

**THE ROLE OF ASHRAM SCHOOLS IN EDUCATING THE CHILDREN
FROM TRIBAL COMMUNITY**

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Of all the Items in the Development Programme for the tribes, Education is the most Important as it is both the Means and the End of real Progress

B.A. Deshmukh (2004)

Education is fundamental to socio-economic development. Development of the Country lies with the development of the backward people who are socio-economically underprivileged and educationally recessive in relation to total population. Education is the cornerstone of development. Natives or Scheduled tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, most programmes were initiated since independence and recognizing that education provides permanent change in socio- economic status of these people, Government has given top priority to education of tribal people.

Tribal groups constitute about 8.2 % of the total population in India (Indian Government Census, 2001). According to government statistics, tribes can be found in approximately 461 communities with almost 92 % of them residing in rural areas, mostly in remote underserved forest regions with little or no basic civic amenities like transport, roads, markets, health care, safe drinking water or sanitation. Tribal communities therefore lag behind other communities with respect to attainment of income, education, health and other requisites for good community nutrition. Of the 86 million tribals who are 8.2 percent of the population, 80 percent live in the Middle India belt of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Northern Maharashtra and Southern Gujarat. Around 12 percent or 10.2 millions live in the Northeast. The rest are spread over the remaining States. Scheduled tribes are distributed throughout the country except Pondicherry, Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, and Delhi. **Thus from the above statistics it can be inferred that, if the education of this 8.2% of the population is neglected, 100% literacy can never be attained and this population will never progress and be worthwhile for the country.**

Education will enable the tribal to perform their role to be useful citizen in democracy. The success of Education is evident from the literacy rate. Thus for increasing the literacy rate a



number of strategies have been planned and adopted by the government. The Education Division of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs makes all efforts to supplement the efforts of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, which is the line Ministry, and the State Governments/UT Administrations by administering various schemes with the objective of enhancing access to education through provision of infrastructure by way of construction of hostels for students belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. Establishment of Ashram Schools, Vocational Training Centre as well as to maximize retention of Scheduled Tribe students within the various stages of school education and promoting higher learning by providing monetary incentives in the form of scholarships such as Pre Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship (PMS), Scholarship for Top Class Education, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship and National Overseas Scholarship for ST students.

Educational institutes have been increased in tribal areas to strengthen their educational lease. Among all, the opening of a number of Ashram Schools in tribal areas has been an initiative in the area of tribal education. Tribal children have been provided free boarding and lodging facilities in the Ashram Schools. This scheme was originally a centrally sponsored scheme and now operated by the State Government. The purpose of setting up the Ashram School is to bring about the total development of tribal children with an emphasis on vocational education which can train them to stand on their own legs and become idealistic and selfless independent citizens of the nation. As the schools are residential, it can reduce the incidence of student's absenteeism in school, improve the standard of education at the primary level and reduce the burden of their parents from incurring expenditure on their children's education. Different facilities like school building, playground, and free kitchen, gender teaching material, furniture, dress, books and economic resources have been provided to motivate the tribal children and their parents towards education. Staying in the Ashram School during the crucial years of schooling from five to sixteen years, will definitely motivate a student to continue his or her study in the school without dropping from the halfway. Above all, an effective socialization can grow among tribal children which will ensure better level of educational attainment among them. Ashram Schools are specially designed to suit children of tribal background to attain better education.

The researcher has been visiting the **Shri Anna sahib Sahasrabude Advasi Anudanit Madhyamikshala** and has cited the **case study**, of this Progressive Ashram School.

Following are the objectives of the study

- a) To gauge the facilities of Ashram School
- b) To evaluate the performance of students

c) To suggest strategies for improvement, if any in 1975, Shri Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe, realized that along with Leprosy, the society was plagued with several other problems and he therefore expanded the activities of the centre to create one big Ashram – ‘Shantivan’. The NGO’s and many social organizations like Rotary and Lion Clubs and many social workers volunteered to help in the activities of Shantivan. The efforts of all the people lead to the establishment of an agriculture centre, a cow shelter with Indian and Jersey cows, a Bio-gas plant, a Naturopathy centre, a weaving centre, a Panchayat Training program and **an Adivasi Ashram School.**

Facilities:

The Adivasi School is a Marathi medium school. The school consists of 460 students, both boys and girls from Class I to Class X. There are 13 teachers in all and 10 support staff. The school is a residential School with Residential Hostel facilities for the children mostly belonging to the Adivasi community. There is a Hostel superintendent who looks after the students after school house as the teachers are not residential teachers. The teachers live in the nearby villages and travel to the school daily. There is a fixed time table in the school right from which is planned from 5a.m. to 10p.m. A biometric is installed in the school for attendance purpose for the students.

