

EDUCATION OF TRIBES IN INDIA: LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract :

Scheduled Tribes (STs) are indigenous population that has been living in India from times immemorial. Traditionally, STs have been referred to as adivasis, vanabasis, tribes, or tribals. Although the term tribe or tribal is not defined anywhere in the Constitution of India, according to Article 342, ST represents the tribe or tribal communities that are notified by the President of India. Jha and Jhingaran (2002) equate STs in India more with the "indigenous" or "native people" in other parts of the world. Mishra (2002) defines Scheduled tribes as people who (i) claim themselves as indigenous to the soil; (2) generally inhabit forest and hilly regions; (3) largely peruse a subsistence level economy; (iv) have great regard for traditional, religious and cultural practices; (V) believe in common ancestry and (vi) have strong group ties. The 2001 census put the number of people belonging to Scheduled Tribes in India at 84.3 million, which is 8.3% of the total population and these are classified into 573 different communities. There are about 60 major tribal groups accounting for about 80% of the total tribal population of India in 2001. There are over 100 medium tribal groups and 130 minor tribal groups and about 60 others are numerically insignificant (Census of India: 2001). Sujatha (2002) points out that there are 270 languages spoken STs and these language are different from the language spoken in the state they are located.

Keywords : Scheduled Tribes (STs) , Education Of Tribes , Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

The constitution of India assigns special status to Scheduled Tribes (STs). Realizing that Scheduled Tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, a host of programs and measures were initiated ever since India got Independence. Article 46 of the Constitution states that, "The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation." Articles 330, 332, 335, 338 to 342 and the entire Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution deal with special provisions for implementation of the objectives set forth in Article 46. However, education of ST children is considered important not only

because of the constitutional obligation but also a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

Sujatha (2002) points out that a significant proportion of Scheduled Caste and an even greater proportion of Scheduled Tribe children continue to remain out of school. This is so even in the younger age group, indicating that accessing basic school is still a problem, especially in certain states and regions that have suffered gross neglect by the polity and State. Further more, she observes that there is an unprecedented rise in enrolment of both Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes, which indicate a strong desire for education. She goes on to say that a dampener on the situation is that attendance rates at both primary and middle school and completion rates are far from satisfactory. This indicates that dropout and failure are problems that afflict SC/ST children to a far greater degree than the rest and they thus continue to lag behind them in terms of educational attainment.

The gross dropout rate of tribal students from primary, middle and secondary stages of schooling in India is quite alarming. As such, the gross dropout rate represent percentage of pupil who dropout from a given grade or cycle or level of education in a given school year. Selected Educational Statistics (2000-2001) reveals that dropout rate of tribal children ascends from 40.7% to 53.7% to 68.58% as they progress from primary (I-V grade), middle (VI-VIII grade), and secondary (IX-X grade) stages of schooling in India. This paper attempts to explore and establish the challenges and problems STs face in the context of education of their children by reviewing the related literature pertaining to education of STs.

The present literature review is an endeavor to evolve a research project. The proposed research project would attempt to conduct a microscopic holistic study on education of one of the primitive tribes known as Chenchus. In a recent visit to this inhabitation, the reviewer found that all most all children, from 233 families at an inhabitation, between age group of 6-16 are out-of-school. This caused the reviewer a research concern about the educational challenges of Chenchus. Eventually, research questions got evolved in order to address the educational challenges of Chenchus. The research questions are:

- (a) What are the worldviews of chenchus and how are they influencing the educational choice (outright rejection of education/drop out's) of their children?
- (b) What are the perceptions and experiences of children being out of the school? /what are the perceptions and experiences of children during their phase of being in school? How do they see their journey of dropping out of the school?

(3) What are the experiences of teachers (working in Tribal school that exists right next to Chenchu inhabitation) with the children from Chenchu tribe?

It is in the light of the above research questions, the present literature review identified studies that can be situated in three thematic areas based on the research problem that they have intended to inquire. Three thematic areas are: (1) Studies pertaining to physical facilities and infrastructure schools where tribal students study; (2) Parental attitudes and beliefs, work and language of home; (3) Miscellaneous variables.

STUDIES PERTAINING TO PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The two studies conducted on Ashram (Tribal Schools) by Pratap, Raju, and Rao (1971) and Desai and Patel, (1981) do not project a good profile of Ashram Schools. Pratap, and Raju (1973) found that the working and physical conditions of Ashram Schools to be unsatisfactory. Some of the teachers working in these schools did not stay there and visited schools occasionally. The study pointed out that the schools' were treated as source of income rather than avenues of service.

Rathnayya (1974), with regard to the question of distance between home and school as a barrier for schooling, found that tribal parents felt inconvenient to send their children to school due to long distance between home and school. Joshi (1981) in his study on tribals of Trivendrum district, found that schools were available within one kilometer to only 18 percent ST children. Furthermore, he found that more than 14 percent guardians responded that no schooling facilities were available within a distance of three kilometers. Vyas and Mann (1980) similar to above findings, concluded that tribals live relatively in isolated areas- thick forests and high hills, where meager transport facilities and poverty are the prime factors for low level of education among the STs.

Masavi (1976) in his study found the wastage rate to be 65 per cent at the primary level, however, only 9.1 per cent of the total enrolled children of class-I could complete class-IV. The stagnation rate at class I was very high which came down considerably for classes II, III and IV. The overall wastage in Ashram Schools was 46.7 per cent. The main causes for wastage and stagnation were found to be socioeconomic conditions, ignorance among tribal parents, ill equipped teachers, teaching in alien languages, physical illness inappropriate curricula. Desai, B. and Patel, A. (1981) found that in most of the Ashram Schools the number of children enrolled was much higher than the prescribed number (120 students each) and except in two schools, the 1: 1 ratio among boys and girls was not maintained. Only 18 out of 22 Ashram Schools had 100 per cent teacher strength and in some cases the educational qualifications of teachers was class VII. The overall wastage rate reported in the Ashram Schools was 44.42 per cent.

