



BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG TRIBAL WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of education is to better prepare people for the demands of a dynamic, ever-changing world. By providing appropriate acknowledgement for the degree to which an individual can pursue or acquire a talent, the educational system's reforms should help lessen socioeconomic disparities. Tribal people of Tamil Nadu have experienced a variety of types of deprivation, including being cut off from their land and other resources. During this transition, the tribal woman is compelled to follow specific rules that might potentially deprive her of her autonomy and power. The tribal woman is compelled to follow specific rules throughout this transition, which might potentially rob her of her autonomy, control over the conventional system of production, her home, family, and children, as well as her own life. It is still true that many tribal women have not received an education at any level, and in order to empower them, chances must be given for them to take on leadership roles in order to achieve economic independence and even societal change. The economic empowerment of Indian tribal women is assessed in this article. The majority of Tamil Nadu's tribal lands are located in the Autonomous Hill districts, where this study was carried out.



KEY WORDS: Tribal women, Tribal Women Empowerment, Tribal Development, Challenges, Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

In the current situation, empowering indigenous women is a difficult issue. Tribal women must be empowered if the nation is to thrive in a meaningful and inclusive way. The ability of tribal women to influence economic sources of income and their per capita income, as well as their access to education, professional opportunities, and financial decision-making and political opportunities, can all be used to gauge their level of empowerment. Tribal women's economic, social, and political empowerment depends on their ability to access education. One potential strategy for inclusive growth is the educational empowerment of tribal women. It directly affects many facets of tribal development. The individual would make a significant contribution to the growth of the country in addition to uplifting the underprivileged tribal women via education. When compared to their peers in other communities, indigenous women's educational status is inadequate.

The Nilgiris district is home to the majority of the tribal population. The Kodas, Thodas, Irulas, Kurumbas and Badagas, Kattunayakan, and Paliyan are the main tribes of Tamil Nadu. They mostly engage in pastoral activities and organise into larger organisations. 7,94,697 people are tribal in Tamil Nadu, according to the 2011 census. There are 38 tribes and sub-tribes in Tamil Nadu. Agriculture and forest areas are the major sources of income for these folks.

OBJECTIVE

- Describe Tamil Nadu's tribal regions;
- The article emphasizes the need for inclusive growth and addressing the complex issues of tribal education, highlighting the need for further research and attention.
- Discuss the social hierarchy of Tamil Nadu's population and describe its current state in terms of literacy, occupation, and other factors.
- Gain an understanding of the region's many tribes and their social, economic, and cultural traits.

The primary goal of the current study is to examine the economic features of tribal women using the following criteria: population, sex ratio, and women's literacy.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a descriptive research strategy has been chosen. The goal of this research design is to describe the issues and other units of study, such as socioeconomic background, and to gather new information about tribal women through the current study using secondary sources of data. The research is exploratory in nature and was gathered from the Ministry of Labour & Employment's Annual Report (2012–2013) and the Census of India (2011).

TAMILNADU SCHEDULED TRIBES

Region and Demographics

Tamil Nadu State has a total size of 1,30,058 square kilometres. The state is home to 36 subgroups of tribes. Toda, Kota, Kurumbas, Kattunayakan, Paniyan, Irular, Kanikkar, Palliyan, Kadar, and Malayali are the principal tribes among them; Toda, Kota, Kurumbas, Kattunayakan, Paniyan, and Irular have been declared as "Primitive Tribes." According to the 2011 Census, there were 7.94 lakh Scheduled Tribes in the State, which accounted for 1.10% of the 721 lakh total population. Of the 7.94 lakh tribal members, 49.50% were female and 50.50% were male.

Government initiatives and policies pertaining to tribal women's education

After India's independence from British imperial authority, efforts to systematically provide free and compulsory education to children under the age of 14 advanced. By providing compulsory and free education to children under the age of 14, the successive Five Years Plans sought to accomplish the goal of 100 percent literacy in the nation, prioritising the objective set by Article 45 of the Indian Constitution. The establishment of several programs and incentives for universalising and improving the quality of elementary education in India was given top priority in the National Policies on Education of 1986 and 1992 in order to meet the Universal Elementary Education (UEE) aim.

The fact that the goal of universal elementary education has not yet been accomplished, despite sixty-two years of independence, is a reality that raises serious concerns. For a variety of factors, including poverty and limited access to schools in rural India, around ten million girls of school age do not attend primary schools. In order to tackle this issue, the Indian government, along with state governments and local self-governance, launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program in 2001–2002. The Indian government established this comprehensive and significant integrated effort to fulfil its long-delayed aim of universal elementary education.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose (NSCB) Awasiya Vidyalayas and Hostels under Samagra Shiksha are support for reaching out to children in sparsely populated, or hilly and densely forested areas with difficult geographical terrain and border areas where opening a new primary or upper primary school and Secondary/Senior Secondary schools may not be viable. Preference is given to Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), LWEs, Special Focus Districts (SFDs) and the 115 aspirational districts.

The socio-economic and cultural fabric of these communities has been greatly improved by the Indian government's efforts to empower tribal populations, which include the PM Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gramme Utkarsh Abhiyan and other programs like EMRS and PM-JANMAN. The Indian government's goal is to ensure that tribal communities receive the support they need to close the development gap and improve their socio-economic conditions.

