, who are seen in Tamil and Telugu districts also. They speak Kannada. In Mysore itself, these Kurubas are divided into uru or village Kurubar and the kadu (forest) Kurubar. These Kadu Kuruba are again divided into two classes. The Betta or hill Kurubas are a group of active people*

*capable of great fatigue and experts at forest work. The Jenu Kuruba or Jen Kuruba are darker and inferior. They collect as the name indicates honey and beeswax”.*

### ***Physical Appearance***

Sirajuddin *et al.* (1992) reported that the Betta Kuruba were mostly short and of very short stature with a mean of 1548.1 mm as against the short category of Kadu Kuruba with a mean of 1561.3 mm and other measurements like CI (75.84), NI (76.42) indicating dolicocephalic and mesorrhine category. TFI (85.71) is of higher mesoprop to leptoprop whereas UFI (48.91) is of euryen and mesene classes.

### ***Dress Pattern***

The male dress consists of a cloth tied around the waist (*panchi*) and reaching to the knees. The upper part of the body is covered by a shirt. The female wears a coarse cloth four yards long, and have tattoo on their arms depicting various trees or cradles etc. A typical Betta Kuruba woman covers her body below the shoulder by tying a sari round the armpits leaving arms and shoulders bare, and a white cloth is used as an upper garment round the chest.

### ***Language***

The Betta Kuruba speak a mixture of Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada which they call *Betta Kuruba Bhaashe*. Kannada is used to communicate with others. Some of the Betta Kurubas can also speak Tamil and Malayalam because of their proximity to Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Some men have married women from other *haadis* (settlements) in Tamil Nadu and Kerala who speak Tamil, Malayalam, and the Betta Kuruba dialect.

### ***Economic Activities***

The traditional occupation of the Betta Kurubas was basket weaving. However, they have almost given up basket weaving owing to the non-availability of bamboo and the restrictions imposed by the Forest Department on the collection of forest produce. The community consists of both landowning and landless groups. Apart from agriculture, they are also engaged in agricultural labour and cottage industries. The major crops grown by them are ragi, marigold, sapota, and avre etc. There is a great demand for cheap agricultural labour in Kerala for ginger plantations, for which the farm owners hire Betta Kurubas. Many of the young Betta Kuruba individuals are employed as forest watchers by the Karnataka Forest Department.

### ***Health Status***

There is a primary healthcare centre in B. Matakere village which sends health workers to conduct routine check-ups on the health status of the settlement in B. Matakere. Minor ailments are attended to by making use of their extensive ethno-botanical knowledge. For people living in Brahmagiri and Jagankote haadi, the nearest primary healthcare centre is in N. Begur. For serious ailments, the Betta Kurubas go to the nearby Vivekananda Memorial Hospital located in Sarguru village that provides quality healthcare. Alcoholism is rampant among the Betta Kurubas along with smoking and chewing tobacco which has a detrimental effect on their lifespan.

### ***Formal Education***

There are four schools in B. Matakere of which three are run by the Government of Karnataka and one school is run by an educational trust by the name of Sharada Education Trust. The Government Girijan Ashram School provides boarding and education to children belonging to scheduled tribes. There is a Government Middle and High School located in B. Matakere where a small number of Betta Kuruba children go to school. There are five schools in the nearby villages of Jagankote and Brahmagiri haadi where a number of Betta Kuruba children are admitted. There is an Ashram school in N. Begur,

a Convent school, a Government high school, and a high school run by Vivekananda Foundation in Hosahalli. There is also a Government high school in Kenchanahalli where a few Betta Kuruba children are enrolled. A majority of the elders among the Betta Kuruba have never been exposed to formal education and remain unlettered.

### *Enculturation among the Betta Kurubas*

The Betta Kuruba were the children of the forests. In their traditional homelands, they had no access to formal education. Their traditional knowledge about their surroundings was immense and it shaped their worldview. The Betta Kuruba legends are full of myths and legends which explains every aspect of their life. Most of this knowledge is being lost in the present context because the elders are reluctant to pass it on because they believe that their traditional knowledge has lost its relevance now and if this knowledge is imparted, they fear that their religion will lose its distinctiveness be lost through time. Socialization occurs among the Betta Kurubas through the parents and elders of the settlements. As the relationships in the settlement are on a personal basis, neighbours and elders also deviant behaviour among children.

