

Problem and Management of Tribal Education in Jaunsar Bawar

Dr. Anjali Chauhan

*Professor & Head, Department of Anthropology,
Sri Jai Narain Mishra Post Graduate College, Lucknow
E-mail: dranjalichauhan@gmail.com*

Abstract

The Jaunsari tribe, an indigenous Scheduled Tribe of Uttarakhand residing in Jaunsar Bawar (Dehradun and Uttarkashi), is known for its distinct cultural identity yet remains educationally and socially marginalized. This paper highlights the challenges faced in tribal education, focusing on poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, and lack of basic amenities in schools. A case study of a girls' residential school in Lakhmandal reveals severe shortcomings including overcrowding, lack of teachers, no electricity, and minimal sanitation. Despite hardships, Jaunsari children, particularly girls, show determination to pursue education. Improvements over the past decades, such as increased literacy, reduction in female infanticide, and greater social mobility, are acknowledged. The paper recommends a culturally sensitive educational framework that integrates Jaunsari language, promotes English and computer skills, and provides career-oriented coaching. Infrastructure development, qualified teachers, student counseling, and inclusion of tribal festivals in the academic calendar are essential. Further, initiatives to preserve Jaunsari culture through sports, music, and traditional knowledge, along with the promotion of nursing and naturopathy education for women, are proposed. Empowering the Jaunsari community through education can bridge socio-economic gaps and facilitate mainstream integration while preserving cultural identity.

Keywords: Jaunsari tribe, tribal education, Uttarakhand, Jaunsar Bawar, educational infrastructure, cultural preservation, indigenous knowledge, rural development, Scheduled Tribe

The Jaunsari are one of the major Schedule tribes of Uttarakhand. They are indigenous people who seem as a distinct group of society that maintains its distinctiveness in culture but lacks positive traits of modern society. It is also a simple, largely illiterate and backward society. The elements of backwardness can be eliminated by virtue of education and social upliftment. But there is no universal way of intervention into this indigenous society because it is largely a isolated ethnic group. The truth is that they are the original inhabitants of this geographic location (Dehradun and Uttar Kashi). Inspite of the fact that they are marginalized they intend to make their identity, language, culture and other aspects as recognized in Uttarakhand. Keeping in mind the nature of this society we need to identify appropriate intervention methods for promoting education in the area.

Let us first pay heed to this article in the newspaper. "Lakhanmandal (Uttarakhand): Consider this scene. 169 tribal girls packed like sardines in a tin, live in three small rooms of a school hostel in this remote Himalayan village around 125 km. away from Dehradun. On average, forty girls sleep on the floor of a room using blankets as their bedspread. Over sixty others sleep on the verandah of this school-cum hostel building. As the Himalayan winter approaches fast, for the students and the only teacher of this school, Sabra Devi, survival becomes their foremost consideration.

This "model residential high school", which gives "free food and accommodation", is run by the Uttaranchal rural development ministry for the girls of the Jaunsari tribe, one of the most backward tribal groups in the Himalayas.

The tin boxes of the hostel inmates containing their belongings are scattered across the schoolyard. Some of the girls have kept these boxes under the cots to protect them for the elements. The hostel has no cook. The girls themselves do the cooking a staple diet of dal, chawal and roti. It has only one toilet. Students, who appear for the tenth-class exam, study sitting around lighted candles in the night. There's no electricity either. The school, which started in a rented building in 1993, runs classes from VI to X in these three rooms.

The school has no principal. Of the sanctioned staff strength of 24 (six for class IX and X), the school has none. The saddest aspect is the future of 39 girls, who will appear for the Class X exam in March, 2002. Since July last, they have none to teach

them. Undergraduate Jitendra Singh, the pharmacist of the school, is now teaching English and Science in Class X. The hostel warden, Likho Devi, who is also an undergraduate, teaches them Home Science. Sabra Devi, who is supposed to teach only Class VIII students, now teaches Hindi and Social Studies for classes IX and X. Students are admitted at Class VI after a written test. Though about 100 students appear for the test, 35 are admitted every year.

Some of the students come from Tiuni, 105 km. away from here. Some like Sangeeta (class X) and her sister Nirmala (class IX) come from Nada, a remote village which can be approached by walking eight hours. Despite the backwardness of the Jaunsar Bawar, girls want to join schools dreaming of a bright future. Despite the odds, they assemble at the school yard in uniform every day at 10.00 a.m. and sing "sare jahan se accha Hindustan humara".¹

The Times of India, 20 November 2001 by V.J. Thomas

The above statement throws light on the status of education in Jaunsar-Bawar area. After 58 years of independence and forty years of introduction of Community Development Program (CDP), this tribal region lacks schools, hundreds of children still do not go to school, which proves the pathetic state of Tribal Education in India. Consequently, the region remains one of the most backward ones when the politicians claim to bring about an IT revolution in the country.

