



# **A Comparative Study Of Gender Of The Santal Community, Six Blocks Under Kharagpur Subdivision In Paschim Midnapore District, West Bengal.**

**Bipulkanti Bhunia**

Department of Geography & Environment Management, Vidyasagar University, W. B, India.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Santal community another major Scheduled Tribe group in Indian subcontinent, is significantly facing considerable educational and socio-economic challenge. Against this backdrop, a thorough examination of gender disparities in the current education system of the Santal community in the Kharagpur sub-division of Paschim Midnapur district in West Bengal is necessary. The main objective of this study is to observed and analyze the current educational status, gender disparity, and the impact of education on the socio-economic status of Santal community in six blocks of Kharagpur sub-division. This study used a non-probability sampling method. Primary data was collected through questioner and group discussion, and secondary data was collected from government website, report and relevant research paper. Microsoft excel software and ArcGIS 10.8 software were used as research tools. Research indicates that the current education scenario of the Santal Tribe in the six (Dantan-I; Dantan-II; Debra; Kesiary; Narayangraha & Mohanpur) blocks of Kharagpur Sub-division is for behind the general cast and the impact of gender inequality in education is directly affecting their socio-economic condition. In term of gender, female is comparatively ahead of men in the field of education. The findings of this research suggest that interventions such as the kanya Shree project, addressing language discrimination, implementing culturally relevant curriculum, and promoting education and improved living standards will make an essential contribution to the sustainable socio-economic development of the Santal community in the study area.

**Key words:** - Education, Scenario, Gender Disparities, Santal, Tribe, Community.

## **Introduction:**

This study examines gender disparities in educational opportunity participation and outcomes among the santal tribal community living in Paschim Midnapore district, highlighting the social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that influence the educations experiences and opportunities of santal boys and girls. The indigenous people of the Indian Subcontinent are collectively called 'scheduled Tribes' or 'Adivasi'. According to the 2011 census, 'Adivasi' constitute a significant portion of the Nepalese population and 8,6% of the population of India, about 104 million people. Both the indigenous 'Tharu' of Nepal and the ethnic minority of Bangladesh are called the 'Adivasi'. The Andaman & Nicobar Island, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal and few northeastern states have a majority of 'Adivasi' community. They have been known by many names through they were kherwars the Aryans who followed them and took over their territory and culture called them Ashur and Naushad in the Ramayan and Mahabharata. The kherwars, in response to the Aryans, called themselves Horas, a human personality, and their religion Hora Dharam. The Chot Nagpur plateau and the lowlands south of the Damodar River were the ancestral homeland of the Santal. After the famine of 1770, the Santal began migrating to their present homeland, the Rajmohal Hills, Birbhum, and Santal pargana of Bihar. According

to the 1981 census, there were 16,66,610 Santals in West Bengal, of whom 3.23% had returned from metropolitan areas. According to the 2001 census, there were about 84.4 million tribals in India, which is 8.20% of the country's total population. In 2001, there were 41 "Scheduled Tribes" in West Bengal, most of whom were concentrated in the southern, western and northern region of the state (Manosanta Biswas, 2018). Education refers to the process of increasing an individual's abilities and potential for success in a particular community or culture. From this perspective education serves as a tool for personal development. Education is the lifelong process that begins at birth. Children are recruited for special instruction in the skills and abilities that society considers important between the ages of about four and six, which marks the process was considered to begin only after the completion of formal primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, individuals often experience change throughout their careers and even after retirement, it is still possible to learn informally in today's information age. In its broadest definition, education is a process can be identified whose goal is to deal with the situation around people creating the attitudes, capabilities and information needed to do so Saraswati Hansdah & Dr. Sunita Acharya, (2018). Lack of economic stability, education, and essential services like health are among the causes of the problems faced by disadvantaged group (Dr. Suman Negi, 2024). Any kind of socio-economic progress begins with education. It plays a vital role in the overall development of people, helping them to become them more aware, gain a better understanding of their social, political and cultural environment and improve their socio-economic conditions. Education is an essential part of human resource management and development (Nikhiles Guha & Prabir Das, 2014). They often live in harmony with the natural world especially forests, jungles and wildlife. The Santals are historically hunters and gatherers who rely on a shared resource pool and an agricultural economy of their livelihoods. More than 95% of Santals are engaged in agriculture, which has historically been their main occupation. The Santals have a polytheistic religious faith centered on festivals and Bonga Puja. Some continue to practice traditional religions, including elements of Hinduism, while others have converted to Christianity (Md. Faruk Shah1, Kazi Shahidullah2 & Fahmida Sultana, 2023). Education in India has long been seen as a means of redressing historical injustices that have befallen oppressed communities. The National Educational policies of 1968, 1986, and 1992 emphasized three key pillars equity, accessibility and quality. These concepts have influenced the creation of educational initiatives aimed of providing equitable access and benefits to education for all social groups, including tribals. However, achieving educational equality poses particular challenge for the tribal community of India. These challenges stem from their cultural distinctiveness, physical remoteness and socio-economic backwardness, which make it more difficult for them to integrate into the public education system. Observing that, due to their distinct socio-cultural environment and different stage of development, tribal education must meet the specific needs & goals of those communities. As a result, education serves as a tool for economic development and strengthening the internal resilience of tribal groups, which empowers them to cope with new difficulties. The Chik Barik e Following were classified as Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal under the 1950 constitutional order: 1. Chik Barik, 2. Gond, 3. Gorait, 4. Bhumi Tamang, 5. Mru, Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagata, Tibetan, Yolmo, 6. Birhor, 7. Kharwar Birjia, 8. Chamka, 9. Chero, 10. Asur, 11. Garo, 12. Baiga., 13. Badia, 14. Lodha, 15. Ho, 16. Karmali, 17. Gond., 18. Khond, 19. kisan, 20. Mahil, 21. Korwa, 22. Baiga Lepcha, 23. Hajang Lodha, Kheria, Kharia, 24. Lohara, 25. Magh, 26. Mahali, 27. Kora, 28. Mal Pahariya, 29. Mecho, 30. Bhutia, 31. Munda, 32. Nagesia, 33. Oraon, 34. Pahariya, 35. Rabha, 36. Santal, 37. Sauria Paharia, 38. Savar, 39. Limbu (Subba), 40. Bhumi ( Kamruzzaman Mollah, 2018). Above I have highlighted research comments from various authors on the educational status of Santals. My research I have discussed a different from them that is I have also highlighted the educational scenario of Santal Tribe of Kharg pure subdivision.

