

Transformative Power of Education in Uplifting Tribal Communities

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Abstract

India is a populous nation with a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and a diversified population. Because of this variation, it is difficult to establish consistent criteria that address each child’s unique requirements and circumstances. There’s a chance that Indian customs and culture would clash with international norms pertaining to children’s rights. For instance, there are still many areas of the nation where child marriage is common, which violates children’s rights to education and safety from danger. Without regard to social or economic status, everyone has the fundamental human right to an education. This fundamental right, which has significant effects on the development and well-being of tribal children in the future, is sadly denied to a great number of them globally. The difficulties tribal children have in getting a good education will be discussed in this essay, along with the significance of resolving these problems in order to promote the total development of the children. The Constitution of India have the provisions for providing the education to all the children irrespective of their caste, race, sex and place of birth. Why are the tribal children not receiving high-quality education, despite the availability of numerous resources and other facilities? In India, tribal education is a crucial field that requires care and strategic approaches due to their diverse practice of customs and other things. The Education Policies, Teaching Method etc should keep in mind while framing any ruled or regulation for them in respect of education. To guarantee their comprehensive growth, these concerns will be covered in this paper.

Keywords: Tribal, Children, Human Rights, Indian Constitution, Government.

INTRODUCTION

People that lived in cities and adhered to societal structures exist, but there are also other communities that exist outside of these and are typically referred to as tribes. Nowadays, communities that are among the oldest people living on the subcontinent are referred to as “tribes.” Tribes were groups of people who did not follow

written religions, did not have traditional states or political structures, did not have distinct classes, and above all were neither Hindus nor peasants nor did they follow castes. Tribal people maintained extensive oral traditions and elaborate customs while not keeping written records. Every new generation was given these.

A tribe is a group of individuals who share a common geographic location and live and work

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together. A tribe shares a shared language, religion, and culture. They are also quite united as a group. Typically, a chief leads the tribe.

The Bhils, Gonds, Santals, Oraons, Mundas, Khonds, Mizos, Nagas, and Khasis are among the tribes in India that have resisted assimilation and change in order to preserve their languages and cultural identities. Many Indians believe that their ongoing seclusion is impeding the process of national integration. These minority groups are currently being integrated into the national mainstream by the government under the pretext of national unity.

Constitutional Provisions

In order to protect and prompt the tribes within the society, the Indian constitution have the following provision in respect with them:

- The President may, Under Clause (1) of Article 342, with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, notify tribes as Scheduled Tribes.
- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (Article 338A).
- No Discrimination with any person on any ground (Article 14).
- Provision of reservation in the matter of public employment (Article 15).
- Similar protections for the tribal community in the states of Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, and Meghalaya (ATMM) are included in the sixth schedule.

The Educational Needs of Tribal Children

One of the key education rights of tribal children is access to comprehensive and culturally relevant education. Tribal children have the right to receive an education that reflects their culture, language, and traditions. This type of education not only helps tribal children maintain their cultural identities but also enhances their academic success and overall well-being. It is important for schools to incorporate tribal history, language, and cultural practices into their curriculum in order to provide a more inclusive and empowering educational experience for tribal children.

In addition to cultural relevance, tribal children also have the right to access high-quality educational resources and facilities. Unfortunately, many tribal communities lack adequate funding for schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms,

outdated materials, and limited access to technology. This lack of resources severely hinders the educational opportunities available to tribal children and perpetuates educational inequities. In order to ensure that tribal children have the tools and support they need to succeed academically, it is essential that adequate resources are provided to tribal schools and communities.

Another important education right of tribal children is the right to be free from discrimination and prejudice in the educational setting. Tribal children often face discrimination and bias from teachers, peers, and school administrators, which can have a detrimental impact on their academic performance and self-esteem. It is crucial for schools to create a safe and inclusive learning environment where tribal children feel valued, respected, and supported. Educators must also receive cultural competency training in order to better understand and address the unique needs and challenges faced by tribal students.

Furthermore, tribal children have the right to receive special education services and support if they have disabilities or learning differences. Many tribal children experience disabilities at a higher rate than their non-tribal peers, yet they often do not have access to the necessary resources and accommodations to succeed in school. It is important for schools to provide individualized support and services to tribal children with disabilities in order to ensure that they have equal access to education and opportunities for success.

Moreover, tribal children also have the right to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, music, and arts programs. These activities play a critical role in the overall development and well-being of students, yet tribal children often face barriers to participation due to lack of funding, transportation, and support. It is important for schools and communities to prioritize extracurricular opportunities for tribal children in order to promote their physical, social, and emotional health.

Additionally, tribal children have the right to receive adequate nutrition and healthcare services in order to support their overall well-being and academic success. Many tribal children come from low-income families and may not have access to nutritious meals, preventive healthcare, or mental health services. Schools must work to address these basic needs in order to create a conducive learning environment for tribal children and promote their overall health and well-being.

