

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION AMONG SCHEDULED CASTE, SCHEDULED TRIBE, BACKWARD CLASSES AND MINORITY CHILDREN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Malli Gandhi

The aims and objectives of the paper is to focus on the current educational needs of SC, ST, OBC and Minority children at all stages of school education. However, the specific aim and objectives is to identify the gaping gaps and the serious issues, problems affecting the education of these sections of children in order to provide a road map to bridge the gaps and to provide better and quality education these children. The present paper has been divided into three sections. **Section I** deals with educational issues concerning to Scheduled caste children focussing on the educational scenario, attainments, enrolment, dropout and retention problems, programme and policies aimed at educational development, schemes, exclusion and discriminatory practices and major findings and recommendations of the working group for a better quality education. **Section II** deals with the educational problems of Scheduled Tribe Children. The broad focus of the paper is on certain aspects like problems faced by the adivasi children in the school education scenario, constitutional goals and aspirations, effective tribal education system, barriers that prevent the tribal groups from taking advantage of the schools offered, issues relating to language, ashram, residential schools, culture specific curriculum, teachers, tribal ethos, life skills, home, school and community relations. Section III deals with educational issues relating educational development of minorities and backward classes, their access to schools, quality, availability, grievances, governance and systemic reforms in school education. It is expected that the present paper will help the education policy makers, government authorities, researchers, and apex educational organisations to plan, organise better and effective, qualitative educational programmes for the overall development of SC,ST, BC and Minority children in general and their educational needs in particular.

India achieved about 70 percent of literacy according to the latest survey reports. Though the progress could have been better, considering several constraints, it is not a mean achievement. However, the rate of literacy among the marginalised sections in particular, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes and Minorities is much lower when compared with the non-SC, ST and forward sections. Further, the type of education provided to these sections of children is quite conventional. Even after six decades of Independence steps are not properly initiated to provide purposeful and meaningful education to these sections of children. Education of these children should incorporate the socio-economic and cultural genius of these sections of people. They should be sensitised with their rich cultural heritage. The present paper is an attempt to examine the problems associated with the education of SC, ST, OBC and Minority children, their cultural specific curricular, pedagogic aspects, monitoring of their learning in schools,

Address for communication: **Dr. Malli Gandhi**, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Regional Institute of Education, NCERT, Manasgangotri, Mysore-6, Karnataka.

pedagogy and learning, materials, multilingual education and socio-cultural aspects in education. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority sections have been the victims of caste system with untouchability in Indian society. This is unique to India. Though funds are provided to elevate the educational status of these sections of people, their funds have been snatched away excluding the children of these communities from the school system. There are more than 550 communities spread across SC,ST, OBC and Minority communities whose literacy, gross enrolment ratio, and school participation scenario is not up to the mark. Children of these sections of people are under constant psychological pressure in schools. The governments have to provide full support for the educational development of all these categories of children. Their position in education needs to be reviewed until they reach the educational status of the advanced sections of the society. A major portion of the children from SC,ST, OBC and minority sections are excluded from the school system as a result of various factors with non enrolment, high rates of dropouts and low rates of survivors at the end of primary schooling itself. Though the state and central governments have been taking prominent initiatives for the educational development of these sections of people, there are many hindrances and hurdles in providing quality education to their children at all stages of education. Child friendly infrastructure, positive and supportive attitude of teachers, girl child friendly toilets are still a big concern. The needs of adolescent girls are another important concern. Several studies conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF and Government of India reports and scholarly works on the educational problems of SC, ST, OBC and Minority children shows the deplorable conditions of school education system, school experiences, classroom practices, curriculum practices, their academic success, language barriers, problems of school incentives and so on. The ultimate aims and objectives of education is to make the children of these sections of people to understand their cultural and world genius better and engage them in social action and change of their society for the better. Inspirations can be drawn from the experiences of ethnic minority schools from US, UK, Australia and other nations' in order to plan and implement better education systems for the children of these communities. Children from these sections are living in a large degree of isolation. This is a point for the need for more effective curriculum frame work that is sensitive to their cultural and educational needs. There is a need for better forms of interaction among teachers, children and community members in the school environment. But very little has been done with regard to the educational needs of SC, ST, OBC and Minority children. Parents of these sections express their anguish and feelings about the future of their children. They feel that their children should be educated. Education is a tool for their social, economic, political and cultural development. They feel that schools should impart right knowledge, good behaviour, and right attitude to their children. They strive for a better place in society through education. But a large number of children from

these sections are lacking support from schools and community members. They have to struggle constantly for their academic success.

The SCs constitute 16.9 per cent of India's population in census 2011. The socio-economic development and protection of SCs from discrimination and exploitation has been a high priority from the very start of the planning process. The Constitution of India guarantees protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Art. 46). Various Five Year Plans have designed schemes for the welfare and educational attainment of Scheduled Castes of India. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) adopted a multipronged approach for the socio-economic development of the SCs. Expansion in education in general was a major thrust of the Eleventh Plan. For the educational development of SCs, especially women and girl children, the Central Government has introduced several schemes like *Post-Matric Scholarships*, *Top Class Education for SC students* etc. Despite many constitutional and legal measures, the fruits of India's material development are shadowed by a bleak scenario on social development front. The educational status of scheduled castes (literacy, enrolment, dropout, retention, gender parity etc) paints a bleak scenario even today. The process of learning has been plagued by many a systemic issue that either halted the progress of educational attainment of SC children or slowed down the process of knowledge acquisition. A recent study conducted by SSA (*Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*) during the year 2011-12 in six states of the country viz., combined state of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan acknowledges the prevalence of exclusionary practices in schools and demands the need to address them urgently. Teachers Working in SC residential schools are not versatile in local languages. Ensuring teacher regularity in SC welfare schools with effective monitoring system needs top priority. The defective definition of disadvantaged groups and weaker sections under section 12 of the Act creates confusion and 25% stipulation on school admissions for SC, ST or BC children is not honoured by many private institutions. Child abuse is found across all states where physical punishment is a commonly observed norm. In view of bleak educational scenario for SC children, it is indispensable that residential schools of high quality should be established for both boys and girl students of SCs. The issue of Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Caste origin, who are now classified as Backward Classes, should be settled early. In recent times, there is some evidence of democratic mobilisation in some areas concerned itself with the issues of the SCs though it is of miniscule in nature. The renewed spirit is expected to bring the much required pressure on policy makers to implement provisions of various government schemes in respect of social welfare programmes. Even more importantly, teachers can play an even more vital role as transmitters of the egalitarian ideal of humanism and Indian Constitution. According to the 6th All India Educational Survey of the NCERT the proportion of SCs in all schools at all levels and in both in rural and urban areas

put together is only 8.99 per cent. Unless the SCs are enabled to reach up to the level of advanced classes in all respects and unless we create the basis for fraternity and infuse along with it anti-caste, anti-untouchability egalitarian human rights education, the dreams of nationalist glory of the educated middle classes will not materialize. Article 366 (25) of Indian Constitution refers to scheduled tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342. Owing to a plethora of reasons they have been reduced to minorities in their own home-lands. This process has acquired precarious dimensions in the post-independent era. Scheduled tribes (STs) constitute about 9% of India's population. Each of the 705 scheduled tribes has their own language, and differs from the one mostly spoken in the State where they reside. Tribals are not a homogenous group. To look into tribal development issues *Integrated Tribal Development Projects* were conceived during Fifth Five Year Plan. During the Sixth Plan, *Modified Area Development Approach* (MADA) was adopted to cover smaller areas of tribal concentration and during the Seventh Plan, the *TSP* (Tribal Sub Plan) strategy was extended further to cover even smaller areas of tribal concentration and subsequently *clusters* of tribal habitat locations were identified. In order to give more focused attention to the development of Scheduled Tribes, a separate Ministry, carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, known as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs was constituted in October 1999.

Tribal education has recently witnessed a rapid transformation, particularly in the areas of access, pedagogic reform and community participation in tribal areas. The National Policy on Education (1986, 1992) and its programme of action (1992) have identified special measures for fulfilling the constitutional commitments to Scheduled tribes. But recent studies on school management practices throw light on many grey areas in the realm of education of tribal children across the country. Inclusion of children in border areas and tribal/ forest areas remains weak even today. Transition rates from primary to upper primary and secondary show significant dropout rates and there are significant gender differences. Serious issues of pedagogical problems have been reported by studies and gaps in educational administration are still plaguing the unhindered growth of tribal children and students.

Systemic issues like discrimination, lack of schooling facilities, poor infrastructure, defective TLM etc are brought to the notice of policy makers. The problem is more pronounced in case of NT/SNT/DNT/ PTG communities. The stigma of criminality is still one of the major impediments in the smooth run of educational progress of children and youth. Children often faced a kind of social alienation in most of the walks of social life. Social alienation particularly in young age hampers the growth of psycho-social faculties of the children. Although school coverage has increased, STs continue to lag far behind the rest of the population. Full implementation of legislative measures like Forest Dwellers Act (FRA) 2006,

the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) and Non-Timber Forest (NTFP) shall be taken up on priority. STs face problems in securing the benefit of reservation due to the inclusion of certain non-tribal communities in the list of STs, leaving scope for non-tribals to pass off as STs. Tribal autonomy can be promoted better by bringing all tribal areas under the Sixth Schedule. The Dilip Singh Bhuria Commission's Report (1995) in this regard has not received practical attention. It is imperative that there needs to be more philanthropic investment in building community cultural wealth outside the classroom too. This would provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential that can transcend the barriers experienced by STs today.

Backward Classes enjoy constitutional privileges under Article 340(1), 15(4), 338(1), 16(4) and are provided certain special measures including reservation even before independence in Princely States and Presidencies of peninsular India. Backward classes consist of castes of mendicants, *Safai Karmachari* and nomadic, semi-nomadic and *Vimukta Jati* castes. The *Safai* sub-category includes Muslim scavenger castes like *Halalkhor*, *Muslim Mehtar*, *Muslim Jogi*. Backward classes can be seen under categories like: extremely backward (*Sarvaadhik Pichade*) castes; most backward castes (*Athyanth Pichade*); more backward (*Adhik Pichade*) castes of BCs. Many of BC families are dependent on traditional occupations like fishing, productive industries and services. But access to technology is still not within their easy reach due to which reason traditional occupations like weaving of cotton and silk handloom fabrics may soon face extreme difficulties. Muslims of India come broadly under two categories: socially and educationally backward classes (BCM). They account for about 80% of the total Muslim population of India and other Muslims. The BCM are converts from the same castes as BCs and SCs of Hindus (more from BCs in North India and more from SCs in South India). All the schemes, programmes and legislations mentioned for BCs apply to BCM also. Christians constitute a much small proportion of the Indian population than Muslims, about 2.5%. They are mostly in South India. They are also in small numbers in North India known by the names *Massihs*. There is no problem of incomplete identification in the case of Christian BCs. But, developmental issues mentioned in the context of Muslims also apply to BC Christians, particularly SCs and fisher-folk converts. Children from OBC/Minority communities drop out of schools in large numbers as compared to the children of forward sections of India. Their experiences in schools are not very positive and face various types of discrimination, caste discrimination, community specific exclusion, gender-related exclusion and sexual harassment, bullying, and violence against the children. Despite several efforts by government conditions of OBC/Minority children is far from satisfactory. There are significant variations in education among OBC and minority children. These variations cut across community, tribe, section, state and various other variations. Children cannot attend the school due to the barriers of distance from their school

to home. Building infrastructure in OBC/Minority schools needs to be upgraded. Ensuring teacher regularity in OBC/ Minority schools with effective monitoring system needs to be in place. Across all the states, regular attendance is a serious issue among children from extremely poor and marginalised communities. The availability of school buildings, toilets, bore well or hand pumps are not ensuring access to OBC/Minority children in schools. There is a huge gap existing between the availability of such infrastructure facilities and the conditions of its usage and usability. The general status of OBC/Minority schools is anything than satisfactory and is expected to undergo a few important changes. Teacher orientation and training with appropriate subject knowledge should be enhanced. Quality education should be provided to teachers working with OBC/Minority children to enable them to attend to the needs of these children. A massive scheme of skill-development in various marketable modern occupations should be undertaken such as plumbing, electrical repair, repair of electronic goods, agricultural equipment etc so that they can be employable.

I

I. The Problems of Education of Scheduled Caste Children

Education is perhaps the most crucial input that empowers the educated to sustain the challenges of change and continuity. It was the first of the three-point mantra given by Dr. Ambedkar – Educate, Agitate, Organize – for the ‘Depressed Classes’ and was also emphasised by revolutionary reformers like Mahatma Phule and Narayana Guru.

