Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Tribal groups are considered to be the earliest inhabitants of India. Historically self-sufficient, forest-based communities with independent cultural identities; these tribal groups have been subjected to displacement, dispossession, and subjugation since centuries. Scheduled Tribes (STs) are now India’s poorest and most marginalised communities. One of the unintended consequences of the development in India, without proper implementation strategies, has been uneven development and the tribes as a community are the worst sufferers of these interventions (Xaxa, 2016). Like other indicators of social development, it is well recognised that the educational status of tribes is very discouraging as compared to the rest of the population and there are differences in educational attainment among tribes located in different parts of India.

Data reveal that 75% of all categories of students pass Class X examination in 2010 while the pass percentage is very low among Scheduled Tribe children. Only 62% of the Scheduled Tribe children pass Class X examinations in the same year. The drop-out rate is also higher than Scheduled tribe children. More than 62.4% of the tribal children who enter Class I fail to complete secondary level of schooling against 47.4% from all categories of children in India. (Government of India, 2014). The inequality in educational attainment between Scheduled Tribes and rest of the population is widened throughout years. Further, there are also state variations in drop-out rate among Scheduled Tribes at the secondary level. While drop-out rate among Scheduled tribes in Odisha is the highest at 85.6% in 2010, drop-out rates among Scheduled Tribes are higher than the national average of 70.9% in the states such Bihar (71.1%), Gujarat (77.6%), Jharkhand (79.8%) and Rajasthan (79.3%). (Government of India, 2011)

Though there are limited studies on drop-outs and completion of schooling at the secondary level of schooling, the studies on drop-out at elementary level shows that the reasons of high drop-out rates are the wide-ranging such as high (opportunity) cost of education, inadequate educational facilities, poverty, familial duties, structural factors and school-related factors. (Bhagwati 1973; Duraisamy 1992; Dreze and Gazdar 1996, Nambissan, 2000, Sedwal and Kamat, 2011, Sengupta and Guha 2002, Sujatha, 1996, 2002, Tilak, 2002). Further, several studies reveal that poor quality of teaching-learning processes in many schools leave no opportunities for acquisition of core competencies.
even after students attend schools for eight to ten years. Furthermore, the poor learning mechanism of the school does not help in value addition of the child’s learning opportunity, which compels many parents to withdraw their children from school. (Govinda and Bandopadhyay, 2012 and PROBE, 1999)

Large-scale studies undertaken on the education of tribal children in the Indian context, point to pervasive inequalities between tribes and the general population with respect to various indicators in education. (Ambasht, 1970 Sachidananda, 1971, Panda, 1983, Panda, Bijoy, 1995, Sujatha, 1987, 1994). However, a few studies have examined the education of the tribal children in ethnically differentiated settings. Sujatha (1987) has revealed an important finding, which posits that constraints for the educational progress of Yenadis\(^1\) are found more in mixed villages than with in tribal habitations. Comparisons of tribal and other setting show that the interaction between school and community is rare in the case of the former. Yenadi parents also participate less in the school activities than the parents of other tribes in the tribal colonies. The reasons are mainly attributed to low motivation, lack of awareness among parents, lack of interest on the part of children, household factors and overall discrimination within the school settings between Yenadis and another group of children(Sujatha,1987).

Sujatha’s work (1987) also stresses that a significant mismatch between formal system of education and educational aspiration of the community, on one hand, and a divergence of realities with socio-cultural aspects of their life on the other, severely hamper educational progress. Lack of space for the life needs of the tribe in the curriculum and inappropriate school timings and calendar are the other important factors contributing towards the lower participation in the education of the tribal children in the mixed settings(Sujatha,1987).

