



TRIBAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH – A PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Social and economic justice, equality of status and opportunities, assurance of the individual's dignity are insured by the Constitution of India for all the citizens among other things. The constitution of India is enriched with several provisions for schedule castes and schedule tribes to safeguard and promote their cultural, social, educational, and economic interests in order to bring them in the mainstream of the nation. However, traditional tribal societies are undergoing a rapid change with the mainstreaming policy of the Indian government. For the tribal communities the process of becoming a part of the mainstream has meant a declining control on their resources and erosion of their cultural heritage. The major issue affecting the tribals in India is displacement: not merely displacement by large projects but resource displacement, thus violating the basic survival rights of tribal communities. Tribal areas reveal a high degree of land alienation. Non-tribals have invaded tribal protected areas. Deforestation, mainly due to exploitation of forests for industrial purposes, is another manifestation of resource displacement. This has resulted in decreasing access to forest resources by tribal communities. This paper to be discussed Tribal Education Development in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Social & Economic Status, Schedule Tribes, A.P. Government, Visakhapatnam, Education Development.

Statement of the Problem:

“A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate.”

— Seth Godin,



The total number of tribal communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes is 572 in number. Scheduled Tribes are those tribal communities who have been listed so by the President of India in keeping with Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. These tribal communities mainly live in Scheduled Areas, or those outlying areas, which during the British times did not come under the direct purview of civil, criminal and revenue administration.

However, traditional tribal societies are undergoing a rapid change with the mainstreaming policy of the Indian government. For the tribal communities the process of becoming a part of the mainstream has meant a declining control on their resources and erosion of their cultural heritage. The major issue affecting the tribals in India is displacement: not merely displacement by large projects but resource displacement, thus violating the basic survival rights of tribal communities. Tribal areas reveal a high degree of land alienation. Non-tribals have invaded tribal protected areas. Deforestation, mainly due to exploitation of forests for industrial purposes, is another manifestation of resource displacement. This has resulted in decreasing access to forest resources by tribal communities. With increasing globalization and privatization, the land rights of tribal areas is under even greater threat since these are regions, which have a high natural resource base and has tremendous potential to meet multiple market demands. Added to resource displacement is project displacement where development projects have threatened the livelihood needs of tribal communities. More than 40 per cent of displaced persons of all large development projects are tribals.

More importantly displacement has been accompanied by erosion of the identity of tribal communities, which is being subsumed within the dominant culture. There is a breakdown in their own community institutions, which hitherto safeguarded their resources, traditional practices and values. In the process the richness and wealth of their knowledge systems, identity and survival with integrity is being destroyed.

Although there are protective laws governing tribal areas these laws are being circumvented or not implemented in spirit. For example the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India which is a protective legal framework for tribal areas is under threat of being amended due to the mining lobby in India which is keen to exploit the minerals from the habitats of tribal people. The forest laws and land acquisition laws also run counter to the land rights of tribal communities. The government programmes especially earmarked for tribal areas do not reach the people for whom they are meant due to ineffective implementation systems.



The Education in the Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh:

The population of tribal people in Andhra Pradesh is 4,199,481 (6.3 per cent) of the State's population. The literacy rate for total population of the State as per the 1991 Census was 44 per cent (male 55 per cent and female 33 per cent) and these figures have gone up to 61 per cent (male 71 per cent and female 51 per cent) in the 2001 Census, apparently due to the intensive literacy drives initiated by the State government. The corresponding literacy rate among the tribal population was 17 per cent (male 25 per cent and female 9 per cent) as per the 2011 Census and 22 per cent in the 2015 Census. This reveals the gap between the general population and the tribal communities.

