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Efforts of civil society organization for tribal education: Reflections from Maikal region of Central India

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Abstract

Education is a powerful tool that can change society; however, certain sections of society still lag behind in access. However, the county celebrated seven decades of independence and made numerous plans and programs for the tribal communities. In India, 705 tribal communities, among them 75 communities, are considered more vulnerable groups known as PVTGs. Among them, the Baiga tribes are deprived. These communities are largely found in central India with a significant number. Though the government is making for their overall upliftment, still the situation remains unchanged. Recognizing the importance of education government has made many efforts in the form of Ashram schools, Model schools, Tribal schools, and Ekalavya Vidhyalay, however, the tribal literacy reported to be 50.6 percent. This paper makes a unique attempt to explore the efforts of selected NGOs in the Maikal region of central India for education development; Those NGOs include Parivaar Education society, Pranam Narmada Yuva Sangh, Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sewashram, Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra etc. the study maps a detailed account of their attempts, strategies and also a way of functioning for education development. Further also examines what social work methods are used for community mobilization, organization, and rapport building.

Keywords: Schedule tribes, tribal education, maikal region, NGOs

Introduction

Tribes are the country's aboriginal people, having unique and indigenous cultural and life patterns. They preserve the culture, environment, and Mother Nature. Although tribes are in the focus since independence, a British-born Indian anthropologist Dr. Verrier Elwin, documented the tribes of India, mainly central India tribes and North-East tribes. India is now celebrating the 75th year of independence, still, some of the communities are far away from development. The tribal community is considered a marginalized community why? What is the lacuna? The UNDP describe the indicators for human development, education is one of them. Mahatma Gandhi advocated the importance of education on many occasions before and after the independence, he includes education as a key factor for the Sarvodya (all-round development) of the nation. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nation Organization includes quality education is the fourth most important goal for sustainable development. (UNO, 2015).

Educational status of tribes: According to the census of India 2011, the tribes constitute 8.6 percent of the country's population, and Madhya Pradesh has a 15.31 million population, which makes 21.1 percent of the total state population. The constitution of India provides equal opportunity in the context of education and employment to all the marginalized sections of society. The positive discrimination adopted by the state is a step to bring up the STs, SCs, Women, and others, but still, the literacy rate of the tribe is not near to the general literacy of the country. The overall literacy rate of India is 73 percent, and Madhya Pradesh's literacy is 69.3 percent. On the other hand, the overall literacy of tribes is 59 percent, while tribes of Madhya Pradesh have only 50.6 percent. This clearly shows the gap and social distance in the context of the tribal community. The government has paid less attention to the development of the tribal language and cultures; our country has an absence of special educational programs for tribes (Kundu, 2017) ^[8]. The girl's education is not the priority of the tribal community. The school relationship between teachers and community people is also not favorable to some extent which affects the education of the tribal children (Rout, 2015) ^[13]. There is much more reason for low enrollment, school dropouts, out of school, and less interest in education and school. In 2014, the Xaxa committee reported various reason and cause for it and also produced 15 recommendation to resolve these issues.

Education status of the Maikal region

The Maikal range covers the Dindori and Anuppur districts of eastern Madhya Pradesh and the Kawardha district of Chhattisgarh. This Maikal hill is the junction of the Vindhyas and Satpura ranges, from where the Narmada and Sone rivers originated. The Anuppur district of the Maikal range is the dominant tribal district of Madhya Pradesh, having Gond, Baiga, Bhaina, Bhariya, Panika, Agariya, and Kol tribal communities at large. According to the census 2011, the district population is 749,237, including 358,543 tribal population, which constitute 47.85 percent of the district population. The district's literacy rate is 67.88, whereas tribal literacy is literacy is 47.85, including 46.95 male and 48.79 female literacy rates.

The Dindori is the tribal concentrated district of Madhya Pradesh. Here more than 64 percent of the population is tribes, mainly, Gond, Baiga, Kol, Panika, and Dholiya tribes found in the district. According to the census 2011, the district population is 704,524, whereas the scheduled tribe population in the district is 455,789 which constitutes 64.69 percent of the total district population, having 7 blocks including 901 villages. The district's literacy rate is 63.9 including 75.47 percent male and 52.47 percent female literacy rate of the district. The tribal literacy of the district is 59.96, including 71.37 percent male and 48.86 percent female literacy rate.