Nambissan (1994) argues that rejection of mother tongue of the children by the school, which is integral to their sense of culture, identity and self-worth also cause harm to children’s natural desire to learn. There are assumptions that the reason behind drop-out of tribal children and their poor performance may be due to the rejection of the linguistic and cultural resources by the education system that these tribal children bring with them(Nambissan,1994). There are also debates that the aspects of cultural and

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\(^1\) Yenadis are one of the 33 Tribes of Andra Pradesh. They account for 9.2 per cent of the ST population of the state.
social practices and pattern of socialisation of tribal children have received little attention in the researches done in the area of schooling of tribal children (Sundar, 2010, Xaxa, 2011). Therefore, there is the need to probe and carefully examine social context and marginality of communities in relation to education. Within this discourse, the present research aimed at mapping subjective experiences of children, parents, and teachers in the context of diverse community cultures and schooling practices in a tribal village.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The issues of poor educational attainment among tribes calls for a relational analysis between social context and marginality in relation to schooling of tribal children. Cox (2001) discussed marginalisation as a situation in which a section of population is pushed to the margins of a society, for some reason, where their sense of security is threatened in every way. The marginalised are usually without work, without the means to lead a full social life, and perhaps are stigmatised for being in a situation over which they have little control (Cox, 2001).

Discussing on the context of the marginalisation of tribes, Xaxa (2001) argued that these situations of tribes mainly results from the fact that the developmental policies and programmes are not so alien in case of larger society, as it is in case of tribal society. Further, the large-scale immigration of non-tribals to tribal areas have marginalised tribes and tribes remained excluded from fair share of access to the fruits of development. (Xaxa, 2012). Further, Xaxa (2001) pointed out that in some areas, where more than one tribal group exist, some of them are not only numerically dominant but are also more economically and politically powerful than others and in these areas, tribal groups with small size of population are more vulnerable and marginalised than other groups. There is some relationship between lack of development and traditional social structure and culture of tribes, which needs to be explored in research.

Regarding marginalisation within education, Braslavsky (1985) states that three types of marginalisation of education continue to operate in society. Discussing education in the context of Argentina, he notes these forms: ‘Marginalisation through total exclusion, where there is no entry into the education system and no access at all to formal learning, particularly learning to read and write and perform basic math functions; marginalisation through early exclusion, where there is the process of expulsion or rejection from the formal education system before having had the
opportunity to solidify basic skills and marginalisation through inclusion, which is a
process whereby education is provided through tracks of ‘differing quality for some
sectors of society but without guaranteed access to some skills’ (cited in
Aguerrond, 2000, pp.139). Examining the model proposed by Braslavsky (1985),
Aguerrond (2000) refines these three forms of marginalisation:

1. Marginalisation by total exclusion: Since pre-school instruction and teaching-
learning process in primary classes is predicted on the characteristics of middle class
children and evaluation is based on these stereotyped images, children from poorest
sector are at disadvantage in early grades.

2. Marginalisation by early exclusion: Vast majority of children from poorest section
drop out from secondary education even though they complete primary education
because of total exclusion. This is reflected in differences between the poor and non-
poor in completion rates not only at primary level of education but differences widen
at secondary or tertiary level.

3. Marginalisation by inclusion: The education system, instead of devising a strategy to
address the learning needs of the poorest, focusses more on incorporating services to
aid the poor. The system then places the blame for school failure on socioeconomic
condition of the family or on the child’s learning problems instead of taking any
blame for discrimination on itself.

Within the educational context of Argentina, Aguerrond (2000) argues that the
education system is a battleground where there are structural mechanisms of
marginalisation in practice, while people of different social class demand to enter and
remain in the school. The first consequences of social group with different cultural
orientations gaining access to education what was usually known as 'dropping out'. A
school formally created for the middle class conditionally rejects children from other
class.

