Role of Education in Women Empowerment: A Case Study on the Social Development of the ‘Santal’ of Birbhum District, West Bengal

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Abstract

The present paper examined that the role of education in women empowerment with special reference to ‘Santals’ women of Birbhum district West Bengal. The main objectives of this study are (a) to assess the academic achievement of the ‘Santal’ women, (b) to analyze the importance of education in promotion of social, economic and political empowerment among the tribal women of rural Bengal. The study is based on the both primary and secondary sources. Observation and Interview techniques were used for primary data collection from the field. The present study revealed that despite low literacy the ‘Santal’ women’s are neither socially empowered nor developed. Therefore, educational up-liftment is so much necessary for social development of the ‘Santal’ women of rural Bengal.

Key-Words: Education, Women empowerment, Social Development, Santal.

Introduction

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a women you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered.”   — PT.J.L.NEHERU

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but may also be autodidactic. Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts or considered as educational. Education is commonly divided into stages such as preschool, primary school, secondary school and then college, university or apprenticeship. The wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something. Education requires instruction of some sort from an individual or composed literature. The most common forms of education result from
years of schooling that incorporates studies of a variety of subjects. Education seeks to develop the innate inner capacities of human being. By educating an individual, we attempt to provide some desirable knowledge, understanding, skills, interests, attitudes and critical ‘thinking. That is an individual acquires knowledge of history, geography, arithmetic, languages and sciences. He develops some understanding about the deeper things in life, the complex human relations, and the cause and effect relationship and so on. He gets some skills in writing, speaking, calculating, drawing, operating some equipment etc. He develops some interests in and attitudes towards social work, democratic living, and co-operative management. As an individual in the society, he has to think critically about various issues in life and take decisions about them being free from bias and prejudices, superstitions and blind beliefs. Thus, he has to learn all these qualities of head, hand and heart through the process of education.

Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain power. According to the country report of the Government of India, ‘Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power’. According to Bhuimali Anil and Sampa Poddar (2005), Empowerment is in fact, a process in which a person assumes an increased involvement in defining and promoting his own agenda for development in respect of social, economic and political matters. The goals of women’s empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology, to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetrate gender discrimination and social inequality and to enable poor women to gain access to and control over both material and informational resources. Bhuian Dasarathi (2006) remarked that the word women empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day-to-day lives in the social, political and economic terms, a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. Social development or social change is the phrase that refers to the alteration of social order within a society. It may also refer to the notion of socio cultural revolution, or ‘social progress’. This is the philosophical idea that society always moves forward by dialectical means, or evolutionary means. Social development refers to the development of interaction with the human world around, including relationships with others and also the social skills we need to fit into our culture or society. Social development is when environmental factors affect the development of humans, and changes their way of living or growing.

Review of Literatures

In their paper on ‘Scheduled Tribe Women: Educational Development in India’, Talavar Yamanoorappa Yenkoba and D. J Shashikala (2013) viewed that scheduled tribes are most neglected sections, as they are living in remote, hilly and forest areas. Even though social status of women is equal or higher in few tribes, still their educational status is lower. The statistics of 2001 revealed that the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe girls is only 34.76 as against male literacy rate of 59.17. They discussed about the national and state level statistics on educational development of scheduled tribe women. They showed in the statistics that the gender-wise
enrolment of the STs in primary and secondary education, it is proved that there is low education among the scheduled tribe population in India.

In her paper on ‘Women Empowerment and Education’, Jagdeep Singh Pooja (2013) explored that women education in India has a major anxiety of both the government of India and the society who played a very important role in the enlargement of women education in the country. The Education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position in society. The improvement of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This means women folk in our country are illiterate, backward and exploited.

In their paper on ‘Empowerment of Women through Education’, Jahan Aijaz and Shashikal A.D.J. (2013) corroborated that the most potent weapon related to women's empowerment is education. Education plays an important role in changing women's attitude towards empowerment and their status in family and society. A healthy well educated informed and well employed woman will definitely be able to assert her rights and make concrete contributions to the development process. Thus education does lead to women development and creates awareness about women's rights and is thus empowering at the all level.

In her paper on ‘Education and Women Empowerment in India’, Sehrawat Joyti (2014) admitted that women constituting the half of the nation are still in social bondage and suffer a lot in the society. Much has happened to raise the educational and social situation of women at the level of policy and rhetoric but perhaps more effort is needed to translate intentions into concrete action to remove the policy performance gaps and the distance between the textual and the contextual position of women. This paper analyzes the concept, women empowerment by incorporating all divergent views with sufficient logical reasoning. It will also explain the problems faced and the possibilities ahead in achieving women empowerment through education.

