

Inclusive Education of Tribal Society: A study of Model Residential Schools in Kerala

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1. Introduction

Education is a pre-requisite for short- and long-term economic growth. Education is a major non-income factor determining the development of any economy or society (UNDP, 2000). It is a persuasive driver of development for individuals and society improving equality, peace, stability and economic development. Opening the classroom doors to all children especially the marginalised will help to shatter the perception of “Marginalised Section” and thereby to disrupt the different dimensions of poverty. The educational system in India is the second largest in the world. When we take the circumstance of Kerala, “Literacy and Education” are among the major indicators that emanate the parlance “Kerala’s Development Experience” (GOK, 2009). Education is a powerful instrument of social change and often initiates upward movement in the social structure thereby, helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society. “Of the many poor, marginalized and oppressed groups in the country the Scheduled Tribes are clearly among the most vulnerable to this kind of change. The main reason for this vulnerability is the lack of education” (Rudolf C Heredia, 1995). Lack of motivation and absence of aspiration for development are the strong forces perpetuating the educational backwardness of tribal children. “Education of Scheduled Tribe is considered important not only because of the constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities” (Vinoba Gautham, 2003). Considering the unique socio-economic conditions, the government has taken initiative of starting the residential schools for the Tribals during the 5th Five Year Plan. By and then many Residential Schools were started across the country to advance the educational index of tribal children.

The present study mainly engrossed on the emergence and performance of Model Residential Schools in Kerala. In the milieu of establishing quality residential schools for the promotion of education in all areas and habitations in the country, the Eklavya Model

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Residential schools (EMRS) for the scheduled tribe students were established. Its origin can be traced back from Ashram schools. "Ashram schools are residential institutions built to serve adivasi children from a cluster of villages by giving them free boarding and lodging facilities" (Jha Jyostna and Dhir Jhingran, 2005). The concept of ashram school is based on the Gandhian Philosophy of self-reliance and their practice started with an experiment by Thakkar Bapa, a Gandhian in Panchamal district in Gujarat in the year 1992. During the First Five Year plan there was an attempt by the government of India to open such schools all over the country. From the Third Five Year Plan onwards government took serious initiatives in setting up Ashram schools in various parts of the country (Ananda, 1994).

2. Objective and methodology

The present study aims to analyze the performance of Special School Intervention especially the Eklavya Model Residential school in imparting quality education to Tribal children. The contemporary study is descriptive in nature and look into the performance of Special School Intervention for improving the educational status of tribal students. The investigator selected the Model Residential School, Katella, Thiruvanthapuram for the micro level analysis. Since the study is mainly qualitative in nature, the investigator used participatory approach to understand and assess the performance of Special School in imparting quality education to the tribals. As the part of the study the investigator had spent three days in the Model Residential School and closely observed the daily routine, infrastructure facilities, learning environment, involvement of the students in the learning activities, teacher student relationships, extra-curricular activities, hostel facilities in order to get a better perception regarding the functions of MRS and its impact on educational performance of tribal students. In addition to this the investigator used a performance assessment scale to quantify the assessment done through the participatory approach. The investigator also conducted a comprehensive objective type test based on CBSE secondary level syllabus to understand the level of scholastic attainment of the tribal students. The data regarding the educational performance of tribal students collected from the official records of the school and the information regarding the general status of tribal population and their socio-economic conditions collected from different secondary sources like Ministry of Tribal affairs, Department of Public Instruction, Scheduled Tribe Development Department, Planning Commission, Kerala and also collected information from different Government Reports and documents such as Census Report 2011, Economic Review 2011 & 2012, Human Development Reports 2011. To understand the general perception of the students about the Residential school, a structured questionnaire was administrated among the selected

sample of 50 tribal students of Model Residential School, Katella. The investigator used a check list to check the availability of infrastructure facilities of the selected residential School and the Hostel. The discussions and informal interview of officials of Tribal Development Department, Teaching and Non-Teaching staff of MRS, Katella helped the investigator to understand more about the performance of Special School Intervention for the elevation of the educational pursuits of the tribal students.

3. Review of literature

It is widely said that formal education is beneficial for the tribal community. But Rodrigues, (1992) criticized such an assumption emphasizing rather that the formal school certainly needs a greater degree of sensitivity towards the tribal community if it proves to be highly beneficial to them. Author pointed out that, the socio-economic conditions continue to influence the relationship between the school and community. To him school must not only be a school but a community center. Author greatly emphasizes that there should be some degree of integration between school and community and he also suggest various types of activities to bring about this integration such as adult literacy, social welfare, parent teacher association instruction in mother tongue etc.