Although the statistics show a vast change in literacy levels, the issue of literacy depends on how it is defined and the extent to which it is enabling in qualitative terms. While there are special programmes initiated for adult education, the implementation process is far from effective. Fifty-four years after Independence on November 28, 2001 the Government enacted the 93rd Amendment to the Constitution making the Right to Education a Fundamental Right. It puts the onus of sending children to school on parents rather than the State. It is not enough to talk of fundamental rights and fundamental duties of the citizens. It is equally necessary to dwell on the fundamental duties of the government. The extent to which this enactment will be increasingly backed by resource allocation will be the test of the seriousness of purpose of the government to implement the law.

It is pertinent to look at the education scenario of Andhra Pradesh in this context. As far as elementary education is concerned, the government has undertaken several measures to reach out to tribal communities, such as the Girijana Vidya Vikas Kendras (GWKs) with standards I and II in areas where 'primitive tribal communities' reside; mandal (sub-district) level elementary schools; special residential schools called Ashram Schools mainly in tribal areas; the 'Alternative Schools' etc., and monitoring systems such as the School Complex System. There have also been some special programmes such as bridge courses and back to school initiatives for dropouts. For adult literacy, the State has launched a special programme known as 'Akshara Sankranthi' which is for 'adults' above 15 years of age.

All these attempts fall far short of the specific educational needs in tribal areas. Apart from access to education is the issue of quality of the education process. Many of the existing schools do not have adequate number of teachers. The quality of teaching leaves much to be desired let alone the content, which does not take into account the tribal reality situation.



Defining 'Education' in the Tribal Context

For us 'education' is an integral part of the empowerment process. Empowerment of the tribal community means capacitating tribal communities to secure access and control of their land, forest and water resources as well as sustain and promote viable alternatives for security of their livelihoods. Empowerment thus is an interactive process whereby tribal communities are enabled to participate actively in local governance (decision making that affects their own life situation).

It is in this context that we need to define the role of adult education. For us, educating tribal communities in a more concrete sense means to facilitate processes, which will enable tribal representatives to:

1. Develop an analytical capacity for assessing their external and internal environment impacting on their own communities;
2. develop confidence and capacity to articulate their interests and perspective thereby participating in decision making processes leading to better governance;
3. develop skills to initiate local relevant alternatives to improve livelihoods and challenge external pressures;
4. value self and community history with a critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems.

We do recognize that adult literacy constitutes an important part of adult education and we have made some attempts in this direction. From 1992-1997 we facilitated tribal youth to take up night schools as a part of the government drive for adult literacy. Several of the trainers were absorbed into the State-run literacy programme initiated in 1998.

However, our major involvement has been with young adults who have been dropouts of the school system. School dropouts have very little opportunities for further education. The percentage of enrolment in schools is 79 per cent (89 per cent for male and 68 per cent for female). But the dropout rate among the tribals is as much as 71 per cent while for the general population it is only 65 per cent. The ambitious ones tend to be frustrated with an alienating education experience and some of them often land up joining extremist groups in the area.

Mainstream educational institutions do not 'educate' because the curriculum does not give due consideration to the rich traditional knowledge and value systems prevalent within tribal societies. These institutions do not create an opportunity to develop and learn skills which are relevant to the needs,



lifestyle and aspirations of tribal communities. We believe that it is important to invest in the youth because it is they who are going to steer the future of tribal societies. Hence we have been focusing on 'alternative education' mainly with tribal youth.

Yuva Parichay was a one-year process initiated in 1991 and discontinued in 1998 after the training programme was decentralized. The trainees were drawn from tribal areas of 7 districts in North Andhra Pradesh. Each batch ranged from 30 - 40 trainees in the age group between 18-25 years. The minimum educational qualification was basic reading and writing skills or those who had dropped out after completing Standard V.

The need for initiating an educational process with youth emerged in 1989 when the land rights of tribal communities were under tremendous threat because the State was seeking to repeal a land regulation in favour of tribal communities. During this time a campaign against the repeal of the law was initiated all over the state by several concerned organizations. An analysis however of the campaign revealed that local tribal youth although involved in the campaign, did not demonstrate an understanding of a broader vision of tribal rights.

