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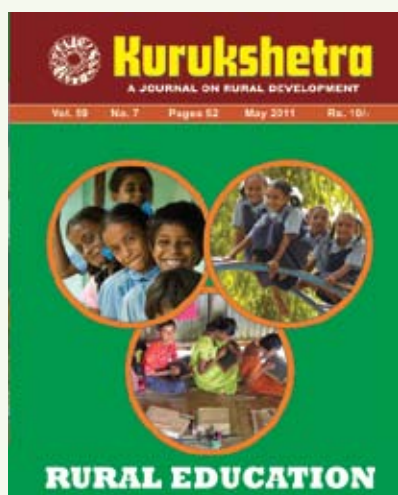
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INSIDE

India has the largest education system in the world after China. However, issues of quality education and access remain. Challenges in some parts of the country. The Right to Education (RTE) is now a Fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. In simple words, it means that the Government will be responsible for providing education to every child up to the eighth standard, free of cost, irrespective of class and gender. However, it will take at least five more years before the target is reached. This is because the infrastructure has to be built, and lakhs of teachers recruited.

The RTE is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of enrollment, attendance and completion of education on the government. Though the National Education Policy of 1968 talked of a free and compulsory education, the Right to Education came into effect only in April 2010.

To fulfill the promise of imparting education as a right, the government has enhanced funds to the education sector. In the current budget (2011-12), an increase of 24 per cent has been made in allocation for the education sector.

We discuss in this issue, the Right to Education, and the challenges to enforce free and compulsory education.

There is heartening news in the latest census. India's effective literacy rate has recorded a 9.2 per cent rise to reach 74.04 per cent, according to provisional data of the 2011 census. Effective literacy rate in the 2001 census was 64.83, which has improved to 74.04.

In this issue, we also discuss the state of child nutrition which is not a happy situation. According to a study, 20 per cent of children under the age of five years are wasted, as they are too thin, and nearly 70 per cent children between six months and 59 months, are anemic.

Despite the constraints, more and more children are getting enrolled in schools and aspiring to share the gains of the economic growth.

The Challenge of Educating Rural India

Anupam Hazra

The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well accepted. Access to education is critical to access emerging opportunities that accompany economic growth. Keeping in view of this accepted fact there has been a major thrust on education since independence; but as far as ensuring quality education in rural India is concerned it has always been one of the biggest challenges for the government.

India viewed education as the best way of bringing social change. Soon after gaining independence in 1947, making education available to all had become a priority for the government. The education sector has received considerable attention in the recent Budget (for the year 2011

– 2012) too - which has announced a significant increase of 24 per cent in the total allocation for education sector. The existing operational norms of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* have also been revised to implement the right of children to free and compulsory education, which has come into effect from 1 April 2010. Allocations to achieve the objectives of the Right to Education (RTE), which has been aligned with the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, were hiked from Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 21,000 crore. While this is targeted at strengthening elementary education, the Centre is now focusing on “vocationalisation” of secondary education, which will enable students to pursue job-oriented courses at the plus two-level. Initiatives have also



been taken to increase retention of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students in Class IX and X by introducing a pre-matriculation scholarship. The human resource development (HRD) ministry's allocations have gone up to Rs 52,057 crore from last year's Rs 43,836 crore. Though the recent budget seems to be providing a major impetus towards the country's overall educational growth but due to various socio-economic factors, India's education program continues to be denigrated. Of the biggest victims of the educational system are those living in rural areas. Though for encouraging the growth of rural education, from making policies to introducing laws - our government has

lined up the education system up to the mark but implementing the process into an effective way has been the lacunae of the entire system.

