

EDUCATION OF SCHEDULE TRIBES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Education is the major instrument for change and social development which play an important role in empowering the child economically and socially and assists the marginalized population out of poverty. India is a country with rich diversity reflects in the multitude of cultures, religions, languages and racial stocks. The schedule tribes are one of the principle categories of the backward classes or historically disadvantaged bottom groups of society. Despite several campaigns to promote formal education ever since independence, the literacy rate among schedule tribes has remained low and the female literacy rate has been still lower compared to the national female literacy rate. Education of schedule tribe children is considered important not only because of the communities. India is home to tribal population of about 85 million with more than 700 groups each constitutional obligations but also as a crucial input for holistic development of tribal with their distinct cultures, social practice, religions, dialects and occupations and are scattered in all states and union territories in India.

Keywords: *Schedule Tribes, Education, Schemes and Programmes*

I INTRODUCTION

India has the largest concentration of tribal people anywhere in the world except perhaps in Africa. The history of the marginalization of the tribal people goes long back. On the whole, tribal people are segregated in the society from the general people in various respects. Education is precondition for removing the barriers of backwardness and marginalization of any society. From this perspective, it is imperative to bring the weaker, deprived and marginalized sections such as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India to the forefront of educational revolution and mainstream of national development. Education imparts knowledge, and knowledge of self-identity will infuse a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the weaker sections of the society to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, so as to avail socio-economic, political and educational opportunities extended to them. According to the 2001 Census Report, the population of STs in the country is 84.3 million consisting about 8.19% of the total Indian population. Indigenous communities of India are commonly referred to as tribal or adivasi communities and are recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India. Although the Constitution does not define Scheduled Tribes as such, it designates these communities as those which are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to Article 342 of the Constitution, the

Scheduled Tribes are the tribes or tribal communities or part of groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by the President through a public notification. The criteria followed for specification of a community, as scheduled tribe are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness. At present, 533 tribes in India have been notified under the Article 342 of the Constitution with the largest number of 62 tribes belonging to the State of Orissa.

Five Fundamental Principles of Tribal Development

Since the inception of independence and adoption of the Constitution of free India, the British policy of isolation and non-interference was replaced by a policy of integration through development. This approach for development of scheduled castes was first laid down by our first prime minister of India late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his 'Tribal Panchsheel' which was later ratified by Dhebar Commission and Shilu Ao Committee. This 'Panchsheel' is contained in his preface to the book entitled 'A Philosophy for North Eastern Frontier Area (NEFA)' written by the renowned anthropologist Verrier Elwin whom Nehru greatly admire and respected. The five fundamental principles of tribal development are: 1. People should develop along the 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 in 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: The Foreword to the Second Edition of the book 'A Philosophy for NEFA' by Verrier Elwin] These ideas are in consonance with the Article 244 of the Indian Constitution which mandates the preservation of the tradition and culture of the Scheduled Tribes and the autonomy of the scheduled areas. Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes in Constitution The Constitution of India has provided many safeguards for the welfare and development of the tribal people. The relevant articles can be classified under four major heads: (a) Protective Provisions (Arts. 15, 16, 19, 46, 146, 342 etc.); (b) Developmental Provisions (Arts. 46, 275 etc.); (c) Administrative Provisions (Arts. 244 & 275) and (d) Reservation Provisions (Arts. 330, 332, 334, 335, 340 etc.). The Protective Provisions safeguard tribal people from social injustices and all forms of exploitation, while the Developmental Provisions promote with special care of educational and economic interests of the weaker sections like the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The Administrative Provisions under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules give special powers to the States for the protection and governance of tribal areas and the Reservation Provisions ensure due representation of the Scheduled tribes and Scheduled castes in legislative bodies and government jobs.



The salient provisions of different articles are:

Box – I: Constitutional Safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes in India

Articles and its Provision

244(1) Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes.

244(2) Administrations of Tribal Areas.

339 Control of the Union over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes.

275(1) Payment of grant-in-aid to enable the States to meet the cost of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the States with the approval of the Government of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that State or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas there into that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State.

342 Specifying the tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribes.

330 Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People.

332 Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Tribes in the State Legislative Assemblies. 334 Reservation of seats and special representation to cease after sixty years.

164(1) In the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there shall be a Minister-in-charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in-charge of the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes or any other work (Now applicable to Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa).

338 There shall be a National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes to be appointed by the Honourable President of India (Since bifurcated into two, one for Scheduled Tribes and the other for Scheduled Castes).

335 Claims of Scheduled Tribes to services and posts.

46 Promotion of educational and economic interests of the Scheduled tribes, Scheduled castes and other weaker sections.

371A Special provision with reference to Nagaland. Fifth Schedule Provisions as to the Administration and control of Scheduled Areas. Sixth Schedule Provisions as to the Administration of Tribal Areas. Source: Constitution of India, GOI.

