

TRIBAL EDUCATION IN INDIA : GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

It is proved that education is the sole means to establish peace and brotherhood in the world. India is a land of a multitude of culture, religion, language and races. Tribal community in India constitute a small portion of the total population with their indigenous culture, language and their unique lifestyle. Tribal people in India are marginalized, underprivileged and deprived in some way or the other. They are still not able to relish the fruits of modernization and technological development. Only education could enable them to cast off their mold of oppression of centuries and bask in the sunshine of socio-economic development. With the help of education they can empower themselves and build confidence and courage to overcome the barriers of their day to day life.

Our constitution laid down various provisions for uplift of tribal communities but still they are confronted with various challenges. Despite several initiatives taken by the Government to enhance educational status ever since independence, the literacy rate among Schedule Tribes has remained low. Objective of this paper is to analyse the status of tribal education and the government initiatives to promote education among tribals and the challenges faced by the tribals to achieve education

Key words: Tribal communities, Empowerment, Challenges, Marginalized, Development

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Introduction

A nation's development is directly related to the accessibility and opportunities to avail educational facilities by the people. Since the attainment of independence special attention has been paid to provide education to the people but unfortunately, even after the passage of seventy glorious years of independence, it has always been a great challenge for the government to provide education to all tribal people. It is a universally accepted notion that education serves as a pivot for the tribals to establish a camaraderie with the rest of the Indian population.

India is a land of various ethnic, multicultural, multi religious and various indigenous people. Most backward and marginalized section are considered to be the tribal community, though they share only 8.6% of the total population (2001 census) which means India is home to more than 10.2 crore tribal people, which makes her the largest tribal populated country in the world. It is quite evident that tribals fail to keep up the pace in every sphere of life in comparison to non tribal communities. Now it is a fact that India cannot reach its goal of “development for all” without the development of its 10.2 crore tribal people. And education is considered to be the most important means to enhance potentiality of subaltern class and literacy can cultivate and make them dexterous and transform them from a mere human being to a resourceful person, so they can easily develop their internal quality by themselves and easily overcome the barrier of their day to day life. Government should ensure that this marginalized section enjoys the nectar of economic and social prosperity. The government has taken several programs to promote education among tribals. Even the framers of the Indian Constitution considered the situation of the tribals of our country and laid down several provisions for uplift of their social, economic and educational condition

Constitutional safe guard :

Framers of the Indian Constitution realized that certain marginalized section in India were excluded from the national main stream and suffered extremely from social, educational and economic backwardness. They considered that this section needed special constitutional safeguard to protect their rights and interests as to enable them to join the national main stream. List of constitutional provision for Scheduled Caste are as follows:

Educational, Social, Economical and Cultural safe guard:

Article 46 of Indian constitution lays down that, the state shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 154(4) empowers the state to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizen or for SCs or STs

Article 29(1) provides distinct languages script or culture. This article has special significance for scheduled tribes

Untouchability is abolished under Article 17, and its practice in any form is a punishable offence
Article 275(1) provides Grants in-Aids to states (having scheduled tribes) covered under fifth and six schedules of the constitution.

Article 350A states that ‘It shall be the endeavor of every state and every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to the children belonging to the minority group..... ’

Article 243D, 330, and article 332 provides reservation of seats for STs in gram panchayat, house of people and state legislative assembly.

Many other provisions are laid down in articles 15, 16, 335, 338A, 342 etc.

Educational status of Scheduled Tribes :

Literacy rate is one of the most popular and important way to measure the percentage of literates among the population. Here we discuss the literacy rate of the tribal people and compare to national literacy rate and analyse the gap between all social group and the tribal community since independence.