Background

The SCs constitute 16.9 per cent of India’s population in census 2011. The socio-economic development and protection of SCs from discrimination and exploitation has been a high priority from the very start of the planning process. People belonging to SC communities are spread all over the country with about 80% of them living in the rural areas. Around half of the SC population is concentrated in the five States of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. They constitute more than a fifth of the population of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Punjab has the highest proportion of SCs to the State population. Recognizing that the Scheduled Castes have historically suffered grave social disabilities and educational and economic deprivation, the Constitution provides special provision for advancement of their interests. The Constitution of India guarantees protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Art. 46). It guarantees equality before law (Art. 14), and enjoins upon the State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds of caste (Art. 15 (1)). Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden (Art. 17). The

Constitution mandates that no citizen shall, on grounds only of caste or race, be subjected to any disability and restriction (Art. 15 (2)). It empowers the State to make provisions for reservation in educational institutions [Art. 15 (4) and (5)], and in appointments for posts in favour of SCs (Art. 16 (4), 16(4A), 16(4B) and Art. 335). Reservation of seats for SCs in the Lok Sabha is provided under Article 330, in the State Assemblies under Article 332 and in the Local Self-Governments bodies under Articles 243D and 340T. In addition to the above, the Parliament has enacted the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, renamed as Protection of Civil Rights Act, in 1976. To check and deter atrocities against SCs, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 has also been enacted. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) adopted a multipronged approach for the socio-economic development of the SCs: social empowerment through educational development; economic empowerment through income and employment enhancing avenues; protection through effective implementation of protective legislations and eradication of occupations such as manual scavenging; and holistic development through earmarking of funds proportionate to the population. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) adopted a three pronged strategy: (i) *Social Empowerment*: removing existing and persisting inequalities besides providing easy access to basic minimum services with a top priority assigned to education as the key factor in social development; (ii) *Economic Empowerment*: promoting employment-cum-income generation activities with an ultimate objective of making them economically independent and self-reliant; and (iii) *Social Justice*: striving to eliminate all types of discrimination with the strength of legislative support, affirmative action, awareness generation and change in the mind-set of the people. Expansion in education in general was a major thrust of the Eleventh Plan. For the educational development of SCs especially women and girl children, the Central Government has introduced several schemes which are described below:

Post-Matric Scholarships (PMS): It was implemented since 1944-45 to promote higher education among SCs by extending scholarships to pursue studies beyond matriculation. Under the scheme, 100 per cent Central assistance is provided to States/UTs over and above their committed liability except for North-East States where committed liability is not applicable to them. The Scheme was revised in December 2010. In addition to increasing the rate of scholarship the income ceiling of parents whose children would be eligible to avail the scholarship was raised from Rs.1.00 lakh to Rs.2.00 lakh per annum.

Pre-Matric Scholarships: They are being awarded since 1977-78 with an objective to encourage children of scavengers and those engaged in menial works to pursue education. The scheme was revised in 2008 changing the Central share from 50 per cent to 100 per cent over and above the committed liability and increase in the rate of scholarships. Scholarship @ of Rs.110 per month is provided under the scheme to children studying in classes I to X. However, children studying in

classes III to X and staying in hostels are provided scholarship @ of Rs.700 per month.

Top Class Education for SC students: This scheme aims to promote quality education amongst SC students by providing full financial support for pursuing studies beyond 12th class in premier institutions of the country for pursuing courses in Engineering, Medical/Dentistry, Law, Management and other Specialised Streams. SC students who secure admission in the notified institutions (according to the norms prescribed by the respective institutions) and whose total family income is Rs. 4.5 lakh are eligible for the scholarship.

Upgradation of Merit for SC Students Scheme: The scheme is in operation since 1987–88 to extend remedial and special coaching offered to students to remove their deficiencies in school subjects (class IX to XII) into professional and technical courses.

National Overseas Scholarship Scheme (NOS): Under the Scheme, scholarships are provided to selected students for pursuing higher studies for Master level courses and Ph. D programme in specified fields. The scheme provides for fees charged by institutions, monthly maintenance allowance, passage and visa fee, contingency allowance and so on.

Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships: The Scheme was launched in the Tenth Plan in 2005–06 as a special incentive to extend scholarships to SC students to pursue higher studies and research degrees such as M. Phil and Ph.D. The scheme is implemented through University Grants Commission (UGC) and the benefits are comparable to Junior Research Fellowships (JRF) and Senior Research Fellowships (SRF) of UGC. The Scheme was revised in 2010–11 and the number of fellowships has been increased from 1,333 to 2,000 to benefit more SC students.

Upgradation of Merit: This scheme has been in operation since 1987–88 and provides funds to educational institutions for conducting remedial and special coaching to SC students in Class IX to XII so that their merit is upgraded into professional and technical courses.

Scheme of Free Coaching: The scheme, implemented since Sixth Five Year Plan, provides coaching to students belonging to Scheduled Castes and those coming from socially and economically disadvantaged sections to sit for competitive examinations of Group A and Group B categories in the Central/State Governments, and soft skill development programmes for employment in private sector.

Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatravas Yojana (BJRCY): The objective of the Scheme launched in 1963–64 is to reduce the high dropouts and to increase the retention rates amongst SC students. Facilities in the form of hostels for SC boys and girls are provided to pursue studies from middle school to the university level. Central assistance is provided for construction of hostel buildings on matching basis (50:50) to States and 100 per cent to UTs and 100 per cent to States for SC Girls Hostels (since 2007–08). Twelfth Plan envisages education to be the most important

instrument to uplift the status of the SCs. It mostly focuses on access to and participation of SC students to quality education through the following steps:

The Pre-matric scholarship scheme at present exists only for children of those engaged in manual scavenging. A new pre-matric scholarship scheme has been introduced for SC students studying in Class IX and X during 2012–13. This scheme needs to be extended to SC students studying in Class I to VIII during the remaining period of the XII Five Year Plan so that all the SC students from class I to X will start getting pre-matric scholarship by the terminal year of the Twelfth Plan.

Special attention needs to be paid not only to retention in schools but also to provide the children with quality education through incentives like free supply of books, mid-day meals, hostels, and so on to SC children especially the SC girls.

The scheme of Post-Matric Scholarships for SCs provides scholarships to SC students for pursuing higher education in various courses beyond matriculation. The scheme should also have the provision for a laptop or other suitable computing device for all SC students passing X or XII Board Examination by scoring the higher percentage in the exams.

Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) for SC was increased to 2,000 students in 2010–11. There is a need to further increase the number of these fellowships. The number of scholarships under the scheme of 'National Overseas Scholarship' needs to be increased substantially without any restriction.

SC students need to be encouraged more vigorously to prepare for various competitive examinations. Free coaching to the SC students' should be expanded to cover Premier Entrance Exams to professional institutions like IITs, JEE, AIEEE, CPMT, CLAT, CAT, and so on under the scheme of coaching for SC students.

State Governments need to upgrade the hostels to a satisfactory level using funds provided by the Finance Commission and other agencies. It is envisaged to have additional Hostel capacity of 2 Lakh seats for SC students with a minimum of 50 per cent for SC girls. Central assistance to States/UTs for construction of boys hostels need to be increased appropriately.

Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatra was Yojana will be revised so as to provide assistance for creating additional seats for SC students in integrated hostels too, besides for constructing hostels exclusively for SC students.

Access to good quality schools/residential schools still remains much below the actual requirement for SC students, especially for SC girls. Therefore, good quality residential schools for SC boys and girls need to be set up in blocks with high SC concentration so as to ensure that all meritorious SC girls and boys have access to such residential schools, as early as possible. The percentage of SCs in such schools should be at least 50 per cent. Despite many constitutional and legal measures, the fruits of India's material development are shadowed by a bleak scenario on social development front. Owing to the oppressive caste system (whose most disadvantageous tag had been the problem of untouchability), the country

presents world's largest number of landless agricultural labourers, largest number of the self-employed without access to modern technology, largest number of malnourished, undernourished and underweight children, largest number of people living below poverty line, largest number of people without proper nutritional security and highest rates of infant mortality, child mortality, anaemia etc. And needless to say, the worst sufferers come from lower rungs of the stratified society and Scheduled Castes constitute a prominent social segment among them.

Scheduled Castes: Educational Status

Literacy among scheduled castes presents a gory picture.

<i>Census</i>	<i>Literacy Rates</i>					
	<i>Over all</i>			<i>SC</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
1961	34.4	13	24	17	3.3	10.3
1971	39.5	18.7	29.5	22.4	6.4	14.7
1981	46.9	24.8	36.2	31.1	10.9	21.4
1991	64.1	39.3	52.2	49.9	23.8	37.4
2001	75.3	53.7	64.8	66.6	41.9	54.7

Source: Census, 2001

At present, there are 1208 communities specified as SCs in 26 States and 5 UTs of the country. An exercise has been undertaken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, to work out the female literacy rate of each SC community as per figures of 2001 Census. This exercise has shown that there are 15 SC communities, each with a population of 1 lakh or above, whose female literacy rate, as per 2001 Census, was 20% or less. All these 15 communities belong to just three States viz. Bihar, Jharkhand and UP and include Musahars. The total population of these 15 SC communities is 1.32 crore

The proportion of children who attend the government schools are largely from socially disadvantaged groups viz., backward classes and SCs. The fact reiterates the lurking social concern that government schools cater to the educational needs of the poor and marginalised children while children of forward castes conveniently skip the public educational institutions at primary and secondary levels. There are state wise variations noted in terms of enrolment ratios. There is a gap between attendance reported in school records and the number of children present in the attendance rolls on all working days of the schools. Children from extremely poor families, landless daily wage labourers, and seasonal migrants tend to miss school more often. Most importantly, girls from very poor families were irregular and many children from such families reach school very late. Therefore, such children are not involved in school activities like leading the morning assembly and participating in other school functions. Research studies show that such children

are excluded from active participation in class and school activities because they are not able to keep pace with the lessons taught. As per the abstract of Selected Educational Statistics, 2008-09 published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development the GER for various age groups, separately for SCs and overall population is presented below:

Age-Group	Gross Enrollment Ratio					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	SC	All	SC	All	SC	All
6-11 years (Primary)	130.18	114.34	130.6	114.41	130.12	114.37
11-14 years (Upper Primary)	86.84	77.90	83.57	74.42	85.28	76.23
6-14 years (Elementary)	114.6	100.45	112.87	99.09	113.49	99.80
14-18 years (Secondary)	44.36	50.56	39.49	43.10	42.11	47.01
18-24 years (Higher Education)*	13.79	15.87	9.08	11.05	11.62	13.58

Source: Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics, 2008-09; MHRD

*Abstract, Statistics of Higher Education, 2007-08, MHRD

GER for SCs in 2008-09 was higher than for the overall population for the age group of 6-14 years and it is reported that due to higher proportion of under-age and over-age SC children enrolled in classes I-VII. School Attendance Rate (SAR) is defined as the number of students in the age group of 5 to 14 years found attending school in a year divided by the estimated number of all such children. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in its various surveys has provided estimates of SAR. These rates for the years 1983, 1987-88, 1993-94, 1999-2000 and 2004-05 separately for boys and girls, in rural and urban areas, are presented below:

Year of Sample Survey	School Attendance Rates							
	Rural				Urban			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	SC	NON SC/ST	SC	NON SC/ST	SC	NON SC/ST	SC	NON SC/ST
1983	48.9	59.2	25.5	39.2	66.7	76.5	52.3	69.1
1987-88	49.8	63.4	31.1	45.8	68.2	78.0	53.8	72.6
1993-94	64.3	74.9	46.2	61.0	77.5	86.8	68.6	83.0
1999-00	70.1	80.2	58.6	73.8	79.2	88.0	73.9	85.4
2004-05*	80.9	87.6*	73.7	84.2*	85.0	91.5*	79.3	91.4*

* Rate is for non-SC/ST and OBC.

Source: (NSSO Reports)

Though there is a considerable improvement in the school attendance of SC children in the age group of 5 to 14 years over the five surveys, the recent surveys

put the rates at lower levels vis-à-vis non-SC/ST population. School dropout rate is an important indicator of educational development. Dropout rates for the last available year viz., 2008-09, are given below:

Class	Dropout Rates (%) 2008-09						Difference between SC and ALL (Percentage Points)		
	SC			ALL			Boys	Girls	Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
I to V	30.0	22.7	26.7	26.7	22.9	24.9	3.9	-0.2	1.8
I to VIII	50.8	43.9	47.9	44.9	38.9	42.2	5.9	5	5.7
I to X	66.5	66.6	66.6	55.8	55.9	55.8	10.7	10.7	10.8

Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics, 2008-09; MHRD

Dropout rates amongst SC students continue to be higher and increased for SC students at a faster rate for higher classes compared to overall rates. Similar trends have been observed for boys and girls. Gender parity index is an important indicator of educational development. The Index for the last available year viz. 2008-09, is given below:

Stages	Gender Parity Index (in %)	
	Total	SCs
Primary (I-V)*	1.00	1.00
Upper Primary (VI-VIII)*	0.96	0.96
Elementary (I-VIII)*	0.99	0.99
Secondary/Sr. Secondary (IX-XII)*	0.85	0.89
Higher Education **	0.70	0.66

*(Gender Parity Index is measured as a ratio of girls' GER to boys' GER at a given level of education)Source: *Abstract, Statistics of School Education, 2008-09 & **Abstract, Statistics of Higher & Technical Education, 2007-08, Ministry of Human Resource Development.*

Due to a plethora of reasons (most of which are caste-oriented), there has been a conscious exclusion of children from scheduled castes from learning institutions that are at once manifest by defective enrolment, high rates of drop-out and low rates of retention at the end of school. Many teachers too imbibed the psychopathology of the entrenched caste system whose behavioral patterns while treating SC children have often come under social scanner. SC children are prevented from using common drinking water resources and not allowed to sit along with other children for the mid-day meals at school. Its occurrence in some of the prestigious professional institutions at the NCR (National Capital region) has been documented by studies and reported by the media. It is often found that the gap between the SCs and advanced castes remains un-bridged. This is corroborated by NSSO data figures which show that nearly one-third of SC families have no literate adult (15

years and above) as against 15.9 per cent in case of advanced castes. The NSSO statistics also bring out the imbalance between SC and ST on one side and advanced castes on the other at different levels of education. In addition constitutional safeguards are not respected and the case in reference is denial of quality education and level playing field for the SCs (as also for STs and BCs) in private educational institutions pursuant to the 93rd amendment of 2005. Clause (5) under Article 15, calls for efforts refers to empower the State to provide reservation by law for the SCs, STs and BCs in state-run, state-aided as well as private educational institutions.

