

Educationalstatus Among Tribals In Eastern Ghats Of Andhra Pradesh: A Case Study

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the causative factors among the tribal education in eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. The tribal social structure, culture and language are quite different from the general population of India. According to the education department the enrollment ratio of ST girls and boys shows a progressive trend in the country which can be attributed to the efforts of the Government in this regard. However, there is a significant wastage and stagnation at elementary stage and it was noticed that the dropout rates in the field of education is alarming in the tribal areas. The socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors are identified as inhibiting the phase of education development in respect of wastage and stagnation among the scheduled tribe children.

Keywords: Education, Savara, Konda Dora, Eastern Ghats,

Date of Submission: 08-07-2020

Date of Acceptance: 23-07-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development and has a great significance. One cannot imagine education without schools as it plays a major role in moulding the basic ideas, habits and attitudes of the children, with a view to producing well balanced individuals. Schools provide not only education to the children but also keep them away from the social evils. Education is the key that opens the door of life. It plays a pivotal role in social change and it brings perfections in human life, an upward mobility in social status, radical transformation in outlook and perception. Education is widely accepted as the essential tool for the attainment of the developmental goals and leads to political consciousness, awareness of rights and duties among the people of a nation and it is the most important instrument for human resource development and has a great significance in the context of developing countries.

II. METHODOLOGY

It is based mainly on both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative work is based on case studies, observation, interviews and focus groups discussions. Because of the nature of the study genealogical method is adapted to present lineages up to depth of five or six generations to understand the process of change over generations and to elicit the effects of the programmes aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the tribes under study in respect of education. Data is also obtained by canvassing 615 schedules in the selected Gummalaxmipuram, Kurupam and Saluru Mandals in Vizianagaram district and Seethampetamandal in Srikakulam district. The secondary data collected through internet, Andhra university library and Government offices.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A quarter of billion tribal population lives in India. The Indian tribal population exceeds the total population of many countries in Europe and Africa. Such a significant population is in utter backward condition due to isolation, ignorance, illiteracy and primitive technology. Priority to independence nothing much was done for their welfare except the initiation of a few protective measures for the tribal communities like a scheduled district Act, the Government of India Act 1935, where in the tribal areas were excluded or partial excluded from the purview of the legislation and the in the tribal areas the administration was given the powers of legislation as well as quasi judiciary. In the field of tribal education Indian education Commission of 1882 suggested that the tribal children be exempted of payment school fees. After independent the Constitutional makers made several provisions in Indian Constitution for protection, welfare and development to uplift the tribal communities on par

with the rest of the population. A duty is cast on the Government for the welfare and development of the scheduled tribe in the Constitution.

Accordingly, several development protective and welfare measures are initiated to ameliorate the condition of the tribes. Article 15(4) this clause empowers the state to make special provisions for the educational development of the SCs and STs (Sahoo 2009). Tribal welfare and development have been accorded a highest priority in the Five-Year Plans. The Indian planners having realized the importance of education as an instrument of change for the betterment of the society has given due emphasis on tribal education right from first Five Year Plan onwards since the socio-economic development of scheduled tribes is linked to the educational advancement. The importance of education as an agent of change as well as a means of employment has been realized in planning process. Hence in accordance with Constitution, the responsibility is placed on the Government to raise the literacy levels of the tribes. In spite of the Constitutional 48 safeguards and planning nothing much was done in the field of educational development in the first phase of planning and the results are not up to the expectation of the Government.

Basing on the reports of the committees and commissions a fresh initiative has taken up by creating a central advisory board of education which recommended special efforts to be made at the elementary stage to enroll all children belonging to scheduled tribes. Accordingly, efforts are made by the Government at the elementary stage to the enroll all the children of scheduled tribe. In addition to the free education, free supply of educational materials, mid-day meal programme and ashrama schools are opened in the tribal areas. All these measures have yielded results since the literacy rates of scheduled tribes in the three decades (1970s to 1990) have shown an improvement in tribal literacy as per the department of education the percentage of literacy which is 11.30 percent in 1971 is increased to 29.6 percent by 1991 showing the percentage increase of 161.95 percent. But however, the gap between the literacy rates of STs and those of the general population is very high. There is a marked improvement in the literacy rate among the scheduled tribes where in the male literacy is increased to 59.17 in 2001 census and 68.53 percent according to 2011 census. In case of female literacy which is a meager 4.85 percent in 1971 which increased to 18.19 percent by 1991. There is a marked change as regards to female literacy which increased to 34.76 percent in 2001 census than 49.35 percent by 2011. (Source: Educational Development of SC and ST Dept. of Education and Census of India).

In spite of the gigantic efforts of the Government, the scheduled tribes are lagging behind in literacy in comparison with the non-tribal population. By 2011 the percentage of literacy among the males is recorded as 80.89 percent as against 68.53 percent for the tribal male. As regards to the female literacy rate there is a tremendous gape between scheduled tribe population and general population in spite of vigorous efforts the half female population among scheduled tribes are still illiterate. According to the education department the enrollment ratio of ST girls and boys shows a progressive trend in the country which can be attributed to the efforts of the Government in this regard. However, there is a significant wastage and stagnation at elementary stage and it was noticed that the dropout rates in the field of education is alarming in the tribal areas.

