

# Socio-Economic Empowerment of Tribes through Education: A Micro Level Study in Andhra Pradesh

## OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 6

Issue: 2

Month: October

Year: 2018

ISSN: 2321-788X

Received: 08.10.2018

Accepted: 27.10.2018

Published: 29.10.2018

Citation:

Rupla Naik, B., et al. "Socio-Economic Empowerment of Tribes through Education: A Micro Level Study in Andhra Pradesh." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018, pp. 45–50.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1472682>

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### Abstract

*Education plays an important role in the social, political and economic transformation. The socio-economic development among the Tribal community depends on their educational levels. At the beginning of Independent India, the literacy rate among the Tribes was only 8.54 percent. But it has increased to 63.1 percent by 2011. No doubt it is a success at the primary level. But in higher education, representation of Tribal students is very discouraging with only 4.2 percent. Due to increased literacy rate among the Tribes, now they are approaching the government officials to utilize various welfare programmes entrusted to them by the Central and State governments.*

**Keywords: Higher Education, Socio-cultural development, Empowerment, Standards of Living, Savings.**

### Introduction

Education is the prime factor and also essential to improve the socio-economic, political and technological development of the society. Social disparities, economic inequality, harmony, medical care, and happy and peaceful life will be possible with the growth of knowledge society. All most all the economies realized the importance of education for its sustainable development through the growth of GDP. But the literacy rate among the Tribes has not been increasing as expected still in many rural areas. Tribal women education is also not improving as expected. Swamy Vivekananda explained the hidden qualities of a man and how the education will help to utilize the human capabilities for the development and he has stated that it is the manifestation of the perfection already in man and it states that a human development approach essentially requires for improving the capability of individuals for the Nation's economic development.

In developing Countries like India, education up to the elementary stage is considered essential for every citizen. The advanced and the developing nations of the contemporary world have realized the significance of education in knowledge society through a planned education system. The central and state governments in our country have been providing educational facilities to the people through different levels of education such as primary education, secondary education, higher education, and professional education.

Next, to Africa, India has a largest Tribal population in the world. The lifestyles of Tribes are adjusted by the Eco-system and are treated as the children of nature. As per the notified Schedule under Article 342 of the Constitution of India, there are 533 Tribes in India.

The Tribes are still considered to be foragers. Their style of living is different from other communities. They closely moved to the natures in their everyday life as they are living in hill and forest areas and depending for their livelihood on forest resources. In recent days, a few tribal families have taken up agriculture with the intervention of ITDA apart from food gathering and hunting. However, some of the tribal male and female are doing jobs after completing their education.

### **The Tribe**

A group of people, the families, related to each other, who live together, communicating with same language, culture, and history, those who live in remote hill and forest areas. In other words, a traditional society, a tribe is a social division consisting of some common features such as social, economic, religious and blood ties with a common culture and livelihood nature. They have some uniform characteristics such as culture, social and political aspects. In India, they are also commonly known as 'Adivasis.' According to Article 366(25), such Tribal communities or groups of such Tribes are called as Scheduled Tribes for the Indian Constitution. Indian society is characterized by several castes and religions. The caste system is a social stratification, and an integral part of Indian society.

According to the traditional Hindu varna, the Scheduled Tribes are said to belong to the Shudra varna. The 'Tribe' is defined in various ways by many socialists and Anthropologists. The meaning of the Tribe according to the Oxford Dictionary is any primitive or barbarous under a chief. The definition of the Tribe emphasizes a common language and a sense of solidarity. Tribals are the indigenous people or first people of the land believed to be the earliest settlers in the Indian peninsula. As the Tribes are aboriginal, ethnic groups who are the original inhabitants of a given region are generally called as Adivasis. The tribal for centuries lived in isolation and thus were able to reserve their social customs, traditions and religious beliefs to a large extent.

