



STATUS AND FUNCTIONING OF ASHARM SCHOOLS IN PROMOTING TRIBAL EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The Indian constitution assigns special status to the scheduled tribes and realizing that scheduled tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, a host of programmes and measures were initiated ever since the Independence. NPE, 1986 and its POA, 1992 recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas, besides underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching/learning material in the tribal languages also. The Govt. of India has been implementing different educational plan and programmes time to time for education of the tribals in a large extent. The present paper tries to explore the status and functioning of asharm schools for promoting tribal education in Indian context.

Keywords: Tribal Education, Asharm Schools, Status and Functioning

Introduction: Education is the key to all round human development. A nation's economic, social and cultural progress is determined by the education development of its citizens. India is a pluralist country with rich diversity reflected in the multitude of cultures, religions and languages of various groups. There is however large disparity in the socio-economic parameters of various groups/communities residing in the country. Some groups notably the Scheduled Tribes have been traditionally marginalized and economically backward in relation to the total population of the country. Educational development is the most effective instrument for their empowerment and has the potential to help the marginalized and the poor to come out of the poverty trap and facilitate them to be at par with the rest of the citizens. Recognizing the importance of education, the Government of India has been initiating efforts to achieve education for all, particularly to the groups which have lagged on the economic scale. A major step was taken in 2002 when by virtue of the 86th amendment to the Constitution Article 21A was inserted making free and

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compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group as fundamental right. In pursuance thereof, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a flagship programme was launched for achievement of universal elementary education in a time bound manner. It had a special focus on education of tribal children. Recently the Right to Education (RTE) of children to free and compulsory education was enacted on 04.08.2009 which describes the modalities of importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 to 14 years. The Scheduled Tribes are one of the principal categories of backward classes or historically disadvantaged bottom groups of society. Despite the Government initiatives and efforts to promote education among STs, the literacy rate among STs as compared to national average has remained low and the female literacy rate has been still lower compared to national female literacy rate.

Table 1 : Literacy among STs and all Social Groups

Year	STs %			All social groups			Gap%
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30	19.77
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45	23.15
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57	27.22
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21	22.61
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84	17.74
2011	68.53	49.35	58.96	80.89	64.64	72.99	14.03

The literacy rate for the total population in India has increased from 28.30% to 72.99 % during the period from 1961 to 2011 whereas the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes has increased from 8.53 % to 58.96%. Among ST males literacy increased from 13.83 % to 68.53% and female literacy increased from 3.16 % to 49.35% during the same period. It is seen that the percentage gap in literacy rate, which was 19.77% in 1961, increased to 27.22% in 1981, though there has been reduction in gap to 14.03% in 2011.

Table 2 : Literacy rate for general population and STs as per Census 2011

	India/ State/ UT	Literacy Rate (%) 2011 (general population)			Literacy Rate (%) 2011 (STs)		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1	Andhra Pradesh	67.02	74.88	59.15	49.21	58.35	40.09
2	Arunachal Pradesh	65.38	72.55	57.7	64.58	71.48	57.96
3	Assam	72.19	77.85	66.27	72.06	78.96	65.10
4	Bihar	61.8	71.2	51.5	51.08	61.31	40.38
5	Chhattisgarh	70.28	80.27	60.24	59.09	69.67	48.76
6	Goa	88.7	92.65	84.66	79.14	87.16	71.53