According to the unpublished data of educational statistics the dropout rate among scheduled tribes is as high as 75.66 percent which is decreased to 63.81 percent at primary level. The socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors are identified as inhibiting the phase of education development in respect of wastage and stagnation among the scheduled tribe children. In the area under study, among the tribal communities' frequent separations and divorce and remarriages are common. According to the tribal custom the children belongs to their father's lineage and in the event of divorces the responsibility to look after the younger siblings is placed till the remarriage of her father.

The study reveals the frequent absenteeism owing to the family responsibility ultimately results in dropout among the girl child. This cultural factor is mainly identified as a factor responsible for wastage at primary level in the area under study. Since most of the parents of earlier generations are illiterate, they are least interested in the education of their children and they are encouraged to participate in goat or sheep rearing tending milch cattle and he buffalos, and collection of minor forest produce etc. these social factors were identified as responsible for their dropout. The tribal economic condition is poor and subsistence in this connection, children are seen as economic assets to supplement the family income by working with the parents and with others (Hasnain 2004).

In the study area it is observed that there is a little compulsion of parents on their children in the tribal area and the children have freedom to act unlike in the urban areas. The school atmosphere is intimidating structured system to the children who are accustomed carefree life and, in several cases, the psychological factor is identified as the factor responsible for dropout. Having realized the above factors, the Government have initiated several steps for the to combat dropout and propagation of education for the scheduled tribes. A number of primary residential schools or mini gurukulams were established at Mandal level and residential schools were opened at division level and residential junior colleges were started in district level. In case of tribal girls and children of PVTGs 100 percent seats are reserved for scheduled tribes' students of that category, while in scheduled tribe boys 70 seats are reserved in the residential schools.

In addition, a number of residential schools are opened in scheduled areas exclusively for tribal children except a few cases under agency employee's quota. Free education, provision of uniforms, distribution of books, scholarships by the Government as resulted in the improvement of enrollment and reduction of wastage and stagnation. Another aspect identified as causative factor for the school dropout rate are due to health problems. In this context medical and health, education, ICDS departments combined have started a school health programme named Jawahar BalaArogyaraksha (JBAR) in the year 2010 so as to cover 100 percent of the children from birth to class 12 studying in schools are junior colleges.

As per the medical and health department statistics the school health programme as covered 35.8 laksh children in 46000 schools. The Government also implemented the programme of deworming of children. Since school age children form a high proportion of state population the Government concentration a major initiative to provide comprehensive package of promoting, preventive, curative referral health services to the children studying in all primary, upper primary and secondary schools. The programme provides a package of life skills to children, decrease of prevalence of aneamia and malnutrition. Reduced dropout from the educational streams due to acute illness and to provide to treatment for all chronic ailments to unable children to overcome these difficulties. Though the above schemes include all categories of children, especially tribal beneficial to suffer from the above ailments.

The study reveal the special efforts of the Government have yielded positive results as MHRD statistics shows a marked improvement of the tribal children in educational development which resulted in the reduction of dropout rate to 31.9 percent for male children and 30.7 percent to female children which itself is a tremendous achievement of the Government in the field of education and the study reveals the Government schemes have resulted in the overcoming of some of the cultural inhibiting factor. The education scenario is such that among the three tribes under study, though the first ascending and 2nd ascending generation of kinsman are illiterates, gradual change is noticed in ego's generation and rapid improvement is identified in the 1st and 2nd descending generations resulting in the students acquiring intermediate, degree qualifications in several cases and even among the particularly vulnerable tribal groups i.eSavara. In recent years in the area of study, there are professional graduates and post graduates even among the girls are noticed from among the Jatapu, Savara and Konda Dora tribes.

The data obtained from 615 families reveals that 51.16 percent of the tribals are illiterate and 43.98 percentage of literacy rate noticed in the field area. The table 2 indicates that the 12.69 percent of them are degree holders and 3.64 percent are now pursuing post graduate degrees. The genealogies and case studies of the following tribal elders reveals the present the position of educational development among the study area.

