

Role of Education in the Empowerment of Tribal Women

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of Education in the tribal women is at different levels of development. Earlier government had no direct programme for their education, but in the subsequent years the reservation policy has made some changes. There are many reasons for low level of education among the tribal women. Formal education is not considered necessary to discharge their social obligations. Superstitions and myths play an important role in rejecting education. Most tribes live in abject poverty. It is not easy for girls to go to schools. As they are considered extra helping hands. The formal schools do not hold any special interest for the children. Most of the tribes are located in interior and remote areas where teachers would not like to go from outside.

Introduction

Expressing the view on education, Mahatma Gandhi has remarked: "The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or shares in the stock-exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated. The girls, we say, do not have to earn; so why should they be educated? As long as such ideas persist, there is no hope of our ever knowing the true value of education".

Education in the present scenario has great significance. It is essential because it is a vehicle to knowledge, self-respect and getting successful in life. It also built our character, strength, social conduct and values. It brings out a better citizen out of each of us because man is nothing but an animal without knowledge.

What is the aim of education? When it should aim at gaining equality, we practice untouchability and divide society into different castes. The girls are supposed to change their religion to their husband's and wear burka after marriage. We inject the caste discrimination into the minds of children at a very early stage. We assign work to boys and girls differently at school, which make them believe they are not equals.

Women's education assumes particular importance in the context of the country's development as women constitute nearly half of the nation's population. Education enables women to learn basic skills and fosters a value system which helps in uplifting their status in society. For the development of society, inclusive growth of all section is needed, and for this perspective, it is essential to uplift the People, who are aboriginals, a primitive, uncivilized, indigenous, marginalized and deprived section of the society. These communities are far behind in the process of development. They are economically, culturally, politically, and socially excluded people of India. Women of these Communities are one of the most neglected sections of the society. The main reason for their underdevelopment is lack of education. Recognizing this fact, more priority has been laid on women in five-year plan to promote women's enrolment and retention in school various incentives like free distribution of text-books, school uniforms for girls, providing Mid-Day Meal and attendance scholarship.

Female literacy in the world:

The main aim of education is literacy around the world. Literacy is the ability to read and write, which is very less among females in various countries. It is studied that around 10% of the females are illiterate in countries like Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Sudan, and in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines the literacy is about equal.

As per UNESCO, 96 girls for every 100 boys are enrolled in primary education in 2008, but in university level, girls are less worldwide, and if we look upon the poorest countries like Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Mali, the number of boys and girls enrollment are equal.

In 2015 United Nations General Assembly set 17 goals for the year 2030 which is said as sustainable development goals, it focused on gender equality for achieving the goal of human progress, peace and prosperity, other than this it also targeted on issues like Quality education, no poverty, zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, reduced inequalities.

Prevalence of female literacy in India:

As per the historical analysis, the education status of women in India right from the ancient period to the modern period, have been low except for the Vedic period, which has been considered as the golden period.

According to the 2011 census, female literacy is 64.6% as compared to male literacy, which is 80.9%. The literacy among the Scheduled castes female in the year 1961 was 3.29% which increased to 56.50% in the year 2011 as compared to male literacy which was 16.96% in the year 1961 and increased to 75.20%. It is evident from the data that the growth of male literacy is more than the increase in female literacy among the scheduled tribes in India.

In 1961 the percentage of literacy of tribes was 8.53%, and in 2011 it increased to 58.96 %. But literacy among the tribal women was 3.16% in 1961, which increased to 49.35% in 2011 according to National Commission of SCs and STs, fifth Report & Census 2011. Thus it is evident from the above data that the literacy rate of ST female is low than the SCs female.

Review of literature:

Nayar (1992) conducted a study to examine the reasons for dropouts and non-enrolment of girls in rural areas revealed that 1. Dropout girls were from poor family. 2. Girls could not continue their studies due to pressure of doing household work. 3. The dropout girls also shared their views regarding their keen interest in attending school. 4. Negative attitudes of parents towards the girl education. Dropout was minimum in the age groups 6-8 years and maximum after class 5. The study suggested for the appointment of at least one female teacher at every primary level. All girls students must be provided incentives for free books, uniforms and all other stationery items irrespective of caste. Education is basic for the growth of an individual as well as society. Concerning the education of the tribal women, families support must be optimistic, the government should take effective measures for the improvement of tribal women in mainstream schools, changing the behaviour of parents towards the girls' education, upgrading the schools in remote areas. To decrease the impact of poverty on girls' education, stipend must be provided to the enrolled girls to help them continue their studies.

