



## TRIBAL'S AND THE ISSUE OF EDUCATION

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Tribal education is the litmus test of the social sector welfare role of the state. The tribals stay outside the urban and rural fringes and live with socio cultural values that are distinctly different to mainstream society. Over centuries, the tribals have evolved an intricate convivial custodial mode of living. Tribals belong to their territories, which are the essence of their territories, which are the essence of their existence; the abode of the spirits and their dead and the source of their science, technology, way of life, their religion and culture.

Our socio-culturally hierarchically stratified system made sure that the tribals stayed at the bottom of the social system and there was little accommodation and acculturation between the tribals and the rest of the social sections of the society. The tribals depended on hunting, gathering and traditional agriculture and so also remained self- reliant with their bare needs of survival. It is a cruel joke that people who can produce some of India's most exquisite handicrafts, who can distinguish hundreds of species of plants and animals, who can survive off forests, the lands and the streams sustainably, with no need to go the market to buy food, are labeled as unskilled. And we the mainstream, urban consider ourselves to be skilled and superior. We in the mainstream urban are superior, knowledge and skill-wise, no doubt about it. But is it superiority to attest to the highest call of development i. e. sustainable development.

We, the mainstream, are pursuing the parameters of globalization in pursuit of global material life reflecting in our education, especially higher education. We are not ready to adopt the best practices of globalization of work culture, healthy competition, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity etc. but we are divided on caste and religion, our economy runs on croony capitalism and our education system is divided in the science and social science without employability skills and professional course, leading to employment. On the the other hand the tribals have their own guilds tto learn their vocational trades without discrimination, no cate or class discrimination, no gender bias, community living and a community life conducive to sustainable development .

Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are thoroughly disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, caste or where they live. Social exclusion is denial of the capability of individual or group to participate in, be respected by society more meaningful.

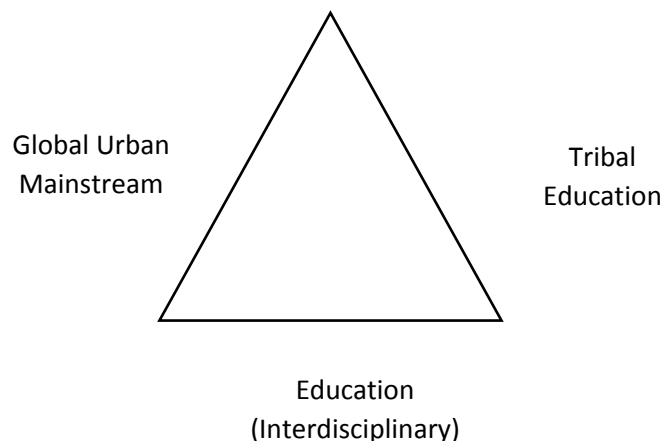
Social exclusion of children in education is an issue of violating their rights to education. Social education in education in education hampers the holistic development of children. The constitution of India guarantees the right of equality in education.

Literacy rate total population and scheduled tribes population and Gap in literacy rate-India/States/Union Territories: 1991-2001

The literacy rate in India in 1991 for the total were 52.2 and for ST's 29.6 with a literacy gap of 22.6. while in 2001 the total literacy was 64.8 the ST rate of 47.1 with a gap of 17.7. in Maharashtra the total literacy rate for 1991 were 64.9 with ST rate of 36.8 having a literacy rate gap of 28.1. in 2001 the total literacy rate was 76.9 with the ST rate being 55.2 having a gap of 21.7.

An analysis of the socio-cultural background of the three entities global society, mainstream society and isolated tribal society is done because the three have evolved from one common platform.

Can we imagine our education system in a triad as follows:



We assess the globally inspired urban mainstream educational setup on the left axis, the tribal education on the right and the two the two ends meeting with the best as the inter-disciplinary in education.

Now we can analyze the various parameters of education on this graph.

a) separate ashramshala schools for tribal children, this concept reeks of the highest sense of patronage of the urban society on tribals. The tribals to be taught in isolation, it also reeks of a

mentality of prevailing in urban as well as in rural areas. We need the tribal children to be exposed to urban socio-cultural milieu and vice-versa. It is necessary for increased understanding, accommodation, acculturation and reduced alienated feeling. The government of Maharashtra has recently declared on their intentions to create mixed schools. And as a by-product even teachers transferred to tribal schools shall not feel punished if they have to work in relative less isolated and cosmopolitan schools. Their participation of interest and convenience is an important tool of improvement in quality of tribal education.

The government in its zeal to provide facilities to the tribal's has constructed hostels for the tribal students, supplied textbooks, provided different types of scholarship, etc, but instead of bridging the gap it has widened the rift.

The tribal students staying in separate hostels, availing themselves of separate scholarships, feel naturally ostracized. This should change and instead there might be some percentage reservation of seats for tribals in a general hostel and tribal students should be encouraged to take an active part in various college as well as hostel activities. Only then they could be brought into the mainstream.

