

An Analysis of Tribal Women's Education in India

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Abstract - Education system should make an individual better suited to the needs of the ever changing dynamic world. The changes in the educational system should also reduce the social gaps by enabling proper recognition to whatever extent one is able to pursue or acquire a skill. The tribal community 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. It is often alleged that the level of aspiration of these women as a group is low and they are quite satisfied with what they are and with what they have. It is most often not true only to womenfolk but to everyone who feels helpless and frustrated. However in order to develop and raise their level of aspiration, adequate educational opportunities are to be provided so that they get motivated to participate, support and also ultimately learn to initiate their own programmes of development. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the present status of educational facilities availed by tribal girls and women. It is also suggested to provide skill and vocational training programmes to tribal women living in rural areas.

Keywords – Tribal Development, Socialization, Skill Training, Social gap, Functional Literacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational backwardness is a distinct gender dimension. An education system should provide a new culture of work ethos and an array of young talented, skilled and well equipped target group who will be able to shoulder

the developmental responsibilities. It should make an individual better suited to the needs of the ever changing dynamic world. The structuring or restructuring of educational system should also contribute to reduce the social gaps by enabling proper recognition to whatever extent one is able to pursue or acquire a skill.

At this juncture it is pertinent to quote Prof. Harbison of Princeton University. He rightly observes that, "Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of Nations. Clearly a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilise them efficiently in the national economy, will be unable to develop anything else".

Socialization is synonymous with education. Brook Over (1955) writes. "It includes any social behavior that assists in the induction of the child into membership in the society, or any behavior by which the society perpetuates itself through the new generation". Margaret Mead (1943) defines, education as the cultural process, the way in which each newborn human infant is transformed into a full member of a specific human society. Both these definitions indicate one aspect - socialisation or education is a cultural process in which inculcation of norms, values attitudes morals and skills, the members of the society ensures continuity in each generation with regard to various aspects of society. Socialisation in a traditional society stabilizes social norms and values. It is essentially a conservative and culture transmitted process. Elementary Indian education never brought any radical innovation of values. However, with the changing world, the concept of education is experiencing a complete transvaluation. Today education a powerful agent of social change. It unlocks the door to modernisation. It also paves a sure road to economic modernisation and progress.

Therefore in this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the educational status of tribal women. The present paper is based entirely on secondary sources of information, mainly drawn from various research studies conducted in this field.

II. METHODOLOGY

The data for the present study have been gleaned from various sources which have been duly acknowledged. Information on Women's Studies enrolment at different levels of University and professional Colleges was obtained through the reports of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, Census of India, 2001 and the Report on Selected Educational Statistics, Published by the Statistics Division, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 2007.

III. OBSERVATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The data thus collected was analyzed, tabulated and presented in the following pages.

The tribal community all over India has been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as, alienation from land and other forest resources since the British rule. Women by nature have, greater ability to organise people, resources and work. They have greater perseverance adaptability and attitude for discipline and cleanliness. To utilise their creativity, adaptive and organizational ability and to motivate them to participate in education, development of their own group is actually required.

A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic and political structure of her society. They exercise free and firm hand in all aspects related to their social and economic life. But it is still important to emphasize that the tribal woman is in herself exactly the same as any other woman with the same passion, love and fears, the same devotion to the home, to husband and to children. The same faults and the same virtues. Though the tribal women are away from the main stream of national life, but they are not kept away from the impact of socio-economic changes effecting the neighborhood or society in general. In the 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 process of such alienation has an impact on the tribal women.

It is often alleged that the level of aspiration of these women as a group is low and they are quite satisfied with what they are and with what they have. It is most often not true only to womenfolk but to everyone who feels helpless and frustrated. However, in order to develop and raise their level of aspiration, adequate educational opportunities are to be provided, so that they get motivated to participate, support and also ultimately learn to initiate their own programmes of development.

The Report of the Working Group on Tribal Development (1980) Suggests: "We feel while the core economic sectors might hold primacy in planning education is the key to tribal development.... Education is an input not only for economic development but also for inner strength of the tribal communities so that they can meet the new challenges on terms of some degree of capacity".

But there are some constraints on education in general and literacy in particular. Save (1945) once wrote. "In case of people who hardly get bread twice a day, literacy

is a tall talk". Ignorance of the people is yet another constraint on tribal development. Numerous programmes of socio-economic development undertaken in the tribal areas in India were not making much headway mainly because of ignorance and illiteracy of the tribals. Even to take advantage of the various development schemes a certain degree of education is necessary.

Development through literacy and education in a small community depends on (1) Universal provision of schools (2) Universal retention of pupils till they complete the prescribed course, and universal enrolment of pupils. Further the disparity in educational attainments has roots in structural constraints. Instead of the concept of traditional literacy, the concept of functional literacy would be a valuable educational exercise in the content of tribal development. Not only traditional literacy but also other skills which equip the tribals to face boldly the exogenous factors of modernisation root print in this case.

