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TRIBAL WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

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**TRIBAL WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA –
OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT

Tribal's or adivasis are concentrated mostly in the central belt of India and parts of the North-East. The sex ratio of the tribes in India during 1991 showed 971 females per 1000 males while it was 927 females among the general population. The status of any social group is determined by its levels of health nutrition, literacy, education and standard of living. Like other social group the tribal women constitute 50 percent of the population. Tribal women work harder in order to improve their economy. Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. Health of the tribal women is more important. In tribal communities women are working hard and considered to be asset. Women continued to play a significant role. Poverty inflicts deep-rooted wounds on the psyche of individuals. Education imparts knowledge, knowledge of self and infuses a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the tribal women to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and to avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them. It has been recognized as a major instrument which societies can use to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. The earliest period of independence has ushered in a new era in the field of women's education in general and tribal women in particular in the country. In spite of the opportunities, extra initiatives and care by the government for tribal education, the achievement of tribal women education is not as per expectations due to several factors. Hence, problems associated with education of tribal women needs immediate attention and early resolution. Women play equal to men in productive activities. A large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation

Key Words: Education, Tribal Women, community and development

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Introduction:

An education system should provide a new culture of work ethos and an array of young talented, skilled and well equipped target group who will be able to shoulder the developmental responsibilities. It should make an individual better suited to the needs of the ever changing dynamic world. The status of any social group is determined by its levels of literacy, education, standard of living and health nutrition. The tribal women constitute like any other social group, about half of the total population. Tribal women work harder and family economy and management depend on them. It has been reported that illiteracy, in tribal as well as non-tribal population, is positively correlated health. As women in all social groups, they are more illiterate than men. In general, their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and their presence in the school. United Nations has defined the status of women as the “conjunction of position a women occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother.....of the power and prestige attached to these positions, and of the right and duties she is expected to exercise” (UN, 1975). Education gives them decision making, economic status and empowerment always go hand in hand. To-day’s tribal women society wishes that their future would be good. They do not want their children to suffer as they have suffered. They demand good educational and job facilities for their children. Slowly educational status of women and their children, accessibility to all kinds of infrastructural activities improved decision making capacity in all important aspects is appreciable in states like Gujarat. Article 46 of the Constitution of India lays down that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. A large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities so

as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study opportunities associated the education of the tribal women.
2. To assess the challenges and change.

Opportunities associated the education of the tribal women:

There is a saying that “if you educate a boy, you only educate an individual; if you educate a girl you are educating the whole family”. Education imparts knowledge, and knowledge of self identity and human environment will infuse a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the weaker sections of the society to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, and avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them (Pradhan 2011). On November 28, 2001 the Government enacted the 93rd Amendment of the constitution making the Right to Education a Fundamental Right. There are number of studies exposed the educational development of tribal women by quantitative indicators in the form of enrolment, literacy rate and educational facilities. Though the governments have taken several steps in the development of tribal education projects and schemes much need to be exercised. The social welfare programmes have been ineffective due to deficiency in the administrative scheme, lack of sore trained management, lack of general preparedness for large investments, lack of accounting systems, procedural delays and insufficient of proper monitoring and evaluation.

The constitutional directive to allow for free and mandatory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years has not yet been fulfilled. Experts from the educational field acknowledge that this lack of success is mainly due to the slow progress of education among girls, SC and STs. It is observed that the literacy among the tribal women has falling behind all other section. The low educational condition of the tribal women is excogitated in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and higher dropouts in the school. When women want to deal with issues like wages, savings, accessing government schemes, skills up gradation, interacting

with socio-political structures the literacy have to be propelled. The dropout rate for tribals at the secondary level is as high as 87 percent and for the girls it is almost ninety percent.

There are various factors responsible for the slow advance of the educational development of tribal women. The factors like poverty(Poorness), unbiased attitude of the parents, irrational and bias, problem of suitable teacher, language and communication, inadequate infrastructure facilities in education institution, high loss and stagnation. First and foremost indicator is poor economic status is a great deterrent to successful education of the tribal children especially for female children. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial and women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depends on them (Awais, Alam and Asif 2009). The tribal community think that if the child is taken away from his normal economic work to attend school, the family deprives of the little income, which she brings. As a consequence, the parents have to feed the child out of their earning and resulted economic marginalisation of the household. In these circumstances, education, the basic necessity of life, is a matter of luxury for the tribal family. A huge section of tribal parents avoid sending their children to school to grab the costless educational opportunities offered to them. However tribal and non-tribal teachers feel hard to convert the tribal parents to send their youngsters to school. The tribal community feels that there is no need for the girls to go to school and waste their time. Psychological and social factors like illiteracy of the parents and their indifference to education, lack of encouragement by the community, motivation and "insecurity" of future for being educated. Other factors like low social interaction between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents, suspicion over the sincerity of the non-tribal teachers and in many cases shortage of tribal teachers also discourage parents to send their children to school.