### **I. Educational Scenario of Tribal Population in Different District Under West Bengal:**

According to the 1981 census, there were 16,66,610 Santals in West Bengal, of whom 3.23 percent had returned from metropolitan areas. According to the 2001 census, there were over 84.4 million tribals in India, constituting 8.20% of the total population. In 2001, West Bengal had 41 Scheduled Tribes (STs), most are located in the southern, western and Northern regions of the state. There were 44,06,794 tribals in the state, constituting about 5.5 percent of the total population, 93.9 percent of them live in rural area. Between 1991 and 2001, the state witnessed 15.7 percent increase in the tribal population. Of the 38 (1991) scheduled tribes in West Bengal, Santals constitute 51.8 percent, which is more than half of the tribal population. The Santals are in majority in the Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Midnapore, Burdwan, and Hooghly district of West Bengal (Manosanta Biswas). 'Scheduled Tribes' (STs) constitute 8.20% of Indians 1.13 billion population. The Indian government provides various concessions, reservations, subsidies and other benefits to tribal and the Indian constitution provides some protections for them. Therefore, recognized Indian tribes are classified as Scheduled Tribe for administrative purpose. In India, 47.1% of the Schedule Tribe population is literate. The

Indian state of West Bengal is home to 87 million people. Scheduled Tribes constitute 5.5% of total population of West Bengal, 83% of the Scheduled are literate (Ratan Bandyopadhyay, 2008). However, achieving educational equality poses particular challenges for India's tribal communities. These challenges stem from their cultural distinctiveness, physical remoteness, and socio-economic background, which make it more difficult for them to integrate into the public education system. To take into account the distinct socio-cultural environment and different stages of development of these communities in order to meet their specific needs and goals. As a result, education becomes a weapon for economic development and strengthening the internal resilience of tribal groups, empowering them to face new difficulties. According to the 2011 census, there are 40 officially recognized Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups in West Bengal, which constitute about 5.8% of the total population of the state (Arup Majumder, 2025). Austro-Asiatic (Santal, Munda, Mahali, Bhumij, Lodha, Kora, Ho etc.), Dravidian, Tibeto-Chinese (Bhutia, Lepcha, Toto, Mech, Garo, Rava, etc.). According to the 2011 census, there are 40 officially recognized Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups in West Bengal, which constitute about 5.8% of the total population of the state. Despite this significant percentage, the literacy rate of the tribal population in West Bengal is 57.93%, while there is a huge gender gap between male & female literacy rates of 68.17% and 47.71% respectively. High dropout rates, especially among girls, and lack of infrastructural support- such as school location, language barriers and inadequate teacher-student engagement-further exacerbate this educational imbalance. Emphasis is placed on the educational status of Scheduled Tribe gender-based disparities, and the role of government programs in addressing these disparities. By examining these issues, this study will provide insights into how education can serve as a critical tool in bridging gaps in the state, promoting social inclusion, and developing marginalized communities. In Alipour, Birbhum, Purulia and South 24 Parganas districts, and the role of government programs in addressing these disparities are emphasized. By examining these issues, this study will provide insights into how education can serve as a critical tool in bridging gaps in the state, promoting social inclusion and uplifting marginalized communities (Arup Majumder, 2025). This study explored the following research aims, the educational scenario of gender basis of the Santal Tribe, literacy percentage of male & female Santal Tribe, affect their socio-economic status. West Bengal Tribes: Literacy and Education: According to 2001 census, West Bengal had a population of 80,176,197, of which 4,406,794 were scheduled Tribes (Who constitute about 5.5%) of the total population of the state). Between 1991 and 2001.

## II. Population: Size and Distribution:

More than half (51.8) of the Schedule Tribe population is Santal. Other major tribes with significant populations including Oraon (14%) Munda (7.8%), Bhumij (7.6%) and Kora (3.2%). They constitute more than 85% of the State's tribal population, along with Santal's. The remaining tribes, with one percent or more of the population, Lodha, Mahali, Bhutia, Bedia, and Saver. The remaining tribes have very small populations (Table 1).

**Table 1: Population and proportion of 10 major STs (2011).**

SL No.	Name of the Scheduled Tribes	Total Population	Population to the total ST population
	All Scheduled Tribes	5296953	100%
1	Santal	2512331	47.42
2	Oraon	643510	12.14
3	Munda	376296	7.10
4	Bhumij	366386	6.91
5	Kora	159404	3
6	Lodha	108707	2.05
7	Mahali	81594	1.54
8	Bhutia	66627	1.25
9	Bedia	88772	1.67



10	Savar	40374	0.76
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Source: Census of India 2011

**Literacy Rate:** Among all the tribes, 34.4 % of the population has been considered literate. The literacy rate among male in the Santal community is 57.4%, while the literacy rate among female is 27.0 %, which indicate gender disparity in literacy.

