

Education of Scheduled Tribe in India: Schemes and Programmes.

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Abstract

India is a pluralist country with rich diversity reflected in the multitude of cultures, religions, languages and racial stocks. The Scheduled Tribes are one of the principal categories of the backward classes or historically disadvantaged bottom group of society. Despite several campaigns to promote formal education ever since independence, the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes has remained low and the female literacy rate has been still lower compared to the national female literacy rate. Education of Scheduled Tribe children is considered important, not only because of the constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for holistic development of tribal communities. This paper highlights laudable programmes and schemes for promotion of education among STs in our country.

Key words: Scheduled Tribe, Education, Schemes and Programmes.

Introduction

In India the tribes form a significant section of the population mainly because of two factors:(a) they constitute 8.14% of the total population, numbering 8,45,11,216 persons (2001 census) and (b) they have distinct cultures, dialects and economic pursuits in different ecological settings. Since independence they have been incessantly drawing the attention of policy makers because of their geographical isolation, backwardness, shyness of contact, primitive traits etc. Since the 16th century, the tribes have been perceived as sub-humans who live under primitive conditions (Xaxa, 2005). Ancient Indian texts and historical documents describe them as dasyus, daityas, rakshasas and nishads. Moreover, in the sociological and anthropological literatures this community has been described by various nomenclatures such as aborigines/aboriginals (Risley 1903., Elwin 1944), submerged humanity (Das & Das 1955) and backward Hindus (Ghurye 1963).

But these people have been conceptualized as Scheduled Tribes under article 342 of Indian constitution. Article 366(25) of Indian constitution refers to scheduled tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to Article 342 of the Constitution, the Scheduled Tribes are the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by the President through a public notification. According to the 2001 Census, Scheduled Tribes are inhabited in all the states except Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh and Delhi. One concentration lives in a belt along the Himalayas stretching through Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the west, to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in the north-east. Another concentration lives in the hilly areas of central India comprising the states Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa and to a lesser extent, Andhra Pradesh. Tribes also live in Jharkhand and West Bengal states. There are smaller numbers of tribal people in the states- Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in south India; in western India in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in the union territories of Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Because of their geographical isolation and distances from the mainstream of society they are vulnerable and exposed to the problems of gross social injustice, discriminations, inhuman suppression suppressions and economic exploitation. The Government of India has made special provisions for protection of the scheduled tribes from exploitation and for their development. These special provisions are contained in the Article 15(4), 16(4), 19(4), 19(5), 23, 29, 46, 164, 275(1), 330, 332, 334, 335, 338, 342 and fifth and sixth schedule of the constitution (Bisht, 2006). There have been commitment and deep concern for the development of the Scheduled Tribes of the country in our Five Year Plans. Special programmes are formulated and the central government extends adequate resources for developmental programmes in the tribal habitations. Unfortunately these efforts have failed to narrow the gap between the tribal and non-tribal population. The STs occupy the lowest rung in the educational ladder. Census report (2001) reveals that the literacy rate of STs has been 47.10% which is less in comparison to general population literacy rate (64.80%). The ST female literacy rate has been 34.76% whereas overall female literacy rate has been 53.67%. The Education of the STs is full of paradoxes and pitfalls. According to the Abstract of Statistics of School Education, 2007-08, MHRD the Gross

Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Tribe Children at the elementary stage of education is 109.6 which is more pronounced as compared to all categories GER i.e., 100.5. On the other hand, at elementary level dropout rate of these children has been 63.4% and for all categories has been 43.0%. At elementary level Gender Parity Index for STs and for general masses have been 0.91 and 0.96 respectively. The enrolment of Scheduled Tribe children is approximately 6% of the total students enrolled at the secondary/senior secondary level. The ST education presents dismal picture at higher level also. All India Survey on Higher Education (2010-11) reports that merely 4.3% of the total students enrolled at higher level are from tribal community. Considering all these disparities between tribal and non-tribal students not only the policies developed specially for the Scheduled Tribes have focused on education, but also the National Policy on Education 1986 has made following recommendations relating to education of the Scheduled Tribes.

- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas.
- There is a need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal languages at initial stages with arrangements to switchover to regional languages.
- Promising Scheduled tribe youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas.
- Ashram Schools/ Residential Schools will be established in a large scale in tribal areas.
- Incentive schemes will be formulated for Scheduled Tribes, keeping in view their special needs and life style.

Schemes and Programmes for Education of Scheduled Tribes

Education is precondition for removing the barriers of backwardness and marginalization of any society/ community. Therefore, the education of Scheduled Tribe has been a priority for the Government of India. Here are the descriptions of some of the programmes and schemes launched for the promotion of education among this disadvantaged section of society.

Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme: This scheme has been in operational since 1944-45. The objective of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to the Scheduled Tribes students studying at post –matriculation or post-secondary levels to enable to complete their education. This scheme is open to all ST students whose parent’s annual income is Rs 1.08 lakh or less and the scholarships are awarded through the Government of the State/Union Territory where he/she is domiciled.

Schemes for construction of hostels for ST Girls and Boys: The scheme for construction of ST Girls’ Hostel was started during the Third Plan period. A separate scheme for construction of ST Boys was launched in 1989-90. Both schemes were merged into one scheme during 10th Five Year Plan. The objective of the scheme is to promote literacy among tribal students by providing hostel accommodation to such ST students who would otherwise have been unable to continue their education because of their poor economic condition, and the remote location of their villages.

Schemes for the establishment of Ashram School in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas: This scheme is operational in tribal sub plan 1990-91. The presence of boarding and lodging facilities has been found to be the factor of higher rate of enrolment in schools (Ayadappanavar, 2003). The objective of this scheme is to promote and extend educational facilities to Scheduled Tribe students including PGTs. Ashram Schools provide education with residential facilities in an environment conducive to learning. This is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on a cost sharing basis between the Centre and the States.

Up gradation of merit: This scheme which was operating earlier has in the tenth five year plan been merged into the scheme of Post –Matric scholarships. It is since been functioning only as sub-scheme of the PMS. The objective of this scheme is to upgrade the merit of Scheduled Tribe including PGTs students in classes 11th and 12th by providing them with facilities for all around development through education in residential schools so that they can compete with other students for admission to higher education courses and senior administrative and technical positions. Under this scheme a revised package grant of Rs 1900/-per student per year is provided from 2008-09 which includes honorarium to be paid to the Principal or Experts imparting coaching and also meet incidental charges.

Book Bank: In order to reduce the drop-out rates of the ST students from the professional institutes /universities, funds are provided for the purchase of books under this scheme. The central assistance to States /UT Administration for setting up Books Banks is limited to the following ceiling or actual cost of the set, whichever is less.

(Rates of ceiling per course)

S.No	Course	Cost of one set (One set for 2 students)
I	Degree Courses	
1	Medical	Rs 7,500 /-
2	Engineering	Rs 7,500/-
3	Veterinary	Rs 5,000/-
4	Agriculture	Rs 4,500/-
5	Polytechnic	Rs 2,400/-
II	Post –Graduate Courses	
1	Medical and Engineering	Rs 5000/- (One set per student)
2	Business Management	
3	Law	
4	Bio –sciences	

This is a Centrally Sponsored scheme and the expenses are shared between the Centre and States on 50:50 basis. However, in respect of UT Administration cent percent grants are given by the ministry.

National Overseas scholarship scheme for Higher Studies Abroad: This scheme has been in operation since 1954-55. This was a Non Plan Scheme which became a Plan Scheme from 2007-2008 .The objective of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to selected ST students pursuing higher studies (Masters, Doctoral and Post Doctoral level) in certain specified fields of Engineering, Technology and Science only. Four annual “Passage Grants” to ST and PGT candidates are available under this scheme. The passage grants are open throughout the year to such candidates who are in the receipt of a merit scholarship for post-graduate studies, research or training abroad from a foreign university /Government or under any other scheme, where the cost of passage is not provided. The scheme provides grants for to and fro passage from India to back by economy class. Grants are given to the selected candidates on 100 percent basis directly by the Ministry through the Indian Mission.

Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship: The scheme has been launched from the year 2005-2006.The objective of this scheme is to provide fellowships in the form of financial assistance to students belonging to the STs to pursue higher studies such as M.Phil and Ph.D. This scheme covers all the Universities/Institutions recognized by the UGC under section 2(f) of the UGC Act. The rate of fellowship for Junior Research Fellow (JRF) and Senior Research Fellow (SRF) is at par with the UGC Fellowship as amended from time to time.

