

# Children of Nomadic and De-notified Tribes and Education Opportunities: A Challenge of Inclusiveness

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## *Abstract*

*Every child has the right to get an education, which is essential for the development of any child. In India, the Right to Education Act, of 2009 provides free and compulsory education to children till fourteen years of age. Irrespective of their caste, class, gender, region, or religion, every child is entitled to get an education. Certain sections of our country are far away from the purview of education. They are a large number of children of Nomadic and De-notified Tribes (NTDNTs). Due to historical injustice and migration in nature, these communities have been excluded from getting education. Certain concrete steps like mobile schools, residential schools, and so on have been taken to educate these children, but there is a long way to go to achieve desirable results. This paper will attempt to understand the education status of nomadic and De-notified groups and what needs to be done for their inclusiveness in society in general. This paper has taken the base of existing literature to support the arguments.*

**Keywords:** Nomadic and De-notified Tribes, Children, Education, Inclusiveness, and Challenges.

## **Introduction**

The British Government in India enacted the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in the year 1871 which declared certain tribes as ‘born criminals’ under the act. These wandering communities were looked down upon as hereditary criminals who were “addicted to the systematic commission of non-reliable offenses” (Kumar, 2004). These groups were engaged in different occupations, such as cattle gazers, acrobats, fortune tellers, magic

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tricks, etc., but the Britishers misunderstood them as hereditary criminals. Some of the communities were engaged in criminal activities, but considering all nomadic groups as born criminals was a major mistake of the British government (D'Souza 2001). Being a wandering tribe, they had proper geographical knowledge of the country and also assisted local kingdoms against the British Government, which was considered a threat against them. Through the amendment of CTA, the British wanted to control these groups and brought different communities under various amendments of the act from 1871 to 1944. The British government nearly declared 200 nomadic tribes as born criminals under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. They were treated in an inhuman manner, and many harsh provisions were imposed on them under the act.

It was in the year 1952, after five years of independence they were declared as 'De-notified.' Nomadic and De-notified Tribes (NTDNTs) are the most marginalized section of the society. Nomadic people continuously move from one place to another for their livelihood. It always remains hard for the state to keep monitoring them due to their frequent movement, so they first become a victim of suspicion and mistrust compared to the settled populations. The roots of their miseries are not recent but traced to the pre-independence era. Historical injustice and various forms of discrimination suffered by these groups have kept them far away from the developmental measures of mainstream society. These communities were living on their traditional occupations such as pastoral, hunting, transportation, craftsmanship, trading, entertainment, forage, etc, which have been badly affected by new economic changes. Their age-old traditional occupations are not sufficient nowadays to meet their daily requirements, and at the same time, they are not highly skilful and educated people, so it becomes difficult for them to adopt new forms of lifestyle according to the changing economic system.

Many of these families are deprived of amenities such as land, BPL Cards, birth certificates, and domicile status certificates due to the non-availability of proper documents. This leads them to double disadvantages and impoverishment in life. In their routine life, these groups also face many incidences of human rights violations and atrocities from other social groups because they are not able to take the support of law enforcement officials and judiciary. Education is considered as a most powerful tool for development of individuals or society as whole. It has all the potential for transformation into terms of social, economic and political aspects. The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, was mainly introduced to bring poor

and disadvantaged sections into the sphere of formal education by the government of India. Its objective was the development of all children irrespective of their background, but there are many factors, such as poverty, social exclusion, low awareness, and migration which create hurdles for people of nomadic and De-notified communities to enrol their students in formal school systems. Even if their children are enrolled, they need help to continue their education. The children of nomadic groups have remained far from benefits of education under the provision of the RTE Act. This paper has tried to understand the concept of nomadic and De-notified tribes and education states among them with the help of existing literature. It has attempted to suggest some of the efforts that need to be taken for to bring children of these groups into the purview of education.

### **Meaning of Nomadic**

Nomad means those people who do not have permanent houses to live in and they wander from one place to another for pastures. The purpose of their mobility is livelihood. According to Sadr (1991), Nomads are members of tribes, nations, or races having no permanent settlement, and they constantly move in search of food and pastures. They are categorized as hunters and food gatherers, itinerant fishermen, and pastoralists.

