

**EDUCATION OF THE MARGINALISED**  
SITUATING HISTORICALLY THE DISADVANTAGED  
COMMUNITIES IN KERALA

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*Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Philosophy in Applied Economics of the  
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**BINU ROSHNI.P**  
M.Phil Programme in Applied Economics  
2004-2006

**CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**  
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## DECLARATION

I here by affirm that the work for this dissertation, **Education of the Marginalised: Situating Historically the Disadvantaged Communities in Kerala**, being submitted as part of the requirements of the MPhil Programme in Applied Economics of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, was carried out entirely by myself. I also affirm that it was not part of any other programme of study and has not been submitted to any other University for the award of any degree.

30 June 2006



Binu Roshni.P

*Certified that this study is the bona fide work of Binu Roshni.P, carried out under my supervision at the Centre for Development Studies*



P. Sivanandan  
Fellow



K. Narayanan Nair  
Director  
Centre for Development Studies

*To*  
*My Parents*

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **EDUCATION OF THE MARGINALISED SITUATING HISTORICALLY THE DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES IN KERALA**

**Binu Roshni.P**

MPhil Programme in Applied Economics

Jawaharlal Nehru University

2004-2006

Centre for Development Studies

Scholarship on Kerala's educational experience has painted it as a unique one, but its spread and impact do not seem to be egalitarian. The quality of instruction, the growth of private unaided institutions, the difference in the levels of educational attainment among various social groups are all matters that require serious attention. The present study situates the educational achievement of Dalit and Adivasi students in a historical perspective. It explores the contemporary situation by analyzing their performance in the SSLC/ Higher Secondary examination results and their school completion rates for a period of 14 years from 1991-2005. A case study of Model Residential Schools, a successful government sponsored programme almost exclusively for the benefit of Dalit and Adivasi students, is attempted to bring out the merit of a total supportive system compared to the general assistance scenario. The pass percentage of SC/ST students in the SSLC examination seems to be continuously lower than that of the non- SC/ST students, and similarly the rate of improvement, if any, is also lower in their case. However a comparison of the SSLC results of students in the Model Residential Schools with the performance of SC/ST students in the general schools shows a critical edge for these in MRS system.

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Context of the Study

Education is an indicator as well as a facilitator for the overall development of the society. It is probably the only means for reducing inequalities, especially in a highly stratified society like India. Scholars suggest that education improves the position of historically disadvantaged communities by increasing their skills, knowledge, confidence and freedoms [Dre`ze and Sen 1995; Sen 2000]. Indian constitution envisages education as the basic right of every individual. But even after 58 years of independence most of the states in India have failed to achieve the goal of universal Primary education. The 2001 census indicates that India still has over 300 million citizens above the age of 6 unable to read and write.

Contrastingly, however educational experience in the state of Kerala is different from rest of the states in Indian Union. As per 2001 census literacy rate of Kerala is 90.92%. It is well known that Kerala is far ahead of the rest of India in respect of key indicators of social development such as literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy. Centre for development Studies in its pioneering work on Kerala [1975], emphasized the facilitating role of education in bringing positive changes in the State. If one traces Kerala's educational history it can be seen that Kerala society has always cherished the value of education.

Scholarship on Kerala's educational experience might paint it as a model one, but it must be pointed out that the visual has its own set of problems. Ensuring the quality of education, regulating the growth of private unaided educational institutions, reducing the differences in the educational attainment of different social groups are subjects that need probing and careful management. In Kerala, there still exist social

groups which are substantially behind the rest of the population in terms of education and other development achievements. They include people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the traditional coastal fishing communities [Chandrasekhar. C.P et.al 2001]. It is necessary therefore, to see whether Kerala's tall achievements on the educational front could be extended to the deprived communities like Dalits and Adivasis. The term Dalit [meaning oppressed] has gained currency in recent times. In our study we use the term Dalit to refer Scheduled Caste Communities. The study situates the educational achievements of Dalits and Adivasi children in a historical perspective. It explores the contemporary situation by analyzing the performance of Dalits and Adivasi children in their SSLC / Higher Secondary results and the School Completion Rate for a relatively long period of 14 years from 1991-2005. Further the study also provides a comparative picture of non Dalit/Adivasi students. The study looks at the achievements of Dalits and Adivasi students in the light of educational assistance provided by the state government to SC/ST students as is evident from the various development measures that have been initiated after Independence, and particularly starting from the First Five year Plan for the social and economic development of Dalits and Adivasis. At this point we will also present a case study of Model Residential Schools, which is a successful government sponsored program exclusively for Dalit and Adivasi students. We attempt to compare the educational performance of students in Model Residential Schools with that of the non- MRS SC/ST students analyzing SSLC result as one of the crucial indicator.

## **1.2 Previous studies on the Subject**

The present study concentrates on some aspects of marginalization of Dalits and Adivasi students in education at the school level. More precisely, it traces the historical disadvantages of Dalits and Adivasis' in acquiring education and tries to assess the contemporary situation by looking into their pass percentages and school completion rates. The study also gives the case of a successful educational program for Dalit and Adivasi students. In reviewing the literature, the following aspects are covered. (1)Nation wide and State specific studies on education of marginalized groups. (2) Studies conducted in the Kerala context.

### **1.2.1 Nation wide and State specific studies on education of marginalized groups**

Educational deprivation of Dalit and Adivasi children is always ascribed to their poverty and the poor material conditions at home. In addition to these household constraints, the learning atmosphere at schools is also not supportive to them. Nambissan [1996] argues that besides the poor infrastructural facilities, lack of effective pedagogic supports to acquire linguistic, numerical and cognitive competencies also adversely affect the schooling of Dalit children. The study finds that indifferent and careless attitude of teachers has great impact on the learning experiences of Dalit children. The researcher argues that by establishing non- formal educational institutions for these groups government is escaping from their responsibility to generate equity in the formal schooling system.

A field study on schooling of Dalit children throws light on the impact of caste discrimination or that of being Dalit in varying situations and school participation patterns [Jha and Jhingaran, 2005]. Twenty villages which have sizeable Dalit population from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Jharkhand were taken for this study. It observes that even today in India caste, through its correlates with poverty and social marginalization, does have a significant role in aggravating educational deprivation among Dalits. But as there appears a change in economic opportunities, socio- political mobilization and in the functioning of the school, there can be a transformation in the educational scenario as well.

A similar enquiry was undertaken among the tribal population in a few states [Jha and Jhingaran, 2005]. Eighteen villages from seven states of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkand, Gujarath, Karnataka, and Maharashtra were selected for the study. The study finds that the level of interest for schooling in tribal areas is very high in some places and the Adivasis consider education as the means to change their situation. But the physical access to schools is still a major handicap in many areas. Irregular functioning of the schools and the curriculum which do not match the tribal culture seem to keep the children away from school. The researchers have identified a strong need for establishing Ashram schools (residential schools) for the tribal children- in many areas. On the progress and working of such Ashram Schools for tribal students, a study was conducted in Thana District [Purandase1987]. The study suggests that

there is a need to start high school sections in such schools for their higher education. Ananda [1994] conducted a study on Ashram Schools in Andhra Pradesh and critically examined its functions and provided several policy suggestions to improve the system.

Sujatha [2002] looks at the education of Adivasis within the background of government's educational policies and programs by taking the major indicators like, literacy, enrollment, retention and physical access. She points out that the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes is 30% in 1991 census, which is well below the national average. Some states with higher tribal population seem to have higher literacy rate but in larger states like Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh literacy rates of Adivasis remain very low. Another factor which receives greater attention is that 'though the educationally developed states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have higher general literacy rates, they are still way behind the smaller and tribal concentrated states in terms of tribal literacy'. School participation among the tribal children is also very low compared to general population. During the year 1997-1998 enrolment of Adivasi students in classes' I-V was only 9 million. But there was improvement in girls' enrollment level in all the tribal concentrated states. Sujatha points out that drop outs and poor levels of achievement among Adivasi students' can be attributed to differences in socio-economic status. According to her enquiry remoteness and scattered nature of tribal habitations make school attendance a difficult proposition for the tribal children. She finds that about 1/5 th of Tribal population is constrained by this problem.

Subrahmanian Ramya [2005] discusses the educational backwardness of Dalits and Adivasi students in a social exclusion frame work. She indicates that the constitutional obligation of equality of opportunity is lost in the context of the 'school ethos' in which the educability of low ranked children is challenged by upper caste teachers in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The learning experiences of Dalit and Adivasi children in rural India is placed in the larger context of social marginalization of these communities in Nambissan [2003]. The paper focuses on the available literature on classroom processes and highlights the manner in which the educational experiences of Dalit and Adivasi children are influenced by social marginalization. The study deals with curriculum, language of educational transaction, and teacher attitudes. The author finds that 'for

Dalit and Adivasi children, classroom processes are likely to be pervaded by discriminatory attitudes and practices that stem from the position of these communities in the larger social structure. The exclusion of their language and culture from the medium and content of school syllabus, as well as messages of inferiority that are conveyed to them through the hidden curriculum, are critical factors that adversely affect those children's motivation to learn and make them to withdraw from studies'. The paper argues that the declaration of National Curriculum Framework [NCF] regarding equal opportunity in education disregard the reality of educational discriminations the children from these communities encounter in schools. 'On the other hand, the assumption by the NCF that non-formal and alternate structures of schooling will meet the educational needs of these children suggests that they are unlikely to be assured of 'equality of access or conditions of success.' Other studies also show that the exclusion of minority cultures from schools adversely affects the sense of self identity of such children, their motivation in school, and the very process of their learning [Corson, 1993]. Anitha [2000] in her study conducted in Karnataka finds that in SC/ST concentrated villages, educational transaction is dominated by what she calls 'domesticating orientation'. 'The educational transaction is directed to keep the children within the classroom without assigning any specific task.' Teachers tend to emphasize discipline by instilling fear in the children. It is characterized by, 'the absence of learning activity, accompanied by silence (defined by the teacher as "tolerable noise")...' and was similar to 'herding'. The teacher's indifferent and careless attitude is captured in the study. Teachers refer to these children as 'good for nothings', and they also feel that 'whatever benefits provided, these children will never improve'; 'even stones would respond but not these kids'. This reflects their strong indifference and negative approach towards the education of the Dalit and Adivasi children.

Central Institute of Research and Training in Public Cooperation [1975] tried to analyse the problem of school dropouts among Dalit children. The study focused the problem basically from a sociological perspective and described the ensemble of situations which had victimized the Dalit children to abandon schooling. The study was conducted in Ballia and Azamgarh districts of Uttar Pradesh. The Dalit locality which was surveyed was a veritable sight of poverty and neglect, displaying deprivations of every kind. The reasons for the incidence of drop outs among Dalit children were observed as poverty, antagonistic behavior of school teachers and school mates, lack of interest in studies etc.

A study conducted on the literacy status in West Bengal points out that Dalits and Adivasis in the state are educationally marginalized. [Ramachandran et.al, 2003]. It examines the factors affecting the literacy level and access to school education in the state. West Bengal is the unique state which has been ruled by a government with a pro- poor manifesto for more than 25 years. Researchers have tried to identify the barriers that still persist against the spread of basic school education. They argue that progress in school education is quite uneven; disparities of region, caste and gender are very sharp especially in the case of educational attainments among rural persons. Another study on the educational deprivation of the poor in Calcutta city [Nambissan, Geeta 2003] tries to identify the extent of access that the poor children have in getting regular primary education and the quality of schooling made available to them. The paper identifies poverty as the main cause for the educational deprivation of the poor.

Nambissan, Geeta [1983] tried to study the nature and magnitude of inequality of educational opportunities between Adivasis (Bhils) and non Adivasis of Rajasthan. She finds that Adivasis are educationally backward compared to the non-Adivasis and the economic situation of the households' acts as a crucial factor influencing educational opportunity. One significant finding was that most of the Adivasi respondents in her study had a positive attitude towards education, but their precarious social and economic conditions pull them back from having such aspirations.

A study on the education of the marginalized groups in Bihar gives meaningful insights [Jabbi.M.K, Rajyalakshmi2001]. The study was conducted in the two districts of Bihar; Bhojpur a developed district and Dumka a low performing district. Bhojpur has a long history of educational development but Dumka is tribal dominated and backward in terms of education and other development achievements. All the indicators of educational development like literacy mean years of schooling, enrollment rates etc are unfavorable in Dumka. One major finding of the study is that gender differences in schooling is less among the upper castes and the Adivasis , while there is a pronounced difference among the Dalit communities. There is a positive correlation between education of parents and enrollment of children. Among the children who are not going to school, very few participate in income earning activities. Girls mostly sit at home to do house hold chores while some boys go for

wage earning jobs and majority of them earn less than Rs 10 per day. The reasons cited for their educational backwardness are mostly household related in the case of girls and school related in the case for boys.

Some studies have looked into the educational variations among the Scheduled Castes. One such study is undertaken in Maharashtra by Wankhede [2001]. In this state which is known to be advanced in social and educational spheres, despite the long experience of social reform movements spearheaded by Ambedkar, the Dalits in general lag behind in education, and castes that are urban based and with low population proportions show high rates of literacy levels. The educational backwardness of the Scheduled Caste is attributed to poverty, discrimination in schools; lack of interest in learning etc and the author suggests that there is need for greater attention through incentives and better facilities given to each of the deprived castes.

[Nanchariah, 2002] tries to look at the condition of Dalits and their access to education during colonial period, and their educational development during the post Independence period. He finds that even after a great deal of government intervention, educational gaps between SC/ST and non SC/ST persists in India. He has also attempted to study their access to salaried jobs during this period. It observes that though there is some improvement in their representation in government services from 1971-1991, in autonomous bodies like universities their representation is quite insignificant.

### **1.2.2 Studies conducted in the Kerala Context:**

There are only very few studies available on the education of Dalits and Adivasis in the Kerala context. An ICSSR sponsored study was undertaken to understand the educational problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe college students in Kerala in 1975 [George, 1975]. The sample size of this study consisted of 215 Scheduled Caste and 63 Scheduled Tribes students from various colleges in Kerala. The enquiry was to capture the problems of Dalit and Adivasi students in availing educational opportunities. It was found that the educational aspirations of the respondents were high. Majority of the SC respondents felt that only because of the scholarship schemes of the government that they could go for education. However, two thirds of them were of the opinion that the scholarship amount was quite



inadequate and suggested for enhancement. The ST respondents classified themselves as financially the most backward and wanted the scholarship amount to be substantially enhanced. The study also tried to get the assessment of teachers on Dalit and tribal education. The teachers felt that inadequate and very poor economic background of these students had contributed a great deal to their poor educational performance.

[Krishnan 1999] discusses the educational scene in Wayanad district. The district has the highest tribal concentration in the state. The objective of his study was 'to understand the extent of awareness on the part of the tribesfolk about the educational schemes meant for them and the degree of utilization of such schemes by the tribal households in Kerala'. He found that different tribal communities in the study area had different educational achievements and this difference was attributed to the variations in their poverty levels and availability of school infrastructure within their reach. Poverty indeed was the major reason, he pointed out, for the high drop out rates in the tribal areas. The study observed that a sizeable section among them remained unaware of many of the facilities made available by the government for their educational improvement. Inter – tribal variation was significant in their level of awareness and the extent of utilization of educational facilities. The Kurichians and Kurumans had greater awareness about various educational schemes while the Paniyans and Kattunaikans were least informed. One major observation of the study was that Adivasis were keen to educate their girl children. Three fourth of the respondents in the study area were very eager to educate their girl children as well. The study observes that educational backwardness of Adivasis does not arise solely due to the paucity of educational schemes in the area; rather it is a result of the ineffective and faulty implementation of such schemes. It could become successful if only the tribesfolk also become more aware and active in pursuing education.