Committees and Commissions for Tribal Development

In addition to the constitutional provisions mentioned above, the government appoints committees, commissions and study teams from time to time to look into the way in which the target groups are making use of the constitutional provisions, the problems faced by them and to suggest measures for further improvement. The important committees, commissions and study teams appointed so far are:

- Backward Classes Commission (1953 – 55), headed by Kaka Kalelkar;
- The Study Team of Social Welfare and Welfare of Backward Classes (1958 – 59), headed by Renukar Ray;

- Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks (1959-60), headed by Verrier Elwin;
- The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commissions (1960 – 61), headed by U. N. Dhebar;
- Study Group on Welfare of Weaker Sections of the Village Communities (1960- 61), headed by Jay Prakash Narayan;
- The Special Working Group on Cooperatives for Backward Classes – 1961, headed by M. D. Bhargava;
- Advisory Committee on Revision of List of STs & SCs – 1965, headed by B.N. Lokur;
- Study Team of Tribal Development Programmes (1966-69) , headed by P. Shilu Ao;
- The Committee on Tribal Economy in Forest Areas – 1967, headed by Hari Singh;
- The Task Force on Development of Tribal Areas – 1971;
- Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy Expert Committee-1972, headed by S.C. Dube;
- The 2nd Backward Classes Commission (1976 – 80), headed by B. P. Mandal;
- The Study Team on Co-operative Structure in Tribal Development Project Areas – 1976, headed by K.S.Bawa;
- The Study Group on Relief of Indebtedness Land, Alienation and Restoration in Development Agency Area – 1973, headed by Shri P. S. Appu ;
- The Study Team of Marketing, Credit and Co-operation in Tribal Areas, 1978, headed by P.R .Dubhashi and
- The Working Group on Development of Scheduled Tribes during the 7th Five Year Plans (1985 – 90).

Not only the Central and the State Governments have undertaken various steps in this regard, but also various voluntary organizations have evinced interest in this task. Organizations such as the Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh, the Bhil Seva Mandal, the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, the Indian Red Cross Society, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak Sangh, etc., carry on welfare activities among the tribal.

Literacy & Education of the STs

A Profile Realizing the need to improve the overall status of tribal, their education has emerged at the forefront of recent development efforts. Education of ST children is considered important, not only because of the constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 is one of them, which specified the following:

- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas.
- There is need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal language at the initial stages with arrangements for switch over to regional languages.
- ST youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas.
- Ashram schools / residential schools will be established on a large scale in tribal areas.
- Incentive schemes will be formulated for the STs, keeping in view their special needs and life style (para 4.4).

NPE, 1986 and Programme of Action (POA), 1992 recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas, besides underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching / learning material in the tribal languages. The National Programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE), has a special focus on education of the tribal children. Tribal children are an important constituent of the Special Focus Groups (SFG) under SSA; other focus groups include girls, SCs working children, urban deprived children, children with special needs, children below poverty line and migrating children. The enactment of the Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) is also a pragmatic step for expanding and promoting elementary education, especially among the tribal and marginalized sections of our society. Although there is a significant increase in the literacy of population of all categories in India, the tribal are far behind from the national increase. The literacy rate for the total population in India has increased from 52.21% to 64.84% during the period from 1991 to 2001 whereas the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes has increased from 29.60% to 47.10%. Among ST males literacy increased from 40.65% to 59.17% and among ST female literacy increased from 18.19% to 34.76% during the same period. The ST female literacy is lower by approximately 21 percentage point as compared to the overall female literacy of the general population. However, the increase in total as well as female literacy among STs is significant. Literacy rate has increased from 8.53 percent in 1961 to 47.0 percent in 2001 for STs while the corresponding increase for total population was from 28.30 percent in 1961 to 64.84 percent in 2001.

Key Problems Associated with Tribal Education

Poverty: Poor economic conditions accompanied by subsistence economy is a great hindrance to successful education of the tribal children. Almost all the tribes whether food gatherers, hunters, fishermen, shifting cultivators or settled agriculturalists lack adequate food to maintain the family for the whole year. In this situation, they find it difficult to afford their children to go school; rather, they see children as an economic asset in the family and contribute to the family income by working along with the parents and with others. Naturally, education, the basic necessity of life, is a matter of luxury for the tribal family (Singh, 2005).

Apathy of Parents towards Education: A large section of tribal parents do not send their children to school to utilize the free education opportunities offered to them. There are many factors responsible for apathy of the parents towards education. These are:

1. Psychological and social factors like illiteracy of the parents and their indifference to education, lack of encouragement by the community, motivation and insecurity of future for being educated.
2. Low social interaction between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents.
3. Suspicion over the sincerity of the non-tribal teachers and shortage of tribal teachers.
4. Parental hesitation to send the girls to co-educational institutions.

Apathy of children towards Formal Education: In many states tribal education is taught through the same books, which form the curriculum of the non-tribal children. A tribal child who lives in an isolated and far flung places, untouched by civilization, can hardly get interest in any information about Indian society, history, polity, geography, economy and technological development of his country. So the contents of the teaching syllabus, instead of pleasing the learners, generate indifferences within the tribal students (Pradhan, 2011: 26-31).