### **De-notified Tribes**

De-notified tribes are communities listed as born criminals under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 and its subsequent amendments. It was believed that they were habituated to commit non-bailable offenses. Once a tribe is declared as criminal under the act, all its members are compulsion to register themselves with the local magistrate. If they fail to register, they are charged with severe provisions under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Under the Habitual Offender Act 1952, these communities were decriminalised and declared as De-notified Tribes. According to the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, these communities are still marginalized and living very miserable lives. Not much focus has been made to understand their specific needs. National Commission for De-notified Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, in its report, stated that there are roughly nearly 110 million population of nomadic, semi-nomadic and De-notified groups who still face violence and atrocities by mainstream society.

### **Education Status of Nomadic and De-notified Children**

Education is considered the best tool for individual and community development, bringing social, economic, and political transformation in society. The government of India brought the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 to bring underprivileged groups into the purview of the formal education system which will result in their growth. It will help them to be empowered. However, the children of nomadic communities could not benefit from the act due to various reasons such as poverty, lack of awareness, social exclusion, migration, etc., which kept them away from the school system. Not having another supportive mechanism to deal with the challenges of their life, they were not able to take advantage of various provisions of the Right to Education Act.

Nomadic communities move from one place to another in search of livelihood. Due to their migratory nature, the existing schooling system does not help to bring children of nomadic communities into formal education. The children also move with their parents from one place to another and have responsibilities to support their families. Due to these challenges, they are far away from the education system today. The Renke Commission formed in the year 2008, suggested in its report that teachers should be developed from nomadic communities who will teach and move with them wherever these groups move. These groups reject the normal schooling system due to their migratory nature, so these steps can bring fruitful results in educating them. The migration has very adversely affected the education of nomadic children. There are very few children of nomadic groups able to attend school in the place where they migrate. Almost three-fourths of nomadic children are not able to attend school at their migration destination which results in cases of child labour and other kind of exploitation. The majority of nomadic people are not aware of the RTE Act. (Puri, 2016). After independence, our leader expressed political resolution to strengthen the education system to achieve economic development and ensure social justice (Velaskar, 1990).

In the report of the Education Commission 1964-66, it was mentioned creating a common space, irrespective of caste, class, and gender, for all the children to bring them into the education system. School is the place to fulfil the dream of inclusiveness of all children. However, we still need to catch up to achieve goal of hundred percent literacy. The literacy rate was 74.04 per cent in the census report of 2011. People belonging to less privileged sections suffer more than the privileged ones.

They still need to be made aware of services like education, good health, livelihood options and other resources. Children of these groups are at most a disadvantage due to their socio-economic backwardness. These groups wander from one place to another in search of livelihood, so their children many times are not able to take advantage of regular schooling, and the government has not been able to establish proper mechanisms where children of nomadic communities can afford school with their regular movements. It is also considered one of the prominent reasons that the dropout ratio is high among nomadic children. This increases the incidence of child labour among these communities, who they get engaged in occupations like rag picking, acrobats, labourers and substance abusers. The nomadic children do not have proper documents such as birth certificates, caste certificates, etc which are required to get into government schools. Nowadays, parents want to provide education to their children, but there is no suitable education system according to the lifestyle of nomadic communities, which will help nomadic children to take benefit of formal education.

The Renke Commission has observed very critical aspects of nomadic, semi-nomadic, and De-notified tribes. It mentioned that education is a distant dream for these groups. Most of their population is illiterate, but of those who are educated, the majority of them are up to standard 10<sup>th</sup>. They have less accessibility to education due to their livelihood pattern and sustenance. Children get engaged in working from an early age. They do not attend school regularly because they perceive that education will not help them earn a livelihood. It is wise to expect high literacy from these groups when the government makes some serious efforts to ensure sustainable livelihood for these communities. The nomadic nature of these communities creates a continuation of studies of the children. It is one of the major reasons for the high dropout among nomadic children (Shah & Bara, 2020). There were more than half of the respondents among Dafer and Salt Khera communities had never enrolled on school education. Only a few of them have attained education up to post-graduate level. The results indicate that they are very far away from educational services in society (Kannabiran et al., 2017).