In their paper on ‘Empowering Women through Education and Influence: An Evaluation of the Indian Mahila Samakhya Program’, Kandpal Eeshani, Baylis Kathy and Arends-Kuenning Mary (2012) pointed out that participation in a community level female empowerment program in India significantly increases participants physical mobility, political participation, and access to employment. The program provides support groups, literacy camps, adult education classes, and vocational training. We use truncation-corrected matching and instrumental variables on primary data to disentangle the program’s mechanisms, separately considering its effect on women who work, and those who do not work but whose reservation wage is increased by participation. We also find significant spill over effects on non-participants relative to women in untreated districts. In their paper on ‘An Analysis of Tribal Women’s Education in India’, Rani G. Sandhya, Rajani N. & Neeraja P. (2011) stated that the fact remains that a large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation. It is often alleged that the level of aspiration of these women as a group is low and they are quite satisfied with what they are and with what they have. It is most often not true only to womenfolk but to everyone who feels helpless and frustrated.
However in order to develop and raise their level of aspiration, adequate educational opportunities are to be provided so that they get motivated to participate, support and also ultimately learn to initiate their own programmes of development.

**Objectives of the Study**

To examine the educational achievements of the ‘Santal’ of Birbhum District, West Bengal.

To analyze the importance of education in women empowerment with special reference to the ‘Santal’ of Birbhum District, West Bengal...

**Research Methods**

Research Approaches:- Qualitative and Quantitative both research approaches are employed in order to get empirical data from the field. Hereafter, the secondary data were pickup from various sources like books, journals, articles, conferences, published and unpublished research work. Methods & Techniques: - A Case Study method has been applied by following observation participant and in-depth interview techniques to take up the primary data by doing minute field work. Structure questionnaire and some open ended questions had been used as a tool of data collection. Universe & Population:-In this present study, the research universe is only the scheduled tribes women and the population are just only one tribes like ‘Santali’. The present study has been made in ‘Fuldanga’ and ‘Bondanga’ villages which fall under Ruppur gram panchayat of Birbhum district, West Bengal. Sampling: - Non probability sampling like purposive and convenience sampling technique were utilized here as well. Sample Size: - The total sample size is 112 households. Hence, the total male and female population of these two tribal villages are 165 and 274 respectively.

**Facts and Findings**

The present data has been picked up by doing hardcore field work in two ‘Santal’ villages of Ruppur Gram panchayat of Birbhum district, West Bengal. The total three tables such as, households-wise population distribution, village-wise population distribution, educational status and one bar chart has been utilized for the presentation of whole primary data for serving the purpose of this research study. These tables and charts are as follows:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table No:1</th>
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<td>Distribution of Households of the Santal of Two Villages, Ruppur Gram Panchayat, Birbhum District, West Bengal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Villages</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bondanga</td>
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<td>Fuldanga</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Table-1:-In the first table indicates the distribution of sample on the household basis of two villages. In ‘Bondanga’ there are total 52 ‘Santal’ families and the percentage is 46.42. In ‘Fuldanga’ there are total 60 ‘Santal’ families and the total percentage is 53.57.

| Distribution of Population of Two Villages as per Sex, Ruppur Gram Panchayat, Birbhum District, West Bengal |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Villages        | Male   | %      | Female | %      | Total Population | %      |
| Bondanga        | 115    | 21.33  | 114    | 21.15  | 229             | 42.48  |
| Fuldanga        | 150    | 27.83  | 160    | 29.68  | 310             | 57.51  |
| Total           | 265    | 49.16  | 274    | 50.83  | 539             | 99.99  |

Table-2:-In the second table, we have seen the distribution of population based on the sex ratio of two villages. The village ‘Bondanga’ consisting of 229 individuals, the total percentage is 42.48. Out of which 115 are males (21.33%) & 114 are females (21.15%). In ‘Fuldanga’ village, there are 310 individuals, the total percentage is 57.51. Out of which 150 are males (27.83%) & 160 are females (29.68%). The total numbers of individuals, of those villages are 539 (99.99%). Out of which 265 are males (49.16%) & females are 274 (50.83%).

