

Un-deemed pledge of Education of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe: An Analysis in terms of Related Literature

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Scheduled caste and the scheduled tribes in India are a part of the socially disadvantaged group that has received special focus over the years for their social and economic advancement. Interventions by the government of India for these socially disadvantaged groups in terms of constitutional and policy interventions have paid dividend but much needs to be done. In this paper an analysis of the educational status of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has been done to find out the underlying reasons of their lagging behind.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe

Introduction

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been, for centuries, the most neglected, marginalized and exploited people. As per the Census 2011, the total population of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) is 16.2 per cent and 8.2 percent respectively for both the categories. As per the census of India, 2011 the overall literacy rate for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was 66.1% and 59% respectively. Moreover, the literacy rate of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population is less than the corresponding literacy rate of India (73%). In urban areas, the effective literacy rate was 76% for both SCs and STs the national average being 84.1%. Apart from urban rural and gender –wise variations there are also regional variations in terms of literacy rates for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. While Mizoram and Tripura have seen the highest literacy rates among SCs, Bihar and Jharkhand have the lowest literacy rates among SCs. Among STs, the highest literacy rate is in Mizoram and Nagaland while the lowest was in Andhra Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The literacy rate for SC males was 75.2% in 2011, an increase from 66.6% in 2001 while for ST males; it has gone up from 59.5% to 68.5%. The national literacy rate among males was 82.14% and for females it was 65.46%. For females, literacy among SCs was 56.5% and it was 49.4% in STs. Higher female literacy has led to a narrowing of the gender gap in literacy to 18.7% for SCs and 19.1% for STs, which is now comparable to the national average of 16.3%.

There has been a consensus regarding the importance of education in bringing about betterment in the living conditions of weaker sections including scheduled castes and tribes and backward classes. In fact the philosophy of equality of educational opportunity is based on the assumption that the disadvantaged sections in the society are the result of lack of opportunities at

the individual level to make use of societal avenues to carve oneself a suitable niche in the economic and social structure. India being a Welfare State, committed to the welfare and development of its people and of vulnerable section in particular, the preamble, directive principles of state policy, fundamental rights and specific sections, viz, articles 38, 39 and 46 in the constitution of India, clearly show the commitment of the state to its people. State commitment to the education of SC/ST children is contained in Articles 15(4), 45 and 46 of the Indian Constitution. Article 15(4) underscores the state's basic commitment to positive discrimination in favour of the socially and educationally backward classes and/or the SC and ST. Article 45 declares the state's endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. Article 46 expresses the specific aim to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of SC/ST.

The constitution of India purports to maintain ethnological and linguistic identity of the tribes through Article 29, which seeks to protect the language, dialects and culture of the tribes. National Policy on Education (1986) recommended for using cultural contents in the curriculum. The teaching-learning materials should be prepared according to the local culture and the language of textbooks and medium of instruction be the language of the tribes in primary schools. Article 350 (A) also suggests for education through minority languages for minority children and the tribal people are also linguistic minorities a most of the tribal languages are non-scheduled language and having no scripts.

There have been commitment and deep concern for the development of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of the country in Five Year Plans and several steps have been taken by the government for framing appropriate policies needed to design and implementing various welfare programmes for achieving the objective of creating favorable environment to ensure speedy socio- economic development of SC/STs Special programs are formulated and the central government extends adequate resources for developmental programs in the tribal habitations.

Emphasis was given to open schools and residential schools for the tribal children through the ASs scheme. Quantitative expansion of education was, in time, achieved in numbers by opening more Ashram Schools (ASs), establishing hostels, etc. Due attention was paid for the qualitative improvement of tribal education by providing remedial coaching, counseling and guidance in vocations. However, all the provisions have proved insufficient in addressing the needs of tribals. 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 Group (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. These groups are not mutually exclusive and they overlap.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) recognizes the varied issues and challenges in tribal education in view of the heterogeneous structure of tribal population in the country. The issues and challenges in tribal education can be categorized as external, internal, socioeconomic and

Cultural. The external constraints are related to issues at levels of policy, planning and implementation while internal constraints are with respect to school system, content, curriculum, pedagogy, medium of instruction etc. The third set of problems relate to social economic and cultural background of the tribal children. STs are at different levels of socio-economic and educational development. STs in North Eastern States and those settled in urban and semi-urban areas are comparatively better placed. The problems of education of the ST children vary from area to area and tribe to tribe. Therefore,

Some of the interventions being promoted in States under SSA include:

- Setting up schools, Education Guarantee Centers and Alternative Schools in tribal habitations for non-enrolled and drop out children.
- Textbooks in Mother Tongue for children at the beginning of the primary education cycle, where they do not understand the regional language. Suitably adapt the curriculum and make available locally relevant teaching learning materials for tribal students.
- Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect
- Special support to teachers as per need.
- Deploying community teachers.
- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers.
- The school calendar in tribal areas may be prepared as per local requirements and festivals.
- Anganwadis and Balwadis in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are relieved from sibling care responsibilities.
- Special plan for nomadic and migrant workers.
- Engagement of community organizers from ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households.
- Ensuring sense of ownership of school communities by ST communities by increasing representatives of STs in VECs / PTAs etc. Involving community leaders in school management
- Monitoring attendance and retention of children.
- Providing context specific interventions e.g. Ashram school, hostel, incentives etc.

Unfortunately the initiatives so far have narrowed down the gap but failed to bridge the gap between the schedule caste, tribal and general population in terms of education. They still occupy the lowest rung in the educational ladder. The benefit of education did not percolate so easily because of multiplicity of problems that the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes encounter.

Review of Researches and Studies : We have Reached How Far and how Fair

Since independence, the structure of constitutional democracy has opened up avenues making it possible to move-up the socio-economic ladder, as equality of opportunity and social justice were recognized as the guiding principles of development planning in independent India. With the constitutional protection and better educational and economic facilities as well as motivating factor for upward social mobility it will be possible for the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to be at par with those of non-scheduled population and also entering into the mainstream of national life (Uplaoonkar, 1982).

One of the challenges in providing education to tribal children is with respect to setting up schooling facilities in small, scattered and remote tribal habitations. The majority of the Scheduled Tribes live in sparsely populated habitations in interior, and inaccessible hilly and forest areas of the country. Nearly 22 per cent of the tribal habitations have population less than 100 while more than 40% have population of 100 to 300. The rest have population of 300 to 500 (Sujatha, 2000). One of the reasons for poor access to schooling in tribal areas before 1980s was the high norm on population, number of children and distance for opening new schools. Most of the States have relaxed these norms to enable setting up schools even in small tribal hamlets. This, along with other measures has improved access in tribal areas. For instance, Andhra Pradesh has relaxed norms to set up schools in habitations even with 20 school-age children. Some States Karnataka etc. have lowered the population size norm, especially for tribal areas. EGS Centers can now be established even with 15 children. In remote tribal habitations in hilly areas of North Eastern States and Jammu & Kashmir, EGS schools can be opened even with 10 children.

Buzdar and Ali (2011) found that the major problem for majority of them is the absence of schools and school related human and physical infrastructure. The problems of transportation, drinking water, electricity, school buildings and boundary walls were severe in tribal cum rural areas than urban areas. Quality infrastructure ensures quality education and quality education ensures masses participation in education programs. . Large number of ST children are still outside the access of primary education and a high percentage of them drop-out without reaching Class X. The educational institutions for ST children are highly inadequate in terms of quantity and quality.

Sinha (2005) in his study conducted on tribal education in Odisha found that one of the major impediment was the school language. The school languages, that is, Oriya, English, Hindi / Sanskrit, are difficult to learn for the tribals, who speak different tribal languages at home. There is no proper environment to study at home. Tribal girls cannot go to the hostels as they are needed at home and field to extend support to their parents. If the school timings are changed to evening and the school holidays and dates for the examinations are changed to suit the local situations (during times there is no sowing, harvesting, etc.), may be, some more children would join schools. Moreover, massive awareness of the programmes should be implemented for parents and community members.

A recent report done by NIAS, Bangalore brings together the findings of a wide range of research studies and data on the tribal community in India. There are more than 600 tribal communities in India and it is widely acknowledged that they are among the most deprived social group in India - with a majority of them living in rural areas. The important issue raised by this report pertains to systemic exclusion - "By design and through overt and covert practices, education became part of the systematic exclusion of non-elite students... *Neither the makeup of the education system nor the lack of participation by Adivasis is by accident.* This brings us to the condition of „invisibilisation that also marks the educational experience of the disadvantaged. Even as they participate in formal education as students, teachers, parents, staff and school administrators, Adivasi people can never hope to find Adivasi knowledge, ethos, traditions, histories and languages as part of their educational experience. In addition to the impact of these forms of erasure and silence, Adivasis are portrayed in stereotypical ways that

are based on perceptions of their primitiveness and closeness to nature. Continued legacies of exclusion and invisibilisation loom large on the discourse of inclusion of Adivasis in all forms of public life including educational institutions”

It was also felt that to promote education among the tribes it is necessary to preserve their socio-cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and the curricular contents, pedagogy should be formed accordingly. To remove the educational backwardness of these people, there are constitutional provisions and policies but practically what is happening needs in depth understanding. The policies for the Schedule Tribes in India face dilemmas because the tribal identity, culture and values to be preserved and simultaneously they should be eased for the mainstream education. The survival of native language and culture is critical to the success of any community and ways of life. Research studies have revealed that the students are more engaged and successful when offered the opportunity to study their traditional ways.