Institutional Support & Systemic Concerns

The process of learning has been plagued by many a systemic issue that either halted the progress of educational attainment of SC children or slowed down the process of knowledge acquisition. The following issues are identified by academics as well as social activists as the major impediments in the educational progress of children from the most depressed sections of indigenous society despite the best intentions of the government policies and attendant allocations. There is a huge gap existing between the availability of such infrastructure facilities (water, seating etc) and the conditions of its usage and usability. The objective of various the schemes is to provide financial assistance to enable the children of manual scavengers, tanners, flayers and sweepers to pursue pre metric education. Prior to revision of the scheme in April 2008, the total expenditure was co-shared on 50:50 basis between the Centre and the State Governments (100% borne by Central Government in the case of UTs), over and above the committed liability. Post-matric scholarship assistance is the single largest intervention by the Government of India for educational empowerment of SCs. The Scheme was revised in December, 2010 wef 1.7.2010 under which the income ceiling of parents of children availing the scholarship, has been raised to Rs.2.00 lakh per annum. Under a new scheme started in 2007-08 meritorious SC students are provided financial assistance for pursuing professional and specialized courses in identified 182 institutions of excellence. The number of scholarships per year is 1250 and the assistance provided includes reimbursement of fee, maintenance allowance, provision of personal computers and books and stationery allowance. The income ceiling for availing the scholarship is Rs.2.00 Lakhs per annum. Under the scheme, *Upgradation of Merit* the Ministry provides funds to the educational institutions for conducting remedial and special coaching for SC students (Class IX to XII) so that their merit is upgraded. Under *Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatravas Yojana* scheme the Ministry provides financial assistance to the extent of 100% for girls hostels and 50% for boys hostels to States for construction of hostels for SC students. The educational institutions imparting education for Dalit children are mostly the government run schools. It is often criticised that quality provided in these schools is not put up to the mark. There have been strong appeals from various sections of society to address

the systemic problems as well as issues embedded in the process of learning in case of SC children. Even the traditional wings of Indian polity strongly demand that reservation and extension of benefits under government schemes shall be continued without any break as long as social inequalities exist in our society. Some of the suggested measures are like: not to charge fees from primary to post graduate level; categories among SC families that need to be helped through no-fee concession shall include girl students, students with physical challenges (*also read as health challenges*), victims of social/natural disasters or dependent children, children of widows or single mothers; limit for annual family income shall be enhanced from the existing 2 lakh to 6 lakh etc.

Systemic Reforms

A recent study conducted by SSA (*Sarva Sikha Abhiyan*) during the year 2011-12 in six states of the country viz., combined state of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan acknowledges the prevalence of exclusionary practices in schools and demands the need to address them urgently. The habitations/villages/blocks where the children of marginalised groups reside are quite far. They cannot attend the school due to the barriers of distance from school to home. In addition, the social norms in Indian society with regard to the treatment of Dalits are by and large discriminatory. Building infrastructure in SC welfare schools needs to be upgraded and Ashram/ Tribal welfare/Residential/ KGBV schools for SCs should be modernized. The infrastructure facilities that are available in these schools are poor in almost all the states. A minuscule proportion of schools had usable and functional toilets for girls. Teachers Working in SC residential schools are not versatile in local languages. For example, many teachers in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa states working in tribal areas do not speak the tribal languages. Therefore, children are unable to communicate with the teachers in these parts. So also, Odiya spoken in the coastal areas is considered as the standard official language and is used in books and for classroom transactions. As a result, students from rural western Odisha and Dalit students (who speak a different dialect) usually face difficulties. Language is an important caste marker in many states. In Rajasthan, local dialects vary with each district and children may not be familiar with the standardised Hindi used in schools. Language is an important indicator and barrier for SC education; it needs to be explored farther in detail since a large number of studies have focused on this issue. The Mid-day meal (MDM) is one area which needs special attention. Social and community prejudices invariably surfaced in recent time. The cooks appointed in SC welfare schools are mostly from other caste category groups where there is every possibility that their performance is poor. Ensuring teacher regularity in SC welfare schools with effective monitoring system needs top priority. One of the biggest challenges that needs to be tackled is the availability of adequate teachers in order to cater to

various needs of SC/ST/OBC children. There is acute teacher shortage at all levels. Majority of teachers are not present in schools on every working day. Para teachers, contract teachers are not paid regularly. Community participation in SC/ST schools is reported weak and the existing School Management Committees (SMCs) or the Village Education Committees are found to be ineffective. The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 emphasises that *guaranteeing all children the right to go to school, the right to be treated with love and care, and most importantly the right to be treated equally and with dignity*. Despite several efforts by government conditions of Dalit children is far from satisfactory. Discrimination, unequal treatment and hidden practices retarding the abilities of marginalised sections of children to learn still pose serious social threats. Added the defective definition of disadvantaged groups and weaker sections under section 12 of the Act creates confusion and 25% stipulation on school admissions for SC, ST or BC children is not honoured by many private institutions. Till the time of next amendment to the Act, it is expected to provide for specific percentages of reservation for SCs, STs and BCs like: SC-8%, ST-4%, BC-10% & other disadvantaged groups and weaker sections - 3%. This is an immediate interim amendment required and the subsequent goal should be to amend the law raising the total percentage of 15% reservation at national level for SCs and appropriate percentages at State level. Wording of the RTE Act has led to stopping of reservation that existed in schools of 'specified category' i.e. Kendriya Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya and Sainik Schools. Reservation should be restored in these institutions like in the past. The RTE Act provides for education only up to Class VIII. It is understood that there is thinking in the Ministry of HRD to extend this to cover up to Class X. This thinking should be concretised quickly and, if possible should be extended up to Class XII. The Right to Education Act does not address the issue of pre-school education. The existing AWCs may be asked to prepare young children and put them in the formal educational stream by following the patterns and methodology adopted by some NGOs in states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. To make this foundational level of education available to SC children a few more measures suggested by experts are: AWCs should be upgraded to provide pre-school education; AWCs should be established in every SC hamlet to improve school enrolment and access to pre-school education; AWCs may encourage other children to join the centres which step can help in eliminating discrimination and promote social integration (this experiment was successfully tested by reputed woman social reformer, late Dr. Hemalata Lavanam in the post Jogini reform period in the north Telangana region during late 1990s and the experiment was famously called *Education Under a New Social Habitat* where school was used as an instrument for social integration); non-discriminatory treatment of children of these communities in all AWCs should be ensured and all teachers and workers should be oriented and sensitized not to discriminate against or undermine the creative potential of any SC child; teachers from the SC community

should be appointed in these AWCs, particularly where they are located in SC hamlets; a proper mechanism should be provided to ensure adequate budgetary and infrastructure (books, buildings, etc.) along with regulatory mechanism and local supervision, involving SC parents for smooth and efficient running of AWCs. One common perception present is that SC/ST/OBC children do not perform better in schools. Interestingly the records from schools reveal that academically these children perform better than many others. There is a disjuncture between the teachers' perception and reality. It is observed from the government schools that children from SC communities regularly participate in the tasks that are assigned to them by the teachers. This is one area that constitutes an important element of discriminatory practices in the schools. School and classroom observation evidences reported in various studies/reports indicate schools rarely practice democratic norms. Teachers often decide the roles of tasks to be performed both in the classroom and around the school. These include routine duties like sweeping the playground, classrooms, corridors, toilets and the place where the mid-day meal is served. High profile tasks such as leading the morning assembly and participating in school functions are assigned to non-SC kids whereas personal tasks such as fetching water or the register for teachers, serving tea, cleaning blackboards and tables and carrying desks/chairs are assigned to SC community students. These practices that often go unnoticed by others need an immediate role reversal where all children are assigned all tasks without any social discrimination. Such a step is sure to eliminate gender and caste biases in public educational institutions. Across all the states, regular attendance is a serious issue among children from extremely poor and marginalised communities. This is due to various reasons such as poor health, recurring illness, short time migration by parents for work, taking on household responsibilities especially among girls, parental absence from home etc. In some states most of the schools allow the forward caste children to eat or drink water and wash their mid-day meal plates first (Rajasthan). In case of SC students, a water pitcher is and water is poured from it. The hand pumps on the school campus are exclusively meant for upper class children. In some states SC children are made to bring water in bottles from their homes, mainly because water from the school pump was considered unhygienic. In some states 90% of SC schools had some drinking water facility in the form of a tube well, open well or rapid water. Water portability has become a big issue in some states (Orissa). Some of the SC schools did not have drinking water sources (Andhra Pradesh). In some states the SC children have to fetch water from a little distance. The perception of discrimination has even seeped silently into the minds of children too. It is reported that OBC girls and also those from the general category were found practising untouchability with their schoolmates. And the only plausible explanation for such an act is the behaviour of their parents at the domestic fronts. Teachers, who should ideally be leaders of change, get their own water or ask the upper caste children to

get it from their homes or a forward caste family nearest the school premises. In some states like Bihar, 93% of schools have facility for drinking water. But girls often drink water after boys and children from deprived communities often get the chance at last. There is overwhelming evidence of gender as well as caste-based discrimination in practices around cleaning of toilets. First of all very few schools have usable toilets with proper water facilities. Wherever toilets are being used, children clean them using water from the hand pump or tap. In several schools, usable toilets were locked for the use of teachers and girls were asked to clean them. In Bihar, 75% of the schools had usable toilets but most of them were locked for the use of teachers. In Rajasthan, the situation was similar and the teachers admitted that they kept the toilets locked because children spoil them and soil them. There is a glaring gap in terms of sports and gaming facilities. In schools where sports equipment are available, only selected boys, based on their perceived academic abilities were able to use them. In most of the cases, teachers consider general category children 'bright kids'. Culture specific sports are not a priority in schools and SC children are seen playing with their friends. Their culture specific sports, games are losing sheen. Like sports facilities, libraries also are noticeable by their absence. Scolding children is very common across all states where physical punishment is a commonly observed norm. Though the government declared schools as no *punishment zones*, children are prone to verbal and physical abuse. Often SC children are being targeted. Teachers feel that ban on punishment is the main reason for lack of discipline or no discipline among SC/ST/OBC children in schools. In many places children report that physical punishment is very common, for instance pulling of girls hair, twisting, pinching the ears or stomach of boys and girls. Verbal abuse using caste/community identity is sensitive to SCs in several schools. Some schools are known for sexual abuse and violence on girls by teachers and care-takers. There are many instances where teachers are suspended due to their involvement in sexual abuse. The mid-day meal scheme has emerged as the most important educational programme for SC children. There are several discriminatory practices in the mid-day meal programme. In almost all the states SC children are attracted towards mid-day meals. Children from forward sections generally go home for lunch. The food in the SC schools is prepared and served by non-SC staff. In some states caste identity is observed as an important criterion for appointing cooks. SC children are observed sitting in their own community groups. Teachers do not encourage sitting separately, or sitting together. Children squat on the floor in groups on toes. SC children sit separately. There is no pattern to allow children to sit wherever they like or find space. There shall be in place appropriate and empowered institutions including reform of existing institutions, reaching down to the village level and filling up the positions in these institutions with persons of integrity and commitment to constitutional directives and norms. It may be noted that the reform of existing institutions and establishment of new institutions is within the competence of the Central and State governments.