The education rights of tribal children are fundamental to ensuring their academic success, cultural preservation, and overall well-being. It is imperative that policymakers, educators, and society as a whole recognize and uphold these rights in order to create a more equitable and inclusive educational system for tribal children. By providing comprehensive and culturally relevant education, allocating adequate resources, addressing discrimination and bias, providing special education services, promoting extracurricular opportunities, and addressing basic needs such as nutrition and healthcare, we can help tribal children thrive and reach their full potential. It is essential that we prioritize the education rights of tribal children in order to create a more just and equitable society for all.

The lack of access to quality education has profound consequences for the development of tribal children. Without proper education, they are more likely to remain trapped in a cycle of poverty, limited opportunities, and low social mobility. This not only affects their individual well-being but also hinders the overall economic and social development of their communities.

Moreover, without education, tribal children are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They are more likely to be forced into child labor, early marriage, or trafficking, depriving them of their childhood and hindering their potential to lead fulfilling lives. Education is not only a pathway to empowerment but also a means of protection for vulnerable children. To address the educational needs of tribal children, it is essential to take a holistic approach that considers the complex socio-economic and cultural factors that impact their access to education. This includes investing in infrastructure, such as schools and teacher training programs, in remote tribal areas, to ensure that children have access to quality education close to their homes.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to promote inclusive and culturally relevant education that respects the traditional knowledge and practices of tribal communities. By incorporating indigenous perspectives and languages into the curriculum, education can be more meaningful and engaging for tribal children, fostering a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. Supporting tribal children's education requires a multi-faceted approach that involves collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Governments must prioritize the education of tribal children by allocating sufficient

resources and policies that promote inclusive and equitable education for all.

Challenges Faced in Education

They fall behind in the advancement of humanity. They continue to live in harmony with nature according to their ancient customs. They have experienced violence, societal discrimination, and impulses towards servitude since ancient times. The tool that aids in their progress is education. Challenges faced by tribal children in accessing education are as followings:

1. **Economic Hardships:** Many tribal communities live in poverty, lacking sufficient resources for education. Economic constraints hinder their ability to afford schooling expenses and necessary materials.
2. **Illiteracy:** A significant proportion of tribal populations remain illiterate. Lack of basic education perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage and limits opportunities for tribal children.
3. **Unemployment:** Tribal youth often struggle to find employment due to inadequate education and skills. This perpetuates poverty and hinders their socio-economic progress.
4. **Housing and Nutrition:** Poor living conditions, inadequate housing, and insufficient nutrition affect tribal children's overall well-being. These factors directly impact their ability to focus on education.
5. **Language Barriers:** The diversity of tribal languages and dialects poses challenges in delivering education. Many tribal children face difficulties learning in languages that are not their mother tongue.
6. **Distance to Schools:** In remote tribal areas, schools may be far from villages. Lack of proper roads and transportation facilities makes it difficult for children to attend schools regularly, leading to high dropout rates¹.
7. **Lack of Qualified Teachers:** Tribal schools often suffer from a shortage of trained and motivated teachers. This affects the quality of education provided to tribal children.
8. **Cultural Relevance:** The curriculum in mainstream schools may not align with tribal culture and traditions. A culturally relevant curriculum is essential for engaging tribal students.
9. **Dependence on Private Tutoring:** Some tribal families resort to private tutoring due to perceived shortcomings in public schools. However, this dependency can be financially

burdensome and may not always lead to effective learning².

10. **Government Efforts:** The Indian government has implemented specific laws and policies to address these challenges. However, effective implementation remains a work in progress.

Improving Tribal Education

Improving tribal education requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the unique challenges faced by these communities. Here are some strategies to enhance tribal education:

1. **Community Involvement and Empowerment:** Engage tribal communities in decision-making processes related to education. Their insights and perspectives are crucial for designing effective programs. Empower local leaders and elders to take an active role in shaping educational policies and practices.
2. **Culturally Relevant Curriculum:** Develop curricula that incorporate tribal culture, history, and traditions. This fosters a sense of identity and pride among tribal students. Include indigenous knowledge systems alongside mainstream subjects.
3. **Teacher Training and Recruitment:** Provide them with cultural sensitivity training. Encourage tribal youth to pursue teaching careers within their own communities.
4. **Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Build and maintain schools in tribal areas, ensuring they are accessible and equipped with basic amenities. Improve transportation facilities to reduce the distance between villages and schools.
5. **Bilingual Education:** Offer education in both the tribal language and the regional/national language. Bilingual education enhances learning outcomes and preserves cultural heritage.
6. **Nutrition and Health Programs:** Implement school-based nutrition programs to address malnutrition. Conduct health check-ups and provide necessary medical support to students.
7. **Scholarships and Financial Support:** Provide scholarships and financial assistance to tribal students pursuing higher education. Encourage private and corporate sponsorships for tribal education.
8. **Technology Integration:** Use technology to bridge gaps in education. Provide e-learning resources and virtual classrooms. Ensure

access to computers and the internet in tribal schools.