An educational system, which offers cultural inclusion of the tribal children accounts for better educational outcomes. India, being a country of diversities may not find equal responses and results of uniform educational policy from different geographical locations and from different communities. Tribal society has been a field of interest for the Anthropologists as the social structure and formal social institutions of the tribal society are different from so called mainstream society. So the distinctiveness of the tribal society and culture should be preserved and the socio-cultural barriers, tribal children face at school through alien curricular contents, teaching-learning not through their mother tongue are taken seriously these days. Issue of cultural exclusion of the tribal children from schooling and the issue of medium of instruction have drawn attention of the researchers from the 80s but specific Governmental policies are yet to be fully incorporated. For tribal communities, this includes teaching in their language, but it also means incorporating tribal cultural characteristics and teaching strategies that are harmonious with the tribal cultural traits and contemporary knowledge system.

The participation of the tribal children in schooling has been characterized by low performance and dropout. One of the main reasons behind this is the home-school language gap, which ultimately leads to cultural exclusion of the tribal children from classroom, from text books and from school as well. The knowledge acquired by the child in the home differs from the school as the tribal culture finds no place in the curricular contents. The child enjoys learning in the school when learning starts from what he/she knows in the language medium known to him/her. Language of the child is the converging point of community and school knowledge. The child's ability to communicate provides him/her better scope of learning. If child is unable to communicate in school it becomes an obstacle in his/her participation and performance.

In case of scheduled caste children studies conducted by Naik (1971), Yadav (1979), Maurya (1976), Chitnis (1984), found that many of the parents were unaware of such facilities and special schemes and programs envisaged by the government. A research study by Gangrade (1974) conducted in Haryana showed that the majority of the parents of the SC students were illiterates and due to limited exposure to the mass media their awareness of educational facilities was also limited. Rajgopalan (1979) found that high school SC students were suffering from a number of problems such as lack of hostel facilities, poor economic conditions, help rendered in domestic work, absence of learning environment in home and lack of home support, tuitions unaffordable and absence of basic facilities in the villages etc. Inadequate provision of physical

access even at primary stage, as well as the issue of its socially accessible to the scheduled caste has never been addressed. The caste still continues to obstruct the access of scheduled caste children to school and the quality of education they receive (Nambissan, & Sedwal, 2002). A study conducted by Kumar, Arora and Chaudhary (2000) in Sirsa district of Haryana showed that the percentage of dropout girls was highest among Scheduled Castes in the age group of 9-12 years, their parents were found to be illiterates, the girl child was employed in domestic work and care of siblings, early marriage was also a reason for dropping out, and the parents didn't consider sending the girl child to the school as useful but felt it is a sheer wastage of money.

A study conducted by Aggarwal (1994) examined the inequalities in the literacy between scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste population and examined the district wise data for empirical estimation and observed that there are wide disparities in the literacy. However, the review of the enrolment trends and the researches has shown some improvements at school stage but utilization of educational facilities in higher education has remained less than satisfactory.

Apple (1982) argued that the school is an arena within which the inequalities of society are contested, and where both reproduction and non-reproduction take place. Pierre Bourdieu (1973) emphasized the way in which schools reproduce social divisions based on wealth, privilege and power. The society and family influence very strongly the children when they are getting their education. The aspirations of children also sometimes are restricted to their abilities, as in case of Scheduled Caste girls only aspired for lower levels of education as well as employment most probably understanding the constraints in which they are studying in the schools (Panda, B. K.;2010). The schools in these societies mostly act as transmitter of not only the cultural heritage of society but also the mechanism of social inequality (Bourdieu, 1973).

Adisheshia and Ramanathan (1979) reported that the high degree of wastage at the primary level of education was due to illiterate and poor families of the Scheduled Caste children. The occupations followed by these families were mostly farming and the children have to assist the parents either in the fields or looking after the house or other domestic related jobs (Pimpley, 1980). The Probe (1999) also pointed out that the adverse learning environment experienced by the scheduled caste pupils can't but affect their educational aspirations and achievements. The high dropout rates among Scheduled Caste students are due to such latent factors, which need to be tackled. The facilities of the school in the interior villages are not very satisfactory, this has also affected the attendance among the disadvantaged children (Panda, B.K., 1995). The inability of Scheduled Caste parents to meet the educational needs of the children in terms of providing books, notebooks, stationery also became an impediment in the education of the children leading to dropout (Muarlidharan, 1997).