Still issues of quality and access remain areas of concern particularly in the sphere of rural education in India. Children in rural areas continue to be deprived of quality education owing to factors like lack of competent and committed teachers, lack of textbooks or teaching-learning materials, and so on. A large number of teachers refuse to teach in rural areas and those that do, are usually under-qualified. The much publicised mid day meal scheme meant to reduce drop-out rates in schools, seems to be not yielding the desired

Recent Scenario of India's Education Sector: At A Glance

- 96.5% of children in the 6 to 14 age group in rural India are enrolled in school
- 71.1% of these children are enrolled in government schools, 24.3 % are enrolled in private schools.
- The proportion of girls (age 11-14) who are still out of school has declined from 6.8% in 2009 to 5.9 in 2010; in states like Rajasthan (12.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.7%), this percentage remains high and shows little change since 2009.
- Enrollment in private schools in rural India increased from 21.8% in 2009 to 24.3% in 2010
- Nationally, the percentage of five year olds enrolled in schools increased from 54.6% in 2009 to 62.8% in 2010. The biggest increase was visible in Karnataka where the proportion of five year olds enrolled in school increased from 17.1% in 2009 to 67.6 in 2010
- Nationally there is not much change in reading levels as compared to last year. Only 53.4% children in Standard V can read a Standard II level text. This suggests that even after five years in school, close to half of all children are not even at the level expected of them after two years in school.
- On average, there has been a decrease in children's ability to do simple mathematics. The proportion of Standard I children who could recognize numbers from 1-9 declined from 69.3% in 2009 to 65.8% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of children in Standard III who could solve two digit subtraction problems decreased from 39% to 36.5% in the same period. Children in Standard V who could do simple division problems also dropped from 38% in 2009 to 35.9% in 2010.
- ASER 2010 found that over 60% of the 13,000 schools surveyed satisfied the infrastructure norms specified by the RTE. However, more than half of these schools will need more teachers. A third will need more classrooms.
- For rural India as a whole, children's attendance shows no change over the period 2007- 2010. Attendance remained at around 73% during this period.

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010

results due to alleged misappropriation of funds meant for the scheme, mismanagement, lack of seriousness among the implementing authorities, diversion of funds, lack of awareness among the parents of poor children, etc. The food served under mid-day meal scheme in rural schools is also of inferior quality. Besides that, the recent Public *Report* on Basic Education [PROBE] report reflects that physical infrastructure of rural schools is far behind the satisfactory-level, with 82 percent of the schools is in need of renovation. Books are often unavailable, and teacher absenteeism tends to be high.

But these emerging issues which are jeopardising the progress of rural education, are being addressed and there are positive signs that the emphasis in major government programmes such as the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is shifting focus from universal enrolment to universal retention and quality. Attention is also being given to the governance of schools with the formation and functioning of Village Education Committees (VEC) and more transparent processes for managing school resources. In recent years, it has also been noticed that the *Panchayati Raj*, or village council has been playing an increasingly significant role in the progress of education in rural areas across the country. On the other hand, in last few years, the number of qualified teachers in rural schools has increased because of the augmented efforts by the government and private groups towards improving the country's overall educational status as well as towards upgrading and ensuring professional training of school teachers. The next most pressing challenge is to boost the access in

rural areas to secondary education, particularly for girls, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities as well as to ensure availability of technical and vocational education and skills. At this level of the education system the private sector is growing rapidly and playing an imperative role of service provider.

Conclusion

India has the second largest education system in the world after China. The scale of operation involved to ensure quality of Education for All in the country is unique and challenging. At the same time, the nature of problems affecting the education system are so diverse and often deep rooted that the solution cannot lie in the alteration of any one single factor – it is not about

India has the second largest education system in the world after China. The scale of operation involved to ensure quality of Education for All in the country is unique and challenging.

just shortage of money or just shortage of trained teachers or lack of political will; all these undeniably contribute to the problems, affecting the country's existing education system. However, there is a need to look at the entire set of problems and deal with the issue holistically taking into consideration the specific

context of different sections of the society. It will also require a constant and strong central support for policy, strategy, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation combined with increased decentralization within government, stronger public-private partnerships, and improved accountability relationships between the service providers, policy makers, and the target population.

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RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring enrollment, attendance and completion on the Government.