Scheme of Top Class Education for ST student: Ministry of Tribal Affairs has introduced a new scholarship scheme of Top Class Education for the ST students from the year 2007-2008. The objective of the scheme is to encourage meritorious ST students for pursuing studies at degree or post degree level in any of the selected lists of institutions, in which the scholarship scheme would be operative. There are 125 institutions approved under the scheme in both the Government and private sectors covering the field of management, medicine, engineering, law and commercial courses. Each institute has been allotted five awards with ceiling of total 625 scholarships per year.

Vocational Training Centers in Tribal Area: This scheme was introduced in 1992-93 and is continuing. The main objective of this Scheme is to develop the skills of the ST Youths for a variety of job as well as self employment and to improve their socio economic conditions by enhancing their income. Under this scheme 100% grants are provided to the States, UTs and other Associations implementing the scheme. Under this scheme, the Ministry provides financial assistance under three components:

- Grants to Tribal Research Institutes on 50:50 sharing basis; for conducting Research and Evaluation Studies, Seminars, Workshops etc.
- Awards of Research Fellowships to Tribal Students on 100% basis registered in Indian Universities and
- Supporting projects of All-India or Inter-State nature on 100% basis to NGOs/Universities etc. for conducting research on tribal matters, travel Grants and for the Publication of Books on tribals.

Coaching For Scheduled Tribe Students: The scheduled tribe candidates coming from deprived families and disadvantaged environment find it difficult to compete with those coming from a socially and economically advantageous background. To promote a more level playing field, and give ST candidate a better chance to succeed in competitive examinations, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs supports a scheme for coaching for the disadvantaged ST candidates in quality coaching institutions to enable to successfully compete in examinations for jobs/admission to professional courses. The scheme supports free coaching to ST candidates for various competitive examinations viz. Civil Services /State Civil Services/ Other Exams conducted by UPSC like CDS, NDA, etc./ professional courses like Medical, Engineering, Business Administration/Banking/Staff Selection Commission /Railway Recruitment Boards/insurance companies etc. The financial norms of the scheme have been revised during 2007-2008. The scheme covers coaching fees, monthly stipend @Rs 1000/- per ST student per month and boarding/lodging charges for out station students @Rs 2000/- per student per month for the period of coaching.

Strengthening education among Scheduled Tribe girls in low literacy districts: It is a gender scheme of the Ministry of tribal affairs. The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy between the general female population and tribal women, through facilitating 100 %enrolment of tribal girls in the identified districts or blocks, more particularly in the naxal affected areas and in the areas inhabited by the Primitive Tribal Groups (PGTs), and reducing drop -out rates at the elementary level by creating required ambience for education. The scheme covers 54 identified districts in 12 States and 1 Union Territory where the ST population is 25% or more, and ST female literacy is below 35% or its fraction as per census 2001. In addition, any other tribal block in a district, other than aforesaid 54 identified districts, which has scheduled tribal population 25% or above, tribal female literacy rate below 35 % or its fraction, as per census, are also covered. The scheme is implemented by non-governmental organizations and autonomous societies of the State Government/ Union Territory.

Tribal Research Institutes: Fourteen Tribal Research Institutes have been set up by Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. These research institutes are engaged in providing planning inputs to the state government, conducting research and evaluation studies, collection of data, codification of customary law and conduct of training, seminars and workshops.

Conclusion

Illiteracy is the root cause of backwardness of the STs in our country. Through various programmes and schemes the government has been making serious effort for improving educational standards of them. Multiple reasons have hindered the participation of STs in education. Merely launching the programmes and schemes is not a panacea for evil of illiteracy among tribal masses. The benefits of these schemes have percolated to them scantily. Low level of awareness about these schemes among the tribal masses, peculiar nature of their dwellings, apathy of administrative officials in implementation of these schemes and programmes are bottlenecks in the ST's Education. Local media and ST Intelligencia can work jointly for creating awareness among the STs. The administrative machinery should be sensitized towards peculiarities of tribal habitat.

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