

Government Initiatives and Educational Disparity among Tribal Communities of Idukki District in Kerala

Sabu P. J

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, St.Thomas' College (Autonomus), Thrissur, Kerala India

Abstract

One of the major determinants of tribal development is their attitude towards education. Constitution of India has installed various measures to improve the educational status of tribes. It gives special consideration to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India. This provision helps the STs in the form of reservation in educational institutions and jobs. However, achievements of STs in the area of education are pathetic when compared to the general population in the country. Educational disparity between general population and ST population is different from one state to another. This disparity is high in the state of Kerala. It is found that literacy of STs in Kerala is far below when compared to the literacy rate of general population. In this context, the present study examined the evidences in this area. Surprisingly, it is uncovered that one of the tribal communities has attained extremely high literacy rate which is almost in par with the literacy rate of general population of Kerala. On the contrary, majority of the tribal communities are far below when compared to the literacy rate of STs as well as general population. Most of the studies have given less attention to the inter-tribal community disparity on educational attainments especially in the context of high literacy of general population in Kerala. Therefore, this study seriously examined the differences in literacy rate among various tribal groups. It is found that very few tribal groups are highly advanced in literacy and majority of them are highly backward. Hence, government should give special attention to the tribal-heterogeneity while formulating educational policies for them.

Introduction

India is homeland to a number of tribal communities with diverse eco-cultural, socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. Government of India notified some of the tribal groups as Scheduled Tribes (STs) with respect to the provisions of Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. STs constitute 8.14 percent of the total population of the country with a number of 84.51 million. In the state of Kerala, 1 percent of the total population is tribes, comprising of 36 unique ST groups. Their major livelihood sources are hunting, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, contract labour, etc. literacy rate of the STs of India is only 47.10 percent when compared to the national literacy rate of 65.8 percent. The literacy rate of general population in Kerala is 90.92 percent when compared to 64.5 percent of ST population. From these figures, it is obvious that Kerala is far ahead in terms of literacy rate of general population. However, this trend is not reflected in the literacy rate of STs in Kerala. This trend will have serious repercussions in the social mobility of education among STs and other social groups. In this context, it is imperative to examine the government initiatives on education of STs in Kerala. More specifically, Government of India has been introduced various types of educational and non-educational programmes and schemes to develop the STs in India and in Kerala. An examination of these

programmes and schemes are essential to find out the nature of government initiatives on education.

Educational Programmes and Schemes for STs in India and in Kerala

Major programmes and schemes of central government on STs are (a) National fellowship and scholarship for higher education of ST students for colleges and universities, (b) national overseas scholarship for ST candidates, (c) national fellowship and scholarship for higher education of ST students (for identified top-class institutions), (d) pre-metric scholarship for ST students, (e) Ekalavya residential schools, (f) support to tribal research institutions, (g) schemes of centers of excellence, (h) institutional support for development and marketing of tribal produce, (i) minimum support price for minor research produce, (j) scheme of grant in aid to voluntary organizations working for welfare of STs, (k) scheme of strengthening education among ST girls in a low literacy districts, (l) special central assistance to states to tribal sub-scheme, (m) scheme of development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups, (n) vocational training centers in tribal areas, (o) establishment of ashram schools in tribal sub-plan areas and (p) centrally sponsored scheme of hostels for ST boys and ST girls.

Apart from these centrally sponsored schemes and programmes, Government of Kerala also has been implemented various measures to develop education of STs. These initiatives are (a) model residential schools, (b) peripatetic education to the primitive tribes, (c) tutorial scheme for students, (d) gothra sarathi, (e) samuhya patanamuri (community study centre in tribal hamlets), (f) 100 community study centers in tribal hamlets, (g) pre-metric & post-metric hostels for ST students, (h) special incentive to brilliant students, (i) ayyankali memorial talent search and development scheme, (j) assistance for study tour to school & college going students, (k) assistance to orphans, (l) supply of laptop to students, (m) tribal girl child endowment scheme, (n) engaging tribal teachers in primary schools, (o) post-metric scholarships for ST students, (p) pre-metric scholarship for ST students studying in ix & x classes, (q) vocational training institute & training centers for ST students, (r) nursery schools, balavadies, kindergartens, vikasvadies & crèches and (s) incentive to parents of ST students. From this list, it is obvious that, central and state government have introduced various types of programmes in India as well as Kerala.