The Right to Education Act (RTE Act) came into force in the entire country from April 1, 2010. It is now legally enforceable for every child between the age of six and fourteen years to demand free and elementary education. The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring enrollment, attendance and completion on the Government.

The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children from poor families (to be reimbursed by

the state as part of the public-private partnership plan).

According to government estimates, there are nearly 220 million children in the relevant age group, of which 4.6%, or nearly 9.2 million, are out of school.

It is estimated that 1.71 lakh crore rupees will be needed in the next five years for implementation of the RTE Act.

The Union Finance Minister has allocated an increase of 24 per cent for the education sector in the union budget for 2011-12. Rs.21,000 crores have



been allocated for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan registering an increase of 40%.

Some of the salient features of the Act.

Right to Education

The Act makes it mandatory for every child between the ages of 6-14 to be provided for education by the State. This means that such child does not have to pay a single penny as regards books, uniforms etc... too.

- Any time of the academic year, a child can go to a school and demand that this right be respected.
- Private education institutions have to reserve 25% of their seats starting from class I in 2011 to disadvantaged students.
- Strict criteria for the qualification of teachers. There is a requirement of a teacher student ration of 1:30 at each of these schools that ought to be met within a given time frame.

- The schools need to have certain minimum facilities like adequate teachers, playground and infrastructure. The government will evolve some mechanism to help marginalised schools comply with the provisions of the Act.
- There is a new concept of 'neighbourhood schools' that has been devised. This is similar to the model in the United States. This would imply that the state government and local authorities will establish primary schools within walking distance of one km of the neighbourhood. In case of children for Class VI to VIII, the school should be within a walking distance of three km of the neighbourhood.
- Unaided and private schools shall ensure that children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups shall not be segregated from the other children in the classrooms nor shall their classes be held at places and timings different from the classes held for the other children.

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Universalization of Education

Anil Kumar Biswas

Right to Education Act (2009) has given ample scope to PRIs in rural area for the universalization of elementary education as a fundamental right. If PRI members are monitoring the enrollment procedure of their Jurisdiction, the success will come.

Education is a dynamic process that starts from birth. A child surrounded by parents and other siblings experiences her surroundings and responds. The surrounding environment, the physical and social, “imparts” some information and the child tries to find a pattern in that information and responds. From those responses we assess whether his/her development is normal, abnormal or extraordinary. Different children at the same biological age respond to the same environmental

situation differently depending on the development of their perceptive and cognitive skills such as seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and mentally processing that information to discover the patterns. The behavioral response of the students with identical perceptive and cognitive skill differ due to the differences in the family environment and the extent of self study and effort. So we need for a better education policy for all round development of a child.



Education Policy

Education in India has a history stretching back to the ancient urban centers of learning at Taxila and Nalanda. Western education became ingrained into Indian society with the establishment of the British Raj. Since Independence, the education policies of successive governments have built on the substantial legacies of the Nehruvian Period, targeting the core themes of Plurality and Secularism, with a focus on excellence in higher education, and inclusiveness at all levels.

Traditional education in India served a very limited purpose of a particular section of the society belonging to certain cast. During medieval period education was similarly elitist, favoring the rich. These pre-existing elitist tendencies were reinforced under British rule. The modern education system of British Raj was first developed in the three Presidencies (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras). In the early 1900s, the Indian National Congress called for national education, placing emphasis on technical and vocational training. In 1920 the Congress initiated a Boycott of Government-aided and Government-controlled schools and founded several 'national' schools and colleges. In 1937 Gandhiji raised his voice in favor of universal education. Nehru aimed that education for all and industrial developments were seen as crucial tools to unite a country divided on the basis of wealth, cost and religion, and formed the corner stone of the anti-imperial struggle. So after independence, school curricula were thus imbued with the twin themes of inclusiveness and national pride, placing emphasis on the fact that India's different communities could be peacefully side by side as one nation.

