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Book Review

R.R Patil (Ed.), *Tribal Development in India: Challenges and Prospects in Tribal Education*, New Delhi: SAGE, 2020, XVII+352 pp., ₹ 1295.00 (Hardback).ISBN: 978-93-538-8437-7.

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India boasts the second largest tribal population globally, with over 730 scheduled tribes recognised under article 342 of the constitution. Despite comprising approximately 103 million individuals, accounting for 8.6% of India's population (Census, 2011), the overall condition of these tribes remains challenging. Issues such as limited access to education, healthcare, and basic amenities persists, alongside socio-economic marginalisation and displacement due to livelihood and developmental projects. Additionally, land rights, cultural preservation, and political representation are some of the burning concerns, reflecting the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by India's diverse tribal communities in their pursuit of development and empowerment. Despite several initiatives undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental organisations, including various developmental schemes, grants, and support for livelihood development, the results have not been as satisfactory as expected. Particularly alarming is the state of tribal education, where the literacy rate of scheduled tribes stands at only 59% compared to India's overall literacy rate of 73% (Census, 2011). This glaring disparity underscores the urgent need for in-depth research to uncover the root causes of educational challenges faced by the tribal communities in India, identify the best practices in education and advocate for policy and planning changes tailored to meet their specific educational needs. The book under review makes a valuable contribution to this



discourse, shedding light on crucial aspects of tribal education and offering insights into potential pathways for improvement.

The collection curated by the editor comprises a total of nineteen chapters that explores the various facets of tribal education in India. These chapters are thematically grouped into three main sections. The first section, titled 'Issues of Tribal Education in India', encompasses nine chapters that addresses the multidimensional challenges pertaining to tribal education. In chapter 1, Gomti Bosra Hembrom, through the sociological analysis explores the educational experiences of adivasi children. The study sheds light on the socio-cultural and economic constraints faced by tribes, exacerbated by poverty and exploitation of dominant mainstream communities, which resulted in educational stratification and inequality. Hembrom also evaluates the role of state governments in implementing educational policies for tribes and their failed attempts to combat illiteracy and ensure better learning outcomes. She expressed her concerns over the gradual shifting of students from government to private institutions, along with the rise of privatisation and commercialisation, social inequalities are permeating educational disparities, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to address access, participation and quality issues holistically. Pradyumna Bag delves into the pervasive issue of ethnocentrism in education in chapter 2, focusing specifically on the effects of hidden curriculum on tribal students. Bag sheds light on the pedagogical arrangement of Ashram schools in Odisha, revealing how these institutions often serve as sites of alienation for tribal children, disconnecting them from their home, distinct language and culture and eroding their cultural identity. Through compelling case studies and field examples, Bag illustrates how personal biases of teachers manifest in negative sanctions that significantly impacts the self-worth and motivation of tribal students. The hidden curriculum, propagated through teacher biases and institutional practices, perpetuates the dominant culture and languages, sidelining tribal languages and cultures in the educational discourse. Bag underscores the loss of traditional knowledge and life skills that tribal students would have acquired in their home environments, focusing on the systematic deprivation of language and culture within the confines of the school environment, leading to a sense of estrangement from their own heritage. In chapter 3, Bipin Jojo explores the influence of governmental policies such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, and the NPE-Programme of Action, 1992 on the evolution of tribal education in the region. It underscores how these educational policies and initiatives, by attempting to address the multifaceted social landscape within a unified framework, fail to bridge the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation. Through an