The debates regarding marginalisation and education of tribes in the Indian
context have also raised questions about culture of school and culture of communities
they serve; economic opportunity, poor quality of schooling, teacher-student
relationships and discriminatory practices in school (Govinda and
Bandyopadhyay, 2012; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013; Sedwal and Kamat, 2008;
Sujatha, 2002; Sundar, 2010, Xaxa, 2012). Historically, access to education has been
considered as the most important demand of most of the marginalised communities in
India. While enrolments of tribal children have increased over the last decades, the issue of drop-outs is the most pressing issue. The non-participation or low level of participation in schooling of the marginalised groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) is attributed to familial processes, discrimination and destabilising economic processes such as child labour and seasonal migration (Jha and Jhingran, 2006; Velaskar, 2012). The structural tensions such as absenteeism of teachers, non-functioning of formal school system, geographical isolation accompanied by social isolation also discourage the children from marginalised tribal background in school participation (Sharma, 2012).

Xaxa (2012) also mentions that modern means of education such as language of reading and writing, being an alien phenomenon to tribes, result in high drop-out rate in tribal society. Murali Krishna (2012) goes on to say that the elimination of the marginalised groups such as dalits and tribes mainly occurs because the examination system does not measure intelligence or ability rather negatively assesses these people’s culture, language and knowledge. The schooling system promotes culturally dominant groups whereas socially and culturally marginalised groups such as the SCs and STs are eliminated due to negative stereotypical image of them as stigmatised social groups.

The above discussion points to the fact that a range of economic, social and political factors seem to influence the processes of schooling. However, there is need to explore the socio-cultural context of schooling and establish the link between social, economic and cultural deprivation, and familial factors at one hand and school participation on the other.

1.2.1. Studying Social Context, Cultural Capital and Schooling

Schools undoubtedly exert a powerful influence on the formation of identity of a child but a wide variety of cultural institutions also play a vital role in these contexts. Therefore, while focusing on understanding the relationship between social context, culture, and schooling, it is imperative to explore the relationship between ‘external’ cultural resources and ‘internal’ school culture in both complementary and antagonistic terms (Macdonald, 2012).

At the structural level, social identities reflect divisions in the society that are marked by systematic, material and/or power inequities. However, when we try to understand identities within the educational field, there are arrays of intersectionality, that crosscut social categories. There is the frequent conflation of learner identities with
social identities grounded in categories of race, ethnicity, disability, social class and gender (Reay, 2010).

Learner identities are referred as “the conceptualisation children have of themselves as learners, but as with social identities, these are relational, and pupil constructs of themselves and are seen by others in terms of both their learner and class identities” (Reay, 2010).

Pollard and Filler (2007) state that the learner’s identity is constructed by the intersection of home, school and peer group, socio-cultural influences and relationships. Families, teachers, and friends in the relationship with an individual pupil and with each other, act to mediate and interpret wider cultural and political discourse that shape individual pupil’s experience and perception.

Levinson (1999) argues that school as one of the important sites of intentional cultural transmission within and against which identities are continually being constructed.

When we discuss the education of tribal children, Xaxa (2001) mentions that there is a strong absence of culture of education in tribal society. Bourdieu (1985) argued that schools reflect and are responsive to the cultural orientation of dominant class. I consider Bourdieu’s perspective on cultural capital to understand the schooling practices in my field. As Bourdieu asserts, identity is about difference, the range of capitals; cultural, social, economic and symbolic, are accessed by the individuals and groups to make a difference to the choices and options available to them (Bourdieu cited in Reay, 2010). With these resources, some students successfully move across a variety of different educational fields, and their identities have a degree of fluidity, while other students remain fixed within these same fields (Skeggs, 2004). Here, different sets of cultural capital such as academic qualifications of the parents (institutionalised cultural capital); cultural dispositions both inherited and learned during childhood, a person’s demeanour, speech and manners, attitudes, behaviour, knowledge, and other interactions (embodied cultural capital); and book, artefacts, the dressing styles and lifestyles used by different groups (objectified capital) seems to influence the education, who mostly access these resources.