Teaching development and support

In view of bleak educational scenario for SC children, it is indispensable that residential schools of high quality should be established for both boys and girl students of SCs. Some of the recommendations in this respect are like: residential school, one each for SC Girls and SC boys (Class-VI to XII) should be started in each of the blocks of the country, excluding tribal blocks where 75% of the seats should be for SC students and the remaining 25% should be for ST, BC & other students; these residential schools should follow CBSE syllabus; the administration of these schools should be on the lines of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) or AP Society for Social Welfare Residential Schools. Teacher orientation and training with appropriate subject knowledge should be enhanced. Quality education should be provided to teachers working with SC children to attend to the needs of such children. Pedagogical, curricular issues, needs specific focus and attentions and needs to be addressed in every context. Due to weak educational background, it has been observed that, SC students require additional academic support to enable them to reach up to the required level of performance in their schools. SC students desirous of getting admitted into professional/technical institutes should be helped with specialized coaching sessions. Some universities especially in South India have provided for reservation for the SCs, STs and BCs at all levels including that of Professors, but other universities especially in North India and Central Universities have followed an unjustifiably restrictive policy in this regard by providing for reservation only at the first level. New teacher training institutions should be opened to meet the full requirement of qualified and trained teachers and provide easy access to all deserving students from among SCs. There is a need to study, understand and identify good school practices towards SC children with regard to their education. Some schools are following inclusive and positive practices in their schools and classrooms. But these inclusive practices are very few and need further elaboration. It may be noted that state and central governments have taken a few prominent initiatives: *Tola Sewak* (a volunteer in a village or habitation can take the responsibilities of getting children to school and interacting with them in school-practiced in Bihar. Their second major responsibility is to ensure that no discrimination takes place in school activities.); *Hunar* programme for promoting and encouraging education for poor, marginalised sections. *Hunar* is a programme to empower the minority Muslim girls. It was launched by the State Government of Bihar in collaboration with National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Such programmes need more attention and further extension for SC children. In case of special need children, SSA framework clearly mentions that children with special needs should be provided education in an appropriate environment. They should not be left out of the education system. Child friendly infrastructure, positive and supportive attitude of the teachers and students needs reflection. Providing ramps and child friendly toilet is an important concern. It

must be remembered that scheduled castes expect specific solutions to their specific problems of deprivation and disadvantage. The most important area of the needs and rights of SCs is educational parity at all levels. Serious efforts in this direction will widen the educational base of SCs from school level upwards, laying the foundation for the enhancement of their capacity to fill all reserved seats. This is among the recommendations made in 2008 by the high-level Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs set up in 2005. In view of higher infant mortality (IMR), under-5 mortality rate (U5MR), severe malnutrition, and greater vulnerability of SC health and educational programmes should be accorded top priority keeping in view the latest and recent recommendations of expert committees including SC sub plan. In all beneficiary programmes like National Skill Development Mission and promotion of entrepreneurship, there shall be a mandatory share for SCs. The issue of Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Caste origin, who are now classified as Backward Classes, should be settled early by a consensus involving their representatives as well as representatives of existing SCs and others concerned. Pending this, PCR Act and POA Act should be extended to such converts, who are the victims of *untouchability* and atrocities on account of their caste/community. In recent times, there is some evidence of democratic mobilisation in some areas concerned itself with the issues of the SCs, though it is of miniscule in nature. Society at large, spearheaded by the media, has been able to bring pressure on Central and State Governments and different political parties to bestir themselves for action on various social issues and urgent concerns. The renewed spirit is expected to bring the much required pressure on policy makers to implement provisions of various government schemes in respect of social welfare programmes. Among others, teachers at different levels are an important part of general society and can play a major role in this democratic mobilization. For example, those of them who, on account of past habits and attitudes, unwittingly or otherwise, practise discrimination against SCs can introspect and give up such practices. Those who do not themselves practise discrimination but turn a blind eye towards its practice by others, can become pro-active and stop such discrimination. It must be pointed out here that SCs have bitter experience of the treatment at the hands of some of the teachers in certain prestigious educational institutions even in the national capital and in other metropolises. Such acts of discrimination have also been documented. Such acts can continue only at the cost of prolonging historical bitterness which will impede the advancement of the nation to its fullest potential and in its search for its due place in the international context. Even more importantly, teachers can play an even more vital role as transmitters of the egalitarian ideal of humanism and Indian Constitution. Laws and programmes, if properly formulated keeping in view the objective, and if effectively implemented, can achieve only so much. But they cannot change attitudes, which have been ingrained and got fossilized. This infection and consequent practices of caste-based discrimination and untouchability

are in the air- a fact noticed by Hutton, Census Commissioner of India, in 1931 and which continues to be true today. Measures to counteract this infection have to be undertaken through a massive programme of human rights education, calibrated and graduated in accordance with different stages of the individual's growth. Children must be helped to see that caste is not a badge of honour, but caste is a badge of shame. They should be helped to see that a big country like India with great ambitions and expectations requires large minds and hearts while the caste system narrows the mind and the heart. There is a total mismatch between a big nation and small caste-shrivelled minds. In fact both Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar have separately expressed the common worry about how to change the mind-set created by caste. This is an important task of human rights education in India. The Institute of Human Rights Education has pioneered this effort in this country and a number of teachers belonging to the SCs are actively taking part in it in a number of schools in the country. But this is only a beginning and has to be made universal. The community of teachers, from pre-primary level upwards, have to join this effort with understanding of its implications, the disastrous, social and national consequences of failure to undertake this effort and the social and national benefit which will accrue there from. In fulfilling the specific role of teachers in preventing discrimination and in undertaking human rights education, greater responsibility is on the non-SC, non-ST teachers because they form the bulk of the numbers of teachers. According to the 6th All India Educational Survey of the NCERT and the NIC the proportion of SCs in all schools at all levels and in both in rural and urban areas put together is only 8.99 per cent. Therefore, it is that the non-SC teachers, particularly the upper caste teachers must take the initiative and maintain it consistently and persistently. In devising approaches to human rights education relevant to India, Girijashankar Badekha (1885-1939), commonly known as Gijubhai, pioneer of pre-primary and primary education can provide some methodological guidance. His methodology combined the philosophies and practices of Montessori, Frebel, Dalton and others and his own adaptations and experiments and reached out to children as well as their parents. He was one of the persons who, like Mahatma Phule, contributed to giving SCs a place in education and had an important role in securing their entry into Dakshinamurthy, a hostel he started in 1915 at Bhavnagar. By following Gijubhai's idealism and by adapting his methodology the evils of casteism and untouchability could be easily tackled by teachers. In addition, there is a need to conduct several qualitative and quantitative research studies in SC schools to probe into ground realities like gender equality, social equity dimensions, practices of social discrimination with the schools, classrooms, and their daily experiences.

Conclusion

Unless the SCs are enabled to reach up to the level of advanced classes in all respects and unless we create the basis for fraternity and infuse along with it anti-

caste, anti-untouchability egalitarian human rights education, the dreams of nationalist glory of the educated middle classes (drawn mostly from the upper castes and recently to a limited extent from the upper middle castes) will not materialize. The contemporary period should be utilised for normalizing, humanizing and equalizing Indian society so that India can make a qualitative difference to international affairs if and when it becomes a permanent member of the Security Council and even before that consummation.

The Problems of Education of Scheduled Tribe Children

Background

Scheduled Tribes (STs), once proud masters of their traditional territory have been reduced to minorities in their own home-lands. This is a historical process that has been going on for centuries and has acquired precarious dimensions in the post-independent era. This process has become virulent in recent times, when the mineral wealth of the tribal land has become much more valuable. The lands that still remain with them are poorly developed, are rarely irrigated and are poorly integrated with the market, leaving the field open to middlemen from outside. Irrigation projects that have been undertaken by governments in the tribal areas are typically programmes for building dams in tribal areas, submerging tribal lands, scattering their settlements and people to the wind and taking water to non-tribals outside the tribal areas. Public expenditures incurred on such projects are gratuitously shown as part of the tribal sub-Plan. No wonder increasing numbers of STs are forced into wage-labour and the proportion of STs among agricultural wage-labourers has increased in recent decades. Traditional tribal rights in forests which they have been enjoying through traditional symbiotic relationship with forests were unilaterally abrogated by the colonial government, making the STs dependent on others for their elementary requirements and very survival. The term Scheduled Tribes first appeared in the Constitution of India. Article 366 (25) refers to scheduled tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to Article 342 of the Constitution, 'the Scheduled Tribes are the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by the President through a public notification'. In pursuance of these provisions, the list of Scheduled Tribes was notified for each State or Union Territory with the proviso that it was valid only within the jurisdiction of that State or Union Territory and not outside. In other words the list of Scheduled Tribes is State/ UT specific and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State. The inclusion of a community as a Scheduled Tribe is an on-going process. The essential characteristics, first laid down by the Lokur Committee (1965) are: indications of primitive traits; distinctive culture; shyness of contact with the community at large;

geographical isolation; backwardness. These characteristics are not spelt out in the constitution but have become the important referral points as they subsume the definitions contained in 1931 Census, the reports of first Backward Classes Commission 1955, the Advisory Committee (Kalelkar) on Revision of SC/ST lists (Lokur Committee, 1965) and the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill 1967.

Scheduled Tribe Development: An Overview

Scheduled tribes (STs) constitute about 9% of India's population. Each of the 705 scheduled tribes has their own language, and differs from the one mostly spoken in the State where they reside. Tribals are not a homogenous group. Different tribes, even if living in the same village, maintain exclusive identities. Socialization is generally endogamous and they identify more with people belonging to their tribe rather than to those living in the same village or area. The recent history of tribals is filled with stories of forced displacement, land alienation and increasing marginalization, eruption of violence and the counter-violence by the State. Going by any parameters of development, the tribals always figure at the tail end. The situation of the communities that have been pastoral or nomadic is still worse. Tribal communities continue to face economic deprivation and lack of access to basic services, including education. Due to the absence of rehabilitation in post-independent era tribals are dispersed across the country, and live away from urbanization. As industrialization and urbanization flourish, infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity are not reaching these tribal localities. Reduced accessibility and connection have further deprived tribals from improving their lives. *Adivasis* often migrate to cities in search of a job within the mainstream for their survival. However, they are often unable to find a place in city slums due to various reasons. Realizing the need to improve the overall status of tribals, their education has emerged at the forefront of recent development efforts. Acknowledging that tribals comprise the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, a host of programs and measures have been initiated since India's Independence. The tribal situation in the country presents a varied picture. Some areas have high tribal concentration while in other areas the tribals form only a small portion of the total population. There are some tribal groups which are still at the food gathering stage, some others practice shifting cultivation and yet some others are pursuing primitive forms of agriculture. The Constitution of India provides for a comprehensive framework for the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes and for preventing their exploitation by other groups of society. A detailed and comprehensive review of the tribal problem was taken on the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan and the Tribal sub-Plan strategy took note of the fact that an integrated approach to the tribal problems was necessary in terms of their geographic and demographic concentration. Accordingly, the tribal areas in the country were

classified under three broad categories: states and Union Territories having a majority scheduled tribe population; states and Union Territories having substantial tribal population but majority tribal population in particular administrative units, such as block and tehsils; states and Union Territories having dispersed tribal population.

It was decided that tribal majority States like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and U.Ts of Lakshadweep and Dadra & Nagar Haveli may not need a Tribal sub-Plan, as the entire plan of these States/Union Territories was primarily meant for the S.T. population constituting the majority. For the second category of States and Union Territories, tribal sub-Plan approach was adopted after delineating areas of tribal concentration. A similar approach was also adopted in case of States and Union Territories having dispersed tribal population by paying special attention to pockets of tribal concentrations. To look after the tribal population coming within the new tribal sub-Plan strategy in a coordinated manner, *Integrated Tribal Development Projects* were conceived during Fifth Five Year Plan and these have been continued since then. During the Sixth Plan, *Modified Area Development Approach* (MADA) was adopted to cover smaller areas of tribal concentration and during the Seventh Plan, the *TSP strategy* was extended further to cover even smaller areas of tribal concentration and subsequently *clusters* of tribal concentration were identified. At the time of delineation of project areas under the Tribal sub-Plan strategy, it was observed that the ITDPs/ITDAs are not co-terminus. The Scheduled Areas as per the Constitutional orders have been declared in eight States viz., A.P. (the erstwhile combined state), Bihar, Gujarat, H.P., Maharashtra, M.P., Odisha and Rajasthan. As per the provisions contained in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, various enactments in the form of Acts and Regulations have been promulgated in the above states for the welfare of scheduled tribes and their protection from exploitation. Since TSP strategy also has twin objectives, namely socio-economic development of Schedule tribes and protection of tribals against exploitation, the Government of India (August 1976) had decided to make the boundaries of Scheduled Areas co-terminus with TSP areas (ITDP/ITDA only) so that the protective measures available to Scheduled Tribes in Scheduled Areas could be uniformly applied to TSP areas for effective implementation of the development programmes in these areas. Accordingly, the TSP areas have been made co-terminus with Scheduled Areas in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, H.P., Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan. The state of A.P. where the TSP areas are not co-terminus with Scheduled Areas has also furnished a proposal to this effect which is under examination.

The ITDP/ITDAs (Integrated Tribal Development Projects/Agencies) are generally contiguous areas of the size of a Tehsil or Block or more in which the ST population is 50% or more of the total. On account of demographic reasons, however, ITDPs in Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal may be smaller

or not contiguous. Andhra Pradesh and Odisha have opted for an agency model under the Registration of Societies Act and the ITDPs there are known as ITDAs. There are now 194 Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) in the country spread across the states of Andhra Pradesh (Telangana and AP put together), Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Island and Daman & Diu where the ST population is more than 50% of the total population of the blocks or groups of block. In eight states having scheduled areas the ITDPs/ITDAs are generally co-terminus with TSP areas. The ITDPs/ITDAs are headed by Project Officer though they may be designated Project Administrators or Project Directors.