Barik and Indira Garnaik (2012) had made a study on the role of Ashram School in Tribal education. The study examined the importance of Ashram Schools in improving the educational entitlement of the tribal children. Authors pointed out that education among the tribal is given highest priority for the simple reason that it is a key to socio-economic development of the tribal. Ashram schools are enriched with free residential facilities and other infrastructural facilities. The purpose of the Ashram School is to bring about the development of tribal children with an emphasis on vocational education. As the schools are residential, it can reduce the incidence of student's absenteeism, improve the standard of education at the primary level and reduce the burden of their parents from increasing expenditure on their children's education. The study concluded by stressing that the dropout rates among the tribal students have been substantially reduced through the system of Ashram schools and is definitely uplifting the poor and deprived tribal children.

Sedwal and Kamat, (2008) shed light on the nature of exclusion and discrimination faced by scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Study revealed that the concept of "Ashram schools" and "Residential schools" for ST children came into vague in order to overcome structural barriers such as difficult terrain, inaccessible locations and spatially dispersed habitations and thereby to improve educational access for ST communities. The cultural marginalization and

oppression faced by the SC/ST students could not be tackled as they associated with the mainstream society. The second important challenge of mainstream education is its inability to assure jobs and upward economic mobility. The study concludes by revealing that the reluctance of SC/ST parents to keep their children in school can be traced to this dichotomy between school education and their prospects in the economy

4. Model residential schools – An Overview

With the objective of providing quality education to the tribal students, it was decided during 1997-1998 to utilize a part of grants under Article 275(1) of the constitution of India for setting up 100 Model residential schools from class 4 to 12. Till date the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has Sanctioned 284 EMRS, out of which 226 have been made functional while the rest are at different stages of completion. Maximum number of EMRS is approved in Madhya Pradesh (32). States are free to use the funds out of their Article 275(1) grants to construct and run additional EMRS over the number sanctioned by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. As per the 2018-2019 budget, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20000 tribal persons, will have an Eklavya Model Residential School by the year 2022. State Governments and Union Territory administrations can request for new EMRS provided their existing EMRSs have been made functional. High quality management is accessed in terms of efficient utilization of allocated funds, appointment of the desired number of teachers, provision of medical facilities to the students and staffs, healthy foods, hygienic surroundings, ensured by the state and UTs. If the management failed to keep up the quality of schools, the states and union territories will not be able to claim the funds from the Ministry for this programme. The government gives one-time grant of rupees 30 lakh per school annually. Additional cost must be borne by the concern state governments.

In Kerala a total outlay of rupees 6000.00 lakh has been allocated for the running of Model Residential Schools for the year 2019-2020. All expenses relating to cost of running of MRS including cost of establishment (salaries and allowances), repair and maintenance, minor construction, additional amount for fuel, cooking gas and provisions, waste management, energy projects, project for modernization, projects for implementation of e-governance initiatives, extra coaching, skill development including additional skill acquisition programme and entrepreneurship development, group activities like student police cadet, NCC and NSS, purchase of equipment's/furniture/computers and other accessories, programmes for soft skill development and for extra remedial coaching, cost for conduct of seminars and workshops, cost for meeting travels and allowances to students and staffs for

participating or for conducting various programmes /competitions in India and abroad, cost for meeting study tour of students, development of health including provision for counselling and special programmes/student doctor, student police, projects aimed at the overall development of children and cost for Sahavasa camp for Secondary and Higher Secondary students and honorarium for counselors will be met from this outlay. The total number of students to be covered during a year is 7500. The running costs of new schools proposed in 2019-20 will also be met from the scheme. To reduce the drop out levels in secondary and higher secondary schools, it is intended to provide residential coaching to needy students and help them clear their examinations and also provide skill development training for ensuring employability in emerging sectors (Scheduled Tribe Development Department, Budget 2019-2020).

Eklavya Model Residential Schools are established to tackle the socio-economic inequalities which deprive the educational attainment of Dalit's and Adivasi students. Admissions to EMRS will be through selection/competition with suitable provision for preference to children belonging to Primitive Tribal Groups, first generation students etc. Number of seats allotted for both boys and girls are equal. For SC/ST students, there is an upper income limit of Rs 40,000 per annum. Admissions are provided in the ratio of 19 ST students, 13 SC students and 3 backward students. Sufficient land will be given by the State Government for the school, play grounds, hostels, residential quarters, etc., free of cost. In these schools, education is entirely free. As the name implies, these are residential schools requiring the students to stay in the school premises. The students are provided all the facilities free of cost such as accommodation, food, dress including uniform, books etc. Every class can have maximum strength of 60 students preferably in two divisions of 30 students each and the total sanctioned strength of the school will be 480 students. About 5500 students studying in these institutions.