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7	Gujarat	78.03	85.75	69.68	62.48	71.68	53.16
8	Haryana	75.55	84.06	65.94	-	-	-
9	Himachal Pradesh	82.8	89.53	75.93	73.64	83.17	64.20
10	Jammu & Kashmir	67.16	76.75	56.43	50.56	60.58	39.73
11	Jharkhand	66.41	76.84	55.42	57.13	68.17	46.20
12	Karnataka	75.36	82.47	68.08	62.08	70.14	52.98
13	Kerala	94	96.11	92.07	75.81	80.76	71.08
14	Madhya Pradesh	69.32	78.73	59.24	50.55	59.55	41.47
15	Maharashtra	82.34	88.38	75.87	65.73	74.27	57.02
16	Manipur	79.21	86.06	72.37	77.36	82.08	72.71
17	Meghalaya	74.43	75.95	72.89	74.53	75.54	73.55
18	Mizoram	91.33	93.35	89.27	91.51	93.59	89.47
19	Nagaland	79.55	82.75	76.11	80.04	83.11	76.91
20	Odisha	72.87	81.59	64.01	52.24	63.70	41.20
21	Punjab	75.84	80.44	70.73	-	-	-
22	Rajasthan	66.11	79.19	52.12	52.80	67.62	37.27
23	Sikkim	81.42	86.55	75.61	79.74	85.01	74.27
24	Tamil Nadu	80.09	86.77	73.44	54.34	61.8111	46.80
25	Tripura	87.22	91.53	82.73	79.05	86.43	71.59
26	Uttar Pradesh	67.68	77.28	57.18	55.68	67.08	43.72
27	Uttarakhand	78.82	87.4	70.01	73.88	83.56	63.89
28	West Bengal	76.26	81.69	70.54	57.93	68.17	47.71
Union Territories							
29	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	86.63	90.27	82.43	75.58	80.87	69.92
30	Chandigarh	86.05	89.99	81.19	-	-	-
31	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	76.24	85.17	64.32	61.85	73.62	50.27
32	Daman and Diu	87.1	91.54	79.55	78.79	86.23	71.23
33	NCR of Delhi	86.21	90.94	80.76	-	-	-
34	Lakshadweep	91.85	95.56	87.95	91.70	95.69	87.76
35	Puducherry	85.85	91.26	80.67	-	-	-
	India	72.99	80.89	64.64	58.96	68.53	49.35

A scrutiny of data of literacy rates among STs in various States reveals that in most of the north eastern States *viz.* Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, STs are at par with general population while in some of the other States *viz.* Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal which have sizeable ST population in remote areas, the literacy gap is still as high as 18 to 26 percent.

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The Ministry of HRD is mandated to promote education in the country and take initiatives/measures to improve opportunities of education of disadvantaged group. The Ministry of HRD has addressed the issue of education deprivation of ST children through creating better provisions, relaxing norms for opening primary schools in tribal hamlets, establishing residential facilities, opening Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) in tribal areas, etc. Besides, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs makes all efforts to supplement the efforts of Ministry of HRD, which is the line Ministry, and the State Governments/UT Administrations by administering various schemes with the objective of enhancing access to education through provision of infrastructure by way of construction of hostels for ST students, Establishment of Ashram Schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, Vocational Training Centre as well as to maximize retention of ST students within the various stages of school education and promoting higher learning by providing monetary incentives in the form of scholarships such as Pre Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship (PMS), Scholarship for Top Class Education, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship and National Overseas Scholarship for ST students.

Ashram Schools

Ashram Schools are residential schools imparting primary, middle and secondary education to ST boys and girls. The Ashram Schools which are run by State Governments have been an important tool to give formal education to ST children at the elementary level. The National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986 and the Programme for Action Plan, 1992 accord priority for establishment of Ashram schools on a large scale.

Central scheme of Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas

To supplement the efforts of State Governments, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing a scheme 'Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas' under which grant-in-aid is given to States for construction of school buildings. The Scheme is in operation since 1990-91 and has been revised with effect from the financial year 2008-09.

Salient features of the scheme

- The scheme is operational in the Tribal Sub-Plan States/UT Administrations. Twenty two (22) States i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and two (02) Union Territories i.e. Andaman & Nicobar

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Islands and Daman & Diu are identified as Tribal Sub-Plan Areas for implementing the scheme.