From these schemes and programmes, it is found that, most of the initiatives have been focused on STs in general rather than individual tribal sub-groups. It is essential to examine the problems of tribal sub-groups also. It is mainly because the demographic pattern and geographical location of tribal sub-groups are extremely unique. In this context, it is presumed that, proper attention of tribal uniqueness is essential. In order to examine the impact and intensity of these programmes and schemes, the present study has selected one of the parameters of basic educational attainments i. e. literacy.

Literacy Rates among Tribal Communities in Kerala

The literacy rate among tribal communities as well as STs is exhibited in Table 1. It is clear that literacy rate among tribal communities is extremely uneven. It varies from 96.79 percent (Mala Arayar) to 39.63 percent (Cholanaickan) for the period 2013. From these figures, it is evident that one of the tribal community in highly advanced in terms of literacy and others are comparatively backward. On the one hand, some of the tribal communities such as Wayanad Kadar (86.46 percent), Kanikkar (90.06 percent), Kurichiyan (83.82 percent), Kurumar (86.47 percent), Thachanadan (80.73 percent), Karimpalan (86.15 percent), Ulladan (88.45 percent), Uraly (89.16 percent) and Mala Panickar (83.04 percent) have achieved

comparatively better position in literacy rate. On the other hand, some of the tribal communities such as Adiyar (66.26 percent), Arnadan (49.28 percent), Eravalan (50.38 percent), Hill Pulaya (65.55 percent), Irular (60.01 percent), Kudiya (79.69 percent), Mala Pandaram (51.73 percent), Malasar (50.40 percent), Maha Malasar (43.55 percent), Malayan (63.23 percent), Mannan (72.66 percent), Muthuvan (68.98 percent), Mudugar (64.15 percent), Palliyan (78.28 percent), Paniyan (65.19 percent), Mala Vettuvan (67.47 percent), Mavilan (77.74 percent), (Vetta Kuruman (67.56 percent), Kadar (58.74 percent), Kattunayakan (59.37 percent) and Kurumbar (56.36 percent) are extremely backward in literacy rate during the period 2013.

Table 1 -Literacy Rates of Various Tribal Communities in Kerala

Community	Literacy (%)	Community	Literacy	Community	Literacy (%)
Adiyar	66.26	Mala Pandaram	51.73	Thachanadan	80.73
Arnadan	49.28	Malai Vedan	86.32	Mavilan	77.74
Eravalan	50.38	Malasar	50.40	Karimpalan	86.15
Hill Pulaya	65.55	Malayan	63.23	Vetta Kuruman	67.56
Irular	60.01	Mannan	72.66	Mala Panickar	83.04
Wayanad Kadar	86.46	Muthuvan	68.98	Kadar	58.74
Kanikkar	90.06	Mudugar	64.15	Kattunayakan	59.37
Kudiya	79.69	Palliyan	78.28	Koraga	78.35
Kurichiyar	83.82	Paniyan	65.19	Kurumbar	56.36
Kurumar	86.47	Ulladan	88.45		Cholanaickan
Maha Malasar	43.55	Uraly	89.16	ST in Kerala	64.5
Mala Arayar	96.79	Mala Vettuvan	67.47		

Source: Draft report on the socio-economic status of STs in Kerala; Scheduled Tribes Development Department; Government of Kerala, 2013

From these statistics, it is obvious that educational growth is highly scattered among tribal communities in Kerala. A lion's share of the tribal communities is suffering from severe educational backwardness in terms of literacy rate at the grass root level itself. Government has been implemented various types of programmes and schemes to improve the educational state of STs in India as well as in Kerala. However, educational outcomes in terms of literacy rate are extremely uneven among tribal communities in Kerala. In this context, present study attempts to examine the constraints of tribal groups in the path of high literacy rate (Manjusha, 2013; Haseena V.A & Ajims P. Mohammed, 2014; Jobin Joy & Srihari, 2014; Thanga Durai, 2015; Varghese, 2016).

It is evident that, Mala Arayan tribal group is highly advanced in literacy rate when compared to other tribal groups. Majority of the Mala Arayan tribal group locates in Idukki district. This group seems to have achieved immensely in the area of literacy. Further, it is found that most of the tribal groups except Mala Arayan group are appears to be highly backward in educational attainments (George, & Mohan

Kumar 2007; George, 2011; Indu, 2013; Paul & Rajasenan, 2013). Moreover, educational attainments among tribal groups of this group would give insights to fine-tune the tribal educational policies in the long run. Therefore, this study concentrated on this district. By and large, the causes behind this backwardness may be classified into external and internal constraints.

