



EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SCHEDULE CASTE AND SCHEDULE TRIBE IN INDIA : A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

“The tribal communities were the most ancient residents of India. Though they were a part of the social structure of the region in which they lived, they were excluded from the structure of the caste system. They lived separate community life and isolated from other groups. Their economy was subsistence and primitive²⁵. Thus, tribal groups remained devoid of education.

“The population of STs in India stood at 84.33 million as per the Census of 2001. STs constitute 8.2% of the total population of the country with 91.7% of them living in rural areas and 8.3% in urban areas. The sex ratio of ST population in 2001 was 978, which was much higher than the national average of 933. The proportion of ST population to the total population had also increased from 6.9% in 1971 to 8.2% in 2001. Each of the nearly 300 main tribal groups differs from each other in customs, practices, traditions, faith, and language²⁶”



“There are 75 identified Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) spread across 17 States/UTs living in utmost destitute conditions. Some of them, in dire straits, also face the threat of extinction. In order to provide focused attention to the survival, protection and development of these PTGs, a special scheme launched in 1998-99 was implemented during the Tenth Plan to provide tribe specific services and support including, inter-alia, housing, land, agricultural inputs, cattle rearing, health, nutritional services and income generating programmes²⁷”. Though the majority of the tribal are settled cultivators, their farming activity is generally uneconomical and non-viable due to the lack of access to necessary agricultural inputs, specially assured irrigation.

KEYWORDS: *Schedule Cast, Educational Status, Tribe in India.*

Educational Status of STs

“Between 1961 and 2001, the literacy rate of STs increased 5.32 times, while that of total population increased 2.69 times. However, the gap between the literacy rates of STs and of the general population continued during the three decades between 1971 and 2001 almost at the same level of 17.70% and above, but with marginal variations ²⁸”.

“Dropout rates are still very high –42.3% in Classes I to V; 65.9% in Classes I to VIII; and 79.0% in Classes I to X in 2004–05. Thus, in case of tribal we see lack of educational development and inability to complete a specific level of education ²⁹”.

Introduction of Scheduled Caste and education

“The Scheduled castes habitations were isolated from the living area of all other castes and were kept at the farthest end of villages, towns and cities. They were deprived of some social and religious rights and were subjected to certain traditional disabilities, thus, lived separately and isolated from other social groups. Their economic conditions remained very weak and were excluded from education and denied from the rights of education³¹”.

“The SCs constitute 16.23% of India’s population. In the past, they have been socially ostracized, economically exploited and denied human dignity and a sense of self worth. The socio-economic development and protection of SCs from discrimination and exploitation has been a high priority from the very start of the planning process. People belonging to SC communities are spread all over the country, with 80% of them living in the rural areas³²”

Educational Status of Scheduled Castes

“The literacy rate of SCs has been increased considerably, from 10.3% in 1961 to 54.7% in 2001³³”. Till recently the gap between literacy rates of the general and SC population had not reduced. However, the Census in 2001 showed a distinct reduction in this literacy gap.

“The school dropout rate is a crucial indicator of lack of educational development. The dropout rates for SC children are still very high –32.7% in Classes I to V; 55.2% in Classes I to VIII; and 69.1% in classes I to X in 2004–05³⁴”. The gap between the SC population and the general category increases at higher levels of schooling. However, an encouraging sign is the reduction in the gap between the dropout rates of the total population vis-à-vis the SCs at all levels.

With respect to elementary education, various incentives in the form of abolition of tuition fee, free supply of books, mid-day meals, scholarships, and so on, shall be provided to SC children. Among the SCs, children of scavengers are educationally the most backward. The existing Pre-Matric scholarship for them needs to be revised in its funding pattern from 50:50 to 100% so that more target families send their children to schools. Special attention needs be paid to retention in schools of SC students and the quality of teaching for them.