The objective of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high-level education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non-ST population (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2010). Features of the Model Residential Schools are To impart quality education to the disadvantaged communities like Dalits and Adivasis, to reduce the dropout rate among them and to improve the retention capacity of the school, to improve the educational performance of Dalit and Adivasi students, to give a conducive

academic atmosphere and to provide close student teacher interaction through increased individual attention. (GOI, 2011).

Twenty Model Residential Schools are functioning in Kerala with a maximum of 5 schools in Wayanad district. Among these 20 schools, 2 EMRSs follow CBSE Syllabus and rest of the schools follow state syllabus. Extra academic facilities are being provided in all EMRSs including special remedial classes for the fifth standard students, Spoken English classes for all students, medical and engineering entrance coaching in 7 MRSs having Science batch, motivation class for all students and so on.

5. Analysis and Discussion

A case analysis of Ambedkar Memorial Residential school Kattela, Thiruvananthapuram was conducted to analyse the extend of quality education to tribal children. The study used both Qualitative as well as Quantitative method for the analysis of the data with the help of some simple statistical tools. To acquire the basic data an interactive session was arranged in the school with students and teachers.

I. Socio-economic conditions of tribal students (sample units) in MRS, Kattela

Most of the students in MRS are coming from more or less same socio-economic background. They are having the same problems. In the case of most of the students' both the parents are manual laborers and often faces the problem of seasonal unemployment. Therefore, they lack money for their children's education. There is no proper water supply and electricity in their home. Absence of electricity in the houses is a great hurdle for the students in their education. They also face the problem of access to safe drinking water. They have to walk long distance to fetch water for their basic necessities. Apart from this, accessibility to nearby schools is another great problem. They may repeatedly miss the classes due to heavy rains, landslides and have to walk long distance through the forest to reach the school. In addition to this the familial problems like drunkard father, quarrel between the father and mother, family feuds etc. also stand as an obstacle in their educational pursuits.

Poverty is the great villain in their education. They experience abject poverty in reality. In order to avoid the acute poverty children are often send to do some minor manual jobs like collecting firewood, honey etc. the illiteracy/low education of parents is an effective hindrance to their educational development. Another bottleneck in their education is nutritional deficiency. Tribals are often victims of hereditary diseases. Anemia, sickle cell

anemia etc are rampant among them. They also lack the access to primary health care facilities. Another barrier in their education is the attitude of the parents towards the education. Attitude of the parents towards education is an important factor influence the education of their children. Parents often prejudiced that if their children go outside their reach, it may have an adverse effect on their ethnicity and indigenous culture. In addition to this once they are educated; the children often have the tendency to settle in urban centres seeking better living conditions. This also creates a deleterious attitude among the tribal parents towards education. A bird's eye view of the socio-economic problems faced by the tribal students (50 samples) stands in the way of their educational attainment is given. (See table 1.1)

Table 1.1 socio-economic problems faced by ST students (sample) in MRS

SL. NO	SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS (OUT OF 50 SAMPLES)	PERCENTAGE
1	Seasonal Unemployment of the parents	38	76%
2	Lack of Regular Income	41	82%
3	Absence of Electricity	32	64%
4	Lack of Safe Drinking Water	36	72%
5	Lack of Safe Proper Sanitation	32	64%
6	School Accessibility problem	48	96%
7	Drunkard Father	20	40%
8	Problem of Poverty	12	24%
9	Hereditary Diseases	3	6%
10	Parental Attitude Towards Education	42(Students' parents have a positive attitude)	84%

Source: Primary Survey 2019

The Problems under consideration really form great hurdle for the tribal students in their educational pursuits. The first seven problems listed in the table accounts for more than 60% creating a great snag in their educational pursuits. Among these problems, school accessibility problem (86%) constitutes the greatest hurdle in their education, followed by negative attitude of their parents (84%) towards educating them. This negative attitude is mainly due to the financial burden incurred in their studies. However, it can be said that the problems quoted above are more or less correlated and together constitute the hurdle in the education of the tribal students. But these problems can be overcome to a large extent by the venture of residential system of schooling. A study on ashram schools finds that residential system helps to improve the attendance rates and participation rates among tribal students

(Jha Jyotsna and Dhir Jhingharan, 2005). The importance of residential system for tribal students is well acknowledged by policy makers. As a result, the system of model residential schools gains more importance.