- The scheme allows for construction of Ashram Schools for the primary, middle, secondary and senior secondary stages of education as well as upgradation of existing Ashram Schools for Scheduled Tribe boys and girls including PTGs.
- 100% funding for establishment of Ashram Schools i.e. school buildings, hostels, kitchen and staff quarters for girls in TSP areas. In addition, 100% funding for establishment of Ashram Schools for boys in only the TSP areas, (if any), of the Naxal affected districts identified by Ministry of Home Affairs from time to time. All other Ashram Schools for boys in TSP States continue to be funded on 50:50 basis. 100% funding will be provided to UTs.
- Financial assistance on 50:50 basis given for other non-recurring items of expenditure i.e. purchase of equipment, furniture and furnishing, purchase of a few sets of books for a small library for use of inmates of the hostels, etc. The scheme is need-based and demand-driven and funds are released on receipt of proposals indicating the mandatory details from States Governments/UTs, and subject to availability of funds under the scheme. Therefore, there is no State-wise allocation under the scheme.
- While the Ministry of Tribal Affairs administers the scheme and releases grant-in-aid for construction of buildings and procuring equipment, furniture, books etc., the maintenance and running of Ashram Schools is the responsibility of the State Government/UT Administration concerned.
- The Ashram Schools are required to be completed within a period of 2 years from the date of release of the Central assistance. However, for the extension of existing Ashram Schools period of construction is 12 months.

Mode of Operation of the scheme

- Plan of the Ashram School along with the location, duly approved by the Competent Authority in the State Government/UT Administration. The plan must indicate a layout of the compound, including the kitchen, vegetable garden and plantation (fruits and nutritional trees like moringa, citrus) areas. States are encouraged to use fuel saving or renewable energy technologies in the school by availing schemes of the Ministry of New and Renewal Energy. A certificate to the effect that matching provision exists in the State Budget for the scheme, wherever necessary.

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- Unencumbered land will be made available free of cost by the concerned State Government for construction of an Ashram School.
- State Governments will bear the required matching share of cost of the building based on the current scheduled rates of State PWD or CPWD rates.
- The location of new Ashram Schools and the admission policy should be so decided as to give priority to Scheduled Tribe Girls, Children of Primitive Tribal Groups and migrant Scheduled Tribes.
- Utilization Certificate and Physical Progress Report in respect of grants released during previous years.
- A few rooms/blocks of the hostels should be constructed barrier free and facilities like ramps, etc. should be included in the design of the construction for the convenience of the ST students with disabilities.
- In case, any State Government is unable to provide the required matching share from its budget, any MP/MLA can provide the State's share from his/her MPLADS/MLALADS fund.
- Preference will be given to State Governments who commit annual maintenance expenditure, as per reasonable norms.

Table No: 3 Status of Ashram Schools

Name of the State Govt.	No. of Ashram Schools sanctioned	No. of Ashram Schools completed	No. of Ashram Schools incomplete
Andhra Pradesh	78	41	37
Chhattisgarh	134	73	61
Gujarat	164	154	10
Goa	1	0	1
Jharkhand	2	0	2
Karnataka	19	17	2
Kerala	11	7	4
Madhya Pradesh	242	172	70
Maharashtra	87	87	0
Orissa	82	52	30
Rajasthan	9	0	9
Tripura	19	3	16
Uttrakhand	12	10	2
Uttar Pradesh	02	0	2
Total	862	616	246

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The State-wise releases of funds and number of Ashram Schools sanctioned during the last three years under the scheme of 'Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas are given in Table 1.20. 22

Funding Pattern of the Scheme

Under the scheme of Establishment of Ashram School in Tribal Sub Plan Area, State Governments are eligible for 100% central share for construction of all Girls' Ashram Schools and also for construction of Boys' Ashram Schools in naxal affected areas. The funding pattern for the other Boys' Ashram Schools to State Governments is on 50:50 basis, while cent percent assistance is given to UTs for construction both Girls' and Boys' Ashram Schools.