### **Objectives' of the Study**

As the Tribals are living in remote villages with low infrastructural facilities along with traditional attitude, a study has been conducted on their educational levels and based on that their socio-economic aspects were observed by the way their economic development which causes for their social empowerment. In this regard, Nadimigaddipalli Thanda of Dharmavaram Mandal in Ananthapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh was selected for the study. For this, 50 Tribal households were randomly selected.

### **Tribal People in India**

According to 2011 census, the Tribal people constitute 8.6 percent of total India's population of 104 million. It reveals that India has a largest tribal population in the world. The extent to which a state's population is tribal varies considerably. It is observed that 90 percent of the tribal population is there in the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland. Most of the Tribes are found in central India, which accounts for around 10 percent of the region's total population. A Major concentration of tribal community is in Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal. In the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Tribes are of one percent whereas in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka their share is 6 percent of the total population.

The people of the Tribal community are generally called as Adivasis. It is a term for the same set of ethnic and tribal groups considered the aboriginal population of India. It is the local terminology, and in different parts of India, they called as Batavia, vanavasi or Girija. The term Adivasi carries a specific meaning of being the original and indigenous inhabitants of a given region and was coined for that purpose. Details about the demography of India's tribal people are lacking. The National census survey report has not been gathered information on a tribe basis. Some of the researchers were collected the data during the early 1930s and extrapolate the Tribal information. Some of the Tribal groups are in danger of extinction as they are facing challenges of encroachments from other groups, and from various social aspects such as religious issues, modernization and westernization.

### **Origin of Tribal People of India**

It is believed that the Tribes, the black aborigines are originated from the black aborigines those found in New Guinea and Australia. As per the evidence from the DNA of Negrito Tribes Andaman Islands of date back 70000 years, they originated from Africa, Indonesia and India. It also indicates that they are the first modern humans who leave Africa. It is believed that Andaman Island tribes are the Negritos of Southeast Asia and the Philippines.

As per the theoretical observations of some scholars, they originated in the distant past from Burma or Malasia through sea or from Sumatra Islands through the Nicobar Islands and joined in the Andaman Islands. The gains of Tribes made in earlier decades were eroded during the 1970s in Central India. Over a period, migration into Tribal lands was increased dramatically and the government officials were not showed their interest in Tribal welfare. At the same time the non-Tribals able to bribe the local officials to deprive many Tribals of their landholdings.

### **Indian Tribal Life**

Many Tribals live in widely dispersed villages, with families living on farms surrounded by fields. A temple or public platform under a large tree is the central place where males from upper and

middle castes meet and spend their time. Hunting and collection of firewood from the forests is a traditional livelihood of Tribes. Most of the Tribal groups have a belief on superstition powers and if any family members of their families become ill health, they believe that a witch harmed the diseased person. The Tribes restricts the others to enter into their regions for livelihood purpose or settlement. This is so to manage their culture, other living habits, and to explore the harm from other Tribal groups. Alcoholism is a common problem among many Tribal communities and sometimes it disrupted their lives. Most of the Tribes are living in heavily forested areas which have poor accessibility with limited political involvement and poor economic significance. Historically, the economy of most tribes was subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering of forest resources. Regarding ownership of land is viewed as a communal resource, free to whoever needed it. Tribal languages suffered huge setbacks with the formation of linguistic states In India after 1956; the linguistic states were formed in some parts of India under the States Reorganisation Act. Due to this reason, the Tribals were suffered from their languages. For example, under state-sponsored educational pressure, Irula children are being taught Tamil, and the children of Irula felt shame to be associated with speaking the Irula language along with other children and educated adults. Similarly, the Tribes in Odisha, Bihar, and West Bengal faced the problem in adopting the languages of Oriya, Hindi, and Bengali respectively.