Infrastructural facility always has a great role in designing a good ambience in the school. Both teachers and students have a single voice about the infrastructural facility in the Model Residential School Kattela. To analyse the infrastructural facilities in the MRS, Kattela a check list has been provided to students, teachers and the authority of the school. All the basic facilities are bestowed to the students by the authority both in the school and in the hostel. Table 1.2 shows the infrastructural facility in MRS, Kattela:

TABLE 1.2 INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES OF AMBEDKHAR MEMORIAL MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, KATTELA

SL NO	INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES	YES	NO
1	Office Room	•	
2	Staff Room	•	
3	Lab	•	
4	Library	•	
5	Play Ground	•	
6	Guest Room	•	
7	Auditorium	•	
8	Toilets	•	
9	Computer Labs	•	
10	Smart Class	•	
11	Desks	•	
12	Benches	•	
13	Tables	•	
14	Notice Board	•	
15	Lighting Facilities	•	
16	Fan	•	
17	Mike	•	
18	News Paper	•	
19	Telephone	•	
20	Drinking Water Facility	•	

Source: Primary Survey

All the above cited amenities are available in the school and the students have the complete access to all these facilities all through the academic year. In all the Model Residential Schools, there is director from ST department apart from the Principal to manage the entire

administrative and functioning's of the school and also to take care of the proper utilization of funds from the Scheduled Tribe Development Department. Maintaining a well-furnished school is the sole responsibility of the director deputed from the ST department. Comparing with other government schools the students in MRS is enjoying the aforesaid facilities in the school. Class rooms in MRS are very spacious and well ventilated and also electrified. The school is also issuing bicycles to the students to reach the school in time from the hostel whereas in the case of their initial stages at home, the students have to trek a long distance to the nearby schools in which they often miss the classes. School also has a large playground for the students with many sports equipment's. The co-curricular activities like NCC and NSS is functioning in the school.

BOARDING FACILITIES AT MRS, KATELLA

Students of MRS, Katella have a homely atmosphere in the hostel. Food and accommodation are entirely free for them. Milk and meat are regularly provided to students. Very nutritive food is providing by the authority mainly to overcome the issue of nutritional deficiency that often hampers their studies. Residential system thus provides a conducive atmosphere for the students to learn. Most of these students don't get any motivation to study at home because of the unfriendly atmosphere, but in the residential system they get relief from the family problems and it helps them to concentrate on studies. Another important factor is the infrastructure facilities that the school provides. Most of the students have no desk and chair to sit and study at home and no electricity at home. These impediments have been overcome through the residential system. Facilities in the hostel are shown in the table 1.3:

TABLE 1.3: INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES IN THE HOSTEL OF AMBEDKHAR MEMORIAL MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, KATTELA

SL NO	INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES	YES	NO
1	Bed	•	
2	Pillow	•	
3	Study Room		X
4	Dining Hall	•	
5	Television	•	
6	Prayer Hall	•	
7	First Aid Box	•	
8	Garden	•	
9	Sport Equipment	•	
10	Study Table	•	
11	Chair	•	
12	Book Rack	•	

13	Cloth Rack	•	
14	Bath Rooms	•	
15	Toilets	•	
16	Water Supply	• (scarce)	
17	Lighting Facilities	•	
18	Fan	•	
19	Reading Books		X
20	Telephone	•	

Source: Primary Survey

Students have a bit of complaints about the conditions in the hostel. Scarcity of water is the most important among them. Another major issue is the unavailability of study rooms. They are having only a big hall and all students have to sit there and study. Students from class VI to XII have to study in that single room. Most of the students have the habit of reading loudly. But it is not allowed there. Apart from this, the absence of a teacher to guide them in their studies is another major issue that the students face. Warden will be there to manage them but she will not help them in their studies. Another problem is the lack of communication between the students and parents. This is mainly because the time allotted to them to phone their parents is very less. Despite these problems, the students are very happy in the school as well as the hostel environment. Most students in MRS Katella felt that at home no one takes care of their studies and no one to clear their doubts in studies, the advantage of being in hostel is that, they are able to discuss the lessons among themselves after the classes and through problem solving methods and assistance.