A recent study covers major issues on school education in contemporary Kerala [Chandrasekhar.C.P et.al, 2001]. The paper particularly focuses on the levels of public investment, issues of access, retention of students, physical infrastructure, course content and new forms of community participation in school education. By giving a brief historic overview of educational and social development in Kerala, the authors point out that traditional inequalities still persist. The problems of access to school, enrollment and attendance in primary classes among Dalits and Adivasi children had been overcome to a large extent. In the case of retention of children in

schools, especially that of Dalit and Adivasi pupils, is found to be lower compared to others. The study illustrates the prevalence of three features in school performance in Kerala in the 1990s. First is the sudden drop in retention rates at the Class 10 level, about 93 per cent of those joining in Class 1 remained in the school system until they reach Class 9, while only 75 per cent continued in school a year later, in Class 10. For the Dalit children, the retention rate in Class 10 for the same cohort (1990-91 to 1999-2000) was 64 per cent, and for Adivasi children, the retention rate in Class 10 was only 35 per cent. The study points out that the high rate of dropout from the school system at this stage is because of the fact that these students possess confidence in passing the Class 10 school-leaving- certificate examination. The second feature was the high rate of failure in the Class 10 examination. It is found that only 50 % of students clear Class 10; the number would be lower still if those who pass on "moderation", or the award of grace marks, were excluded. The third was the standard of learning achieved by the students at different stages of school system was unacceptably low. The study also throws some light on the new forms of community participation in school education in Kerala.

Based on the above review of literature on the educational experience of Dalit /Adivasi children in the country, some observations can be advanced.

At the national level there are several studies dealing with the educational backwardness of Dalits and Adivasi children, but very few notable studies could be identified in the context of Kerala.

All studies observe that socio economic factors such as poor material conditions , unfriendly academic atmosphere at home and school related problems like inefficient and indifferent attitude of teachers, and problems of curriculum are the major impediments that discriminate the Dalits and Adivasi students from better educational performance.

There are not worthwhile studies dealing with the prospects of the special schools for Dalit and Adivasi children. In Kerala no major research has been done so far assessing the performance of the special schools created exclusively for the benefit of Dalit and Adivasi children.

In this context we try to analyze the various social and economic factors that affect the educational performance of Dalit/Adivasi students in Kerala in a historical perspective.

The study will focus on the performance of Dalits and Adivasi students in school education and in comparison with the performance of non SC/ST students as well as with the students of special schools, i.e, Model Residential Schools. To understand the performance level we take SSLC as the prime indicator. The study also gives gender dimensions of SSLC results. A case study of Model Residential Schools, a government sponsored educational institution for Dalits and Adivasi students is attempted to sight as an ideal situation that can be replicated for all the disadvantaged social groups for attaining educational excellence.

### **1.3 Objectives of Study**

The objectives of the study will be:

- To trace the historical experience of the Dalits and Adivasis in their attainment of formal education.
- To enquire into the educational achievement/performance of Dalit and Adivasi students at the school level and to compare and contrast their attainment levels with those in Model Residential Schools and (2) Dalit students in non- MRS schools

### **1.4 Analytical Framework**

We follow an inclusion- exclusion framework to analyse the educational status of Dalit and Adivasi children in Kerala. Social Exclusion is a multi dimensional concept. People may be excluded from pursuing certain livelihoods, following certain employment, possessing property, getting education and welfare state protection, or making contacts in other spheres [Silver 1994]. In Kerala we find that the educational system has moments of accommodation as well as ejection. It implies that there are deliberate inclusionary attempts from the part of the government in various ways, which are reflected in the form of high literacy, high enrolment and so on. At the same time if we probe further into the class and caste status of students in terms of their performance in SSLC examination and the school completion rates we find that the present educational system is in a way excluding Dalit and Adivasi children.

## **1.5 Methodology and Data Sources**

The study is limited to School education in Kerala. We mainly depend on archival records, statistics on school education available from the department of Public Instruction, School office records, census data, and other sources of data and literature on school education in the state. In order to capture the specificities of Model Residential School system, a case study is attempted in a Model Residential School located in Thiruvananthapuram district. We have conducted various interactive sessions with students and teachers of the school. More over a scheduled questionnaire was send to the headmaster/headmistress of all Model Residential Schools in the state to gather their perspectives on the functioning of Model Residential Schools.

## 2

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF DALITS AND ADIVASIS - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine briefly the social context of educational development of Dalits and Adivasis in Kerala. We propose to study the progress of their educational attainment since 1956, i.e., post state formation period and trace the role of various agencies. We also try to bring out the persistence of educational gap between Dalits and Non - Dalits, in the process of educational growth.

The system of education assumes crucial importance in studying societal advancement and it needs to be examined within the socio- economic context in which it has developed' [Basu.A,1982, p.91]. In the highly stratified Hindu caste system, it is possible that, instead of becoming a means of rapid social transformation, education can tend to reflect and perpetuate social/caste distinctions [Satyanarayana,A, 2004, p 52]. It becomes necessary therefore to assess the impact of education within the context of social stratification as well. Kerala had witnessed the most rigid caste system in the country. The worst forms of untouchability were practiced in this state. The depressed castes did not have access to public places, such as temples, public paths, bathing tanks, roads and educational institutions [Ramachandran, 1996 p 275]. Indeed Swami Vivekananda, had described this state as "a mad house of caste divisions".

### 2.2 Early Socio-Economic and Educational scene of Kerala

During the feudal period 'the entire Kerala society was divided into two: those belonging to the caste hierarchy were Savarnas and those outside were branded as

Avarnas (casteless). The Savarnas had supported the dominance of Brahmins what initiated caste hierarchy, and attained caste status: the kings and chieftains becoming Kshatriyas; and others Sudras (Nairs).’ Believers of Buddhism and Jainism, who protested against Brahminical dominance, were incorporated later under Hinduism, but were treated as Avarnas, the Ezhavas got inferior status in the caste hierarchy. But the indigenous ethnic groups like Pulayas, Parayas , Kuravas etc did not get absorbed into the four fold varna caste system, but remained outside as ‘panchamas’ ,the lowest group of the Hindu Society. Caste Hindus enjoyed land ownership rights, superior tenancy rights, and also held religious and political powers. Avarna Castes, on the other hand , had no right over landed property or any other socio- economic or political privileges, they spend their whole life to serve for the social and economic interests of the Savarnas. ‘Inequality, Discrimination and Caste Oppression were the institutionalized characteristics of the prevailing social structure’. [Sivanadan p 73-78]. Educational facilities were quite widespread in Kerala even during the pre-British period. But the distribution of educational opportunities was in those times determined by the pattern of distribution of ownership and control of land [Nair.P.R.G, 1983]. According to Vedic theory education was the monopoly of the Brahmins [Logan, William, 1931, p 109], in practice however, it was, in reach of all socially privileged groups [ Aiya , Nagam 1906 p 445]. Higher education, especially the study of Vedas was still an exclusive preserve of Brahmins in medieval Kerala Society [Pillai, Kunjan 1970, p 267].There were popular educational institutions mostly as relics of the erstwhile Buddhist tradition which provided basic educational facilities to all other castes and communities. Such institutions were known as kudipallikudams (village primary schools) or Ashan pallikudams [Tharakan,1984 p 1914]. The education received by the avarnas in general consisted little else than their folklores and skills handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth [Nair.PR.G,1983]. Dalits and Adivasis were by and large excluded even from these institutions.

The beginning of modern education in Travancore can be traced back to the issue of a Royal Transcript by Rani Gouri Parvathy Bai under the advice of the Resident, Colonel Munro. The Rescript was addressed to Venkata Rao, Dewan Peishkar of Quilon. It was resolved that, “the state should defray the whole cost of education of its people in order that there might be no backwardness in the spread of enlightenment among them; that by diffusion of education they might become better subjects and public servants , and the reputation of state might be advanced

thereby." But even after several years of Queen's proclamation , education in Travancore did not reach the people of depressed castes. The lower castes like Ezhavas, Parayas and Pulayas were not admitted in the government Schools. In 1891-92 Ezhava students constituted only 2.1 percent of all students in Government Schools<sup>1</sup> while they constituted 16 percent of total population. The representation of Pulayas and Parayas was zero in government schools. Even though by law, the government schools should be opened for all the castes, in practice it was restricted. Therefore, in order to provide education to the backward castes, in 1895-96 the Travancore Government had started 15 special schools: 4 for Muslims, 7 for Ezhavas, 2 for Pulayas 1 for Marakkans and 1 for Kanis. In the next year, 15 more schools were established for them.<sup>2</sup> In spite of these efforts large majority of government schools obviously were inaccessible to backward castes. During 1901 in Travancore, the literacy rate among Pulayas was 0.17%. The literacy levels of some selected communities during the pre- independence period are given in the table below (see Table 2.1). It shows the prevalence of wide inequality among the different caste groups. The rate of growth and the levels of literacy among the Dalits were significantly lower compared to those of other communities. Among the three divisions, namely the princely states of Travancore and Cochin and the Malabar district, the literacy rates of Pulayas, other Scheduled Castes were better in Travancore. Malabar lagged far behind in the education of depressed castes. In 1941 the literacy level of Pulayas in Malabar was only 1.9percent. Ezhavas, the intermediary castes, drawing inspiration from social reform movement had made appreciable achievements in literacy levels [Sivanadan, 1989, p105]. We could also see from the table that there is a slight improvement in the literacy rates of Scheduled Castes in Travancore over the years, but the improvement is minimal compared to other castes. This improvement was mainly due to the efforts of Christian Missionaries, Sree Narayana movement and the efforts of Ayyankali.

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<sup>1</sup> Trivandrum,1898, TR Box 7, CWMA ; Nagercoil 1902, TR Box 8, CWMA

<sup>2</sup> Nagam Aiya, Manual , vol II,p 482

**Table 2.1**

Literacy Levels of Selected Communities during  
Pre-independence Period in the three regions in Kerala

Community	Travancore			Cochin			Malabar		
	1911	1931	1941	1911	1931	1941	1921	1931	1941
Brahmin	45.2	50.9	73.9	42.5	68.0	73.7	42.8	44.7	57.0
Nair	23.0	35.5	61.7	27.1	55.7	63.2	26.1	28.0	37.7
Syrian Christian	18.4	35.7	55.6	21.5	40.1	55.4	32.4	37.3	40.5
Ezhava	10.1	21.3	46.5	8.2	26.2	34.7	10.6	21.9	N.A
Muslim	9.4	14.8	30.1	7.4	13.7	23.2	5.7	6.2	7.5
Pulaya	0.8	3.3	17.0	0.5	5.3	9.8	Nil	1.2	1.9
SC(Total)	3.0	5.0	18.0	..	..	9.6	..	..	1.0

Source: Census Reports : Travancore, Cochin and Malabar for 1911,1921,1931 and 1941 (cited in Sivanandan ,1989,p103)

There was increased awareness and demand from the Ezhavas and other lower castes from 1890 onwards for educational opportunities. In 1896, P.Palpu, one of the stalwarts of Ezhava community submitted a petition to the Maharaja of Travancore explaining the exclusion of lower caste children from entering government schools. The Pulayas also were united under the leadership of Ayyan Kali(1863-1941) . He played a significant role in the struggle for the emancipation of the Pulayas and other lower castes, and challenged caste based disadvantages faced by them such as exclusion from public roads, markets, temples, government offices, schools etc. In 1904 the Pulayas under his leadership made efforts to start their own schools. The pupils in these schools had no black boards, the sand on the floor was their book and the fingers their pencils. The first school in the history of Dalit education in Travancore was established in Venganoor, but it did not survive for long. In 1907 the government passed an order to admit Dalit children in all schools. But the officials did not implement the order , especially in rural areas. The school management consisting of landlords also refused to implement the order. In order to pressurize the government and other managements Ayyankali had threatened and said, "If you don't allow our children to study, weeds will grow in your fields". He cut apart the last strand of kinship between the landlords and labours and paved the way for the first ever agricultural labour strike in history. Yielding to this strong year long protest, the government had removed all restrictions for admission to depressed class children in schools after this, and more new schools were started for them. But the officials and authorities of the schools were still reluctant to implement the order for



the initial few years [PTSTA, 1951:99]. From the year 1917 onwards there were intense efforts by lower castes to get their legitimate share of opportunities in matters of education and employment. Their effort ultimately succeeded as the government brought out various measures for their education like night schools, special schools for different caste and communities, girls schools ,etc [Salim Abdul and PRG Nair, 2002,p 66]. Gradually government converted the special schools into general schools as the caste stigma was slowly getting reduced. Since 1931 (census) there was significant improvement in the educational levels of lower castes. There were different factors contributing to change ,such as , the removal of restrictions to admission of pupils in government and aided schools on the basis of caste or religion and the liberal policy followed in the 1930s for assigning uncultivated lands to depressed communities at concessional rates[Iyer,1923] and the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore (1936) which gave further fillip to the educational aspirations of lower castes. Table 2.2 depicts the enrolment of students of different castes in the year 1935-36 and 1947-48.

**Table 2.2**

Students by Castes in Travancore, 1935-36/1947-48(in'000)

Caste /Community	Enrolment		Increase in enrolment
	1935-36	1947-48	Enrolment
Nair	144.5	238.8	65.3
Ezhava	113.6	202.1	77.9
Pulaya	15.1	29.4	94.7
Syrian Catholic	71.8	131.1	82.6
Latin Catholic	44.8	70.6	57.6
Muslim	31.6	56.6	79.1

Source: Administration Report of education Department, Relevant years, Nair, 1989:299

In Malabar also government has neglected the education of depressed class until the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1930, schools were thrown open to Scheduled Castes [Salim Abdul, PRG Nair, 2002 p 139]. However, there were strong protests from upper castes, for instance, when the *Nayadis* of Malabar were admitted to a District Board school in 1938 the students of higher castes had completely boycotted the school. At Archur, Mappilla(Muslim) children boycotted classes when Dalit children were admitted to school [Salim Abdul, PRG Nair, 2002] . In course of time,

however, the protests subsided. Thus the influence of social reform movements, state intervention and public action had brought about significant changes in the educational infrastructure of the state over time.

During the post independence period several policies and programs were introduced to improve the economic and educational status of the under privileged groups in Kerala [Sivanadan, p 73-90].

### 2.3 Education among Lower Castes after the State formation

The educational growth in Kerala during the post independence period is quite impressive not only in terms of the growth of institutions, teachers, enrollment of students and expenditure but also in terms of the development and diversification of higher stages of education [Nair. P.R.G, 1983 p 78]. At the time of state formation the status of school education among the various social groups in the state is depicted in the following table (See Table 2.3). It gives community wise break up of students in various classes and the percentage of SC , ST and Other students in School Enrolment during the year 1956-57. It reveals that the School enrolment of Dalits and Adivasi students was very low around 7 percent, much below the share in population and in case of Adivasis , very few children were enrolled for schooling.

**Table 2.3**

Community wise Students in Schools  
in the Total School Enrolment in Kerala 1956-57

Community	Enrolment			Percentage in Total enrolment		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
ST	10837	7271	3566	0.40	0.52	0.30
SC	185585	10977	75808	6.85	0.78	6.28
Others	2512849	1385733	1127116	92.75	98.70	93.42

Source: Calculated from Educational Statistics since Independence,  
DPI publication

The Communist ministry which came to power in the unified state in 1956 had brought blatant changes in the area of education. Nossiter [1982, p168] has stated, "No account of the communist ministry could avoid placing the accent on education and land reform." The government found it necessary to reform the educational system, as it continued to remain as the privilege of specific caste/religious groups.

