



Empowerment of Tribal Women through Education in India: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the paper is to analyse the status of tribal education with literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates and Gender Parity Index in India. 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 has 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, Education, Enrolment and Literacy.

INTRODUCTION:

Empowerment has become one of the most widely used development terms. Yet it is one of the least understood in terms of how it is to be measured or observed. According to the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus the word "Empowerment" means "give power" or "Authorize". According to the Cambridge International Dictionary, the "Empowerment" means to give (someone) the official legal authority or freedom to do something.

There are always a number of segments in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these segments lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such elements from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. In tribal society women are more important than in other social group because of their strong participation in earnings and household activities. The importance of woman is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to various fields like economic, social, education, political etc. Women constitute almost half of world's total population. According to 2011 census, India constitutes 48.27% of woman population. Most disappointing fact is that, country having such a high ratio of women section still lack behind in their status and empowerment. The situation is more severe among the tribal or primitive societies, which constitute approximately 8.9% of the total population of the country numbering 104.30 million. Schedule Tribes are one of the most backward, exploited and marginalized groups with respect to education. The literacy rate of ST remains well below the general population, only 58.96% compared to 74%. The percentage of literacy of tribes was only 8.54 % in 1961 which has increased to 58.96 % in 2011. But female literacy among tribes is only 49.40 % compared to male literacy of 68.50%. In recent times, the growing tendency of underestimating women forced them to occupy a secondary position in society and to deprive them of their basic rights; the need for empowering women was felt. Education gives them power of expression and ability to solve problems through their views and ideas.

Women Empowerment:

Empowering women is to increase their control over the decisions that affect their lives both within and outside the household. Women are a major force behind people's participation, in the life of society today, not only do they comprise the majority of those

excluded from participation but they play a leading role in the emergence of groups, organizations and movement, worldwide and are becoming increasingly active in their communities, governments and the international arena (Karl, 1995). Women gain greater share of control over many resources such as knowledge, information, ideas including financial resources that involved access to money and control over decision making in the home, community, society and nation through empowerment (Kulshreshtha, 2010). Empowerment in the context of women's development is a way of challenging and overcoming barriers in a women's life through which she enhances her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process, which enables women to realize her full identity and power in all spheres of life. Mahatma Gandhi rightly commented that "when a man is educated, an individual is educated; when women is educated, a family and a country are educated"

Education and Empowerment:

The opening up of the economy by the forces of liberalization has resulted in a world order where, survival of fittest has become the norm of the day, even for the marginalized. In the post liberalization economy where survival is more significant than existence, this part enquires whether the education given to women in Andhra Pradesh has empowered women in all spheres of society so as to survive in the market oriented new world order. The impact of the forces of liberalization had diverse patterns in various sectors and regions of the Indian economy.

Education is central to the process of empowerment, since consciousness raising essentially a process of education. Education, in the context of empowerment is a weapon of great potency, as it provides exposure and access to new ideas and way of thinking, and triggered a demand for change. In the absence of education that is relevant to existing knowledge and real needs, women are unable to get access to formal sector jobs, make career advancement, participate in decision making at all levels, and be represented in government and gain political influence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the status of tribal women education.
2. To evaluate the importance for empowerment of tribal woman.
3. To clarify the concept of empowerment of tribal woman

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Present study is descriptive and based on secondary data which is sourced from various books related to tribal women education and development, journals, scholarly articles, government publications, reference papers in print and on from websites related to the topic.

Education of Tribal Women in India:

India is the second populous country in the world with 6.77 crores of tribal population. Most of the tribal people are poor, illiterate and inhibited in inaccessible forests and hilly areas. They lag behind in all spheres of life in comparison with other sections of the population. The government of India has launched a number of schemes for the promotion of education and welfare among the tribes in general and different new initiatives for the women section in particular. In spite of these efforts, the rate of literacy has not improved. In case of the primitive tribes, it is very poor and among women, it is very low. Literacy is the key for socio-economic development of any section or region, and this is the reason that the tribal community all over India have 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.