Some Betta Kuruba have a habit of eating mud. This type of behaviour is corrected by parents in the early stages by keeping mud mixed with chilli powder for the children to consume which usually gets the children to stop this habit. Parents have the first role correct the deviant behaviour exhibited by their children. Children attend festivals along with their parents and observe rituals and the festival proceedings in a bid to learn the ways to perform said activities. The children are taught the Betta Kuruba way of life starting very early in their childhood. They have to acquaint themselves with different clans as this is how they will recognize the members of their community in future. As soon as the children learn to talk, they are taught clan names and deities to be worshipped.

The mother and paternal grandmother occupy a prime position in a child's early life as these two people show the greatest affection and take it upon themselves to teach the child. A child sleeps beside their mother or paternal grandmother until he or she learns to walk and talk, for this is the time when love and affection is needed the most. At this stage, the child is given a separate place to sleep in the house with a view to make the child independent on the elders for the basic things. If there is an educated person in the house, the children are taught alphabets and basic writing. In the earlier days, the Betta Kurubas had youth dormitories called *Chavadi* where young boys and girls learned their first life lessons. However, with the passage of time and their relocation, the *Chavadi* is only used as a community hall for meetings, weddings, and rituals.

### *Transport and Communication*

B. Matakere can be accessed by road, with buses and private jeeps from Sarguru. Private vehicles make up for the less number of buses and charge a nominal fee for transportation. The same is the case with the Better Kurubas living in Jagankote and Brahmahiri haadi. Only a few Betta Kurubas who are economically stable own two-wheelers. Communication facilities are well developed with mobile networks and landline connectivity.

### *Social and Political Organization*

There are three moieties among the Betta Kurubas, namely, *mooroil mage*, *aiduoil mage*, *yoloil mage* which are further divided into unilineal descent groups called *Jamma* which means clan. There are more than 200 clans in Betta Kuruba out of which some clans have been lost through the ages. *Jamma* plays a crucial role in all the life activities of the Betta Kurubas. The rules of marriage are consistent with that of other tribal groups in India i.e., clan exogamy. In the traditional setup, each of the clans were entrusted with a profession, for example, making drums and flutes, tackling elephants, invoking gods, and performing important socio-religious ceremonies etc. The influence of clans can be seen in birth ceremonies, marriages, death rituals, dispute settlement, and almost all spheres of the Betta Kuruba social life.

The Betta Kuruba have their own traditional panchayat system. The head of the group is known as the *Yajman*. The post is hereditary and is always held by the eldest son of the *Yajman*. Two other junior *Yajmans* assist the headman in his work. The function of this panchayat is to settle disputes and deal with other community affairs. Apart from the traditional panchayat, they are also associated with the modern formal panchayat. Disputes of serious nature which remain unsettled by the traditional community panchayat are referred to the formal Panchayat Raj system.

### ***Religion***

The Betta Kurubas are animists and believe in black magic, sorcery and witchcraft. They worship forest gods and goddesses called “*Norali*” and “*Masthi*”. Every clan has its own deity. Some of the names of their clan deities are *Narasimbawadiya*, *Kapilwadiya*, *Masthamma*, *Maramma*, and *Ainur Maramma* etc. However, majority of the Betta Kurubas were displaced and rehabilitated in 1973 to the fringe areas of the forests in which they resided for generations and came into contact with the society at large. Although they have managed to retain their cultural uniqueness in the present context, they have become acculturated to a certain extent with Hindu communities.

### **Socio-economic Status**

Socio-economic status refers to the stratified distinctions between individuals or groups in societies or cultures based on measurable indicators. Social status influences the socio economic condition as to how people are treated depending on the background they come from, which may be determined by various factors or indicators. Socio-economic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, land holding, and place of residence. It is a way of looking at how individuals or families fit into society using economic and social measures that have been shown to impact individual’s education and well-being. Socio-economic status and education are closely related. A family’s socio economic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social positioning in the community. The following is the explanation of the constellation of socio-economic factors that are an external impression of a more intrinsic and yet vital social organization.

The Government relocated the Betta Kurubas of the Girijan Colony from the nearby Kalkeri forest and constructed houses for them long ago. Every house has a toilet and is equipped with a rain water harvesting system. Every three days, potable water is supplied to each house through taps. The whole settlement is electrified and recently LED street lights have been installed. LPG cylinders are provided to them at a subsidized rate. The Betta Kurubas of B. Matakere are availing certain facilities provided by the Government. Every month, a Betta Kuruba family is provided with amenities such as 3 kg of rice, 1 kg ghee, 3 kg of different variety of pulses and 72 eggs. The Government has allotted some 80 acres of cultivable land to them, as claimed by an informant and attested by the non-tribals of B. Matakere. However, there is an uneven distribution of land, with some households having large tracts of land and some families with no cultivable land. Unskilled labour (57.7%) and agriculture (19.2%) continue to be the predominant form of livelihood in all three settlements (Figure 2). Owing to the unsustainable nature of the livelihoods practiced by the Betta Kurubas, their income constantly fluctuates due to a number of reasons such as availability of labour work, rainfall, and capital. Of the 204 Betta Kurubas considered for the study, around 54% percent households had an annual income of less than Rs. 0.3 million while 46 % of the Betta Kurba households had an annual income of over Rs. 0.3 million rupees (Figure 3).