examination of both academic literature and empirical data collected during the study, the author provides specific examples of the challenges faced by ashram schools in Maharashtra, including inadequate infrastructure, unhygienic living conditions, poor healthcare, safety and security and the struggle for quality education. Saumya Deol and R.R. Patil in chapter 4 draws the attention of the readers towards the complexities of language policies in tribal ashram schools, highlighting the tension between promoting dominant languages for integration and preserving local languages for cultural preservation. It discusses the efforts of some states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to incorporate local languages into the curriculum and the challenges in implementing such initiatives on a broader scale. Additionally, the chapter explores the impact of language barriers on tribal students' educational experiences and outcomes. In chapter 5, Dhaneswar Bhoi further elaborates on the objectives of ashram schools in addressing the socio-economic and geographical inequalities faced by tribal populations. It discusses the historical evolution of ashram schools and their role in reducing absenteeism and dropout rates among tribal students. Additionally, the chapter examines the provision of boarding and lodging facilities in ashram schools to create a conducive learning environment for tribal students. In chapter 6, S. N. Tripathy, provides a nuanced analysis of the educational challenges specific to the Katkari tribe in Maharashtra. The study explores the impact of distress migration on Katkari children's educational attainment and proposes inclusive policies to ensure their equal access to education. Besides, the chapter discusses the importance of integrating migrant tribal children into the formal schooling system to address high dropout rates effectively. Chipemmi Awung Shang and R. R. Patil in chapter 7, offers detailed insights into the current status of residential schools in Manipur, including infrastructure, teaching practices, and enrollment patterns. It examines the role of governmental and non-governmental organisations in providing educational opportunities for tribal children in the region. Additionally, the chapter discusses the challenges and best practices observed in residential schools, providing recommendations for improving educational outcomes for tribal students in Manipur. In chapter 8, Prakash Chandra Jena, further emphasises the importance of instructional materials in tribal languages and the need for upgradation of ashram schools to meet the diverse educational needs of tribal communities. It discusses the provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the NEP-Programme of Action, 1992 in promoting mother tongue-based education and establishing more ashram schools in Tribal Sub-Plan areas. Moreover, the chapter explores the role of tribal ashram schools in bridging the gap between tribal and non-tribal educational outcomes and the challenges faced in achieving this objective. R. Vasundhara Mohan in chapter 9, evaluates the impact of ashram schools on tribal



literacy rates and learning outcomes, emphasising the need for continued efforts to address disparities in educational development between tribal and non-tribal populations. Further, the chapter examines the challenges posed by socio-economic and cultural factors in tribal education and proposes strategies for enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for tribal children in India.

The second section showcases innovative approaches and exemplary practices in tribal education, focusing on the distinctive methods adopted by ashram schools. These chapters spotlight the integration of indigenous wisdom with modern educational paradigms, the development of a comprehensive codebook for quality management, the implementation of centralised kitchens for efficient meal distribution, and the adept management of service delivery for tribal education. In chapter 10, Noorjahan Kannanjeri and Alkha Dileep investigated the educational landscape of Wayanad district in Kerala, renowned as the dwelling place of diverse tribal communities. This chapter scrutinises government-operated ashram schools to assess their efficacy in not only enhancing literacy rates but also in preserving indigenous culture. Employing qualitative analysis through case studies, the research unveils that while ashram schools contribute to literacy improvements, they fall short in fostering robust teacher-student relationships, delivering formal education while preserving tribal culture, and providing vocational training.

The historical evolution of ashram schools in India, from their inception by Gandhian disciples to their present governance under Tribal Development Departments has been studied by Rajashri Tikhe and Buveneswari Suriyan in chapter 11. The chapter delineates the development of the Ashram School Codebook, which emerged from the necessity of tailored guidelines for the unique nature of residential tribal schools. Originating in 1995, with subsequent revisions in 2003 and implementation in 2006–2007, this codebook serves as a crucial framework for qualitative management in tribal residential ashram schools, ensuring adherence to standardised practices and policies. Chapter 12 by Saurabh Katiyar, underscores the establishment of centralised kitchens in Maharashtra's ashram schools as a strategy to mitigate tribal-urban disparities. These kitchens, conceived to offer nutritious and hygienic meals, streamline operations from procurement to delivery, ensuring uniform quality standards. Notably, centralized kitchens have emerged as pivotal in providing standardised, high-quality food, thereby addressing nutritional deficiencies and promoting health among tribal students. In chapter 13, Muhammed Shafi C. T. and R. R. Patil, sheds light on the transformative role of Indira Gandhi Memorial Model Residential School (IGMMRS) in uplifting Cholanaikkar and Kattunaikkar tribes, designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala.



