



Role of Ashram School in Tribal Education : A Study of a Block in Jharsuguda District

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Education among tribal is given highest priority for the simple reason that it is key to socio-economic development of the tribal. Education enables them to perform their role to be useful citizen in democracy. Development of the state lies with the development of the backward people who are socio-economically disadvantaged and educationally backward in relation to total population. Education is the cornerstone of development. How much education is successful is evident from the literacy rate. As per 2001 census, literacy rate among tribal population records 37.37% in Odisha as against 47.1% in India, out of which male literacy constitute 23.37% of tribal population.

Literacy of Scheduled Tribe in Odisha

Year	Percentage of literacy		Tribal disparity
	Total	STs	
1961	21.66	7.36	14.30
1971	26.18	9.46	16.72
1981	34.23	13.96	20.27
1991	49.09	22.31	26.78
2001	63.08	37.37	25.71

Source: 2001 census report

The tribal disparity in literacy rate steadily increased from 1961 to 1991 and a marginal decrease was found out in 2001. The pace of improvement in the literacy rate has been very slow as compared to the relatively faster pace of improvement in the literacy rate of general caste. The above disparities need to be bridged. Over the years, various strategies and educational institutions have been increased in tribal areas to strengthen the educational lease of the tribal. One of such measure is the opening of a number of Ashram Schools in tribal areas. These schools are enriched with residential facilities and incentive programmes which are provided under five year plan by the ST and SC Development Department of the State Government operating since 1984-86. These are residential middle schools which function like the general schools in a highly systematic structured framework. It has been established in the Tribal Sub Plan areas. Tribal children have been provided free boarding and lodging facilities in the Ashram Schools. This scheme was originally a centrally sponsored scheme and now operated by the State Government.



The purpose of the Ashram School is to bring about the total development of tribal children with an emphasis on vocational education which can train them to stand on their own legs and become idealistic and selfless independent citizens of the nation. As the schools are residential, it can reduce the incidence of student's absenteeism in school, improve the standard of education at the primary level and reduce the burden of their parents from incurring expenditure on their children's education. Different facilities like school building, playground, and free kitchen, gender teaching material, furniture, dress, books and economic resources have been provided to motivate the tribal children and their parents towards education. Again, by staying in the Ashram School during the crucial years of schooling from five to sixteen years, they will definitely continue their study in the school without dropping from the midway. Above all, an effective socialization can grow among tribal children which will ensure better level of educational attainment among them. Ashram Schools are specially designed to suit children of tribal background to attain better education. Generally Ashram Schools provide education from class I to class VII or class IV or V in certain area.

Objectives of the study:

- a) To investigate the socio-economic background of the students
- b) To evaluate the facilities of Ashram School
- c) To evaluate the performance of students
- d) To evaluate the educational aspirations of the students in the Ashram School.

The problem to be studied:

The researcher has somehow expressed her dissatisfaction about the educational progress of tribal in the Ashram School. A large amount of money has been spent under different five year plans under the head of special education for tribal. A separate department is working for their social security and welfare but these programmes could not make much headway. How far these Ashram Schools are successful to uplift the tribal children? Whether the purpose of education for tribal gets solved by the Ashram Schools? Whether Vocational training is properly provided to them? And so on. In order to answer these questions a systematic investigation is done by the researcher to evaluate the Ashram Schools and suggest some points which will assist Government administrators to get an idea for the successful establishment of these schools and thereby actions can be taken for further programmes.

Strategy of investigation:

The researcher visited about all Ashram Schools in a block of Jharsuguda District, communicated with the teachers, collect data from the headmaster, collect a representative sample of 100 students from different Ashram Schools.

The study was conducted in a block out of the five blocks of Jharsuguda District which comes under the Tribal Sub Plan area. Tribal population in this block constitute 40% of the total population, majority of them reside in rural areas. There is a network of 11 Ashram Schools in this block till today. The beneficiaries of Ashram School include children of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and OBC & General category.



The following table shows the ST beneficiaries of Ashram School:

Name of the School	Class-I		Class-II		Class-III		Class-IV		Class-V		Class-VI		Class-VII		Class-VIII		Total	
	ST		ST		ST		ST		ST		ST		ST		ST		ST	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Bajari A.S.	6	3	2	12	2	17	2	15	2	6	2	20	3	10	-	-	19	82
Kudaloi A.S.	4	4	3	8	3	8	6	14	2	20	6	16	2	24	8	17	34	111
Grindola A.S.	10	5	9	7	11	12	8	29	6	19	0	24	0	16	0	15	44	121
Jorabaga A.S.	9	7	3	3	6	1	9	12	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	30
Attabira A.S.	2	7	1	6	4	13	2	9	3	13	0	18	0	17	0	0	12	101
Pandari A.S.	2	6	1	8	0	9	2	12	1	16	2	17	0	24	2	21	10	113
Remanda A.S.	3	4	0	3	0	4	3	11	4	12	2	25	6	24	0	0	18	83
Gudiali A.S.	2	4	2	4	1	7	2	13	0	10	0	7	0	3	0	0	7	47
Piplikani A.S.	0	2	1	2	0	8	1	11	0	8	0	15	0	17	1	15	3	78
Chhualibera A.S.	5	17	7	8	13	15	20	16	33	10	59	31	40	28	0	0	177	125
Dalgaon A.S.	9	2	5	11	6	9	11	15	17	17	43	22	34	12	0	0	125	88

(The report is collected from the Chairman of the Block.)

Ashram School definitely uplifts the poor & deprived tribal children as tribal children are very poor and their parents can not just afford to send their children to school. Sending their children to school is a matter of economics for them which may dislocate their traditional pattern of division of labor. Poverty is a major contributing factor for their educational backwardness. It has been observed that parents of more than 60% children of the Ashram Schools are labourers, 20% are farmers, 10% are employees in the coal mines or Government Servant. Ashram Schools have evolved to cater the socio economic and

educational needs of the tribal children by providing free boarding and lodging facilities. But an assessment of the children's educational expenditure other than fooding and lodging also include expenditure on purchase of note books, reference books and stationeries, dresses for student, money for better treatment in private hospital and traveling from home to school and back to home by the students during holidays and vacation, private tuition fees for various causes like celebration of *puja* and picnic etc. These put economic pressures on parents though these are incidental expenses as viewed by some parents.



The researcher tried to evaluate the dropout rate of tribal children from class wise student's enrollment.

Class	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	Total Ashram Schools
No. of ST stud- ents	113	101	149	223	213	309	260	11

It has been observed that the number of tribal children enrolled is less in number in lower classes and in the higher classes like class V, VI and VII student's enrollment is more. The highest enrollment in class VI is due to the outside students entering in class VI directly with very poor standard. The number of student's decreases in higher class VII. When they entered into high schools they are identified with very poor results. Very few students have secured somehow pass marks in high school examinations.

Some suggestions:

- 1) The existing weaknesses of the Ashram Schools should be promptly tackled by provisions like timely payment of stipend and timely supply of reading and writing materials as per requirement may be ensured, vacancies in teaching and clerical posts should be filled up immediately, infrastructure including library facilities, computer, playground, provision of water, electricity, toilet, cot have to be provided and properly maintained.
- 2) Supplemental, remedial classes and special coaching classes for poor students, involvement of subject expert's technical guidance should be promoted.

- 3) Educational provision through vocational education is needed to be strengthened. Vocational craft oriented education, education on games, sports; agriculture must be imparted to the students. Specially weak students may be promoted in that respect. Vocational training will instill confidence among students and their parents.
- 4) Provision of resource support and capacity building is a major pre-requisite in educational institutions. Maximum exposure to the tribal children can give them opportunity to excel in their skills.
- 5) Massive parental education through adult education can generate awareness and love for education among the tribal.
- 6) Talented tribal children should be identified and nurtured in the field they are interested. Tribal children are very brave and fearless. They should be given spiritual instruction, meditation in the school. Physical exercise, physical training should be imparted regularly so that they can be promoted to join Indian Army and Police and can serve the nation.
- 7) They will be promoted in games and sports they can do better. The researcher found out one tribal boy is excellent in archery without training in the Ashram school. If he will be given proper training he can be a national / international level player like Dilip Tirkey of Sundergarh district.
- 8) As the name "Ashram" suggests a powerful symbol throughout Hindu society where the Hindu Kings entered in 'Gurukul' to learn the art of warfare with education, the modern Ashram school should be



maintained in this way in a natural surrounding by giving value best education to create brave, faithful jawan 'Hero' for future whose potentialities can be best utilized for the nation. They will be the valuable human resources of our country.

- 9) Teachers should motivate the tribal students in education in school and conduct regular examination, review of examination results, career counseling of students, select the weak students and give them special care to uplift in educational sphere.
- 10) Primary education and proper evaluation of primary students is essential to get them admitted to the high school. Otherwise they will find it difficult to cope up with the high school syllabus.
- 11) Teachers and students should be made free from hostel management and concentrate more on studies and extra coaching and remedial classes.

Above all, firm determination with dedication of the teachers, government and community can make the Ashram school a role model like 'Shantiniketan' which can give sight to the educationally impaired, backward tribal children and empower the tribal to look at their problem in civil societies.

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