Drawing on Nehru's vision, the Kothari Commission was set up to formulate a coherent education policy for India. According to the commission, education was intended to increase productivity, develop social and national unity, consolidate democracy modernize the country and

develop social, moral and spiritual values. To achieve this, the main pillar of Indian education policy was to be free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. Other features included the development of languages, equality of educational opportunities and the development and prioritization of scientific education and research. The commission also emphasized the need to eradicate illiteracy and provide adult education

National Policy on Education

After Kothari Commission's (1964) recommendations the introduction of National Education Policy 1986, Rajiv Gandhi announced a new education policy. The National Policy on Education (NPE), was intended to prepare India for the 21st century. The policy emphasized the need for change and noted 'Education in India stands at the Crossroads today. Neither normal linear expansion nor the existing pace and nature of improvement can meet the needs of the situation'.

According to the new policy, the 1968 policy goals had largely been achieved: more than 90% of the country's rural population was within a kilometer of schooling facilities and more states had adopted a common education structure. The prioritization of science and mathematics had also been effective. The 1986 policy was reviewed by a committee constituted in 1990 under the chairmanship of Acharya Ramamurti. On the basis of the recommendations of this committee, certain provisions of the 1986 policy were modified in 1992.

Apart from the above mentioned three important national policies, following initiatives have been taken:

- Operation Blackboard (1987) aimed to improve the human and Physical resources available in primary school.
- Restructuring and reorganization of Teacher Education (1987) created a resource for the continuous upgrading of teacher's knowledge and competence.

- Minimum levels of learning (1991) laid down levels of achievement at various stages and revised textbooks.
- National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995) Provided a cooked meal every day for children in class I-V of all govt., govt.-aided, and local body schools.
- District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (1993) emphasized decentralized planning and management, improved teaching and learning materials, and school effectiveness.
- Sarve Shiksha Abhijan (SSA) (2001), aimed at universalizing elementary education of satisfactory quality in the country. The programme is now a flagship programme of the govt.
- The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhijan (RMSA) on the lines of SSA, is expected to bring in the desired investments in Secondary Education and facilitate the process of universalizing secondary education in the country.

The year 2009 is a landmark year in the development history of elementary education, when the government finally managed to pass the 86th Amendment to the Constitution that made Right to Education (RTE) **Constitutional Provisions for Education :-**

The last education commission under the British, the Sergeant Commission, had in 1945 envisaged a forty year time frame for universal education; that is by 1985. The constitution did not enact education a fundamental right, but made the article 45 of the Directive Principles, calling on the state to 'Endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age 14' the only time bound article, directing the state to accomplish the task in 10 years, that is by 1960. The new article 21A, which was inserted as part of the 86th Amendment says that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages 6 and 14 through a law that it may determine".

The 42nd Amendment (1976) to make education a 'Concurrent' subject for expansion of Primary Education facilities, particularly in backward areas, to make education easy to all, free and compulsory education, prioritization to universalization of primary education. Article 29 states that the minorities shall have the right to preserve their distinct language, script or culture. Article 29(2) declares that "no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state fund on grounds any of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them". Article 30 gives protection to religious and linguistic minorities. They have the right to establish and administer institutions of their choice. Article 30 (1-A) says that in case of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority being acquired by the state, the state shall ensure that the amount fixed for such acquired property should be such as would not restrict or abrogate the rights of the minority. Article 30(2) prohibits state from discriminating in granting aid to educational institutions managed by the religions and linguistic minorities. Article 28(1) Prohibits religious instruction in any educational wholly maintained out of the state funds. 28(2) nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the state but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires the religious instruction shall be imported in such institution. 28 (3) No Person attending any educational institution recognized by the state be required to take part in any religious institution that may be imported in such institution or any premises attached there to – unless such a person is a minor, his guardian has given consent there to. Article 46 deals education of the socially & educationally backward classes of citizen. Article 350A deals facilities for instruction in mother tongue of Primary Stage.

Right to Education Act (2009)

The rough draft of the bill was composed in the year 2005 in and received Presidential assent and

was notified as a law on 3rd September, 2009 as the children's Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act.