Irrational and bias acts a damaging role in contributing education in the tribal areas. The tribals thinks after becoming educated and earning jobs, their children may alienate from them and cut off their links with their

families and villages. Some tribal groups trust that their almighty shall be furious if they send their children to schools run by outsiders. The non tribal teachers in many cases treat themselves 'civilized' and tribals as 'uncivilized' and 'savage' (Pradhan 2011). The relationship between teachers and children is poor. In a tribal group, a positive thinking teacher, has a special power in the village setting for which tribals are afraid of him. Most of the teachers unwilling to stay near the school or in the village, where as teachers stay in nearby towns. Most of the tribal area schools do not have sufficient teachers and the schools are depending on stop-gap arrangement teachers.

Deficiency of communication becomes a problem between student and teachers. It is found that tribal students are often ridiculed, humiliated and reprimanded for speaking in their own language, and are punished for failing to talk in their standard language or continuously lapsing back in the mother tongue (Nambissan 1994: 2752). The basic infrastructure facilities in the tribal school building are very poor which results the children stay away from the school. Some of the hostel constructions are very slow, poor with substandard quality of materials. In reality, most of the primary schools in the tribal areas are single teacher-managed whose presence in the school is more of exception than a rule (Hasnain 2004). A data revealed at the Primary level, the dropout rate among STs in 2003-04 was 48.9 percent and 70.1 percent at the Upper Primary level (Pradhan 2011). School timing i.e. clash of class hour with the working hour particularly, during the harvesting period, formal education, poverty, lack of academic atmosphere, unwillingness of the teachers to convince the parents and parental apathy towards education and lack of proper medical aid, balanced diet and suitable self-employment opportunities are the major factors for which there is wastage and stagnation.

To assess the challenges and Change:

Tribals are still devoid of modern facilities like education, electricity, proper drinking water health care, ample transportation, etc. problems associated with education of tribal women needs immediate attention and early resolution. Tribal women need to face lots of challenges in the society.

Skills training, increased growth, productivity and innovation, in particular for the informal sector are linked with poverty re-education (Fluitman: 2002). The first and foremost challenge to the tribal is that they are still not much exposed to the outside world and are confined to their community only. If we closely analyze functioning of educated tribal's, we notice two traits of transformation. One group of educated tribal argues that tribal's should reform themselves with the mainstream society. The other group of tribal's wants to maintain its tribal identity. Most of the primitive tribes still live in hills, dense forest with difficult terrain and many a times, it is difficult to reach them because of lack of road and transport facilities. It is a challenge to provide education to tribals and setting up school and institutions in small, scattered and remote tribal habitations. High school drop-out rate among tribals is another reason for their lagging behind in education (See, Vinoba Gautam, 2003).

The issues and challenges in tribal education can be categorized as external, internal, socio-economic and psychological. The external constraints are related to issues at levels of policy, planning, and implementation while internal constraints are with respect to education system, content, curriculum, pedagogy, and medium of instruction, etc. The third set of problems relates to social, economic, and cultural background of tribals and psychological aspects of first generation learners. It is important to address the problems of low literacy among tribal women severely at national level and resolve the peril through confident and effectual means.

Conclusions:

Due to various issues tribal women are lagging behind in their education level than non-tribal women. The problem linked to the female children in general and tribal girl in India are perplexed, multiplied and interlinked. The above reasons causes major hitch in the process of spread of education among tribal women. The main aim of education is to change the cultural norms and patterns of life of tribal women to make them economically independent, to organise themselves to form solid groups so as to analyse their situations and conditions of living, understand their

rights and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of women and the entire society.

Suggestions:

1. Government and civil societies should create awareness among the tribal people about the government programmes, needs and advantages of the education among tribal women.
2. Skill training programmes have to be designed and organised for school dropout women.
3. Create awareness that education only should make the tribal women economically independent, solution to their life problems and make their life better.
4. The tribal teachers who understand the tribal language and culture must be posted in tribal schools.
5. In order to motivate the girls, their families about the value of the education the tribal teachers should be given incentives.

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