By the mid 1960s only 17 percent of the Scheduled Caste population had finished primary school [Lieten 1982, p 35]. The introduction of Kerala Education Bill 1957, by Joseph Mundaseery, the then Education Minister of Kerala was a milestone in the history of education in Kerala. Some major provisions included in the bill were the following;

(a) The government may regulate the primary and other stages of education in government and private schools (b) the government shall pay the salary of all teaching and non-teaching staff in aided schools direct or through the headmaster of the school (c) all fees collected should be deposited with the government (d) government may pay grants to the management for maintenance and purchase of land, buildings , equipments etc. (e) the managers of private schools shall be deemed to have been appointed by the Act and they are to appoint teachers from the list of the candidates prepared by the public Service Commission (g) the government may appoint local educational authorities to satisfy local needs and constitute a State Education Advisory board to advise the government [Kerala Education Act ,1958]. There was widespread agitation against this Bill by the Christian Church , and they gathered support from various communal groups having private management schools/colleges like SNDP(Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham), NSS( Nair Service Society), MES (Muslim Education Society). This agitation along with the protest against agrarian reforms created the “ Liberation Struggle” which led to the overthrow of the first Communist ministry in Kerala in July 1959.

There was a rapid growth of educational institutions. The private sector controlled more than 60 percent of schools in the state (see Table 2.5) and most of the institutions were run by Christians Management (see Table 2.6).

**Table 2.4**

Educational Institutions  
under Private Management

Year	Total Schools
1970-71	63.5
1975-76	60.8
1979-80	61.9
1981-82	62.0

Source: cited in Sivanadan,1989

**Table 2.5**  
Distribution of Schools in  
Kerala according to management in the year 1962-63

Management	Percentage
NSS	1.33
SNDP	0.97
Other Hindus	26.22
RC	10.54
Syrian Christians	3.65
Marthoma	2.19
Latin Catholics	1.89
Jacobite	0.60
Other Christians	1.82
Muslims	2.46
Anglo Indians	4.63
Government	39.11
Others	4.59
Total	100

Source: Administrative Report, 1962-63, DPI

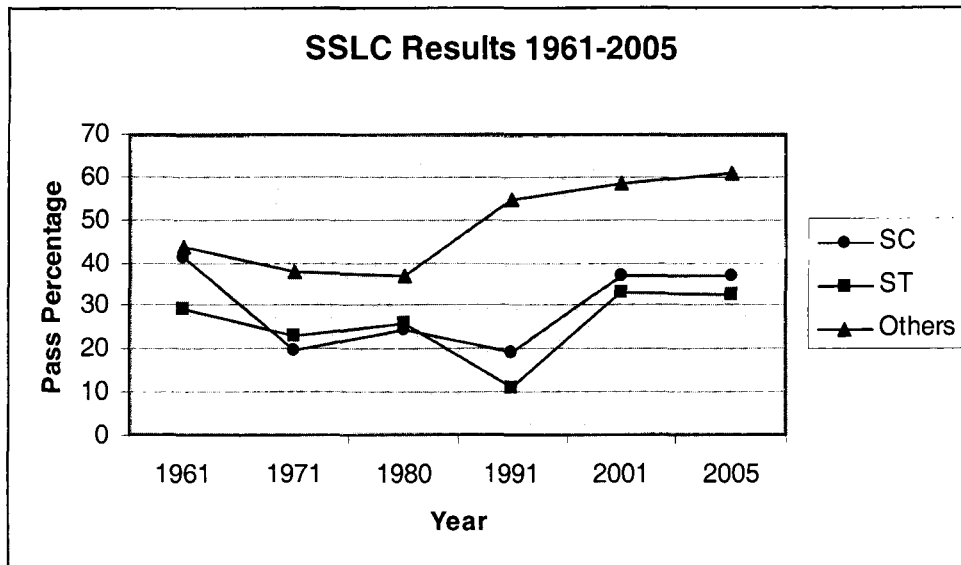
Vigorous steps were taken by the government to improve the educational levels of Dalits and Adivasi students. Improvement in literacy rates and increase in enrollment levels had occurred. The percentage of enrollment of SC students in the total enrollment had increased from 7.6 percent in 1964-65 to 11 percent in 1994-95. In the case of ST students, the increase was from 0.6 percent to 11 percent during the same period [Salim Abdul, PRG Nair, 2002, p 169]. However the success rate of Dalits and Adivasis in the SSLC examination was not impressive. It always remained below the state average (see Table 2.7).

**Table 2.6**  
SSLC Results 1961-2005

Year	SC	ST	Others
1961	41.15	29.01	43.48
1971	19.87	22.95	38.06
1980	24.51	26.06	36.77
1991	19.20	11.00	54.88
2001	36.74	32.85	58.70
2005	37.03	32.5	61

Source: Various Administrative Reports, DPI

Figure-2.1  
SSLC Results 1961-2005



Source: Various Administrative Reports, DPI

When we analyse the educational attainment of Dalits and Adivasis for last 45 years we find that there is not much improvement in their educational levels over years, in fact it is seen to be coming down in certain years and the gap between them and the non -Dalits persist strongly even today. [Sivanandan, 1989,p 109]. It can also be seen that the private sector dominate the education sector in the state. It leads to the perpetuation of caste - class differences in the society and accelerates the process of marginalization of the traditionally deprived communities.

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### 3

## CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF DALITS AND ADIVASIS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

### 3.1 Introduction:

In the last chapter we have attempted a historical overview of Kerala's educational development with special reference to Dalits and Adivasis since the reorganization of the state in 1956. The overall educational development in Kerala since independence has been impressive especially in terms of growth of educational institutions; enrolment of students and expenditure [Salim Abdul and P.R.G Nair, 2002]. The density of schools in Kerala is quite as high compared to any other state in India. There are 12,650 schools in the year 2005 comprising 6827 Lower Primary Schools, 3042 Upper Primary Schools and 2781 High Schools with a total enrolment of 48.42 lakh students [Kerala Economic Review, 2005]. There is one lower primary school for every sq km, and one high school for every 4 sq km. The teacher pupil ratio during 2004-05 is as low as 1:27. Stage wise details of teacher pupil ratio show that, it differs at each stage. At the lower primary level it is 1:30 at the upper primary, 1:27.5 and at the high school, 1:25.5. The physical and basic facilities in the schools are also more or less evenly distributed in both urban and rural areas [AIES, 1993-94]. Kerala's achievement in educational front is illustrious. But it must be pointed out that it has its own problems, of course, of a different nature. It seems traditional patterns of inequalities persist even today. 'There are social groups that are substantially lagging behind the rest of the population in terms of educational attainment and other development achievements.' They are mostly the scheduled castes and tribes, traditional coastal fishing communities and the underclass of Tamil migrant workers in the state [Chandrasekhar et.al, 2001].



Dalits and Adivasis in general are the most marginalized sections in India. Even after half a century of planned economic development, large sections of Dalits remain socially as outcastes and they are deprived of education and civic amenities and are economically dependent on the upper castes for survival [Mungekar, 2001]. The condition of the Adivasis is even more pathetic [Kunhaman, 1999]. The statistical indicators of educational achievements such as literacy, enrolment rates, and school attendance among SC/STs and non SC/STs in Kerala are not so uneven compared to the rest of the Indian states. Kerala ranks first in India not only in the literacy of total population but also in the literacy of Scheduled Caste population. According to 1991 census the literacy rate of Dalits was 79.66 percent against 89.81 percent for the state as a whole. At the national level the literacy rate of Dalits was only 37.41 percent as against 52.21 percent for the general population in the same Census year. The literacy rate among Adivasis in Kerala was 57.22 percent as against 29.60 percent for the entire Adivasi population at the national level in 1991. It means that, the shortage of literacy rate among the Adivasis in Kerala was as high as 32 percentage points below the state level literacy rate. In the case of enrolment, the proportion of Dalits and Adivasi students in Lower Primary and Upper primary Schools are relatively higher than their population share but in High School sections the share of Adivasi students get reduced. There are severe maladies in Kerala's school education system which has to be examined beyond these figures. For instance, the deteriorating quality of school education, increasing number of private unaided institutions, the poor learning experiences of students coming from disadvantaged sections and so on are factors which need serious attention.

In this chapter we attempt to examine the present status of Dalits and Adivasi students by looking at the outcomes of schooling and also making a comparison of the experience of non- Dalit/Adivasi students. We have taken SSLC and Higher Secondary results as one indicator and School Completion Rates as another parameter to compare the educational performance of SC/ST students with that of the non SC/ST students.

### 3.2 Who fails in Public Examinations?

“The examination system is actually cheating the masses by concealing the deep divisions that exist within the education system; where a poor mill-workers child from a neglected government school is made to compete with children from well-to-do public schools. The system submerge these ugly realities under a veneer of total parity among candidates. But it hardly needs probing to find that a majority of failures belong to the disadvantaged”

*Krishna Kumar (PROBE, 1999)*

Performance of students is considered as one of the important indicators of educational outcomes. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), in a study in 1994 pointed out that Kerala stands 18<sup>th</sup> in the list of states in educational standards at school level [Ramakrishnan.C, 1999]. A sample study conducted by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, a people's science movement, found that in Thiruvananthapuram district, 30 to 35 percent of students from standard VII have not attained the minimum level of language proficiency prescribed for standard II [Tharakan.P.K.M, 2003, p32]. World Bank (1997) study points out that 'Scheduled caste students performed less well than other students in mathematics in five of eight states and in language in six out of eight states, with the difference greater than 25 percent of standard deviation for mathematics in Haryana, Karnataka and Kerala and for language in Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa.' A field study in Kerala concluded that even though Kerala has made substantial advances in infrastructure, enrollment and retaining children in primary schools; its record in terms of student performance is not acceptable [Varghese 1999]. The SSLC result is an ample evidence of their poor performance. Data shows that the number of students who clears the SSLC examination is less than half of the numbers writing the exam (Table 3.1). Even the current pass percentage is officially maintained by the practice of giving 'moderation' marks, it is a systematic inflation of marks to push more students across the passing line. 'If there is no such 'moderation' the pass percentage would be around 35 percent [Ganesh and Ramakrishnan 2000, p. 4]. The same study also brings out the fact that, the proportion of pupils who do not pass the SSLC examination is higher in the government and government aided schools than in elite private schools.



Our study looks at the performance of SC/ST students and provides a comparison with the non-SC/STs by taking SSLC/Higher secondary results as an indicator; it could help us to identify those who get excluded from the educational system.

### 3.2.1 Social groups and SSLC Results

Different studies have shown that the overall performance in the Secondary School Leaving certificate (SSLC) examination, which students write at the end of Class 10, is very poor [Chandrasekhar. C.P et.al 2001, Chakraborty Achin, 2005]. At the same time, there is also disparities in the performance of students among the various social groups. The table below gives the number of students passed in SSLC examination among SC, ST and others from the year 1991 to 2005.

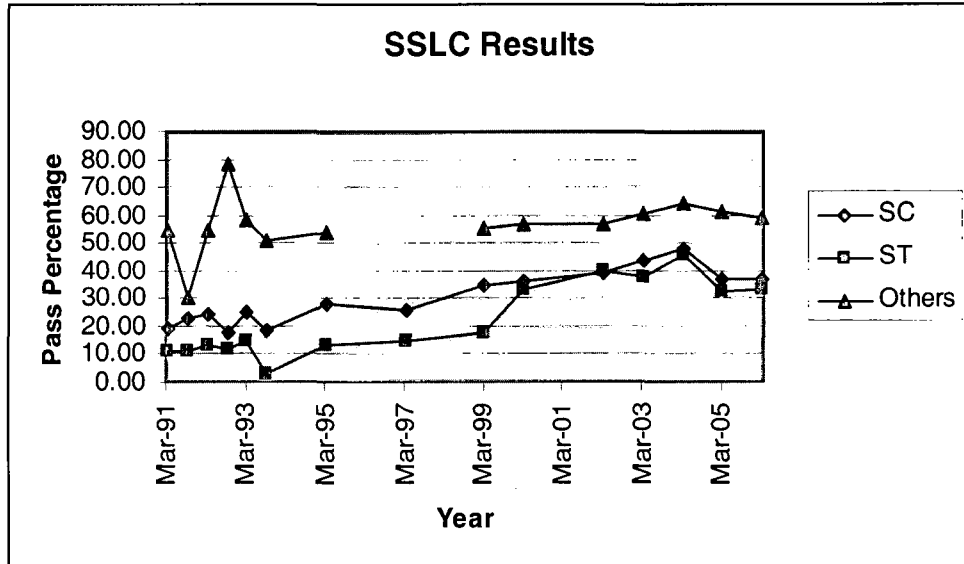
**Table-3.1**  
SSLC Results 1991-2005

Year	Month	Pass Percentage SC			Pass Percentage ST			Pass Percentage Others		
		Total%	Boys %	Girls %	Total%	Boys %	Girls %	Total%	Boys %	Girls %
1991	Mar	19.2	20.24	18.06	11	11.52	10.41	54.88	55.47	54.29
	Sep	22.9	24.14	20.16	10.71	10.26	11.76	30.44	27.42	36.09
1992	Mar	24.4	25.72	22.19	13.51	14.95	9.18	54.85	55.94	53.83
	Sep	17.9	20.83	12.63	12.14	9.30	23.81	78.07	24.75	26.30
1993	Mar	25.2	30.97	17.40	14.83	17.59	11.43	58.30	56.15	60.91
	Sep	18.6	28.06	5.83	3.12	2.33	10.00	50.60	51.88	48.91
1995	Mar	28.2	28.98	27.30	13.27	14.38	12.13	53.77	53.37	54.22
1997	Mar	25.9	28.27	23.12	14.75	14.80	14.70	N.A	N.A	N.A
	Sep	18.1	16.32	20.84	5.97	8.16	3.49	N.A	N.A	N.A
1999	Mar	34.6	34.00	35.42	17.69	13.33	27.50	55.35	55.17	55.55
	Sept	11.5	9.38	18.75	11	15.00	7.00	N.A	N.A	N.A
2000	Mar	36.4	37.28	39.14	33.13	27.47	38.72	56.55	55.98	56.69
2001	Mar	36.7	33.17	39.85	32.85	33.74	32.08	58.70	54.54	62.52
2002	Mar	39.3	35.21	43.01	39.69	39.79	39.61	56.90	59.20	67.20
2003	Mar	43.8	38.75	48.25	37.71	36.36	38.96	60.55	62.97	71.36
2004	Mar	48.1	44.66	51.34	45.95	45.04	46.75	64.40	68.52	74.66
2005	Mar	37.03	N.A	N.A	32.5	N.A	N.A	61.00	N.A	N.A

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

Note: N.A -Not Available

Figure-3.1



Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

The Table -1 gives the variations in the performance of SC/ST and non SC/ST students. We find that, the pass percentage for the SC students was 19.2 in March 1991, for the ST students it was only 11% which for others it was 54.88%. In March 2005, the pass percentage of SC students has gone up to 37.03%, for ST to 32.5, but for others it is almost double their rates, 61%. We therefore find that the gap in the pass percentages between the SC/ST and non SC/ST students is quite high. It is also evident that the rate of improvement in the performance of Dalit and Adivasi children over the years is very low. In order to assess the trend in disparity we construct the disparity ratio.