Importance of Education in Woman's Empowerment:

Education is one of the prime indicators of social as well as cultural development. Education can be act as an instrument in bringing empowerment. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. The educational achievement of women can have deep and prolonged effect within the family and across generation. Empowerment is a very broad and dynamic term encompassing all types of empowerment such as economic, social, political, legal, psychological and cultural empowerment of woman. Education is the key factor in the process of woman empowerment as it helps in building self-reliance, self-confidence, raising awareness and to achieve equality with men or at least, to reduce gender gap considerably. Education would enable tribal woman to perform certain social roles which they cannot perform without it. The basis objectives of education to empower woman are:

- i. To educate woman and eliminate illiteracy;
- ii. To develop self-reliance and self-confidence;
- iii. To increase awareness about their bodies and sexuality;
- iv. To capable women to make their own decisions and negotiate;
- v. To raise the woman's awareness of their constitutional rights;
- vi. To provide skills and proper training for income generation; and
- vii. To prepare them to be good woman leaders and more and more participation in social activities.

Problems of Tribal Education:

There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal education. They are as follows:

- **Medium of language** – Language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents them access to education.
- **The Location of the Village** - The physical barriers creates a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighboring village.
- **Economic Condition** - The economic condition of tribal people is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools.
- **Attitude of the parents** - As education does not yield any immediate economic return, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income.
- **Teacher Related Problems** - In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education.

- **Lack of Proper monitoring**- Proper monitoring is hindered by poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department.

Government Policies and Programmes for Tribal Education:

Starting from the First Five Year Plan Period¹ (1951-1956) the government is steadily allocating financial resources for the purpose of tribal development. Towards, the end of the plan (1954), 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) was created. During the Third Five Year Plan Period (1961-1966), the government of India adopted the strategy of converting areas with more than 66 per cent tribal concentration into Tribal Development Blocks (TBDs). By the end of Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974), the number of TBDs in the country rose to 504. Additionally, in 1972 the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy (TSP) was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. TSP was based on twin objectives of socio-economic development and protection against exploitation. It was generally implemented in the areas where the Scheduled Tribe population was more than 50 per cent of the total population.

The PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 in fact, has made it mandatory for the States having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for giving wide-ranging powers to the tribes on the matters relating to decision-making and development of their community. A centrally-sponsored government scheme of ashram schools exclusively for ST children from elementary to higher secondary levels was initiated in the 1970s. But the poor quality of education in ashram schools, however, has undermined confidence in education as a vehicle for social mobility.

The Janshala Programme is a collaborative effort of the Government of India (GOI) and five UN Agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA – a community based primary education programme, aims to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalized groups, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/minorities, children with specific needs.

SUGGESTIONS:

Some suggestions for improvement of tribal education are as follows-

- **Literacy campaign** - Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of education. Extensive literacy campaign in the tribal dominated districts may be undertaken on a priority basis to literate the tribal.
- **Attitude of the tribal parents** - The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counseling and guidance.
- **Relevant study materials in local languages** - All study materials should be supplied in local languages of tribes.
- **Appointment of Local teachers and female teachers** - It is suggested to appoint more tribal teachers and female teachers in the tribal areas. The ecological, cultural, psychological characteristics of tribal children should be considered carefully by the teachers in tribal areas.
- **Stipends and various scholarships** - Since higher education among the tribes is less, special ST scholarships should be provided to the tribal students perusing higher education, particularly in medical, engineering, and other vocational streams.
- **Residential schools** - More residential schools should be established in each states and districts and extended up to PG level in tribal areas.
- **Social security**- Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls is of great concern in residential schools.
- **Proper Monitoring** - Higher level officials should check the functioning of schools frequently relating to the teaching methods, working hours, and attendance registers.

CONCLUSION:

Education is the key to tribal development. Tribal children have very low levels of participation. Though the development of the tribes is taking place in India, but the pace of development has been rather slow. If govt. will not take some drastic steps for the development of tribal education, the status of education among tribes will be a story of distress, despair and death. Hence time has come to think it seriously about tribal education and inclusive growth. So, there is an urgent need for various govt. interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for tribal education. Easy access and more opportunities should be provided to the tribal children in order to bring them to the mainstream of economic development.

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 organize 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 organized. The skill could be for assuming political leadership or for economic self-reliance or even social transformation.

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