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Tribal Youth and Development of Education through Seasonal Schools for Migratory Nomads of Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

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While all people have a right to education, it is especially urgent for the tens of millions of children who are backward, socially and economically. Without safe, quality education, and the long-term corollary benefits of greater social, economic and political stability, the risk of a lifetime of poverty and misery multiplies dramatically. The overall literacy rate of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, as per census 2011, is 68.7 per cent. Again, as per census 2001, the literacy level of STs is 37.5 per cent, which is quite low. The male and female literacy levels stand at 48.2 and 25.5 per cent, respectively, which show that the literacy level among females is abysmally low. While the figures depict the education backwardness in the tribes in general, however, it also depicts the gender disparity in education, in particular. Although special provisions in the form of reservations in higher education and jobs have been made, the higher drop-out ratio and skimpy enrolment at the primary and middle school stages makes reservations kind of unproductive. Since education is the significant tool of social transformation, particularly of young minds, this paper, therefore evaluates the efforts made by the government of Jammu and Kashmir in providing the educational facilities to the nomadic children. The paper aims to highlight the effectiveness of Mobile Primary Schools in providing education to the transitory community.

INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir lies in India's northwest corner, bordering Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China. Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are the three geographical divisions of Jammu and Kashmir. Physical, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics of the three

regions differ significantly. Jammu province and Kashmir valley make up the state's administrative division. The state's winter capital is Jammu, and the summer capital is Kashmir. The state is divided into 22 districts, 148 blocks, 1969 Panchayat Constituencies, 13786 Panchayat Constituencies, 87

Assembly Constituencies, and 6 Parliamentary Constituencies.

Jammu and Kashmir is also home to a variety of tribal communities, each of which adds a unique tint to the state's multi-colored cultural tapestry. These tribes have established themselves in every nook and cranny of the state. The state's tribal people, their culture, traditions, modes of communication, or simply their cuisine set them apart from the rest of people. Anthropologists from throughout the Indian subcontinent have flocked to the region, eager to learn more about the lives and cultures of the state's numerous tribes. According to the 2011 census, the state's total population is 1,25,41,302. According to the census, there are 14,93,299 STs in the state, accounting for 11.9 percent of the total population. The most recent census numbers (Census 2011) on the population of each of the twelve ST communities are not yet available. However, according to census 2001, Gujjar is the most populous Scheduled Tribe, with a population of 763,806 people, accounting for 67.2 percent of the total tribal population, followed by Bot (96,698), Bakkerwal (60,724), and Brokpa (60,724). (51,957). Gujjar, Bot, Bakkerwal, and Brokpa make up around 88 percent of the whole tribal population, while Balti, Purigpa, and Gaddi make up about 10.2 percent of the overall tribal population. The remaining five tribes of Sippi, Changpa, Mon, Garra, and Beda account for 1.9 percent of the remaining population. Punch and Rajouri districts have the most Gujjars, followed by Anantnag, Udhampur, and Doda. Leh, Anantnag, and Baramula, respectively, contain the highest concentrations of Bot, Bakerwals, and Brokpas. Balti and Purigpa are primarily found in the Kargil and Kathua districts.

Gujjars and Bakkerwals combined account for 8.1 percent of the state's total population, making them the state's third largest ethnic group. They have distinct social, cultural, and linguistic identities. These tribes are largely nomadic, but they have become more settled in recent years. They have now settled in greater numbers in permanent communities in the plains abutting the slopes, and agriculture has become their primary source of income. Many semi-settled Gujjars, on the other hand, have blended agriculture with pastoralism. During the summer, they and their cattle migrate to the lower and middle mountains of PirPanjal in search of better pastures, then return to the plains in the winter. Bakkerwals who raise goats and sheep for a living are primarily pastoral nomads. During the summer, they leave their homes and relocate to the Himalayan highlands, where they spend the winters in the plains and Shivalik foothills. The Bakkerwals go across the most isolated parts of the mountains on their summer voyage to reach the upper pastures of the PirPanjal range, where they dwell in makeshift hutments and keep an eye on their herd of cattle. As a result, the majority of STs' lives are migratory, and they live in intermittent habitations throughout the interior and distant regions. Tribal areas are frequently isolated and lack effective communication, which makes it difficult for them to sustain their cultural ethos. Gujjars and Bakkerwals have the worst socioeconomic situations of all the tribes. The tribes are heterogeneous with their own cultural tradition and social practices. Each tribe has its own music and songs, dance and folk tales, myths of origin and stories of migration which generates a feeling of belongingness among its members.

