

# BARRIERS TO EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL GIRLS

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## ABSTRACT

*Education plays an important role in social change. Most of the social communities are educationally backward. Development of a nation is determined by the quality of its citizens. Nation is not built by bricks and mortar but by the quality of its citizens. Education plays the prime role in economic and social development. It is crucial for building human capability and for opening opportunities (Gupta 2001). There are approximately 85 million Indians who are classified as "schedule tribes". Though there has been a gradual increase in their literacy rate since independence, but still the present position is far from satisfactory especially in case of tribal girls. The focus of the paper is to analyze the barrier and issues regarding education of tribal girls in India. For this purpose, the author has gone through related literature in the form of a number of articles and research papers and tried to find out the reasons behind low enrolment rate, high dropout rate and minimum retention of tribal girl students in the school. Along with this, author has mentioned some remedies to overcome these barriers to improve educational opportunities for tribal girls. Author also tried to hint at some of the recommendations of NEP-2020 for the promotion of education of girls including tribal girls*

**Keywords:** Education, Tribe, Poverty, Literacy, Girls

Our country is home to a large variety of indigenous people. The Schedule tribe's population represents one of the economically poor and marginalized communities of India. With a population more than 10.2 million, India has the largest tribal population in the world. It is 8.2 percent of the total population of the country. Most of the tribal people are inhabitant in poor, uneducated and inaccessible forests and mountain areas. They all lay behind many aspects of life as compared to other sections of the population. The Government of India has started many schemes for the promotion of education and welfare of tribal and in particular the tribal girls. Despite these efforts, there is no improvement in the literacy rate. In the case of primitive tribes, it is very poor and low among women. Literacy is the key to socio-economic development of any class or region, and that is why tribal communities in India are under differentiation from different types of deprived, such as separation of land and other resources. Especially tribal women are deprived from the mainstream of national life.

*"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you*

*Educate a whole family. Women empowered means Mother India empowered" PT. Jawaharlal Nehru*

Education is the key to success. Women are the centers of creation in this world. Women don't know themselves for which they are created. Women have played a stable and defined role in society. The true evaluation of their contribution to the family, society and the country is scarcely done or counted till date. In this intensely changing society and world, women have to get aware about themselves, their responsibilities and their rights. At present the role of women is considered in all aspects of social fiber. Many studies in the past have proved that they are playing a creative role in nation-building. Education of women which is about half of the nation's population therefore, undoubtedly is of utmost importance for developing countries like India. This is similarly true for tribal women also. In developmental perspective the spread of education of tribal women is considered as an important criterion for studying social change. With the passage of time girls as an agent of change should be educated for maintaining stability.

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In order to motivate the students to join school and to continue studies up to a particular stage, the government and other agencies arranged to give students free learning and instructional material, free mid-day meal, free uniform, scholarships, stipends etc. but unfortunately as soon as these facilities are withdrawn, the students left the schools. The government opened elementary and middle schools in remote, rural and tribal villages so that education can be within the reach of the underprivileged and deprived section of society but it has now been realized that all these efforts failed to produce the desired results. All children in the age group of 6-14 years do not enroll themselves in schools and dropout rate at elementary level is as high as 60%.

In India tribal societies have specific characteristics. They live in compact areas, which are generally hilly and have undulating terrain. Demographically speaking, there are approximately 250 scheduled tribes with several sub groups and some 100 languages/dialects. Most of these tribes constitute separate socio-cultural groups having distinct culture, traditions, marriages, kinship, and property inheritance system and they live largely in agricultural and pre-agricultural level of technology. Although the government of India and state government are making several efforts for the quantitative and qualitative upliftment of education in tribal areas, the problem of education in these areas still persists. In tribal areas, on one hand the enrolment ratio of children in school is very low, while on other hand the drop-out rate among ST students continues to be very high at all the levels of education.

### **Barriers and Critical Issues Regarding Education of Tribal Girls**

Author reviewed many articles and research investigations done to find out the causes of dropout and less enrolment of tribal girls in schools. The major studies which have been considered to collect the data are; Tripathy (2006); Pradhan (2006); Gupta (2001); Azad (1976); Chaudhury (1974); Pradhan (2008); Pradhan and Mahapatra (2009); Pradhan and Panigrahy (2009), Pradhan (2010); Pradhan (2011); Pradhan, and Mahapatra (2011). All of the investigators worked on the causes of low enrolment rate and high dropout rate of tribal girls along with

challenges and issues regarding education of tribal girls. After going through the articles and research papers, the main issues and problems that have been identified as barriers in the promotion of education of tribal girls are as follows;

