

EDUCATION TO THE DEPRIVED SECTIONS: A FOCUS ON TRIBAL WOMEN

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Abstract

Scheduled Tribes (STs), the socially and educationally disadvantaged groups are one of the most exploited and deprived sections of the population in Indian. Tribal women are deprived of education which is the integral part of life. The Indian Tribal family organisation makes discrimination between the sexes regarding education and empowerment. Needless to say, that exclusion from fruits of development has adversely affected the quality of life of the tribal people and Tribal children are no exception. So, the Tribal society is marked by inequality, discrimination, exploitation, domination and deprivation. This paper examines issues concerning school access and equity for Women of Scheduled Tribe communities and also highlights their unique problems, which may require divergent policy responses. There are several studies available on various aspect of socio-cultural anthropology of tribal people. But very few attempts have been made to study on Socio-cultural Tradition and Women Education in tribal society in the study area. This paper discusses the education progress among tribal's particularly women in the present societies.

Keywords: Empowerment, Education, Tribal Women.



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Introduction

The tribal communities all over India have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation. Education is an important human activity. It enriches the tribal women in the self development and as well as the society as a whole. Especially the tribal women though they are away from the main stream of national life, but they are not kept away from the impact of socio – economic changes effecting the society in general. In this process of change, the tribal woman is forced to adhere to certain norms which may even take away her freedom, her control over the traditional productive system, her house, family and children and even her own life. The status of women is not similar in all the primitive societies. It is determined by the functions allotted to them, the social attitudes towards them, the behavior of males and the social contribution of the

women. These ideals and functions are, however, not universal. This paper speaks about the role of education in the empowerment of tribal women.

The tribal communities live in about 15 per cent of the country's area, in varying ecological and geo-climatic conditions, plains, forests, hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. They have their presence in the States and Union Territories except Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. The predominant tribal-populated States of the country, i.e. those with tribal population of more than 50 per cent of the total population of the States are: Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep. If a comparison is made amongst ST population alone, more than half the ST population of the country is concentrated in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The largest number of tribes (62 per cent) is in the State of Orissa. Tribals have been living in and around forests for centuries. These are their original habitats for generations from time immemorial.

A number of research reports were referred regarding women education.

Mohanty, P. (2009) conducted a study on potential correlates of academic achievement of rural SC girls from class IV and V of four blocks of Haryana. His result reveals (i) significant difference and positive relationship between academic achievement and socio-economic status of high-achieving girls (ii) no significant relationship was found between high-achieving rural SC girls and home environment (iii) no significant relationship was found between high-achieving rural SC girls and school environment. Gosh, S and Sushmita, (2012) studied on domestic violence against women in Hugli district, West Bengal and suggested that women need to be educated to change their attitude and self-confidence.

Patil, A.K., and Chandhar, Samita, V (2009) studied on improving women's status through lifelong learning, a case study in Raigad District of Maharashtra, the study found that women educational status is directly reflecting on the profession, employment and income of the family, it also revealed that dropout from the formal women education system and further education classes they have obtained do not fulfil the requirements of their life, providing lifelong learning programmes can provide the opportunities to enhance their status in several aspects.

Nayar, Usha (1992) conducted study to analyze the causes for non-enrolment and dropout of girls in rural areas and to suggest local-specific intervention strategies and found that the— (i) drop-out and never enrolled girls belonged to below subsistence level households. Pointed out that women education was not cost-free and they found it difficult to meet non-tuition cost like uniforms, books and money, (ii) Domestic work and sibling care were the chief reasons for girls not attending school, (iii) The demand for women teachers was strong in Mewat as also the need for an Urdu teacher, (iv) The drop-out girls, however, expressed their willingness to return to school. Parents were apathetic and had lower women educational and occupational aspirations for daughters compared to sons, (v) Drop-out was negligible in the age-groups 6-8 years and was maximum after class V, (vi) The study recommended rationalization of teachers between rural and urban areas to ensure at least one women teacher in every primary school.

