



## Role of Government Educational Schemes in the Empowerment of the Mahali Tribe in India

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### Abstract:

*Education is a powerful tool for empowerment, especially for marginalized communities such as tribal groups in India. The Mahali tribe, spread across Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha, has historically faced challenges in accessing quality education due to poverty, socio-cultural practices, and infrastructural gaps. This study examines the role of government educational schemes in empowering the Mahali tribe, using a qualitative approach based on secondary data from policy documents, government reports, and existing research. The findings suggest that schemes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Right to Education Act (RTE), mid-day meal program, scholarships, and residential schools have played a significant role in improving enrollment and reducing dropout rates among Mahali students. These initiatives have provided financial support, nutritional security, and safe learning environments, which encourage regular participation in schooling. Residential schools and hostels, in particular, have helped bridge the gap for children living in remote areas by offering access to education closer to their communities. However, secondary data also reveals limitations. While schemes have improved access, they often fail to address deeper socio-cultural barriers such as language differences, gender bias, and early marriage. Teacher shortages and lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy further restrict the effectiveness of these programs. The digital divide and uneven implementation across regions also limit the reach of government initiatives. Despite these challenges, the study concludes that government schemes have created important opportunities for empowerment by opening pathways to education, skill development, and social inclusion. For the Mahali tribe, these schemes represent more than just access to schooling—they are steps toward breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization. Strengthening infrastructure, expanding scholarships, and promoting culturally relevant teaching can enhance the impact of these schemes, making education a true instrument of empowerment for the Mahali community.*

**Keywords:** *Mahali tribe, Government educational schemes, Empowerment, Rural education, Tribal students, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Right to Education Act.*

### Introduction:

Education has long been recognized as a major driver of empowerment, social mobility, and inclusion. For tribal communities in India, including the Mahali tribe, education is not only a means of acquiring knowledge but also a pathway to overcoming poverty, marginalization and social exclusion. The Mahali tribe, found mainly in Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha, has historically faced challenges in accessing quality education due to economic hardships, cultural practices, and infrastructural gaps. In this context, government educational schemes play a crucial role in opening opportunities and creating conditions for

empowerment. Over the past two decades, India has introduced several policies and programs aimed at universalizing education and ensuring equity. Schemes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Right to Education Act (RTE), mid-day meal programs, scholarships, and residential schools have been designed to improve enrollment, reduce dropout rates, and provide support to disadvantaged groups. These initiatives are particularly important for tribal communities, where school participation is often hindered by poverty, language barriers, and socio-cultural practices.

Secondary data shows that these schemes have had a positive impact on the Mahali tribe by increasing enrollment and encouraging regular attendance. Mid-day meals provide nutritional support, scholarships reduce financial burdens, and residential schools offer safe learning environments for children living in remote areas. However, challenges remain. Teacher shortages, lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy, and uneven implementation across regions limit the effectiveness of these programs. Socio-cultural factors such as early marriage, gender bias, and traditional livelihood practices also continue to affect participation. The need to study the role of government educational schemes in empowering the Mahali tribe is therefore significant. It helps to understand not only how these initiatives improve access to education but also how they contribute to broader empowerment by promoting inclusion, skill development, and social justice. This study, based on a qualitative approach using secondary data, seeks to analyze the impact of these schemes and highlight both their achievements and limitations. By doing so, it aims to provide insights into how education can become a meaningful instrument of empowerment for the Mahali community in India.