- **Attitude of Parents:** Tribal parents are mostly illiterate. They don't have any value in education, especially for girls. They show indifferent attitude towards the education of their girls. Moreover, the parents of these girls do not have any connection with outside society and are unaware of the importance of education. They are interested in providing household responsibilities to their girls at a very early stage of their education.
- **Location of Villages/Habitat:** Most of the tribal communities inhabit the forest in a scattered manner. Therefore, it becomes difficult to open separate schools in such remote areas where the required student's strength is not available. On the other hand tribal habitation remains separate from each other by some physical barriers like rivers, hills, nallas and forests. So, these physical barriers produce a hindrance for the girls of the tribal community to attend the school in a neighboring village. In such situations parents do not allow their girl child to attend school.
- **Negative Attitude towards School Education:** Many of the tribal girls and parents have a negative attitude towards education, they consider education as a boring and useless process. They still are not convinced regarding the importance of education for their livelihood. They are aware of government allowances for their education, but their negative attitude towards education makes them stay back to their colonial environment rather than go to school.
- **Appointment of Local Untrained Teachers:** In remote tribal areas it's very difficult to get trained teachers and it largely affects the quality of education. In tribal areas, if the teachers are appointed from outside areas, there will be no relationship between the teachers and the villagers and they will not be familiar with the



tribal language and culture. Moreover, teachers do not get any housing facility in the tribal areas, which makes them irregular which in turn inhibits the normal routine of school. Apart from this, the apathetic attitude of the tribal community and appointment of untrained teachers in the tribal areas reduce the importance of education.

- **Economic Conditions:** Due to poor economic conditions, tribal people have to engage their children in some kind of economic activities. The collective earning remains the major concern and the behavior of poor families is based on the principle of bread before education. The children work in factories. The girls, mostly in addition to labour, remain engaged in household activities. It becomes difficult for such families to send their children to schools for education.
- **Lack of Proper Co-ordination:** Due to poor coordination between the tribal welfare department and the school education department, proper monitoring is inhibited.
- **Non-Stimulating Social Environment:** Tribal social environment is also responsible for high tribal girls dropping out from school. Early marriage is regarded as one of the major reasons. The rural tribal communities do not send their girls to school because of the suspicion they nurture about young teachers in school. In tribal society education has not received a status value. Moreover, the semi-settled life, the carefree attitude and indifference to saving are also significant factors in building a social environment in which education is considered meaningless.
- **Discouraging School Environment and Unfair Behavior of Teachers:** School environment is also responsible for creating a problem of dropout, retention and less enrolment. Scarcity and irregularities of teachers, their behavior towards students, lack of accommodation, furniture and equipment, the distance to school and indifference of the school personnel to the development of individual students are the major factors that

have a cumulative effect on retention of girls in schools. The number of teachers in school is inadequate and the government does not appoint new teachers even against vacant posts. Many schools are single teacher schools and when the teacher takes leave, naturally it is a holiday for all the students studying in that school. Corporal punishment practiced by teachers is another reason for developing negative attitude of tribal girls towards school.

- **Language Difficulty:** Language is also a hurdle in the education of tribal girls. The tribal students are articulated in their own dialect, while the education is imparted in regional language.
- **No Immediate Gain from Education:** Almost half of the parents criticize the prevailing conditions of education. They are not satisfied with the conditions of schools. They are vocal enough to say that in the present circumstances it is useless to send their children to schools because of the inadequate number of teachers in schools. The parents also blame that teachers are not performing their duties seriously. Most common complaints against teachers are-that they reach the school late and leave earlier than the scheduled closing time, they frequently remain absent from schools, do not take classes regularly, have negative attitude towards tribal students and engage the students in their personal works etc. Some of the parents directly question the objective of education. They are of the opinion that modern education is useless and serves no purpose. According to them, instead of wasting time on education and running after jobs, it is better to establish oneself in family vocation.
- **Early Marriages of Girls:** Early marriage of girls is also regarded as one of the major reasons for the drop out of tribal girls from schools.
- **Migratory nature and Semi-settled Tribal Life:** Tribal people do not live a stable life. They used to migrate from one area to another area, in such circumstances it is very difficult to arrange and provide educational facilities to such migratory communities.



### Suggested Remedies

In the light of above discussion, the following guidelines may prove useful in the future planning to solve the dropout problem of tribal children especially girls:

- The most irritating problem is the behavior of teachers and their discouraging attitude towards tribal children. The teachers may or may not accept it, but it is the observation of many investigators that the teachers are irregular in the classes, indifferent, neglectful to the education of children and behave in an authoritative manner with tribal students. Some of them exercise physical punishment while many of them do not teach sincerely. Moreover, it has been found that discord among teachers also goes far in negatively influencing the students. Therefore, it is time to increase sincerity among teachers towards their responsibility and to moderate their negative attitude towards tribal students through special In-service training programmes.
- Some families withdraw their children from school because they do not see any immediate gains from education. Thus, poor and illiterate parents should be made aware of the significance of education through awareness generation programmes.
- It has been concluded by the researchers that, if other things remain the same, enrolment and retention rate of the students especially girl students are positively correlated with the proportion of female teachers appointed in the school. Therefore, if the number of female teachers increases in the school the enrolment and retention rate of girls will also improve.
- The 73rd constitutional amendment authorizes Panchayati Institutions to play a significant role in the administration and financial management of school education. Therefore, in places where the Panchayati Raj Institutions exist, the administrative and financial management of schools may be handed over to them.
- The relevant study material in the local language is strongly suggested for the use of the mother tongue or home language as the medium of instruction in early stages of education. From the perspective of language, it is desirable to appoint a local teacher from the same tribal communities, all study materials should be supplied in local languages of the tribes.
- Efforts should also be made to change the negative attitude of tribal parents towards education of their children especially girls'. A proper awareness campaign should be organized to create awareness about the importance of education. Extensive literacy campaigns in the tribal dominated districts may start work on a priority basis to literate the tribal people. The department of education should make a team which should go to tribal areas to spread awareness about various schemes offered by the government to encourage people to send their daughters to school.
- Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls, should be a matter of great concern in residential schools.
- Since higher education is less in tribes, special ST scholarships should be provided to the tribal girls for higher education, especially in engineering, medical and other vocational streams.
- Very few researchers have studied the nature of tribal people that affect the advancement of education. The tribal life is semi- settled. All their activities are directed towards subsistence earning. Majority of them are indifferent towards changes and remain traditionalist. As such education has not yet received its due significance in social life. Therefore, efforts need to be made to educate them in family economics that would result in eliminating their poverty and then would be able to spare their wards from household activities and child labour.
- So far as the problem of language is concerned, the S.C.E.R.T Rajasthan undertook many experiments in imparting education in local dialect, but these experiments did not bring out desirable results. It was observed that some



teachers were against the use of tribal language in education and they discourage tribal students from using their language in the school campus. This attitude of teachers should be changed and the teachers appointed in the tribal areas must have the knowledge of local dialect so they can use local dialect whenever necessary in their teaching process.

- In order to improve the level of education of tribal people, the curriculum should be revised in the light of tribal needs and requirements. In the curriculum such knowledge, information and skill should be included, which may help the tribal families to solve their financial difficulties and they may feel that education is relevant to their needs.
- The participation of voluntary agencies and NGOs in tribal education development should be promoted.
- Grassroot peoples' participatory development approach should be applied in the tribal areas, so that tribal people may partner in making and implementing locally viable and useful programmes and schemes. Therefore, adequate representation should be given to tribal people and their traditional institutions in the educational policy framing and planning committees at the local and state level.
- More residential schools should be established in each state and district and should be extended to PG level in tribal areas.
- High level officials should often examine the working of schools related to teaching methods, working hours and attendance registers.

### **Recommendations of NPE-2020 for the promotion of education of girls especially tribal girls**

- One of the major reasons of dropout rate and fall in enrolment ratio at secondary level of school is the onset of menstruation and the lack of availability of hygienic toilets in the schools. NEP-2020 plans to meet this challenge through gender inclusion funds which will be used to provide quality education to all the girls including tribal girls and to ensure facilities like secured and hygienic toilets.

- In addition to secure and hygienic toilets, hostel facilities for marginalized girl students including tribal girls have been also recommended by NEP-2020.
- NPE-2020 aims to address the issues of gender inequity in recruitment of female teachers in the tribal areas. The policy includes adopting new methods that will ensure that merit and qualification are taken into account and the women teachers are provided a proper forum for recruitment in tribal areas so as to improve the enrolment of tribal in schools.
- The policy also highlights the necessity for teachers and facilitators like anganwadi workers to undergo proper training to counsel the families of tribal girls. This inclusion of the family for counseling is very much essential to change the mindset of tribal parents towards the education of girls.
- NPE-2020 suggests the skill enhancement courses in the educational institutions for tribal girl students so as to attract these students towards schools and to make them self-sufficient.
- The policy does emphasis that the sex education needs to be carefully added in the curriculum and be made a compulsory part of the teaching learning process. In addition to the inclusion of sex education, NPE-2020 emphasis on legal literacy as another important aspect to be included in the curriculum. The policy suggests that the girl students including tribal girls must be aware of their legal rights.
- It is also mentioned in the policy that female health should be of prime importance and care should be taken that the right kind of nutrition is given to female students under the mid-day meal scheme.

### **Conclusion**

Half of the population of the country is women but they cannot take part in economic activities because they are not educated. Education of girls is very important. Educating girls, especially tribal girls, has a catalytic effect on their families and villages. In every family, the presence of an educated mother,



daughter or sister is invaluable. Education departments say that in addition to providing free education to girls from sixth to tenth class, the government also offers scholarships to girls. In some cases, it is supplemented with book allowances at ninth class and registration money at tenth class. Due to the efforts of the government, the number of girls in schools and colleges has increased in recent years. In fact, UNICEF's figures for education shows that girls are doing better than boys in every indicator- elementary school enrolment and attendance, secondary school enrolment and attendance. Women always work, but we do not assess the work they do at home. That's why education is very much essential for girls for making them self-sufficient, only then there will be a genuine development in the country.

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