Bernstein (1975) focused on studying the cultural processes and found that the process of schooling influence the reproduction of class cultures to a large extent. Bernstein established that school culture was transmitted through both the instrumental
order and expressive order. While the instrumental order is mainly concerned with the acquisition of specific skills, the expressive order includes conduct, manner, and character. According to Bernstein, “instrumental order” divides groups of staff members and pupils. Students are often grouped based on their age, gender, social class and academic ability. Bernstein discussed that the rituals of the expressive order were both consensual and differentiating. Consensual rituals comprise of rituals of school assemblies and ceremonies, the rituals of punishment and reward and dress styles. He found that these consensual rituals bound together all members of the school including pupils and staff members as a moral community. On the other hand, differentiating rituals demarcate groups within the school from each other, regarding age, gender, or social functions.

I understand Bernstein's cultural transmission theory relevant to my study as it provides an analytical framework for understanding the structure and organisation of schooling and school practices and its influence on student’s orientation to and learning in school in a locality where four communities share the space in the educational field. As discussed above, Bourdieu’s (1973) framework, which describes how uneven access to cultural capital by children of different communities provides differential educational opportunity with in a complex of family, community and larger socio-economic contexts, will also be used in the study.

1.3. Socio-Economic Conditions of Tribes in Odisha

Odisha, which is situated in the east coastal region of the country, occupies a unique place in the ethnic map of India, because the state is native to the highest number of tribal groups among all states of India with extremely diverse socio-economic situations. These tribes range from nomadic food gatherers and hunters to skilled and settled agriculturists and horticulturists.

The total number of tribal groups in Odisha is 62, which include 13 ‘Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups’ (PVTGs). Out of total population of 41.9 million in the state, 9.5 million Scheduled Tribes constitute of 22.85 per cent and 9.66 per cent of the total tribal population of the country. There has been an increase in the ST population in Odisha from 42.24 lakhs in 1961 to 95.91 lakhs in 2011. However, the proportion of ST population to the total population decreased from 24.07 per cent in 1961 to 22.85 per cent in 2011. The decadal population growth rate of STs since 1961 has been less than that for the total population. The advent of non-tribal population into tribal areas is increasing year by year. As a result, there has been decrease in homogenous tribal
villages. The tribal villages with 100 per cent of tribal population, decreased from 5085 in 2001 to 3839 in 2011. (Census of India, various years).

Map 1.1. Location of Kendujhar in Odisha Map

Source: Government of Odisha

There are eight scheduled districts in Odisha, which have more than 50% of share of ST population to total population. About 44.21 per cent of the total land area in Odisha has been constitutionally declared as Scheduled Area. Except the regions of the coastal belt, most of the districts of the state are either partially or fully declared as Scheduled areas. At present, Scheduled Areas of the state include six districts that are fully and five districts that are partially within it. About 118 blocks out of 314 community development blocks are covered under the tribal sub-plan. There are 15 tribal groups distributed all over the state having population of more than one lakh. More than 70% of the total ST population are living in 10 districts of Odisha while rest 30% of ST population are scattered in remaining 20 districts of Odisha. (Odisha Economic Survey, 2013-14). This data clearly show wide and uneven distribution of various groups and communities of people around the state, which remind the plural structure of the Indian social system. While ST communities are largely concentrated in
south-western and north-western state and majority of the Scheduled Caste population are concentrated in the coastal regions of Odisha (Census, 2001)

Odisha has a high level of dependence on mineral resources, but the economy of the state is also characterised by lower per capita income. Apart from low GDP, other measures of development like lower growth rates and higher levels of mortality, malnutrition, morbidity, lower index of education are found in mines affected districts of Odisha. Most of the mineral deposits of the state are home to a sizeable tribal population; including some of the most primitive tribes in the world, who are totally dependent on forests for their livelihood and have lower adaptive capacity to social changes.

As far as economic condition concerned, the state’s economic growth has accelerated, but it still lags behind the rest of the country. In the past, several years, the state has taken a number of initiatives. Large scale investment in the mineral sector is one of them. With the recent boom in prices of mineral intensive products, it has attracted many foreign and domestic investors of steel, aluminium and certain other mineral intensive manufacturing industries. As a result, large scale displacement has been happening in recent years. During 1948-2008, three million people in Odisha was displaced, approximately 75 per cent of which were Scheduled Tribes and 25 per cent were Scheduled Castes. (Fernandes 2008).