Gaur and Rana (2002) The education is a conscious and deliberate process in which one personality acts upon another with the purpose of modifying the development of the others by means of the direct application of the educator's personality and the use of knowledge and skill. Thus, education is conducive process, which develops child's individuality in all aspects-physical, mental, emotional; and social. Education is important for the growth of individual as well as society. Durkheim defined education as "Education is actually a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have spontaneously."

Singh (2003) studied the comprehensive ethnography of the Scheduled tribes and Scheduled castes community. Various tribes such as Aheri, Ahir, Bangali, Barar, Bauria, Bazigar, Gagra, Gaderia, Gandhila, Gujjar (Muslim), Gujjar (Hindu), Labanas, Nat and Sansi are discussed. The status of women and the literacy rate varies from tribe to tribe. In Bauria tribe, the status of women is low; education is given priority; most of the boys are under-matriculate. The status of women in Gaderia tribe is low, boys and girls study up to secondary level, and dropout is high. Women of Gujjar (Muslim) tribe have low status, they have a positive attitude towards education, but due to poverty, boys and girls are engaged in economic activities. Women enjoy equal status as men in Nat tribes, and the community is very backward in availing the educational facilities, boys and girls, including the elders are uneducated. Thus, it is concluded that the scenario of education is dismally low in almost all tribes. Some of the tribes like Labanas and Gujjar (Muslim) have a positive attitude towards education, but due to an economic condition, they are unable to attend schools, which increases the dropout rate of the children.

B.V. Shah (2005) Concluded that the tribals have a positive attitude towards education. They favour the utilitarian aspects of education which will help them in fetching jobs. Government efforts of spreading education among the tribals go in vain due to the poor socio-economic and cultural environment of their homes, education is considered as an important factor in bringing social change. Impact of education differs on different tribal groups. Education has enabled the tribals to participate in the wider economic and political processes. Broadly it is said that though education among the tribals is limited still it has a greater influence on changing the socio-economic, cultural and political aspects of tribals in Indian society. It fosters the leadership qualities among the tribals and in order to bring social and cultural reforms, it has helped the tribals in organizing reformist movements. Both the culture of Sanskritization and modernization is observed among the tribals, which shows the transition from one set of values to another.

Thakur (2009) Tribal communities are termed as the most deprived, economically and socially excluded groups. Women of these social groups live in the worst condition as compared to their male members discusses the status of women, it says that men and women are the two different humans being born with different sex, both are equally important, but women are always treated as the second and weaker section of the society, so various means and measures are taken to uplift their status. Tribals women are always neglected, more priority has to be given to these downtrodden, suppressed and the disadvantaged section of the society.

Birinder Pal Singh (2010) discussed the comprehensive ethnographic account of seven denotified tribe or Vimukt jatis, criminal tribes, marriage, family, life cycle rituals, and economic activities. Religious attributes, impact of development programmes, it has explained in detail about the history of criminal tribes, how they entered Punjab and settled here why they are called criminals. Tribes like Bangala, Bazigar, Sansi, Barad, Gandhila, Bauria and Nat are discussed separately, the various aspects such as marriage, family, life-cycle rituals, food habits, social divisions, the impact of the development programmes are discussed. Impact of development programmes differs from tribe to tribe. Each tribe has a different scenario of literacy. Broadly, it is observed that the literacy is less in almost all the denotified tribes of Punjab.

Rani et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine the present status of educational facilities availed by tribal women, the data was collected from different sources viz, 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. It was concluded that education helps women develop self-esteem, self-reliant, capable of building leadership qualities. In the present era of globalization, tribal women are still steeped in the old traditional practices, and superstitions. Education is a vital instrument to bring social change. Female literacy has been increased in the past four decades, and it is also observed that there is a gradual increase in the number of ST girls in acquiring higher education but the fact is that generally, the tribal women had to stop education at various stages so for empowering these women special training programmes must be initiated.

Arya & Chauhan (2012) The perspective adopted for educational development among tribal communities fails to address the specific disadvantages characterizing the tribal population. For instance, the population and distance norms formed by the government have not been beneficial to tribal locations because of their sparse population and sporadic Residential patterns. Further, in formulating policies and programmes for tribal education it is essential to understand the complex realities of tribal life and the expectation of tribal's from the system, and this has never been done either by the tribal welfare department or by the education department.

Sahu, (2014) Despite the sincere and concerted efforts by the government for the overall development of the scheduled tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard parameters of development. They are not able to participate in the process of development, as they are not aware of most of the programmes and policies made for their upliftment. This is mainly due to the high incidence of illiteracy and a very low level of education among the tribal people. Hence, the educational status of the scheduled tribes and the role of governance in this direction are highly essential.