### **Need and Significance**

The empowerment of tribal communities in India has been a long-standing goal of national development policies, and education is central to this process. The Mahali tribe, living mainly in Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha, has historically faced barriers such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, and socio-cultural practices that limit access to schooling. The need for this study arises from the fact that while government schemes have been introduced to improve education for disadvantaged groups, their actual impact on the empowerment of the Mahali tribe remains underexplored. Understanding how these schemes function in practice is essential to evaluate whether they truly address the challenges faced by tribal students. Government initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Education Act, mid-day meal programs, scholarships, and residential schools were designed to promote inclusion and equity. These schemes aim to reduce dropout rates, improve attendance, and provide financial and nutritional support. For the Mahali tribe, such interventions are particularly important because they help bridge the gap between marginalized communities and mainstream education. However, secondary data shows that despite these efforts, issues such as teacher shortages, language barriers, gender bias, and uneven implementation continue to affect participation.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to highlight both the achievements and limitations of government schemes. By analyzing secondary data, the research can show how these programs contribute to empowerment by improving access to education, promoting skill development, and fostering social inclusion. At the same time, it can identify gaps that need to be addressed, such as culturally sensitive teaching methods, stronger infrastructure, and community involvement. For policymakers, educators, and community leaders, this study is significant because it provides insights into how education can become a meaningful instrument of empowerment for the Mahali tribe. It emphasizes that empowerment is not only about enrollment numbers but also about ensuring that education is relevant, inclusive, and sustainable. Strengthening government schemes and tailoring them to the cultural and economic realities of the Mahali community can help break cycles of poverty and marginalization, making education a true pathway to empowerment.

**Table 1: Need and Significance of Government Educational Schemes for the Mahali Tribe**

Aspect	Dimensions
<b>Need for the Study</b>	The Mahali tribe faces barriers such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, and socio-cultural practices that limit access to education. While government schemes exist, their actual impact on empowerment remains underexplored.
<b>Government Schemes Introduced</b>	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Right to Education Act (RTE), mid-day meal program, scholarships, and residential schools aim to improve enrollment, reduce dropout rates, and promote inclusion.
<b>Achievements of Schemes</b>	Increased enrollment, improved attendance, nutritional support through mid-day meals, reduced financial burden via scholarships, and safe learning environments through residential schools.
<b>Limitations Identified</b>	Teacher shortages, lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy, language barriers, gender bias, early marriage, and uneven implementation across regions restrict effectiveness.
<b>Significance for Policy Makers</b>	Provides insights into how schemes contribute to empowerment and highlights gaps that need addressing. Helps design context-sensitive and inclusive strategies.
<b>Significance for Educators</b>	Emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant teaching methods and teacher training to engage tribal students effectively.
<b>Significance for Community</b>	Education becomes a pathway to empowerment, skill development, and social justice. Strengthened schemes can help break cycles of poverty and marginalization.
<b>Significance</b>	Empowerment is not only about enrollment numbers but also about ensuring education is relevant, inclusive, and sustainable for the Mahali tribe. Strengthening schemes can make education a true instrument of empowerment.

### Literature Review

Recent literature highlights the evolving role of government educational schemes in empowering tribal communities in India, with specific relevance to the Mahali tribe. Using secondary data, scholars have examined both achievements and limitations of these initiatives.

### Access and Enrollment

A 2023 analysis of UDISE+ data shows that while near-universal access has been achieved at the elementary level for Scheduled Tribes, significant disparities persist in transitions to secondary and higher education. Enrollment among tribal students has improved due to schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act, but dropout rates remain high, especially in rural and marginalized areas.

### Infrastructure and Quality

Patra, Dutta, and Bharti (2025) emphasize that inadequate infrastructure in tribal regions continues to hinder educational outcomes. Schools in remote areas often lack proper classrooms, sanitation, and teaching resources. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes infrastructure as vital, yet tribal regions remain disadvantaged due to remoteness and economic marginalization.

## **Socio-Cultural Barriers**

Tayyab (2023) highlights persistent socio-cultural challenges such as language barriers, lack of culturally relevant curricula, and gender bias. Many tribal children, including Mahali students, speak local dialects not used in classrooms, creating a disconnect between home and school. Early marriage and traditional livelihood practices further restrict participation, particularly for girls. Government schemes like mid-day meals and scholarships have been effective in reducing hunger-related absenteeism and financial burdens. Residential schools and hostels have provided safe learning environments for children from remote areas. However, uneven implementation across states and teacher shortages limit the full potential of these programs. Studies suggest that while these schemes have improved access, they often fail to address deeper socio-cultural and economic barriers.

## **Empowerment Dimension**

Recent literature stresses that empowerment through education is not only about enrollment but also about meaningful participation, skill development, and inclusion. Government schemes have opened pathways for tribal students to access education, but empowerment requires culturally sensitive pedagogy, community involvement, and sustained support. Scholars argue that education must connect with tribal realities to truly empower communities like the Mahali.