### 3.2.1(a) Disparity Ratio

Disparities in the SSLC pass percentage between SC/ST students and non SC/ST students have been quite high in Kerala, although it is showing a decreasing trend in recent years, the rate of decrease is extremely low in the case of STs. In a bid to measure this disparity, the following simple ratio is used.

$$\text{Disparity Ratio (A, B)} = \frac{\text{Pass percentage of group A}}{\text{Pass percentage of group B}}$$

Where Group A, forms SC/ST students and Group B refers to non SC/ST students

The index measures the performance of SC/ST students relative to non SC/ST students. If pass percentage in group A is low relative to that in group B, the ratio will have a low value, less than 1. As pass percentage in group A rises relative to group B, the ratio rises reaching the value 1 when pass percentage among the two groups is equal. Any deviation from 1 is thus a measure of disparity between the groups.

**Table-3.2**

Disparity Ratio

Year	SC	ST
1991	0.35	0.2
1992	0.45	0.25
1993	0.43	0.25
1995	0.52	0.25
1999	0.63	0.32
2000	0.64	0.59
2001	0.63	0.56
2002	0.69	0.70
2003	0.72	0.62
2004	0.75	0.71
2005	0.60	0.53

Source: Calculated by the author from SSLC results

In the year 1991, the ratio for SC students was 0.35 while for STs, it was 0.2; in the year 2005 the ratio is 0.60 for SC students and 0.53 for STs. These disparity ratios reveal that, there is of course some improvement over the years in favor of Dalit /Adivasi students, but the pace of change is very slow.

Another important factor which needs to be assessed in the matter of SSLC examination of Dalits and Adivasi students is the level of success divisions achieved by them. A survey by UGC in 1960 indicates that Dalit students who were successful in school leaving examinations secured mainly third divisions [Singh 1985]. The detailed SSLC results of various years collected from Govt. Higher Secondary School Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram support the above study.

**Table 3.3**

Detailed SSLC Results of Govt Higher Secondary School, Medical College,  
Trivandrum

Category	Appeared	Passed			
		Distinction	First Class	Second Class	Third Class
March 2000					
Gen	24	0	0	1	6
OBC	79	0	2	3	11
SC	40	0	0	1	6
ST	0	0	0	0	0
OEC	3	0	0	0	0
March-2001					
Gen	3	0	0	0	1
OBC	17	0	0	1	1
SC	12	0	0	0	0
ST	0	0	0	0	0
OEC	0	0	0	0	0
March-2002					
Gen	16	0	3	2	3
OBC	49	0	5	6	17
SC	34	0	1	3	6
ST	1	0	0	0	1
OEC	5	0	0	0	1
March-2003					
Gen	22	0	1	1	6
OBC	67	0	3	6	15
SC	33	0	2	0	5
ST	0	0	0	0	0
OEC	4	0	0	0	2
March-2004					
Gen	22	0	0	2	8
OBC	61	0	0	2	27
SC	29	0	0	1	10
ST	0	0	0	0	0
OEC	3	0	0	0	0

Source: School records, Govt Higher Secondary School, Medical College, Trivandrum

Table 3.3 shows that, in the year 2000 March, out of the 40 SC students who appeared for the examination only 7 cleared, one with a second class and the others with only

third class. In the year 2001 none of the SC students appeared in the examination had cleared. In 2002, out of the 34 appeared, one got first class, 3 secured second class and 6 students cleared the exam with third class. During the year 2003 out of the 33 appeared 2 got first class and 5 passed with third class. Out of the 29 students appeared in the year 2004, 11 cleared the examination and among them 1 secured second class and others had third class only.

A study which was more an action oriented than academic was conducted earlier in the Medical College Higher Secondary School by KRPLLD to understand the quality of the government schools as well as to take appropriate action to improve the standards of the schools [Kumar Mohan .G and V.Sasi Kumar,1999]. They started on with the premise that in Kerala, in general, the government schools admit poorer children, teach indifferently and produce poor results. The researchers had interactive sessions with the teachers as well as the students. The teachers attributed several reasons such as indiscipline among the students, lack of interest among the parents, paucity of reference materials etc to this outcome. As it was more of an action oriented study, the researchers tried to help the students with better learning facilities and teaching aids which worked out well and yielded good results. The pass percentage in the SSLC examination has gone up from 28 percent in the previous examination (1997) to 34 percent in 1998. They disagree with the opinion that, students with the poor economic and educational back ground will perform poorly. The reason for the poor performance can be attributed to the indifferent teaching in the school and inadequate learning facilities at home.

Our case study in the same school shows that the SSLC results are not showing much improvement. In the year 2000 the pass percentage was 20.54, in the year 2002 it was 45.71, in 2003 it was 32.54 and in 2004, 43.48 percent. Interestingly the majority of the students in the particular school belong to backward castes and other disadvantaged communities which in turn confirm the study by Ganesh and Ramakrishnan [2000] that majority of income poor children and children from educationally deprived social groups go to government and state aided schools. The remark of a teacher of this school is pertinent in this context; it reveals the arrogance and animosity of the teachers against the poor students in the school.

“You don’t know, these are very difficult children. Most of them come from Akkulam and Chennilode colonies<sup>3</sup>. They are criminals. They break the benches and shouts at teachers. Will any parent from good families send their children to this school? That is why the pass percentage is also very low here.”

Declining enrollment in government schools, increase in the number of private unaided schools, emergence of international schools, opening up of state sponsored alternative schools etc give rise to a new trend of ‘hierarchies of access’- and this differentiated access to schooling seems to accompany a reaffirmation of a child’s caste, community and gender dimensions which determine the particular school she or he will get admitted [Ramachandran Vimala, 2002].

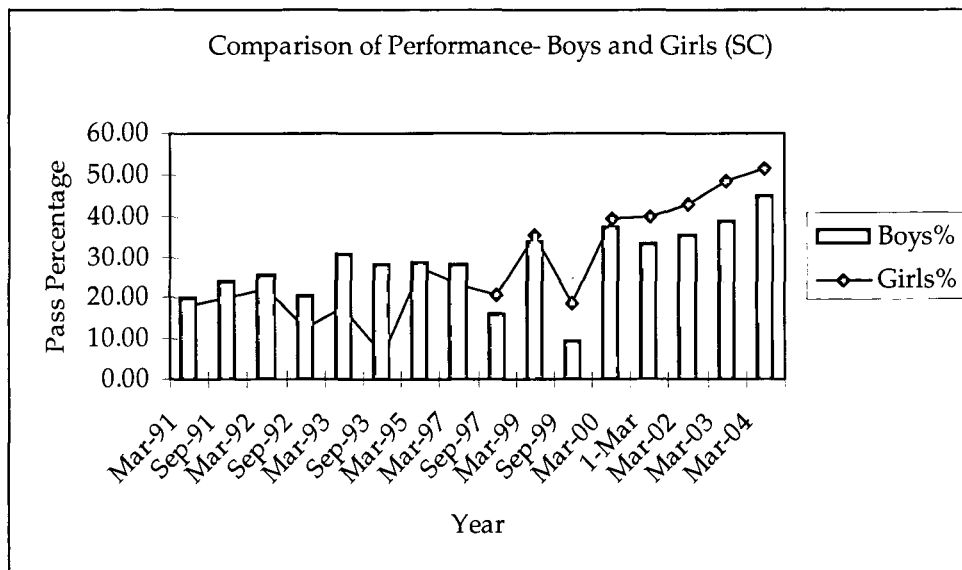
### 3.2.2 Gender and Examination Results

In the case of Kerala, parents are unbiased in educating boys and girls. ‘The percentage of enrollment of girls and boys in all classes from I to X standards is almost equal [ Tharakan Michael , 2003 p31]. Social reform movements, missionary activities and state intervention laid down a base for gender parity in education in the state. Moreover the number of women teachers in our schools does influence parents to send girls to school [Kerala Human Development Report, 2005 p 86]. Several studies points out that, girls have lower drop –out rates than boys[Kerala Human Development Report, 2005 p86]. Chakraborty Achin[2005, p545 ] takes a cohort of 100 students for his analysis, which displays that ‘of the total girls enrolled in the first standard in 1993-94, only 9.82 percent dropped before reaching the 10<sup>th</sup> standard in 2002-03, whereas ,18.93 percent of boys who enrolled in the same year had dropped out by the time they reached 10<sup>th</sup> standard. He finds that the gender pattern is uniform across social groups. Though there is no gender gap at the enrollment level, it would be interesting to see whether there is gender gap in the SSLC results among the various social groups. The following figures depict the comparative performance of girls and boys belonging to various social groups appearing for SSLC examination over the years since 1991 in Kerala.

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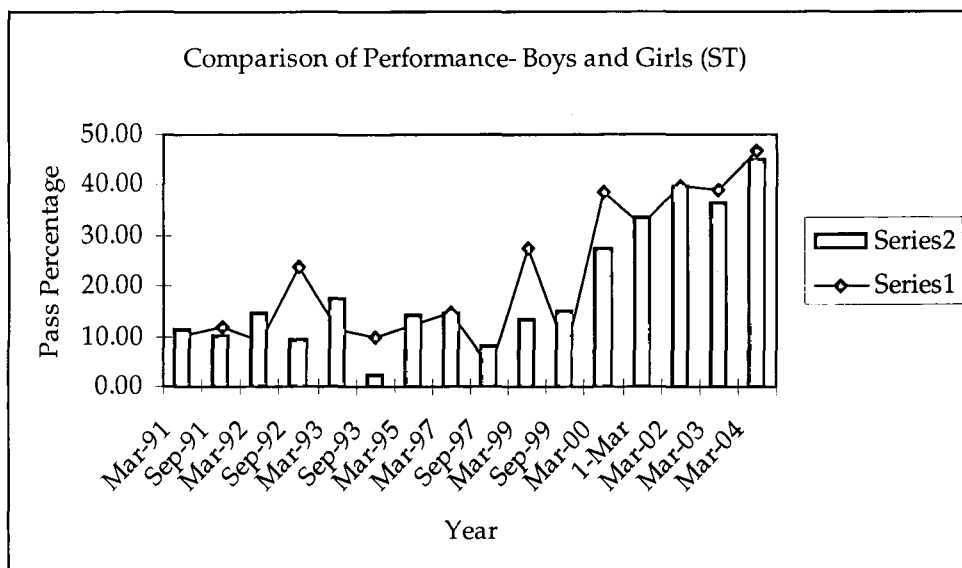
<sup>3</sup> Akkulam and Chennilode are Dalit colonies in Thiruvananthapuram city.

Figure-3.2



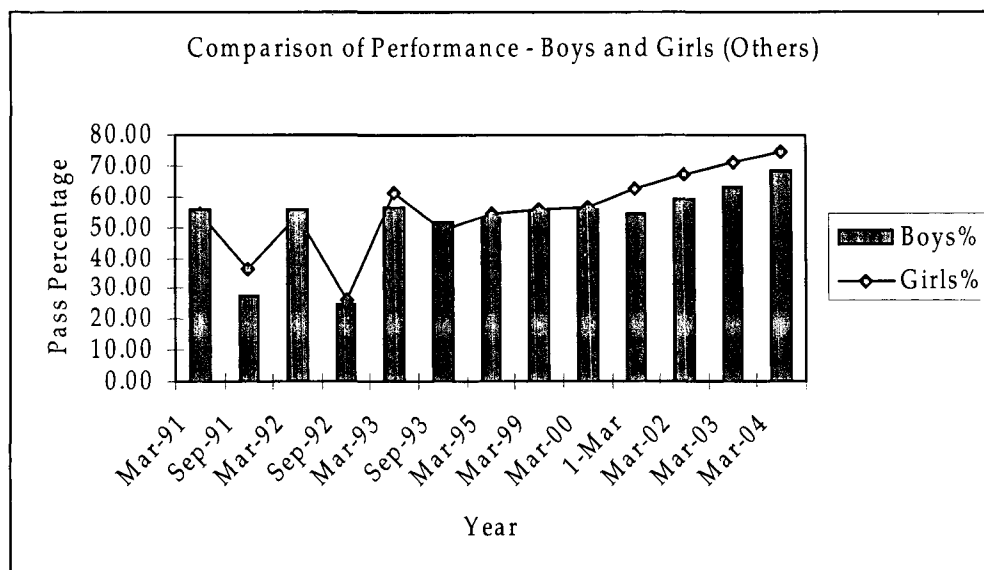
Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

Figure- 3.3



Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

Figure-3.4



Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

We find from the pass percentages of students in SSLC examinations that there is a uniform pattern across various social groups in the performance of girl students. Till the year 2000, among all the three groups the number of girls passing the examination was less than the boys. The gap was greater among SC and STs, while it was less among others. But from the year 2000 onwards, the girls started outperforming the boys in all social groups.

### 3.3 Higher Secondary Results

In accordance with the National Education Policy, Higher Secondary courses were begun in Kerala since 1990-91. At present, this course is conducted in 1656 schools in the state. The table below provides the proportion of SC/ST and Other Category students appeared in the higher secondary examination. In the year 2001 Dalit students who wrote the higher secondary exam formed only 6% of the total and the proportion of ST students was low as 0.04 percent while others constituted 93.71 percent. In the year 2005, there is an improvement in the ratios, the percentage of SC students appearing the exam becomes 8 and among STs it became 0.08. The data also points out a serious matter, normally, the very low enrollment of Adivasi students getting in higher secondary course in the state (see table-3.5). In the year 2001 only 359 ST students got enrolled in XIIth standard, however, by 2005 the ST enrollment was increased to 2736.



**Table 3.4**

Proportion of SC/ST appeared for Higher Secondary Examination

Year	Appeared			
	SC	ST	Others	Total
2001	5.89	0.04	93.71	100
2002	7.70	0.06	91.69	100
2003	6.69	0.05	92.77	100
2004	7.85	0.07	91.41	100
2005	7.96	0.08	91.23	100

Source: Higher Secondary Department

**Table 3.5**

Enrolment in XIIth standard

Year	Others	SC	ST
Mar-01	79822	5119	359
Mar-02	220361	19076	1494
Mar-03	212564	16764	1363
Mar-04	273793	24193	2285
Mar-05	300232	26784	2736

Source: Higher Secondary Department

The table below shows that (see table 3.6) in the year 2001, the pass percentage of SC students in higher secondary examination was 33 and of ST students 43, while others had 61.5%. In the year 2005, the pass percentage of SC students, increased to 46 percent, for ST it was 38 and for others 64.20. Even though there is some improvement in their pass percentages the enrollment of Dalits and Adivasi students in the Higher Secondary did not increase much.

**Table 3.6**

Higher Secondary Results- 2001 to 2005

Year	Pass Percentage			
	SC	ST	Others	Total
2001	32.83	42.99	61.55	59.79
2002	44.38	39.71	65.22	63.46
2003	43.30	43.27	63.82	62.34
2004	42.62	40.98	62.62	60.89
2005	45.52	38.00	64.20	62.50

Source: Higher Secondary Department

### 3.4 Why Dalit /Adivasi Students Fail in examinations?

The data reveals that students from disadvantaged communities tend to fail more in SSLC examination. There is glaring disparity in the performance between SC/ST and non SC/ST students. This disparity in performance can be attributed to several factors like socio – economic difference in conditions of living , cost of schooling, school environment and learning experiences in class rooms, study environment at home and so on.