**Table 2: Literacy rate among 10 major STs (Above 7 years of age)**

SL No	Name of the Scheduled Tribes	Total Population	Male	Female
	All Scheduled Tribes	43.4	57.3	29.2
1	Santal	42.2	57.4	27.0
2	Oraon	43.4	55.4	31.0
3	Munda	41.0	54.0	27.7
4	Bhumij	45.6	61.6	29.1
5	Kora	43.4	58.4	28.2
6	Lodha	34.8	46.8	22.5
7	Mahali	41.1	55.6	26.3
8	Bhutia	72.6	80.2	65.2
9	Bedia	48.4	61.7	34.6
10	Savar	26.3	36.4	16.0

Source: Census of India 2001

#### Objectives:

The objective of the study on the educational scenario of the Santal Tribes in Kharagpur subdivision with a focused-on gender and socio-economic development are as follows: -

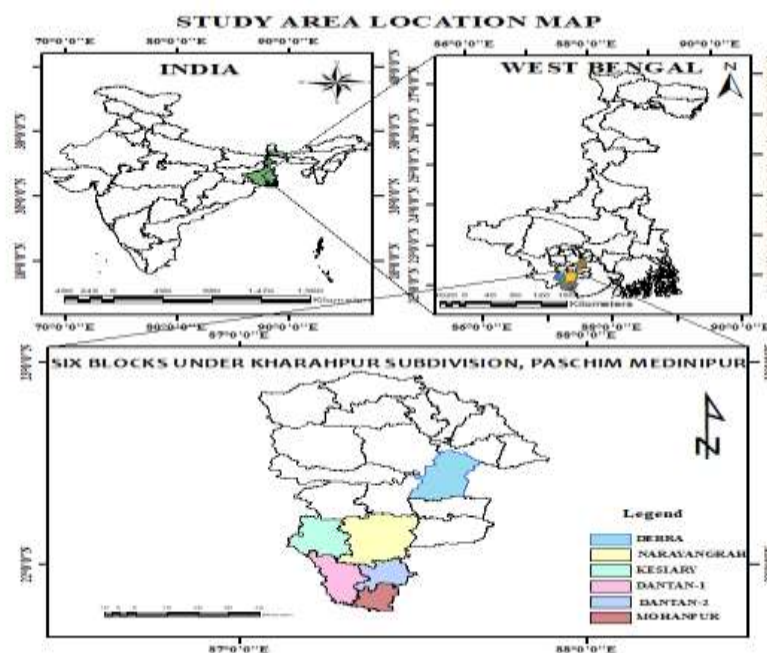
- 1.To Identify the educational scenario of gender basis of the Santal Tribe in Kharagpur subdivision.
- 2.To examine the literacy percentage of male & female Santal Tribe I Kharagpur subdivision.
- 3.To analyse how the educational scenario and literacy rate of the Santal Tribe of the male & female of Kharagpur subdivision, affect their socio-economic status.

#### 4.About Study Area:

The present study selected Kharag pure subdivision in Paschim Midnapore district located of West Bengal, India. Located in southwest of the district, this subdivision consists of several administrative block, including Kharag pure-1, Kharag pure-2, Debra, Pingla, Keshmiri, and Dantan, with a significant presence of Scheduled Tribes, of which the Santal Community is one of the most prominent. Geographically, this region is rich in laterite soil and is part of an alluvial plain with a semi-tropical climate that has made agriculture, the main livelihood of the region. The geography of the region and its proximity to the Chota Nagpur plateau have impacted the socio-economic and educational status of the local tribes, including the Santals.

The educational landscape of Kharag pure subdivision is diverse with literacy and educational facilities lacking in rural tribal-dominated parts compared to metropolitan centers like Kharag pure city. Thus, the study area provides an opportunity context for analyzing the educational situation, access and disadvantages of the Santal Tribe. The current status of education, including the literacy rate among the tribals, in terms of both male & females. There is also a discussion of how the ratio of male and female education has affected the Santal Tribe socio-economically. This area's geography, with its connection to the Choto Nagpure plateau,

influences the socio-economic and educational landscape of the tribble population like the Santal living there. The region is located between latitude 22°30'N and longitude 87°30'.



**Fig-1: Location Map.**

### **What are the Challenges:**

This study regarding surveyed male and female of the santal community under 6 blocks of Kharagpur subdivision to see if they face any obstacles or barriers in their education. The educational barriers faced by men and women of the Santal community are different. In other words, the educational barriers faced by Santal in Kharagpur subdivision differ between men and women. Among the factors that hinder or stop the education of Santal girls in particular are early marriage, domestic work, and lack of security. Among these issues, early marriage is one of the most important barriers to education of girls. The tradition of early marriage is one of the obstacles to their future normal and better lives through higher education. Not only early marriage, but also domestic work and financial reasons cause their studies to be interrupted midway.

On the other hand, obstacles to education have been observed for boys of the Santal community in Kharagpur subdivision. These obstacles are completely different from the obstacles faced by girls. Among the factors that hinder boys' education are economic pressure, migration to different states for work, and reluctance to study. Migration to other states for work is the most common reason for delaying education. Boys migrate to other states at a young age to work to ease the financial burden on the family. As a result, their studies are being stopped midway, which is destroying their secure and stable future.