9. **Life Skills and Vocational Training:** Equip tribal students with practical life skills and vocational training. This prepares them for employment opportunities and self-sufficiency.
10. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of educational programs. Collect data on student retention, learning outcomes, and overall well-being.

Case Studies of Successful Tribal Education Programs

NabinSaunta's Journey in Odisha: NabinSaunta, a student from southern Odisha's Koraput district, exemplifies the transformative power of education. Despite challenges like lack of internet connectivity, regular electricity supply, and poor infrastructure, Nabin's determination led him to pursue his dream of studying computers. His village, Kinjariguda, primarily comprises Kondh tribal households. The youth often migrate to neighboring states due to limited educational opportunities and alternative livelihoods. Civil societies and local organizations have stepped in to provide inclusive education, build confidence, and equip tribal students with essential life skills.

Breaking Through Tribal Colleges and Universities: A report by Jobs for the Future highlights the findings from a Breaking Through partnership facilitated by Jobs for the Future, the National Council for Workforce Education, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. This initiative focuses on improving educational outcomes for tribal students in colleges and universities.

STEM Bridge Programs for Native American Communities: A review of promising practices in STEM bridge programs serving high school and college Native American and indigenous communities. Seven specific programs are highlighted as case studies, demonstrating successful operationalized program models. These programs emphasize themes such as culturally relevant education, teacher-student relationships, and technology integration.

Laya's Work in Tribal Education: Laya, an organization, has implemented innovative training curricula and methods in tribal education. Their programs include mock courts for legal skills practice and health courses promoting traditional medicine through trainees growing medicinal herbs. This case study showcases effective approaches to empower tribal communities through education.

Government Schemes and Plans: Various government schemes and plans aim to uplift tribal education. These include conservation-cum-development (CCD) plans, development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), and central sector schemes related to education, scholarships, vocational training, and more. As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) celebration, which commemorates 75 years of India's independence, the government launched initiatives to educate Indians about tribal contributions to the freedom struggle. On November 15, designated as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, we honor tribal heroes like Birsa Munda, Tantya Mama, Rani Durgavati, and others who were previously overlooked in history. This awareness movement aims to bridge the gap between tribal communities and mainstream society, fostering engagement and understanding.

The central government has taken steps to address these challenges:

- Ashram Schools: These residential schools provide education to tribal children.
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools: Aimed at improving learning outcomes.
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya: Focused on girls' education.
- Pre-Matric Scholarships: Encouraging tribal students to continue their studies.
- Vocational Training Centers: Equipping them with practical skills

Different schemes for the Tribal Children

Pre-Matric Scholarship:

- i. This scheme provides financial assistance to ST students studying in classes IX and X.
- ii. It covers expenses related to tuition fees, books, stationery, and other essentials².

Post-Matric Scholarship:

- i. Aimed at ST students pursuing higher education beyond class X.
- ii. It covers tuition fees, maintenance allowances, and other educational expenses².

National Overseas Scholarships for ST Candidates:

- i. This scheme supports regular, full-time ST students pursuing higher education (post-graduate courses such as Masters, Ph.D., and Post-Doctoral Research) from foreign institutes/universities.
- ii. Financial assistance includes tuition fees,

annual maintenance allowance, contingency charges, visa fees, and more.

- iii. The scheme is implemented through Indian Embassies/Missions abroad.

Umbrella Scheme for Education of ST Students:

- i. Encompasses various components, including pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, vocational training centres, establishment of hostels for ST boys and girls, and the establishment of ashram schools.

National Scholarship Scheme (Top Class) for Higher Education of ST Students:

- i. Formerly known as "Top Class Education for ST Students."
- ii. Provides scholarships to ST students pursuing higher education in professional courses such as engineering, medicine, law, etc.

National Fellowship Scheme for Higher Education of ST Students:

- i. Supports ST students pursuing research at the doctoral level.
- ii. Aims to promote research and innovation among ST scholars

CONCLUSION

The education rights of tribal children are a critical issue that requires attention and action from policymakers, educators, and society as a whole. Tribal children face a variety of challenges when it comes to accessing quality education, including poverty, discrimination, and cultural barriers. In order to ensure that tribal children have the opportunity to receive a high-quality education, it is essential that their education rights are protected and upheld. In conclusion, education is a fundamental human right that should be accessible to all, including tribal children. By addressing the challenges faced by tribal children in accessing quality education and supporting their educational needs, we can empower them to break the cycle of poverty and achieve their full potential. It is imperative that we invest in the education of tribal children to ensure a more equitable and inclusive society for all. Furthermore, NGOs and grassroots organizations play a crucial role in advocating for the rights of tribal children and providing support services, such as scholarships, school supplies, and mentorship programs, to ensure their educational success. By working together, stakeholders can create a more conducive environment for tribal children to thrive and reach their full potential.

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