



Educational Status of Toto Tribes in North Bengal, Alipurduar West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Education is a key indicator of any human development index. In present it is a basic need of people's daily life. Tribal people of westbengal having common issues related to achieve their education .This paper primarily focused on current issues and problems that tribal community face in different phases of problem in their life as well as education is one of them problems. Access to their education in current scenario for tribes has become a challenge due to so many vibrant causes.

Methodology: primary and secondary data had been collected to evaluate this paper. A primary survey was performed on 100 people, who had been living in Toto para of Alipurduar district from a long time, using a questionnaire for data collection. **Results;** Though Totos are educationally conscious today, there is no significant progress in the field of higher education. Economic crisis is the main reason for this. The government has provided substantial financial assistance for the promotion of their higher education but to no available. The reasons of problems to achieve their education are not so easy to overcome from the point of view of Totos.

Introduction:

The Totos are the smallest tribal group and one of the three primitive tribal communities of West Bengal. They are concentrated in the village of Totopara in Madarihat Police Station under Alipurduar district.



The Totos belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. Geographically the Totapara village lies within longitude $89^{\circ}20'$ East and Latitude $25^{\circ}50'$ North. The altitude of the village varies from 500ft. to 2024 ft. from the south to north. The area is located in the extreme north-east region of Jalpaiguri district in western Doors bordering Bhutan. The shape of the village is trapezoid with tapering ends. The village is bounded in the north by the *Tading* hills, a spur of Bhutan Himalayas. On the south-west the village is bounded by the *Titi* forest and *Torsa* River to its east.¹

The village of the Totos is sub-divided into six distinct segments like *Panchayatgaon*, *Mandalgaon*, *Subbagaon*, *Mitranggaon*, *Dhumchigaon* and *Pujagaon*. These are Toto colonies which came into existence with the increase in their population. The whole area of the village sub-divided into several segments, was once identified according to the original Toto names.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To find out their condition is now in the field of education.
2. To specify the reasons behind the backwardness of Totos in the field of education.
3. To find out why Toto boys and girls do not progress in higher education or what causes them to drop out.
4. The present study aims to study the structural change in the education among Toto tribe.
5. To make some recommendations so that the Toto students are more interested in education, so that they don't drop out midway.

METHODOLOGY:

This paper evaluate to educational status of Toto tribe to collect primary data conducted a field surveys in Totopara and interviewed specific Toto people. So Primary data was collected on the basis of field survey and Secondary data was collected from District Statistical Handbook and District Census Book. On the other hand, I have received valuable information from Backward Class Welfare Office, Alipurduar which helped me a lot in this regard.

STUDY AREA:

TOTO para is a village in the Madarihat-Birapra CD block in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. TOT Para is located at $20^{\circ}50'$ N latitude and $89^{\circ}20'$ longitude in Madarihat block of Alipurduar district in the state of westbengal. This village falls under the Madarihat police station. It is bounded by the



foothills of Bhutan to the north, Torsa River to the east, and the Titi reserve forest on the south-west separated by the Hauri River. The total geographical area of village is about 8.08 sq/km. The village about 22 km from Madarihath, Which is the entry point of the famous Jaldapara National Park.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION AMONG TOTOS

Charu. Chandra. Sanyal mentioned in his book *'The Meches and the Totos of North Bengal* that "Many of the Totos could speak in broken Bengali. But literacy could not make any headway. No one was there to study their language and try to give them the first lesson in their own tongue. This would have given them an impetus to receive education".¹

In fact, different voluntary organizations and Government agencies have started working on the educational development of the Totos only after Independence particularly from 1951. A welfare centre was established at Totopara at that time known as '*Bharat Mahajati Mandali*'² under the initiative of the government. Attempts were being made to improve their participation in primary education alongside other developmental activities. At that time, *Jogen Sarkar* came to Totopara as welfare organizer. He also knew Nepali language. He taught the Totos students in Bengali language and Nepali students in Nepali at Totopara. But he could not work for long as he died in 1956. After his death, no teacher had joined there for a long time.

Afterthat, *Dil Bahadur Rana* had been appointed there as assistant welfare organizer. But he could not succeed in teaching. He resigned from the service in 1954. As a result, education along with other development activities almost stopped. Later after *Dil Bahadur Rana*, many welfare organizers came to Totopara to work for their development. Among them were *Dr. Ashis Dutta, Bhagabanbabu, Mantosh Sarkar, Bangshibabu* and *Ruben Basumatari* to name a handful few. At that time, a primary school was established at Totopara for the improvement of primary education. The Adibasi Development Department also arranged for the spread of primary education among the Totos. A cooperative society was also established.³

Next came, *Santosh Bhattacharya* on 2nd January 1964 and *Gharma Prasad* on 15th July, 1965, as teacher cum assistant welfare organizer at Totopara. They were very conscious about their works and taught the Toto and Nepali students in Bengali language sincerely. But there was still no improvement in education among the Totos. In these context, *Santosh Bhattacharya* remarked that "*Parhaps there is no other tribal community in India which is as backward as the Totos in education. So far only 15-16*



persons have learnt to put their signature during the past 20 to 21 years ever since efforts to spread education among them started in 1952 A.D."⁴

In the 1950s *Dhanapati Toto* was pioneer in bringing of the Totos under the fold of education.