### **Migration status of the Santal community:**

The Santal community of West Bengal has a long history of internal and external migration, mainly due to economic hardship, lack of local employment opportunities, and the search for better education and infrastructural facilities. Their migration status is marked by significant changes from traditional agricultural life in rural areas to urban centers and industrial areas and tea plantations. There is a diversity of migration patterns and circumstances, mainly among the Santal. The Santal are traditionally a nomadic people and they migrated from the Choto Nagpur Plateau region to the districts of Midnapur, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum, and other western parts of West Bengal. During the British rule, they were transferred to various districts of North Bengal for employment as tea workers and other jobs, such as agricultural work and contract laborers in various industries. A review of their early history shows that they sometimes migrated to rural villages and towns, which is considered a current trend. For example, Santal people from the districts of Purulia, Bankura, and West Midnapore are migrating to cities like Kolkata and the suburbs of Santagati to be employed as temporary workers in various industries. Again, it is related to seasonal and cyclical migration among the Santal community. Especially during the harvest season, they are temporarily shifted to areas like Burdwan for agricultural work. Traditionally, men participated in this migration but women do not participate at all, only a very small number. Migration of the Santal community from West Bengal to neighboring states, especially regions like Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha.

The primary driving force behind the migration of the Santal community is not desire but, economic necessity, lack of employment in the local area, uncontrolled price increases of cultivable land, low prices, etc., have forced them to temporarily relocate. In addition, the lack of irrigation and the vagaries of seasonal nature force them to migrate due to the inadequacy of their crop production and livelihood security. Due to development, the Santal community migrates for government and corporate project such as dams, mining, industrial construction, etc. The continued migration from rural areas to cities for higher educational opportunities, as well as the desire for a better life, and exposure to modernity, contribute to the trend to migration. Looking at the migration statistics of the five blocks of the study area, it can be said that the Santal community has chosen this traditional migration path mainly for socio-economic reasons. It has also been observed that Santals migrate for higher education, marriage, employment and even outside the country for income generation. The Santal of the study area are a dynamic group of people who have chosen to migrate to improve their socio-economic status and try to preserve their distinct cultural heritage.

### Methodology:

This study is based on a qualitative study of Research design in six blocks of Kharagpore subdivision, in Paschim Medinipur district of W. B. This study used a non-probability sampling method. The present study is mainly based on primary and secondary data source. In this study, primary data was collected through interview, observation, questionnaire and group discussion methods. Secondary data was collected from government websites, reports, relevant papers, journals and local government. Total 300 household surveys, which covered 700 Santal people from selected ten blocks in Kharagpore subdivision in Paschim Midnapur.

For sample collection, a household survey was conducted as a cross-section study, considering each individual family in the rural area of the study area as a sample unit. The data was collected through a household survey. The relevant information regarding the educational situation was collected from selected households in the Santal community- majority villages within the study area through a door-to-door approach.

**Primary stage:** *Six blocks under the Kharagpore subdivision of West Medinipur district have been selected for this study.*

**Secondary Stage:** *Based on the Santal tribe population statistic, six blocks have been selected from among the ten C. D blocks of the Kharagpore subdivision*

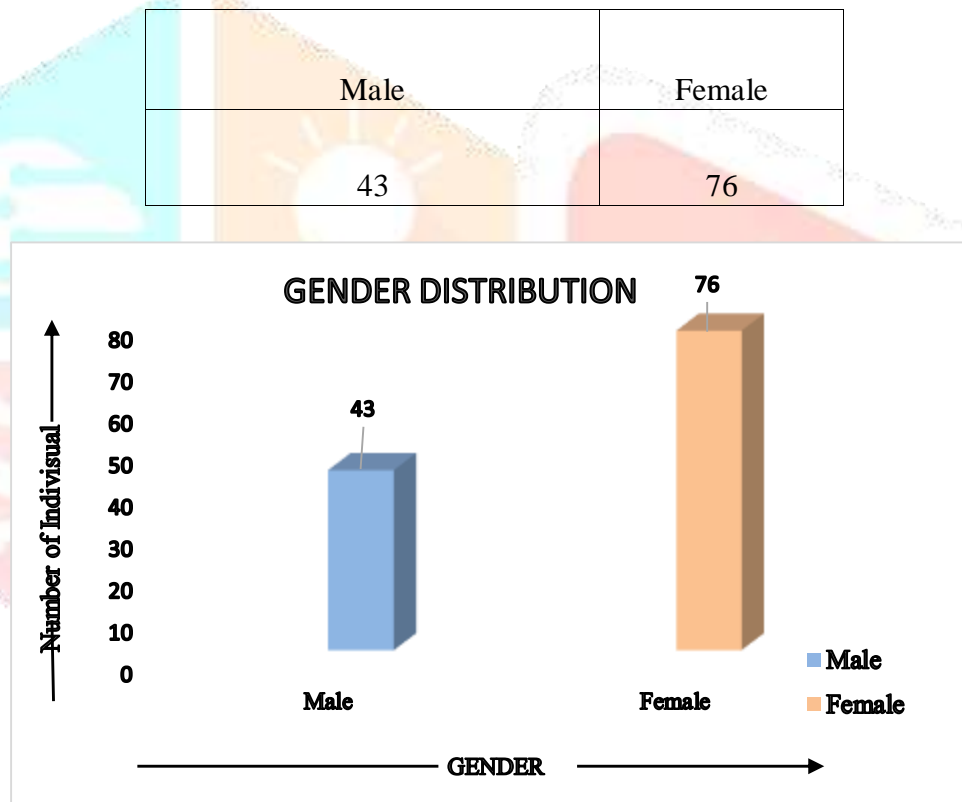
**Tertiary Stage:** *119 sample households were taken from 32 Santal inhabited villages across six C. D blocks of the study area.*

**Result:**

The result of the study on the educational status of the Santal tribe in Dantan-I, Dantan-II, Debra, Kesiary, Mohanpur, & Narayangraha, under Kharagpur sub-division, shows that the literacy rate among 119 respondents is 66.39 %, the literacy rate of male is 39.24 %, while the literacy rate of female is 60.80 %, which indicates a significant feature. On the other hand, the rate of illiteracy was found to be, 32.50 %, for men and 67.50 %, for women, indicating that those men responsibilities, lack of interest, face greater barriers to achieving education due to security concerns and cultural expectation. This section presents the result of the study area on literacy rate, gender disparity, and educational scenario, along with graphics for ease of understanding.