During the Sixth Plan, pockets outside ITDP areas, having a total population of 10,000 with at least 5,000 tribals were covered under the Tribal Sub-Plan under Modified Area Development Approach (MADA). So far 259 MADA pockets have been identified in the in the various TSP states of the country. Generally, MADA pockets do not have separate administrative structures to implement development programmes. The line Departments of the state governments are expected to implement development programmes in MADA pockets under the overall control of the District authorities. Clusters (of tribal population) are no separate administrative structures like MADA. So far 82 Clusters have been identified in various TSP states of the country. Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) are tribal communities among the STs who live in near isolation in inaccessible habitats. They are characterised by a low rate of growth of population, pre-agricultural level of technology and extremely low levels of literacy. So far 75 PTGs have been identified. In order to give more focused attention to the development of Scheduled Tribes, a separate Ministry, carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, known as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs was constituted in October 1999. This is the nodal Ministry for overall development of Scheduled Tribes. The mandate of the Ministry includes social security and social insurance with respect to the Scheduled Tribes, tribal welfare planning, project formulation, research and training, promotion and development of voluntary efforts on tribal welfare and certain matters relating to administration of the Scheduled Areas. Ministry of Tribal Affairs supports and supplements the efforts of State Governments/U.T. Administrations and the various Central Ministries/Departments for the holistic development of these communities.

Education of Scheduled Tribe Children

With education viewed as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities, elementary education has been made a priority area in the tribal sub-plans since the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-79). As a result, there have been marked improvements in access, and to some extent in quality of primary education in

tribal areas. Education has recently witnessed a rapid transformation, particularly in the areas of access, pedagogic reform and community participation in tribal areas. Emphasis has been on improving access to elementary education through the schemes of alternative education, training of teachers, appointment of local teachers, adapting curriculum to their needs, and providing locally relevant teaching-learning materials to schools. Owing to determined efforts of the government, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of ST children has increased considerably at elementary levels of education, even more as compared to their non-tribal counterparts. The GER of ST children at primary stage is 137 as against 116 of their non-tribal counterparts. Participation of these children is now more or less in proportion to their share in population at the elementary school level. Dropouts, though declining over years, are significantly large at this level: the dropout rate of ST children at primary school level is 35.6% as against 27% of their non-tribal counterparts. The corresponding figures for elementary school stage are 55% as against 40.06. The general factors responsible for the high rate of dropout among the ST are: teacher absenteeism, lack of adequate teaching-learning materials in schools, irregular supply of mid-day meal, lack of participation of VEC/SMC in school programme and poverty, and illiteracy of parents. These findings have immense implications for designing education of the tribal children in the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) regions of the country. Most of the students, as they come from socio-economically disadvantaged communities like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are scared of the teachers and do not find anything interesting to hold them on to the schools and gradually they start withdrawing from the schools. Education continued to receive high priority in the Eleventh Plan to facilitate educational development among STs by providing educational facilities, incentives and support especially focusing the ST girls. Some Special Schemes for the development of education amongst STs are: Post Matric Scholarship (centrally sponsored scheme providing financial assistance to the Scheduled Tribe students pursuing higher education beyond matriculation levels); hostels for ST Girls/Boys (to facilitate ST students to continue their studies at distant places by extending hostel facilities); upgradation of merit of ST Students (to upgrade the merit of Scheduled Tribe students in classes IX to XII by providing them with facilities for all round development through education in residential schools); free Coaching for STs (in operation since the Sixth Five Year Plan and provides free coaching to ST students to enhance their competitive capabilities to face various competitive examinations); scholarships scheme of Top Class Education (launched in 2007–08 with the aim of promoting quality education amongst ST students); ashram Schools (cover 22 States and 2 Union Territories and the objective is to promote and extend educational facilities to Scheduled Tribe students including PVTGs in tune with their social and cultural milieu); strengthening education among ST Girls (The Scheme of Educational Complexes in the Low Literacy Pockets was revised

in 2008–09 and renamed as Strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts); Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships (launched in 2005–06 as a special incentive to extend scholarships to ST students to pursue higher studies and research degrees); National Overseas Scholarship (launched in 1954–55 providing financial assistance to meritorious ST students for pursuing higher education abroad at the level of Masters and Ph. D); Tribal Research Institutes (There are 17 Tribal Research Institutes located in various states and UTs conducting relevant research, student surveys and training). A number of development projects viz., industrial, power or irrigation facilities are setup in the tribal areas during the 12th Five Year Plan period. Though these projects offer tremendous opportunities for the economic advancement for the tribal people living in these areas, very little of the benefits actually accrue to tribals due to lack of adequate and eligible candidates for the jobs created. Tribal youth must be equipped with necessary education and skill abilities to take advantage of job opportunities in their areas and elsewhere. Otherwise, the opportunities will go in favour of outsiders, leaving a feeling of deprivation and discontent among the tribal youth. The current focus is to review the educational needs of *Scheduled Tribe* children in the schools in the country. Provision for quality education for these children through improvised pedagogy, mother tongue instruction, types of action plans for implementing multilingual education, contextualization of the content of the school text books, support materials required, provision for support materials in tribal dialects, contextualization of classroom transactions, integration of life skills with the curriculum, overall need for modification of pedagogic routines in tribal context, in-service teacher training programmes etc are some of the emerging issues that need urgent action in India. Various recent studies on education of tribal children (from the perspective of social inclusion) throw light on the poor state of affairs. A recent study on school management practices under SSA supported by European Union states in its report that the prescribed curriculum and related teaching learning material (TLM) are top-down in nature; do not create opportunities or the administrative space and scope for need-based development of material and need-based planning at the school level; inclusion of children in border areas and tribal/forest areas remains weak. Similarly, transition rates from primary to upper primary and secondary show significant dropout rates in case of marginalised sections and minority religions, and there are significant gender differences. Literacy rates among ST children still lag behind in many states. Though decentralised community mobilisation efforts have improved enrolment, this cannot be said for inclusion of the most deprived communities or social groups. The Constitution of India prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste, sex or place of birth. It stands for equity and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Inequitable circumstances leading to socio-economic and educational deprivations have created imbalances in society and lack of resources has tended to remain backward. The

Constitution has made provisions for certain safeguards (social, economic, educational, cultural, political, service) and protective measures to ensure all round development of weaker and disadvantaged sections. It also provides that States will promote educational and economic interests of weaker sections of society, in particular scheduled castes and tribes.

The National Policy on Education (1986, 1992) and its programme of action (1992), have identified special measures for fulfilling the constitutional commitments to Scheduled tribes which include opening of primary schools, *Anganwadis*, non-formal and adult education centres, construction of school buildings in tribal areas, development of curricula and instructional materials in tribal languages so as to render tribal students switch over to regional languages in course of time. The priorities also include establishment of residential schools, formulation of incentive schemes and scholarships for higher education, and designing curriculum at all stages to create awareness of the rich cultural identity of tribal people and their enormous creative talent. Various short term and long term measures as indicated in the programme of action on National Policy of Education (1992) have been identified for this purpose. A number of welfare, administrative and educational provisions have been made to improve the situation in respect of scheduled tribe communities. Funds have also been earmarked for the educational upliftment of this group under various sub plans. The major programmes of Elementary Education *viz.* District Primary Educational Programme, *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*, *Lok Jumbish*, *Shiksha Karmi*, Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education and the National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education have accorded priority to areas with concentration of scheduled tribes. The scheduled tribes deserve a high priority in any programme of education and the main reason is that a large majority of the tribal children who are not part of the formal system of education come from this group. The Working Group Report on Education of the disadvantaged sections during Tenth Five Year plan (2002-2007) brought out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in November, 2001 has mentioned that 'despite the fact that there has been an increase in the literacy rate of the STs since independence, the present position is still far from satisfactory. The overall increase in the literacy rate in the country during the period 1961-91 was 28.19% against which increase in literacy rate for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes during the same period was 21.07 respectively'. The situation in respect of these sections of people is still far from satisfactory and greater efforts are required to bring them on par with the general population. The Tenth Five Year plan has also recognized the need for increasing their retention and reducing their dropout rate as one of the measures to empower them. Therefore, there is a need to identify issues, which need to be addressed through carefully devised methodology of teaching these children so that they are in a position to derive full benefit from the education system. The National

Curriculum Frame Work for school Education (NCF 2000 and 2005) recognized the need to respond to the specific educational needs of the learners from various sections of society by integrating socio-cultural perspectives in the educational programmes, partly by showing concern for linguistic and pedagogical requirement of socially disadvantaged groups. This is more relevant to scheduled tribes as they exhibit different culture and use different languages. Some of the languages do not have their own script and use scripts of other languages. India is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. Tribal population constituting 8.1% of the total population comprises different social systems and dialects. Contextualization of curriculum and incorporation of fundamental rights of the disadvantaged groups are the right kind of steps to be taken up for promoting respect for all cultures, equity and democratic values. The subject matter and pedagogy are the important components of tribal education. Tribal children bring with them rich experiences and perspectives of different cultures, which are different from other groups. This diversity is at times confused with multiculturalism. While diversity refers to individuals/people that exemplify all cultural and congenial differences, multiculturalism means inclusion of theory, fact, values, and beliefs of all cultures. Therefore, the pedagogical strategies used for teaching in the tribal context are ought to be different. There needs to be synchronization between school activities and lives of students contextualizing curriculum and its transactions by linking with the experiences and skills of students. A uniform teacher-training package is being used for teachers of both tribal and non-tribal areas. There is almost no emphasis on understanding psychology of children from tribal areas, their specific-socio-cultural milieu, learning environment and the indigenous learning styles at home and community. Some of the training packages include a small module on tribal education, which often deals with macro issues mainly due to the paucity of time and space. The composition of Indian society calls for specific pedagogical inputs in teaching the tribal communities. This requirement is also supported by the recommendations of NCFCE 2000 and NCF 2005 which state that internationally, pedagogy is perceived not merely as a science of instruction but as a culture or as a set of sub-cultures as well which reflect different contexts and different teaching behaviours-inside and outside the classrooms. The issues related with development of pedagogy of tribal education can be divided six categories viz., medium of instruction; contextualizing textbook content and preparation of material; contextualizing curricular transaction; integrating life skills and entrepreneurship skills, information technology with curriculum; changing timings and holidays of tribal area schools and improving organizational climate in residential schools.

Pedagogical Requirements

Education through mother tongue has been emphasized both in the Kothari Commission Report (1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (1986, 1992)

and its programme of Action (1992). Various cognitive processes like perception, apprehension, responses, and creative expression are maximally developed through the medium of mother tongue; the medium of instruction, therefore, ought to be the mother tongue of children enrolled in schools. Smooth transition from students' operations in the mother tongue to those in the regional language is to be ensured. The transition from mother tongue to regional language is very curtailed to language learning. There is a need to take up studies on use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools serving tribal population.

In most of the states in India, tribal children have to learn from those text books, which are being used for the non-tribal children of the state as a whole. The contents of these books deal with subjects/topics unknown to the tribal children. The tribal children, who live in isolated and remote villages, may not be able to identify themselves with these text books because of their urban-based non-tribal contents. Besides the illustrations used in these text books are also from the world alien to tribal children. There is an imperative need that these text books are revised on a state-to-state and district-to-district basis so that necessary changes in them could be made to suit the socio-cultural and linguistic requirements of children from various tribal communities. At present, there is dearth of learning materials in the tribal dialects which is a strong factor contributing to high dropout rate of tribal children. Even the text books written in the regional languages do not permit the child to identify him with the content and its context. Besides the difference between the home language and the school language, non-inclusion of folk literature and culture specific stories, dialogues etc also hamper the interest of tribal children in learning. There is a need to revise the prescribed text books on a state to state basis, which needs to be supplemented by development of culture specific material through District Institutes of Education and Training in collaboration with voluntary agencies working in the tribal areas. There is a need to develop specific support materials at the district and grassroots level to support learning by tribal children in their own mother tongue. Some concrete steps in this direction have been taken by states under SSA programme. Culture specific teaching-learning materials have been prepared by the state governments such as Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. This includes language books, glossaries, supplementary reading materials, bridge inventories, learning kits, etc. The *Anada Lahari* developed by the state of Andhra Pradesh under the *Janasala* programme is exemplary in this regard. Formal schools often emphasise on discipline, routine norms, and teacher centred instruction. This is a contradiction and poses problems to the free environment of tribal culture. This has led to sharp difference in the surrounding social environment of home and school. This difference in two environments is to a great extent responsible for high drop out of tribal children from the school. This can be solved by the use of alternative teaching methods taking into account the