A Swedish Missionary Organization named '*Lutheren World Service*' also worked for educational development among the Totos at Totopara. As a result, a new chapter was introduced thereafter in the spread of education among the Totos. They set up a work centre at Totopara in 1967 under the leadership of *Revarand Olav Hodne*. They took all activities after reviewing the overall life status of the Totos. *Narendranath Das*, Assistant Commissioner of Tribal Development Department of West Bengal and *Manindranath Mitra*, Special Officer of Tribal Development, Department of West Bengal were also actively involved with them in this initiative. With the approval of the Minister (Tribal Development Department of West Bengal), together they arranged for some (seven in number) Toto boys for vocational training in weaving loom, carpentry, agriculture and computer training at *Rampur Mission centre* in Coochbehar.⁵

In 1969-70 they built a school house named '*Toto Kalyan Vidyamandir*' for teaching Toto students and *John Ekka* was appointed there as a teacher. But he left the school within a few days and *Anugraha Ekka* joined in his place. Teaching in both Bengali and English languages began from 1970. In addition to teaching, students were also served lunch in the school. As a result, interest in education gradually increased among the Totos. *Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal* wrote in this context that "A big school house has been built where *Anugraha Ekka* an Oraon lady was the teacher and fifty five boys and girls were in roll. I saw many Totos who could speak Bengali well."

Officially, this primary school was recognized by the District School Board in 1972. *Anugraha Ekka* joined this school as head teacher in 1973. But she was transferred to another place within a few days. *Haren Saiba* belonging to Mech tribe was then appointed as the Headmaster of the primary school in 1973. *Samuel Tigga*, an assistant teacher also joined there on the same year but he was also transferred from Totopara in 1974. *Parinita Mankhin*, a Garo lady teacher, was teaching there without pay since 1974 and later she was officially appointed as a teacher in this school in 1988. She was married to *Haren Saiba* and since then they have been teaching at the primary school.⁶



YEAR	BOYS STUDENT	GIRLS STUDENT	TOTAL
1972	35	1	36
1973	38	8	46
1974	34	6	40
1975	41	13	54
1976	39	12	51
1977	44	11	55
1978	41	10	51
1979	42	11	53
1980	58	14	72
1981	59	15	74
1982	51	15	66
1983	41	9	50
1984	39	5	44
1985	43	6	49
1986	43	14	57
1987	52	21	73
1988	56	19	75
1989	51	7	58
1990	50	15	65
1991	58	9	67
Total	915	221	1136

Source: Majumder, B, Totos 1998

The above table shows that 36 students studied at Toto Kalyan Bidyamandir in 1972 and among them there was only one girl student and the rest 35 were boys. Between 1972 and 1991 the number of Totos students had increased to 86 per cent. The table also shows that, the number of Totos students attending primary school was not satisfactory, compared to their total population. The ratio of enrolment of girl students in primary spell of learning in comparison to boys was even more deplorable. In 1972, percentage of girls' student among the Totos was almost 3 percent, whereas in 1991, 13 percent girl students were enrolled in the primary school. In 1991 the rate of receiving primary education among the Totos was 7 percent out of a total population of 926. The male participation in primary education



was 12.7 percent out of the total male population of 473. The female participation, on the other hand was only 2 percent out of total female population of 453. So it is clear that earlier the rate of female education among the Totos was abysmally low in comparison to male students.

In 1991, one English Medium Nursery School was established by a Christian couple of Oraon origin in the house of Dhaniram Toto on rental basis. It was named as S.B.A. Mission English School in which only two girl students studied out of a total 28 students.⁷

In 1979, a Junior High School named Dhanapati Toto Memorial Junior High School was established at Totopara under the initiative of the *Swedish Mission*. The school is affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. In 1976–1980, the Swedish Mission established two Adult Education Centres at Totopara. But this effort of the Mission had failed due to the lack of awareness for education. In 1991, 57 students studied at Dhanapati Toto Memorial Junior High School. Out of them only 13 belonged to the Toto community and among them only thirteen were female students. It is necessary to mention here that at least 20 Totos students got secondary education outside Totopara under the initiative of the *Swedish Mission*. Out of 20 students, there were only three girls students. *Gouri Toto* studied upto class VI in 1978 by staying at the Dinahata Sweedish Girls hostel. But *Bani Toto* studied at the Birsha High school upto class IX in 1979 residing at the house of *Rebati Mohan Sarkar* at *Chhoto Salkumar*. *Suchana Toto* studied initially at *Dinhata* but completed her study at Rangalibajna High school and studied upto class X in 1979 -80.⁸