Constraints of Educational Attainments among Tribal Groups in Idukki

Inadequacy of group-specific programmes and schemes on education, administrative delays, policy lags are seem to be the major external constraints associated with tribal education. Further, 'follow-up' of implemented schemes are also seems to be another major hurdle in the balanced educational development among tribal groups. Literacy programmes of the government should have deep focus on the uniqueness of each tribal group rather than STs in general. School level factors also appear to affect tribal education substantially. Content and pedagogy, medium of instruction, syllabi, teacher attitude towards cultural diversity, nature of physical infrastructure, level of peer group and examination system are also would affect the education status of tribal sub-groups.

Along with these external bottlenecks, some of the internal constraints are also appear to be disturbing the tribal groups in the journey towards educational attainments. For instance, geographical location is supposed to be a major problem in accessing schools and other educational facilities. At the same time, it may be argued that government should seriously consider this dimension of their problem and make sufficient facilities for their education. One of the major reasons seems to be their educational backwardness is household and /or parental attitude towards education. Majority of the parents treat that formal education and training is essential to lead a happy life. Parental attitude towards gender equity seems to be another dimension of the educational inequity. Some of the parents prefer male-education is essential for the development of their family. On the contrary, some of the parents treat female-education is imperative to familial growth.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The present study attempts to examine the level of disparity in the level of literacy rate among tribal communities in Kerala. It is found that literacy rates of tribal communities are extremely diverse and highly uneven. Therefore, it is necessary to give special attention in the development of tribal education. More specifically, this scenario requires due care from various corners such as policy makers, educational institutions, tribal communities and voluntary organizations.

Firstly, most of the governmental initiatives focus on the STs in general rather than individual tribal communities in particular. This approach is not sustainable in the long run. Some of the tribal communities are highly advanced and majority of them are extremely backward with respect to educational parameters. Apart from the primitive tribal groups, there are some of the tribal groups which require extra focus and attention. Given the resource constraints, government should give due care to the backward groups in the form of various types of individual-specific tribal programmes and schemes on education.

It may be concluded that parental education has a crucial role in determining the familial position in education. Therefore, educational institutions can start special mission in the tribal areas to improve the literacy rates among tribal sub-groups. This would improve the educational status of their wards in the long run. Government should create special incentive systems to participating schools in this mission. Further, government can sponsor these programmes at least in the long run. Tribal communities should take special initiatives for their own development. But tribal

households and head of the households may not be equipped to execute these policies. Therefore, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, local self govts. and tribal households should move hand in hand. These measures will improve the tribal education in the long run.

REFERENCES

- George (2011): “Higher Education in Kerala: How Inclusive is it to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?” Education Exclusion and Economic Growth, Working Paper Series, Volume 1, Number 4, 2011, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy [CSSEIP], Cochin University of Science and Technology [CUSAT]
- George, Joy & Mohan Kumar P. S (2007): Socio-Economic Impact of Job Reservation: “A Comparative Study of the Christian Malai Arayans and other Hill Tribes in Idukki and Kottayam Districts of Kerala” Thesis submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2007.
- Haseena V.A & Ajims P. Mohammed (2014): Scope of Education and Dropout among Tribal Students in Kerala -A Study of Scheduled Tribes in Attappady, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Volume 4, Issue 1, January 2014
- Indu V Menon (2013): “An Analytical Study of Primary Education of Tribal’s of Kerala with Special Reference to Peripatetic Schools Single Schools and Balavijnhana Kendrs”, *Proceeding of the Global Summit on Education*, 11-12 March 2013, Kuala Lumpur.
- Jobin Joy & Srihari, (2014): “A Case study on the School Dropout Scheduled Tribal Students of Wayanad District, Kerala”, *Research Journal of Educational Sciences*, Vol. 2(3), pp1-6.
- Manjusha (2013): “Lights and Shadows of Tribal Development in Kerala: A Study on the Muthuvan Tribe of Edamalakkudy Tribal Settlement in Idukki District”, *Dawn Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp 274-283.
- Paul, Binu P & Rajasenan D (2013): “Income, Livelihood and Education of Tribal Communities in Kerala-Exploring Inter-Community Disparities in Kerala”, Thesis Submitted to Cochin University of Science and Technology, Cochin, 2013.
- Thanga durai Lenin (2015): “Empowerment of Tribal Children of Attapady”, *Indian journal of Applied Research*, Kerala, Vol.5, No.22, December 2015, pp 42-44.
- Varghese, Grace (2016): “Social Diversity among the Tribal Students in Kerala: A Sociological Study”, *Advance Research Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, June, 2016, pp 136-141.