Kaur et al. (2015) discussed women literacy in India and found that though the literacy level of women has increased still a gap is observed between male and female literacy. In 1981 the female literacy was 29.75 per cent, which increased to 65.46 per cent in 2011 along with this gap is found rural and urban female literacy. The literacy rate of SC and ST is less as compared to the general women because of lack of awareness regarding education. The scenario of education of SC and ST women significantly increased due to the sincere efforts by the government and non-government agencies. But still, a lot of improvement is required to raise the educational status of SC and ST women.

M.shivaleela (2016) examined the problems related with the access to schools for tribal girls and equality of scheduled tribe women; it also studies on the growth of education among the tribal women, concluded by saying that the status of women varies in all the primitive societies. It is determined by the functions allotted to them, behaviour of males, social attitudes towards them. The tribals in India are always being subjected to different forms of deprivation. Specifically, the tribal women fall victims of the impact of socio-economic changes affecting society. For this the tribal women need to empower themselves and education is considered as an important tool for the development as such different schemes are initiated by the government from time to time for the welfare of the tribal women, but still the educational status is below standard due to various reasons. Therefore problems related to the education of tribal women's has to be looked upon seriously.

Suman Kumari (2018) focused on the challenging aspects of tribal women education in India, highlighted the critical issues of tribal women education such as location of village, illiterate parents, poverty, negative attitudes towards girl's education etc.; concluded that education is essential for the overall development of the individual and society, remove obstacles. In the context of education of tribal women, parents must be optimistic about education. Various measures must be taken by the government for monitoring the working of schools related to teaching methods, attendance registers, working hours. Teachers motivate the parents for increasing the enrollment of girls in schools. Parents need inspiration for sending their daughters to school rather than only focusing on imparting religious education to girls and decreasing the impact of poverty on girl's education, providing a stipend to the girls' who are already enrolled. Thus this study enables in creating an educational environment and broadening the mindset of tribals.

Problems faced by the Tribal Women:

Most tribal's faces a number of challenges which they need to overcome in order to improve their status in society. They intend to discuss here the issues faced by tribal women in particular. Absence of any fix livelihood: Various literature studies reveal that although work participation among tribal women is higher compared to scheduled caste and general population but the livelihoods of the tribal people are neither permanent nor fixed. Most of them do not have a regular source of income, and they live below the poverty level. Tribal people residing in the rural areas pursue diverse low level activities for fulfilling their basic needs. Mostly they are engaged in agricultural activities. Apart from that, they are engaged in pastoral, handicrafts and at times as industrial labourers. Tribal women are mainly not engaged in any kind of continuous work and much like their male counterparts are found to work in agriculture. A meager number of tribal men and women are engaged in government services. Economic conditions of households are related to other aspects of their life.

Educational Status of Tribal Women

The educational status of girls is measured by different educational indicators such as enrolment, GER, gender parity index in various levels of education for various castes in India viz. SCs & STs in the year 2010-2011. Enrolment of ST girls is low as compared to all the other social groups. The enrolment of ST girls in the school is 9.57%, and SC girls are 18.9%, and the percentage of all categories is 47.04. The gender parity index of ST girls is high in primary level, but as the level of education increases the gender parity index decreases, which show gender disparity is more. The GER of ST girls declined from 136.7% at primary level to 9.5% at the higher level. Dropout rates of ST girls vary from a lower level of education to a higher level. ST girls of 1 to 5 have a lower dropout rate, and girls student of classes 1 to 8 and 1 to 9 have a higher dropout rate. So it is evident that level of education among the tribal women is low due to various social, economic and cultural factors and special efforts must be paid to remove the problem of literacy of girl child in India. Tribal women are socio-economically and educationally backward section of the society. Their literacy level is far below the level of general people.

Government efforts to upliftment of the Tribal Women

The Central and State Government took steps in Accelerating Education of Tribal women in India:-

In the post-independence period, constitutional provisions were framed for providing free and compulsory education to children up to the age of 14 years. The National Policy on Education 1986 & 1992 for achieving the target of Universal Elementary Education (UEE). In spite of these efforts, the goal of Universal Elementary Education has become a distant dream for the country. Near about 10 million girls of school-going age do not get the opportunity of attending school due to various factors like lack of finance, lack of accessibility to school. The programme started by the government of India is 1. Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, other initiative taken by the government to encourage more and more children attending school are 2. Free uniforms, 3. Free textbooks and

school bags, 4. Attendance scholarship for girls, 5. Mid-day Meal 6. The PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. 7. Initiation of ashram schools in the 1970s.

Conclusion

It has been observed that the educational policies of the government should be labelled successful only if it enhances the capacity of people. Education is important to make the world more secure and fair. The poorest and the depressed parents from the most backward families long for providing basic education to their children because they want to save their children from the terrible condition that they went through. So the government must research deeper into the reason behind the need of education for different sectors.

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