A study on 'Socio-economic Status and Educational Attainment and Challenges of DNT, NT and SNT' covered twelve communities during 2013-14 at Rajasthan. This study made essential observations regarding the education status of these groups. It stated that one of the reasons for the low level of education among these communities was a lack of awareness among parents regarding education. Even though education is free up to the middle

level in government schools in Rajasthan, hardly these communities have taken benefit of these programs. Being mostly illiterate, parent of NTs, DNTs and SNTs are not very concerned and serious about the education of their children. As per the census of 2011, the literacy rate of children having aged seven years or older was 79.19 per cent and 52.12 per cent for boys and girls, respectively, in Rajasthan, while it was 66.49 per cent for boys and 50.52 per cent for girls among children of DNT, NT and SNT according to data of the survey. The results indicated that the ratio of boys was better than girls among DNT, NT and SNT, but compared to the general population, it was lagging behind (Meena, 2020). The children of De-notified tribes had experienced a form of discrimination for the other students and teachers in schools. They are called their tribe's names with derogatory remarks. Sometimes, teachers asked them to sit down at the last batch in class and they were even asked to do manual work like cleaning classroom, sit separately for mid-day meals, and not to drinking water from a common pot and glass (Korra, 2020).

### **Steps of Inclusiveness for Nomadic and De-notified Tribes**

Under Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution, every child is entitled to free and compulsory education from six to fourteen years of age. The state must ensure that all children are getting quality education under its provisions. It is the right of every child irrespective of their caste, class, religion, region, gender, or socio-economic background. The children of nomadic and De-notified groups are also entitled to the same as other children. However, the situation could be more favourable for the children of these communities. Their parents need to be made aware of the importance of education. The government should focus much more seriously on ensuring that children of nomadic and de-notified tribes can have equal education opportunities. Jammu and Kashmir state introduced seasonal educational schools for the pastoralist communities. The teachers made temporary tents for nomadic groups of Himalayan regions who migrated during the winter season. Andhra Pradesh government came up with the concept of a school on the boat for the children of fishing communities of East Godavari district under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. IIT Bombay launched an anchored instruction program in their camp schools in Maharashtra to educate children of nomadic communities between five and seventeen years about the 3Rs through interaction, participation, and discovery. In countries like Nigeria and Kenya, they have adopted on-site schools that provide education to children of semi-nomadic groups at the place where they migrate. They introduced distance education to reach out

to nomadic children with the help of television and radio so these children can take benefit of education even if they migrate with their parents with the help of these devices (Suresh & Srinivasan, 2019).

The government should strengthen mobile schools which, will benefit children of nomadic groups to take advantage of it. This approach is adopted in certain regions of the state but such programs should be implemented properly in other areas where there is large a population of nomadic communities. It can be well-suited to the needs of the nomadic and De-notified tribes. The structured and planned activities with the objective of increasing the accessibility of education among nomadic groups can be very fruitful (Pigozzi, 1999). Mobile schools can be very favourable and offer viable atmosphere to achieve higher education levels among children of nomadic and De-notified tribes. The children also face discrimination at the hands of fellow students and teachers. Renke Commission (2008) suggested that discrimination is also one of the reasons for high drop out among them. We need to ensure that the children are not being discriminated against due to their background in the school. It also mentioned the need to develop such teachers among nomadic communities who move with them wherever they go so their children's education is not affected. The residential schools should be established so ~~that~~ parents can keep their children there and migrate for livelihood. The lack of education among nomadic and De-notified children is not only an infrastructural problem but also a lack of curriculum that satisfies their needs. The unique curriculum to be developed which equip them with their nomadic skills and provide livelihood opportunities in future.

### **Conclusion**

Nomadic and De-notified communities have always been victims of social injustice and atrocities. They have been excluded from the purview of the social, economic, and political spheres for a long time. These groups have not been able to benefit from the education system in our country due to their nomadic way of life. Their children are left out of formal education due to their migratory nature. There are certain efforts made by the government to include them in the formal education system, but there is a long way to go to achieve desirable results. The government should identify these groups' special needs and formulate policies and schemes that can provide education to all children of NTDNTs. Education is very important for the holistic development of these communities and making them part of mainstream society.

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