In an evaluative study conducted on hostels and Ashrams for Tribal girl students, Jha, (1985) found that like most of other beneficiary schemes meant for tribals, mostly the rich amongst the tribal community availed of the facilities of hostels and Ashrams. The number of students admitted to the hostels was much higher than the number expected and the superintendents of these hostels were neither trained nor qualified. The hostel rooms were overcrowded and did not have basic facilities. Their parents making their girls living very difficult sometimes misappropriated the scholarships that are given to girls. The amount of this scholarship was also found to be inadequate. In a study conducted by Sharma (1984) it was found that, introduction of different incentives like free uniforms, textbooks and boarding and lodging facilities resulted in higher enrolment of SC and ST students including girls. This increase in case of SC and ST children ranged from 49.2 per cent to 92.7 per cent. Two studies, one by Bhargava, (1989) and another by Kamble, (1992) were carried out to conduct survey of educational facilities for weaker sections in Orissa and Maharashtra respectively. They found that educational facilities for Scheduled Tribe habitations are poorer in comparison to other habitations in the district and the facilities of textbooks, free uniforms, stipends and midday meals were available to children coming from tribal communities.

Tilak (2000) observes that there is a lack of basic material condition including situations of acute poverty. It has been quite emphatically established that, as he opines, a sizeable section of the tribal population is too poor to avail of education that is far from free and entails unaffordable costs. In a recent study, Jha and Jhingran (2002), with an all India sample has lent ample credence to the assertion that poverty and tribal identity act as fundamental deterrents to education

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS, WORK AND LANGUAGE OF HOME

The second thematic area this literature review explores is the parental education and parental attitudes and beliefs pertaining to the education of their children as well as work and language of home. Srivastava (1981) in his study found that unproductive and traditional type of educational system for the tribals was the cause of indifferent attitude of tribal parents towards their children's education. Besides, lack of necessary facilities and equipments for teaching, lack of motivation among tribal parents for education of their children resulted in high dropout rate.. Punalekar (1980) found that parental outlook, belief and unfavorable attitude towards girl child education (due to taboos and prejudice of tribal community) acted as constraints in the advancement of their education. Singh (1974) found that majority of ST students did not have congenial home atmosphere that facilitates their education. Shah and Thakre (1974) revealed that high proportion of ST students did not receive any motivation with regard to their education. Vyas and Choudhary (1971), Mandke (1971), Srivastava and Pandey (1979) attempted to find out attitude of tribals towards prevailing educational system and to know how far it fulfills the cultural needs of the people. Das (1962) reported that since after being educated, new generation tribals did not like to be tied up with the traditions of their community, hence, tribal parents did not like to give this type of education to their children. Nanda (1994) admits that parents are often reluctant to send their children to school because they lose the capacity to engage in agriculture.

In the context of educational background of tribal parents, Desai and Pandoor (1974) reported that majority of ST students were first generation learners. Joshi (1980) observed that 85 percent of the fathers (below 45 years) and 95 percent of mothers had no education in schools. Several studies on home background have revealed its positive impact on student's learning. Sarkar (1983) reported that there was a significant difference between the high and low achievers in terms of educational environment, income, social background, provision of facilities and parent-child relationship. Malik (1984) found that children of illiterate parents had significantly lower academic achievement after controlling for their socioeconomic status and intelligence. Talesra (1989) in her study found that 51%, of fathers were illiterates; 34.3 had primary education and Only 14.7 percent got secondary education. Studies of Jagannadhan (1985) and Shukla (1994) also stated the discernible positive influence of home background on student's learning. Shukla (1984) explored the relationship of socioeconomic status (SES) of primary school students with their achievement in arithmetic, general science and social studies. The study revealed that SES was positively and significantly related to the achievement in these subjects. Velaskar (2001) views that new socio-political forces combine with the old and mediate through community, family, culture and ideology to adversely affect dalit and tribal communities and influence educational access and participation of their children.

Nambissan (1994) maintains that the denial of schooling in the mother tongue to children of tribal communities assumes significance in the context of their poor response to formal education and high attrition rates. A growing body of research on language and ethnic minorities in western societies highlights the crucial issues pertaining to the medium of instruction at the primary stage and review policy and practice relating to mother tongue education for tribal children in India. Sujath (2002) observes that language poses another major challenge for tribal education. Tribals normally speak local dialects rather than the main state language. Consequently, tribal students feel further alienated when the teachers are not well trained to communicate in the tribal dialects.

Sarangapani (2001) found that learning among tribal children is intimately connected to the work process- children learn the names and medicinal uses of many plants and trees while accompanying their parents on foraging trips in the forest. Nanda (1994) describes a walk in the forest with Bonda tribe children in eastern India. While some children wandered off to explore the forest and collect edible items, those who had been to residential school, kept to the path and were very indifferent to their surroundings.

All research studies mentioned above are concentrated in the areas of physical facilities, enrolment, retention, and drop out, parental involvement and teacher preparation. Tribal students being the weaker section of the society confront with economic deprivation, lack of enriching and stimulating environment at home and cultural mismatch with teachers 5/9/16 1:59 PM which may irreparably limit their learning skills. One may find common factors that are affecting the education of tribes. However, the structures and processes that contribute to various common factors may qualitatively differ from tribal community to other. Hence an in-depth qualitative study will be proposed adopting ethnographic methods that would attempt to explore into the socio-cultural and politico-economic, and techno-ecological life of Chenchus and its effect on education of their children. This microscopic-holistic study will explore in to the lives of Chenchu children, parents and teachers.

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