‘LEARNING WITH BURDEN’: ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE PROBLEM FACED
BY PAWARA TRIBAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Inclusive education is key component for developing inclusive society. For mainstreaming the weaker sections of society, we have Right to Education Act 2009 which ensures free and compulsory education to all children irrespective of their region, class, caste, religion etc. But still there are many sections of the society that need attention urgently of them are tribes. The present small scale study focuses on the issues of language problems faced by Pawara tribal students. Good inclusive education is that which respects and accepts diversity. Language barrier is a big challenge for adopting inclusive education in India. The present research paper throws light on the problem faced by Pawara tribal students due to language barriers. They are inside school and still excluded.

Keywords: Tribal students, language barriers, challenges in inclusion etc.

We are living in the era of Inclusive Education. It is a progressive approach seeking to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. This is a world famous approach adopted in education. Particularly, Government of India has accelerated this approach to achieve the target of ‘Education for All’. But the road of mainstreaming of marginalized groups through inclusive education is full of challenges as well as opportunities. Indeed its a challenge, especially because Indian society is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and divided into many castes and sub-castes. ‘The Scheduled Tribe’ community represents an important social category of Indian social structure.

The Problem:
‘Tribes’ in the Indian context today are normally referred to in the language of Constitution as’ Scheduled Tribes. Constituting 8.6% of the total population, tribal people are considered to constitute the ‘Weaker section of the society’. According to the
census of 2011, the total population of tribes in Maharashtra is ten per cent. At present, India has the second largest tribal population in the world next only to Africa. Today, we are looking forward towards a bright India, Digital India etc. still the problems faced by tribes are unanswered. According to the Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India (2013) 9,38,19,162 out of 10,42,81,034 tribal population of India stay in rural areas and in areas which are far from development. Though the central and the state Governments have taken much interest in the tribal welfare programmes, projects and schemes, much remains to be done. The progress achieved in this field is far from satisfactory.

Education is the process of development. Primary education is expected to provide and create learning environment for students to develop their personalities and hidden potentials. Education is an indispensible tool for the growth and development of individual and society from all spheres though its formal or in the form of alternative. While discussing about the development of tribes, education is one of the most important means. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which help them in meeting the new challenges of life (Sahu, K.2014). 08). We can not deny that Government has taken efforts to bring tribes in mainstream through education. Undoubtedly, they have outgrown in the recent years with the help of the efforts by the government. The literacy rate amongst tribals has increased from 8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011 while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.305 in 1961 to 72.99% in 2011 (Statistical Profile of the Scheduled tribes in India, 2013 Ministry of Tribal affairs, Statistics Division, Govt. Of India).

Although efforts are visible in primary education, the problems are still aplenty. More than 80% of them are below the poverty line and hence they are sometimes excluded from the growth process. This is revealed by the World Bank Report stating that STs are 20 years behind the average population in India thanks to their settlement in rural areas (Poverty and Social Exclusion in India, The World bank, 2011). While discussing about the educational progress, Studies show that tribal students in primary education do not have proper well-equipped schools and teaching-learning materials (Pradhan and Pattnaik, 2012). Moreover studies also reveal that there has been lack of interest from the community itself (Rao, 2009). Apart from this, there are well established studies that show that when tribal languages are not used as mediums of
instruction, students do not show much interest. Studies show that in the service programmes for teachers conducted by government, there was lack of co-operation and co-ordination among the participants (Rao, 1993). The present small scale study discuss about the language problem faced by the Pawara tribal students in their learning process. The Pawara tribes are one of the major tribes in Maharashtra. According to the research made by Dr. J. Gaikwad, Pawara has their habitat in former Udaipur state (Rajasthan). Entomologically, the term ‘Pawara’ is derived from the Pawagad, which is at present in Gujrat. From there this they have migrated to Surat region, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

**Literature Review :**

There exists substantial amount of literature on the status of tribal education in India. A brief review is highlighted here. An analysis done by Pradhan and Pattnaik (2006) aimed at exploring the quality of education in 142 Ashram Schools which was meant for the tribal students of Koraput district. This study clearly depicts the problems that lead to a weaker base of the tribal students at school which is why they face difficulties in later stages of their career, particularly in tertiary education. Rani, M (2000) observed in her study that due to the language barrier the tribal children are unable to establish communication link with the teacher and thus leading to the termination of their education in some point or the other. Gupta’s (2006) study signifies the fact that the tribals continue to remain away from the mainstream population and are hence away from the development process as well. Sahu Kabita (2014) came to conclusion in her studies that there is an urgent need for various govt. interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for tribal education. Easy access and more opportunities should be provided to the tribal children in order to bring them to the mainstream of economic development. Another study completed by Rao (2013) records the non-awareness of tribal students and parents regarding various programmes and policies of the government in the field of education.

**Objectives of the study :**

1) To understand the language barriers faced by Pawara tribal students.
Sample of the search:

The researcher has adopted purposive sampling method. The Pawara tribes is mostly inhabited in the ranges of Satpuda mountain. They are mainly concentrated in North-Western region (Dhule and Jalgaon District) in Maharashtra. But a big number and pockets of this tribe are located in Buldhana, Akola and Amravati district also. For the present study, researcher have selected a fifth standard class of Zilla Parishad primary school form Jalgaon Jamod Tehsil of Buldhana district. 50 tribal students are selected as a sample.