In 1991, there were 13 Totos students studying in Dhanapati Toto Memorial High school. Among them there was only one female student. During 1992-93 only three female students took admission in class V and in the last three consecutive years their numbers in class V were 5 in 1993, 6 in 1994 and 10 in 1995. In comparison to boys, there was low participation of girls students in this school.

In 1993 the school was up-graded to high school, upto class X standard. After getting the affiliation of a High School some Totos students appeared in Madhyamik examination. Sri Chitta Ranjan Toto passed Madhyamik examination in 1979 after 32 years since Independence and he was the first Madhyamik qualified student in the Totos community. Sri Bhakta Toto was second student, who passed the Madhyamik examination in 1981 among the Totos.⁹

**Educational Status of the Totos, 2001**

	Illiterate	Literate								Total
		Read & Write	I-IV	V-VIII	IX	X	Madhyamik Passed	H.S. Passed	Graduate	
Male	406	17	100	73	13	4	1	1	1	210
Female	445	10	66	18	02	-	-	-	-	96
Total	851	27	166	91	15	4	1	1	1	306

Saha, Ishita-Educational Status of the Totos 2014, p.102

It is found from the above table that the number of illiterate people among the Totos in 2001 were 851 and among them 406 were males and 445 females. In terms of percentage it was 35 per cent (males) and 38.6 per cent (females) respectively. In *Toto Kalyan Vidyamandir* the total number of students in 2001 was 166 and among them the percentage to Totos students was 14.34%. The above table also shows that the number of dropouts has increased gradually after the primary spell of learning. The total number of literate people in the school was 306 (26.4%) and among them the males were 210 (18.15%) and the females were 96 (8.29%) *Sanjib Toto* earned the rare reputation of being the first graduate in 1998 among the Totos. *Dhananjoy Toto* was the only student among the Totos who achieved first post graduate degree from the University of North Bengal in 2016. *Sadhana Toto* was the first girl student who appeared in the Madhyamik examination, but she could not qualify. *Suchana Toto* is the first female candidate among the Totos, who passed Madhyamik examination in 2003 from Rastriyo Open School, known as McWilliams High School, located at Alipurduar. In the same year *Rita Toto* passed Madhyamik examination from Dhanapati Toto Memorial High School. *Rita Toto* was the first female graduate from the Totos who passed out from P.D. Womens' College, Jalpaiguri in 2010. *Sanchita Toto* was the first female Hons. graduate among the Totos, who passed out in 2013.¹⁰

Education among the Totos has been expanding slowly with the passage of time. At present there are one high school and two primary schools at Totopara. Hostel facilities are available there for the



students. Around 20 boys and 20 girls’ pursue their studies staying at the hostel. There was also an English medium primary school at Totopara built under private initiative. Totos students now study at different places, such as, Kolkata, Darjeeling, Madarihat and other places also.¹¹

It shows their awareness for education in recent times. Until 2016, 139 Toto students have passed Madhyamik examination and their numbers in Higher Secondary Examination, as well as in higher spells of learning like graduation and post graduation were 59, 11 and 01 respectively.

The Social Education Department, Government of West Bengal had organized five non-formal education centres at Totopara during 1989-1990. *Smt. Banani Ghosh, Dhaniram Toto, Sachin Toto, Smt. Bani Toto* and *Smt. Suchana Toto* were entrusted with the responsibility of managing these centres. However, after some years these centres were shut down on account of financial crunch.¹²

Though Totos are educationally conscious today, there is no significant progress in the field of higher education. Economic crisis is the main reason for this. The government has provided substantial financial assistance for the promotion of their higher education but to no avail. The reasons are not hard to seek.

It is observed that the spread of education is not same in all the localities of the Totopara. *Panchayetgaon* and *Subbagaon* are ahead from the other villages like *Pujagaon, Dumchigaonin* and *Mitranggaon* in terms of education. *Panchayetgaon* and *Subbagaon* have the advantage of location. These villages are well connected by motorable roads and Government officials and others are more visited this areas. The Tribal Welfare Centre, different project Head quarters and market are within these areas. It is found that there was no female literate among the Totos in *Mitrang-gaon, Puja gaon* and *Dumchigaon* till 1979. Even in 1991 the situation was miserable.