Youth and Education

Youth development is critical for any nation's success. The global population is still relatively young, with 1.15 billion persons aged 15 to 24 accounting for 17.8% of the overall population (Gale et al., 1982). Young make up 61.8 percent of the world's total youth population of 1.2 billion in Asia and the Pacific, up from 57.7% in 2000 (U.N. 2009). As per United Nations publication close to 85 per cent of this population lives in the developing nations. About 9/10 young people live in less developed nations to quote UNFPA. Asia accounts for the majority, with 60 per cent of total, followed by Africa with 15 per cent and Latin America and Caribbean with 10 per cent. Remaining 15 per cent resides in the developed regions and countries. India has the world's highest number of young people (10 to 24 years) with 365 million, which constitutes 28 per cent of its total population although in terms of total population India stands next to China which has 269 million young people. The United Nations General Assembly defined "youth" as people aged 15 to 24. This definition was created in honor of the 1985 International Year of Youth, which was celebrated all around the world. As the yearly yearbook of statistics issued by the United Nations system on demographics, education, employment, and health illustrates, all United Nations statistics on youth are based on this criteria. It's also vital to distinguish between teenagers (ages 13 to 19) and young adults (ages 20 to 24) under the category of "youth," because the sociological, psychological, and health issues they experience are likely to be different (DESA, 2002). Youth's meaning and how society views it varies over time and space, as well as within societies. Youth, in particular, has a

significant gender dimension: boys and girls may have very diverse experiences with being young. As a result, in addition to being defined chronologically (as a period of time between specific ages), youth is also defined functionally (as a process of passage from childhood to maturity marked by rituals or physical changes) and culturally (as a period of time between certain ages) (pertaining to the role that individuals play in a given social context).

Because 'youth' is generally referred to as a person leaving compulsory education and obtaining their first job, age is regarded the easiest way to describe youth, particularly in relation to education and employment. As a result, youth is best described as a phase of transition from childhood dependence to maturity independence. As a result, youth as a category is more variable than other set age categories (as defined by the United Nations).

While all people have a right to education, it is especially urgent for the tens of millions of children who are backward, socially and economically. Without safe, quality education, and the long-term corollary benefits of greater social, economic and political stability, the risk of a lifetime of poverty and misery multiplies dramatically. Worse, future generations are denied the knowledge and opportunities critical to their personal betterment and that of their societies. Education is, at its most basic level, about recognizing and meeting basic human rights and human dignity. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are critical, to be sure, but education also provides the cognitive, physical, and psychological protection that children need to pursue freedom and work toward the peaceful development of their families, communities, and countries. Without the backbone of education and the critical reasoning

skills and opportunities it provides, a young body and mind is more susceptible to being sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks. Moreover, studies show that educating girls and women is one of the most effective investments a country can make – one whose dividends include improved maternal and child health, improved access to education, and greater economic growth. Schools also serve as the effective means of communication to teach about the basic health care. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms education to all without discrimination and declares primary education as free and compulsory, that secondary education in different forms (including technical and vocational training) should be made available to all by every means of appropriate, and that the higher levels of education should be made available to all on the basis of merit.

Educational Status of the STs of Jammu and Kashmir

The overall literacy rate of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, as per census 2011, is 68.7 per cent. Again, as per census 2001, the literacy level of STs is 37.5 per cent, which is quite low. The male and female literacy levels stand at 48.2 and 25.5 per cent, respectively, which show that the literacy level among females is abysmally low. While the figures depict the education backwardness in the tribes in general, however, it also depicts the gender disparity in education, in particular. Since education is the significant tool of social transformation, particularly of young minds, this paper, therefore evaluates the efforts made by the government of Jammu and Kashmir in providing the educational facilities to the nomadic children. The paper aims to highlight the effectiveness of Mobile Primary

Schools in providing education to the transitory community.

The migratory and sporadic nature of tribe makes development a difficult process for them. The reasons for their low levels of literacy owes to the lack of proper educational facilities. However, schooling is available to all migratory nomads during the winter in the form of various stationary and permanent schools all over the state. But the summer locations where the number of nomadic children is quite high, as generally these children move to these places along with their parents, these facilities are less. The Jammu and Kashmir government, with an aim of providing education to the nomadic children, had started a novel concept of Mobile Primary Schools (MSPs), commonly known as mobile schools during 1970s. These schools designed to impart education to the nomadic children in upper regions of PirPanjal range, however, could not continue for long after the onset of militancy in late 1980s. However, the government of Jammu and Kashmir revived the concept of mobile schools during the tenure of the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as the Chief Minister of the state. Under this, 'Seasonal Educational Schools' were set up for the education of the children of the nomadic populations which are also known as 'Seasonal Centers' or 'Seasonal Camps'. The teachers at these seasonal schools do not accompany the nomadic children but continue to remain at the temporary camps of the nomads and provide education to those children who come to higher reaches with their families. The move to provide the continuous educational support to the migratory nomadic children was taken for the first the time in the year 2005 by setting up three seasonal camps in three separate locations on experimental basis in

Poonch district of Jammu region.