The Role of NGOs

The development of a nation is based on its development policy, program, and its proper implementation. India is a broad country where more than 21.92 percent population is considered below the poverty line, and it needs strong, visionary, and innovative programs and policies. Today non-government organization plays a key role in the implementation of such program and scheme. Many NGOs, VOs, and GOs are working at the ground level for the nation's holistic development. Two types of NGOs are found in the study first is providing advocacy, and another type of NGO is working or project implementing NGOs. Many NGOs are enhancing education via residential school, night classes, Balwadis, etc., and the impact of this work is giving result now the enrollment ratio and literacy rate of the area is increasing (Rajpoot, 2010) ^[12]. The non-government organizations play a significant role in tribal development. These agencies are committed to work and have a high level of motivation, people participation, flexibility to work, and innovative work style. The volunteering organization and the state are both interconnected to each other. After independence, the role of these agencies became significant, and nowadays, they play a vital role in the development sector (Sarmah, 2007) ^[14]. Many NGOs are deeply working among the tribal community and are promoting health, education, and other aspects. (Nanjunda & Dinesha, 2011) ^[11]. The non-governmental institutions are providing free and quality education to the tribal students. They offer free education, residential facility, and other necessary support to children, which may increase GRE at the primary level among the tribal community (Mohanty & Biswal, 2009) ^[10]. NGOs can be considered one of the most powerful tools for the nation's development.

Objective

1. To examine the efforts, approaches, and interventions of non-government organizations.

2. To study Community collaboration and cooperation for education.
3. To explore the cultural barriers and constraints which hinder education progress.
4. To offer tailor-made policy suggestions and recommendations based on the ground realities.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a three-pronged research methodology. The study was carried out in the Maikal region (Dindori and Anuppur district) of M.P. The research adopts the qualitative approach and descriptive study method for this paper. Sample units would be Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra Mahakoshal, Pranam Narmada Yuva Sangh, Parivaar Education Society, and Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sewashram organization. The data have been collected from primary and secondary sources through observation, interview, focus group discussion, and content analysis. The primary data have been collected through interviews with the NGO members, beneficiaries, internees, and volunteers and discussions with parents and community members, key stakeholders, and representatives from the tribal development and education department. The researcher collected data through both participatory and non-participatory observation. The secondary data was collected from the NGO's annual reports, official records, internship reports, books, journal websites, and social media sites.

Discussion

Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra Mahakoshal: This is a non-profitable organization working in the Dindori district of the Maikal region of Madhya Pradesh. The major focus would be on the tribal children, education, skill development, women empowerment, organic farming, etc. the organization is working on 13 key social development sectors for the overall development of peoples of 25 selected tribal villages of the Dindori district.

The organization set up a hostel for tribal boys called the 'Veer Narayan Janjatiya boys hostel' with five tribal students in 2010, as of date, about 60 tribal boys have been admitted and continuing their education in various classes stretched from 5-12 classes. These students hail from a poor economic background where education becomes an unrealistic dream. They provide free education, accommodation, and health and recreation facility to the hostel inmates. From its inception to recent years about 180 vulnerable and marginalized tribal boys got benefited from this hostel.

To fulfill its objectives, the organization also established a school named Narmadanchal Vidyapeeth School for 1-12 classes in the year 2018-19, medium of instruction is bilingual English and Hindi. A total of 300 students are studying in the school in nearby villages. More than 750 students have benefited from it.

Since 2016, Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra has organized career counseling sessions annually for local tribal and non-tribal youth. As per the organization's annual report, about 800 students and youth in the local area were given guidance. As per the discussion of Jamsingh Ji, the Chief executive officer of the organization) many tribal students are selected as DSP, Deputy Registrar, Tahsildar, Sub-inspector, constable, patwari, etc. for government jobs.

Apart from this, Kendra provides a skill development program to the local people. Car driving school for women is one of the innovative initiatives for women's

empowerment, more than 150 women have been trained under the program, and out of 150 women, 10 are now professional drivers having their cars. The mobile repairing training program has been provided to 56 local youth, where 28 belong to the tribal community. Further, to make the tribal youth familiar with technology, The Kendra has also launched a computer concept course (CCC) with the collaboration of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Amarkantak, where 700 local tribal youth benefited from the program.