Table:1

Source Statistic of school education – 2010-2011

It is clearly seen that all India literacy rate significantly increased along with the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes from the year 1961 to 2011 but the matter of concern is that, the gap between these two groups is still 14.03 in 2011. After independence many government initiatives in the

Comparative literacy rate of scheduled tribes and total population(in percent)						
Census	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
All social groups	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
STs	8.53	11.30	16.35	29.60	47.10	58.96
Gap	19.77	18.15	19.88	21.61	18.28	14.03

form of different plans and increase in allocation of funds for education facilitate and encourage enrolment of students from different social groups

Table: 2

Gross enrollment Ratio		
Class	ST	All Categories
Class - I-V	137	116
Class- VI-VIII	88.9	85.5
Class -IX-X	53.3	65
Class -XI-XII	28.8	39.3

Source Statistic of school education – 2010-2011

The data we get from Statistic of School Education 2010-2011, is not so much optimistic regarding ST's enrolment. If we analyse the data, it is clearly visible that the tendency to drop out starts from class VIII onwards. The gap at this stage between ST and all India level is as much as 11.7. Drastic fall in GER is quite significant at this stage. There is no hope as well in post matric level. It is 10.5 lower than the all India level. But we must say that situation is quite better at the elementary level (I – VIII) where GER of ST student is quite higher than all India level. So it is high time for the government to give priority to enrolment of ST students in matric and post matric level in the education policy.

Table: 3**Dropout Rates (in percent)**

class	ST(boys)	All(boys)	ST(Girls)	ALL(girls)	ST(total)	All(total)	Gap
Class I-V Primary Stage	37.2	28.7	33.9	25.1	35.6	27	8.6
Class V-VIII Middle Stage	54.7	40.3	55.4	41	55	40.6	14.4
Class –I-X Secondary stage	70.6	50.4	71.3	47.9	70.9	49.3	21.6

Source Statistic of school education – 2010-201

Dropout is an important indicator through which the number of students pursuing their education in different stages is measured. Rate of dropout among tribal boys and girls is almost same in all these three stages (see table – 3) but when we compare the gap between tribal and all social group we can see it is really high at the secondary level which is 21.6 but it is quite low at the primary level with 8.6. From the table 3, we can see that rate of dropout at the primary level is 35.6 that means 74 S.T students out of 100 is pursuing next stage of education but finally when it comes to the secondary level (I-X) number of ST students drastically fall to almost 29 which is very low in comparison to national level dropout of students.

Scheme and programme for tribal development

Tribal Panchsheel: It was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of free India who anticipated the necessity of the development of tribal people and for this sake he laid down five principles of tribal development which is called Tribal Panchsheel. It was ratified by Dhebar commission and enshrined in “A Philosophy for North Eastern Frontier Area” written by Verrier Elwin. These five principles are:

1. People should develop along lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribal rights on land and forests should be respected.

3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4. We should not over-administer these areas or over-whelm them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.

5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved. (source : “A Philosophy for NEFA” by Verrier Elwin)

Post- Matric Scholarship For Scheduled Tribe Students:

This scheme was introduced to encourage the ST students pursuing Post–Matriculation, in professional, technical as well as non-professional courses in various recognized institution by providing them financial support. Students having family income not more than Rs.1,0800 per year, are entitled for this scheme. This scheme is in operation since 1944-1945, and implemented by state government and UTs administration with 100% central assistance .

Hostel for ST students girls’ and boys’:

A plan for providing hostel accommodation for ST girls’ was started during third five years plan period and for the boys’ this programme was launched in 1989-1990 and both these schemes merged in 10th five year plan. Aim of this scheme is to facilitate hostel accommodation to the peripheral ST students who are unable to pursue their education due to their financial condition and location of their residence .

Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme (RGNF):

RGNF was introduced in the year 2005-2006 with the objective to encourage the students belonging to ST community to pursue higher education such as M.Phil and Ph.D by providing them financial assistance. University Grant Commission (UGC) took the responsibility to implement this scheme on the behalf of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Vocational Training Center in Tribal Areas:

Aim of this scheme is to develop the skill of ST students depending on their qualification and present market trends. This vocational training would enable them to get suitable employment or enable them to become self sufficient.

National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for ST:

This scheme provides financial support to those meritorious tribal students who wish to pursue their studies in abroad (Masters, Doctorate, Post-Doctorate) in specified field of Engineering, Technology, and Science.

Scheme of Top Class Education for ST Students:

A scheme of scholarship was introduced by Ministry of Tribal affairs in 2007-2008 to encourage brilliant students of tribal community for continuing their study at degree or post-degree level.