#### 3.4.1 Material Conditions of Dalits and Adivasis and Schooling

The following observation made in a recent study is worth mentioning. ‘We know that Dalit and Adivasi Children come from homes that have been deprived of literacy and education for generations, in addition they bear the burden of poverty. Such children are likely to begin schooling less equipped with proficiency in language, social and conceptual skills that the schools demand compared to those children coming from relatively better off educated homes’ [Nambissan Geetha, Mona Sedwal, 2002]. Dalits and Adivasis are the most marginalized sections in our country. In India and in Kerala too, a large section of Dalit and Adivasi families remain below the poverty line. Most of them are engaged as laborers in agricultural and allied activities. According to the NSS survey about 48% of Dalits and 51% of Adivasi population, compared to 29% of non SC/ST population, were under poverty line [Nambissan, 2003]. Majority of Dalits have only marginal land holdings, they are illiterate and low skilled [Nambissan, 1996]. In Kerala, the Scheduled Castes constitute 19 percent of the

BPL population; though they are only 9.81 percent in the total population of the State [see Table 3.7]. This shows that the incidence of poverty among the Scheduled Caste people is almost double that of the general population. Scheduled Tribes constitute 3 percent of the BPL households but their proportion in the total population of the state is only 1.14 percent. This implies that the incidence of poverty among Scheduled Tribes is about three times that of the total population of the state [Kerala Economic Review 2005]. Even today the majority of the agricultural work force comprises Dalits and Adivasis. Table 3.13 reveals that in 1991 about 56.9 percent of the SC workers depended on agriculture (3.1 percent as cultivators and 53.8 percent as agriculture laborers.). In the case of STs , 53.54 percent depends on agriculture.

**Table 3.7**

Percentage of families below poverty line

Sl no	Category	Share in BPL Families (%)	Percentage of total state (Census 2001)
1	Scheduled Castes	19	9.81
2	Scheduled Tribes	3	1.14
3	Others	78	89.05

Source: Kerala Economic Review, 2004

**Table 3.8**

Percentage Distribution of main Workers-1991 Census

Sector	Total	SC	ST
Primary	48.0	69.6	-
(1)Cultivators	12.2	3.1	16.2
(2)Agricultural Labour	22.54	53.8	55.47
Secondary	18.2	13.1	-
Tertiary	38.8	17.3	-

Source: Kerala Economic Review, 2004

The census figures show that the material condition of the Dalit and Adivasi households is piteous even today in India in general, and Kerala is no exception. Disparity between SC/STs and others is still glaring even in a relatively egalitarian state like Kerala. 'Both for rural and urban areas ,in terms of expenditure , on food ,clothing, extent of land holding and levels of education of heads of households indicate substantial inter caste disparity between the SC/ST population and others

[Deshpande Ashwini 2000 p 325]. For the Dalit and Adivasi children education becomes a struggle given their disadvantageous material background.

### 3.4.2 Cost vs. Quality Schooling

Education is no more completely free. It might be technically free for some sections, but not in actual case. Tilak [2000] uses NCAER data of 1993-94 for his study and points out that Dalit household, even in rural areas, spend a fairly large amount of money for educating their children even at the primary stage. They have to spend on items such as books, stationary and uniforms. The expenditure per student in a government school is Rs303 per annum; in a government aided school it is Rs 325 per annum. But in the public unaided school it is significantly high, 757 per annum, making such education out of reach for majority of the Dalit students. Box 3.2 gives the average cost of sending a child to school.

#### Box-3.1

<b>Average cost of sending a child to School (Rs/year at constant 1996-7 prices)</b>	
Primary level	
NSS estimate,1986-7*	212
PROBE estimate,1996	318
Elementary level	
NCAER estimate,1994	478
*Excluding clothing expenses	

Source: NSSO, 1993; NCAER,1996a, PROBE survey

In Kerala there has been an increase in the enrollment of students in private unaided schools over the years and a fall in enrollment in government schools. The race after private unaided schools for enrollment of children is due to a feeling that they will get quality education in such schools while the teaching and other facilities in government schools are considered inferior. As mentioned earlier, cost of sending a child in a private unaided school is enormous. However, the increase in enrollment in private unaided schools shows that there is a demand for it and the richer parents are willing to pay for this quality education , of course , at a very high cost and how many can afford it is a matter of serious concern. Table 3.16 shows that only 3% of SC students are studying in private unaided schools and among ST s the enrollment is only 0.35 percent in private unaided schools. Thus the economically and socially

disadvantaged sections get excluded from getting quality education because of the high cost.

**Table: 3.9**  
Management wise strength of SC/ST students 2004-05

	Government			Private Aided			Private Unaided		
	Others	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST
Students in numbers	1324499	205059	35587	2620770	299355	28148	318074	9406	1141
Percentage	84.62	13.1	2.27	88.89	10.15	0.95	96.79	2.86	0.35

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction, Thiruvananthapuram

It is also observed that in Kerala most of the students seek private tuition to supplement the class lessons. As private tuition becomes a costlier affair, poor parents find it difficult to afford. Teachers often rely on homework to supplement their teaching within the class room. So those students who don't have a conducive atmosphere at home and parental support for studies will not be able to perform well. It seems that Kerala's school curriculum is more home based and tuition guided and is one of the main reasons for the disparities in performance among SC/ST and non SC/ST students.

### 3.4.3 Teachers Role

Teacher's attitude is very important in child's learning. Practice of segregating Dalit and Adivasi children in classes and making them work at class hours can still be seen in many states in India. Sainath [1996] reports that in Rajasthan children of Balmiki caste are made to sit in their mats outside the class room or at the door. A field study conducted in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh found that most of the teachers are prejudiced regarding the learning capacities of Dalit and Adivasi children. They regarded Dalit and Adivasi children as academically weak simply because they come from low caste back grounds. Teacher absenteeism is also another feature in more backward regions and in particular in Adivasi areas. A government report observes that, '...a number of schools, especially in the tribal areas, had remained closed for certain periods of time and in a number of cases these schools had not functioned since the beginning of the academic year' [GOI, 1988]. Experience of Dalit and Adivasi children in class rooms is documented very little in the Kerala context. But a recent study which observes the success and failures of DPEP in different states in the country, gives a more alarming picture about the exclusionary tendencies prevailing

in our class rooms. The study has taken Palakkad and Malappuram as sample districts from Kerala. In Palakkad district, the researcher observed that children belonging to disadvantaged communities and groups are seated separately in the schools under study. There was a distinct preference by teachers for children from forward communities, as was reflected in the choice of group leaders in the classroom. The general impression the teacher held was that the children who could not learn in the class belonged to certain specific communities having low social status. Some teachers also stated that the children belonging to such disadvantaged communities had 'no motivation to attend school, except sharing the free mid day meal in the school as they are deprived of parental support '[Madan Vandana, 2004]. In a more egalitarian state like Kerala we expect that physical segregation of Dalits and Adivasi children in schools doesn't persist, but the above study indicates that in certain remote areas in the state , open discrimination against Dalit and Adivasi children does exist even today. Unsupportive educational environment both at home and at school is therefore, the major reason for the underperformance of the Dalit/Adivasi children in pursuing education in the state.

### 3.5 Some Field Observations

Our interaction with a few school dropouts in Akkulam Colony in Thiruvananthapuram district in fact affirms our observation. Akkulam colony is predominantly inhabited by SC population. The living conditions are abysmally miserable.

Sindhu wrote her class Xth examination in March 1999. She failed in two subjects English and Mathematics. She recollects her school days:

"I had to suffer segregation in the class. Class mates used to tease me saying that I am a servant's daughter .Some of them used to taunt me saying that I come from a colony. I used to feel ashamed to tell others that I live in a colony. When I hear this I used to feel angry towards *achan* (father) and *amma* (mother). Teachers used to ignore us deliberately during lectures. Only those who could impress upon the teachers were asked to read out lessons in the class. I was never asked to read English lessons. Teachers used to give least care for students like us and at home there was no one to help in studies. Moreover every night *achan* used to come home fully drunk and there used to be regular fights with my mother. There was no environment to study at home."

She told that most of the children in the colony either fail in the class Xth exam and discontinue their studies or drop out of the system much earlier.

Rajimon wrote class Xth exam in the year 1995. Now he is a driver. His father and mother got separated when he was in class V. He said there was no electricity at home when he was studying and no one took care about his studies. His mother was illiterate. Going for tuition was unaffordable and the teachers in the school were least concerned. The boy was also involved in student politics. His elder sister too had discontinued her studies after failure in class Xth in the year 1994.

Bindhu is now working as a garden cleaner in Akkulam tourist village. She wrote her class Xth examination in March 1990, but failed and stopped studies after that. She recalls her school days like this:

My school days were very painful. I used to do all the household chores before going to school and after coming back I used to go to a nearby home to help in their chores. I remember there used to be regular quarrels between my parents in the evenings. My father is a drunkard; you can't imagine how difficult those days were. Hardly could I study anything at home. I have two brothers. Both of them dropped out before reaching Xth standard. Now they are casual laborers. I never got any encouragement at home to study. You know never I had a good uniform to wear. At school, I never got any support from teachers. Only well-off students get attention at government schools. ”

She feels that environment at home matters a lot in children's education. These are examples of strong exclusionary pedagogies. There is a lack of sensitivity of the schools to the socio-economic conditions of Dalit and Adivasi children and thus the schools fail to give support by providing suitable academic atmosphere to these children. There is scope for more detailed field studies in Kerala to elicit the learning experiences of Dalit and Adivasi children at school.

'While Universalisation of school education from the point of view of access is no doubt a laudable achievement in Kerala, it still leaves out the question of translating this access into reasonably good performance in terms of quality and efficiency outcomes' (Chakraborty , Achin 2005). The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF) restated the need to provide for 'equal opportunity to all, not only in access but also in the conditions of success' [NCERT: 2000; earlier stated in NCERT, 1998:4]. It raises serious concern of educational deprivation of communities such as the Dalits and Adivasis.

It is well known that mere provision of access and enrollment of children in the school are not enough for achieving the goal of universal education. These measures should be accompanied by suitable efforts to give quality education at low cost and also ensure that the children stay in schools to complete the full cycle of schooling. Here we have taken School Completion rate to measure the quality of school education in Kerala, and its potential to retain students for completion of the course.

### 3.6 School Completion Rate

The School Completion Rate, is the percentage of a cohort of pupils, enrolled in the first grade (class1) of the primary school in a given school year, and expected to complete the last year of schooling, namely the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. For instance, the school completion rate for 2000 is the ratio of total number of students successfully completing the last year of the schooling in a given year to the total number of children enrolled in Ist grade during the year 1991-92. This measure does not reflect the number of years spent in the school, as the data does not permit the calculation of years lost due to grade repetition (Sengupta, Piyali and Guha, Jaba, 2002 p1635). We have taken School Completion Rate because in the context of Kerala, where the overall education development is high, the enrollment rates cannot be a good indicator of educational achievement. The table below shows the School Completion rate among SC/ST and Others.

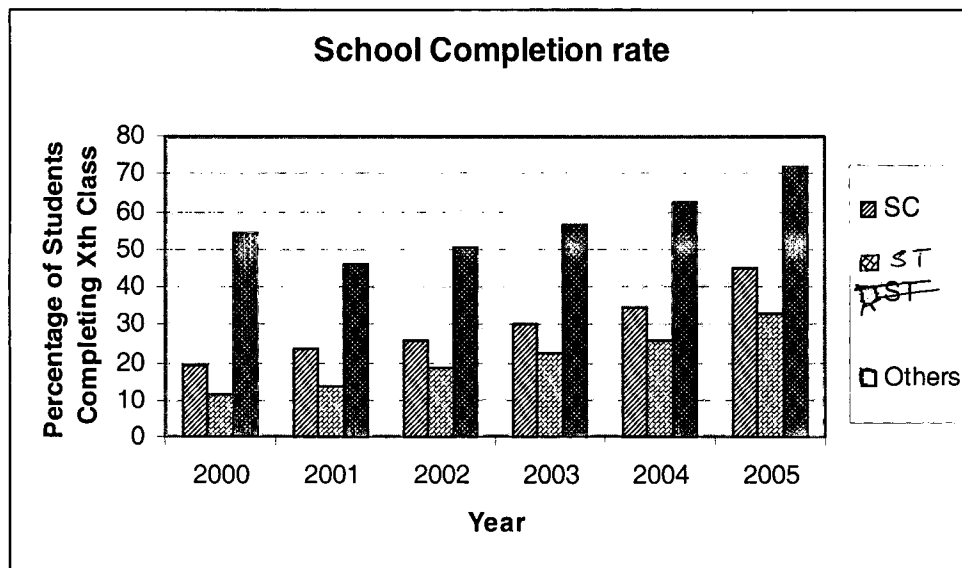
**Table 3.10**  
School Completion Rates

School Completion			
Year	SC	ST	Others
2000	19.26	11.63	54.08
2001	23.34	13.52	46.03
2002	25.55	18.54	50.33
2003	30.07	22.4	56.23
2004	34.74	25.91	62.56
2005	45.01	33.10	71.64

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction



Figure-3.5



Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

We have attempted a cohort analysis. The school performance of all the students enrolled in class I in 1991 was followed till class Xth examination; to find out how many had completed the entire schooling. Among the SC/ST and other students the completion rates at primary and middle school levels are very high. This is because of the automatic promotion policy of the state till class VII. But when we examine the final school completion rate, there is marked difference in the performance of SC/ST students compared to others. The figures shows that out of 100 SC children joining in Class I in the year 1990, only 20 students' get cleared the SSLC examination in the year 2000. Among the STs it is only 11, and for others the number is 54. But we could find that there is a steady improvement in School completion rate among Dalits even though the gap between SC/ST and non SC/ST is still high. This change can be attributed to new initiatives in the education after 1991, like the text book revision, DPEP, community participation in education and so on.

### 3.7 Policies and Outcomes – What goes wrong?

Educational development of Dalits and Adivasi should be traced by from the policies and programs constituted for them. Educational development of these marginalized sections in Indian society, has drawn the attention of policy makers'. The constitution has made the following provisions to protect the interests of Dalits and Adivasis.

*Article 46: Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled tribes and Other Weaker Sections-*

This article directs the state “to promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the society and in particular Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and protect them from all form of exploitations.”

*Article 15: Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth.*

Education of Dalits and Adivasis was a major objective to be fulfilled through our five year plans. An amount of rupees fifteen crores was allocated in the First Five Year Plan, and the amount being substantially increased in the successive plans , such as , 41 crores in the Second plan , 53 crores in the Third Plan , 70 crores in the Fourth Plan , over 100 crores in the Fifth plan and nearly 200 crores in the Sixth Five Year plan for the improvement of education among the Dalits and Adivasis in India. Different committees were appointed by the government to assess the level of educational progress achieved by the Dalit and Adivasi Students.

In 1960-61 a commission under the chairmanship of Mr. U.N. Dhebar was appointed to find out the conditions and problems of Dalits and Adivasis. The Commission had pointed out the lack of adequate arrangements in education front. It proposed to constitute Ashram schools, and residential institutions, throughout the country for their education. In addition to the recommendation by the Dhebar Commission, Kothari Commission (1964-66) came up with a set of suggestions to start, more schools in the densely populated areas, more secondary schools with hostel facilities and provisions of stipends and scholarships for higher education.

National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 had proposed more arduous efforts in equalizing educational opportunity. ‘Draft National Policy on Education [1979] observed that while there had been considerable expansion in all sectors of education in India, imbalances and inequalities continued to persist. Vulnerable sections of the society such as Scheduled Castes, Tribes, Girls, Landless laborers, Backward Classes and Urban slum poor in general continued to lag behind in educational attainment. The Commission had recommended to identify the specific problems of these sections to evolve suitable programs for their education. The NPE, 1984 and 1986, made strong

recommendations for the removal of communal disparities and equalization of educational opportunities for SCs, STs and OBCs.