So, recent studies (2023–2025) show that government educational schemes have made progress in improving access and enrollment among tribal students, including the Mahali tribe. Yet, challenges of poverty, inadequate infrastructure, language barriers, and socio-cultural practices continue to limit empowerment. The literature underscores the need for holistic strategies that combine infrastructural development, economic support, culturally relevant teaching, and community engagement to make education a true instrument of empowerment for the Mahali tribe in India.

## **Objectives**

1. To analyze the impact of government educational schemes on school participation and empowerment among Mahali tribal students in rural India using secondary data.
2. To identify the limitations and challenges in the implementation of government educational schemes for the Mahali tribe through a qualitative review of secondary sources.

## **Discussion**

This study set out to explore how government educational schemes contribute to the empowerment of the Mahali tribe in India, using a qualitative approach based on secondary data. The findings reveal that while these schemes have created important opportunities for access and inclusion, challenges remain in ensuring that education translates into genuine empowerment.

## **Access and Participation**

Government schemes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education Act (RTE) have played a significant role in improving enrollment among Mahali tribal students. Secondary data shows that these initiatives have reduced barriers to entry by making education free and compulsory at the elementary level. Mid-day meal programs have encouraged attendance by addressing nutritional needs, while scholarships have reduced financial burdens for families. Residential schools and hostels have provided safe learning environments for children living in remote areas. Together, these schemes have increased participation and created pathways for inclusion.

## Empowerment through Education

Empowerment is not only about access but also about the ability to use education as a tool for social mobility and self-reliance. Government schemes have helped Mahali students gain literacy, basic skills, and exposure to wider opportunities. For many families, education has become a means of breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization. Girls, in particular, benefit from scholarships and residential schools, which provide safer spaces and reduce dropout rates. These initiatives contribute to empowerment by promoting equality and opening doors to higher education and employment.

## Limitations and Challenges

Despite these achievements, secondary data highlights several limitations. Teacher shortages and lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy remain major obstacles. Many Mahali students face language barriers, as classroom instruction often does not reflect their local dialects. Socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, gender bias, and traditional livelihood responsibilities continue to affect participation, particularly for girls. Infrastructure gaps—such as inadequate classrooms, sanitation facilities, and transportation—also discourage regular attendance. Moreover, uneven implementation across regions means that some communities benefit more than others, leaving many Mahali families underserved.

## Policy Effectiveness

While schemes have improved access, their effectiveness in achieving empowerment is mixed. Programs like mid-day meals and scholarships address immediate needs but do not fully tackle deeper socio-cultural barriers. Residential schools provide opportunities but are limited in number and often far from tribal villages. The digital divide further restricts access to modern learning resources, leaving Mahali students behind in an increasingly technology-driven education system. Secondary data suggests that empowerment requires more than policy—it requires context-sensitive strategies that connect education with tribal realities.

## Linking Findings to Objectives

The discussion connects directly to the study's objectives. The first objective—analyzing the impact of schemes—shows that initiatives have improved access and participation, contributing to empowerment. The second objective—identifying limitations—reveals that structural, economic, and socio-cultural barriers continue to restrict effectiveness. Together, these findings highlight the need for holistic approaches that combine infrastructure development, teacher training, culturally relevant pedagogy, and community involvement.

So, government educational schemes have created important opportunities for the Mahali tribe by improving access, reducing financial burdens, and encouraging participation. However, empowerment remains incomplete due to persistent challenges in infrastructure, pedagogy, and socio-cultural practices. The discussion emphasizes that education must go beyond enrollment numbers to become a meaningful instrument of empowerment. Strengthening schemes, tailoring them to tribal contexts, and involving communities in decision-making can ensure that education truly empowers the Mahali tribe in India.

**Table 2: Discussion on Government Educational Schemes and Empowerment of the Mahali Tribe**

Theme	Insights from Secondary Data
Access & Participation	Schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education Act (RTE) improved enrollment. Mid-day meals encouraged attendance by addressing nutrition, scholarships reduced financial burdens, and residential schools provided safe learning environments. So, participation increased.