The population under study i.e SC, ST, historically remain socio-economically backward and thus, deprived from all spheres of development. Particularly they are deprived from educational opportunities. Still they are not enjoying the rights regarding education though there are constitutional safeguards. The ashram school is one of the avenues for such population to raise their educational status. The ashram school scheme has been started to bridge the gaps of education for socially disadvantaged communities thereby safeguard and ensure dignity, worth and human rights.

Besides this, Social attitude towards female education, poverty, physical setting, method and content of education are some of the problems for educational growth. Early marriages of girls in rural areas, arranging home duties to the girls, lack of female teachers in schools of rural areas. As well as “Due to poverty it becomes an obligation for many children to work for the family. Due to economic dependency parents cannot provide educational motivation to their children³⁵”. “Sometimes there is a lacuna in the content of education that it is not directly related to the needs of people therefore, people cannot realize the importance of education in their life”³⁶. Due to physical setting of certain castes and tribes educational growth hinders. “The scheduled tribe people live in hilly and remote areas. Educational facilities do not reach to them so they remain deprived of education facility³”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- To study the educational status of S.C and STs in India.
- To highlight the causes of educational deprivation of S.C and STs in India.
- To throw light on historical review of educational conditions of S.C and STs in India.

METHODOLOGY :

Present study has been conducted by using secondary method of data collection such as books journals and reports. Descriptive and analytical Research design and has been used to analyze and describe the data. Present study focuses on educational status of S.C and STs in India and tried to highlight the history of education thereby causes and conditions for educational deprivation of S.C and STs. At the end of the study conclusions has been drawn by analyzing the data on the basis of objectives.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SC AND STS.

“During the beginning of the Aryan period, the education was of two types i.e. religious and professional religious education was imparted to Brahmins and professional education was imparted to Kshatriyas and Vaishyas for preparing themselves for their work in life. The lower castes and out castes (Shudras and Ati Shudras) were deprived of any kind of education in their life. The society based on four fold Varna system, the Shudras and Ati Shudras were denied the right to take education ¹”. This situation has remained the same up to the arrival of British in India.

COMMUNITY BASIS OF EARLIEST EDUCATION

The system of education in ancient India was based on the principle that education was for community. Community life was carried out under the well known caste system. “A teacher, known as guru, would live and teach in a place isolated from the community such places were usually called *vidya Ashrams*”. These Ashrams were pre dominantly for the purposes of imparting religious education, but the students also were taught the ‘three Rs.’ After teaching, the guru’s students had to go to the village town, or city daily to beg food for themselves and their master. The Guru never received monetary earnings. Every citizen believed it a duty to help him and thus support the cause of education. Certain menial services have to be performed by the pupil for his teacher. These included the fetching of water and collecting of fuel, and sweeping the place round the fire. The school at which the Guru taught his pupil was really a small community within a community. The period of studentship was very long. In some cases, the student actually might choose to remain a life – long pupil of his teacher.

The teacher’s role was oftentimes a parent surrogate, even of the extent of nursing the child during illness and attending him in trouble just like his parents would do. This interest of the teacher, in turn helped to make the parents interested in the well – being of the teacher and the school. In Ancient India the children’s education was generally given at home by the father in muslim communities. This was supplemented by the priest who taught in the temple or mosque. The Muslim conquest formalized the system without considerable innovation. “The school programs were not only formulated and designed according to the local environmental needs, but also according to the needs of each caste⁵”. The children of each caste received education according to their needs and the duties of their later lives.

EDUCATION DURING BRITISH PERIOD

The East India Company found the four ancient methods of education still at work. The pioneers of western education in India were the Christian missionaries. The British government formulated the educational policy on liberal, democratic and secular lines. They provided education facilities to all persons in India irrespective of caste, class and religious differences. The Shudras and Ati Shudras were provided educational facilities in the schools established by Christian’s missionaries. “During this rule, the Woods Dispatch of 1854, the Hunter Commission of 1882, the Sadler Commission in 1910, the Hartog Committee of 1926, the Harbot wood report in 1936 – 37 and the sergeant report of 1994 have all recommended to provide for educational facilities to the Indians⁶”. This ultimately has resulted in the steady growth in the literacy rate during the British rule.