Table 1: No. of beneficiaries under various activities offered by Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra, Mahakaushal.

Sr. No.	Name of the activity	No. of beneficiary
1	Veer Narayana tribal Boys hostel	180
2	Narmadanchal Vidyapeeth School	750
3	Library	215
4	Car driving school	150
5	Careercounselling program	800
6.	Computer concept course (CCC)	700
7.	Dona-pattal making production and training	55
8.	Mobile repair training program	56
9.	Organic farming training	1580

Source: Baseline survey report 2022

Pranam Narmada Yuva Sangh: popularly known as PRANYUS among the local communities, is a non-profitable organization that works on the Swami Vivekananda ideology working in the Maikal region of Madhya Pradesh. The activities stretched across Dindori, Anuppur, Mandla, Anuppur, and Shahdol districts. The organization runs many self-sponsored programs and projects like the Share Education Program, Kapda Bank, Nirog Nari (menstrual hygiene awareness program), Snakebite awareness and prevention program, River Narmada cleanness drive, Forest and biodiversity conservation project, Modal village project, skill development project (Vermi compost and Mushroom production)

The organization has been running Swami Vivekananda Coaching classes under the share education program since 2016. The program started with one center, and now a total of 13 coaching classes are functional across tribal habitations in Maikal hills of Amarkantak, where free of-cost coaching is being provided for the entrance exam of Navodya Vidhyalya, Modal school, Excellence school, Sainik School etc. They mainly focused on the tribal students of dense forests and unreached habitats.

The organization also provides career counseling and guidance to the tribal youth. They mainly focus on the Anuppur and Dindori districts of the Maikal range.

Table 2: No. of beneficiaries under various activities offered by PRANYUS.

Sr. No.	Name of the activity	No. of Beneficiary
1	SVN Free Coaching classes	425
2	Carrier Counselling	1480
3.	Selection in Navodya Vidhyalya School	08
4.	Tribal Modal School	09
5.	Excellence School	12
6.	Sainik School	01
7.	Krida Parisar	21
8.	Eklavya Model Residential School	04
9.	Kanya Shiksha Parisar	03
10.	Central University	22
11.	Job in the development sector	18

Source: Annual report 2021 of the organization.

Parivaar Education Society: This part discusses the Parivaar Organization. It is a humanitarian organization inspired by the spiritual and humanistic ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Set up in 2003 by Sri Vinyak Lohani, an alumni of IIT Kharagpur and IIM Calcutta. He was inspired by Swami Vivekananda and his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He started Parivaar with 3 kids in a rented building outside of Kolkata. The organization works on the humanistic principle, the operation area includes West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Parivaar provides education through residential and day boarding schools. The boarding school named as is called Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Seva Kutir. According to the official records, 661 Seva Kutir are being operated across Madhya Pradesh, and more than 60,000 are benefiting. The organization provides education mentorship and nutritious meals for morning and evening classes. Most beneficiaries belong to the tribal community. The organization has also taken up various other health activities such as health campus, eye campus, and Ambulance services in 35 districts of Madhya Pradesh, while Seva Kutir (education center) serves 14 tribal dominant districts of the state. The organization also covers the three districts of the Mikal range, which are tribal dominant districts, namely Dindori, Mandla, and Anuppur districts. The Parivaar provides education and nutritional meals to the tribal students, a spiritual atmosphere, skill development, and recreational activity along with health assistance to the students and their parents. Free and regular health camps, eye camps, and ambulance services are being provided. Most of the Gond and Baiga tribal communities benefited from the organization's work.

Table 3: No. of beneficiaries of Shri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Seva Kutir of Parivaar.

Sr. No.	Component	District of Maikal Range			Total
		Anuppur	Dindori	Mandla	
1	No of Seva Kutir	38	60	30	120
2	Total No of Beneficiaries (Approx.)	2621	5450	2700	10771
3	Total tribal Students (Approx.)	2569 (98%)	4905 (90%)	2690 (90%)	10164 (94.36%)

Source: Annual report 2021 of Parivaar Education society.

Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sewashram (RKVS): This section fetches another interesting story of an organization that built up the Vivekananda ideology and carried his legacy. The RKVS is one of the most popular and dedicated organizations in the Maikal hill of Amarkantak since 1995. Dr. Prabir Sarkar was the founder of the organization. He was a Homeopathic government doctor, inspired by the Ramakrishna Paramhansa, MaaSharda, and Swami Vivekananda. The organization is being operationalized on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda philosophy, i.e. service of mankind is service of god. The organization established a free residential school in 1996 called Maa Sharda Kanya Vidyapeeth (MSKV) at Pondki near Amarkantak. They mainly focus on the education of the tribal girls of AmarkantakMaikal hills. The MSKV is an elementary school providing education from class 1st to 8th, mostly Baiga and Gond tribal girls are studying in the school. The Baiga community is considered a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs). The school provides not

only education and residential facility but also value education, health education, connection with their tribal culture, sports, yoga, gardening, and many skill development programs. The school strength is 104 student at present, approximately 400 students has been passed out from the school, where 80 percent are from the Baiga community. The alumnus of the MSKV has become govt. school teacher, staff nurse, ANM, Aanganwadi worker, self-employed, and other service sectors. Mehar (2018) ^[9] studied about Dr. Prabir Sarkar, the founder of Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sewashram organization. The paper was honored to Dr. Sarkar as a Visionary Educationist for his selfless service to the education of tribal girls' children. The organization is working over 65 Baiga tribal villages for health, education, and awareness, the RKVS runs a dispensary at Pondki village where villagers are getting free health check-ups and medicine regularly. They regularly organized a health camp in those 65 villages, they also provided free mobile ambulance service to the villager of the Maikal region.

Findings

The NGOs are working toward the fulfillment of the goal of a nation of development. The tribes of the Maikal region are getting benefited from the Parivaar education society, Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Sewashram, Pranam Narmada Yuva Sangh, and Janjatiya Kalyan Kendra Mahakausha in perspective of basic education and health facility. NGOs design education programs as per the need of the community. Along with education, the organization provides food, accommodation, health facility, recreation activity, cultural and skill education to the tribal children. The local teachers are appointed in the education centers and utilizing the local resource is a major initiative for the promotion of locality. There is no language barrier between the students and teachers, the organization staff and community members. They have good community rapport and gain the trust of tribal community because these organizations adopted local culture and also promoting them. The local tribal community can access emergency services at any time. The emotion of the students and community was understood and respected by the organization, and they made constant follow-up of every service and case. They develop the education interest of students & parents by promoting an indigenous knowledge system and through frequent counseling of parents.

Conclusion

The study area (Maikal hills range) is geographically isolated, where the Anuppur, Mandla, and Dindori are tribal concentrated districts. The tribal community has their own indigenous culture, custom, and informal education system which is declining gradually because of the effect of modernity. The literacy rate of tribes is very less than the nation's literacy, while the literacy of Maikal tribes is very poor. These NGOs play a key role for promoting education among the tribal community of the Maikal region. Many NGOs are working in rural and tribal areas for the upliftment of the tribal community in western Madhya Pradesh. Rajpoot (2010) ^[12]. Three out of four organizations are working on Vivekananda's humanitarian philosophy. Three of the four studied organizations provide quality education and nutritional food. These organization working towards full filling the 2nd and 4th goals of the Sustainable Development Goal of UNO. These organizations are

improving the quality of tribal life along with protecting and promoting the tribal culture. The tribal community has less exposure and less awareness about the importance of education, these organizations are awarding the tribal community, and the result is, school attendance is increasing.

As a son of the soil, I have closely witnessed the function of the organizations and their approach, and rapport with the community, and felt impressed that these four organization work for value, and service and had a tremendous impact on the local tribal communities. These NGOs strongly believe that education is the root cause of development. As Swami Vivekananda asserted that "We want the education by which character is formed, the strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet."

Recommendations

Based on the extensive fieldwork, observations, and discussion with various stakeholders, the concluding section provided valuable suggestions for improving education.

- Motivation session for teachers and staff
- Ethics and moral teaching
- Provide a national platform to local students for sports and cultural events.
- Community participation and involvement should increase.
- Collaboration with university and Higher Education Institute.
- Motivate youth and encourage them to study
- Carrier guidance for dropout and out-of-school children.
- The government should support and collaborate to achieve similar goals with such kinds of NGOs whose selfless service to marginalized sections of society.

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