
Educational Exclusion: Adivasis' Experiences of formal Schooling in India

Ajay Samir Kujur

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur

Abstract: Adivasis are the communities of people who form the part of Indian society since historic time. However, they had withdrawn themselves into the remotest areas of the country and relatively lived an isolated life. But their isolation was broken by the British colonizer who penetrated into their habitat. They were brought in close contact of rest of Indians who were more enterprising because of formal education. They were forced to compete with them for which they were not prepared because due to seclusion modern formal education and scientific development had not affected them positively. After independence, constitution and subsequent policies emphasized education as a bridge for Adivasis to catch-up with the rest of Indians. However, even today large number of Adivasis children are still away from schools, another large group leave school very early stage and very few are able to develop their capability. Thus, the paper has tried to answer the question "why education has not been attractive to the Adivasis?" The analysis reveals that Adivasis suffer exclusion at every stage of schooling or education. The very name 'tribe or tribal' by which they are generally known create a sense of inferiority complex that lead to exclusion. Schools for Adivasis and the facilities in them are substandard. Their life, history, culture, language find no place in the Indian education system. Often they suffer chastise for using their language or practicing their culture.

Keywords: Exclusion, Social Exclusion, Discrimination, Adivasi, Assimilation, Integration

1. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the most diverse land found anywhere in the world. Diversity is found in every part of the country. Although many people were not aware about, diversity existed since ancient time. Thus, diversity is the essence of India. This diversity is based on religion, caste, language, occupation, region, tribe etc. but is determined by caste system which becomes a social arrangement and ideology of social inequality. Thus, all societies of India suffer exclusion to certain extent. Moreover, Adivasis in India are the communities of people who suffer exclusion of different types and in different fields; to greater degree and have suffer exclusion for longer time. As Popay et al. (2006) write, "exclusionary processes impact in different ways to differing degrees on different groups and/or societies at particular times". Education is one field in which Adivasis were excluded or not provided for many years on numerous pretexts. For quite sometimes it was accepted by all that education was not made available to Adivasi communities because they lived primarily in forests, mountains and hills away from the rest of Indian society.

After independent, concerted efforts is being made to integrate the Adivasi communities with rest of the India by making education a constitutional right for Adivasi communities. Constitutional provisions and other policy commitments have been made to address the issue of Adivasi or to combat factors affecting their development negatively. Some important initiatives have been taken to improve the positions of the Adivasis in education. Some changes, mainly on the access of these different groups to education are evident. However, Adivasis students continue to experience exclusion in various segments of education. This paper is an attempt to put together the exclusion experienced by Adivasis in their enterprise to receive education. In doing so, the author makes use of secondary data (mainly the researches during the past years) and field observation of the schools in one of the Adivasi dominated districts of Jharkhand carried out between the years 2013 to 2016.

2. UNDERSTANDING EXCLUSION

The word exclusion has been derived from Latin word 'excludere' meaning 'shut out'. It is the deliberate act of preventing or not allowing someone from taking part in an activity or entering a place (Oxford Dictionary). It is a situation in which someone is prevented from entering a place or taking part in an activity (Cambridge Dictionary). Thus, exclusion can be defined as a process whereby certain individuals or groups or community of people are pushed to the margins of society and are prevented from participating or contributing partially or fully in social activities (economic, political, cultural, social, educational etc.) of the society in which they live.

Social Exclusion

The term Social exclusion is used to illustrate what happens when an individual or a community of people or a geographical area is excluded from essential services or every day aspects of life¹. It is multi-dimensional concept. However, mostly it is debated in the context of poverty and discrimination (Ziyauddin, 2009). The term Social Exclusion originated in France from the writings of Rene Lenoir in 1974 (De Haan, 2001) about a group of French population that were incapable to situate themselves in the salary nexus due to which their social citizenship rights were limited or, not recognized. However, the term gained popularity in France during the 1980s, the period of economic, social, cultural and political crisis (Silver, 1994) during which the term social exclusion was conceived as a “rupture of the social bond” or “solidarity” (Silver & Miller, 2003). After France the idea of social exclusion was adopted across the European Union², de-centering discussion around poverty (Mathieson et. al., 2008), and then by the rest of the world.