The Ramamurti Committee Report [1990] also made several recommendations for the promotion of education of the SCs, STs and OBCs including recruitment of more SC/ST teachers, revision of curriculum etc.

Kerala Education Commission [1999] which was constituted by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, and chaired by Ashok Mitra had found that there was need for immediate restructuring of the education system on the lines of equity and excellence. The report suggested to make links between a 'democratic polity and the educational process' [Kerala Education Commission Report, p 26]. It also tried to provide an outline of a system for people's education that transcended the prevailing norms and discriminations based on caste, class, religion and gender dimensions. The report provided a comprehensive, well thought out overview of education system in the state from pre- school to higher education and gave suggestions to over come the educational backwardness of the marginalized sections.

### **3.7.1 Programmes available for the educational advancement of Scheduled Castes and Tribes**

There are number of Centrally Sponsored and State sponsored Education Schemes for the benefit of Dalit and Adivasi students.

Centrally sponsored Schemes are the following: (1)Post-matric Scholarships ,(2)Pre-matric Scholarships,(3) Boys &Girls Hostel, (4)Book Banks, (5)Coaching and Allied Schemes, (6)National Overseas Scholarships(NOS), (7)Grants in aid to voluntary organizations.

These programs are in addition to the general schemes like opening new schools, Non Formal Education Centers, Operation Black Board Scheme etc. Except the National Overseas Scholarship Scheme, all others are carried out with expenses equally shared between the Central and the State governments.

State Sector Schemes (selected ones)provide the following facilities such as(1) Scholarships and stipends at various levels,(2)Supply of text books, stationery , equipment , uniform , sports material, (3) Attendance prize to students, (4)Residential

Schools Hostels, (5) Merit Scholarships, (6) Reimbursement of Examination fees and tuition fees at various levels of education, (7) Excursions (8) Mid day meals (9) Vocational craft classes, (10) Loans to students for pursuing education

In principle any Dalit or Adivasi child who wishes to study can pursue it without hindrance. But field studies in Northern India show that the coverage of most of the incentives schemes is very limited. Schemes for providing scholarship or free uniforms do not cover all the SC/ST students, very few receive such incentives, and the criteria for the selection of students also remain unclear. Most of the mismanagement and corruption practices were reported from Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh states [Jha and Jhingaran, 2005].

The financial assistance given to the Dalit and Adivasi children for education is inadequate and the little assistance they get also comes too late. Moreover to improve their educational performance and to make it on par with the levels of others a mere financial support in the form of stipends and scholarships is not sufficient. Studies and field observations point out that the material conditions and the environment at home are not education friendly in the case of Dalit and Adivasi students. Policies and programs need to be reoriented keeping in view their disadvantageous past.

In the foregoing discussion we have attempted to understand the performance of Dalits and Adivasi students in the public examinations. We find that there is a major gap in the educational performance between SC/STs and non SC/STs. We have also tried to review the major reasons the researchers have pointed out on the underperformance of these students and have tried to see whether these are matching with our field observations. Another indicator we have used to assess the performance level was the school completion rates. We find that there is a steady improvement in School completion rate among the Dalits even though the gap between SC/ST and non SC/ST is still high.

## 4

# AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE CASE OF MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

### 4.1 Introduction

In the context of various educational policy initiatives by the state for Dalits and Adivasi students, Model Residential Schools have a great significance. Its origin can be traced back to the Ashram Schools. These are residential educational institutions built to Adivasi children from a cluster of villages by giving them free boarding and lodging facilities [Jha Jyotsna and Dhir Jhingran, 2005]. The concept of Ashram School is based on the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance, and the practice started with an experiment by Thakkar Bapa, a Gandhian, in Panchamal district in Gujarat in the year 1922. 'After Independence , as a part of the developmental work , various voluntary organizations in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Orissa took immense interest in educating tribals by establishing Ashram Schools'. During the First Five Year Plan there was an attempt by the Government of India to open such schools all over the country. From the Third Five Year plan onwards Government took serious initiatives in setting up Ashram schools in various parts of the country [Ananda, 1994].

If one traces back, there were several initiatives by individuals and volunteer organizations to spread education among Dalits and Adivasis. The schools of Jotirao Phule<sup>4</sup> for girls and untouchables in Maharashtra were the first of that kind in Western India. Gaikwad of Baroda opened eighteen special schools for the Depressed Classes in 1883[Nurullah and Naik, p 589]. 'In these schools no fees were charged and slates, pencils and textbooks were provided free' [Gaekwar Fatesinghrao P, p112].

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<sup>4</sup> Mahatma Jotirao Phule (April 11, 1827 - November 28, 1890) was an activist and social reformer from Maharashtra,

#### 4.2 Model Residential Schools in Kerala – Origin and Growth

Model Residential School (MRS) is a government sponsored educational scheme exclusively for Dalits and Adivasi children. The first such schools in Kerala were started in the year 1990-91 in the districts of Trivandrum and Wayanad. The establishment of MRS was conceived as a direct intervention to tackle the socio-economic inequalities which deprive the educational attainment of Dalit and Adivasi students. The concept of such an educational policy stemmed from the objective of imparting quality education and thereby improving their educational standards. Its objectives can be specified as

1. To impart quality education to the disadvantaged communities like Dalits and Adivasi's.
2. To reduce the drop out rate among them and to improve the retention capacity of the school.
3. To improve the educational performance of Dalit and Adivasi students
4. To give a conducive academic atmosphere.
5. To provide close student teacher interaction through increased individual attention.

The reason behind the setting up of Model Residential Schools is to provide a congenial study atmosphere and also to relieve the poor Dalit and Adivasi parents off the burden of struggling for food and other expenses for the education of their children. MRS is expected to reduce the wastage and stagnation in their education and to improve the standard of achievement.

In the year 2004-05 there are 20 such schools in various districts of the state (see, Appendix II) enrolling 3619 students. The students are drawn primarily from Dalit and Adivasi communities whose parental income is less than 40,000 per annum. In each school 10% of seats are reserved for open category students whose parental income also falls under the same category. MRS provides education from class five to class 10. Generally these schools follow state syllabus and the medium of instruction is Malayalam, however the school in Njaraneeli, Trivandrum is following CBSE syllabus. The programme is residential and the teachers and students live together to have close interaction each other. Every year a maximum of 40 students are admitted

to one school. As the seats are very limited the selection of students is made through a state wide entrance examination in class IV. This is conducted by the ST department.

The reason for taking Model Residential Schools as a case study is the record of better performance of students in these schools undergoing SSLC examination, it made us probe further onto the contributing factors of this attainment . The objective of this chapter is to explore the factors that led to the commendable performance of Dalit and Adivasi students in Model Residential Schools and to compare their attainment with the overall performance of Dalit and Adivasi students undertaking SSLC examination in general schools. We will also try to explain in brief the experience of Dalit and Adivasi student studying in Model Residential Schools at their home and at school, the teacher's role in these Schools, the Importance of Residential System and how the various factors act as inputs in attaining better results. We have made a case study of the Model Residential School, Katella to explain the above mentioned factors.

#### **4.3 An overview of Ambedkar Memorial Model Residential Higher Secondary School, Katella**

The Model Residential School Katella is located at Sreekariyam Panchayath in Thiruvananthapuram district. It is in the outskirts of the Thiruvananthapuram city. The frequency of public bus services to this place is very low and therefore reaching the school is a bit difficult without a private transport.

The school was established in the year 1990-1991, and it is the first among the Model Residential Schools established in the state. It is a girl's school. There are 11 teachers in the school and the student's strength is 332. The school has pucca buildings. There are 7 class rooms in the school complex, Administrative block, Staff room, Reading Room, Laboratories, and Hostels for the students with a mess and quarters for teachers. The school and hostel are electrified. But there is acute water shortage and because of that most of the teachers are staying outside the campus.

The ambience of the school was found education friendly. Teachers were very cooperative and they arranged our interactive sessions with students. The discussions with the students and teachers were an eye-opener in all sense. We could get a feel of the experiences the Dalit and Adivasi student's had at home and their life at the Model Residential School and also how inclusionary /exclusionary is this system.

#### 4.4 Experience of Dalit and Adivasi children – Their Life at Home and at the School

In an earlier chapter we have reviewed the socio- economic conditions of Dalit and Adivasi families in general and the Kerala situation in particular. The experiences of Dalit and Adivasi children at their home will be different from that of other children. Because of these differences in socio- economic conditions sending children to the school is a struggle for Dalit and Adivasi families (PROBE, 1999). In addition to the financial expenses, other needs like, helping them in home works, motivating them to study well etc have to be met but these are impossible targets for the poor Dalit and Adivasi parents, who are mostly illiterate or low educated. An enquiry into the life of students in MRS at their home gave us similar insights. Most of the students of Model residential Schools come from the lowest strata of the society with similar socio-economic background. In our interactive sessions with the students of the Kattela MRS, a girl from Wayanad district, studying in class XII , said that her mother is the sole bread winner in her family.

She voices the conditions at her home like this:

My father left us 12 years back when my younger brother was not even one year old. My mother works as a casual laborer, and most of the days there won't be any work and we have to starve. *Veetil chennal choru thinnan kariyonnum ella, annum chammanthi, ellankil mulaku. Eppozhenkillum oru divasam curry* (At home there won't be any curry for rice, everyday there will be chutney or chilly. Once in a while only curry will be prepared). I like to stay at school.

Another girl, also from Wayanad, says that,

.... both my father and mother are casual laborers, but my mother runs the house. My father is a drunkard and every night he will come home drinking and abuse and physically hurts my mother. He spends all the money on drinks. I am scared of my father and don't like to go home for vacations. Usually I go to my aunt's place during vacation. At home I go for work with my mother and save that money. I feel that it is my luck that I got admission in MRS.



Maya , A class Xth student told us about the conditions at her home like this:

“We are three sisters. My mother is chronically ill. Father passed away long before. My younger sister is also studying here in 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Going to school was very difficult when I was studying there. We had to cross a river to reach the school. So during rainy seasons and floods it used to be very difficult for us to go school. At home earlier there was no electricity, very recently only we got it. It was hard for my mother to find money to buy uniforms and text books for us every year. My mother’s brother helps us, but he doesn’t have a proper job. So, how far he can help? Now my mother is happy that two of us are getting good education without any cost”

Sumeeta, a class XIIth student, hails from Munderi Village in Malappuram district narrates her situation at home:

..... “my house is near to the forest. My achan (father) is a casual laborer. Amma (mother) left us when me and my chettan (elder brother) were very young. Achan got married to another woman. My chettan left his studies at class IX. Now he got married, but he doesn’t go for any work. I need to have a calculator, and want to ask for Rs 100 from home to buy one, but for the last two and half months I haven’t got any information from home....every night I weep thinking about my home. There is no electricity in my house. It is very difficult to be at home and study. *Veetil aayirunnappol enikku pattini kidakkendi vannitundu* (I had to starve when I was at home). I want to forget everything and study hard...”

We were having our discussion in a class room. One girl who was sitting in the last row and was silent all along had got up and said that she wanted to say something. Her name is Hima. She said, ‘there is no electricity at home and no desk and chair to sit and study’. Her elder sister passed XIth standard examination this year. But she will not continue to study because there is no money to buy text books. Her father is a drunkard, he quarrels with her mother every night and her sister cannot concentrate in studies. Her mother works in a company as a daily wage laborer, from this year onwards her sister will also go to the company with her mother.”

Each student of Katela MRS has a similar story to tell: drunkard father, regular quarrels between father and mother, separated parents and poverty. It is commonly accepted that socio- cultural and economic aspects of the family always influence the educability of the child [Joshi.P.C, and Rao.M.R, 1964]. For the poverty stricken families which live in constant financial stress it becomes difficult to take care of their children’s education properly [Jha Jyotsna and Dhir Jhingharan 2005]. We could infer

from these narratives that the poor material conditions and the inhospitable general atmosphere at home are the major obstacles to the proper education of these children.

While, the life at MRS is totally different for them. Sruthi, a class X student narrates a day in MRS like this:

“Our day starts by the wake up bell at morning 5.00am. We do our washing up and cleaning quickly and go for the Morning Prayer. Morning Prayer is in the T.V room, which is inside our hostel. After the Morning Prayer, our self study time starts. It will be in the Study Room, which is also inside our hostel. It is well furnished room with desks and chairs for each of us. At 8.00 am we go for our break fast. By 8.30am we finish our breakfast and rush to the reading room to grab the newspapers. 8.30am to 9.15am is the compulsory newspaper reading time and all of us read newspapers regularly. At 9.15am we gather for the morning assembly and at 9.30 our first session starts. We get a break of fifteen minutes at 11.15. We drink water , go to loo and fresh up during the break up time. The next period starts at 11.30 and by 1.00pm the class will be dispersed for lunch. We finish our lunch and come for the after noon session at 1.30pm. The after noon session ends at 3.15. Then we go to store water. There is acute water shortage here, so we have store water for our use. By 3.45pm we will again assemble in the class room for special class. Special classes will continue till 5.00pm. Each day each subject will be taught in the special class. After the special class we will go back to our rooms. We do our washing and cleaning and then we have our evening tea in the dining hall. At 6.30 pm we gather in the T.V Room for evening prayer and then the study time starts. We all will sit and study in Study Room. It is the supervised study time. Our Warden will be there to inspect our study. At 7.00pm we watch news in Television. After news again we go back to studies till the dinner time at 8.30. We get a glass of milk at 9.00pm. Then we will study in the study room and go back to our bed at 11.00pm.”

We asked Sruthi and her friends about the provisions for games and other extra curricular activities. One girl said:

“There will be Drill periods, that time we play. But there is no regular time for games every day. There are music classes and dance classes once in a week. And....there used to be Yoga classes before, now it is stopped...”

Another student interfered her friend and said

.... “We play on Sunday’s, mostly indoor games. We have different clubs here, our class also has one. We have named it as floral club. Last year on February 19<sup>th</sup> we celebrated the first anniversary of our club and we conducted several games relating to flowers. It was simply great. Our class teacher encourages us in every possible way, and...the school has a good band troop also. Some of us are members of the band troop.

We then asked the students to differentiate the school life of MRS with the school they studied before. All the students in one voice said that they like MRS.

A girl studying in class VI hailing from Kollam differentiates her older school with MRS Kattela :

“Before coming here I studied in an LP school near my home. *Pazhaya schoolinekkal ishtamanu ee school*( I like this school better than the earlier school). Teachers are very helpful and I have more friends here.”

Another girl studying in class XII says that

“When I first came here , I was very home sick. But after having mingled with other students, I started forgetting all my worries. The food is good here, sometimes there is water shortage, but this year it is not worse. The, teachers are dedicated and they teach very well. I have lots of problems at home but I am happy at school.”

Shilpa, a class Xth student finds that teachers are very helpful here and whenever there is any problem in studies, they are ready to help. It is not the case of any other school- she said.

She also said,

“Punishments are very less here. Extra Classes and Group Studies are helping us to do well in the examinations. We also study our subjects in groups and it helps us a lot. Earlier, when I was at home there was no scope for such group studies. After coming here I started giving more importance to my study.”

Another girl said that she likes to be in this school, because she can study well and every thing is free and this reduces the burden of her parents.

Most of the students in the school have commended upon the friendly and encouraging attitude of teachers, the good food and the free facilities provided to them like uniforms, text books, note books etc which are unaffordable for most of their parents. More over they are comfortable with their peer group which shares a common socio cultural and economic back ground.