**Table-1:**

Table number-1 indicates the male and female respondents from the study area households, comprising 43 males and 76 females, overall total population of the 119. Based on the statistics in this table, the bar graph below presented the data separately for male and female.

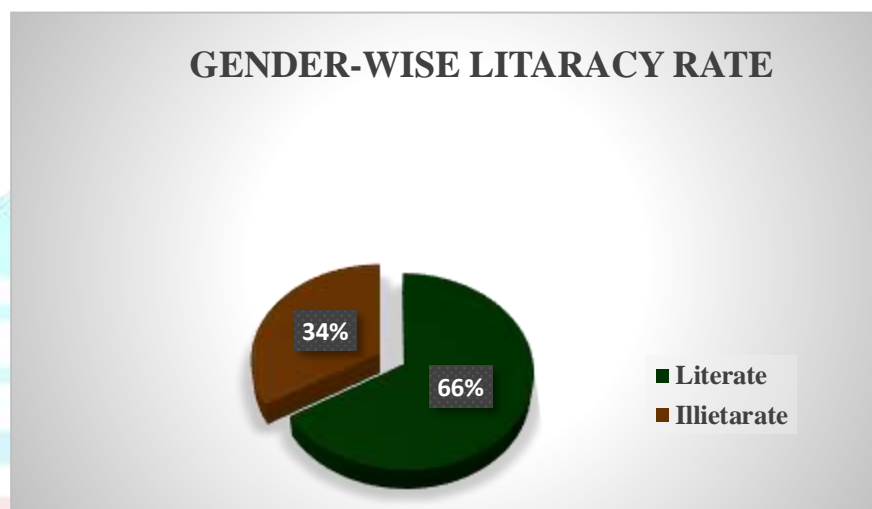


119 people were selected as respondents to collect data on the educational scenario of the Santal community in six block such as Dantan-I, Dantan-II, Debra, Kesiary, Mohanpur, & Narayangraha, of Kharagpur sub-division. In this bar graph, the vertical scale represents the number of individuals and the horizontal scale represents gender. Of the 119 respondents, 43 were male 76 were female. Most of them are below the age limit of 35. The number of women respondents is high, which demonstrates women's awareness and their leading role. A 3D bar graph has been presented based on the statistics in above table. The above bar chart represents the male and female population based on separate statistics. In terms of percentage, 36.13% are male and 63.87 % female.



**Table-2:** Table number-2 provides statistics on the literate and illiterate on the among the household thar responded to the study area survey. And according to the statistics in the table, the literate and illiterate are represented in the pie diagram below. The table shows a literate population of 69 people and an illiterate population of 40 people.

Literate	Illiterate
79	40

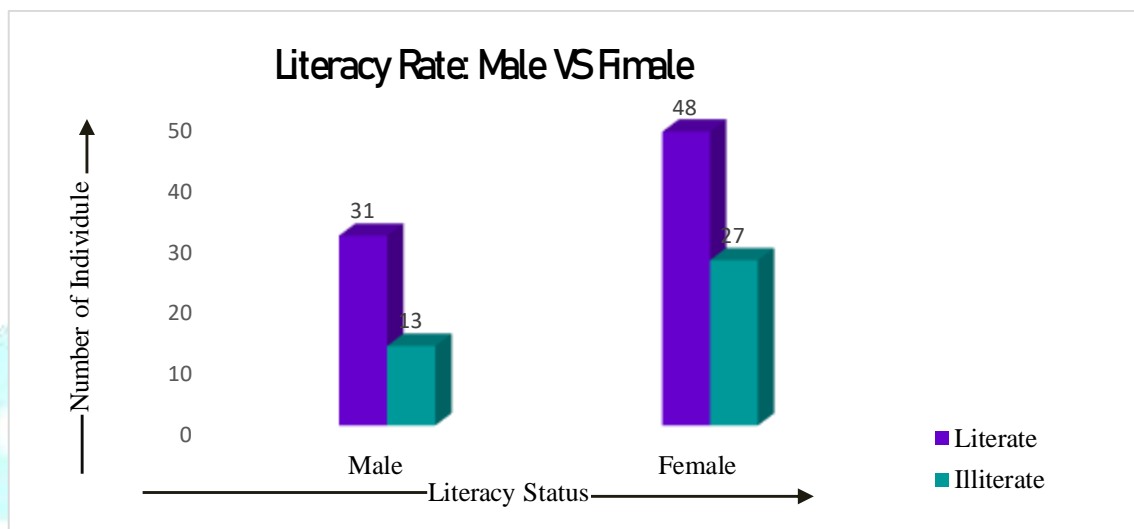


Above the literate and illiterate respondents of the Santal community, the study area shown through the pie chart. This figure shows the educational trend of the Santal community. Here out of 119 respondents, 79 are literate, which is 66.37% in terms of percentage, and 40 are illiterate, which is 33.61% in terms of percentage. That is, although most of the total respondents are literate, the number of illiterate people is relatively small.