It was found that the broad settings within which the study was conducted play an important role in shaping the behaviour of the people. It also shows that they were typically tribal in nature in spite of the change in the external realities of their life. They have been able to maintain their core cultural values which is very much evident from the ethnographic information brought out during the study.

## **Dimensions of Formal Education among the Betta Kurubas**

India is a pluralistic country with rich diversity reflected in the multitude of cultures, religions and languages of various groups. However, there is a significant disparity in the socioeconomic parameters of various groups/communities living in the country. Some groups, notably the Scheduled Tribes, have been traditionally marginalized and economically backward in relation to the total population of the country. Education development is the most effective instrument for their empowerment and has the potential to help the marginalized and the poor to come out of the poverty trap and facilitate them to be at par with rest of the citizens (Vidyarthi 1972; Upmanyu 2016; Daripa 2017). Despite several government initiatives and efforts to promote education among the STs, their literacy rate as compared to the national average has remained low and female literacy has been still lower compared to the national female literacy rate (Dwivedi and Thakur 2020).

The Ashram School system is one of the government's initiatives to promote the holistic development of tribal children, with a focus on vocational education. (Nanjunda, 2008). As the schools are residential, it can lower the rate of student absenteeism, increase the quality of education at the elementary level, and relieve parents of the burden of paying educational expenses for their children. By staying in the Ashram School during the crucial years of schooling from five to sixteen years, there is a greater chance of them continuing their studies without dropping out midway. As a result, the educational attainment of indigenous children can improve as a result of a more positive socialization. Generally, Ashram Schools provide education from Class I to Class VII or class IV or V in certain areas.

There are more than 100 students admitted to each of the three Ashram schools which consists of a mix of children from SC and ST communities. The schools spend an average of Rs. 900 per student every month which is mostly utilized on daily-use items and uniforms etc. The number of teachers is less and only a small number of teachers are permanently employed while others are either trainees or ad-hoc teachers. The teachers do not get any formal training or orientation from Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) and no workshops are conducted for them. Teachers are generally reluctant to join the schools on account of their geographical remoteness and distance from major towns and cities. These teachers teach about six subjects to about 70-80 students in different classes every year. The Ashram School in B. Matakere has been facing shortage of students and due to this, the school has started admitting children from Scheduled Castes. It is to be noted that the strength of the students has gradually increased over the years and has remained more or less stagnant in the present context. The teachers at the private schools in the region find that the Betta Kuruba students find it difficult to adjust to the teaching at their schools initially probably because of shyness, language barrier etc. In the settlement, the Betta Kuruba children speak the Betta Kuruba dialect as it is the first language taught to them and Kannada becomes a second language to them. Hence, language is the first barrier they have to overcome.

A teacher at the Government High School believed that the Betta Kuruba children should be allowed to study in the Ashram School till 7th class and then they should join the government higher primary school. Their progress should be evaluated periodically by authorities. The teacher further explained the Government Schools were under the purview of the State Education Board whereas the Ashram Schools were under ITDP. ITDP had a different approach towards education which differed from the approach of the State Education Board. The teacher makes a point that integration should begin from the Ashram Schools themselves. If the students are not integrated at an early level i.e., primary and middle school, it becomes an uphill task to do the same when the children join the government schools at higher levels of schooling. If nothing else, the students should learn to read and write Kannada properly which will enable them to continue further in other where Kannada is the medium of instruction. There is also a common opinion among the teaching community in B. Matakere that the segregation policy of the Government is not bearing fruit at all.

People from the settlement are reluctant to send their children to the Ashram School because of they are dissatisfied with the efforts of the teachers and also the lack of quality education. There is a general opinion among the parents that the children of Class VII of the Ashram School are not on par with students in Class IV of other schools. They believe that the sub-standard quality of teaching, condescending attitude of the upper-caste teachers towards tribals and the students not being able to connect with the teachers is the cause of this incompetence. The teachers, on the other hand, feel that the Betta Kurubas are not utilizing their full potential and the opportunities presented to them. The teachers share a common dissent for the happy-go-lucky attitude of the tribals. Illiteracy is very high in all three study areas (34.7%) and can be attributed to a number of reasons such as lack of awareness about the importance of education, lack of access to quality education, poor socio-economic status, and a general lack of interest (Figure 4).