capacity of tribal children, availability of resources in tribal schools and the physical environment in schools. Teachers working in tribal schools are expected to know cultural values, practices, traditions and communication style of tribal children as well as the factors affecting their achievements in schools and learning difficulties. *Adivasis* lay a great emphasis on learning by memory because of their oral traditions. They are very much fond of riddles and narrative personal indulgences. All these issues are essential not only for a contextualized teaching-learning transaction but also for adopting appropriate evaluation procedures for the continuous and comprehensive evaluation of the tribal children in their environment. One of the objectives of education for life is development of life skills relevant to the target group and their local contexts. These skills are basically local specific. These life skills are important for individuals to face challenges in their life. These life skills can be classified into four broad categories: universal life skills, teacher oriented life skills, student oriented and subject oriented life skills. Student oriented skills need to be addressed in the specific socio-cultural context of *adivasi* children. Schools in tribal areas, due to their geographical isolation are deprived of emerging educational support systems. Education has to address both globalization and localization so that a balanced personality is developed. This task is more difficult in the tribal context where information technology facilities are very limited. It has also been advocated by many scholars and research studies that along with the academic studies, vocational training courses should also take part in the education system and curricular practices of *adivasi* children. At least a few hours' in a day may be allocated for vocational training of *adivasi* children in their schools. In tribal areas there is a vast networking system of residential, welfare and *ashram* type of schools which have been established and functioning for the overall development of *adivasi* children. These schools are under the management, supervision and control of tribal welfare departments and integrated tribal development agency organizations. Reports on functioning of these schools across the country reveal mixed stories. While some schools are effectively functioning, other schools have not exhibited satisfactory results due to variety of reasons. Insensitive nature of supervision, lack of effective monitoring system, teacher absenteeism, poor motivating factors and poor residential conditions in these schools have a potential bearing on the socio-cultural practices of the *adivasis*. Teachers working in the tribal schools are generally not mentally geared towards serving tribal children. They perform sensitive activities like teaching in mechanical and routine manner. It is important to develop a specific training component for teachers and wardens who work in tribal schools. Moreover, teachers need periodic motivational training and field placement to become familiar with home environment of children and also their psychology. Experts and field functionaries suggested a few measures for the betterment of the existing situations: a few more schools may be established and should be provided with necessary infrastructural

facilities; free coaching centres should be opened in the tribal villages for the educated and unemployed youth physical education should be improved and special training facilities should be provided to make them national and state level players; universalization of ICDS with secured *Anganwadi* workers; compulsory elementary education for PTG and Hill Tribes' children; reduction of Dropout rate among PTG children; availability of Upper Primary and High Schools in hilly tribal villages; girl-child friendly toilets in tribal schools; strengthening of District Institutes of Teacher Education (DIETs) to ensure availability of local teachers able to teach in mother tongue; Nagaland model for strengthening the system of governance in tribal schools; for migrant workers among the *adivasis*' alternative schools/tent schools/mobile schools; Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas for tribal girls and effective skill development norms for girl child's education in tribal villages; child survival and health issues affecting tribal children under the age of 18 need remedial action; tackling of high levels of malnutrition in tribal villages; access to public services (health, PDS etc.) to be improvised etc.

Systemic Issues

Children coming from ST groups sometimes do not access government schools on par with others. There are state-wise variations with regard to this issue. The attendance rates among these sections of children are uneven. There is a gap between attendance reported in school records and the number of children present on all working days in the schools. Children from extremely poor families, landless daily wage labourers, and seasonal migrants among the STs tend to miss school more often. Most importantly, girls from very poor families were irregular and many children from such families reach school very late. Adivasi children are often ridiculed and ignored by the teachers. The combination of being poor, first generation school goers, being absent frequently due to circumstances and compelling reasons children are often ignored. Tapping of their full energies in the schools is not taking place. Like in the case of scheduled caste children, it is observed that children from ST communities regularly participate in the tasks that were assigned to them by the teachers in government institutions. Teachers decide the roles and tasks to be performed by ST students both in the classroom and around the school. These include routine duties like sweeping the playground, classrooms, toilets and the place where the mid-day meal is served. Children of Adivasi families drop out of schools in large numbers as compared to the children forward sections. Their experiences in schools are not very positive and encouraging as they come from diverse social and poor background. The educational institutions particularly the adivasi children attend are mostly the government run schools. It is an established fact that the quality provided in these schools is anything but satisfactory. There are significant variations in education among ST children.

In the states like Assam and Odisha the habitations/villages/blocks where the children of adivasi groups reside are quite far. Their children cannot attend the

school due to the barriers of distance from their school to home. For example, Bodos, Karbis, Mishings and Chakmas in Assam live in remote areas where it is always difficult for children to commute the distance to school. As these communities live in distant habitations/villages, their children often go to schools that are fairly homogenous. The social norms in Indian society with regard to the treatment of adivasis are by and large discriminatory. The availability of school buildings, toilets, bore well or hand pumps are not ensuring easy access for ST children. The status of working of such facilities needs to be identified. There is a huge gap existing between the availability of such infrastructure facilities and the conditions of its usage and usability. Building infrastructure in ST schools needs to be upgraded. Ashram/ Tribal welfare/Residential/KGBV/Madrassa schools should be modernized. The adivasi communities have started playing a significant role in politics due to social mobilisation in the last 2-3 decades. The Educational attainments and status of some of the adivasi groups are better when compared to OBC groups/forward sections where the community participation, assertive political movements, social mobilisation, urban proximity are better. There are however two constraints. Intense activity is confined to pockets where density of tribal population is high (like in Madhya Pradesh where land right movement of tribal families under the auspices of Ekta Parishad is of great contemporary relevance). When compared to the SCs and their assertive social movements, the tribal social activism is at a lower ebb still.

Systemic Reforms

SC/ST/OBC children often face coercive conditions in schools. Teachers make use of them for different purposes like fetching water, roll call sheets, attendance register, and for personal causes. These conditions are often retarding interests of ST children in schools. In some schools the scholarships these children get or incentives they get will be rebuked by the teachers in the school assembly and classrooms. Schools should have the ability to tap the energies of ST children. Infrastructure facilities are another important concern in SC/ST/Minority schools. The infrastructure facilities that are available in these schools are poor in almost all the states. There are inadequate classrooms for children. Usable toilets are almost absent. In fact, toilets are available in majority of the schools but their usage is very little. Serious attention should be paid to ensure that they should be brought into serviceable conditions with running water facilities and cleaned regularly. Toilets should be girl-child friendly. Girls from the poor sections mostly are frequently asked to clean the toilets. Teachers Working in Tribal Schools are not well versed local languages. Among the problems of education of tribal children language is an important barrier. Medium of instruction is an important indicator for education of ST students. This needs to be explored in detail since a large number of studies have focused on this issue. For instance in Assam the main

medium of instruction is very different from the mother tongue of tea garden workers or of workers who come from Hindi speaking areas of the country. Similarly, in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh, the medium of instruction is different from the mother tongue of the adivasi children. In Rajasthan, local dialects vary in each district and children may not be familiar with the standardised Hindi used in schools. Discriminatory practices are seen in vogue in many schools where ST children are either assigned less important and menial tasks in the schools or used for personal errands of school teachers. The social discrimination is conspicuous by its presence in matters of fetching water and cleaning toilets. These are often assigned to children from ST or SC categories whereas kids of forward castes will get refined school routines like conduct of assembly, reading prayers and speaking on chosen subjects. It is a case of intellectual dishonesty and negation of knowledge-acquisition where learning tasks are often given to upper caste children that are denied to others. This social denial results in psychological aberrations and prone to develop introvert thinking among children drawn from those social rungs of society other than upper ones. In some states most of the schools allow the forward caste children to eat, drink water and wash mid-day meal plates first (Rajasthan). Another humiliating example is a case where students from ST/SC categories are *given water*, but not allowed to *take water*. In addition, there is overwhelming evidence of gender as well as caste-based discrimination in practices around cleaning of toilets. Wherever toilets are being used, children clean them using water from the hand pump or tap. There are no sporting facilities for children in the ST schools. Culture specific sports are not a priority in ST schools and children were seen playing with their friends. Their culture specific sports, games are losing sheen. Like sports facilities, libraries also are absent. Even if the schools had books, they were not given to the children. Library books are never allowed for ST children. Teachers do not allow/borrow books to the home particularly ST students because they are considered low caste people and they likely spoil the books. ST students regularly complain of punishment in schools. Children are prone to verbal abuse with caste and community identity. Often ST children are often being used for abuse. Teachers often complain about the ban of all forms of corporal punishments. They feel that this ban is the main reason for lack of discipline among ST children in schools. It is generally observed that ST children are slapped in schools. In many places children report that physical punishment is very common. The disciplinary measures thrust upon ST children are severe and complex. The RTE Act notwithstanding, teachers and parents were quite vocal about the need for punishment. The verbal abuse using caste/community identity is sensitive to STs in several schools. The attitude towards girl ST students and the kind of punishment meted out to them is very severe. After puberty touching the girls is a taboo and therefore in some schools teachers resort to scolding the girls. Some schools report sexual violence on girls. The Mid-day meal (MDM) is one area which needs special attention. Social

and community prejudices invariably surfaced in recent time. The cooks appointed in adivasi schools are mostly from other caste category where there is every possibility that their performance is too poor. The seating arrangements for eating the food and access to water for cleaning the plates are poor. In almost all the states ST children are attracted towards mid-day meals. Children from forward sections generally go home for lunch. The food items in ST schools are prepared and served by non-ST staff. Therefore ST children do not prefer to take mid-day meals (for example, *Gondi* and *Sugali* communities). The adolescent girls due to several constraints are not able to eat mid-day meals. The ST children are observed sitting in their own community groups. Children are separated based on gender, caste, sect, and community.

In schools at least three seating arrangements are practiced. The brightest/most active/disciplined students are allowed to sit in the front rows. Academic performance of children matters much. They get their role numbers according to the academic performance. Normally ST students were asked to sit at the back. Children from the forward sections even if their performance is found defective, they will be allowed to sit in front rows. In most of classroom activities, it is observed by researchers that teachers attribute the poor performance of ST children to lack of interest towards the education. Majority of upper caste teachers exhibit a strong bias towards ST students and brand them underachievers/poor performers. Only a few teachers encourage ST children to develop academically and perform equally with other category children. Majority of the teachers are of the opinion that ST children's parents are often not educated and they eventually drag their children out of school and do not ensure regular attendance. In most of instances, parents are by and large unaware of what is happening inside the schools and the conditions of their children. Parents have nothing to say about what their children learn and do in the school. They believe that everything is quite alright. Awareness levels with regard to the benefits of education are very little. They do not expect much to happen in schools due to their constant fight for their survival. There is common perception that ST children do not perform better in schools. Interestingly school records in some places schools reveal that academically these children perform better than many others. There is a distinction between the teachers' perception and reality. The teachers have their own prejudices and traditional stereotypes about the academic achievements and attainments of ST children. Ensuring teacher regularity in ST schools needs a mention and attention of those concerned. One of the biggest challenges that needs to be tackled is the availability of adequate number of teachers to cater to various needs of ST children. There is acute shortage of teachers at all levels. Majority of teachers are not present in schools on every working day and do not come to school even though they are appointed on permanent basis. In some schools, contract teachers are being appointed who do not show serious interest in the quality education of children. Para teachers, contract

teachers are not paid regularly. Community participation in ST schools is an important concern for promoting quality education for ST children. Another important aspect is the presence and functioning of School Management Committees (SMCs) or the Village Education Committees has not been very effective to ensure involvement of parents, especially from the most backward communities. Majority of them admit that their voices are rarely heard and have no opportunity to participate regularly in school-level committee meetings. Both RTI and RTE should be linked to ST schools as RTI will supplement its strength to RTE. The qualification norms of teachers should be adhered to RTE norms for ST schools. There is a need to study, understand and identify good school practices towards ST children with regard to their education. Some schools are following inclusive and positive practices in their classrooms. But these inclusive practices are very few and need further elaboration. There are a few initiatives launched by central and state governments for SCs like Tola Sewak (a volunteer in a village or habitation can take the responsibilities of getting children to school and interacting with them in school-practiced in Bihar) and Hunar programme for promoting and encouraging education for poor and marginalised sections. Such programmes need more attention and further extension to cover ST children. It is important that the specific needs of special needy children among ST groups needs separate focus. In majority of the cases such children are not included in the school system. The SSA framework clearly mentions that children with special needs should be provided education in an appropriate environment. They should not be left out of the education system. Child friendly infrastructure, positive and supportive attitude of the teachers and students providing ramps and child friendly toilets form some important and immediate concerns. Education of children of the Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Denotified Communities (NT/SNT/DNT) communities is a very important concern of the government. Despite provision for local habitation schools and mid-day meal, attendance was still not satisfactory and cherished results have not been achieved in the standards of education. The educational problems concerning these children should be tackled by the apex educational organisations as a part of their extension programmes. There is a need to study the educational pattern available to these children with a view to improving the achievement levels. The main focus should be to examine to what extent education has spread among these tribes in India. There is a strong objection raised regarding the pathetic conditions of education and educational institutions prevailing in the settlement schools. There are social and behavioural changes taking place among the members of the NT/SNT/DNT tribal settlement areas in India. The settlements in various states in the country constitute a major segment of the total scheduled tribe population in the country. In all these settlements NT/SNT/DNT tribes form a major part of population. Some of the settlers still suffer from problems of crime and illiteracy. One of the main problems identified by the field experiences and the field surveys

is about the social treatment meted out to the families of these tribes. For generations together, the families and their members have been labelled as criminals, suffered dishonour and social negligence. The reasons are not far to seek given the background of the socially despicable avocation as practiced by some of the people belonging to these tribes. The children and women, in particular, have suffered ignominy from mainstream society. The stigma of criminality is still one of the major impediments in the smooth run of educational progress of children and youth. Children often faced a kind of social alienation in most of the walks of social life. Social alienation particularly in young age hampers the growth of psycho-social faculties of the children. Social practices of the mainstream society have denied opportunities for the children coming from the so-called criminal families residing in the settlement areas. The approaches of the government often times remain impersonal and lack human element and in its approach. The school or the process of schooling in settlement areas or settlement schools may be used as instruments or tools to impart social culture, feelings of common fraternity, community approach, adjustment mentality, atmosphere of working and learning together and finally moral dynamics of social and cultural behaviour. The schools in settlement areas are to be treated or perceived from a different angle where they are expected to combine the role of an instructor, and change agents. There is a need to conduct several qualitative and quantitative research studies in ST schools to capture the reality of conditions persisting in schools: gender equality, social equity dimensions, practices of social discrimination within the schools, classrooms, and daily experiences. Modernisation of these institutions with culture specific education is an urgent task. Any violation of the rights of ST children is a violation of their rights to equality, social justice and right against all forms of discrimination. Quality education should be provided to teachers working with ST children to attend to needs of such children. Pedagogical and curricular issues need specific focus and attention so as to address the emerging issues in their proper social and cultural context.