#### 4.5 Teachers Role

The impression we got about the teachers in MRS Kattela is that they are affectionate to the students and are dedicated to their work. There is a close personal relationship between teacher and student based on affection and cooperation. Our interaction with the teachers in MRS Kattela has helped to get their perspectives on Dalit and tribal education, the difference between the MRS and non- MR schools and also the necessity to set up more residential schools in the country for disadvantaged communities.

There are 11 teachers (in 2005) in the school and among them three belongs to Scheduled Caste. Almost all the teachers we interviewed had previous work experience in other government schools.

Premaja came to Model residential School Kattela as Malayalam teacher in the year 2001. She takes class for 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standard students and is the class teacher of 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Before joining in MRS she was a teacher in Vazhamattom Government School. Through the department transfer she came to MRS. She differentiated MRS with general schools like this:

“In MRS, number of students in a class is very low; the maximum number will be 35. It becomes easy for us to give individual attention to each of them. In other government schools, where I was teaching before, there used to be 50-60 students in each division, and so, only those who could perform well in the class used to get our attention.”

She said that the aim of the school itself is to improve the educational standards and performance of SC/ST students. Teachers and the staff become answerable to the authority if the performance of the students goes low.

Most of the teachers felt that the infrastructure facility is better in MRS compared to the non-MR schools. Free boarding, conducive academic atmosphere and dedication of teachers are other factors they pointed out that differentiate the MRS. Teachers have shown genuine commitment to the educational advancement of Dalit and

Adivasi children and are concerned about the general backwardness of these children. A lady teacher remarked:

“All these children come from a very poor socio economic background. Most of these students have several family problems- drunkard father, regular fights between father and mother and so on. We as the teachers should understand their problems and give more time to them.”

Another teacher remarked that students from similar socio economic back grounds mingle closer and improves their self confidence. They share common experiences and discuss their problems. At the Kattela school, the authorities encourage the students to express themselves: by making them write their personal experiences. This helps the teacher to have better understanding of the students’ problems.

Students talked about the teachers’ role in MRS more vividly. Arati, a Xth standard student expressed her expectations of the teachers in a following way :

“Teachers should ask the reason if any student lags behind in his/her studies. They should listen to the students sympathetically and also if the students have any problems at home teachers should ask the students and try to understand their problems. Here teachers do that. When I was in my earlier school I never understand the classes well, and never felt going back to the teacher to clear my doubts. But here it is not like that. Teachers are there to listen to us and help in all possible manner.”

The interviews with the drop –out students from government schools that we have presented in the previous chapter and the interviews with the students in MRS Kattela give two different shades of teaching methods. In MRS Kattela, the teachers have a responsible attitude towards their students. This dedication of the teachers is an important reason for the outstanding performance of students from model residential schools.

#### **4.6 Residential System**

“One of the greatest needs of the backward communities in their education is proper residential life where the students come under wholesome and elevating influences. This fact has been recognized by the government and hostels have already been established at Nagercoil, Trivandrum and Kottayam for the benefit of the backward communities. These hostels have supplied a long felt desideratum and are found to be extremely useful in

training, strengthening and developing the character of inmates. But the girl pupils of backward communities in the state are without any of the amenities necessary for their education. They have to come in large numbers under proper influences, live in healthier environment and form good habits which are essential for their elevation in life. There is no doubt that hostels are the best residence for them, as it has a great chance for developing comradeship and corporate consciousness. It appears to me that steps should therefore be taken for providing residential accommodation to the girl pupils of backward communities in at least two centers in the state, one in central and other in north Travancore where large number of them under go education.”

*[Letter from, The Protector of Backward Communities to The Registrar Huzur Secretariat: December 1946]*

The above letter shows the importance of residential system in the life of backward caste students felt long before. One of the important facilitating factors in improving the results of Dalits and Adivasi children in Model Residential Schools is therefore its residential character. The importance of residential system for Dalits and Adivasi students is well acknowledged by policy makers. A study on ashram schools finds that residential system helps to improve the attendance rates and participation rates among tribal students [Jha and Jhingaran, 2005]. A journalistic write up on residential schools in Gooda Bihar also found that attendance rate and students performance are outstanding [Sainath, 1996]. The author has surveyed seven residential schools tribal students run by the welfare department in Gooda, Bihar. These schools provide them food, clothes, board and books free. The author affirms the need for the residential school system in that area and provides the following account. Pramod, an ex-student of Bhanji Residential School in Bihar observes that:

“The ‘Phaharias<sup>5</sup> want to get educated. They just could not afford the burden of the present system, but the residential schools made a huge difference in lessening it.”

Another person feels that that ‘three or four primary schools should be merged into one residential school and the students should be provided with food, clothes and books. [Sainath, 1996].

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<sup>5</sup> Phaharia is a tribe in Bihar

In the opinion of a teacher in Model Residential School Kattela, the residential system has several advantages. He says that:

“Students are available for teaching at any time. It is convenient to provide extra classes and giving remedial coaching for weaker students. Moreover residential system acts as a supportive mechanism to them in the absence of support from their homes.”

Enquiries with the students and teachers of Kattela on the impact of residential system give us the following insights. Most students in MRS Kattela felt that at home no one takes care of their studies and no one to clear their doubts in studies, the advantage of being in hostel is that, they are able to discuss the lessons among themselves after the classes and get their doubts cleared from their teachers at any time, which is not possible in other schools. Residential system thus provides a conducive atmosphere for the students to learn. Most of these students don't get any motivation to study at home because of the unfriendly atmosphere, but in the residential system they get relief from the family problems and it helps them to concentrate on studies. Another important factor is the infrastructure facilities the school provides. Most of the students have no desk and chair to sit and study at home and no electricity at home. These impediments are overcome through the residential system.

In the light of these facilitating factors we shall assess the performance of the students in MRS in the SSLC examination.

#### **4.7 SSLC Results and Performance of MRS Students**

The first Model Residential School in Kerala was started in the year 1990-1991. The students are given admission in class 5. The first schools established in Wayanad (Nellooranadu) and Thiruvananthapuram (Kattela) presented their first batch of the students for SSLC examination in the year 1996. Table 4.3 and 4.4 give the details of the result. During the year 1996 23 students from Kattela MRS and 26 from Nellooranadu MRS wrote the SSLC examination and all cleared it.

We have analyzed the SSLC Results of 9 Model Residential Schools from the year 2001 and with break up on the number of distinctions, first classes, second classes and

third classes for 11 Model Residential Schools for one year 2003-04. We have also collected detailed examination results from 3 Model Residential Schools, Kattela, Nelloranadu and Kalpetta. The following table provides the results of 9 Model Residential Schools in the state.

**Table 4.1**

Performance of Model Residential Schools in SSLC Examination

Schools	Pass percentages				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Dr. Ambedkar HSS , Kodoth,	68.66	85.51	82.86	89.61	80.77
Dr. AMMR HSS , Katela	100	100	95	100	100
MRS Attappady			100	96.2	
Govt MRS for Girls , Kalpetta			100	100	94.12
MRS Munnar			100	100	100
Govt Model Residential School , Kannur				91.18	97.14
Govt MRS , Chalakkudy				100	94.29
MRS Kezhmedu, Alwaye				100	97
Govt Model Residential School, Pookode					93.62

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

The pass percentages in these schools range from 68.66 to 100 during various years. The results of Model Residential Schools Munnar , Kattela, Kalpetta, Alwaye and Chalakkudy are very promising. A slight shortage from the over all level of performance is seen only in MRS Kodoth. The detailed result giving a break up of number of distinctions, first class, second class, third class and failures for the year 2003-04 gives a more impressive picture.

**Table 4.2**

Detailed SSLC results for the year 2003-04 for various Model Residential Schools

School	No appeared	No Passed				Total Failed	Pass %
		Distinction	First Class	Second Class	Third Class		
MRS, Munnar	28	4	22	2		100	
MRS Chalakkudy	34	4	15	8	7	100	
MRS Kodoth	37	2	16	11	8	100	
MRS , Alwaye	33	3	8	13	9	100	
MRS, Katela	35	3	20	7	5	100	
MRS,Nelloranadu	33		2	5	18	8	75.57
MRS,Noolpuzha	37		1	6	28	2	94.6
MRS,Kalpetta	32	1	14	9	8		100
MRS,Kannur	34	2	7	9	13	3	91
MRS,Pattanamthitta	29		8	5	16		100
MRS,Trithala	31	2	9	7	13		100
Total	363	21	122	82	125	13	

Source: Office Records of the School



In the year 2003-04, out of 363 students appeared from all the Model Residential Schools 360 cleared the examination. Except the three schools, Nelloranadu, Noolpuzha and Kannur the rest have secured 100 percent pass, 61.98% students securing distinction, first class or second class.

The detailed examination result of our sample school Kattela and two other schools for various years are given below.

**Table 4.3**

SSLC Results-Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Model Residential School, Kattela

Year	No of students appeared	No of students passed				Total Pass	Pass Percentage
		Distinction	First Class	Second Class	Third Class		
1996	23	1	8	10	4	23	100
1997	27	3	13	11		27	100
1998	30	8	21	1		30	100
1999	30	2	15	9	4	30	100
2000	29	3	13	10	3	29	100
2001	30		19	8	3	30	100
2002	31	10	15	3	3	31	100
2003	35	3	7	9	14	33	95
2004	35	3	20	7	5	35	100
2005	35					35	100

Source: Office Records of the School

**Table 4.4**

SSLC Results- Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Model Residential School, Nelloranad

Year	No of students appeared	No of students passed				Total Pass	Pass Percentage
		Distinction	first Class	Second Class	Third Class		
1996	26	1	18	6	1	26	100
1997	28	2	21	5		28	100
1998	21	2	13	4	2	21	100
1999	27	1	12	10	4	27	100
2000	23	1	6	11	5	23	100
2001	25		6	3	16	25	100
2002	26		5	2	17	24	92
2003	27		7	10	10	27	10
2004	33		2	5	18	25	75.75
2005	32					22	68.75

Source: Office Records of the School

**Table 4.5**

SSLC Results-Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Model Residential School, Kalpetta

Year	No of students appeared	No of students passed				Total Pass	Pass Percentage
		Distinction	first Class	Second Class	Third Class		
2002	33	2	12	11	8	33	100
2003	32	1	15	8	8	32	100
2004	33	2	1	7	23	33	100

Source: Office Records of the School

MRS Kattela has secured cent percent pass except in the year 1995 most of the students clear the exam getting either first class or second class. In MRS Nelloranadu, the pass percentage remained 100 excepting the years 2002, 2004 and 2005. For the years 2001, 2002, and 2004 the number of students getting third division was slightly higher than rest of the years. But in other years most of the students secured first division or second division. MRS Kalpetta also gives the same picture. In all the years the pass percentage was 100.

#### 4. 8 A comparative Picture – SSLC results

C.P Chandrasekhar et.al [2001] observes that one important feature of school performance in Kerala in the 1990s which drew a great deal of public attention was the high rate of failure in the Class 10 examination. 'Barely 50 per cent of examinees pass the Class 10 examination; the number would be lower still if those who pass with "moderation", or the award of grace marks, were excluded'. The study also observes the disparities in educational achievement based on differences in social and economic backgrounds of students. In the light of this we try to compare the results of Dalits and Adivasi students in general schools with MRS students.

In the year 2001 the over all pass percentage of Dalit students in the SSLC examination was 36.73 and for Adivasis it was 32.85 (Refer Table 3.1) , but in the case of Model Residential Schools, the MRS Kattella has a cent percent pass and in the case of MRS Kodoth, the pass percentage is 68. 66,(Refer Table 4.1) which is still much

above the state average, suggesting that MRS students are better instructed than other Dalit and Adivasi students studying in general schools.

#### 4.8 Inferences

This difference in performance can be explained by a large number of factors such as the particularities of MRS school system, quality of education, special care, extra classes and the general well being in terms of timely food, free boarding etc. The discussion also helps us to understand the students' educational aspirations, their socio – economic background and the environment which acts as a catalyst in students' performance. All the students in MRS come from poor families. Yet our secondary data help me to argue that the MRS is in fact flagships as far as secondary education of Dalits are concerned. Their performance is highly encouraging.

- The MRS has a critical edge over the general schools with respect to the pass percentages of Dalits and tribal students.
- The pass percentage of Dalit/tribal students in general government schools is poorer when compared to their counter parts in the same school.

The residential schooling and the special care they get in MRS helps these students to overcome their socio-economic conditions. They consider better education as a means to get an employment and better living.

The question that arises at the end of this discussion is whether an isolated education for the disadvantaged is advantageous to them or not. Many like Pinto Ambrose[2002], Satyanarayana[2002], Yagati[2002] recommends segregation of the Dalits in exclusive schools. Pinto Ambrose [2002] justifies his argument saying that in segregated schools Dalits will 'learn in a spirit of fellowship, exchange knowledge through cooperative learning, exhibit their folk culture and value it, and establish communities of solidarity for social change.' He feels that reservation policy didn't benefit the disadvantaged much. But 'the exclusive schools could provide a big impetus towards evolving an educational system of their own'. Zelliott, Eleanor [2002] in her historical work on Educational experiments for the Dalits in Maharashtra concludes that "the most effective of these experiments were integrated institutions

that accepted all castes and classes, but paid very special attention to the inclusion and the needs of the Dalits”.

It is important to raise the question as to whether the state should opt for more MRS or whether it should try to integrate the general government schools with MRS. Generating and engaging with such a debate will have far reaching implications. At present there is only limited provision to admit students in these schools. Therefore creation of more Model Residential Schools to take all Dalit and Adivasi children who want to study there should be undertaken.

## 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

Education is the basic indicator of social development. Kerala is much ahead of the Indian states in respect of the key indicators of social development such as literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy etc [C.P.Chandrasekhar.et.al, 2001]. Education has a major role in this development process. But at the same time with in the state there are social groups that are substantially behind the rest of the population in terms of education and other development achievements [C.P.Chandrasekhar.et.al, 2001].

The intension of this study was to look at the performance of Dalits and Adivasi students in school education in general and to give a comparative picture of their performance in Model Residential Schools. Most research studies and official statistics shows that the performance of Dalit and Adivasi students is poor compared to other students. The reason for their dismal performance is always attributed to their disadvantaged socio- economic background [Nambissan, 2001]. After Independence, and particularly starting from the First Five Year Plan, various developmental measures were initiated for the social and economic development of Dalits and Adivasis but they remained as marginalized groups. In Kerala also they lags behind other communities in all the development effects and their educational backwardness is a serious matter for concern.

#### 5.2 Findings and Summary

Different studies have shown that the overall performance of students in the Secondary School Leaving certificate (SSLC) examination, which they undertake at the end of Class 10 is generally at a low level ( Chandrasekhar. C.P et al 2001). In this

context we felt the need to study the performance of Dalits Adivasi students in SSLC examination to examine the influence of social backgrounds in attaining better results .We find from secondary data that the pass percentage of Dalit and Adivasi children in SSLC examination is abysmally low , among the SC students it was 19.2 in March 1991, and for the ST students 11% while for others the level was 54.88%. In March 2005, the pass percentage of SC students has gone up to 37.03%, for ST to 32.5 and for others it is almost double, 61%. Though there is some improvement in the performance of SC/ST students the gap below the general level is quite high. Their rate of improvement has been very slow making this gap wide over years. In an attempt to calculate the disparities in the pass percentages of these three groups, SC, ST and Others we have used disparity ration. The disparity ratios reveal that, there is of course some improvement over the years in favor of Dalit/Adivasi students, but the pace of change is very slow. We have also provided the gender dimension of SSLC results and we find a uniform pattern across various social groups in the matter of SSLC performance of girls. Till the year 2000, the number of girls passing the examination was less than the boys. The gap was greater among SC and STs, but among other category it was less. From the year 2000 onwards, however, in all the three groups - SCs STs and Others, the girls started outperforming the boys. This trend is a welcoming sign of girl's empowerment and gender equality. A similar poor performance can be seen in higher secondary results as well. The pass percentage of SC students in higher secondary examination was 33 and for ST it was 43 and for others it was 61.5%.In the year 2005, the pass percentage of SC students 46 , for ST it is 38 and for others 64.20, Even though there is an improvement in improvement in pass percentage. The Higher Secondary results bring out a serious matter, virtual absence of and Adivasi students in the Higher Secondary courses.