**Table-3:** Table number three present the statistics of literate and illiterate individuals in household that provided responses, categorized by gender and in the study area. According to the statistics in the table above, the literate and illiterate population, categorized by gender, is presented through the flowing comparative bar chart.

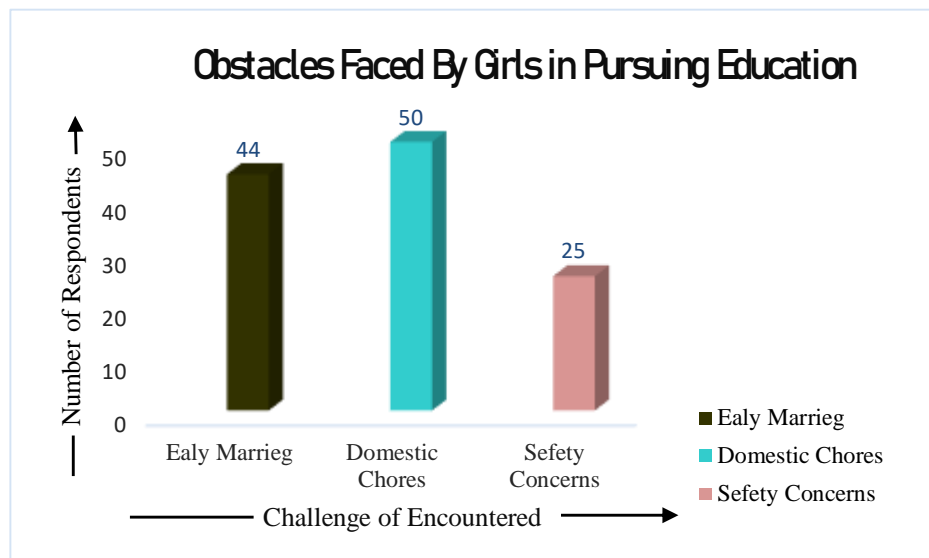
Category	Male	Female
Literate	31	48
Illiterate	13	27



The comparative bar graph above presents the literate and illiterate individuals in relation to both male and female. The given figure illustrates the Santal of illiterate and literate individuals in the study area, categorized by gender, relative to the total population of respondents where vertical scale represents the number of individual and horizontal scale represents the literacy status. It appears that females are significantly ahead of males in terms of literacy. On the other hand, females are ahead of males in terms of the literacy population. The difference between male and female is proportional in both cases.

**Table-4:** At table number-4 the educational obstacle faced by girls in the study area are maintained with their frequencies in terms of different levels. According to the statistics in the below table, the literate and illiterate population categorized by gender, are presented below in the comparative bar graph.

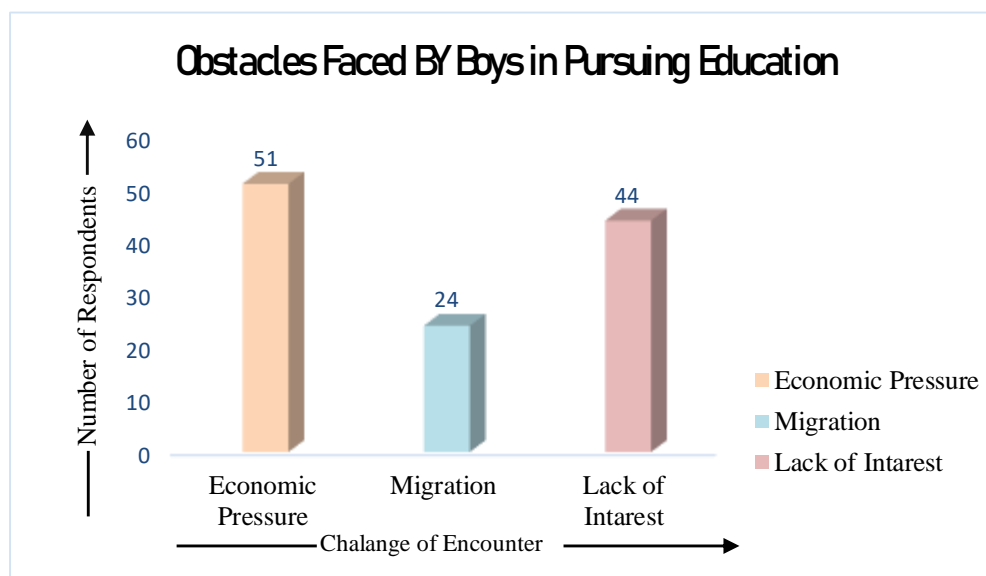
Obstacles	Frequency
Early Marriage	44
Domestic Chores	50
Safety Concerns	25



A simple bar chart can be observed above. This is primarily based on information collected from informants in six blocks of Kharagpur sub-division, which highlights the obstacle to education faced by the Santal community in the area under discussion, particularly the girls. According to the data collected through this survey, 44 respondents believe that early marriage is one of the major obstacles to their education, which is 36.97% in terms of percentage. Furthermore, among the collected data, 50 respondents believe that household domestic chores are one of the main obstacles to the education of girls from the Santal community, which is 42.02% in terms of percentage. On the other hand, 25 of the respondents which data was collected believed that the lack of safety concerns is a barrier to the education of girls in their Santal community, which is 21.1% in terms of percentage. The chart presented through the bar graph indicates the different levels of education among females, which has been considered as one of the components of the data collected in the study area.