The success in this educational endeavour is basically because functional literacy is a kind of mental training in which the adult becomes accustomed to transferring the knowledge and skills acquired to other fields where they are applicable. It is a valuable educational exercise in citizenship one which helps to nurture positive attitude to the problems, adults have to solve and active spirit of co-operation and responsibility in dealing with their collective problems (UNESCO: 1973)

In short, functional literacy for tribal women aims at giving them better knowledge of tribal development in particular and national development in general, there by enabling them to raise their standard of living and simultaneously giving them enough expertise in agriculture and industry so as make them produce more and earn more in their respective capacities.

The need for education and training is a truism. Education in the modern world is not only a process of learning and becoming wise but also a tool at one's command to survive in this age of competition. However cynical this view may be, it is a fact of life and those who are equipped with education of a formal kind, are the achievers, and those who have not acquired or have been denied this tool, are at a tremendous disadvantage vis-à-vis modern living because it is no longer possible in this world today for any society to remain untouched by modern civilization.

IV. EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN

In this context, the scenario of education amongst tribal women who are considered most backward needs to be examined. Taking only the parameter of literacy percentage at face value, the 'backwardness' of tribal women appears to be true. Table - 1 gives a comparative picture of literacy rates in the last two decades and shown the gapping difference between general literacy in the country, amongst STs (both males and females).

TABLE I. STATEWISE SCHEDULED TRIBES (ST) POPULATION AND ITS PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL POPULATION - 2001

Sl. No.	State/Union Territory	Scheduled Tribe Population		
		Males	Females	Person

1.	Andhra Pradesh	2548295 (6.61)	2475809 (6.57)	5024104 (6.59)
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	352017 (60.70)	353141 (68.17)	705158 (64.22)
3.	Assam	1678117 (12.18)	1630453 (12.66)	3308570 (12.41)
4.	Bihar	393114 (0.91)	365237 (0.92)	758351 (0.91)
5.	Chhatisgarh	3287334 (31.39)	3329262 (32.14)	6616596 (31.76)
6.	Goa	299 (0.04)	267 (0.04)	566 (0.04)
7.	Gujarat	3790117 (14.36)	3691043 (15.20)	7481160 (14.76)
8.	Haryana	0	0	0
9.	Himachal Pradesh	122549 (3.97)	122038 (4.08)	244587 (4.02)
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	578949 (10.80)	527030 (11.02)	1105979 (10.90)
11.	Jharkhand	3565960 (25.68)	3521108 (26.96)	7087066 (26.30)
12.	Karnataka	1756238 (6.53)	1707748 (6.58)	3463986 (6.55)
13.	Kerala	180169 (1.16)	184020 (1.12)	364189 (1.14)
14.	Madhya Pradesh	6195240 (19.70)	6038234 (20.89)	12233474 (20.27)
15.	Maharashtra	4347754 (8.63)	4229522 (9.10)	8577276 (8.85)
16.	Manipur	374319 (34.16)	366822 (34.25)	741141 (34.20)
17.	Meghalaya	996567 (84.74)	996295 (87.19)	1992862 (85.94)
18.	Mizoram	422963 (92.13)	416347 (96.95)	839310 (94.46)
19.	NAGALAND	913203 (87.21)	860823 (91.30)	1774026 (89.15)
20.	Orissa	4066783 (21.79)	4078298 (22.48)	8145081 (22.13)
21.	Punjab	0	0	0
22.	Rajasthan	3650982 (12.41)	3446724 (12.72)	7097706 (12.56)
23.	Sikkim	56940 (19.74)	54465 (21.58)	111405 (20.60)
24.	Tamil Nadu	328917 (1.05)	322404 (1.04)	651321 (1.04)
25.	Tripura	504320 (30.71)	489106 (31.41)	993426 (31.05)
26.	Uttar Pradesh	55834 (0.06)	52129 (0.07)	107963 (0.06)
27.	Uttaranchal	131334 (3.04)	124795 (3.00)	256129 (3.02)
28.	West Bengal	2223924 (5.36)	2182870 (5.64)	4406794 (5.50)
29.	A & N Islands	15127 (7.84)	14342 (8.79)	29469 (8.27)
30.	Chandigarh	0	0	0
31.	D & Nagar Haveli	67663 (55.61)	69562 (70.39)	137225 (62.24)
32.	Daman & Diu	7190 (7.77)	6807 (10.36)	13997 (8.85)
33.	Delhi	0	0	0
34.	Lakshadweep	28661 (91.91)	28710 (97.26)	57321 (94.51)
35.	Pondicherry	0	0	0
	India	42640829 (8.01)	41685411 (8.40)	8432640 (8.20)

Source: Primary Census Abstract: Census of India 2001

Note:

Excuding Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur

Figures in parantheses show the percentage of ST population to total population.