Deprived of Education: Tribal women

Scheduled Tribes (STs), the socially and educationally disadvantaged groups are one of the most exploited and deprived sections of the population in Indian. Tribal women are deprived of education which is the integral part of life. The Indian Tribal family organisation makes discrimination between the sexes regarding education and empowerment. Needless to say, that exclusion from fruits of development has adversely affected the quality of life of the tribal people. And Tribal children are no exception. So, the Tribal society is marked by inequality, discrimination, exploitation, domination and deprivation. This paper examines issues concerning school access and equity for Women of Scheduled Tribe communities and also highlights their unique problems, which may require divergent policy responses. There are several studies available on various aspect of socio-cultural anthropology of tribal people. But very few attempts have been made to study on Socio-cultural Tradition and Women Education in tribal society in the study area.

Government Schemes: Educational Programmes

i) Early Childhood Education for 3-6 Age Group Children

That Early Childhood Education is of crucial significance for the optimum development of the child is admitted On all hands in this country and abroad, Studies have proved conclusively that foundation for later development is laid in the early years and impoverishment suffered at this stage damages severly the subsequent development of the

child. The importance of Early Childhood Education in the Indian context where 48% of the population live below the poverty line 63.83% are illiterate and one-fifth of the population is the age- group 0-6 years hardly needs any emphasis. Early Childhood Education has assumed added importance in the context of the programme of Universalisation of Elementary Education. One of the main objectives of educational development according to sixth Five Year Plan 1980-85, is -"to ensure essential minimum education to all children up to the age of 14 years within the next 10 years. This is by way of realising the Constitutional goal in the Directive Principle enshrined in Article 45 of the Constitution.

ii) Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe Students

The scheme covers professional, technical as well as non-professional and non-technical courses at various levels including correspondence courses covering distance and continuing education. The Scheme was introduced during the year 1944-45 and has since been revised from time to time. The last revision of the scheme has been made w.e.f. 01.04.2013. The Scheme provides financial assistance to the Scheduled Tribe students studying at post matriculation or post-secondary stage.

iii) Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Scheduled Tribe Students

This is a Central Scheme to providing fellowship to Scheduled Tribe students for pursuing higher studies such as M.Phil and Ph.D. The scheme was introduced in the year 2005-06. UGC is a nodal agency for implementation of the Scheme. It supports ST students in their higher studies such as M.Phil and Ph.D in all the Universities/Institutions recognized by the UGC. The fellowship is on the pattern of UGC fellowship awarded to regular full time research students in M.Phil and Ph.D courses. The total number of fresh fellowships each year is 667.

iv) National Overseas Scholarships for Scheduled Tribe Students

It is a Central Scheme to provide financial assistance to meritorious students for pursuing higher studies in foreign university in specified fields of Master Level Courses, Ph.D and Post-Doctoral research programmes, in the field of Engineering, Technology and Science. The Scheme was introduced during the year 1954-55 and has since been revised from time to time. This was Non-Plan Scheme, which became a Plan Scheme from 2007-08. Financial assistance is provided to 15 meritorious students (13 for ST and 2 for PTG) for pursuing higher studies abroad at the Masters level and Ph. D and Post-Doctoral research programmes

in 35 specified disciplines of Engineering, Technology and Sciences. The Scheme attempts at enhancing the employment avenues for ST candidates. 100% Central Assistance is provided directly to the candidates.

v) Scheme to Upgrade Merit of Scheduled Tribe Students

The objective of the scheme is to upgrade the merit of ST students by providing them remedial and special coaching in classes IX to XII. While remedial coaching aims at removing deficiencies in various subjects, special coaching is provided with a view to prepare the students for competitive examinations for seeking entry into professional courses like Engineering and Medical disciplines. The scheme was revised from time to time. The last revisions in the Scheme were made during 2008-09. The State Government/UT Administration selects certain schools in different Districts/towns with hostel facilities which show excellence in performance of students from class IX to XII. The Ministry fixes the total number of awards for each State annually.

vi) Central Sector Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Tribe students

This is a Central Sector Scholarship Scheme for ST students introduced from the academic year 2007-08 with the objective of encouraging meritorious ST students for pursuing studies at Degree and Post Graduate level in any of the Institutes identified by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the purpose. It supports meritorious ST students who gain admission in 213 identified quality educational institutions. Scholarship once awarded will continue till completion of the course subject to satisfactory performance.

vii) Scheme of Strengthening Education among Scheduled Tribe Girls in Low Literacy Districts