According to J.P.S. Rana at present Jan. 2004. "There are 13 inter colleges, 16 high schools, 265 primary schools." In addition to these there are 76 Saraswati Shishu Mandir and schools run by Samta an NGO. There are no degree colleges in Jaunsar Bawar. (Today we have 1 degree college in Chakrata and 1 in Vikas Nagar).

In Jan 2004. Pritam Singh has declared that a degree college shall be established in Chakrata.

According to J.P.S. Rana there are following number of students at different levels.²

<u>Primary School</u>	<u>Jr. High School</u>	<u>Inter High School</u>	<u>Inter College</u>	<u>& College</u>
9036	1892	3970	1772	= 16670

Before we embark upon the task of discussing the problem of education we shall have to focus attention on topography of the region. The entire area is mountainous

terrain consisting of mountain of 1500 ft. to 6500 ft. above sea level. The area undergoes severe cold and even in the months of May June the weather is cool. Thus the geographical and climatic conditions make the education scene difficult.

"Tribal children, like several marginalised groups of children in India, are trapped in an intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and deprivation. This is evident in extremely poor adult literacy rates which are reproduced as low education levels among the children from ST communities. This section presents some key data points on educational status of ST communities as a whole as well as schooling status of tribal children. The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes is around 29.60 percent, as against the national average of 52.21 percent".³

The first and foremost condition is that the location of school should be such that the children of several villages can approach it. Thus, the school must be 'accessible' for even smaller children. This will bring them in the realm of education.

"At school, the experience of tribal children ranges from discrimination to a sense of complete alienation. Students from ST communities encounter a series of obstacles including commuting long distances to school in hostile environmental conditions, abuses and discrimination from teachers and fellow students from non-tribal backgrounds, difficulty in comprehending the language of instruction and negotiating space for themselves which was denied historically. Children's denominational identities have always affected their school experiences".⁴

Secondly the school academic calendar is designed according to the general students of festivals and events. But in respect of the Tribal regions this calendar is defunct. For e.g., the primary school in Kuwanoo village conducted Half-yearly examination in mid December which coincides with their festival of 'Diwali' which falls one month after Diwali of Hindus at large. This clash of timing has adverse effect on the studies of students of this region.

If we take into account lesser number of girls students, we shall find an important discrimination issue in development. "Female literacy is another significant indicator of educational development within any social group. Research studies have shown the importance of female literacy and education in uplifting the socio-economic parameters of a given society. In the context of tribal women in India, illiteracy is so highly prevalent that their engagement with the mainstream society is seriously limited. While more than three-quarters of ST women are illiterate, 77 districts in India

have tribal female literacy rates lower than ten percent and 14 districts have less than three percent tribal female literacy rate".⁵

The language barrier and cultural context of education are not in keeping with tribal also. The mother tongue of the children is Jaunsari dialect and medium of teaching is Hindi. Thus, student do face a problem in learning process and language cuts as a barrier. But that is necessary, as Hindi is official language and if they do not learn it, they shall not be able to take up competitive exams or Higher Education which is in Hindi or English.

L.R.N. Srivastava suggests, "They have to learn the language of the state if they have to go for higher education. It is therefore advisable to adopt the script of the regional languages which preparing books in tribal dialects."^{6a} "But I do agree with the issue of teaching in tribal dialects since in the rest of States there is no provision to teach the children in it and no official work is done it, hence it's practically not feasible"^{6b}.

"Since the tribal languages are distinctly different from the medium of instruction in schools (which is usually the respective State language) tribal children often find it extremely difficult to cope with their studies and homework. This lack of language skills acts as a serious impediment when the teacher is a non-tribal and makes no effort to link the two linguistic experiences for the child. Aspirations among tribal children are also low considering that there are not many formally educated persons in such communities. The inability to secure jobs amongst tribals who have completed formal education have led some to get disillusioned with the education system and question the futility of spending several years struggling to get educated. Some consider school educated children as unfit to carry out their hereditary occupations thereby rendering them 'useless' in their traditional lives. Yet, the motivation of a large number of tribal children to walk hours to reach school, tolerate the rebuke of teachers and fellow students, their efforts to identify with a language and curriculum that is alien to their own life worlds and their struggles to break free of their historical marginalization is definitely striking".⁷

One more aspect to this is that cultural context of education for beginners must be from among their own surrounding. This has already been done for Primary Education in U.P. rural areas.