Presently the concept has made significant progress into the discussions and writings on poverty and deprivation (Sen, 2000). According to Arjan De Haan (2001) “social exclusion can help to ground the understanding of deprivation” where deprivation means “not being able to appear in public without shame” or difficulties experienced in taking part in the life of the community (Adam Smith as quoted in Sen, 2000). In India, the debate of social exclusion revolves around the societal interference and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the basis of group identities like caste, language and ethnicity (Ziyauddin, 2009).

While considering the meaning and dimension of social exclusion Sen (2000) visualizes two situations of social exclusion; 1) people are kept out which he calls ‘unfavourable exclusion’ and 2) people are included which he calls ‘unfavourable inclusion’. Both situation carry the same adverse effect as in one situation people are completely denied and in another included but not allowed to or unable to participate in any activity of the society.

Thus, Social Exclusion can be defined the denial of access to or denial of equal opportunity to participate in basic social, political, cultural and economic aspects of society. In the word of Arjan De Haan (2001) social exclusion is “the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society with which they live.” It is not a voluntary act but imposed (consciously or unconsciously) by certain individual or groups of society upon others over time³.

Educational Exclusion

Traditionally, exclusion in primary education has been viewed on the basis of government data of the number of children who are out of school and are not enrolled. However true, it is important to look at exclusion inside the classroom too. A child can be sitting inside the classroom and still be excluded.” Actual reasons can range from a discriminatory attitude, no classes etc thus resulting in absenteeism or dropout, which is silent exclusion. As UNESCO declares educational exclusion as exclusion from ‘*life scenario (the chance of being successful) requisite for learning, entry into a school or an educational programme, regular and continuing participation in school, meaningful learning experiences, recognition of*

¹ Ziyauddin (2009) say that socially excluded people can become trapped in a cycle of related problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poverty, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown. They may suffer expulsion as dominant groups/community holding power or position can shut themselves off, building ever higher walls, by affirming their values in an authoritarian and dogmatic fashion.

² European Union (2004) defines social exclusion as “a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives.”

³ As Ziyauddin (2009) while discussing the concept of social exclusion in Indian context, mainly dalit explains that the caste system has been evolved overtime by which the civil, cultural and economic rights of each individual caste are pre-determined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary.

the learning acquired, contributing the learning acquired to the development of community and society. ' Thus, educational exclusion can be defined as 'the denial, restriction or constraint of access to and meaningful participation in educational institutions and processes.'

Educational exclusion is closely interrelated with social exclusion. Social exclusion may deny access to education which enhances access and ability to utilise resources and the denial of education may accentuate social exclusion or permanently fixed (Ziyuddin, 2009). On the light of the above the sections below discuss about how the Adivasis in India experience exclusion in education.

3. THE TERM USED TO ADDRESS ADIVASIS

Adivasis are communities of people synonymously known as tribe, tribal, aboriginal, indigenous etc. In India mainly in government's documents they are known as 'scheduled tribe'. India has been their home since early historical time (Thapar and Siddiqi, 1979). However, they became the subject of scholarly and developmental debate only after the colonial regime penetrated their habitation and termed them as 'Tribe'. According to Das (2003), before the colonial regime annexed the region inhabited by Adivasi communities they were unconscious of their ethno-tribal identities and simply called themselves 'people' or other. It was the colonial perpetrators, who conceived themselves as racially distinct and superior, faced stiff opposition from them, termed them as 'tribe' meaning animist, backward, primitive, criminal etc. Since then scholars (Indian and foreigners) have presented divers opinion regarding the nature of Adivasi communities in India. Risely, Lacey, Elwin, Grigson and others describe them as *aborigine or aboriginal*. Hutton describes them as the primitive tribe, G.S.Ghurye as *backward Hindu* and S.T Das as '*submerged humanity*'. Andre Beteille defines them as people who follow religious practices as animism, totemism, and nature worship.