### **The Problems of the Tribal People**

Due to various socio-economic reasons, over a period, the Tribals were alienated from their lands in some regions. Gradually, the Tribal lands were occupied by the landlords or money lenders of the plains. To protect their lands from the others, they started movements against the British Ra and the landlords. To avoid such insecurity among the Tribals, the Government was given protection to the Tribal lands. One section of Tribes represented the aristocracy, landlords, and noblemen. Other Tribes consist of a Hinduised section of tribesmen, and the remaining are still largely isolated from the non-Tribal people.

### **Importance of Education in Life & Society**

Education affects the overall life in society and employment. The education of a person starts at pre-school, then college education, and ends with a degree or PG or professional courses. It is necessary to live in the modern world to acquire the skills and knowledge in their area of interest. Due to its importance, the center and State governments are spending huge money on the development of education. To encourage the people to study, they are providing better educational facilities by spending a large amount of money on infrastructural facilities and establishment of new institutions, a sanction of scholarships, other allowances and amenities to the poor and needy. This enables them to pursue higher, and professional studies, and to obtain employment opportunities in any industry or institution.

Education provides a platform for a decent livelihood. It employs the individual in public or private sector or to be helpful to enter in any professional service. The communication skills such as speech, signs, gestures and body language depending on the sound education of an individual. Educated people can manage sound, confident and optimistic body language. It helps a person to express his opinions in a better manner. They can efficiently communicate the audience in the meetings, or expressing their views through newspapers, letters, and video recordings.

### **Education of Tribal People in India**

Extending the system of primary education in the tribal areas and reserving places for tribal children in middle and high schools and higher education institutions are central to government policy, but efforts to improve a tribe's educational status have had mixed results. Recruitment of qualified teachers and the determination of the appropriate language of instruction also remain troublesome. Commission after commission on the "language question" has called for, at least at the primary level, in the students' native tongue. In some regions, tribal children entering school must begin by learning the official regional language, often unrelated to their tribal mother tongue. To acquire a formal education to their children, their commitment varied significantly, and they differ in extending education positively to their

children. The educational policy and its effectiveness vary from region to region. In the North-eastern parts of India, they have generally spared the wholesale onslaught of outsiders. To secure the political, and economic benefits, schooling has helped them in those regions. Due to the effective education system, the highly trained Tribes are getting opportunities in the professions as well as administrative positions.

It reveals that the dropout rates are high in Tribal schools. Many of the Tribal children are dropping from school at primary school and becoming illiterates in the later days. Few other Tribal children are continuing their studies up to high school, and some of them are becoming dropouts. Some of them are continuing in the higher studies and getting employment.

### **Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes**

Education is one of the components in the overall development of individuals, enabling them to greater awareness, a better comprehension of their social, political and cultural environment and also facilitating the improvement of their socio-economic conditions. These hold in the case of Tribes in India. As per the 66th round NSS report of 2009-2010, the literacy rate is 72.80 percent, while the Tribal literacy rate is 63.1 percent. It shows that variation is 10 percent of the total literacy rate of India. For the same period, Tribes literacy rate is 49.20 percent in Andhra Pradesh.

The enrollment of Tribal children was 11 percent in the primary school level, 8.7 percent in the upper primary school level and 6.4 percent in the secondary school level for the academic year 2010-2011. The dropouts between first to fifth classes was 35.60 percent against the National average of 27 percent. From first class to 10th class the Tribal students' dropout rate was 70.9 percent against the national average of 49.30 percent.

### **Findings of the study**

Out of 50 sample households, 15 are female, and 35 are male. Among the 15 female, only 20 percent are studied up to primary level education and another 7 percent up to high school level. Among 30 male sample households, 30 percent studied up to secondary level education, 9 percent up to high

school, 25 percent studied intermediate level, and another 15 percent studied higher education and professional education. The remaining are illiterates. As per the findings of the study, the main occupation of these tribals is lime burning. But in recent years, they diverted to agricultural labor and non-agricultural labor. About 62 percent of the illiterates mainly depend on labor activity, and the remaining are depending on non-agricultural activity at the nearby town areas for various fields. Out of 50 sample respondents in the study area, 84 percent of the respondents have nuclear families, 12 percent have joint families and the remaining are widows or single living.