**Table-5:** The obstacle of studying faced by the boys in the study area at table no-5 have been listed, along with their frequencies at different values. According to the statistics in the above table, the individual obstacles are presented below using a simple bar graph.

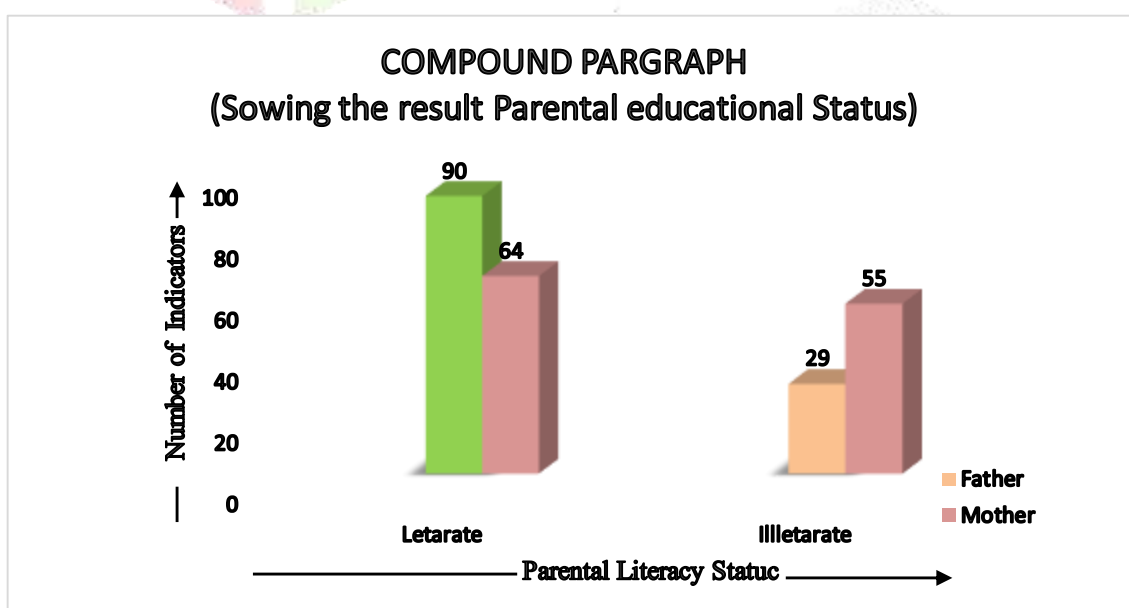
Obstacles	Frequency
Economic Pressure	51
Migration	24
Lack of Interest	44



Parent \ Letarte	Letarte	Illiterate
Father	90	29
Mother	64	55

**Figure caption:** The simple bar graph above presents data collected from respondents of the Santal community in the Kharagpur sub-division, which primarily highlights the obstacles considered to be hindering boy's education in the study area. The data collected from the respondents and presented in the chart shows that 51 respondents stated that the main obstacle to boy's education is financial pressure, which is 42.86 %. Again, among the respondents from stated that migration is the one of major obstacles to boy's education, which is 20.17% in terms of percentage. On the other hand, 44 respondents cited boy's lack of interest in education as an obstacle to their education, which accounts for 36.97 % of the total.

**Table-6:** Table number six shows the statics on the educational status of the parents. And below a comparative bar chart is presented based on those statistics, which illustrates the literate and illiterate levels of parents.



The above comparative bar graph illustrates the literacy and illiteracy status of the parents in the study area, where the vertical axis represents the number of indicators and the horizontal axis represents the parental literacy status. The literacy status of the parents of 119 respondents is presented through this figure. Among the 238 parents of the 119 respondents, there are 119 fathers and the remaining 119 are mothers. The literate and illiterate individuals among the 238 fathers and mothers have been presented separately. According to the respondent's information 90 fathers and 64 mothers are literate, while fathers and 55 mothers are illiterate. Based on literacy, there are 90 fathers, representing 58.44% and 60 mothers' representing 41.56%. On the other hand, based on illiteracy, there are 29 fathers representing 34.52%, and 55 mothers representing 65.48%. The comparative bar graph shows that fathers are ahead in terms of literacy, at 58.44%, while mothers are significantly ahead in terms of illiterate, at 65.48%.

**Discussions:** The present study attempts to understand the educational status of the Santal tribe in six blocks such as Dantan-I; Dantan-II; Debra; Kesiary; Mohanpur; Narayangrah; under the Kharagpur sub-division, with the particular focuses on literacy rates, gender disparity, and the impact of socio-economic condition on education. Research reveals that despite the presence of institutional systems, several factors such as lack of parental education, family economic hardship, and socio-cultural barriers continue to effect educational participation among the Santal community. For the research in the study area, 119 people were selected as the sample size comprising 43 male and 76 female.

**Educational Scenario of the Santal Tribe:** In the study area, the educational situation of the Santal community is gradually improving, yet their educational status is not satisfactory compared to the general population. In the section, several statistical data point regarding their educational situation. Have been presented through graphical representations. The study observed that among the sample size of 119 individuals, the percentage of literate individuals was 66.31% and the percentage of illiterate was 33.61%.

**Gender-wise Literacy Pattern among the Santal Tribe:** Significant characteristics have been observed in literacy rate among the Santal community in the study area. In all six blocks of the Kharagpur sub-division, the female literacy rate is consistently higher than that of male. In the six blocks literacy rate is 41.18% and the male literacy rate is 25.21% while the male literacy rate is 10.92% and the female literacy rate is 22.69%. The study clearly indicates women are making progress in education despite the obstacle. Domestic chores, early marriage, and safety concerns related to the distance to school are contributing to some extent to the disruption of girl's education. It is also observed that men's lack of interest in education and economic pressure is driving down their literacy rate.