Table-1 Shows the Statewise Scheduled Tribes (STs) population and its percentage to total population according to 2001 census. It is clear from the table-1 that the STs population is very high in Madhya Pradesh State i.e. (1,22,33,474) and there are no tribals in Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. Tribal population is very low at Goa i.e; only 566 persons (0.04% of total population).

Table-2 Shows the percentages of literacy rates of STs by sex and urban/rural from 1961 to 2001. It is evident from the above table-2 that there has been a considerable increase in the literacy rates of tribals from 1961 to 2001 i.e 8.53 to 47.10. The Literacy rates among females also raised significantly during this period. Among the tribal women, living in urban areas there is nearly four fold increase in the literacy rates i.e. 13.45 in 1961 to 59.87 in 2001. Simultaneously the literacy rates among rural tribal women also increased from 2.90% to 32.44% during these four decades. This is due to the continuous efforts of the Government towards educational development among STs. The same is shown in Figure 1.

TABLE II. LITERACY RATES OF SCHEDULED TRIBES (STs) BY SEX AND URBAN/RURAL 1961 TO 2001

Year		M	F	Person
1961	Rural	13.37	2.90	8.16
	Urban	30.43	13.45	22.41
	Total	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	Rural	16.92	4.36	10.68
	Urban	37.09	19.64	28.84
	Total	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981	Rural	22.94	6.81	14.92
	Urban	47.60	27.32	37.93
	Total	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	Rural	38.45	16.02	27.38
	Urban	66.56	45.66	56.60
	Total	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	Rural	57.39	32.44	45.02
	Urban	77.77	59.87	69.09
	Total	59.17	34.76	47.10

Source: Internet Selected Educational Statistics, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resources, Statistics Division 2007.

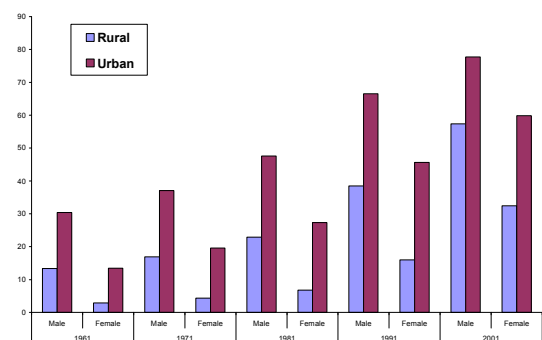


Figure 1. Literacy Rates of Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Table-3 Shows the details of the Schedule Tribe students studying at different levels of education during 2004-05. As per the table - 3 the number of boys is more in all the courses compared to girls. But the number girls pursuing various courses is also very significant. The percentage of ST girls in higher education has been increasing gradually. This is a welcoming change. But still there is a need to extend educational opportunities to tribal women and girls living in rural areas. Moreover to bring them into the mainstream of economic development suitable strategies must be adopted to provide vocational as well as skill training courses to improve the socio-economic status of tribal community particularly women who are once alienated and deprived of these facilities and opportunities.

TABLE III. SCHEDULE TRIBE STUDENTS STUDYING AT DIFFERENT LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN INDIA (2004-05)

Educational Level	Boys	Girls	Total
Ph.D	793	544	1337
M.A.	14271	8808	23079
M.Sc	3324	2160	5484
M.Com	2296	1347	3643
B.A/B.A (Hons)	124645	71533	196178
B.Sc/B.Sc (Hons)	33142	16620	49762
B.Com/B.Com (Hons)	31353	17018	48371
Others*	38754	27445	66199
Not included in specified faculty			

Source: Internet Selected Educational Statistics Government of India, Ministry of Human Resources, Statistics Division, 2004-05.

*Others include data of Open and Distance learning institutions in 8 states namely Bihar, Gujarat, M.P, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, U.P and West Bengal.

V. CONCLUSION

Education to women is as essential as to men. It makes women to find the right way to development. Even today in most parts of the country, the tribal women remains steeped in superstitions and ignorance with men presiding over their destiny. The main aim of education is to change the cultural norms and patterns of life of tribal women to make them economically independent, to organise themselves to form strong groups so as to analyse their situations and conditions of living, understand their rights and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of women and the entire society. The population of STs is very high in some states and in some states there are no STs. With regard to the literacy rates, female literacy has raised considerably in the past four decades both in urban as well as rural areas. Moreover the percentage of Schedule Tribe girls in higher education has been gradually increasing.

The fact remains that a large number of tribal women in rural areas might have missed educational opportunities at different stages and in order to empower

them varieties of skill training programmes have to be designed and organised. The skill could be for assuming political leadership or for economic self-reliance or even social transformation.

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