The marginalised sections of Odisha, specifically STs, SCs and other forest dwellers suffer from some of the worst indicators in terms of poverty levels and poor economy, access to productive assets, education and heath, etc. For example, 63.5 of Odisha’s tribes live below poverty line in 2011-12. They live in conditions of subsistence; dependent on agriculture and forests and are linked to the larger economy through their engagement as daily wage labour, picking up odd jobs in construction, transportation, and domestic sectors for some period. However, dispossession from government as well as private land and leasing out forest lands for mining activities has deprived tribals of their basic sources of livelihood (Patra, 2014).

Recent poverty estimation shows that Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the poorest among all other groups, even poorer than Scheduled Castes (SC). Undoubtedly, it can be seen that the poverty rate among STs and SCs has been reducing at a faster rate, i.e., 20.88 and 26.51 percentage points respectively from 2004-05 to 2011-12, but the gap between these two communities is widening year by year. While the gap in Head count ratio between STs and other communities was 47.30 per cent in 2004-05, the same
increased to 49.32 in 2011-12. Similarly, the gap between STs and SCs was 16.50 in 2004-05, but it has increased to 22.13 present in 2011-12(Table 1.1). This means that although there was substantial reduction in the poverty, the tribal communities get less benefit than Scheduled Castes(SCs) and other social groups in Odisha.

Table 1.1: Poverty Head Count Ratio (Per cent) by Social Groups for Rural Odisha, 2004-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration/Year</th>
<th>STs</th>
<th>SCs</th>
<th>OBC</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>84.40</td>
<td>67.90</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>37.10</td>
<td>60.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>47.10</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>39.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>63.52</td>
<td>41.39</td>
<td>24.16</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>35.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Odisha Economic Survey 2013-14

Map 1.2. Location of Patna Block in Kendujhar District

Source: Website of Kendujhar district

Kendujhar district, in which the sample village is located, has total population of more than 18 lakhs while Scheduled tribes are about 8.1 lakhs, constituting 45.45 per cent of total population. The distribution of family income among social groups in Kendujhar district reveals that the income of STs and SCs are much lower than all the
social groups except SCs and STs (SECC, 2011). It is evident in table 1.2 that in over 96 per cent of ST households, the highest earning member earns less than Rs. 5,000 a month. Social groups other than STs and SCs are relatively better placed than SCs and STs. In 7.56 per cent of households belonged to social groups other than SCs/STs, the highest earning member makes more than Rs. 10,000 as monthly income against 1.65 per cent and 3.44 per cent among SCs and STs households respectively (Table 1.2)

Table 1.2 Monthly Income of highest earning household member in households of Rural Odisha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Categories</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
<th>No. of Households with monthly Income of highest earning household member (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Odisha</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>2073079</td>
<td>1983495(95.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>1564418</td>
<td>1442835(92.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other categories</td>
<td>5040023</td>
<td>4204895(83.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Other than SC and STs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kendujhar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>172028</td>
<td>165271(96.07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>43147</td>
<td>39753(92.13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than SCs/STs</td>
<td>156072</td>
<td>131128(84.02%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011

The Scheduled Tribes in Odisha are forced into the fate of impoverishment due to various issues and challenges like lack of basic services like health and education, loss of livelihood, agricultural land has no irrigation facilities and water sources has dried up as a result of deforestation. Further, the new revenue policies and inflation have created added problems (Mohanty, 2011). Land alienation is also one of the prominent causes of poverty among tribes. Many tribes have also lost their land due to indebtedness. Studies reveal that more than 50% of the lands of the tribes lost in last 25-30 years through the process of indebtedness, mortgage and forcibly possession by the non-tribes. Further, stagnant agriculture and limited opportunities for non-farm self-
employment led to low income and rampant poverty among Scheduled Tribes (Mehta, 2011)