### **Obstacle in Boy's and Girl's Education**

The research has identified both general and gender base barriers in the field of education. For boy's, the obstacles identified are economic pressure, migration and lack of interest while for girl's early marriage, domestic chores, and insecurity have been identified as obstacles. 42.86% of people identified economic pressure is the main obstacles for boys, and 42.02% identified domestic chores as the primary barriers to the girl's education. Economic hardship is major obstacles for both boys and girls, forcing them to contribute to their family's income through agricultural labor or wage work. Girls in particular, face additional challenges such as cultural expectations regarding domestic chores.

Linguistic barriers are another major obstacle to the education of children in the Santal community. Since they speak in their mother tongue, Santali, which uses the Ol Chiki, Script, it is essentially a language belonging to Austroasiatic language family. Since they have to receive their education in Bengali language; this is a major obstacle in assessing education or studying higher education. The lack of education among parents and the resulting limited educational support within the family further increases the number of drop out in the education system.

### **Aspirations after Schooling**

The desire for education among the Santal community is of a mixed nature. Although parents express a desire for their children to receive an education the scope of their aspiration is limited to basic education. For boys



the desire for education is linked to employment opportunities, while for girls, education is always considered beneficial only until marriage.

The research indicates that although girls have a strong desire for employment, due to a lack of education, they will choose or have already chosen agricultural work as a profession in the future. Due to the few numbers of female pursuing higher education, it remains to be seen who will be prioritized for employment in the future, according to research. The research also revealed that most of male in the study area will take up agriculture as a profession after completing their education, or have already done so. In terms of employment, it has been observed that some men are involved in the teaching profession or working in other government sectors, while others are looking to choose employment as a career in the future.

### **Impact on Education on Socio-Economic Status**

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic condition of the Santal community. Education demonstrates improved employment opportunities higher income levels, better health awareness, and greater social mobility for individuals. Specifically, literacy among men in the Santal community contributes to wages, employment, and occupational diversity, while female literacy helps in family discussion-making and in caring for children's development and health.

This research confirms that gender inequality in education directly effects overall socio-economic development. The current educational trends in the study area indicate the comparative progress of female education, which is expected to enlighten the future generations with the light of education. Men have a comparatively lower literacy rate, and many are illiterate, which hinders their path to higher incomes; their primary employment is limited to working as labors. Currently, due to increased literacy, a female is managing their domestic responsibilities while also focusing on employment, which is accelerating the socio-economic development of the Santal community. Among the Santal tribe community, the lack of education among parents is the main limitation to the current generation access to education, which directly impacts social and economic progress.

### **Overall Interpretation**

In conclusion, based on the entire research, it can be said that the educational development of the Santal community in the study area is progressing, slowly, but it is far from being on with the general population which is detrimental to their improved socio-economic condition. Despite equal educational opportunities for men and women, the significantly lower literacy rate among men results in weak economic structure and under development socio-economic condition. Certain obstacles have deprived children of education (Early marriage; Economic pressure; safety; Domestic chores; Lack of interest) opportunities, which continues to hinder socio-economic progress and quality of life.

### **Conclusion:**

The research paper is designed to examine the current educational situation of the Santal tribe in six (Dantan-I; Dantan-II; Debra; Kesiary; Mohanpur; & Narayangrah) blocks of the Kharagpur Sub-division of Paschim Medinipur district, primarily focusing on gender disparity in education, the economic impact of education, and its societal impacts. The research finding indicates that education plays a significant role in the social and economic structure of the Santal community, through many disparities and challenges persist. The research revealed that the Santal tribal community is comparatively lagging behind in overall educational status compared to the non-tribal population in the study area. Despite government schemes such as free education, tribal allowances, and midday meals, access to quality education is hampered by significant factors such as geographical isolation, poverty, parental unawareness, and language barriers. While there are no significant obstacles to accessing free education but the primary level, barriers to education arise at the secondary and higher secondary levels. This is resulting in a growing number of dropouts, increasing poverty, unemployment, which in turn is affecting the socio-economic condition of the Santal community.

The research indicates that gender inequality is observed in the education system. While there is no significant disparity in access to education at the primary level, disparities are observed at the secondary and higher secondary levels, particularly girls being considerably ahead of boys in educational attainment. In the case, the reasons for men falling behind include economic pressure and lack of interest, which are hindering their access to education and thus exacerbating the gender disparity in education attainment. However, in same case, it has been observed that the lack of education among girls is mainly due to early marriage, domestic chores, and lack of awareness. The research establishes a strong connection between the problems of the Santal tribe, particularly their socio-economic conditions, and their educational status. Access to education improve living slandered, health awareness, economic stability, and increased opportunities at both the personal and community levels will result. The research significantly highlights the current status of education in terms of gender, which will strongly enrich their education experiences both with in the family and the community. The literacy level of parents has been highlighted which will help maintain the educational status of their future generation. And discussed here are the major obstacles to education faced by students of the Santal community in the study area, the resolution of which will help create a framework for an improve educational system.

In the conclusion, the education system and socio-economic development of the Santal community in the six blocks of Kharagpur sub-division in Paschim Medinipur district, are facing challenges. To address the problems, it is necessary to emphasize initiatives such as the kanya Shree project, free education at the secondary and higher secondary levels or in higher education, culturally sensitive educational frameworks and programs that promote educational awareness and encourage improved living standers. Focusing on the educational system of Santal community in this region appears to be not only a matter of individual or community concern but also a particularly significant step towards inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development in the region

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