

## EDUCATION OF THE TRIBALS : SOME PSYCHO-SOCIAL CONCERNS

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### ABSTRACT

*Education plays a crucial role in national development by providing the required manpower to the economy. By increasing knowledge and developing skills education transforms human material into human capital. The major objective of any welfare state is to have equity in terms of accessibility to the facilities of education provided by the government. Since independence, various commissions and committees set up from time to time have made a number of suggestions for the educational development of tribals. However, the educational opportunities provided by the government are not accessible to all sections of our society especially scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Although government reports indicate that there is no scarcity of schools, other facilities or incentives for the implementation of Tribal Education Schemes, most of the tribal youths find these incentives unattractive which poses a big question mark for the policy planners. Perhaps the answer to this question lies in understanding the socio and psycho perspectives of education of Tribal children. The present paper tries to unearth those factors.*

**Keywords :** Scheduled Tribes, Equity, Government Interventions, Psycho-Social

### Introduction

The importance of the role of education in socio-economic development of a nation has been recognized for a long time. By increasing knowledge, education transforms human material into human capital. Education plays a crucial role in national development by providing the required manpower to the economy. This is why the importance of education in human resource development is being recognized by all sectors of the economy. The importance of education in human resource development was also recognized long back by the Indian Education Commission (1966) that no investment is likely to yield greater returns than investment in human resources, of which the most important is education.

Empirically, strong linkages have been established between education and the improvement in levels of human wellbeing, particularly with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality, nutritional status of children etc. Even the performance of developed countries has clearly demonstrated that development of human capital through universal basic education has contributed significantly to economic progress. The return on investment in basic education is one of the highest returns.

The major objective of any Welfare State is to

have 'Equity' in terms of accessibility to the facilities of education provided by the government. At present in our country investment in education forms a sizable part of public expenditure, around Rs. 99,300 crore per annum for the year 2020-21 (Source: Business Budget, 2020 both plan and non-plan of Center and States/ UTs). But the educational opportunities created by the government are not accessible to all sections of our society especially the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Tribes in India, constituting 8.6 per cent of India's total population, and classified into about seven hundred communities, including both 'major tribes' and their 'sub-tribes', inhabit all parts of the country except the States of Punjab, Haryana and Delhi and the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Pudicherry (earlier called Pondicherry). Their number and other demographic features vary from one part of the country to another, with the largest number of tribal communities (sixty-two) being in the State of Orissa.

No doubt, during the years of planned development, various efforts towards educational development have been made to provide and expand opportunities to STs at par with non-tribals. Various commissions and committees set up from time to time have made a number of suggestions for the educational development of the tribals with a view

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to help determine the policy and programmes of tribal education. The New Education Policy (1986) came into operation as a major step to step up educational development. That was the reason that Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) had become -one of the goals of national development strategy. National Literacy Mission (1987) was started to increase the rate of literacy with the help of primary education and adult education. National Advisory Committee (1992) headed by Prof. Yashpal found that school learning had become a boring, unpleasant, bitter experience for the students due to the heavy syllabus, difficult text books and irrelevant teaching methods. Operation Black Board 1993 was introduced with a view to increase number of teachers, classrooms, teaching aids etc. and District Primary Education Project (DPEP) was initiated in

1994 in select districts with a view to improve the internal efficiency of educational institutions by minimizing incidence of wastage and stagnation of tribal children and encouraging girls' education to step up rate of enrollment. Although some measure of improvement has been witnessed in the case of enrollment of tribal children over a period of time, it is beyond satisfaction down to the level of expectations. To go into the details of literacy rate as per the 2011 census it is seen that the percentage of literacy achieved among tribals is only 59% as compared to the National Literacy rate which is 73%. Thus, there is a gap of about 14 percentage points in literacy rate of STs as compared to the all India literacy rate. ST female literacy rate is lower by 15 percentage points as compared to overall female literacy rate in 2011. Details are given below in Tale-I.

**Table-I : Literacy Rate among STs and ALL**

Year	Scheduled Tribes			All		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	4.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84
2011	68.50	49.40	59.00	80.90	64.60	73.00

**Source :** Office of Registrar General, India.

Nearly 45.02% of the tribal population falls in the age group of 0 to 14 years. Out of every six children in India, one child is a tribal child. According to 61<sup>st</sup> National Sample Survey, current attendance rates for children in the age group 5-14 years are 72.6% for Scheduled Tribes in rural India. Similarly, the situation is also adverse regarding the school dropout rate of these socially underprivileged groups. Though there has been considerable decline in dropout rate of STs, much still needs to be done for upliftment of these groups in upper primary and secondary education sectors.