Table-3:-The above table represents the educational status of respondents of the two mentioned villages. In those villages there total 165 individuals are illiterate out of which, 64 are males (11.87%) & 101 are females (18.74%) & the total percentage is 30.61%. The number of Pre literate individuals are 87, between them 39 are males (7.23%) & 48 are females (8.9%). The total percentage is 16.14%. Now the numbers of individuals whose are between class me to class IV, 70. Out of 70 there are 40 are males (7.42%) & 30 females (5.57%). The total percentage is 12.99%. In between class V to class VIII, the total numbers of students are 69 & the total percentage is 12.8%. Out of which 40 are males (7.42%) & 29 are females (5.38%). In secondary section, between classes IX to class X, there are total 126 students & the total percentage is...
23.37%. Out of them 74 are males (13.73%) & 52 are females (9.65%). In higher secondary, between class XI to Class XII there are total 7 students, out of them 3 are males (0.56%) & 4 are females (0.74%) & the total percentage is 1.3%. Out of five villages, in UG (Under Graduation) section there are 14 students & the total percentage is 2.59%. Out of which, 4 are males (0.74%) & 10 are females (1.85%). In PG (Post Graduation) out of two villages there is only 1 male student & the percentage is 0.19%. The total number of individuals are 539, out of which 265 are males (49.16%) & 274 are females (50.83%) & the total percentage is 99.99%. The total literacy rate of the villages is 69.38% & the individual male and female rates are 37.29% & 32.09%.

Chart – 1:-The chart one shows literacy rate of the respondents both males and females respectively. The male literacy rate is 37.29% and female literacy rate is 32.09%, which is significantly lower among the tribal women of Birbhum district, West Bengal.

In developing countries like India, education was given prominence both as basic right as a major enabling factor for social development. Education is an essential key element which is being taken as an important prerequisite for making the tribal women capable to take decisions in respect of social, political and economical matters. For the development of any nation, there is the need of an inclusive progress of the weaker and isolated sections of the society. The magnitudes of literacy among the tribal women are very low. In fact, the literacy rate of the tribal population is much lower than the other categories in India. There are several initiatives has been taken from the government sides for the up-liftment of the tribal education but the academic achievements of tribal women have not been met the success as per the expectations due to several factors like poverty, lack of self motivation, cultural taboos and non-availability of jobs in rural areas. Empowerments of tribal women are a serious matter of discourse today in Indian society. Empowering tribal women is a way forward idea to create a stronger rural India. In fact, poor economic condition is the most crucial factor that are affecting tribal livelihood in several ways. Tribal women play very crucial role in their families. They are looking after their families and work harder to earn money because the intact family economy depends on them. The other reason behind poor education is early marriages of girls. For this, the girls sacrifice their every needs and demands at their teenage. They are suffering from serious health problems like malnutrition, anaemia, various gynaecological problems. Education provides basic knowledge and skills to cope with the situation. The well educated tribal women can socialize their children’s with values and behavioural patterns of the community. So, it can be said that education is reasonably a good indicator of social development as well as national
development. From the quantitative data, it has been found that the educational statuses of the ‘Santal’ women’s are much lower in compare to the men in tribal society. It is one of the major barriers that are creating hindrance in the pathway of tribal educational development. The conditions of the tribal women are not changed till today although several decades have been passed away. For a long time of interaction, it has been found that the ‘Santal’ women are very much eager to get the taste of higher education but the economical burdens and cultural barrier make them stopped to enroll in the educational institution. They are still exploited within their community and also outside the community, but at the end of the day they contribute their family financially. Most of the ‘Santal’ women’s are dropped out just after finishing the line of secondary education. The observations showed that the ‘Santal’ women’s are neither educationally coming to the forefront of the society nor empowered in social, economical and political ways of life. By the by, education can provide opportunities for employment in the skilled and prestigious high income jobs and training that are having important consequences for the whole family’s welfare as well as for its individual. It also develops social relationships and social skills that are required to fit them into the society. From the above discussions and interaction, it can be hypothesized that empowerment of the ‘Santal’ women’s are only possible if the status of education is increased in particular. So, it can be analyzed that a revolutionary step with its proper implementation can change the whole scenario of tribal education in India.

Conclusion

The present paper concluded that education is an important factor by which tribal women can be empowered and get well placed in society. It also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and society. A well educated tribal woman will be definitely taking part in the development process of a nation. In the end, the study resulted that despite low literacy; the ‘Santal’ women’s are neither socially empowered nor developed. Therefore, educational up-liftment is so much necessary for social development of the ‘Santal’ women’s of rural Bengal.

References

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