The most important characteristic of British education policy in India was the attempt to use “education” for colonial needs viz. the extension of territories, trade and Christianization, its main concern was to keep India educationally backward or under developed. India should serve as a supplier of soldiers, clerk, petty revenue and judicial officials, domestic servants, butlers etc. on economic terms.

The Christian missions in India, which indulged in the worst possible corruptions and immoralities, stunned the Indians when they proclaimed that their mission is to civilize India. India was civilized even in the Vedic age, thousands of years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Mahabir Swami, Gautam Buddha and the entire vedic literature was full of moral ethical teachings. Their teachings have not been surpassed even today.

EDUCATION IN INDEPENDENT INDIA:

Before independence very little attention was paid to the education of tribal and other disadvantaged sections of the society who constitute one fourth of the total population. "Educational efforts were mostly geared towards the upper and middle classes with the main purpose of training personnel to fill the white collared jobs which help in the functioning of the government machinery. After independence a situation underwent a change and special attention began to be paid to the improvement of the lot of the common people belonging to the disadvantaged sections especially SCs and tribes"⁷

After the attainment of independence in 1947, we accepted the principles of universal, compulsory and free primary education to all between the ages of 6 and 14. Our constitution proclaimed the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. "During post independence period the commissions such as the university education commission 1948, the secondary education commission 1952, and the university grant commission 1952, 1956 respectively were all appointed from time to time. The govt. of India came out with the National policy on education in 1968, 1979, and 1986 respectively"⁸. Our national education policy has been reviewed many times in the light of goal of national progress and priorities decided by our union government from time to time. "In Union Government's Resolution on National policy on education in 1968 more emphasis on quality improvement in education system and planning for better equitable expansion of facilities for better education was given. The first National education policy was formulated by our Union government in the year 1986 which was revised in the year 1992. After independence Central and State governments have taken many decisions to strengthen the education base of STs and SCs. It is also true facts that these two communities of our country still have a long way to go before they can stand equal to the level of castes in the field of education. According to National policy on Education 1986 and programmes of Action 1992 important provisions for SC and ST have been included in the existing system of education"⁹(K. M. Patel, 2005, NAAC Accreditation of Higher Education, p. no. 35-36, Mark Publishers, Jaipur). "There are about 950 thousand schools and colleges in the country with an enrollment of about 200 million students. School Education system in India is the second largest in the world with 167.5 millions children of 6-14 years enrolled and 3.2 million teachers"¹⁰.

In the education policies govt. tried to provide education facilities to the deprived sections of societies such as women, S.C. and Scheduled tribes. Problem of education development exists among some socially handicapped groups. There is a slow educational growth among disadvantaged groups such as S.C. and ST's. "One of the most important reasons for low literacy among tribal is that the dominant classes and castes in the rural areas. The insensitivity of the present educational system to the socio-economic conditions and culture of the tribal is also manifested in the unfortunate decline in hereditary learning, education does not prepare students, specially *adivasis*, to address the basic problems confronting them"¹¹

"The task before free India was to remove the infirmities of the inherited structure of the educational system and transform it into a social force geared to the socio - economic transformation of the Indian polity from colonial under development to self reliant development ¹²". In addition to the other measures adopted for the welfare of STs and SCs efforts were also initiated to spread education among them. Thus, Ashram schools were founded and many more reforms initiated in the area of curricula, methods of teaching and vocational training.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the study it has been concluded that schedule caste and schedule tribe remain deprived from education as they were excluded from the structure of the caste system. They lived separate community life and isolated from other groups. They were deprived of some social and religious rights and were subjected to certain traditional disabilities, their economic conditions remained very weak and were excluded from education and denied from the rights of education. In order to assess the educational status and causes of educational deprivation historical review of education system in India such as ancient period, Aryan period ,British period and post independent period review has been taken, After independence Central and State governments have taken many decisions to strengthen the education base of SC and STs.

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