

Issues and Challenges of Tribal Education for Among the Soliga: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

The changes in the educational system should also reduce the social gaps by enabling proper recognition to whatever extent *one* is able to pursue or acquire a skill. The tribal community all over India have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, there has been no economic, social and political mobility across this community. The Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs. Education is one of the most important means to improve tribal personal endowments, build capabilities, overcome constraints and in the process, enlarge available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained improvement in well-being. This paper made an attempt in examining and understanding the level of literacy and educational attainment among the Soliga tribal community in Karnataka, India. The paper discusses the present scenario of literacy level of Soliga Tribal community as well as the role of government institutions and as many programs have not reached them since it has no contextualised and localised many of the programmes did not benefit the tribal community. The reasons of not getting the benefits by the programs to the tribal's are lack of political will, corruption, and lesser attention on development of tribal areas. The paper highlights the need for special focus on tribal education, which includes context specific traditional and innovative interventions.

Keywords: Literacy rate, Community, education, corruption, programmes

Introduction:

Education is a process of controlling the behaviour of an individual. Education is one of the most important means to improve the personal endowments, build capabilities, overcome constraints and in the process, enlarge available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained improvement in well-being. The process of education and attainments thereof has an impact on all aspects of life. It is a critical invasive instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion of people. Education can be used as a tool to empower the individual. This implies that education as an instrument which is used as a means for bringing about desired changes in the society and in the later case changes in the educational structure follows as a consequence of changes which have already taken place in the society. Education is an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy and it is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward groups.

The male -female gap in literacy and educational attainment among the scheduled tribes is significant. Scheduled Tribes are geographically, socially isolated and economically marginalized communities. In the post-Independence period, sincere and concerted efforts were made for the economic and educational development of tribal's. Despite of these efforts the performance of the tribes in education is still much lower than the Scheduled Castes. This has led to drop outs and directly impacted their overall educational status.

Soliga tribal's in Karnataka:

The Soliga tribe traces their origin to Karayya, son of Lord Maleya Mahadeshwara, swamy of Maleya Mahadeshwara Hills, Karnataka. Legend says that on seeing Karayya's affinity towards wild animals, Lord Maleya Mahadeshwara swamy asked Karayya to reside in forests, whereas other fusion son Biliyayya resided in plains and became the forefather of Lingayats. The Soliga speak the Sholaga language (Soliganudi) as a mother tongue. A member of the Dravidian family, it is most closely related to Kannada with several Tamil influences.

Tribal population of Karnataka is about 34.64 lakhs (6.95%) of total population of Karnataka. The Soliga is a scheduled tribe, who lives in the hilly forest areas of Bili Giri Rangana Hill and Mahadeshwara hill of Chamarajanagar district. The Soligas were also referred as Sholiga, Soliga, and Soligaru by early authors. After declaration of BRT as wildlife sanctuary (1974), Soliga life style got affected and displaced Soligas settlements to periphery (buffer area) and allowed some of the settlement to stay inside (core area) the forest. Earlier researchers (Kumar, 2006; Madegowda et al., 2017) discussed that after the amendment to Wildlife Protection Act in 2002, banning the collection of NTFP for commercial use affected 15,000 Soliga tribals. The government agencies what ever worked in Soliga's area, mostly with respect anthropological point of view like providing medical facilities', electricity, low cost houses and other basic necessities. The available literature of the life style of the Soliga tribes in general, and of the Bilgiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary in particular, in core and buffer zone is very less.

Empowering of education Soliga Tribes 'Sudarshan Model' of Karnataka: There was hardly any awareness among the Soligas about the modern systems of education and health when Sudarshan initially came to them, inspired by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. Much more than the lack of awareness was their abject poverty. There was widespread hunger and lack of basic necessities of life. The limited facility of schooling in government schools was not sensitive to the socio-cultural context of the Soliga people. For example, most students ran away from government schools when they realised that they had to be confined to the class rooms for long hours. This was not the way of the forest. School attendance, therefore, was very low. Besides, the children had to walk for many kilometres to school and back to their forest homes. Sudarshan decided to start a school and a hostel for boys and girls right inside the forest. And this worked. I could see for myself how happy the boys and girls were in the school and hostel run by VGKK and Karuna Trust started by Sudarshan. The children were made to feel free in their own cultural milieu. When the school was started 25 years back, there were only five students. Today there are more than 500 students. It is a remarkable achievement. The success of the spread of education among the Soligas was evident when I met a tribal

student (Jadeya) from the first batch in the tribal school. He is about to complete his PhD from the University of Agricultural Sciences at Bangalore. I found him exceptionally bright, apart from being fluent in English. He proudly announced to me that he was the chairman of the managing committee of VGKK. I was happy to know that he was planning to go back to the Hills after he got his PhD degree to work with Soligas and did not plan to migrate to a city or go abroad.

Objectives of the Study:

Following are the main objective of this study may.

- To know the socio-economic status of Soliga Tribal in Karnataka.
- To study the literacy trends of Soliga Tribes.
- To identify the issues and challenges of Soliga tribal Education.
- Govt. Policies and programmes for the Soliga tribal education in Karnataka.

Methodology:

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study, this has ensured both statistical and non-statistical analysis which was used in order to support the findings of the results of the study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires from the study area. Beside this, Secondary data was gathered from different sources such as enrolment records, and various documents from the School Register book that was available in the schools.