As per the data released by the Chief Education Officer, Poonch, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, during 2006 summer under innovation in education programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 84 seasonal schools were opened in which academic support was provided to 4490 children who included 2503 boys and 1987 girls. This enrollment included 789 never enrolled children. A total of 379 boys and 410 girls got enrolled for the first time out of which 132 children were streamlined in regular schools during 2006-07. Another 2402 children of ST community were also among the children who were provided academic support in these seasonal centers. The government arranged such classes by providing tents in junction with the few NGOs. As per the initial plan of the government, these seasonal centers were supposed to include vocational training programmes for duration of three months each at cluster level or school level where at least 50 boys or girls would have been available at the seasonal schooling camps during the summer migration period. Besides, remedial teaching was also to be provided to the low achiever and zero periods were to be included during the morning hours for the students with very low achievement levels.

Lacunae and Shortcomings

The lack of adequate facilities in these seasonal schools meant for the nomadic children of Jammu and Kashmir makes them pathetic. Despite the claims of government that they have provided the tents, blackboards, chairs and chalk in these centers the actual condition of these centers stand opposite to these claims. The teachers have to take the classes in open sky and as such get easily affected by any

change in weather. The tents that have been provided initially in the beginning of these schools back in the year 2005 have never been replaced and therefore, are in tatters. Due to lack of proper infrastructure, the classes are not organized regularly and also, there is no proper schedule for classes. No blackboards or other necessary stationary is available in any of these centers all over the state.

The seasonal schools do not provide Mid-Day Meals to the enrolled children, the provision of which could attract greater number of children. Also, none of such school has teaching- learning material with them which is a necessary aid in learning process. Despite the government directions to give the teaching-learning material worth rupees 2500 per seasonal centre, on contrary the authorities were giving the teaching and learning material to the centers worth less than half of the sanctioned amount (as per the report in local newspaper, 2013). The Education Volunteers (EVs) are engaged for four months at a stipend of Rs 4000 per month and in most cases the clerks in the ZEO offices take commission of Rs 1000 per month. Moreover, the amount is not released monthly but after months of the closure of these seasonal centers. The problem of corruption is rampant in the seasonal centers of Jammu and Kashmir. Owing to the corruption and other factors such as, low salary, temporary nature of job, harsh work conditions the EVs lack devotion and dedication. Also, the unavailability of proper teaching and learning material makes it difficult for EVs to enrich their knowledge. This deficiency in the knowledge of EVs has direct repercussion on the quality of education being imparted in these seasonal centers. Since 2005, there has been no increment in the salary of EVs, as demanded by them.

In the absence of proper schooling environment children in these schools are not able to concentrate properly. There is no proper grading of classes and as such all the students are made to sit together despite their age and class differences. Each seasonal school is handled by one teacher who teaches all subjects to all students at the same time.

Recommendations

As far as the Seasonal schools are concerned, there is an immediate need of improvising the infrastructure and to ensure the provision of necessary facilities like teaching-learning material and other stationary. The number as well as the stipend of the EVs should be raised. The number of EVs should be such that the students of different age groups get divided into different classes and the stipend should be enough to attract the Volunteers. Also, the Mid-Day meal facility should be made available in all the seasonal schools. There should be proper monitoring and supervision of these schools to check the corruption and other lacunas which hinder the proper functioning of these schools. There is a need of reorganization of system at the zonal level. Besides, these structural changes the Government and various NGOs should organize programmes highlighting the role of education in the process of socio-economic development of any group.

Conclusion

Education plays a significant role in the social transformation of the young people. Therefore, it becomes prime responsibility of any state to provide quality education to all. Although special provisions in the form of reservations in higher education and jobs have been made, the higher drop-out ratio and skimpy enrolment at the primary and middle school

stages makes reservations kind of unproductive. The benefits under provisions of Scheduled Tribe fail to bring in the desirable results as their faulty design does not go well with the nomadic life style. The aspect of education or for that matter any development plan should be in consonance with the unique lifestyle of tribes and not antithetical to it. The various schemes should be carried out under vigilant supervision so as to prevent the corruption and other loopholes at the implementation level.

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