With the hope for a respectable name for these groups of people Xaxa (1999) calls them indigenous⁴. The members of 'indigenous people movement' prefer the term 'Adivasi' (Bates, 1995, Xaxa, 1999; Xaxa, 2005 etc.). However, the efforts have been fruitless. Elsewhere in the world mainly in scholarly writing they are beginning to be known as indigenous people but Adivasis in India are still conceptualized in terms of geographical and social isolation. They are known as tribes or tribal. still perceived as sub-humans to be kept in isolation, or as 'primitives' living in remote and backward regions who should be "civilized" (Bijoy, 2003), animist, barbarous, savaged, backward, alien, the other, exotic, and even criminal or ex-criminals etc. (Beitelle, 1986; Glatzer, 2002; Singh, 2003, Das, 2003) by majority of general Indian population. When the Adivasi children come to the institutions of formal education they are confronted with such image of theirs. They feel humiliated and develop low self-esteem/inferiority complex. Those who cop up with survive and those unable perish. Thus, we may not be wrong by saying that Adivasi children experience exclusion from the very first day of their schooling. Adivasis are even denied of a respectable name or respectable of identity which restricts the children from Adivasi communities from accessing the schools.

4. PROVISIONS OF SCHOOLS AND INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

The School Facilities

The history of formal education among Adivasis can be traced back to the 19th century when the Christian missionary entered India. The missionaries who came to India around 1840s shouldered the responsibilities to educate Adivasis but were confined to some regions of the country. The Indian initiatives to educate the Adivasis began only around 1940s. Moreover, only after the independence the formal education among Adivasis kicked off in a planned manner. Historical educational institutions such as *tols* and *pathsala* cater Hindus of upper castes, mainly to the Brahmin children⁵, *Maktabs* and *Madarsa* to the Muslim children, mainly the ruling class. The Adivasis never featured in these institutions to get education.

The Adivasis however, maintained an informal educational institution known as 'the youth dormitories' to prepare their youth for adult life⁶. Knowledge, skills, roles, norms, values, traditions, and customs, pertained to different spheres of life

⁴ Xaxa (1999) argues says that the fact that these communities of people lived in India thousands of years before Aryan invasion qualify them to be called indigenous.

⁵ Neglected the vast majority of other caste Hindus

⁶ Toppo (1979) confirms the existence of dormitory system among all indigenous communities of the world quoting S. E Pearl that the 'dormitory system exists from Bhutan to Newzealand and from Marquesas to Niger. It is common

and activity were passed on to children through the process of socialization, and in this process of socialization dormitory played an important role (Xaxa, 2011). In the concluding remark after describing the different aspects of Ghotul (youth dormitory of Muria Adivasi) Toppo (1979) says that it was a place where training for the duties of manhood, the lessons in agricultural operations, in hunting, in honey-gathering etc. were imparted through dances, folk-tales and folk-songs. The activities undertaken in the dormitory were at their own leisure. There was no prescribed system or people or time. What to learn, how to learn, from whom to learn and when to learn was not defined. All the activities were undertaken under joyful environment, enjoying the every bit of activities.

Present day however, due to the annihilation of various indigenous groups and the process of acculturation (Sahay, 1968 and Das, 2003) the existence of such institution is a rear thing or exists in a changed form or name, like common house of the village, club house etc. with its changed roles. Extinction of the dormitory system and the process modernization and industrialization brought them into the lap of modern formal education system with qualities and vices. The modern formal education was not only new to the tribal society but also an alien phenomenon. The language of reading and writing, the things taught, the people who taught were alien (Xaxa, 2011). The place and the time mismatch their life. Kanungo and Mahapatra (2004) say that an Adivasi child entering school for the first time meets with a complete different environment. The building pattern with closed four walls, sitting arrangements, times etc. were all alien to him. In their dormitory the Adivasi youth learnt at their leisure but had to sit for hours between four walls. Learning for them was no more a joyful one. Thus, even if most children of Adivasi communities attend the formal schools that are available to them but this do not take them very far. High enrolment (106.74 per cent) drop-out rate (70.88 per cent) (DISE, 2015-16) at primary level, low literacy rate (see table -2), loss of sense of identity etc. are the result produced by formal schooling.