AN EVALUATION OF THE SET GOAL OBJECTIVES BY THE MRS, KATELLA

Model Residential Schools have been established across the country with some set goal objectives. In this scenario, keeping in mind the performance of MRS it is awfully important to analyse whether the set goal objectives in establishing MRS is fulfilled in the study area. The first set goal objective is to ensure quality education to the dalits and adivasi students. Quality education is accessed in terms of providing both academic and non-academic exercise in the same extent. In the case of MRS, it is well documented that both these exercises are bestowed in the same extent. In terms of academic performance, it is noted that (Both in SSLC and Plus Two 100% Results) MRS is performing very well. From 2001 to 2019 the pass percentage of students in SSLC is 100% except in the years 2003 and 2012. Similarly, in the case of plus two, the pass percentage is 100 %. In the case of non-academic activities also the MRS is performing very well. Participation rate in the youth festivals and

other literary fests is very high. In addition to these students are provided training in Yoga and Band.

Second set goal objective of MRS is to reduce the dropout rate among them and to improve the retention capacity of the school. In this field MRS achieved cent percent success. School has been established since 1991, the records collected from the school office reveal that ever since its establishment schools had never faced the problem of Drop - Outs. The school has the full strength recommended by the Tribal Ministry and the school authority is efficient enough to maintain its full strength. Once the problem of drop-out is cleared the retention capacity of the school will automatically be increased. The main reason for the absence of drop out in the school is the ambience that it provides to its students, the homely atmosphere in the hostel, love and affection of teaching and non-teaching staff in the school towards the students. Once the students feel they are secure and develop within the bound of their ethnic culture they will remain in the school. School is clearly backing up all these feelings to the students and thereby successfully attaining the second set goal objective.

The third set goal objective of MRS is to improve the educational performance of Dalits and Adivasi students. The performance of MRS has already been discussed. Comparing with the performance ST students in other main stream schools, their performance in MRS is creditworthy. 100% results in both X and XII achieved by the target specific school over the years reflects the upward trend in the performance of ST students. Therefore, the school has successfully achieved the third set goal objective.

The fourth set goal objective of MRS is to give a conducive academic atmosphere. During the full course of the stay by the investigator in the school clearly got a picture that students have a very conducive academic atmosphere in both the school and in the hostel. They can approach the teachers at any time; can share their personal grievances to the teachers. Apart from this most of the students in MRS is coming from the same socio-economic background. So, they feel very happy and comfort in the school environment. Since most of the students come from the same socio-economic conditions, they can efficiently safeguard their ethnic culture and tradition too. Moreover, they are free from all types of humiliations and discriminations because of the same background. Thus, it can be deduced that school atmosphere is very conducive for the students to attain the educational heights.

The fifth set goal objective of MRS is to provide close student teacher interaction through increased individual attention. This clearly depicted in the discussion of the performance of

MRS, i.e. the individual attention is very high in MRS. This is mainly because high teacher-student ratio in the school. The maximum strength of each class is 35. Therefore, the teachers can efficiently bestow individual attention to each and every student.

These five set goal objectives are positively correlated with the performance of MRS. Low dropout rates, conducive atmosphere for the educational attainment of the students, high individual attention for the students and high teacher-student ratio have a positive correlation with the performance of the school.

6. Conclusion

The ultimate objective of the government in establishing MRS is to impart quality education for both SC and ST students. Government itself has made some set goal objectives in establishing this venture. The study mainly concentrates in the performance of MRS, Katella. The three afore said objectives of the study are closely related with each other and also with the government intention in establishing these schools. From the analysis part it is very lucid that the performance of MRS, Katella is really a model for other schools. Tools used to analyse the performance of MRS have a single sphere reflection that its performance is having an upward trend ever since the year of its establishment. At the same time this creditworthy performance is definitely the result of success in achieving the set goal objectives in establishing the MRS by the school. MRS Katella has fruitfully achieved the set goal objectives.

The overall performance of the students of MRS is knowledgeable. But the question that arises at the end of this analysis is whether an isolated education for the disadvantaged is advantageous to them or not. Many like Pinto Ambrose (2002), Satyanarayana (2002), Yagati (2002) recommends segregation of the Dalits in exclusive schools. Pinto Ambrose (2002) justifies his argument saying that in segregated schools Dalits will 'learn in a spirit of fellowship, exchange knowledge through cooperative learning, exhibit their folk culture and value it, and establish communities of solidarity for social change.' He feels that reservation policy didn't benefit the disadvantaged much. But 'the exclusive schools could provide a big impetus towards evolving an educational system of their own'. Thus, the exclusive schools like MRS are really a land mark in the educational pursuits of the tribals. The system of residential schooling is really a boon for the tribal students with unique culture and ethnicity.

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