The family income of tribes has found to be reduced significantly after commencement of minings. In the name of development, tribals are displaced from their traditional habitats without getting adequate compensation upon which their productive systems, commercial activities and livelihoods are based on from many years. These tribals became the victims of unemployment, debt bondage and hunger due to loss of access to traditional sources of livelihood viz., land, forests, rivers, pastures, cattle etc. Even they get new land for settlement; it but that doesn’t suit them for leading comfortable life. The tribes those who get cash compensation, it becomes just impossible for them to get adequate land because these tribes use compensation paid for land to meet immediate survival needs that surface during resettlement (Downing, 2002).

Like economic influences, social and cultural life has also been disturbed due to displacement. The destruction of tribals’ spiritual values, as well as of tribe’s natural environment and fertility, is largely affected. (Das 2008; Padel and Das 2009). There has been drastic drop in quality of life in tribal areas resulting from this displacement. Padel (2011) discusses that while food security vanishes, and money assumes far greater importance in defining relationships between people in case of rapid industrialisation at the cost of displacement. The material culture and religious life are also largely transformed through displacement. The tribal dances, songs, stories, and customary ways of behaviour, which are the core of tribal identity, have also lost their meaning and vitality.

1.4. Educational Profile of the State

The crucial intervention in education in the post-independence period and rapid expansion in educational facilities helped in remarkable rise in enrolment of children in school. However, the decrease in enrolment are more visible in primary level of education, particularly in cases of Scheduled Tribes and Girls, which should be major concern of the state. Around 63,000 less students were admitted in primary schools in 2013-14 than 2012-13 while 54,000 less students were admitted in 2014-15 than 2013-14. On the other hand, admission in private school has increased\(^2\) (DNA, 2015). In case of enrolment of Scheduled Tribes at

primary education, there was increase in enrolment from 1,385,403 in 2011-12 to 1,394,603 in 2014-15 but the enrolment trend in Odisha shows decrease in enrolment from 1,400,139 in 2011-12 to 1394603 in 2014-15.

In Kendujhar district, the total enrolment of ST students at Primary level was 121,291 in 2011-12 but it dropped to 120089 in 2012-13 and then it increased to 125,433 in 2014-15. (Table 1.3).

Table-1.3: Enrolment among Social Groups from 2011-12 to 2014-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Odisha</th>
<th>Kendujhar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment (All categories)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6506</td>
<td>6422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>4438</td>
<td>4341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>2068</td>
<td>2081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1242</td>
<td>1242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>8378</td>
<td>8297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>4047</td>
<td>4129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>1399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>4527</td>
<td>4806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>3113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2147</td>
<td>2094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Odisha, 2015

Unlike primary level of education, continuous increase in enrolment was visible at upper primary level of education across the communities in Odisha as well as in Kendujhar district. However, there was downfall in girl’s enrolment at upper primary level. The girl’s enrolment was 1,018,744 in 2011-12, which dropped to 1,018,384 in 2012-13 but further it increased in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The decrease in enrolment are more visible in primary level of education, particularly in cases of Scheduled Tribes and Girls, which should be major concern of the state. Around 63,000 less students were admitted in primary

schools in 2013-14 than 2012-13 while 54,000 less students were admitted in 2014-15 than 2013-14. On the other hand, admission in private school has increased\(^3\) (DNA, 2015).

As far as issues of drop-out concerned, there was an increase in drop-out rate at primary level in Kendujhar district from 2.81 per cent in 2011-12 to 3.56 per cent in 2014-15. At upper primary level, the overall drop-out rate was 4.78 percent in 2011-12 and it increased to 6.91 present in 2014-15. Drop-out rate among girls are also high in comparison to boys at both primary and upper primary levels in Kendujhar district. The drop rate among girls was 3.36 per cent in 2011-12 at upper primary level in Kendujhar district which increased to 6.25 per cent in 2014-15 (Table 1.4).