Employing a case study approach, the chapter delineates IGMMRS's provision of comprehensive educational support, including accommodation, food, and educational materials. Equipped with modern amenities and surveillance infrastructure, the school fosters holistic development through academic and extracurricular pursuits. The authors advocates for replicating IGMMRS's success model to bolster tribal education standards nationwide, emphasising the necessity of qualified teachers and modern facilities for enhancing competitiveness and sincerity among students.

In the third and last section, the emphasis is on reimagining policy and planning for tribal education in India. It comprises six chapters that delve into policy redesign and reform, micro-planning for ashram schools, and innovative financing methods to enhance tribal education. In Chapter 14, Sonal Shivagunde highlights the significance of residential ashram schools established under the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) in 1990–1991 for tribal education access. Despite efforts through various policies since independence, literature reviews and evaluation studies reveal shortcomings in ashram school education delivery. The author advocates for revisiting policies and regulations to address these gaps and ensure quality education for tribal learners, crucial for the development of India's tribal population. Naresh Kumar in chapter 15, examines the educational development of tribal populations, highlighting the challenges they face in mainstream schooling and alternative educational provisions. It argues for a socio-anthropological perspective in policy planning to address the cultural essence of tribal education and enhance their educational outcomes. In chapter 16, Bibekananda Nayak, stresses the importance of tailored educational policies and programs for tribal communities. It emphasises addressing issues such as illiteracy, enrolment, gender disparity, and social exclusion in tribal education, emphasising the need for proper enforcement and prioritisation of tribal educational needs. Mrityunjay K. Singh, delves into the historical evolution of ashram schools and their impact on tribal education in chapter 17. He highlights challenges such as language barriers and cultural disconnects, proposing solutions like indigenous education models and teacher-student cultural alignment to improve tribal education outcomes. In chapter 18, D. K. Panmand, discusses the evolution and current status of government ashram schools, emphasising the need for modernisation and micro-planning to meet contemporary educational demands. It advocates for the adoption of modern educational technology and innovation to enhance the quality and sustainability of ashram schools. In the concluding chapter Vetukuri P.S. Raju, explores the financing of tribal education initiatives, particularly the establishment of ashram schools. The author analyses funding patterns and disparities in fund utilisation,



highlighting the impact on tribal education and advocating for effective financial management to improve educational outcomes for tribal children.

The chapters within this book serve as a poignant reminder of the critical need to reassess our approaches to tribal development, particularly within the realm of tribal education. Despite concerted efforts by the government to uplift Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, the implementation of various schemes and programs often faces substantial administrative and governance hurdles, rendering government interventions less effective than intended. Specifically focusing on the ashram school scheme, the chapters underscore its potential to significantly contribute to tribal development in India. However, unlocking this potential requires addressing systemic and circumstantial challenges that currently impede its efficacy. Beyond rectifying these issues, the success and sustainability of the ashram school scheme hinge upon the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders. In essence, the chapters shed light on the transformative potential of the ashram school scheme and underscore the imperative of collective action in advancing tribal education and overall development. Through concerted efforts and collaboration, we can pave the way for a brighter future for India's tribal populations, ensuring they have access to quality education and the opportunity to thrive.

While the book provides a comprehensive examination of tribal education in India, incorporating the voices of tribal communities in the form of narratives, testimonials, or interviews with tribal students, parents, and community leaders would have offered deeper insights into their experiences, challenges, and aspirations regarding education, enriching the readers' understanding of the cultural, social, and economic dynamics at play. Moreover, it would have been better if the book had delved further into the intersectionality of factors impacting tribal education, such as gender, disability to ensure a more inclusive analysis. Additionally, exploring successful grassroots initiatives and community-driven approaches to tribal education would have been beneficial in providing valuable lessons and best practices for policymakers and practitioners. Lastly, while the book acknowledges the importance of collaborative efforts, it could have offered more concrete recommendations for fostering partnerships between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, academia, and tribal communities to address the identified challenges effectively.

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