Table No: 4 Budget for establishment of Ashram Schools (Rs.in crore)

Year	BE	RE	Expenditure
2008-09	30.00	30.00	30.00
2009-10	41.00	41.00	41.00
2010-11	75.00	65.00	65.00
2011-12	75.00	75.00	75.00
2012-13	75.00	61.00	61.00
2013-14	75.00	-	=

Target seats and actual seats for tribal students

Year	Target (No. of seats for ST students)	Achievement (No. of seats for ST students)
2010-11	3450	6025
2011-12	3450	10400
2012-13	3795	3800

Facilities in Ashram Schools

The Ashram Schools of the State Governments/UT Administrations are mandated to provide all necessary facilities like drinking water, bedding and mattress, good quality food, Toilets, Security arrangements, Laboratory, Library, Computer room, watchman, sweeper and health check-up of ST students etc. in the Ashram Schools.

Security of students in Ashram Schools

1.45 On the issue of the security arrangement for students studying in Ashram Schools especially in the naxal affected areas, the Ministry replied that in the existing scheme, the Central Government provides financial assistance for construction cost of Ashram Schools. The running and maintenance including security arrangement for students studying in Ashram Schools

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especially in the Naxal affected areas of the Ashram Schools are the responsibility of the State Governments. State Governments have been asked to share the steps taken up by them in this regard.

Selection of Teachers

Selection and posting of right kind of teachers is crucial when education of disadvantaged children is considered. On the issue of guidelines for selection and posting of teachers in Ashram Schools, the Ministry in their written reply stated that the running of Ashram Schools constructed under the scheme of Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Areas is the responsibility of the concerned State Governments/UT Administrations. Such responsibility on the part of the concerned State Governments/UT Administrations encompasses the areas of teachers' recruitment, students' enrolment, syllabus, affiliation to the Education Board, Management of dropout rates and general functioning of the schools.

As per the information from the Ministry of Human Resource Development the following are practices under SSA for STs

- Development of educational material in local languages using resources available within the community.
- Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of Primary education where they do not understand medium of instruction.
- Incorporation of local knowledge in the curriculum and textbooks.
- Teaching in the local language by recruiting native speakers as teachers
- Training of teachers in multilingual education. Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect.
- Sensitization of teachers to tribal cultures and practices.
- Establishing resource centres in tribal dominated states for providing training, academic and other technical support for development of pedagogic tools and education materials catering to multi-lingual situations.
- Creating spaces for cultural mingling within schools so as to recognize tribal cultures and practices and obliterate feelings of inferiority and alienation among tribal children.
- Involvement of community members in school activities to reduce social distance between the school and the community.
- Anganwadis and Balwadis in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are not required for sibling care.

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- Special plan for nomadic and migrant workers

Evaluation by IIPA

An evaluation study of “Ashram Schools” in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand was conducted by the “Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA)” during the year 2006-07. It was inter alia recommended that the number of Ashram school needs to be increased based on demand focusing on areas where children continue to be unenrolled, and quality of Ashram School must be ensured with required infrastructure. Other suggestions include ensuring access to institutions of higher learning including higher school and higher secondary level, proper sanitation facilities and provision of requisite support staff in the form of teacher/warden staying in school campus, etc.

Implementation status of IIPA recommendations, the Ministry in their written reply stated that the State Governments have been advised repeatedly to take necessary steps to address the issues raised in the evaluation study. The Scheme of ‘Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas’ was revised w.e.f.1.4.2008 which addresses some of the concerns.

Evaluation by NIRD The Ministry of Tribal Affairs in their background note have stated that an evaluation study of the education – related schemes run by them, including the scheme of “Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas” has been entrusted to National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad for their continuation in the 12th Five Year Plan. The draft evaluation report has been received by the Ministry. The recommendations made by NIRD in their draft evaluation report are as under:

Central Government should bear the recurring and non-recurring costs of the Ashram Schools established in Tribal Sub Plan areas for better quality education.

- Admissions to Ashram Schools should be in the ratio of 80:20 between tribal and non-tribal students for proper mix and integration.
- 10% of Ashram Schools seats should be earmarked for the local students as day scholars with day boarding and other facilities to have local community support.
- All Ashram Schools should have provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) facility for mainstreaming the tribal children.
- Ashram Schools should be provided with annual building maintenance grant for school and hostel buildings.
- Career guidance and counseling facility to be provided.

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