Ashram School in Tribal Sub-Plan Area:

This scheme was started in 1990-1991 with a view to provide education with residential facility to ST students.

Tribal Research Institute:

Fourteen Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have been set up in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura.

Book Bank:

In order to reduce dropout rate among ST students from professional institutes/ universities, funds are allotted for purchase of books under this scheme.

Coaching for ST:

Under this scheme free coaching classes are provided to ST students to enhance their skill and capabilities for various competitive examinations, so that they can compete with main stream students in all competitive examinations.

Challenges:

Despite constitutional provisions and safe guard with various government initiatives and programme, educating tribal children is still a major concern for the government. There are so many socio-cultural, economical, geographical, and administrative obstacle (report Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GOI, 2013) for which literacy rate of tribal people has never been at par with entire population, and gap between them is always high, for example the gap between tribals and whole population in literacy rate was 19.7% in 1961 which increased to 21.6% in 1991 and has declined to 14.3% in 2011(see table-1)

However the contemporary challenges faced by the tribal people in order to acquire education are as follows.

Socio-economic and cultural:

Economic conditions : Most of the tribal community is economically backward. It is very difficult for them to fulfill their basic needs. Sending their children to school is much like a luxury to them. They prefer to send their children to work to supplement the family income.

Reluctance of parents towards education:

Illiteracy of parents and their attitude towards education is indifferent, as well as their community never encourages the pupils to pursue study. Besides parents are not willing to send their daughters to co-educational institutions.

Infrastructural challenges:

Most of the schools located in tribal areas have minimal infrastructural facilities. These schools are not equipped with teaching learning materials, study materials, even minimum sanitary provisions are not maintained. Lack of communication plays pivotal role in discouraging tribal children to come to school regularly.

Language related challenges:

In most of the states, official/regional languages are used for class room teaching and these are not understood by the tribal children at primary level. For them these languages seem to be a foreign tongue as they speak only in their mother tongue.

Teacher related challenges:

Irregularity of the teachers in school fail to establish communication bridge among the tribal students. Besides inadequacy of trained teachers is a big problem in imparting education to tribal children.

Recommendations

1. Government should take some specific initiative through various programmes like awareness camp, street drama, counseling, etc which can create awareness among the tribals about the importance of education.
2. Emphasis should be given to career or job oriented courses.
3. Infrastructural requirement has always been neglected. It should be taken under consideration. School in tribal areas should be furnished with adequate class rooms, teaching aids, electricity, water supply, separate toilet for girls and boys, boundary walls, play ground etc.
4. Teachers should be locally recruited who understand and respect tribal culture and practices and most importantly are acquainted with the local language.
5. New teacher training institutes should be opened in tribal sub plan areas to meet the requirement of trained teachers.
6. Teaching and learning should be imparted in local language.
7. Representation of tribal students in higher education is very low; to counter this problem there must be some career counseling programmes at secondary level along with providing scholarship for pursuing higher education.
8. There is no sufficient higher secondary schools in tribal areas, so government needs to establish residential school in such areas under various governmental schemes.
9. There must be strong machinery to protect students from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

10. In order to bring the tribal students in the main streams of national development, community involvement is necessary through panchayati raj institutions.
11. Establish separate school for girls in tribal areas, as some parents hesitate to send their daughters to co-educational institutions.
12. Proper monitoring by high level officials at regular interval is necessary for smooth functioning of school administration.

Conclusion

Education is a driving force of history, no civilization could flourish without educating its people. Since the attainment of independence, government of India has taken several initiatives, schemes and programmes and allotted funds to different plans to spread education among the tribals. No doubt all these efforts are significant and highly appreciable, but despite all these efforts, growth rate of education among the tribals is very sluggish. Representation of tribals in higher education does not meet its expected level. Now the time has come to take drastic decision and effective plan to reduce the obstacles in pursuance of education by tribal children. Apart from government's initiative, if various NGOs and local media play an important role in creating awareness among the tribals, only then can they bask in the auroral radiance of economic development.

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