Superstitions and Prejudices: Superstition, blind beliefs and prejudices play negative role in imparting education in the tribal areas and tribal schools. Among some tribal communities, there is widespread feeling that education makes their children defiant and insolent and alienates from the rest of their society. Consequently a large section of tribal groups oppose the spread of education (Pradhan 2011: 26-31).

Problem of Suitable Teacher: The competency and interest of the teachers is of prime importance in generating interest of the students towards education. The nontribal teachers treat themselves 'civilized' and tribal as 'uncivilized' and 'savage' (Duary, 2010). There is no good relationship between children and the teachers. Sometimes the teachers use the tribal students for their personal work. Even tribal elite, often a proactive teacher, has a special power in the village setting for which tribal are afraid of him. The ego and selfish motive of such tribal teachers have been discouraging the tribal to send their children to the educational institutions. Moreover, in practice the teachers are reluctant to reside in tribal areas, rather they stay in nearby towns. So there comes the problem of insincerity and noncommitment of interaction of the teachers with the guardians and discussion with them over the education of their children.

Problem of Language: In the absence of knowledge on tribal dialect both students and teachers face the problem of communication and teaching-learning. It is found that tribal students are often ridiculed, humiliated and reprimanded for speaking in their own language, and are punished for failing to talk in their standard language i.e. regional and national. Educating children through the regional and national language is not wrong but the students should be familiar with her own language first to develop enthusiasm in education which in turn bring linguistic and social skills that prepare them for formal education in future. Although there is the need of introduction of tribal dialect in the curriculum and teaching-learning process yet there is the paucity of literature and text books in tribal dialects. Developing script and vocabulary and preparing teaching and learning materials for tribal children is a complex and problematic task because of a large number of spoken languages involved and their rudimentary forms which have not developed into a written form that can be used in school language.

Inadequate Facilities in Educational Institutions: School buildings in the tribal areas are without basic infrastructural facilities. The schools basically have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls and non-pastoral floors. In Ashram schools which are residential in nature, there is no space for the children to sleep (Panda, 1996). In addition to poor maintenance of the school and class rooms, inadequate teachinglearning materials such as blackboards and chalks cause problems for the teachers and students in teaching and understanding the content.

Wastage and Stagnation: Problem of education in the tribal areas is also the problem of wastage and stagnation. As per the 11 Five Year Plan Report, stagnation at the primary level was 67.3 percent whereas it was 49.3 percent at the Upper Primary level. School timing i.e. clash of class hour with the working hour particularly, during the harvesting period, formal education, poverty, lack of academic atmosphere, unwillingness of the teachers to convince the parents and parental apathy towards education and lack of proper medical aid, balanced diet and suitable self-employment opportunities are the major factors for which there is wastage and stagnation.

Programmes/Schemes for the Upliftment of Scheduled Tribes

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is running following programmes/schemes for the upliftment of Scheduled Tribes over all India:

- (i) Scheme of Construction of Hostels for ST Girls and Boys
- (ii) Scheme of Establishment of Ashram School in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas
- (iii) Post-Matric Scholarship for ST students
- (iv) Upgradation of Merit
- (v) Pre-Matric Scholarship for ST students studying in classes IX & X.
- (vi) Vocational Training in Tribal Areas(State's component)
- (vii) Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for STs
- (viii) Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for STs
- (ix) Top Class Education for ST students
- (x) Grants in aid to Voluntary Organisations working for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes
- (xi) Coaching for Scheduled Tribes
- (xii) Strengthening Education among Scheduled Tribe Girls in Low Literacy Districts
- (xiii) Vocational Training in Tribal Areas
- (xiv) Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
- (xv) Grants-in-Aid to STDCCs for MFP Operations
- (xvi) Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP' as a measure of social safety for MFP gatherers.
- (xvii) Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India
- (xviii) Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan (SCA to TSP)
- (xix) Development of Tribal Products/Produce (Grants in aid to Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)
- (xx) A new Scheme called 'Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana' has been proposed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Rs.100.00 crore (Rupees Hundred Crore) have been allocated under the scheme for the year 2014-15.

This information was given today by Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Ministry Shri Mansukhbhai Dhanjibhai Vasava in Rajya Sabha.

Conclusion

Illiteracy is the root cause of backwardness of the STs in our country. Through various programmes and schemes the government has been making serious effort for improving educational standards of them. Multiple reasons have hindered the participation of STs in education. Merely launching the programmes and schemes is not a panacea for evil of illiteracy among tribal masses. The benefits of these schemes have percolated to them scantily. Low level of awareness about these schemes among the tribal masses, peculiar nature of their dwellings, apathy of administrative officials in implementation of these schemes and programmes are bottlenecks in the ST's Education. Local media and ST Intelligencia can work jointly for creating awareness among the STs. The administrative machinery should be sensitized towards peculiarities of tribal habitat.

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