District wise Tribal Population in Tamil Nadu

S.No	Districts	Total	Male	Female
	India	104,281,034	52,409,823	51,871,211
	Tamil Nadu	794,697	401,068	393,629
1.	Thiruvallur	47,243	23,692	23,551
2.	Chennai	10,061	5,207	4,854
3.	Kancheepuram	41,210	20,605	20,605
4.	Vellore	72,955	36,663	36,292
5.	Thiruvannamalai	74,859	37,570	37,289
6.	Viluppuram	15,702	7,943	7,759
7.	Salem	90,954	45,956	44,998
8.	Namakkal	119,369	60,489	58,880
9.	Erode	57,059	29,383	27,676
10.	The Nilgiris	63,044	32,130	30,914
11.	Dindigul	21,880	11,024	10,856
12.	Karur	28,342	14,245	14,097
13.	Tiruchirappalli	32,813	16,091	16,722
14.	Perambalur	3,561	1,739	1,822
15.	Ariyalur	3,756	1,847	1,909
16.	Cuddalore	3,034	1,466	1,568
17.	Nagapattinam	18,198	9,414	8,784
18.	Thiruvarur	575	297	278
19.	Thanjavur	2,584	1,292	1,292
20.	Pudukkottai	1,283	647	636
21.	Sivaganga	11,096	5,622	5,474
22.	Madurai	1,835	954	881
23.	Theni	8,064	4,095	3,969
24.	Virudhunagar	1,105	559	546
25.	Ramanathapuram	2,294	1,182	1,112
26.	Thoothukkudi	790	394	396
27.	Tirunelveli	10,270	5,109	5,161
28.	Kanniyakumari	4,911	2,466	2,445
29.	Dharmapuri	7,282	3,554	3,728
30.	Krishnagiri	22,388	11,419	10,969
31.	Coimbatore	10,722	5,274	5,448
32.	Tiruppur	5,458	2,740	2,718

Source: Census India 2011

District wise Tribal Literate and Illiterate in Tamil Nadu

S. No	Districts	Literates			Illiterates		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	Tamil Nadu	419354	186651	232703	375343	214417	160926
2	Thiruvallur	25423	11614	13809	21820	12078	9742
3	Chennai	2458	1092	1366	7603	4115	3488
4	Kancheepuram	21970	10021	11949	19240	10584	8656
5	Vellore	41220	17982	23238	31735	18681	13054
6	Thiruvannamalai	54296	23932	30364	36658	22024	14634
7	Viluppuram	46420	21144	25276	28439	16426	12013
8	Salem	64692	28396	36296	54677	32093	22584
9	Namakkal	26467	11690	14777	30592	17693	12899

10	Erode	12819	5773	7046	9061	5251	3810
11	The Nilgiris	15450	6682	8768	17363	9409	7954
12	Dindigul	4434	2067	2367	3630	2028	1602
13	Karur	153	68	85	422	229	193
14	Tiruchirappalli	5864	2556	3308	12334	6858	5476
15	Perambalur	1063	470	593	1521	822	699
16	Ariyalur	6019	2641	3378	4703	2633	2070
17	Cuddalore	8219	3710	4509	7483	4233	3250
18	Nagapattinam	1749	818	931	2007	1029	978
19	Thiruvarur	1196	524	672	1838	942	896
20	Thanjavur	1463	643	820	2098	1096	1002
21	Pudukkottai	535	249	286	748	398	350
22	Sivaganga	315	125	190	475	269	206
23	Madurai	4172	1709	2463	6924	3913	3011
24	Theni	1117	557	560	718	397	321
25	Virudhunagar	1037	457	580	1257	725	532
26	Ramanathapuram	514	245	269	591	314	277
27	Thoothukkudi	2183	952	1231	2728	1514	1214
28	Tirunelveli	4191	1819	2372	6079	3290	2789
29	Kanniyakumari	2073	884	1189	5209	2670	2539
30	Dharmapuri	31261	13850	17411	31783	18280	13503
31	Krishnagiri	13440	6341	7099	8948	5078	3870
32	Coimbatore	14284	6433	7851	14058	7812	6246
33	Tiruppur	2857	1207	1650	2601	1533	1068

Source: Census India 2011

MAJOR DIFFICULTIES:

The following are the main obstacles:

Financial issue:

One of the biggest obstacles to completing tasks and activities, especially when studying, is financial difficulty. Often exploited and poor, tribal people struggle to pay for educational resources including textbooks, uniforms, supplies, and transportation. Parents often encourage their kids to work in jobs that provide revenue, which makes it difficult for indigenous students to get an education.

Household Duties:

Children in tribal groups frequently assist with household duties, with girls making a major contribution. They help with cleaning, food preparation, caring for livestock, getting water, and providing care. They also take part in the gathering of forest products and agricultural operations. Tribal tribes are very dependent on their surroundings, gathering wood for cooking and medicinal plants. Children may not be able to attend school if they are encouraged to do household duties.