The planners of educational plans must focus on the fact that children have significant role in family economy. With reference to Jaunsar Bawar the children are engaged in tasks like fetching water, rearing younger siblings, collecting flowers and

edible roots, taking animals to meadows, collecting firewood' etc. These are an added burden when children have to be sent to schools also. The parents must be made to realize the importance of education for their children and also, they should realize relevance of education also. This shall also solve the problem of delayed admissions in school Also for e.g., a child going to K.G. may already be 7 to 8 years old. Also, the date of birth is not registered correctly which poses problems in the service period later on.

The researcher found several problems of the teachers also. The teachers appointed in govt. schools are outsider and considers their posting as punishment posting. They do not desire to stay in Tribal area due to lack of facilities; security problems, cultural difference and ethnocentrism.

In fact, they have made alternative arrangement whereby they go on long leaves in turns. When they return the others go on leave. Thus, there is shortage of staff. This situation can be combated if the tribal teachers of the region are posted in their own respective areas and educated graduate tribal are trained for school teaching.

"Tribal communities in India have been historically deprived of access to resources and opportunities, including the opportunity to get educated. The present efforts of the Indian government to bring these children into formal schools fails at two levels. Firstly, because it is not able to enroll all tribal children and provide them access to good quality functional schools. In some states, the government has started providing alternate schools run by untrained local youth which is opposed by many education activists, since it is a poor and sub-standard system given out to those who are already marginalized. Secondly, even when tribal children are enrolled into schools, the education system besides doling out some incentives does not do much to improve the school environment which will treat these first-generation learners with respect and dignity. Instead, tribal children are made to put up with an offensive and insulting climate that continuously discriminates and alienates. For such historically deprived communities, providing access to education is simply not enough, the government has to take a proactive role in creating overall conditions and opportunities that will facilitate their transition and breaking of the intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy. A sensitive cadre of teachers and bureaucracy is definitely required to make the difference. At another level, educational deprivation must be seen in the context of overall deprivation of the community and hence emphasis must be placed on improving the situation of tribal communities in general. Restoring land and livelihoods, empowering women, providing basic civic amenities such as fuel, water and sanitation are pre-conditions to advancements of rights of tribal children. Unless

the government undertakes urgent steps to address these issues, its proclamations on child rights would remain examples of empty rhetoric and its actions would effectively continue to exclude those already sidelined. Following the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in the country, the gap between the tribal and non-tribal children is also widening rapidly, thereby further isolating the isolated. Respecting their claims at the outset should set the ball rolling in the right direction".⁸

The tribal students must be trained to interact with other non-tribal through planned activities with children of the non-tribal areas; they must be taken for educational excursions also to widen.

"The tribal child who lives in an isolated and far off place untouched with the currents of modern civilization can hardly assimilate any information about history and geography of the country about the industrial and technical development, uninteresting and outdated stories about the important personalities unknown and unheard of in tribal areas. He has to be given complete information to begin with about his own tribe and village. They he can pass on the information about his neighboring communities, his village life, social organization beliefs and practices and then pass on to the national scene."⁹

The complete information of scholarships, competitive examination, coaching must be available in local tribal schools. Counselor must also guide these students.

As far as Higher Education is concerned, graduation courses must be conducted through Distance Education Program the youngsters must be trained for self-employment, latest techniques of cultivation, irrigation, knowledge regarding which crops can give them better earning, courses in bio-technology; agro-based industries must be encouraged.

The resources of Jaunsar Bawar area must be recognized and development must be carried on accordingly.

'Adult Education' must be of such level that the tribal can be aware of their rights; they can gain knowledge of land records, government schemes. Counseling centers for them are a must to stop their exploitation.

Female education is discouraged in Tribal areas; specially girls are usually withdrawn from school after class VIII and are expected to take care of household chores. Hence steps must be taken to encourage education of this section which is the "axis of Tribal Economy".

Indigenous knowledge systems are rich and consist of real-life experiences of tribal hence they must be preserved and developed as distinct branch of study. For example, 'Kashmiri Vidya' which is an astrological art stream; indigenous medicines and cures: indigenous methods of predicting and coping with Natural disasters etc.