It is observed that the total number of students, as they move to higher levels i.e., high school, decrease (Figure 4). As per the information provided by the people of the settlement, the reason for this decrease is the quality and treatment meted out by the teaching staff at the Ashram School. As a result of this, it is only in the individual stages i.e., the primary school that the children avail the facilities of the Ashram School. It is therefore, more out of facilities, which are specially provided for tribal children like free boarding and food, and other basic requirements apart from schooling supplies that they stay back in the Ashram School. Once they avail these facilities, they look for other government and private schools for high school or after that. While it can be said that highly subsidized facilities and free education has served the purpose of the poor parents, it has at the same time, failed to provide good and meaningful educational opportunities which the tribal children require. This further means that merely providing material requirements and the teaching staff to improve the educational status of tribal children is not enough because it is an already established fact that these children require special attention owing to their unique cultural background.

## **Discussion**

The study shows that when compared to the society at large, the number of tribals coming out of schools are lacking in quality as well as quantity. The quality of the tribal students coming out of these schools is nowhere comparable in terms of the skills and abilities to compete in the job market. Coming to the Ashram School, the teachers who are responsible for imparting education to the tribal children are mostly high-caste non-tribals. There are also found to share the negative stereotypes of tribals with their dominant culture group people. They fail to understand the tribal students and their shortcomings in learning because of the great difference between tribal and non-tribal cultures. One of the stereotypes supported by the teachers is that the culture of tribal is inferior. The teachers at the ashram schools have failed to realize some of the problems faced by the Betta Kuruba children in understanding the ideas and concepts foreign to their culture, used in the textbooks based on non-tribal and urban culture.

Regular inspections the State Education Board at the Ashram School should be undertaken to check that the level of being provided at the school is on par with schools in the mainstream society. On the hand, Integrated Tribal Development Project should also periodically look into the progress of the tribal children attending schools in the mainstream society. There should be cooperation between the State Education Board and ITDP for the purpose of timely evaluation of tribal students at levels education in the region. The study found that the enrolment of tribal children in schools is quite less which can be attributed to a number of reasons such as lack of interest, poverty, and a general lack of awareness about the benefits of education. One of the significant challenges in providing education to tribal communities is the lack of awareness about the importance of education. Many families prioritize traditional forms of livelihood over education. Therefore, educating parents about the long-term benefits of education is essential to increase enrolment rates in tribal areas.

It was found that the quality of education provided to the tribal students is often substandard. The curriculum and teaching methods used in mainstream schools are not tailored to meet the specific needs and learning styles of the tribal students. Language barrier was found to be a major challenge in the study area as it had created a communication gap between teachers and students. Tribal communities have their own traditional knowledge systems, which are based on their experiences and observation. The integration of this traditional knowledge system along with a bilingual pedagogical approach into the curriculum can help to create an education system that is inclusive of the traditional knowledge system of tribal communities. Teachers must be trained in the cultural, social, and economic context of tribal communities and must be sensitive to the needs of the students and the community they serve. Finally, there is a significant gap in the employability of tribal students compared to non-tribal students. The tribal communities living in the region are mostly engaged in agriculture or other unskilled labour that are becoming increasingly unsustainable due to various factors such as climate change, land degradation, market forces, and migration. The lack of quality education further limits the opportunities for tribal students to acquire skills and knowledge that are in demand in the job market.

Although the Indian Government has formulated excellent policies to improve tribal education, a lackadaisical approach towards their implementation has deprived tribal communities from an effective access to formal education. A multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted to address the short-comings of tribal education in the region. First and foremost, there is a need to improve access to education for tribal students, particularly girls. This can be achieved by generating awareness about the importance and benefits of education, provision of transportation facilities to educational institutions, timely disbursement of scholarships, and providing incentives encourage enrolment and retention. Secondly, the quality of education provided to tribal students can be improved by incorporating the mother tongue of tribal students in school curriculums, training teachers in culturally sensitive teaching methods, and providing adequate infrastructure such as libraries, laboratories, and classrooms. Thirdly, there is a need to enhance the employability of tribal students by providing vocational training and skill development programmes that are relevant to the job market. Finally, there is a need to promote cultural identity and social inclusion by incorporating the cultural heritage and diversity of tribal communities in mainstream education.