Socio-Economic Status of Sholiga Tribes:

Languages: The Soliga speak the Sholaga language (Soliganudi) as a mother tongue. A member of the Dravidian family, it is most closely related to Kannada with several Tamil influences.

Occupation & Social Status: The Soliga used to practice shifting cultivation, but have more or less given up this practice now. They grow Ragi (Finger millet, Eleusine coracana) for subsistence. Their main source of income is harvesting and sale of Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP) like honey, nellikai (gooseberry, *Emblica officinalis*), bamboo, Paasi (Lichen), algae, wild turmeric, Indian blackberry, soapnut and nennari (wild root). They also make baskets using bamboo. They are increasingly being brought to the "mainstream" with active Government and NGO initiative. Many have been given lands closer to 'civilised areas' and most of the forestdwelling population have been brought together into clusters called Podus. Most of the forest area they stay comes under wild life protection area. The Biligiriranga Hills is a Wildlife Sanctuary under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the Malai Mahadeswara Hills is a Reserve Forest, and Bandipur is a National Park. Their rights on harvesting NTFP is being sought to be withdrawn citing conservation concerns, sparking a debate about the rights of indigenous people.

Sub Groups of Soligas: There are five sub groups of Soligas; Male Soliga: Kannada speakers residing in Karnataka; Urali Soliga: Kannada and Tamil speakers, residing in border areas of Tamil Nadu; Pujari group: reside in Maleya Mahadeshwara Hills; Kadu

Soliga: reside near Bandipur Forest; Burude Soliga: reside in Heggadadevanakote Taluk and Kodagu.

Religion: Soliga people follow naturism and animism along with following Hindu practices and their main deities are Madeshwara, Rangaswamy of Biligirirangana Hills, Karayya, Kyate Devaru and Jadeswamy. Other deities worshipped by them include Madeshwara, Basaveshwara and Nanjundeshwara and Sri Alamelu Ranganayaki smetha Sri ranganatha.

Table-1: Literacy profile of Tribal’s and general classes in India

Year	Literacy rate of tribes			Literacy rate of other categories		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.93	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.97	43.57
1991	40.62	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84
2011	65.4	40.06	53	82.47	68.08	75.36

According to the above table, the total literacy rate of the tribal people as of 2011 was 53%, male literacy was 65.4% and female literacy was 40.6%. It is clear from the surveys that the male literacy rate is consistently higher than the female literacy rate of this category. Also, it is known that there is a large gap between the literacy rate of women and men in non-tribal’s and when compared to the literacy rate of tribes/scheduled castes, there is a greater gap.

Table- 2: Class wise dropouts of the Soliga tribal Students

Sl.no	Level	Percentage
1	Lower primary	14.5%
2	Higher primary	43.6%
3	High school	36.4
4	Pu/ College	5.5%
	Total	100

In case of class wise dropouts, majority of 14.5% children are being dropouts at primary level. However, 43.6% children are being dropouts at higher primary level. Almost 36.4% children are being dropouts at High school level. 5.5% children are discontinued their Education at P.U level.

Table – 3: Parents education level of the Soliga students

Sl.no	Level	Percentage
1	Illterate	43.6%
2	Lower primary	38.2%

3	Higher primary	5.5%
4	High school	7.3%
5	Puc	1.8%
6	Degree	3.6%
	Total	100%

In case of parents education level 43% Soliga parents are illiterate. Next, 38% of Soliga parents have studied up to lower primary. More than 5% of Soliga parents have studied up to the higher primary. 7% Soliga parents have studied up to the high school only. 3% have studied up to graduation level.

Reasons why tribal people are backward in education:

Even though the government has provided several programs for the education of tribals, tribal students are academically lagging behind other students. There are several reasons why they lag behind academically. Namely

1. Lack of awareness about education among parents.
2. Not providing them with good facilities.
3. Not to open schools near tracks.
4. Not opening more ashram schools.
5. Non-cooperation in their development by organizations and NGOs.
6. Their parents often migrate
7. Government not taking action to help them continue economically.
8. Government not making special efforts to make them come from forest to land.
9. Ignorance of the benefits of education.
10. Still interestingly familiar with their own superstitious and religious aspects.
11. Not getting along with the citizens.
12. Relying on their ancestral occupations like hunting, beekeeping, etc.
13. Marrying within blood relatives which are hereditary.
14. Ignorance of programs implemented by government and non-governmental organizations.
15. Not getting the facilities provided by the government like money, accommodation, subsidy etc.
16. Non-availability of financial and educational assistance.

In this way the above factors are important for the backwardness of the tribals educationally, socially, politically and economically.

Conclusion:

Tribal education is not altogether a different kind of education. It is education to suit the special needs and aspirations of tribal groups who are in different stages of development. Tribal identity is not a matter of shame. It is true that many groups who are completely acculturated wear it as a badge of privilege. But there is no reason to expect or demand that the tribal should either wholly retain or lose all of his culture. If the educated go through a basically western education but retain something which can be recognized as Indian, there is no reason why the tribal, no matter how highly educated he becomes, could not retain something of the tribal heritage. The education system offers little by

way of tribal culture in the school curriculum. It has not recognized diversity as a basis of educational planning for the tribal and evolved any strategy which will ensure a smooth transition from the home language to the school language by the end of the primary school. The plea here is for ameliorative planning which will make education relevant to the life of the tribal and help him take advantage of the mainstream education as equal without a sense of deficiency and social oppression.

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