Absence of parental support:

An essential component of a child's academic development is the assistance parents provide with homework and tests. However, in indigenous tribes, parental support is occasionally lacking owing to illiteracy. Tribal children understand the need of education, but often struggle to acquire parental support, which results in poor school attendance and household tasks.

Language and cultural differences:

Language and culture are significant barriers to education for aboriginal kids. Their various cultures, traditions, customs, beliefs, and philosophies all have an impact on their alternatives for

making a living. Language barriers make it difficult for students to grasp academic topics and adjust to other cultures, traditions, and principles. They also make it difficult for them to communicate effectively with professors and other students.

Absence of facilities and educational resources:

Tribal schools are devoid of basic amenities and facilities, including classroom supplies, technology, furnishings, air conditioning and heating systems, potable water, bathrooms, a library, a lab, playgrounds, and extracurricular activities. Unsatisfactory academic results and a rise in student dropout rates result from these shortcomings, which also make it difficult for instructors, staff, and students to carry out their jobs effectively.

Due to poverty and financial limitations, tribal kids frequently have difficulty accessing enough educational resources. These resources—textbooks, technology, and the internet—are essential for comprehending academic ideas and accomplishing academic objectives. Students struggle to get an education without these resources. To support structured learning, school administrators should make sure libraries and labs are fully stocked with books, supplies, and technology.

Poverty:

This is one of the main problems. Many indigenous families are below the poverty line, which makes it hard for them to pay for school-related costs including books, uniforms, and fees (Ministry of indigenous Affairs, 2018). For households that depend on each member contributing to the household income through labour, the opportunity cost of sending children—especially girls—to school is sometimes too great. This financial hardship frequently compels families to put short-term survival demands ahead of long-term expenditures in education.

Lack of Infrastructure:

The issue is made worse in tribal communities by inadequate infrastructure. Children find it challenging to consistently attend school since schools are frequently located far from tribal communities and there are inadequate transportation options. The low enrolment and high dropout rates among tribal females are also caused by poorly maintained school structures, a lack of basic amenities like clean drinking water and toilets, and a shortage of teaching staff.

Gender inequality:

In many tribal tribes, gender inequality is ingrained. Boys' education is frequently given priority over girls due to traditional gender norms, which see females' education as superfluous as they should concentrate on marriage and household duties. Tribal females' access to school is severely restricted by this traditional norm.

Early Marriage:

Premature marriage is another common problem. Early marriage is common in many tribal societies, which frequently causes females to leave school early. Girls are expected to take care of the home after marriage, which leaves little to no time for schooling.

Language and Curriculum:

Hindi and English, which many tribal youngsters are unfamiliar with, are the languages of teaching in the majority of Indian schools. Tribal kids, who mostly speak their local languages, have a great deal of difficulty because of this linguistic barrier. They find it challenging to relate to and comprehend the subject being taught since the curriculum is frequently not tailored to their cultural background. Tribal students' educational engagement and comprehension may be improved by include tribal languages and cultural components in the curriculum.

Restricted Access to Higher Education:

Tribal women still face barriers to higher education even if they are able to finish their elementary and secondary school. Tribal communities have fewer higher education institutions, and tribal women find it challenging to continue their education due to the high expense of tertiary education, a lack of financial help and scholarships, and other factors. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2018) suggests giving tribal students targeted financial assistance and expanding the number of universities in tribal areas.

Ideas For Tribal Education improvements

The following are some recommendations for enhancing tribal education:

1. **Literacy campaign:** A suitable awareness campaign should be planned to raise awareness of the value of education in order to get indigenous women to attend schools.
2. **Attitude of Tribal Parents:** Since the parents' lack of interest in their children's education is one of the main causes of their academic underachievement, awareness campaigns should be used to change the attitude of tribal parents towards education.
3. **Study materials in local languages that are pertinent:** Students should be given various educational resources in their native tongue.
4. **Appointing local teachers and female teachers:** In this situation, local instructors especially female teachers should be given more weight in all of those tribal communities.
5. **Social Security:** Offer social safety to both tribal and female students. In this instance, the residential school will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements.
6. **Government Actions:** To raise the educational standing of tribal women, the Indian government has taken a number of actions, including establishing Ashram schools, offering scholarships, and allocating places in universities. However, inadequate execution and a lack of understanding among the native community frequently limit the efficacy of these programs.

CONCLUSION

As India strives for "inclusive growth," women's engagement in the development process is critical, as they account for half of the population. Despite multiple constitutional guarantees and programs for indigenous women, it is a harsh fact that they continue to fall behind in many areas and suffer numerous problems. Women have an important role in tribal society; encouraging women to transition from a high-labor, low-income lifestyle to a high-skilled position of education and cultural leadership helps the whole community. Only through education would they be able to increase their social, economic, and individual engagement in home and community decision-making. Poverty eradication, job creation, increased political participation, and all other facets of tribal woman empowerment, as well as overall tribal development, can only be achieved via widespread access to education.

The truth is that many indigenous women in rural regions may have missed out on educational chances at various times, and in order to empower them, a variety of skill training programmes must be created and implemented. The expertise might be used to assume political leadership, achieve economic independence, or even bring about societal revolution.

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