## **Conclusion**

In a huge composite nation such as India, a one-shoe-fits-all approach of the current education system can be a problematic tool for nation building. Although the Constitution promises education and respect for cultures, religions, and other diversities for its citizens, these promises however, are not met satisfactorily in the present. There is a need for transformation in the Indian education system from a top-down approach to a region-based, grassroots approach. By identifying the bottlenecks in the present education infrastructure for tribal communities, this article highlights the need for a culture-conscious and diversity-inclusive transformation in the Indian education system. A culturally-inclusive education system provides an effective platform for a meaningful integration of tribal communities and other marginalized communities who often feel alienated and are usually dismissed as inferior and incapable. The importance of cultural sensitivity and grassroots approach to education can be emphasized by an anthropological approach that seeks to meaningfully integrate tribal communities and their knowledge in processes of national development. In conclusion, the socio-economic dimensions of tribal education in India are complex and require a comprehensive approach. While the government has made efforts to promote education among tribal communities, there is still a long way to go. Improving access to education, quality of education, and relevance of education should be the primary focus of policymakers to ensure that tribal children receive an education that can improve their socio-economic status and provide them with better opportunities for the future.

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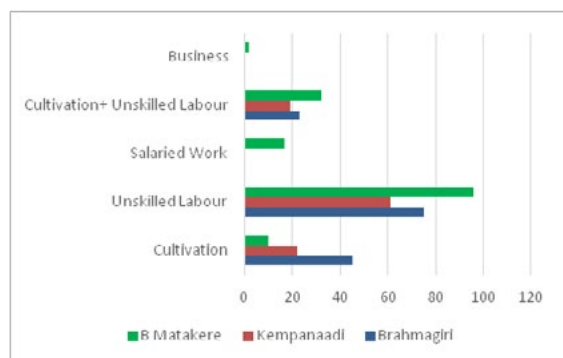
## Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Taluk-wise Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in Mysuru District

Taluks	No. of Haadis	Kadu Kuruba	Jenu Kuruba	Yerava	Soliga	Hakki Pikki	Dungri Garasia	Total
H.D. Kote	114	2430 (100)	16761 (47.79)	1547 (94.33)	2630 (52.46)	512 (31.51)	-	23880 (51.67)
Hunsur	51	-	11329 (32.31)	93 (5.67)	1649 (32.89)	1113 (68.49)	396 (89.59)	14580 (31.55)
K.R. Nagara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mysuru	1	-	-	-	518 (10.33)	-	-	518 (1.12)
Nanjangud	5	-	1195 (3.41)	-	40 (0.80)	-	-	1235 (2.67)
Periyapatna	30	-	5783 (16.49)	-	176 (3.52)	-	46 (10.41)	6005 (12.99)
T. Narasipura	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	201 (100)	2430 (100)	35068 (100)	1640 (100)	5013 (100)	1625 (100)	442 (100)	46218 (100)

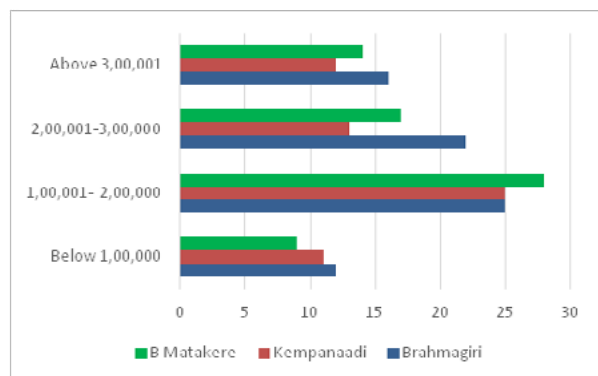
Source: Annual Report 2009-10 DSO, Mysuru

Figure 2: Occupational Status among the Betta Kurubas

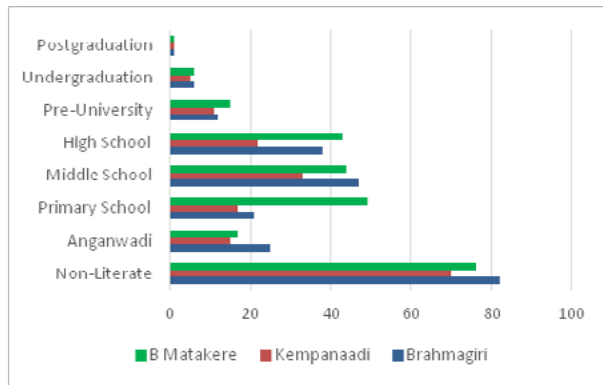


Source: Author's calculation

Figure 3: Annual Family Income Status among the Betta Kurubas



Source: Author's calculation

*Figure 4: Educational Status of the Betta Kurubas*

*Source: Author's calculation*