Main features of Right to Education Act:-

The main features of Right to Education Act are –

1. Free and compulsory education to all children of India in 6 to 14 age group.
2. No child shall be held back, expelled or required to pass a board examination until completion of elementary education.
3. A child who completes elementary education (up to from class VIII) shall be awarded a certificate.
4. Calls for a fixed student-teacher ratio.
5. Will apply to all of India except Jammu and Kashmir.
6. Provides for 25% reservation for economically disadvantaged communities in admission to class I in all private schools.
7. Mandates improvement in quality of education.
8. School teachers will need adequate professional degree within five years or else will lose job.
9. School infrastructure to be improved in three years, else recognition cancelled.
10. Financial burden will be shared between state and central government.
11. No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.
12. Screening Procedure shall be punishable with fine.
13. To constitute a school management committee consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children.



14. No teacher shall be deployed for any non-educational purposes.
15. No teacher shall engage himself or herself in private tuition.

Right to Education Act (2009) is a landmark initiative of the government to strengthen the education system in India. Under this Act it is mandatory to complete elementary education of all children, who reside in Indian Territory. Now Education is fundamental Right of every Indian.

It is very necessary to involve the Panchayati Raj Institution in rural area for universalizing the elementary education. Whenever PRIs in rural areas have taken the initiative to protect child rights, development indicators in areas like education, health and child trafficking have improved dramatically. Right to Education Act (2009) has given ample scope to PRIs in rural area for the universalization of elementary education as a fundamental right. If PRI members are monitoring the enrollment procedure of their Jurisdiction, success will come.

(The author is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, A.B.N. Seal College, Cooch Behar, West Bengal, e-mail : bappa_anil@rediffmail.com)



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FROM THE GROUND

CHALLENGES TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Sujata Hira

It is in the case of children that misapplied notions of liberty are a real obstacle to the fulfillment by the state of its duties.

John Stuart Mill (On Liberty) (1959)

Rani was just nine but had to perform a lot of duties including cleaning utensils and washing clothes in a Babur bari (employer's house) along with her mother Gita. What's more, both of them worked but payment was made to Gita only. The amount was a meagre Rs. 250 per month. To support a family of three (mother and two children as the father did not stay with them any longer), Gita needed to work in

six houses daily in order to make ends meet. Total income of the family was Rs.1150 per month.

Gita had never thought of admitting Rani (the name was inspired by Gita's favourite film actress) to a school though she was aware of all the benefits that Rani can get. She knew that a child enrolled in a school gets free education, free uniform and free books and free lunch. Even the prospect of a better marriage or job as a shopping mall attendant for an educated Rani could not lure Gita to send her



daughter to school. She believed that education is too costly and not affordable. She was hard-pressed to think of today, and had no luxury to think of tomorrow.

Gita was helpless. She needed her daughter's help to maintain her work schedule. She even hoped to earn some extra within two years when Rani will be able to work on her own, thereby increasing their 'family income'. Rani, too, was not eager to go to school. She had attended the local ICDS centre six years back but was functionally illiterate. Instead, she loved talking about movie-stars and TV serials which she watched regularly with her mother after work. The effort of the teacher of the local Sishu Shiksha Kendra(SSK)to get her enrolled went in vain.



In practice, a two pronged approach was taken where both method1. and method2. were employed. A Self-help group employed in cooking mid day meal in a local primary school (Kuler Dari FP school) contacted Gita to work as a helper –cook. Initially she refused fearing a huge workload but later agreed. The Sahayika of the SSK, in the meantime, remained in touch with both Gita and Rani giving

them information about the arrival of new sets of books, pencils, erasers as TLM(teaching –learning material) or the Mid-day meal menu of last week. Gita's new work not only supplemented her income but also changed her outlook towards school. She watched girls studying there talking about their future dreams of becoming teachers or doctors. After three months of joining her work in school she took Rani to the Sahayika she refused one day. She now wants her child to be a primary school teacher.