The long history of failure of government schemes proves the fact that no development scheme can be successful without gauging the social cultural parameters of the area carefully and intensively, a task which can be conducted only by skilled anthropologists. Hence, it is recommended that anthropologists be Spheres appointed at all levels spheres of development. If we look at the trends in teaching English language and communication to Jaunsari speakers the reason behind teaching and learning low standard English have always been a matter of concern. There are several reasons for the poor accusation of English language. Poor infrastructure, lack of training programs, inappropriate methods of teaching very less techno-savvy teachers and their regional background and their home environment. Jaunsar Bawar is a hilly region 85km from Mussorie in Chakrata tehsil in Dehradun and represents the geographical region inhabitant by the Jaunsari tribe which traces its origin from the Pandavs of Mahabharat.

Jaunsari is a hill language of northern India spoken in Chakrata, Tiuni and Kalsi block of Dehradun in Uttarakhand state. It is said to be a dialect and is more closely from the indo Aryan languages, which is also spoken with a mild difference in the Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

Teachers and students of government and public senior secondary schools of Chakrata, Tiuni and Kalsi block were taken into consideration.

The primary responsibilities recognized for school education is borne by the state government and therefore any policy changes must be with full participation and involvement of the state. It is also emphasized that the importance of an inclusive society as the foundation for knowledge society. The significance of the Jaunsari language cannot be undermined but English needs to be promoted as the means of instruction or as means of communication and a determined of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities. School levers that are not adequately trained in English as a language are always at a handicap in the world of higher or professional education. More often than not teaching is in English. Even if it is not in most subjects, books are available only in English. And those who do not know English well enough find it exceedingly difficult to compete for a place in our premier educational institutions. This disadvantage is further accentuated in the world of work, not only in professional occupations but also in white collar occupation as well.

If we consider the challenges in education in Jaunsar Bawar region the primary ones are as follows: -

- Poor infrastructure- The Jaunsar Bawar is rugged hilly area of Dehra Dun district of Uttarakhand and struggles with inadequate infra in schools including classrooms, furniture basic amenities like drinking water and sanitation. There are also lack of hostels in the region due to which the students have to either rent rooms in the nearest village or stay in the houses of their relatives and work in exchange for stay in their houses
- Inappropriate teaching methods- the use of outdated or in-affected teaching method coupled with a lack of focus on practical skills and real-world implications contribute to poor learning outcomes.
- Lack of computer education- though there are one or two computers there is lack of smart classes and internet connectivity.
- Regional background and home environment- the unique regional background and home environment of the Jaunsari tribe also poses a challenge for education. For example, the daily routine of the members of the house is a restraint on the school going children more over the Jaunsaris festivals and fairs do not coincide with main stream festivals around the year.
- Focus on English language- the study highlights the poor accusation of English language skill a matter of concern in the tribal areas of Jaunsar Bawar.

Now the researchers feel the need of teaching the students in Jaunsari language along with English to enable a better understanding of concept. But this will mean that Jaunsari speaking English trained teachers will be required to be posted throughout the schools of Jaunsar Bawar.

In 2010 in Kuwanoo impact of computer education on tribal students was conducted in the form of the project in collaboration with ISRO at Kuwanoo tehsil, block Kalsi, Dehradun under this internet connectivity was provided by a dish antenna. Two or three computers were also installed but the basic problem that occurred in this project was lack of computer trained teachers.

- The necessity of English language for the use of computer.
- Internet connectivity through dish antenna was not continuous one and was affected by weather.

- Electricity was also not provided for a continuous period which hampered computer education.
- The syllabus to be taught by the computer was not well defined.
- The computer education came to the area as a culture shock.

New Education Policy- 2020 Implemented in Uttarakhand

On July 12, 2022, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami implemented the new education policy-2020 in Uttarakhand by launching 'Bal Vatika' (class before primary in the directorate of education). The government claims that Uttarakhand has become first state to do so.