Study by Aikara (1980) showed that the incidence of stagnation and drop-out is higher among the Scheduled Caste students than among the non-Scheduled Caste students. This is essentially due to the fact that while technically the Scheduled Caste students have the facilities available, but they are hesitant to get full benefit of these facilities due to family pressures and lack of awareness and lukewarm support from their fellow students and sometimes the uncaring attitude of teachers. A study conducted by Sachidanand and Sinha (1989) in Bihar, highlighted that there is absence of much interaction between the Scheduled Caste and non-Scheduled Caste students in the schools, there is a distance maintained, making the SC students to suffer from social stigma, on the other hand their poor economic conditions forced early entry into labor force and resulted in dropping out of the school. Kaul (2001) found that the non-Scheduled Caste children

never mingled or played with the Scheduled Caste children outside the school, although they were studying together in the school. Jha (1974), in his study revealed that higher the level of educational attainment, the more favorable was the attitude of people towards abolition of untouchability. According to Uplaonkar (1982), only a small proportion of Scheduled Caste students have been able to reap the benefits of higher education and consequently the benefits of reservations in organized labor market for which educational qualifications are the major considerations.

A study conducted by Anitha (2000) showed positive impact in the school, if there is good relationship between the school and the community and the teachers. Whilst the inherent fear of the disadvantaged children towards the teacher, and their ability to establish a communication link with the teacher is reflected in low attendance and high dropout rates (B. K. Panda, 2008). Anecdotal evidence and certain smaller scale qualitative studies suggest that teaching practices in the classroom negatively affect SC children and result in another 'push' factor from primary school. (Ramachandran, 2004) "Teachers in India are predominantly upper caste and bring their own understandings of the legitimacy of caste relations into the classroom. Scheduled Caste children are expected to run errands and are assigned menial tasks such as sweeping and cleaning the classrooms. Higher rates of teacher absenteeism were reported when children were mainly from Scheduled Caste communities." (Govinda R. & Varghese, N. V. 1993; Kabeer, 2006).

Considering the socio-economic backwardness of the scheduled castes, constitution of India envisaged special measures for their socio-economic upliftment especially for their education development. Several policies and programs have been adopted by the central and state governments for their educational development. There have been a variety of schemes such as scholarships, free uniforms, free books, free coaching, free boarding, free lodging and many other incentives in order to promote the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. The Education For All programs as well as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are also very important interventions by the government in providing access, equality and quality to the children of the Scheduled Castes in the country (Govinda, R. 2002). Some studies also showed that certain interventions had a positive impact on the education of these disadvantaged Micro-level evidence shows that initiatives such as mid-day meals, self-help women's groups, environment building programs, appointment of local community teachers, developing partnership between school and village communities in school management have helped the disadvantaged groups to realize the importance of education and adopt positive attitude towards girls' education (Sujatha, 2002). Studies conducted by Kumar, Arrora, Huria and Daya (2000) found that the mid-day meals, free uniform, free text books, scholarships for attendance are widely availed by children of disadvantaged groups, but there is lack of satisfactory community participation through PTA and VEC. The participation of the girl child is found to be more, if the family members are educated and more particularly the mother is literate (Vaidyanathan and Nair, 2001).

Some of the studies also showed positive indications of improvement in the literacy and development of the scheduled caste children. Some of the states have significantly improved their performance and have been successful in reducing the dropouts and wastage of children in the schools and there has been considerable improvement in terms of their enrolment and participation. Kulkarni (2000) in his study in the states of Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh found that there is a widening disparity between other castes and scheduled castes in terms of school completion, while there is a narrowing in literacy and school completion rates between

other castes and scheduled castes in the some of the states such as Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Conclusions

The review of the literature throws light on the impeding factors as well as the enabling factors for the development of the disadvantaged groups in general. The studies have examined the various issues related to social and economic conditions and the educational provisions and its utilization by the various disadvantaged groups and highlighted the problems. A careful examination of all the literature reviewed provides an in depth understanding of the existence of inequalities, disparities and lack of motivation and awareness as well as social inhibition impeding the development of the scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes. In spite of several best efforts vast majority of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children are still outside the reach of educational provisions and benefits have no meanings for them. In this context it is necessary to ascertain the congenial as well as enabling factors essential for raising the levels of education of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for creating an urge/demand within them to acquire education which is the only instrument to break the isolation and barriers in the society to pave way to social mobility.

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