The difference in the performance of public examinations among the different social groups can be explained in the back ground of their socio – economic conditions as well as the nature of their schooling. In Kerala, Scheduled Castes constitute 19 percent of the BPL population, though their share is only 9.81 percent in the total population. Similarly, the Scheduled Tribes have 3 percent in the category, though their population percentage is only 1.4 [Kerala Economic Review, 2004]. This is ample evidence of the economic inequality in the state that gets reflected in every sphere, including education. An increase in the enrollment of students in private unaided schools over the recent years in Kerala and a corresponding fall in the enrollment level in government schools is observed by many researchers [Human Development

Report, Kerala, 2004]. The race after private unaided schools seems to be guided by the feeling that children get quality education in such schools and the teaching and other facilities in government schools remain inferior. The cost of sending a child in private unaided school is enormous. Yet the rush for enrollment private unaided schools shows that there is a demand for it from a section of parents who are willing to pay for quality education. As this quality education is availed at high price by the affluent class, the poor and the marginalized groups get automatically excluded. It is also observed by various studies that in Kerala most of the students seek private tuition to supplement class lessons [KSSP, 2004]. It is a reflection of diminishing quality of teaching especially in government schools. The students who don't have a parental support and private tuitions to supplement class lessons will be in a disadvantaged position. The poor performance of Dalits and Adivasi students in the SSLC examination is the strong evidence of it.

The School Completion Rate which is another indicator to measure the utilization pattern show that among all students Primary and Middle School completion are quite high. This is because of the automatic promotion policy of the state till class VII. But when we analyze the final school completion rate, there is a marked difference in the performance of Dalit and Adivasi students. Out of 100 SC children who join in Class I in the year 1990, only 20 students get cleared in SSLC examination in the year 2000. Among ST the number is 11, and others 54.

Our study tries to understand the performance of students in one of the residential schools exclusively meant for teaching Dalits and Adivasi children. We see that such Model Residential Schools produce consistently better results. From the year 2001 to 2005 the pass percentages in these schools range from 68.66 percent to 100 percent. In the year 2003-04, out of 363 students appeared from all the Model Residential Schools in the state 360 cleared the examination. Except three schools, Nelloranadu, Noolpuzha and Kannur all other schools secured 100 percent pass. More over, 62% of students clear the exam with high rankings securing distinction, first class or second class.

When we compare the SSLC results of Dalit/Adivasi students studying in non MR Schools with those in MRS students we find that MRS have a critical edge over the general schools in the levels of pass percentages. While the over all pass percentage of Dalit students in the SSLC examination (36.73) and Adivasi students (32.85)

remained low, in Model Residential Schools, the pass percentages are cent percent in MRS Kattela , and 69% in MRS Kodoth, in the year 2001.

The better performance of the students in the MRS is solely due to the particular schooling system, such as providing residential facilities, ensuring quality education, special care and extra classes to supplement and maintaining conducive atmosphere for the general well being of the students in terms of timely food, free boarding etc. Equally important was the commitment of the, teachers for improving the general backwardness of Dalit and Adivasi students and are committed to improve the performance of their students. A comparison of MRS students with the Dalits and Adivasi students in the non- MRS schools is also attempted in the study to establish that the performance of MRS students is way above those studying in general schools.

It is true that the students of MRS are outperforming in the SSLC examination compared to their counter parts in non- MR Schools, whether this small and isolated educational attempts can make an impact on the vast majority of the deprived ones is a pertinent question in this context. Also the lack of opportunity to blend with students from other social groups is another aspect to be considered.

### **5.3 Policy Suggestions**

Historically, education was the monopoly of upper castes in Kerala, as else where in India. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala was a highly conservative, hierarchical and caste ridden society [Mathew, 1999]. It is the social reform movements in the state and the government intervention that helped to eliminate the discriminatory tendency embedded in the caste system in some ways. Though there has been a lessening of discrimination in social life, economic discrimination and marginalization of the socially vulnerable sections still prevail. They continue to lag behind in educational attainments as well. A significant proportion of such communities live in abject poverty in rural India. The situation in Kerala is no different. Poverty continues to be the major obstacle in their education. There has been an increase in the number of private unaided educational institutions in Kerala recently. It is important to note here that the proportion of SC/ST students in private unaided schools is very low and so such quality education is affordable at high cost only by the economically and socially advantaged sections and others naturally get excluded.



Based on the above observations it is imperative that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of education in government schools. Our case study on Model Residential School reveals that MRS has a critical edge over the general schools with respect to the pass percentages of Dalits and tribal students. Government should take initiative to start more such schools or try to integrate the general government schools with MRS system.

#### **5.4 New Focus in Research**

Major studies on school education in Kerala do not provide much details on the schooling experiences of Dalits and Adivasi students. In the context of increasing private unaided schools, international schools and alternative schoolings, it is necessary to look at the learning experience of these children in different schooling systems and identify how exclusionary/inclusionary are such systems.

## APPENDIX 1

### Educational Programs for Dalit and Adivasi Students in the State of Kerala

(1) Pre-primary education:- Financial assistance is given through Local Self Governments. A nursery school child gets Rs. 5 per day for meals, RS 200 for uniform and RS 50 as lump sum grant.

(2) Pre-Matric Education:- For meeting school expenses lump sum grant is issued in the following scale:

From standard 1 to 3 RS 70/-

Standard 4 RS 75/-

Standard 5 RS 110/-

Standard 6 &7 RS 125/-

Standard 8,9 & 10 RS 175/-

(Failed students can avail 50% of the above amounts. Monthly stipend is available to more disadvantaged candidates)

(3) Accommodation in private boarding schools:- Those students who stand out in their standard IV exams are eligible for getting assistance to cover all the costs for this facility. This scheme is implemented through district Panchayats, Municipalities and Corporations.

(4) Fee concession, lump sum grant, monthly stipend for higher education : This assistance is available for post-SSLC studies. Lump sum grant ranging from Rs. 245 to RS 1100 is given to the students in accordance to the nature of the course. The monthly stipend is Rs.215/- or RS 250- The hostlers will get money for food and accommodation along with pocket money

(5) Reservation :- Government recognised Art & Science Colleges offers 20% seats reserved for SC students. The technical and professional institutions earmark 10% of the seats. Annually about 50,000 students avail this reservation facility.

(6) Pre-Matric Hostels:- 97 hostels (57 for male and 46 for female) including 2 sports hostels come under the scheme. It is now controlled by Block Panchayats/ Municipalities/ Corporations. 10% of the accommodation is open for students belonging to other communities.

(7) Subsidised hostels : Those students who sought accommodation in the approved hostels run by voluntary organisations are eligible to get a boarding grant of RS 250 per mensem apart from uniform clothes.

(8) Post-Matric Hostels : 18 Hostels (5 for female and 13 for male) are run by the welfare department. An occupant will get monthly hostel expense of RS 600/- along with a pocket-money of RS 50-65/-

The norm for accommodation is - 68% for SC, 17% for ST, 5% for Converted Christians, 10% for Other Forward Castes.

(9) Encouragement for performance in studies: The students who register good performance in their examinations are eligible to get a cash award specified as below: SSLC RS 750/-

Plus Two, TTC, Polytechnic RS 1000/-

Degree RS 1500/-

PG/ Professional Course RS 2000/-

(10) Promotion & Training to Sportsmen: The SC students who show unrelenting enthusiasm in sports are roped into the sports schools at Thiruvananthapuram. They are given accommodation in sports hostels and are trained with the assistance of Sports Council of Kerala.

(11) Pre-Examination Training Centres: The centres in Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kozhikode impart short-term training to job aspirants for appearing various competitive examinations. The trainees will get a stipend of RS 400/- per month. Entrance coaching classes are also offered by these centres.

(12) Special Coaching for Civil Service Examinations: Institute for Civil Service Examination Training Society, an autonomous institute, imparts special coaching for civil service examinations. The trainees get RS 500/- as monthly stipend whereas hostellers get RS 250/- as monthly pocket money Those who get through preliminary exam will get a free stay and coaching in a Delhi Institute.

(13) Book Bank: Financial Assistance is given to purchase costly reference volumes to those institutes which conducts professional courses.

(14) Money help for failed students: To those who failed in their SSLC, Plus Two, Degree Courses financial help is given to try their chances in tutorials.

(15) Temple-entry Proclamation Memorial Scholarship: Scholarship is given to those SC/ST students who stand out in their SSLC, Plus Two, Degree, Engineering, Medicine examinations.

(16) Chief Minister's Scholarship : 4 SSLC toppers from SC students are given scholarship of RS 1000/- each by the Chief Minister of Kerala.

(17) Awards to Rank-Winners : The SC students who emerges first in the Medical/Engg. entrance list get a cash award of RS 2501/- each.

(18) Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Medal & Cash Award : Those who comes first in SC and ST category in the LLB examinations get this medal along with a cash award of RS 5001/-

(19) Model Residential Schools : Brilliant SC/ST students are admitted in these schools (in Palakkad and Aluva) based on an entrance test.

(20) Assistance for Parallel College Students : The SC/ST students in parallel college get all the financial assistance enjoyed by them in regular colleges.

(21) Self-financing/ Autonomous institutions : The SC/ST students in these institutions get all high-rated fee concessions and other assistance as well.

(22) Study abroad : The SC/ST students who opt to study abroad get RS 1.5 lakh as interest free loan.

(23) ITCs & Production Training Centres : SC/ST students are given training in 41 ITCs and in 3 production training centres.

(24) Kerala Kalamandalam : The SC/ST students in this deemed university get all educational assistance as given in other educational institutions

(25) Tourism & Travel Studies : The SC/ST candidates aspiring to the course conducted by Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies are eligible to get all financial assistance.

(26) Help to OBC : Students belonging to Other Backward Communities are given fee concessions if they fall within the prescribed income limit of RS 20000 for Plus Two and RS 25,000 for Degree Course.

(27) Assistance to the Socially and Educationally Backward : As per Kumara Pillai Commission Report all students with a family income limit of 36,000/- are eligible to get fee concessions in PG or professional studies.

(28) Hostel Complex : A hostel complex housing 150 female students is open in Thiruvananthapuram

(29) Tutorial help : A scheme is being implemented to extend tutorial help to SC/ST students in selected centres aiming improved academic performance.

(30) Vocational Training in Private Institutes : The SC/ST youths who undergo training in private institutes are given all kinds of assistance.

(31) Courses in other States : SC/ST students who obtain admission in much -sought after courses in other states are given educational assistance.

(32) Assistance for D. Pharm, MF.Sc and the Courses conducted by Hyderabad National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management : All educational assistance is given to SC/ST students opting for above courses.

## APPENDIX 2

**Table A.2.1**  
Model Residential Schools in the year 2004-05

s/n	Name of the School	District	Strength
1	Model Residential School , Katela (for girls)	Trivandrum	332
2	Model Residential School,Punaloor(for boys)	Kollam	151
3	Model Residential School , Pathanamthitta(for boys)	Pathanamthitta	162
4	Model Residential School,Kottayam(for girls)	Kottayam	99
5	Model Residential School,Munnar(for boys)	Idukki	183
6	Model Residential School,Chalakkudy(for girls)	Thrissur	205
7	Model Residential School,Attapady(for girls)	Palakkad	198
8	Model Residential School, Pookadu(for boys)	Wayanad	276
9	Model Residential School,Wayanad(for boys)	Wayanad	203
10	Model Residential School,Nelluranad(for boys)	Wayanad	288
11	Model Residential School,Idukki(for boys and girls)	Idukki	178
12	Model Residential School,Kannur (for boys)	Kannoor	205
13	Model Residential School,Kasargod(for girls)	Kasargode	205
14	Model Residential School,Njaraneeli (CBSE)	Trivandrum	60
15	Model Residential School,Alappuzha(for girls)	Alappuzha	155
16	Model Residential School,Alwaye(for boys)	Ernakulam	198
17	Model Residential School,Thrissur(for boys)	Thrissur	128
18	Model Residential School,Thrittala(for girls)	Palakkad	200
19	Model Residential School,Kozikode(for boys)	Kozhikode	91
20	Model Residential School,Kasargod(for boys)	Kasargode	102

Source: Administrative Report, Tribal Welfare Department

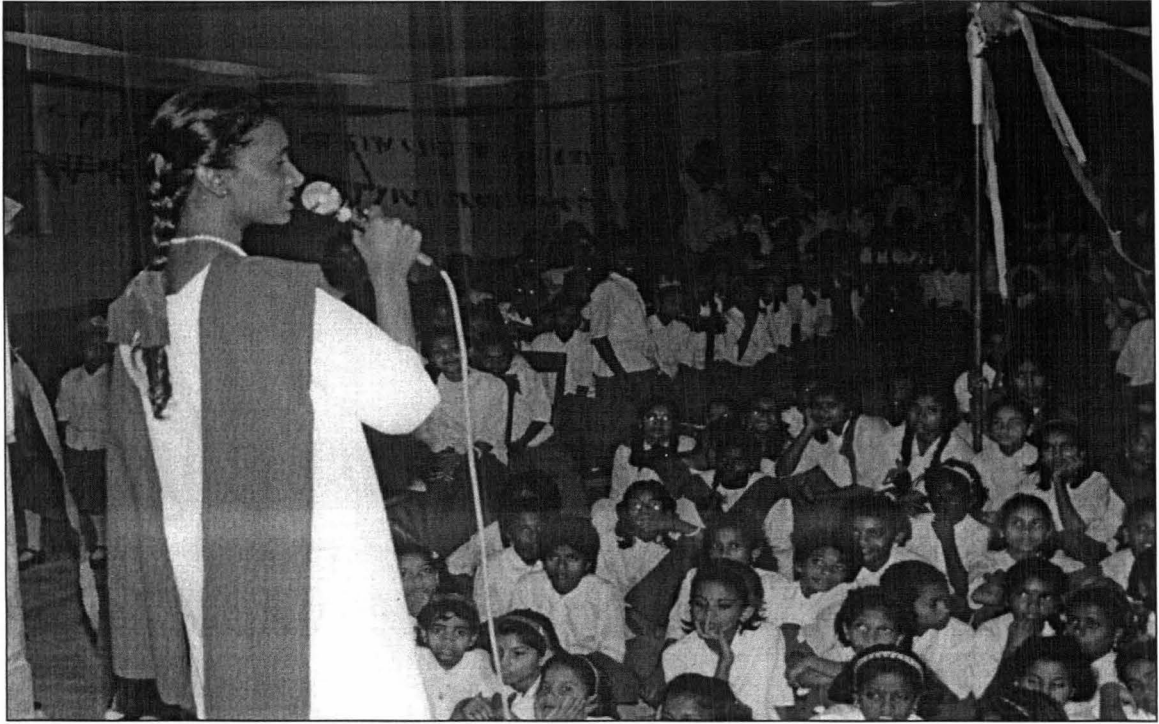
## Cached Moments- Model Residential School Katella



Assembling for Morning Prayer



School band troop



A snap from School Anniversary



Extra Curricular Session



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