After independence lots of efforts were made to provide school facilities of formal education for all. Efforts bore fruits so much so there were 1449078 schools (one school for 2.27 km²) providing elementary education and 239148 secondary schools (one school for 14 km²) in the country (DISE, 2015-16). However, provision of school in Adivasi areas still fall short off. As far as elementary schools are concerned, there is one primary school for 3 square kilometers, one upper primary school for 7 square kilometers and one high school for 30 square kilometers as against 2.27 km² and 14 km² at the national level. Such situation can explain the exclusion of 70.9 per cent students who drop-out from schools before reaching class X. This situation of provision of school can also explain the low literacy (58.96 per cent) of Adivasi population of the country.

Table-2: Decadal Literacy Rate of All Social Group, SC and ST Population

Year	General Population			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3	16.96	3.29	10.27	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45	22.36	6.44	14.67	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57	31.12	10.93	21.38	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	49.91	23.76	37.41	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	75.26	53.67	64.84	66.64	41.9	54.69	59.17	34.76	47.10
2011	80.89	64.64	72.99	75.17	56.46	66.07	68.53	49.35	58.96

Source: Census 2011

5. THE SCHOOLS OF ADIVASI CHILDREN

In order to fulfill the mandates of the constitution the government of India designed and implemented various schemes and programmes such as abolition of school fee, Scholarship, Hostels for boys and girls; many schools such as Ashram school, Katurba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Eklavya Model Residential Schools exclusively for Adivasi children were established, norms of opening schools in Adivasi habitations were relaxed. So much so, at present access to school for Adivasi children is not a problem but there is a long way to go with respect to provision of quality infrastructural facilities (GOI, 2014). Provision of facilities is the first step of quality education. However, many researchers like Sujatha (1996), Sinha (2000), Chattopadhyay and Durdhawale (2009), Duary (2010), found the lack of infrastructural facilities in terms of building,

among the Jakuns of Malaya, the Battacks of Sumatra, the Irgots of Philippine, the Bororo of Brazil and most of the American tribes.'

classrooms, teaching aids, textbooks, library, other educational equipments etc. in the schools available for the Adivasi learner. **Sujatha (2016)** says that the tribal villages have sufficient primary and upper primary schools with all weather building but many are in poor condition, lack sufficient number of classrooms, teachers, library, toilet facility, tables and chairs etc. Few schools have some teaching materials; like teaching aids and instruments, reference books but are kept locked in the almirah.

The facilities in the residential schools (AS and EMRS) meant only for the Adivasi children too do not provide good picture with regard to the availability of infrastructural facilities. **Jojo (2013)** says malfunctioning is the functioning of Ashram schools in eastern and central India. He says the general condition and lack of upkeep and maintenance of the classrooms, hostels, confusion about the medium of instruction, faulty teaching methods, unqualified teachers and their inexperience in teaching are impeding the learning of tribal children. Dhaatri resource centre for women and children (2011) too provides similar picture of residential schools for Adivasi children. It says that the conditions of the residential schools are dehumanizing, hazardous and unhygienic. Toilet, washing place and bathing area were found inadequate in numbers, cleanliness and water supply.

EMRS too provide no better sight. Hansdah (2016) and Geddam (2015) writing about EMRS say that the infrastructure facilities are inadequate, building (toilets, hostel, kitchen, dormitories) are poorly maintained, food is cooked in unhygienic environment.