However, Government Reports indicate that there is no scarcity of schools, other facilities or scholarships for the implementation of tribal education schemes but most of the tribal youths find these incentives unattractive which poses a big question mark for the policy planners. Perhaps the

answer to this question lies in to understanding the social and psychological perspective of education of tribal children which includes:

- **Low Socioeconomic Status:** In India, Tribes are generally poor and have low socioeconomic status. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)'s Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 2008, every second person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and every third person belonging to the Scheduled Castes remains poor. Therefore, they share some of the disadvantages of other disadvantaged groups. Miller (1968), for instance, has identified four major classes of variables, such as cognitive variables,

motivational variables, personal style variables and physical variables, where disadvantaged learners show deficits in performance as compared to the advantaged groups.

- **Tribal Concept of Learning :** In most of the tribal cultures, children are initiated into new life experiences through dance, songs, riddles and folk-tales, which slowly merge them with the society of adults. However, the existing system of education does not take into account their active and pleasure learning styles. Learning in the existing educational system which is geared to urban, non-tribal, middle class cultures, is inactive, monotonous and difficult for them, which is responsible for the huge dropout rate among tribal children.
- **Linguistic Problem :** Most of the tribes speak their tribal languages or dialects. As tribal languages are minority languages, they have to learn the regional languages, Hindi (if the regional language is not Hindi) and English. In most cases, the regional language becomes their third or fourth language. For example, tribal people speak a dialect of Mundari belonging to the Maithili speaking area of Bihar. He has to learn first the dialect of Mundari, then Mundari, afterwards, he will have to learn Maithili, a dialect of Hindi and then standard Hindi. Besides, he cannot escape learning English in the Indian context if he wants to pursue higher studies. This increases their language load and linguistic problems.
- **Lack of Education in Tribal Mother Tongue:** The constitution of India guarantees every child to have their primary education (Article-350 A) in their mother tongue. However, it has not been possible so far to give education to tribal children in their mother tongue except in the case of very few tribal languages. A tribal child who enters the school for the first time finds all the activities of the school conducted in a language, which he cannot follow. He feels alienated from the beginning. Besides, experts in education agree that it is easy and advisable to develop the skills of reading and writing in the mother tongue of

the learner which can later be transferred to other languages learned subsequently. As these skills are not developed in their mother tongue, the tribal pupils are found to be very poor in those skills, which partly account for their poor performance in tests and examinations.

- **Nature of Habitat:** As per RTE (2010) an elementary school must be within an easy walking distance from the home of every child. But most of the tribal villages are scattered. This entails long travels to attend schools. Unless the school is situated very close to their villages, the percentage of tribal students attending school will not improve.
- **Teacher Related Problems:** A teacher who is able to establish rapport with the students facilitate their adjustment in the school and make learning a joyful experience for them. However, generally it has been observed that the non-tribal teachers fail to establish rapport with their tribal students as they have negative ethnic-stereotypes of their students. They also have low expectations of their tribal pupils' scholastic achievement. Teacher's expectation is a major variable in a student's performance, which is often referred to as 'Pygmalion Effect'. If the teacher's expectation is low, the pupil tends to perform poorly. All these factors lead to cultural conflict in the classroom and create problems for tribal learners.
- **Content and Pedagogy:** NCF (2005) lays special emphasis on contextualized content and pedagogies for helping the students to have meaningful learning experiences. But it has been found that text-books of various subjects are not relevant to the tribal community. These textbooks contain ideas, concepts and themes alien to the tribal pupils. The existing textbooks, therefore, not only create problems in learning, but also create in tribal learners a negative attitude towards themselves and their culture. Moreover, the non-contextualized pedagogies used by the teacher make learning an upheaval task for the tribal students. Consequently leading to poor performance and high dropout rate among tribal students.

- **Attitude of the Parents:** Most of the tribal parents have a negative attitude towards education of the children. As education does not yield any immediate economic returns, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which tends to supplement the family income.

### Conclusion

Education is the most effective instrument for ensuring equality of opportunities. Keeping in view this assumption, the government has been making relentless efforts by extending special education facilities and reservation of seats in educational institutions for weaker sections of the society, especially scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is dedicated to achieve inclusive growth of tribal population in the country, as education development is a stepping stone to economic and social development and also is the most effective instrument in empowering the tribals. Efforts have been made from time to time by the concerned ministry by implementing various schemes with the objective of enhancing access to education through provision of infrastructure by way of construction of hostels for ST students, establishment of Ashram Schools, Vocational Training Centres as well as to maximize retention of ST students within the various stages of School education and promoting higher learning by providing monetary incentives in the form of scholarships such as Pre Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship, Scholarship for Top Class Education, National

Fellowship and National Overseas Scholarship for ST students. However, no substantial results can be achieved if the policies and programmes initiated by the Government lack sensitivity to tribal problems and fail to understand tribal psycho-social realities.

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