<b>Empowerment through Education</b>	Education has become a tool for breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization. Literacy, basic skills and exposure to opportunities promote social mobility. Girls benefit from scholarships and hostels, reducing dropout rates and promoting equality.
<b>Limitations &amp; Challenges</b>	Teacher shortages, lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy, and language barriers hinder effectiveness. Socio-cultural practices like early marriage, gender bias, and livelihood responsibilities restrict participation. Infrastructure gaps (classrooms, sanitation, transport) discourage regular attendance. Uneven implementation leaves many families underserved.
<b>Policy Effectiveness</b>	Mid-day meals and scholarships address immediate needs but do not tackle deeper socio-cultural barriers. Residential schools are limited in number and often far from villages. The digital divide restricts access to modern learning resources. Policies improve access, but empowerment requires context-sensitive strategies.
<b>Link Objectives to</b>	Objective 1: Schemes improved access and participation, contributing to empowerment. Objective 2: Persistent structural, economic, and socio-cultural barriers limit effectiveness. Findings highlight the need for holistic approaches combining infrastructure, teacher training, culturally relevant pedagogy, and community involvement.
<b>Main Aspects</b>	Government schemes created opportunities by improving access and reducing burdens, but empowerment remains incomplete. Education must go beyond enrollment numbers to become a meaningful instrument of empowerment. Strengthening schemes and tailoring them to tribal contexts can ensure genuine empowerment for the Mahali tribe.

## Conclusion

The study of government educational schemes and their role in empowering the Mahali tribe highlights both progress and persistent challenges. Initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Education Act, mid-day meal programs, scholarships, and residential schools have significantly improved enrollment and encouraged participation among Mahali students. These schemes have provided financial relief, nutritional support, and safe learning environments, helping many children from marginalized families to access education. For girls, in particular, scholarships and hostels have created opportunities that were previously limited due to socio-cultural restrictions. However, empowerment through education remains incomplete. Secondary data shows that teacher shortages, lack of culturally sensitive pedagogy, and language barriers continue to hinder learning outcomes. Socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, gender bias, and livelihood responsibilities also restrict participation, especially for girls. Infrastructure gaps and uneven implementation across regions further limit the reach of these schemes. While policies have improved access, they often fail to address the deeper structural and cultural realities of tribal life. Despite these limitations, government schemes have opened important pathways for empowerment by promoting inclusion, skill development, and social justice. For the Mahali tribe, education is not only about literacy but also about breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization. Strengthening infrastructure, expanding scholarships, training teachers in culturally relevant methods, and involving communities in decision-making can enhance the impact of these schemes. So, government educational schemes have laid the foundation for empowerment, but sustained efforts are needed to make education truly transformative for the Mahali tribe in India.

## Recommendations

The findings of this study show that government educational schemes have created important opportunities for the Mahali tribe, but empowerment remains incomplete due to persistent challenges. To strengthen the role of education in empowering this community, several recommendations can be made.

First, infrastructure development must be prioritized. Schools in tribal regions should be equipped with proper classrooms, sanitation facilities, and safe transportation. Establishing more schools closer to Mahali villages would reduce the burden of long travel distances, especially for girls and younger children.

Second, economic support for families should be expanded. Scholarships, free uniforms, and textbooks must reach all eligible students. Strengthening mid-day meal programs can encourage attendance while reducing hunger-related absenteeism. These measures help families see education as a viable option despite financial hardships.

Third, teacher training and culturally sensitive pedagogy are essential. Teachers should be trained to understand tribal contexts and incorporate local dialects and cultural examples into classroom instruction. This would make learning more relevant and engaging for Mahali students.

Fourth, community involvement must be encouraged. Awareness campaigns, parent–teacher meetings, and collaboration with local leaders can help reduce gender bias and discourage early marriage. Empowering communities to value education ensure that schemes are not seen as external impositions but as shared opportunities.

Finally, monitoring and expansion of schemes are needed. Residential schools, hostels, and digital learning initiatives should be scaled up and regularly evaluated to ensure they reach the most disadvantaged families.

By combining infrastructure, economic support, teacher empowerment, and community participation, government schemes can become stronger instruments of empowerment for the Mahali tribe, helping them break cycles of poverty and marginalization.

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