Conclusion

Although school coverage has increased, STs continue to lag far behind the rest of the population. To deal with the low levels of literacy among tribals and to bridge the gap between dropout rates between tribals and non-tribals, there is a need to focus on elementary education. Therefore, there is a need to start a scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship for all ST children across the country. The objectives of the proposed scheme are to support parents of ST children so that the incidence of drop-out would be reduced. There strong recommendations for the scheme's continuance in the Twelfth Five Year Plan that are tuned to the changing times. Some important recommendations are: the rates of scholarship and income ceiling should be revised at regular intervals in line with the price index; possibility of

paying college fees directly should be explored; scholarships to students (day scholars or hostellers) should be paid on a monthly basis; it would be desirable that 100 per cent grant-in-aid is given for establishment of Ashram schools and hostels for ST Boys even in the non-Naxal areas; qualified teachers belonging to the local tribal communities should be trained and placed in position as teachers in Ashram schools; increase in the number of scholarships from 667 to 1000 under Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme; number of scholarship awards may be enhanced under National Overseas Scholarship (NOS) etc. Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their wellbeing. In the context of education of ST children, finding a balance between preserving their cultural identity and mainstreaming for economic prosperity seems crucial. Recognizing that the education system is currently designed for the dominant group, there needs to be investment in creating support mechanisms that supplement the integration of the marginalized children into the formal education system. Some of the contemplated measures in this regard are: using both tribal and state languages during the pre-primary and primary levels; creating supplementary learning materials relevant to ST children; introducing monetary/non-monetary incentives for teachers in tribal areas; addressing the health and nutritional needs of children; improving community participation by training teachers and youth as peer educators; establishing and strengthening transitional education centres which focus on mainstreaming marginalized children and creating seasonal hostels and residential schools for children of migratory parents. These support mechanisms are expected to address some of the issues facing these children inside the classroom. However, it is evident that there needs to be more philanthropic investment in building community cultural wealth outside the classroom too. This would provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential that can transcend the barriers experienced by marginalized today.

The Problems of Education of Backward Classes and Minority Children

Background

Contrary to popular misconception, it is not only Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) who are constitutionally recognised but Backward Classes too enjoy such constitutional privilege under Article 340(1), 15(4), 338(1), 16(4) and are provided certain special measures including reservation even before independence in Princely States and Presidencies of peninsular India. After independence, some North Indian States gradually joined this process. Other States and the Centre came last. But, there has been little effort to take a comprehensive view of the economic, educational and other issues of the BCs and resolve them.

Backward classes consisted of castes of mendicants (a better word for beggars), *Safai Karmachari* (scavengers barring those who are included in SCs) and nomadic, semi-nomadic and *Vimukta Jati* (castes formerly dubbed as criminal) castes. The *Safai* sub-category includes Muslim scavenger castes like *Halalkhor*, *Muslim Mehtar*, *Muslim Jogi* etc who are not included among SCs on account of Clause (3) of the Presidential Order under Article 341. This sub-category has the lowest status among BCs and is devoid of assets as well as skills. They can be designated as the extremely backward (*Sarvaadhik Pichade*) castes of BCs. Castes of traditional artisans (weavers, blacksmiths, potters, carpenters etc.) and artisanal producers (fishing groups, stone-cutters, earth workers, oil-pressers etc.) form the largest sub-category of BCs. They have no or little assets but known for their traditional skills. These skills have become out-dated on account of lack of technological upgradation and other support. They can be designated as the most backward castes (*Athyanth Pichade*) of the BCs. Pastoral castes and castes providing various services like hair-cutting and washing of clothes are generally on par with artisan castes and would mostly come under the sub-category of the most backward castes. On the other, many of tenant farmers are from weaker sections among BCs. They can be designated as the more backward (*Adhik Pichade*) castes of BCs. Examples are the *Bataidars* or sharecroppers of Bihar. Along with these groups, castes of landowning peasants have the advantage of possessing agricultural land and related skills, which skills are not fully developed. While most of the peasant castes are included in the list of BCs, there are peasant castes that have in historical times emerged out of social backwardness and risen above the line of social backwardness. These four-fold sub-categories of BCs are commonly known. Though they did not suffer the problem of untouchability, they suffered from their low social status. Usually each of these castes was associated with a traditional occupation. The traditional Indian system had a hierarchy of castes. The linkage with traditional occupation does not mean that all people of a caste were and are engaged in that occupation, but all those who were and are engaged in that occupation belong to that caste.

Status of Backward Classes and Minority Groups

A large proportion of the BCs are dependent on their traditional occupations like fishing, variety of traditional productive industries and services. While, on the one hand, the doors of access to other occupations of their individual choice have been barred to them, on the other hand, opportunities and incomes in the traditional occupations, to which they are largely confined, are also being threatened and truncated by the organised market and through denial of access to relevant technology, finance and flexible credit. Many of them have consequently been pushed into agricultural wage-labour and even bonded labour. This process has gained tempo after traditional artisans were exposed to global competition without prior preparation of technological upgradation, financial support, market linkages

and other support mechanisms which were necessary to enable them to stand up to international competition. At this rate, there is the danger that even traditional occupations like weaving of cotton and silk handloom fabrics, which are cultural hallmarks of India, may disappear after the present generation; already their numbers have shrunk by about half in recent decades. Most of bonded labourers today belong to BCs. The problem faced by BCs engaged in traditional occupations is also the fate of those sections of SCs and STs who are dependent on similar traditional occupations. The presence of BCs in the organised modern establishment of government and quasi-government bodies is very limited on account of denial of their Constitutional right to be recognised and accorded reservation and other facilities until 1990-93. It took another 12 to 14 years for reservation in education in the Central sector to be provided for them. In all parameters of development and welfare, the BCs figure between SCs and STs at the lowest end with the Socially Advanced Castes (SACs) at the top end. There is still no systematic approach of holistic and comprehensive planning for the development of BCs, so that in a reasonable time they are enabled to become equal to the Socially Advanced Castes. Legislation for BCs (along with SCs and STs) for reservation in private higher educational institutions including professional institutions should be enacted, fulfilling the real purpose of the 93rd Constitution Amendment Act, 2005 inserting new Clause (5) in Article 15. High Quality Residential Schools up to Class XII for BC boys and girls should be set up, initially one each in every district and subsequently in every Block. 75% of children in these schools should be from BCs. Among the BCs due share should be given to the children of More, Most and Extremely Backward castes. Some of these residential schools should be located in areas of substantial Muslim population so that children of BCs Muslims can have due access to these institutions. There was a move and financial provision for these residential schools for BCs as well as SCs and STs as early as 1996-97 which was later scuttled. Muslims of India come broadly under two categories: Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Muslims referred to hereafter as BCM. They account for about 80% of the total Muslim population of India and other Muslims. The BCM are converts from the same castes as BCs and SCs of Hindus, more from BCs in North India and more from SCs in South India. Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25 to 28) and cultural and educational rights (Articles 29 and 30) in the Constitution touch upon some basic rights of religious minorities. All Muslims, both socially backward and others, have these rights along with other religious and linguistic minorities. They are also entitled to the rights of all citizens like Right to Life (Article 21) which includes right to safety and security of person and property, right to life with dignity, right to livelihood, right to shelter etc as interpreted by the Supreme Court from time to time. These rights have to be zealously protected. There are special developmental and welfare rights including right to reservation in order to bring about equality as mandated by the Constitution.

This part is available only to the socially and educationally backward classes of Muslims (BCM) and also to a very small proportion of them who are STs (in Lakshadweep and Jammu & Kashmir). All the schemes, programmes and legislations mentioned for BCs apply to BCM also. In these, BCM and BCs of other religious minorities should not be lost sight of and it should be ensured that they are taken up fully in development programmes and schemes along with the rest of the BCs, without oversight or discrimination or scope to suspect discrimination. Establishment of high quality residential schools for BCs in areas where the proportion of Muslim population is high so that Muslims especially BCM whose educational indicators are very low get well-deserved support for their educational progress. These measures pertain to employment and education. If in these two areas Muslims especially BCM are given extra support, the atmosphere in the country may begin to substantively change. Christians constitute a much small proportion of the Indian population than Muslims, about 2.5%. They are mostly in South India. They are also in small numbers in North India especially in districts like Gurdaspur. In Gurdaspur, they are known as *Massihs* who are converts from the same castes as the *Balmikis* of Hindus. The *Hindu Balmikis*, the *Sikh Mazhabis*, the *Christian Massihs*, and the *Muslim Halalkhor* and *Muslim Mehtar* are a continuum of castes on which the inhuman work of manual scavenging was imposed. *Massihs* exist across the border in Pakistan also. While *Balmikis* and *Mazhabis* are SCs, *Massihs* and *Halalkhor* are excluded from the SC list on account of Clause (3) of the Presidential Orders. There is no problem of incomplete identification in the case of Christian BCs. But, developmental issues mentioned in the context of Muslims also apply to BC Christians, particularly SCs and fisher-folk converts. In addition, SC converts to Christianity suffer from untouchability and atrocities not because they are Christians but because they belong to the same castes as Hindu SCs. Therefore, it would be appropriate to give them equal coverage under the Protection of Civil Rights Act and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (POA) Act. This is independent of the claim of SC Converts to Christianity to be brought within the ambit of SCs. There is also a need to consider the situation of the poor who do not belong to SC, ST and BC. The difference between them and the poor among the SC, ST and BC must be clearly understood. The former are poor purely on account of economic reasons and circumstances. They have not been denied access to education or avenues of gainful employment by the social system or the Indian caste system. The latter are poor on grounds of systemic and systematic deprivation and exclusion on account of the traditional social system or the Indian caste system.

Education: Status and Systemic Issues

It is a known fact that children from OBC/Minority communities drop out of schools in large numbers as compared to the children of forward sections of India. Their

experiences in schools are not very positive and encouraging as they come from diverse social and poor backgrounds. Every day they face various types of discrimination, caste discrimination, community specific exclusion, gender-related exclusion and sexual harassment, bullying, and violence against the children of OBC/Minority communities. Many research studies pointed out about their segregation and exclusion from school atmosphere. However, the state and centre educational institutions, organisations do not accept this fact. A study conducted by SSA during the year 2011-12 by involving a team of researchers in six states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan reveals these facts clearly, and acknowledges the prevalence of exclusionary practices in schools and demands the need to address them urgently. It is becoming a distant dream for OBC/Minority children to access school, participate in school related activities, learn and grow. Their education is closely entangled with variety of issues such as society, family, school, community. The National Policy on Education 1986 reiterates that universal education is a powerful tool to help neutralize distortions of the past and give children a level playing field. The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 states that *guaranteeing all children the right to go to school, the right to be treated with love and care, and most importantly the right to be treated equally and with dignity*". Despite several efforts by government and good intentions the conditions of OBC/Minority children is far from satisfactory. Discrimination, unequal treatment, hidden practices retarding the abilities of these marginalised sections of children to learn, grow and acclimatise with educational benefits. There is a need to conduct several qualitative and quantitative research studies in minority schools to capture the reality of conditions persisting in minority schools, gender equality, social equity dimensions, practices of social discrimination with the schools, classrooms, and their daily experiences. Children of OBC/Minority often get admitted into government or public schools. It is an established fact that the quality provided is not put up to the mark. A very insignificant section of OBC/Minority opts for private run schools (where the report card is very poor of their success of completion). In rural and remotest areas their educational situation is still poor. There are significant variations in education among OBC and minority children. These variations cut across community, tribe, section, state and various other variations. Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh governments are providing education in the same schools where the children of forward sections are attending. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala most of the upper class or forward caste children do not prefer government run schools. In these states we can see majority of the children are from weaker sections like SC/ST /OBCs and Minorities. There has been a significant growth in the number of Ashram schools, Residential schools, Tribal welfare, Social welfare, BC welfare and minority schools. But their quality, ability to provide safety, security and skills to many children is not encouraging. The academic standards in these schools are disheartening and discouraging. Some