**Table 1.4. Drop-out rates in Kendujhar both at primary and upper primary level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Odisha</th>
<th>Kendujhar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drop-Out Rate (Primary)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dropout Rate (Upper Primary)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLS</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Odisha, 2015

Many children particularly among Scheduled Tribes drop-out from school. Odisha is reported of having 40,1052 children, those who are out of school. Out of which, 1,19,980 children never enrolled in schools and 2,34,259 dropped out of school. Out of 401,052 out of school children, 307,462 are Scheduled Tribe Children, constitute 76.66 per cent of the total out of school children. (National Survey on Estimation of Out-of-School Children, 2014).

\(^3\)DNA (2015) Panel formed to examine decreasing enrolment of students in primary, UP schools in Odisha. Accessed on 25th January 2017

It was reported in many of the studies that teacher absenteeism was a regular phenomenon and thus, affects quality education in remote tribal areas of Odisha. Lack of basic infrastructure in the tribal areas and schools also influence the education of tribes to a larger extent (Debi and Mahesh, n.d.). Studies also report that the children mostly discontinue their education in Class II, V and VII i.e. at the transition classes from one level of schooling to the other. This indicates a low level of student’s achievement and result, which do not encourage the child to continue the next classes. Children from poor and illiterate families in tribal areas drop out more than other categories (OPEPA, 2012). It seems that the number of drop-outs are increasing and the situation is worse in case of Scheduled Tribes in Kendujhar as well as in Odisha. Even the drop-out rates among girls are also continued to be higher. Compared to the drop-out rates of Scheduled Caste children, the drop-out rates of Scheduled Tribe children are quite high. Hence, engagement with research is highly desirable to locate the social contexts, educational practices and the state of school participation in these tribal areas.

1.5. Rationale of the Study

Diversity in needs and expectations within the education structure has a long-lasting influence on the organisational structure of educational institutions, training of teachers and the content of textbooks. However, the policy perspective in India has not addressed these issues in detail. The net result is that despite long-standing efforts to equalise educational opportunity, access to basic education and educational facilities is still dream for many tribal groups.

Among the social groups, tribes are educationally backward community and most deplorable are the educational status of the tribal children, who share the space with the school as the children of the minority group and live in a culturally diverse setting (Sujatha, 2001).

Reproduction of inequality in education and educational opportunities is still a dominant issue in educational discourse in India. Velaskar (2010) argues that the current school system, being hierarchical and compartmentalised with the rise in multi-layered schools, nurture the merit of the middle and upper caste/class children and actively denies the same classes and development of merit, in the case of poor and historically excluded and subordinate groups. She further states that the whole teaching and learning mechanism is structured in such a manner that the disadvantaged groups of children have lower chances of completing basic levels of schooling, attaining equal
levels of academic success and transition to further stages of education. The opening of substandard schools has further decreased the likelihood of access to meaningful learning. Studies undertaken in India reveal that the participation of tribal children in school education is low in the mixed villages than the single tribal village (Sujatha, 2001). However, there is no clear explanation for how this happens or how the educational system should respond. There is need for greater understanding of the educational or schooling process deemed necessary to bring equity across the social and cultural groups.

Research on drop-outs in secondary education has been a major concern throughout the world. Drop-out from the secondary level of education not only causes socio-economic loss to the nation but also costs both individual and community as well. The prevalence of high drop-out rates among particular groups and communities acts to disadvantage them from benefitting adequately from welfare schemes and programmes. Thus, it not only impedes their adequate representation in social and economic sphere but also prevents the inclusive growth and development of a country (World Bank, 2009). Thus, it is desirable that better solutions need to be developed to ameliorate group-based inequality and inter- and intra-regional inequality in secondary education in India.