Table 1: Literacy level

Educational status	Male	Female	Total
Illiterates	449 (45.55)	541 (55.15)	990 (51.16)
Literates	457 (53.70)	394 (46.30)	851 (43.98)
Not applicable	48 (51.06)	46 (48.94)	94 (4.86)

Table 2: Levels of education

Levels of education	Male	Female	Total
Primary	80 (46.51)	92 (53.49)	172 (20.21)
Upper primary	73 (51.4)	69 (48.59)	142 (16.69)
High school	135 (65.53)	71 (34.47)	206 (24.21)
Intermediate	99 (51.56)	93 (48.44)	192 (22.56)
Degree	54 (50)	54 (50)	108 (12.69)
Higher education	16 (51.61)	15 (48.39)	31 (3.64)
Total	457 (53.70)	394 (46.30)	851 (100)

The problem of tribal education:

Internal Constraints

The internal problems of tribal education refer to the quality of school provision, suitable teachers, relevance of content and curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, and special supervision. A majority of schools in tribal areas are without basic infrastructure facilities. Normally, school buildings in tribal areas have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls, and non-plastered floors. Research evidence shows that a large number of tribal schools do not have teaching-learning materials, or even blackboards. In tribal areas the opening of a school is equated with the posting of a teacher and same is the case with 'ashram' schools. It is found that in most of ashram schools which are residential in nature, there is no space for the children to sleep. Consequently, the classroom turns into the dormitory and vice versa. Due to lack of minimum sanitary provisions, it is not uncommon to find that many children studying in ashram schools are afflicted with contagious diseases like

scabies and diarrhoea, leading to high drop-out rates. Schools in tribal areas just function with bare minimum facilities.

Content and Curriculum

Though the demand for changing the content and curriculum to suit the tribal context has been an old one, no serious effort has been made in this direction in any state, except for some sporadic pilot projects. The uniform structure and transaction of curriculum has put tribal children at a disadvantage. In respect of pedagogy, it has been found that the rigid systems of formal schooling, which emphasize discipline, routine norms, teacher-centered instruction, etc. have made the children wary of school. This goes against the culture of free interaction and absence of force as embedded in tribal ethos and culture prevalent at home. This has led to sharp division between home and school leading to lack of interest among the children towards school, and research findings have shown this as a major factor behind non enrolment. Another area is the inherent fear of tribal children towards the teacher, and their inability to establish a communication link with the teacher and this is reflected in low attendance and high dropout rates. This could be tackled to a great extent by using the regional language as the medium of instruction. The Constitution of India allows the use of tribal dialect (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction in case the population of the said tribe is more than one lakh. But this has not been adopted on the grounds of feasibility and viability of introducing and sustaining such a change. In recent years, some efforts have been made for preparing primers in tribal dialects but again they have been nullified in the context of inter-tribal rivalry, hierarchy, etc, and also, being on a very small scale, are incapable of influencing mainstream practices.

Socio-economic and Cultural Constraints

In a broad sense, these socio-economic and cultural factors can be outlined as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding of the value of formal education, conflicts and gap between the home and school, etc. Studies on educational deprivation of tribals have inevitably linked it to their poor economic condition and poverty. The main occupation of tribals is agriculture, practiced either through shifting cultivation or terrace cultivation where productivity remains very low. Consequently, children play an important role, contributing directly or indirectly to family income by participating in the family occupation and household works like cattle grazing and fuel and fodder collection, etc. Even though elementary education is deemed free and additional incentives are given to children, in practice, it is not free due to several reasons. First, the incentive schemes do not have full coverage, and thus, have limited value at community level. Second, many of the benefits do not reach the beneficiaries. Third, even though incentives like slates and uniforms are given, they are of poor quality and do not reach in time, thus nullifying the entire purpose. It should be noted that the impoverished economic status of tribals makes even the small amount of private expenditure involved in procuring writing material, clothing, etc a serious burden on the family. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising if education is not given priority. In an economy dominated by struggle for survival, options are limited. Since education does not provide any visible and immediate benefit and tribals do not see beyond their present state, the participation of tribal children in education also becomes limited. Another reason for low participation is the opportunity cost involved, as the majority of non-enrolled children are required to work in households or family occupations. Even if the economic contribution of children is indirect, they certainly facilitate the participation of parents in economic activity. In recent years the efforts of the government have been directed towards improving economic conditions of tribes by introducing various developmental programmes and schemes, mostly related to agriculture, horticulture, and cattle rearing, backed by subsidies and monetary and non-monetary inputs. A critical analysis of development programmes and their effect on tribal households shows that till tribal households reach a threshold level of income and land size, the economic development programmes can come into conflict with other activities like education. In a way it can be said that these development programmes seem to be adversely affecting the education of tribal children.

IV. CONCLUSION

Education does not provide any visible and immediate benefit and tribals do not see beyond their present state, the participation of tribal children in education also becomes limited. Another aspect identified as causative factor for the school dropout rate are due to health problems. Since, free education, provision of uniforms, distribution of books, scholarships by the Government as resulted in the improvement of enrollment and reduction of wastage and stagnation. Inclusion of local culture, folklore, and history to the curriculum can help building confidence among the tribal children, and this approach may help in increasing their enrolment and retention at school since music and dance are the essential aspects of their cultural life. Therefore, storytelling, theatre, painting, music, and dance performances should be promoted at schools. Similarly, sports

like archery, football, and other popular local sports are extremely beneficial remedies for dropouts; it should be promoted.

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D Ramesh, et. al. "Educational status among Tribals in Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh: a Case Study." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(7), 2020, pp. 44-48.