



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Issues and Challenges



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because there is a disturbingly linear relationship between poverty and illiteracy. And the figure of illiteracy is even more disturbing as the recent study by UNESCO in 2006 points that 771 million adults are illiterate and this accounts for 18% of the world population. Further narrowing down, 64% of the illiterate adults are women.

Empowerment of women succinctly put by Paz is as follows, "The ability to direct and control one's own life" (Paz, 1990). The vision of India or any other nation will only be complete when the women are said to be empowered compared to the current situation. In the process of empowering women, male counterparts should also recognize their gargantuan responsibility in making the world a better place for women to exercise their rights and lead a normal life. A harmony is born if and only if both men and women appreciate each other's participation in the social and political life of the community. And education is again emphasized to be instrumental in bringing about this harmony. In the words of Burma's democratic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, "Education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all."

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Disparity in Tribal Education ***An Exploratory Analysis***

K. KRITHIGA AND R. ANNAPOORANI

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important social resource and a means of reducing inequality in society. Knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through education helps one to achieve a desired quality of life. Therefore, education described as initiation into worthwhile activities or modes of thought and conduct.

According to Manmohan Singh (2006), "Education is an urgent priority, which needs to be attended to immediately." He stressed the need for huge investments to set-up more universities, professional colleges, nursing schools, etc. to meet the emerging domestic and international demand for various professional services. He also emphasized the need of a policy regime which facilitates investment in educational services. In

the view of George (2007) education is crucial to development as it provides the individual with adequate skills for participating in various economic activities. During XI Five year plan the Government of India has allotted Rs. 56,450 lakhs for the development of education.

The importance of education is more pronounced for the tribals since they account for sizeable proportion of India's population -8.21 percent according to 2001 census. For the development of the tribal community education is most important element. It is a powerful instrument to change the values and attitude of the people and to create in them the urge of the necessary motivation to achieve social mobility and social ascendancy. According to Chakarvarty (2007) the overall development of tribals should include their empowerment in education. It is a pity that massive vacancies exist in tribal regions because of non-availability of educated tribals. However, the educational status of tribal population is poor as indicated by the literacy rate of 41.5 percent as compared to All India average of 65.4 percent. Hence, there is need for improving the literacy of tribals.

Realizing the importance of tribal education the Government had formulated many programmes to improve tribal education. Some of the measures are:

- Primary education continued through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with the participation of ST parents/guardians in activities of school.
- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas.
- Ashram schools/residential schools will be established on a large scale in tribal areas.
- Incentives schemes will be formulated for the STs, keeping in view their special needs and lifestyle.
- Mid-day meals acts as a support service to increase retention rates.

However, on an average in year 2001, difference between the literacy rate of general population and that of scheduled tribes has been around 15 percent. While at the national level,

literacy among males was estimated as 75.9 percent and for females as 54.2 percent, the corresponding figures with regard to tribal males and females were found to be 59.2 percent and 34.8 percent.

In India research attempts (Ashuthosh Thakar (2001), Raghunath Rath (2006), Kukreti (2004), etc.) were made at analyzing the status of tribal education. But there had been little attempt concentrating on the analysis of disparity in tribal education. Hence the current study on "Disparity in tribal education—An exploratory analysis" is formulated with the expectation to fill up the research gap. The basic objectives of the study are:

- To find out the disparity in literacy rate, enrolment rate and composite educational index between tribal males and females, and
- To find out the disparity in literacy rate, enrolment rate and composite educational index between two tribal groups—Kurumbas and Todas.

METHODOLOGY

The study was related to Manjakombai and Avalanchi areas in Ooty block, Nilgiri District due to easy assessability. The required data related to general background, family background, enrolment, etc. are collected by administering the interview schedule from 65 households.

The study formulated the hypothesis that,

1. There is no disparity in literacy among tribal males and females, and
2. There is no disparity in tribal literacy among Kurumbas and Todas.

The study tried to construct composite educational index for the general and the scheduled tribes, following the approach of Nauriyal and Shahoo (2010). The composite educational index was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Composite Educational Index (CEI)} = (2 * \text{LI} + \text{GI})/3$$

where LI (Literacy Index) =
$$\frac{\text{Actual literacy rate} - \text{Minimum literacy rate}}{\text{Maximum literacy rate} - \text{Minimum literacy rate}}$$

GI (GER Index) =
$$\frac{\text{Actual gross enrolment ratio} - \text{Minimum gross enrolment ratio rate}}{\text{Maximum gross enrolment ratio} - \text{Minimum gross enrolment ratio}}$$

where maximum value is 100 and minimum value is 0.

The disparity in literacy rate between males and females among selected population has been estimated using Sopher's (1974) disparity index. The index may be written as follows:

$$D = \log(X_2/X_1) + \log(Q-X_1)/Q-X_2$$

where X_1 and X_2 are per cent literate among the two groups of population and Q greater than 100. The index as proposed by Sopher lacks in certain desirable properties. Indicating this Kundu and Rao (1986) proposed Q greater than 200 and the current study follows the same. Lower value indicates lower disparity and higher values indicates higher disparity.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

(A) Disparity in Literacy Rate

Table 1 represents the male and female literacy rate for the selected tribal groups.

TABLE I
Disparity in Literacy Rate

Sl. No. Groups	Male Literacy Rate	Female Literacy Rate	Overall Literacy Rate	Disparity Among Male and Females	Disparity Among two tribal groups
1. Kurumbas	83.33	75.56	78.26	1.3381	1.1714
2. Todas	87.5	98.04	92.93	1.2365	.

The disparity in literacy rate between males and females were found to be higher among Kurumbas (1.3381) as compared to Todas (1.2365). The disparity in literacy rate of two groups was 1.1714.

(B) Disparity in Enrolment Rate

The disparity in the enrolment of Kurumbas and Todas are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Disparity in Enrolment Rate

Sl. No. Groups	Male Enrolment Rate	Female Enrolment Rate	Overall Enrolment Rate	Disparity Among Male and Females	Disparity Among two groups
1. Kurumbas	91.40	48.10	54.76	5.1997	1.1217
2. Todas	53.33	50.49	51.83	1.1189	

The disparity in enrolment rate between males and females were found to be higher among Kurumbas (5.1997) as compared to Todas (1.1189). The disparity in enrolment rate of two groups was 1.1217.

(C) Disparity in Composite Education Index

Using the two basic educational parameters—literacy rates and gross enrolment ratios the composite educational index was calculated and given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Composite Education Index of Kurumbas and Todas

Sl. No. Groups	Male	Female	Overall	Disparity Among Male and Females	Disparity Among two groups
1. Kurumbas	0.66	0.60	0.77	1.1010	1.1855
2. Todas	0.72	0.81	0.91	1.1267	

The disparity in composite education index between males and females were found to be higher among Todas (1.1267) as compared to Kurumbas (1.1010). The disparity in composite education index of two groups was 1.1855.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the followings suggestions were recommended to reduce the disparity in tribal education:

- To increase the enrolment and reduce dropout among the tribal students;
- Participation of work among children should be reduced;
- Creating awareness to the tribal families about the education facilities provided by Government; and
- Motivating all the parents to send the children to school and not to work.

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