"The RTE Act, 2009 guidelines compulsory and completely free schooling for all children of aged from 6 years to 14 years, confirming completion of the primary stage. There is a provision for every child in this act who has not been enrolled on any class due to any reason, has the right to receive special training. This legislation mandates the availability of education for all children, regardless of their caste, tribe, religion, race, language, etc. But RTE Act will be operative only if the children who are the beneficiaries of this act are made aware of it and this can be only done through their parents".¹⁰

The right to education policy was implemented in the Jaunsari tribe in 2010, whereby right of children from 6 to 14 years of age was made free and compulsory. "The current study also emphasizes on assessing the awareness-level of the RTE Act among tribal parents in two distinct aspects, one by gender and another by educational qualification. School is called the second home for the students. Two stakeholders of awareness of this Act come from educational institutions, they are the parents and teachers who play important roles in the success of this RTE Act. Parent-teacher meetings should be arranged in schools often to spread awareness among students of the RTE Act. The government can organize alertness of RTE in different localities. Campaigning for awareness through banners, slogans, pamphlets, and propaganda through electronic media highlights the importance of education in life and how the RTE Act can become a safeguard in this regard.". ¹¹

If we look at situation in 2024, we will find that the infrastructure of government school has improved, staff has been equipped with better training, but the rest of the conditions remains always the same.

Vikas Nagar is the main satellite town close to Jaunsar, so it is the centre of all activities including education. There are few missionary schools Eklavya Tribal school and many private schools up to intermediate. These are the school where the children are now preferring education. Education has become one of the primary reasons for migration of Jaunsaris from the hills to Vikas Nagar, Dehradun onwards.

Vikas Nagar also has many private centers for school and college education, coaching for competitive public exams. There is one degree college in Vikas Nagar and one in Chakrata. There is also ITI in this city.

The people who are more affluent and settled in Dehradun, Delhi and other major cities in India prefer to educate their children in these cities. Besides economic benefits educational benefits they also get reservation in admission to various colleges and employment. As a result, we find that many Jaunsari individuals are employed at different positions in the government organizations. We also find handful of Jaunsaris doing well in business set ups.

But there are many challenges for students pursuing higher education or preparing for competitive exam in Dehradun, Delhi and other major cities from middle- or lower-income groups. They are over burdened with economic pressure so either they stay in the houses of their relatives and depend on them for fees and other economic and social needs or they live together in small rooms on rent to save money. Not to say that they also face challenges of English language, addiction and poverty, health and sanitation. They also have to keep going back to their villages for working as agricultural assistant or even providing money at home which they earn by doing secondary jobs.

It may be noted that the Jaunsari people are highly competitive and ambitious in nature. Today we find that Jaunsari people have become active in various professions like teaching, police, administration, private jobs, lawyers, banking and business. Many children from Jaunsar are even employed abroad in countries like Singapore, Europe etc. in the navy engineers or hotel management etc.

Conclusion and Recommendations

If we look at the education scenario today it has improved a lot from the past. The students are getting benefits of various government schemes also including several kinds of fellowship at different levels. Besides they get reservation as schedule tribe (ST) in admission to higher education and government jobs. This coupled with their improvement in education standard and their innate intelligence, socio-cultural and

political awareness helps them to carve out a new place in the society, not to say that they tried to maintain their cultural ethos even in major cities and abroad by maintaining their cultural groups and activities. Here it is important to point out that earlier there was female infanticide and girls were discouraged from education but now the situation has improved to quiet some extent. Girls are encouraged not only to study but also to work in different areas according to their caliber and decision. This improvement is because of raise in literacy standards of the men and women of Jaunsar Bawar area. We can also see that there is rise in nuclear family and monogamy also and people prefer to stay away in cities rather than in the villages in Jaunsar Bawar. In next ten years we hope to see the Jaunsaris in the main stream of the society.

After witnessing students and education from last 27 years the following recommendations and needs were identified. Firstly, the need for discipline, health and hygiene of the students. Secondly the need for a good residential or hostel system in school. Thirdly the Jaunsari dialect must be used for conceptual clarity but teaching good English to all students is very essential along with good Hindi. This can be done by posting Jaunsari teacher in the Region. Fourth in today's world computer skill must be propagated well among the students. For this development of infrastructure (Computers, Internet, Electricity) and trained staff shall be required in all schools. Coaching for medical, engineering, defense and government examinations must be available. Counseling centers for student are a must.

If we talk of the academic calendar it must focus on major Jaunsari festival also to enable to staff and teachers to culturally imbibe the society.

The Jaunsari children are good sportsperson so sports academy must be promoted. They are good dramatics, singing and dancing so the cultural heritage must be preserved by promoting these activities and conducting workshops and training programs for the same.

The girls and women a very hard working and empathetic. So, nursing colleges can also be established in the area. Another good option can be Yoga and Naturopathy (Keeping in mind pollution free environment and rich natural surrounding in Jaunsar and Uttarakhand).

Indigenous knowledge system with relation to health practices, technologies, astrology must be studied, researched and recorded for the future generations.

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