Many of the respondents have pucca houses constructed by the government under weaker sections housing scheme. But nearly 60 percent of the respondents have no toilet facilities in their residencies. Most of the respondents are availing government welfare schemes such as Educational Fees reimbursement, Pensions, MGNREGS, SHGs, Loan Waiver Schemes, etc. Among the educated female, 25 percent are working as lower grade government employees and they married the employees. Another 32 percent are working as teachers in government schools.

Due to their employment, they are getting better income comparatively other women in the same village from the same community and so that they feel that they have socio-economic empowerment in the family as well as in the society. They are maintaining savings and constructed own houses in the urban areas. They are sending their children for Schools regularly to provide better education to their children on par with other forwarding communities. They opine that they are receiving respect in the society comparatively other tribal women in their village. In some occasions, they are getting more respect in society than some other forward and backward community women.

The sample male respondents opined that their economic conditions are better than the other ST illiterate families. Because of their educational opportunities, they got employment and due to this their economic conditions are improved. Now they felt that in all aspects their living conditions are better than the forward communities also. Due to

their employment opportunities, income levels are increased, and because of this, their living standards are improved. The socio-economic conditions of educated male and female Tribal people have been changed positively, and they have not been facing discrimination in society.

Compared with uneducated Tribal people, the educated Tribals are sending their children to the schools regularly that too most of their children are studying in corporate schools. They are living in a better environment than their neighbor illiterates. They are managing savings and using this money for their economic development. They are investing money in the real estate, or they are purchasing agricultural lands. Some of them have constructed the houses in their native village.

Due to their educational levels, they have been adopted the new technology, hybrid varieties of seeds, timely application of fertilizers and pesticides, etc. because of this reason; there is an improvement in the production and productivity of agriculture among the families of educated Tribes under study. They have adopted new technology in the water management in the cultivation of various crops under irrigation. Some of them are cultivating horticultural crops in a drought-prone Ananthapuramu district by adopting new technologies in agriculture. Due to education, they know of Government subsidies and are approaching the agricultural extension officers and other officials for various social welfare development schemes which are the cause and concern for the development of weaker sections.

Many of the educated Tribals have been helping their brothers and sisters by way of providing education to their children. Many of the educated Tribals are getting employment in the public or private sector. They are utilizing this opportunity for their overall development to come from the clutches of slavery, poor socio-economic conditions and seasonal unemployment in rural India.

## Conclusions

Tribals in many parts of India are living with self-respect in all aspects, even though their living conditions are poor. The tradition of the Tribals is different from all other communities in the society. They are the landmark for Indian heritage and

culture. After independence, the Tribals are getting more benefits/incentives from the Centre/State governments from time to time. Due to various welfare programmes and provisions of Scholarships, free education policy, RTE, etc. many of the Tribal parents are sending their children to the schools and then for further higher studies.

Due to the above reasons or educating the Tribes by many of the NGOs, the educational standards among the Tribes have increased in Rural India. Because of their educational standards, now many of the educated Tribes are doing jobs in the Public or Private Sector. Due to their employment opportunities the socio-economic conditions of the Tribes have been improved, and now they are getting respect in the society. Because of the educational levels among the Tribal women, they are empowered socially and economically in the society. They are proudly moving in the society on par with forwarding community people even in the villages where the untouchability is going on in recent days in some parts of the country.

The study reveals that the socio-economic empowerment of the rural poor depends on their educational standards. From this experience, most of the Tribal households in the rural areas are sending their children to schools regularly and then for higher studies also. Because of this change in the Tribal community, many of the Tribal children became doctors, engineers, Gazetted officers, Civil servants, and Teachers, etc. on par with neighboring forward Communities. Thanks to the State and Central government for providing better educational facilities to the Tribal children from School Education to the Higher education in all aspects.

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