The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy levels between the general female population and tribal women, through facilitating 100% enrolment of tribal girls in the identified Districts or Blocks, more particularly in naxal affected areas and in areas inhabited by Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), and reducing drop-outs at the elementary level by creating the required ambience for education. Improvement of the literacy rate of tribal girls is essential to enable them to participate effectively in and benefit from, socio-economic development.

viii) Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Agencies for adult education

Proposals from Voluntary Agencies, under this component, will be considered on project to project basis. Assistance to Voluntary Agencies will be considered for undertaking projects of basic literacy/post literacy/continuing education and other projects relevant to accomplishment of overall activities of the Scheme. The projects aimed at eradication of illiteracy would include Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs)/Post Literacy Campaigns (PLCs) and projects aimed at self directed continuing education in the perspective of lifelong learning through establishment of continuing education centers and launching of target specific need based and innovative programme such as Equivalency Programmes, Quality of Life Improvement Programmes (QLIP) and Individual Interest Promotion Programmes (IIPP).

ix) Scholarships Scheme by Centre for Cultural Resources and Training

The Cultural Talent Search Scholarship Scheme aims at providing facilities to outstanding young children to develop their talents in various artistic fields. Children in the age group of 10 to 14 years studying either in recognized schools or belonging to families practicing traditional art forms are eligible for the scholarship. In 1982, the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) took over the Cultural Talent Search Scholarship Scheme from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India in which initially 100 talented students in the field of arts and crafts were identified from all parts of the country and provided with scholarship.

x) Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarships to the Other Backward Classes for Studies

Even after 51 years of independence and in spite of various measures taken to improve the level of education in the country, literacy levels among backward classes, particularly among women, continues to be extremely low. The number of steps have already been taken by the Government and considerable progress has been achieved in improving the level of literacy and education during the last 51 years, but there is still a long way to go before respectable levels of literacy are achieved, It has been recognized now that education and economic support for backward Classes has not been adequate and there is disparity between them and the non-backward sections of the population at every level. In view of the same, it is felt that earnest efforts are required to introduce various new schemes specifically for these target group i.e. backward classes to provide them a level playing field in comparison to non-

backward sections of the population. The position of women in terms of literacy among OBCs population is also a cause of concern. A scheme of Pre-matric Scholarship for the benefit of children belonging to Weaker Section amongst OBCs has been formulated with the object in view.

Few other government schemes are:

- Central Sector Scholarship Scheme of Top Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students
- Corpus Fund Scheme to Maulana Azad Education Foundation
- Post-matric Scholarship Scheme for minority students
- Scheme of Post Matric Scholarships to the Students belonging to Scheduled Castes
- Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education
- Model School scheme
- Adolescence Education Programme
- Scheme of Restructuring and Re-organisation of Teacher Education
- Setting up of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs)
- National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education
- National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme
- Scheme to Provide Quality Education in Madrasas
- Scheme of Financial Assistance for Appointment of Language Teachers

Conclusion

The status of women is not similar in all the primitive societies. It is determined by the functions allotted to them, the social attitudes towards them, the behavior of males and the social contribution of the women. These ideals and functions are, however, not universal. The tribal communities all over India have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. Especially the tribal women though they are away from the main stream of national life, but they are not kept away from the impact of socio – economic changes effecting the society in general. In this process of change, the tribal woman is forced to adhere to certain norms which may even take away her freedom, her control over the traditional productive system, her house, family and children and even her own life. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities

so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation. Education is an important human activity. It enriches the tribal women in the self development and as well as the society as a whole. For the development of a society, there is the need of an inclusive progress of all the sections of the society, and for this perspective, it is imperative to bring the deprived, marginalized and weaker sections of the society such as tribal women to the forefront of educational revolution in India. This is important for equitable growth of human resources and overall development of the nation. Education imparts knowledge, knowledge of self and infuses a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the tribal women to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and to avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them. Although there is a significant increase in the literacy of population of all categories in India, the tribal women are far behind from the national increase, both in terms of national average and women literacy. Despite the opportunities, special initiatives and care by the government for tribal education, the achievement of tribal women education is not as per expectations due to several factors. Hence, problems associated with education of tribal women needs immediate attention and early resolution.

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