On the other hand, as noted by many, the research on secondary education has been a neglected field in the system of education (Sujatha and Geetharani, 2006, World Bank, 2009). Although some studies have been done on financing mechanisms and effectiveness of private and public schools in the secondary level of education, studies on completion and drop-outs need to be focused on in the context of India’s goal of achieving universalisation of secondary education. (Sujatha and Geetharani, 2006, World Bank, 2009). Studies cite that the problems of drop-outs in secondary education vary to a significant degree than that of elementary level of education (Sujatha and Geetharani, 2006). On the other hand, studies show that children who live in small habitations with low population continue to face difficulties in accessing school facilities and thus are at the higher risk of dropping out even after enrolment (Govinda, 2011). Therefore, it is highly desirable to study the marginalisation of education in small habitations and study process of drop-outs in these locations.
1.6. The Field Site

The village ‘Kendukhori’, located in Kendujhar district of Odisha, is inhabited by four communities of people, who share the space with each other. There are three tribal communities i.e. Sounti, Santal and Munda and one non-tribal community, Mahanta, belonging to OBC caste in the village. It was found that apart from tribal-non-tribal differences, the differentiation within three tribes were visible in all directions, in terms of occupation, landholdings and also in the cultural and religious spheres, which is discussed in Chapter Three. Hence, it is important to explore how the social context including economic conditions, cultural processes, social relations and power dynamics in the village that emanate from the social structure have the bearings on school participation.

1.7. Research Questions

In order to understand the processes of school participation in Kendukhori village, the characteristics of children who either complete or withdraw from the educational system between the tribal and non-tribal group of the population, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the socio-cultural and economic characteristics found among tribal and non-tribal groups in the village?
2. How does the interplay between political, economic and social factors within school and communities affect participation in schooling?
3. What are the factors and processes that pave the way for drop-out or completion of school education among different groups?

1.8. Limitation of the Study

This research focusses on exploring socio-cultural and economic differences between tribal-non-tribal communities and within different tribal communities and their influence on school participation. The present study has attempted to map these the differences in social, cultural and economic status of Mahanta(non-tribe) and Sounti, Munda and Santal tribes in a single village. Further research is warranted to understand the social and economic differences between these communities at the district and state level.

4Name changed to maintain confidentiality.
The study was not able to capture responses of all the drop-outs of cohort (2004-14) and cohort (2005-15), the cohorts under study, since some of them were married and some have already joined in the labour force outside the village. The study was able to capture responses of only those drop-outs who were available in the village.

In this study, I was not able to do quality observation of the teaching-learning process inside classrooms, which I had initially proposed to do. Since all the classrooms were multigrade classrooms with few teachers and students in cramped rooms, there were issues of space as well as time. Therefore, I tried to rely on the narratives of the parents, community members, who reflected upon the role performance of teachers.

1.9. **Organisation of Thesis**

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the background, statement of the problem and rationale of the study. In this section, I have briefly touched on discussing the socio-economic conditions and school participation of the general group of population vis-a-vis the Scheduled Tribes in Odisha with particular emphasis on Kendujhar district to highlight the issues of marginalisation of Scheduled Tribes.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. This chapter mainly deals with discussing the relationship between social structure, cultural capital and education and with more focus upon school participation and drop-outs. The theoretical framework is also discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the study. I decided to undertake qualitative research because it allowed me to explore multiple realities in the field and access to valuable data, which are inherent in the participant’s social world. Further, it helped to study knowledge and practices exist in the home, school and communities. This chapter focuses on details of the sample of the study and various approaches to data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4 highlights the key aspects of the lives of different communities including their socio-economic and political, cultural, religious beliefs and practices in the village.

Chapter 5 focuses on explaining the experience of the students in relation to what they learn at school, experience at home and community. It highlights how cultural resources, material resources available in the family and their friendship networks and
also school factors help to get educational opportunities and affect the processes of schooling.

Chapter 6 explores how interactions between economic condition, cultural processes, social relations and power dynamics that emanates from social context of home, school and communities affect school participation and process of completion or drop-out from school education.

Chapter 7 summarises the findings of the study and makes a few recommendations for further studies in the area.