Rani, now, is not permitted to go to a neighbor to watch TV serials in the evening. She needs to finish her homework sitting near her mother as Gita cooks their dinner nearby.

As J.S. Mill argued years ago, it is incumbent on the state to ensure education of “every human being who is born its citizen”, overriding parental objections and long established traditions of sending children out to work. Mill concluded that the state's intervention is needed in the most private domain of family, where parents neglect to provide children with “instruction and training for the mind” along with “food for the body”.

This is the reason, perhaps, why we needed a stringent legislation on compulsory education. The National Education Policy, 1968, though, among others, announced the principle of free and compulsory education but RTE came into being only in 2010. Making elementary education an entitlement for children in the 6-14 age group, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 will directly benefit children who do not go to school at present.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced the operationalisation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act which states that children, who had either dropped out of schools or never been to any educational institution, will get

elementary education as it will be binding on the part of the local and State governments to ensure that all children in the 6-14 age group go to school. As per the Act, private educational institutions should reserve 25 per cent seats for children from the weaker sections of society. The Centre and the States have agreed to share the financial burden in the ratio of 55:45, while the Finance Commission has given Rs. 25,000 crore to the States for implementing the Act. The Centre has approved an outlay of Rs.15,000 crore for 2010-2011.

The Act empowers the school management committee or the local authority to identify the drop-outs or out-of-school children aged above six and admit them in classes appropriate to their age after giving special training.

Salient features of act-

- The child is entitled to receive the education in his neighbourhood school.
- private school will have to take 25% of their class strength from the weaker section of the society. Education of these children will be funded by government.
- No donation and/or capitation fee
- No admission test or interview either for child or parents.
- No child can be held back, expelled and required to pass the board examination till the completion of elementary education
- provision for establishment of commissions to supervise the implementation of the act.
- A fixed student and teacher ratio is to be maintained.
- All schools have to adhere to rules and regulations laid down in this act. Three years

The National Education Policy, 1968, though, among others, announced the principle of free and compulsory education, but RTE came into being only in 2010.

moratorium period has been provided to school to comply.

- Norms for teachers training and qualifications are also clearly mentioned in the act.

Challenges ahead

- Like Rani, many first generation learners lose interest in study due to various factors. Studying demands a different type of concentration /attention than they are used to pay while watching movies or doing household work . It also demands a suitable environment, motivator and encouragement. When these children can not keep pace with classmates in the class, they lose interest. a sc
- Financial assistance provided by these children to their family makes it difficult for the authorities to get them admitted in school.
- As per the provision of the act, children possessing lesser financial ability admitted in private schools may be exposed to different life style and living standard. While the intermixing may result in better coordination and cooperation among children of different financial strata , a coping -problem for the poorer kids cannot be overruled either.
- It is agreed that the act provides us with a weapon to deal with our poor human capital inventory.

References:

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Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Inclusive Education

B K Pattanaik and Madan Mohan Singh

Inclusive education holds the key to all educational endeavour in India. The goal of inclusive education is to end all form of discrimination and foster social cohesion.

Education is the mirror to the society and is the seed as well as flower of the socio-economic development. It transforms human beings from ignorance to enlightenment, from shades of social backwardness to light of social amelioration and a nation from underdevelopment to faster social and economic development. The general conference of UNSCEO in 1964 recognized that "illiteracy is a grave obstacle to social and economic development and hence the extension

of literacy is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of national plans for economic and social development." The first Education Minister of codependent India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said in the parliament in 1948 that "I need hardly say that whatever be our programme for industrial, scientific, agricultural, commercial or material progress and development, non of them can be achieved without an improvement of the human material which is the basis of our national wealth.



That human material is largely conditioned by the training and education which it receives. It seems to me that whatever we think of defence or of food or of industry and commerce, we must take every step to see that education is given the first priority among our national requirement.” Amartaya Sen also emphasised that the solution of all problems, be they related to the economy, development or population, lies in education.