OBC/minority children are unable to be shifted to these residential Ashram schools soon after completing their V standard as parents do not want to send their children to these institutions. In the many states the habitations/villages/blocks where the children of marginalised groups reside are quite far and interior. Their children cannot attend the school due to the barriers of distance from their school to home. The social norms in Indian society with regard to the treatment of OBC and Minority children are by and large discriminatory. Discrimination against these children was more prevalent than against BCs or STs. The Mid-day meal (MDM) is one area which needs special attention. Social and community prejudices invariably surfaced in recent time. The cooks appointed in OBC/Minority schools are mostly from other caste category groups where there is every possibility that their performance is too poor. The seating arrangements for eating, and access to water for cleaning and drinking is also discriminatory. Building infrastructure in OBC/Minority schools needs to be upgraded. Infrastructure facilities form an important concern in case of BC/Minority schools. The infrastructure facilities that are available in these schools are poor in almost all the states. There are inadequate classrooms for children. Usable toilets are almost absent. In fact, toilets are available in majority of the schools but their usage is very little. Serious attention should be paid to ensure that they should be brought into serviceable conditions with running water facilities and cleaned regularly. A minuscule proportion of schools had usable and functional toilets for girls. And where there are such toilets they should be girl child friendly. Girls from the poor sections mostly the socially disadvantaged groups in the villages were frequently asked to clean the toilets. Ensuring teacher regularity in OBC/Minority schools with effective monitoring system needs top priority. One of the biggest challenges that needs to be tackled is the availability of adequate teachers to cater to various needs of OBC/Minority children. There is acute teacher shortage at all levels. Majority of teachers are not present in schools on every working day and do not come to school even though they are appointed on permanent basis. In some schools, contract teachers are being appointed who do not show serious interest in quality education of children. Para teachers, contract teachers are not paid regularly. The responsibility of educational administration at the district/block level is to ensure that all contract/para teachers should attend the school regularly every day. Community participation in OBC/Minority is another concern for promoting quality education for OBC/Minority children. Though parents are aware of the discriminatory practices in the schools they are helpless because they simply accept or ignore the situation as something of this could not be changed overnight. In majority of the OBC/Minority schools the provisions of RTE/RTI are not observed properly. Sensitisation of the community members on RTE, RTI, has not taken place in OBC/Minority schools. Both RTI and RTE should be linked to OBC/Minority schools and 25% reservation clause should be activated to ensure children's easy and smooth enrolment. A common discussion at any

time with a teacher working in on OBC/Minority schools or teaching such children in a school states the perception of teachers, educational functionaries and monitoring authorities about their poor perception of such children. Their common perception is that OBC/Minority children do not perform better in schools. Interestingly the records from the schools reveal that academically these children perform better than others. There is a difference between the teachers' perception and reality. Teachers entertain prejudices and stereotypes about the academic achievements and attainments of OBC/Minority children. They often face the screaming and coercive conditions in schools. Teachers make use of them for different purposes like fetching water, roll call sheets, attendance registers, and for personal causes. Screaming and coercive conditions are often retarding OBC/Minority children in schools. In some schools the scholarships these children get or incentives they get will be rebuked by the teachers. Across all the states, regular attendance is a serious issue among children from extremely poor and marginalised communities. This is due to various reasons such as poor health, recurring illness, seasonal migration by parents for work, taking on household responsibilities especially among girls and parental absence for daily wage labour. Frequent absence essentially meant that the children were unable to keep pace with learning and when they fall behind the teachers never show interest in their educational needs. Their problems are totally ignored. The proportion of children from socially disadvantaged groups like backward classes, SCs/STs/OBC/Minority is much higher than their share in the population. This aspect confirms that government elementary schools cater to the educational needs of the poor and marginalised children. There are state wise variations with regard to this issue. The attendance rates among these sections of children are also uneven. There is a gap between attendance reported in school records and the number of children present on all working days of the schools. Children from extremely poor families, landless daily wage labourers, seasonal migrants tend to miss school more often. Most importantly, girls from very poor families were irregular and many children from such families reach school very late. Therefore, such children are not involved in school activities like leading the morning assembly and participating in other school functions. Research studies show that such children are excluded from active participation in class and school activities because they are not able to keep pace with the lessons taught and, the children are made to sit in the back rows. The availability of school buildings, toilets, bore well or hand pumps are not ensuring access to OBC/Minority children in schools. The status of working of such facilities needs to be identified. There is a huge gap existing between the availability of such infrastructure facilities and the conditions of its usage and usability. There are no proper water mechanisms for cleaning such facilities. Schools are becoming sites of discrimination even in these issues. In some states most of the schools allow the forward caste children to eat to drink water first (Rajasthan) and wash their mid-day meal places first. The

hand pumps are exclusively meant for upper class children. OBC/Minority children are asked to stand away from the tap water even to wash their hands or plates. They had to wait for other children to pour water for them. There is overwhelming evidence of gender as well as caste-based discrimination in practices around cleaning of toilets. First of all very few schools have usable toilets with proper water facilities. Wherever toilets are being used, children clean them using water from the hand pump or tap. In some states, persons are hired to clean the toilets, but girls mostly from the minority community had to bring water from the hand pump and pour it. In several schools, usable toilets are locked for the use of teachers and even in these schools the girls were asked to clean them. There is a glaring absence of sports facilities for children in schools. Only selected students are given access to sports equipment. In most cases, teachers consider these boys bright as they attend schools regularly and sit in front rows. Like sports facilities libraries also are noticeable by their absence. It can be clearly observed from the Government schools that children from OBC/Minority communities regularly participate in the tasks that are assigned to them by the teachers. Schools rarely practice democratic practices and teachers decide the roles of tasks to be performed both in the classroom and around the school. These include routine duties like sweeping the playground, classrooms, veranda, toilets and the place where the Mid-day meal is served. High profile tasks such as leading the morning assembly and participating in school functions are assigned to upper caste students and personal tasks such as fetching water or the register for the teacher, making and serving tea, cleaning the blackboard, collecting notebooks/papers and carrying desks/chairs are given to others including OBC/Minority children. These tasks are allowed to students depending on the teacher's perceptions on what is the prevalent norm in the community and their own personal assessment of what each child can or cannot do. There is clear gender and caste-based behaviour in the classroom and also in the school chores that the teachers assign to the children. The day begins with a morning assembly in schools. The teachers select students based on two important criteria for leading the morning assembly: 1. Gender, 2. Perceived academic abilities. First girls are given preference over the boys as the teachers feel that they sing the National Anthem rhythmically and with more devotion and discipline. The criterion of using gender is straight forward. The second criterion is the perceived academic abilities. This is influenced by caste and class basis. Teacher perceives that students who attend regularly are bright. As a result, these children perform better in studies and speak good English as compared to students who are not able to attend the school regularly. Therefore, the regular students are given opportunities to lead the morning assembly while the not so regular students are not given opportunities to lead the morning assembly. They generally lose the opportunities. Only a few schools give opportunity to other students to lead the assembly/morning prayer. Parents in almost all the states do not bother much concerned about the assignments and tasks assigned in the

schools to OBC and minority children. They are quite silent on these specific norms. Similar patterns are also found during the celebration of festivals. For example, wherever a formal *puja* is performed it is led by teachers with the help of bright students. The issue of discipline is closely linked to being a good student across all the states. Only children who are perceived good or bright are selected to be class monitors, to speak in the morning assembly, to participate in national day functions etc. This form of discrimination is a consequence of certain conditions. Scolding children is very common across all states. Due to the RTE Act teachers are more careful about overt form of punishment. Earlier there used to be a stick in the hands of head teachers. Government declared school as no punishment zone. However OBC/Minority students regularly complain of punishment. Children are prone to verbal abuse with caste, community identity and often OBC/Minority children often are abused. Teachers often complain about implementation of ban of all forms of corporal punishments. They feel that this ban is the main reason for lack of discipline or no discipline among OBC/Minority children in schools. In many places children report that physical punishment is very common as manifest in instances like pulling of girls' hair, twisting, pinching the ears, stomach of the boys etc. The disciplinary measures meted out to OBC/Minority children are complex. The RTE Act notwithstanding, teachers and parents are found quite vocal about the need for punishment. The verbal abuse using caste/community identity is sensitive to OBCs/Minority children in several schools. The attitude towards girl OBC/Minority students and the kind of punishment meted out to them is very severe. After puberty touching the girls is a taboo, therefore in some schools teachers resort to abuse/ scolding the girls.

The mid-day meal scheme has emerged as the most important educational programme for OBC/Minority children. There are several discriminatory practices in the mid-day meal programme. In majority of schools the mid-day meal is prepared by forward castes/sections. OBC/Minorities are functioning as helpers. In some states caste identity is observed as an important criterion for appointing cooks. The OBC/Minority children are observed sitting in their own community groups. Children are separated based on gender, caste, sect, and community. In some schools the mid-day meal is irregular. Even teachers also sit separately and do not eat in the plates supplied to the schools. In schools three seating arrangements are practiced. The brightest/most active/disciplined students are allowed to sit in the front rows. Academic performance of children matters much. They get their role numbers according to the academic performance. Normally OBC/Minority students are asked to sit at the back. In all states children sit and play with their own group members. Though caste identity does not matter much children are not encouraged to mix with all groups of children. A line is drawn among children in playing, eating and living together. There is a need to study, understand and identify good school practices towards OBC/Minority children with regard to their education.

Some schools are following inclusive and positive practices in their schools and classrooms. But these inclusive practices are very few and need further and greater elaboration. In such schools teachers and head teachers are committed towards quality education of poor OBC/Minority children. They take interest and initiative in promoting education regardless the class, caste and gender and physical disabilities. Attention is paid to proper hygiene and active participation of children. However, it is important to note that the number of such schools is very less in our country across the states. The State and Central Governments have taken a few prominent initiatives towards social and educational improvement of children from depressed sections: *Tola Sewak* (a volunteer in a village or habitation can take the responsibilities of getting children to school and interacting with them in school) and *Hunar* programme for promoting and encouraging education for poor and marginalised sections. *Tola Sewaks* have been appointed at the school level and their primary responsibility is to provide to students and more importantly to bring them back to the school. Their second major responsibility is to ensure that no discrimination takes place in school activities. *Hunar* is a programme to empower the minority Muslim girls. It was launched by the State Government of Bihar in collaboration with National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Girls have benefited from this programme. They are confident and showing keen interest in their education. Such programmes need more attention and further extension for OBC/Minority children. It is important that the specific needs of children with special needs among OBC/Minorities groups need special focus. The conditions of such children are more pathetic. In majority of the cases such children are not included in the school system. The SSA framework clearly mentions that children with special needs should be provided education in an appropriate environment. They should not be left out of the education system. Child friendly infrastructure, positive and supportive attitude of the teachers and students need reflection. Providing ramps and child friendly toilets remain a specific concern.

Conclusion

The situation and conditions prevailing in OBC/Minority schools are expected to undergo a few important changes. This is an important and difficult task before planners, administrators and academicians. Even after 67 years of Independence the conditions of OBC/Minority children are still deplorable. Issues of caste, religion, gender, economic status, place of residence, knowledge of English etc have become significant factors for the education of OBC/Minority children. Modernisation of learning institutions with culture specific education is an urgent task. Any violation of the rights of OBC/Minority children is a violation of their rights to equality, social justice and right against all forms of discrimination. A non-negotiable agenda for the needs of OBC/Minority children has to be kept in place by the democratic bodies in the country. Teacher orientation and training

with appropriate subject knowledge should be enhanced. Quality education should be provided to teachers working with OBC/Minority children to enable them to attend to the needs of these children. A massive scheme of skill-development in various marketable modern occupations should be undertaken such as plumbing, electrical repair, repair of electronic goods, agricultural equipment etc so that they can be employed by municipalities and other local bodies or provided necessary assistance to set up as self-employed providers of services which are badly required by urban as well as rural residents. Appropriate planning for nomadic, semi-nomadic and *Vimukta Jati* communities of BCs should be commenced including provisions for open-ended Post-Matric Scholarships. Also, appropriate planning for Safai Karmacharis among BCs (who belong to religious minorities) should be commenced including provisions for open-ended Post-Matric Scholarships. Sectors related to BCs should be re-oriented as sectors for the people concerned e.g., fisheries sector should be renamed and re-oriented as fisher-people's sector. Sub-quotas of reservation with due respect for four-fold categorisation of BCs (Extremely Backward, Most Backward, More Backward and Backward castes) should be fixed separately for each within the total Reservation percentage (27% in the Centre and varying percentages in States). This procedure will enable the weaker and weakest castes of BCs to get some share in the benefits of reservation in employment as well as education. This practice has been in existence in peninsular states even before independence. In North Indian states, this is one of the most acutely felt needs of the BCs who are not land-owning peasant castes and who collectively call themselves as Most Backward Classes. A commitment that this will be undertaken on a purely objective basis and completed within a fixed time-period and, that this task will be entrusted to a body of non-political experts will be a welcome gesture in this regard.

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