Further, some of the residential schools are located in a secluded place. Means to reach there are scarce thus often become costly. Students studying in these schools lack exposure. Nambissan (2000) says 'single teacher school, the Ashram school and the non-formal education programmes (used as supplement for formal education among tribal habitations) instead of providing quality education has provided sub-standard education. The Adivasi district in Jharkhand has all weather building and class rooms. However, facilities in them are inadequate. Only 33.33 per cent schools had at least one room for each class. Pupil teacher ratio is around 1:60. 83.33 per cent schools had toilets separately built for boys and girls but lacked cleanliness. Library of 83.33 percent schools remained as show case in the almirah. Science lab was available one school only. None of the school has mathematics and social science. With the exception of one school, play ground and games teachers are unavailable. The academic calendar and school timing are inappropriate. On Academic calendar is based on the dominant culture. Most schools began at nine in the morning and ended at four in the evening. Explaining the situation of education among Adivasis 'Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India, 2014' says that the access and enrolment has increased but there is a long way to go with respect to provision of infrastructural facilities⁷. Thus, lack of infrastructural facilities, teacher etc. act as means to exclude the Adivasi children from the education.

6. THE TEACHERS OF THE ADIVASI CHILDREN

The Adivasis are poorest section of the society. Poverty qualifies most of the Adivasi children to attend the government schools. There are around 4683353 teachers for government schools of which 1119654 are contractual and 674269 (8.73 per cent) and Adivasi. The majority of teachers working in schools of Adivasis are generally non Adivasi who do not have a favorable attitude towards them and their culture. Such teachers do not respect the language of the Adivasi children and view them as 'culturally deficient' have apathetic attitude towards them (Balagopalan and Subrahmanian, 2003, Mohanty and Biswal, 2009; Jojo, 2013), thus leading to a negative self identity and lose of confidence. Balagopalan (2003) and Kanungo and Mahapatra (2004) say prejudiced and biased attitude of teachers towards his society and culture, unfair or sub-human treatment to tribals by teacher make him impossible to continue in school.

Teacher absenteeism and untrained & contract teachers in the schools of Adivasi children too are a big excluder (Sujata, 2016). Sharma⁸ (2012) and Dhaatri resource centre for women and children (2011) found that the government teacher working in school of did not attend school for ten years instead appointed three contract teachers in very low salary from the villages who acted on their behalf.

⁷ The report further reveals that the learning levels of tribal children have declined which gave rise to the policy; 'minimum level of learning' and when low learning level accumulated at the early schooling stages the 'no-detention' policy (GOI, 2014).

⁸ Tharu Adivasi community in Bihar

The presence of Adivasi teachers in the schools is not sufficed. It does not ensure the transaction of curriculum in ways that show tribal culture in a favorable light. Author's observations of schools reveal that even Adivasi teachers have a very unfavorable attitude toward Adivasi culture and language. Such teachers do not prefer to impart instruction in Adivasi language and discourage students to communicate in the same. This is perhaps because of the fact that these teachers themselves are the products of an educational system which viewed Adivasi culture and language as 'backward' and 'substandard'.

7. THE CONTENT OF CURRICULUM AND THE TEXT BOOKS OF ADIVASI CHILDREN

Generally, education is neutral in itself (Young, 2011), but can be used as powerful means for achieving constructive as well as destructive ends. It can promote or constrain freedom, conserve or destruct culture, assimilate or integrate people, value or devalue culture. On the one hand education can be instrumental to uphold and promote one type of ideology and on the other to demote or annihilate another. Don (2002) says that education 'enables' or improves the capabilities of individuals and the capacity of institutions. Engels (1845) (as cited in Cole, 2008) and Dreze & Sen (2002) say education promotes freedom by inspiring people to organize themselves against oppression and overcome traditional inequality of castes, class and gender. However, the kinds of curriculum provided for the Adivasi children seem to distort their identity as Adivasi or assimilate them into the ideology of the school provider. NCF (2005) says that in a pluralistic society like India, it is important that all regions and social groups be able to relate to the textbooks. All communities have rich cultural resources: knowledge, history, art, local stories, songs, riddles etc. All of which can enrich language and knowledge in schools. Thus relevant local content should be included as part of the teaching-learning process.