The NGO’s like Rotary Club and Inner Wheel and Jannalal Bajaj foundation are giving a lot of monetary help to the Ashram schools. Various facilities are provided to the students in the school like the well- lit classrooms, laboratory, library, computer room comprising of around 40 computers a language laboratory, study room, gymkhana, recreational room which is a big Hall where the students can exhibit their talents in co-curricular activities. The students get up in the morning at 5 am then after their personal cleanliness they study and then have their meals and then attend the school. The teachers motivate them to learn and the walls of the schools are painted with lots of good thoughts and sayings. The teachers in the school are well versed with the local language of the students.

Three meals i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner is provided to the students daily. The meals are cooked in the clean and well equipped kitchen and fixed menu for the whole week is displayed in the Dining hall. The students have to report at the fixed time and have the meals. Wastage of the food is not allowed. The students assemble in the hall together and after all have assembled; they say a common prayer thanking god and the farmers who have been working so hard for the food they are enjoying. After the meal the students wash their own plates and wipe them and keep it in place. This instills the right kind of attitude and values in the students like punctuality, regularity, dignity of labor, cleanliness, etc. The students of higher standards are a source of support for the very young students. They help the younger children in dressing up to



school, tying their hair helping in studies etc. Thus an atmosphere of a family is seen in the school.

Student Performance:

The performance of the students is satisfactory. They perform quite well in language other than English and social sciences and science. The students are good in craft and drawing and sports. The students are unable to communicate effectively in English and also Mathematics subject is difficult for them to understand and thus they obtain low grades in these two subjects. The students are given general Mathematics so as to enable them to learn and grasp concepts and keep them motivated to learn mathematics. The students are very good in sports. Facilities for sports are provided. They play the game Kabaddi at the National level. These students are giving special coaching for Kabaddi, so that they can participate at the National level. Students are well disciplined and self-reliant as they are able to do a number of things on their own. Striking Feature of the students is that they are well disciplined, good mannered and have a thirst for learning.

Some Suggestions:

- The students need more facilities for bathing, toilets and drying clothes, thus these facilities should be provided to the students.
- Language is a barrier as they don't speak in clear language due to the interference of their own cultural language. This hampers their communication skill.
- More facilities for supplementary reading to be provided to the students, like newspapers, magazines can be kept open for students to read whenever they want.
- There is only one Television in the whole school. The right channels like the discovery Channel, Planet M, Educational Programmes on Doordarshan and News Channels provide a lot of information regarding the outside world. The students should have an exposure to the Mass media to enrich their knowledge.
- The students are weak in Mathematics and language. Special guidance for Education to be given. Remedial teaching should be done to motivate the students so that they complete the schooling and can go for higher education.

Conclusion:

The existing weaknesses of the Ashram Schools should be promptly tackled Thus infrastructure facilities like playground, provision of water, electricity, toilet, cots should be provided and properly maintained. Supplemental, remedial classes and special coaching classes for poor students, involvement of subject expert's technical guidance should be promoted. Educational provision through vocational education is needed to be strengthened. Vocational

craft oriented education, education on games, sports; agriculture must be imparted to the students. Specially weak students may be promoted in that respect. Vocational training will instill confidence among students and their parents.

Provision of resource support and capacity building is a major pre-requisite in educational institutions. Maximum exposure to the tribal children can give them opportunity to excel in their skills. Massive parental education through adult education can generate awareness and love for education among the tribal. Talented tribal children should be identified and nurtured in the field they are interested. Tribal children are very brave and fearless. They should be given spiritual instruction, meditation in the school. Physical exercise, physical training should be imparted regularly so that they can be promoted to join Indian Army and Police and can serve the nation.

Teachers should motivate the tribal students in education in school and conduct regular examination, review of examination results, career counseling of students, select the weak students and give them special care to uplift in educational sphere. Primary education and proper evaluation of primary students is essential to get them admitted to the high school. Otherwise they will find it difficult to cope up with the high school syllabus.

With firm determination with dedication of the teachers, government and community can make the Ashram school a role model like 'Shantiniketan' which can give vision to the educationally impaired, backward tribal children and endow the tribal to look at their problem in civil societies.

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