Age Group	Illiterate			Literate															ALL TOTAL
				Up to IV			V - X			H.S			Graduate			Post Graduate			
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
61 - 65	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
56 - 60	2	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6



51 - 55	2	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
46 - 50	5	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
41 - 45	9	2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
36 - 40	5	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
31 - 35	3	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	8
26 - 30	3	4	7	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	10
21 - 25	0	2	2	3	0	3	3	3	6	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	14
16 to 20	0	0	0	6	4	10	4	3	7	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
11 to 15	0	0	0	7	5	12	4	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
6 to 10	0	0	0	8	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Up to 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	25	55	24	10	34	12	10	22	4	2	6	1	1	2	1	0	1	120
Parcenta ge	25	20	45	20	8.83	28	10	8.8	12	3.3	1.66	5.0	0.8	0.8	1.6	0.8	0	0.8	100 %

Source - Field Survey, 2023. Where: M-Male, F-Female, T-Total.-120

Total 120 sample data has been collected from *Pujagaon, Dhumchigaon, Mitrangaon, Mandalgaon, Panchayatgaon, Subbagaon* villages at Totopar in 2023. From the above table, it is shown that out of 120 Totos, 45 are illiterate (30 male and 25female).The percentage of illiterate in male is 25% and female is 20%.

On the other hand, 34 number of literate people who had their education up to class IV (male is 24 and female is 10). The percentage in upto iv male is 20 % and female is 8.83.

Literate persons having secondary level education (class V to X) is 22 (male 12 and female 10). Their percentage is 12.% of 120(male 10% and female 8.8%).

Literate persons who have completed Higher Secondary level is 6(male 4 and female 2). Percentage thereby being in H.S level is 5% (male 3.3% and female 1.6%).

We see from the above table that literate person in graduate level is 2, male 1 and female 1. Literacy percentage in graduate level is 1.6% (Male 0.8% and female 0.8%). Literacy percentage in post graduate level is 0.8 %.(Male 1)



CHALLENGES OF THEIR EDUCATION: In the current situation, the Totos are interested in education, but due to various obstacles, no progress has been made in the field of education among the Totos. The main reason is economic poverty. On the other hand, the pressure of Nepalese immigrants is one of the important reasons for the backwardness of the Totos. Even though the Totos were once isolated, they were self-reliant. Since the fifties of the twentieth century, the land and livelihood of the Totos have been under pressure due to the continuous pressure of Nepali immigrants.

1. Language barrier: Language barrier one of the most important challenges of their education. In present they try to overcome this problem but they are not comfort because maximum time they use their local language as usual their daily life.

2. Lack of Teacher: Lack of teacher in school one of the challenges to achieve their education. Lack of tuition teacher that one of the important challenges in their daily life.

3. Poverty: Economic condition of Totos is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools. As education does not yield any immediate economic return, the Toto's parents prefer to engage their children in employment which supplements the family income at present condition of the family.

4. Lack of awareness: Lack of proper awareness campaign and monitoring of coordination between the tribal welfare department and school education department which parents are not concern about their children education.

5. Physical barriers: Physical barriers create a hindrance for the children of a Toto's village to attend the school in a neighboring village.

6. Others barriers: Such as emotional barriers, personal barriers, and motivational barriers.

SUGGETIONS TO OVERCOME OF OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVE EDUCATION OF TOTOS:

1. PHYSICAL BARRIERS: Factors that impede learning due to environmental limitations or physical challenges.

- To overcome physical barriers ensure a comfortable and accessible learning environment.
- Utilize assistive technology or modifications to accommodate individual needs



2 EMOTIONAL BARRIERS: Emotional factors that hinder learning, such as anxiety, stress, or lack of confidence.

- To overcome emotional barriers foster a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere.
- 2. Implement mindfulness or relaxation techniques to manage emotions and promote a positive mindset.

MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS: Lack of interest for education, low engagement, or limited motivation to learn education.

- To overcome make different type of campaign of policy that promote to students for education.
- 2. Different type of hands-on activities that increase their engagement and as well as their motivation in education.

PERSONAL BARRIERS: Individual factors that impact learning education, such as disabilities, language barriers or limited prior knowledge.

- To overcome provide differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning needs.
- 2. Offer additional resources, support, or tutoring for targeted areas of improvement to achieve their education.

CONCLUSION: Education is an important need of them by which individuals and societies can develop their own talents and personal resources that can build capacity levels and understand their actual barriers to try eliminate barriers and their goals fixed in sustainable development in their social well-being. The purpose of status of education in Toto tribes is to find a balance between the preservation of the cultural identity of the tribe and the mainstreaming of education and their economic prosperity. An Educational program must be adopted to increase the consciousness of education between them, because only education can uplift them in society and bring success and progress in their daily lives of Totos by removing their own daily obstacles.

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