The thrust of the training was to facilitate a relevant response and a meaningful educational process, which took into consideration the problem situation, the tribal learner and the principles of learning. Over a period of time the programme content underwent several changes. In time equal emphasis was paid to learning skills on micro alternatives and on exploring values.

Advocacy in tribal areas today:

- Decreasing access and control over natural resources on which the survival of the tribal communities depend
- Lack of access to basic services: health, education and infrastructure
- Violation of their identity rights leading to cultural erosion
- Encroachment of their right to self-governance

From our experience it is clear that we need to recognize that major learning in the tribal context takes place through struggles on issues focusing on human rights of tribal communities. The development of general awareness of multiple stakeholders is crucial for perspective building on tribal reality. More specifically, structured, systematic training initiatives for developing change agents add lasting value on internalizing learning processes. Also, education on alternatives, which challenge the existing processes of development, is crucial from the perspective of sustainable livelihood.



Hence as stated before, it is imperative that indigenous 'education' must be an integral part of the empowerment process. For a lasting impact, youth must be the centre of development activity. Therefore the need to invest in the education of young men and women in tribal areas. Governance functions in the future will be played by today's youth so the direction of development of tribal areas depends on them.

Adult Education Processes

1. human rights education especially in the current context where there is an increasing threat to access and control of natural resources by indigenous communities;
2. development of skills to initiate and sustain relevant micro alternatives that address livelihood issues from a long term perspective and
3. Value based education with critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems and relevant responses to the changing external environment.

Strategies for empowerment

Need to create special opportunities to respond to the educational needs' of women. Consequences of the development processes are not neutral. They militate more against women than men and hence tend to result in greater negative effects on women. Loss of access and control of resources in tribal areas tend to push women out of productive activities. This also affects adversely their status in their family and community as their participation in the economy decreases. Lack of basic services, particularly related to health and education makes women especially vulnerable. Moreover, atrocities on women are on the increase, as tribal areas become accessible to outsiders and commercially oriented activities. The major strategy to address this issue is to educate the 'panchayat' representatives to safeguard the position of women In the areas under their jurisdiction.

Need to develop an informed cadre of tribal citizens in law related processes is vital. A critical understanding of the customary laws and the legal provisions in the tribal context is necessary to achieve social justice. The legal machinery in the current circumstances is either insensitive or manipulative in character.

In order to safeguard human rights and ensure enlightened governance there is a need for a special focus on educating elected leaders on relevant laws,



their role and functions. In the light of the specific application of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution to tribal areas, a pertinent law known as the Panchayat (Extension to Schedule Areas Act) was enacted in 1996. This Act facilitates the participation of the 'gram sabha' and the panchayat leaders in playing a role in governance issues at the grassroots level. Several NGOs all over the country have taken this up as a challenge. However, the point remains that respective State governments are slow to act. For example in Andhra Pradesh even the rules and regulations pertaining to the Act are not framed as yet!

What Need to be done?

Tribal institutions of secondary education are irrelevant and do not 'educate'. The main reason for this is that the content of education does not take into account their traditional knowledge systems, an understanding of their own environment which is rich in natural resources, relevant skills to provide access and control of their environment and a recognition of their own identity as tribal communities. Also where relevant, a major concern is the need for providing primary education in their mother tongue in order to create an opportunity for them to enhance their learning capacities. Mainstream educational institutions tend to create an alienated group of youngsters with few opportunities to use their capacities. There is a need to review the relevance of curriculum and methodologies of education currently in the tribal context. More specifically we need to campaign for a policy, which takes into consideration the learning needs of tribal youth dropouts at the school and pre university levels.

Summing up

Need to strengthen literacy levels by promoting opportunities for reading at the grassroots level. Even daily newspapers hardly reach remote villages. Decentralized libraries run by literate youth could be one initiative. Any educational process has to be sustained through creating conditions for being updated on current events and how they impact local communities. This means that processes of creative literacy must be accompanied by follow up measures whereby avenues for deliberation and some reading material is made available on a continuous basis.

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