But life, cultures, history, knowledge form, educational approach of Adivasis do not find adequate representation in the curriculum and textbooks designed for them, thus widening the gap between the school and home culture of Adivasi children (Kundu, 2003; Rani, 2009, Veerbahadranaika et. al 2012). Even the useful knowledge possessed by Adivasi does not find place in text books (Sundar, 2010), or very often such knowledge is taken by the dominant group and the government, formalized or distorted and then given back to them without acknowledging them (Jha, 2008: 247). The curriculum is usually based on the experiences of urban middle class children (Kundu, 2003; Jojo, 2013) and the language, culture, history and knowledge of the dominant culture are presented to Adivasi children. Such kind of curricula decreased the motivation and interest of many Adivasi children who leave school and those who survive can be heard saying –'I do not like to go back to my village because people there are uneducated.'

8. THE MEDIUM OF LANGUAGE OF THE ADIVASIS CHILDREN

Article 350a of the Indian constitution states that "It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities." However, analysis of the curricular practices involved in the state or private schools reveals that use of languages of Adivasi communities as medium of instruction in schools even at the primary stage of education is negligible (Nambbisani, 1994; Sunder, 2010). Hindi and English are used as medium of instruction in the schools of tribal district of Jharkhand. Bengali, Oriya and Urdu Oriya have also been allowed as medium in which students can write board examination but none of the Adivasi language finds place. As a result, the language of the teacher and the textbooks remain alien to the Adivasi children. This prevents them to clarify their doubts and or express what they think and make sense of what is taught in schools. Kundu (2003) and Rani (2009) have reported the incidences of Adivasi children being reprimanded for using their home language in schools. Author's observation during visits to the schools in Jharkhand yielded similar experiences. Teachers prevented the Adivasi children from speaking in their mother tongue in the school campus even though they themselves spoke in their language with the students of their linguistic group. The Adivasi children reported the act of punishment (when complained by non-Adivasi children) for speaking in Adivasi languages by the same teachers who themselves spoke their own language in the school. Such act says Rani (2000) forces the Adivasi children to keep silence in the classroom for which teachers level them as unknowledgeable or children beyond teachable (Kumar, 1983). That is say, Adivasi children are punished for both speaking in mother tongue and not speaking the school language. Caught up in this dilemma of not speaking in the language they know and speaking in the language they do not know they remain silence and we term them as shy, unknowledgeable, poor in study etc. Such efforts are indication to compel the marginal Adivasi communities to assimilate themselves into the larger mould of the generic identity (Chakraborty, 2011). This not only the indication of exclusion of Adivasi languages but develops a negative attitude among Adivasi children towards their own languages and undermines their sense of culture and identity.

9. CONCLUSION

It is no doubt, we have accepted the responsibility to educate and integrate the Adivasi communities into the larger Indian society. But the modern formal education systems provided for them mismatch their life. The class room between four walls, sitting in rows for hours, fixed times, dress etc. are all alien to him. Moreover, the schools provided are insufficient and sometimes inaccessible. The facilities available in the schools easily accessible to Adivasi children are inadequate for quality education. The families of most Adivasi students suffer from inadequate housing, food, and clothing. Thus, they are unable to pay to participate in quality educational programmes. Further, due to the fixed times days of learning and other life demand many Adivasi children are not able to participate in educational programmes or spare time to attend schools.

Teaching and learning process do not meet the learning needs of the Adivasi learner as it does not correspond to their learning styles and life. The life, history, culture, religion, knowledge, language are excluded from the matter of learning. Their contribution of knowledge and development are not recognized. Thus, language of instruction and learning materials become incomprehensible. Learning for them does not become a joyful one. Adivasi learner goes through negative and discouraging experiences at school or in the programme.

In the present pattern of education system, Adivasi students experienced exclusion at every stage of schooling. The inadequate provision of schools, Lack facilities in the schools, unfavorable attitudes of curricula, teachers, administrators and other school personnel towards the Adivasi life and culture; the school calendar, school timing etc. are all the site to exclude Adivasis students from education.

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