Method of Study:

This is a small scale study which is descriptive in nature. Researchers have used the Survey Method for the study.

Tools for Data Collection:

Questionnaire: The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher for students and class teacher. Statistical tools: Percentage.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Few questions with their interpretation are discussed here.

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Easily communicating with other</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>05</td>
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Interpretation: It shows that majority of students are confortable while communicating with other students in their own mother tongue i.e. Pawari.

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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easily communicating with teachers</td>
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<td>10</td>
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Interpretation: It shows that many tribal students face problems in communicating with their teachers and the main reason is language barrier. Teachers are using Marathi or Hindi for instruction. While almost all students speak their own mother tongue i.e. Pawari which is not understood by teachers. This clearly shows that there is lack of communication and therefore learning gaps amongst teachers and students exist.
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<td>3</td>
<td>Easily understanding what teachers is</td>
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**Interpretation**: Majority of tribal students can not understand the daily teaching by teachers. Again the language problems is the root cause. Teaching – learning process is the most inevitable part in education. Majority of students are unable to grasp whatever teacher is teaching due to language barriers.

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<td>Discussing personal</td>
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**Interpretation**: Majority of tribal students were uncomfortable in sharing their personal problems with teachers. Apart from academics, students also need counselling and guidance at every step. But due to communication gap, student and teacher fail to establish good relationships.

**Discussion and suggestions:**

The tribal students who are the major victims of the socio-psychological and language barriers of communication feel that the language which is used as the medium of instruction should be flexible enough to meet their demands. Due to language barriers students are unable to participate in learning process effectively. Some of the recommendations which can be made are as follows:

- More number of Schedule Tribe teachers need to be employed in the school of tribes. So that language issue can be addressed.
- A large number of language training sessions and activities for teachers should be conducted by Tribal Dialect centre at SCERT.
- Language Mediator should be recruited in primary schools.
- More female teachers specially belonging to ST category should be employed.
- Teachers should try to adopt innovative strategies such as a student learning in higher class can teach to lower class or can play the role of facilitator.
- Extra efforts should be taken by teachers such as developing vocabulary in tribal language.

Effective interaction and communication is very important in learning process. Students should get an opportunity to express themselves. Active participation of students results into optimum benefit out of it. Right teaching-learning process leads to proper personality development also. It helps to empower people. But if students are
facing difficulties in communication process with teachers, it hardly produces any affirmative results. The same is happening with these tribal students. Pawara students are comfortable with Pawari language while their teachers hardly know this language. When the sender of the message conveys it in a language which is not well perceived by the listener, then it may give rise to misconception and misunderstanding. The words, signs and symbols used in the communication to explain certain facts create doubtful situations. This is due to the fact that the information is not sent to the receiver in a language that is comprehensible enough. In a classroom situation, badly expressed messages, symbols or words with different meanings, faulty translations, and obscured assumptions, use of technical jargons and body language and gestures are some of the problems that students face in a communication process.(Behera,S.2015). Naturally, language barrier creates inferiority among tribal students. They grow older with such language complex that is these tribal students are inside school and still excluded.

The tribal students who are victims of language barriers are needed to be addressed urgently. They need their mother tongue as a medium of instruction. At least teacher should use it along with Marathi. In fact it is proven that students learn effectively in their own language. Government policies also recommended the same thing. But it’s a challenging job to minimize the language gaps in learning process.

There are three main approaches to study tribes in India. These are Isolation approach of Verrier Elwin, Assimilation approach of G.S.Ghurye and Integration approach of Jawaharlal Nehru.

According to Nehru, isolation approach to treat tribal as ‘museum specimen to be observed and written about’ signifies insult to them. Tribe cannot be left cut off from world as they are. According to Assimilation approach by G.S Ghurye, tribal people in India are backward Hindu differing only in degree from the other segment of Hindu society. Their backwardness is due to their imperfect assimilation into Hindu society. Instead of these two approaches, Neheru favours policy of integrating tribal people in Indian society and to make them an integral part of Indian nation without hampering their distinct identity and culture. Policy of integration consists of two types of measures for tribal development. These are protective and promotional measures.

After independence Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru lays down a Panchsheel principle for tribal development in India. Panchsheel is five fundamental principles for tribal development in India. One of the principles of them is that ‘Tribal people should
develop a long line of their own genius and nothing should be imposed on them. Rather we should try to encourage in every way their own traditional art and culture.' We have adopted this liberal perspective for tribal development. But today after many years of independence, in the era of free and compulsory education tribal students are facing many problems in their learning process. In my small scale research, I found the problems faced due to language issue are serious. There are many other problems which should be addressed as early as possible. If we are imposing Marathi or Hindi language as a compulsory medium of instruction, it will be violation of fundamental rights of tribal students given by Constitution of India. Without considering all these minor and major aspects of tribal education, the dream of mainstreaming the weaker sections through Inclusive education will be not come true.

References