B) medium of instruction- with cosmopolitan schools instead of isolated tribal schools the issue of medium of instruction becomes tricky. But this can be solved by putting all the tribal students in one division of a class and employing a teacher who has been trained the local dialect of the tribal students or train tribal teachers for the purpose. We should create such positivism about tribal language that other non-tribal students feel like learning tribal languages the same way we appreciate tribal arts and handicrafts. It is a question of creating an environment of positivism and putting up tribal languages as the French, Italian or Japanese languages are put up for students consumption. Then it becomes a win-win situation with the all-round understanding and acculturation on the rise.

Apart from this it has been proved that when a tribal child begins his education he starts with no linguistic information and conceptualization where as a non-tribal child starts with a few familiar concepts and linguistics associations. So preschool training programme for the tribal child is a prime requirement and the government should undertake such programmes if it means to put the tribals on an equal footing with the non-tribal.

c) teaches at school- lack of social mobility and the problems of inter-cultural communication are major retarding factors on tribal education. As the teacher and the taught in the tribal areas belong to different cultures the communication barrier becomes almost insurmountable.

Teachers in tribal school are generally a more unhappy and frustrated lot. Most of the teachers appointed in tribal areas are a disinterested lot due to various problems faced by them such as lack of proper residential facility, good salary, communication facility and social distance from the tribal people. They think their posting in a tribal school is a punishment and a social stigma. Sadly, officially also an errant teacher is transferred to a tribal school as a punishment posting.

It is not taken as a challenge, but a temporary unwanted destination. This attitude is a sure recipe for disaster. A disaster for quality of education the tribal children receive. The teachers are more often not trained with the local tribal dialect.

There is simply no connect of substance between the teacher and the students. The students cannot fully understand the teachers urbane dialect and the teacher simply carry out the chores of teaching with disinterest and even disclaim. Only greater financial incentive, quality training and cosmopolitan schools with tribals, placed in lessor isolated areas are the only solution for teachers to take greater interest in improving tribal educational quality. These are paradigm shifts and shall need great political will and greater financial provisions.

As regards appointment of teachers, more and more appointments should be made from among the tribal population so that the teachers become 'accepted' and they deal with the tribals students by using a more permissive and motivational approach. The existing teachers should be provided with adequate facilities and they should be properly oriented. It should be a must for the teachers to learn the tribal language and there can also be attempts at writing textbooks in tribal language.

The teacher feels isolated and unhappy and a disgruntled teachers is, certainly, not the best communicator of modern ideas and messages to tribal children. So even though the government has come up in recent times with various plans and programmes to improve the educational lot of the tribal's, there is not much result to show as there is lack of sincerity on the part of the officials charged with the implementation of these programmes. In fact a credibility gap has emerged between such officials and the tribal people. If all these problems are to be tackled successfully, the government has to bring a change in the basic orientation in tribal education.

d) our school curricula, consists of Maths, Sciences, Social Studies, language and Some vocational or socially useful activities with little play-time. This is the same in tribal ashram schools notwithstanding their distinct needs and socio-cultural values. What our educational system does is it gives extraordinary weight age to the science and mathematics. The

performance of which at the secondary and higher secondary level is counted to get admission in professional and other courses leading directly to employment.

The social sciences are abstract and technical and need to be taught well through practical's and simplified processes. The tribal teachers are simply not trained enough and motivated to do this. Secondly, these subjects simply do not count in the day to day life and vocational activities of the tribals. This raises the question of relevance. Relevance to a practical current and future life.

The curriculum needs to also taken in tribal activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, basic forest knowledge and medicine and mould the abundant physical energy of tribal children towards sports activities. The curriculum also needs to include modern vocations like computers and foreign language to catch the interest and imagination through films and other educational tools and devise.

The non-tribal children should be encouraged to take up tribal art as also agriculture activities, right in the fields. This shall enthuse all children and make them value all skill and knowledge creating a kind of respect for tribal culture. This will be the foundation of quality tribal education.

e) right to education and the tribal Children-This is great news, especially for the tribal children. Compulsory and free education is a greater boon for the poor tribals. They shall learn in cosmopolitan schools but shall find acculturation and social acceptance difficult. But with their isolated living it shall be a challenge for the administration to spot and enroll and tribal children into schools. The tribals are also not in a position to seek redressal.

For the opponents of the neoliberal assault in education, the right to education act would make certain thing constitutional – involving teachers in non-teaching work, ambiguous notion of justice vis-à-vis providing representation to 'marginalized' sections, complete neglect of issue of curriculum, pedagogy, education of the disabled children and making insufficient financial provisions. The administration and schools shall have to take suo motto action to bring all tribal children into the education system. The comprehensive and continuous assessment method of evaluation shall be a greater challenge for tribal children.

This will require greater confidence, educated family background and resources to excel, what with its reliance on group activities, project making social interaction and bonding.

Ultimately our education system should be geared towards sustainable development with a virtue for excellence. For this we shall need to define the development model we shall pursue.

A model based on quantity leading to massification and sustainable development. We definitely have a thing or two learn from the tribals natural, peaceful and sustainable way of life.

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