India has the distinction of having one of the largest elementary education systems in the World. With more than 15 crore children enrolled and more than 30 lakhs teachers, the elementary education is expanding in the country in a significant scale. **The literacy rate in the country has increased from a meagre 18.33 percent in 1951 to 65.38 in 2001. In reiterating its stand for universalization of primary education in the country, the 86th amendment to the constitution of India has made free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 age groups a fundamental right.**

Not only illiteracy, but also regional, social, gender and caste based inequality in literacy are some of the features of literacy in India. Table-I and Table-II reflect the picture. The exclusion of girls and other marginalized sections of society has remained a great concern of primary education in India. Way back what an educational expert J P Naik said holds true even today. He said that “the largest beneficiaries of our educational system are the boys, the people of urban areas and the middle and upper classes.” In Asian Drama, Gunnar Myrdal remarked that “the hunger of education in the villages is largely a romantic illusion.” The inclusive education holds the key to all educational endeavour in India. The goal of inclusive education is to end all form of discrimination and foster social cohesion.

Table-I
Literacy Rate by Caste Group and Sex

Categories	Types	Literacy (%)
General Literacy	Person	64.8
	Male	75.3
	Female	53.7
Scheduled Castes	Person	54.7
	Male	66.6
	Female	41.9
Scheduled Tribes	Person	47.1
	Male	59.2
	Female	34.8

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table-I
Literacy Rate by Religious Communities

Categories	Person	Male	Female
Hindus	65.1	76.2	53.2
Muslims	59.1	67.6	50.1
Christians	80.3	84.4	76.2
Sikhs	69.4	75.2	63.1
Buddhists	72.7	83.1	61.7
Jains	94.1	97.	90.6
Others	7.0	60.8	33.2
All Communities	6.8	75.3	53.7

Source: Census of India, 2001

The government of India has launched several programmes after Independence to uplift literacy in the country. In order to achieve inclusive education it has provided incentives to the children belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and also to the girls. More recently, the government of India has launched in 2001 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) a flagship programme in partnership with the state government to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. The SSA programme aims at:

- Strengthening school infrastructure by constructing new building and upgrading the existing building.

- Providing teachers and also building their capacities through training.
- Seeks to provide quality education including life skills.
- Promoting community participation in primary education by formulating Village Education Committees. And involving them in planning and raising community contribution for primary education
- It aims at bridging social, regional and gender gaps in literacy and primary education.
- It focuses on girl education and children with special needs
- It seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

The present paper gives the finding of a study carried out in five districts of Punjab. Although Punjab is an economically developed state, in terms of literacy its position is not encouraging. In terms of the Census 2001 literacy, Punjab occupies 16th position. The Educational Development Index (EDI) developed by National University of Educational Planning and Administration(2007), New Delhi for primary and upper primary level also ranks Punjab 14th with an index value of 0.608, while Kerala, Delhi and Tamil Nadu ranks first, second and third with index values of .0.708, 0.707 and 0.701 respectively. The state has also the distinction of having the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes population, 29 percent well above the national average of 21 percent. Therefore, the importance of inclusive education occupies significant place in the state. The decline in sex-ratio also further justifies the stand.

Gender Parity

One of the essential features of inclusive education is to attain gender equality in terms of educational attainment and educational

opportunities. The study shows that at the class five the gender parity is fully achieved. In class-I and class-II the girls enrolment is higher than the boys. The SSA has enabled to achieve this task. The distribution of books, filling up of the teacher vacancies, availability of teaching learning materials and mid-day meal and school environment such as separate toilets for the boys and girls and clean class rooms and play grounds in many places positive allurements and incentives which attracted the girl children and also encouraged the parents to send their daughters to the school. Moreover, making the panchayats responsible for the school management including the enrolment of the students is also another reason for higher enrolment of girls in many schools.

Table-III
Gender Parity Index in Primary Education

Classes	Gender Parity Index
Class-I	1.04
Class-II	0.89
Class-III	0.95
Class-IV	1.02
Class-V	1.00
Total (primary level)	0.98

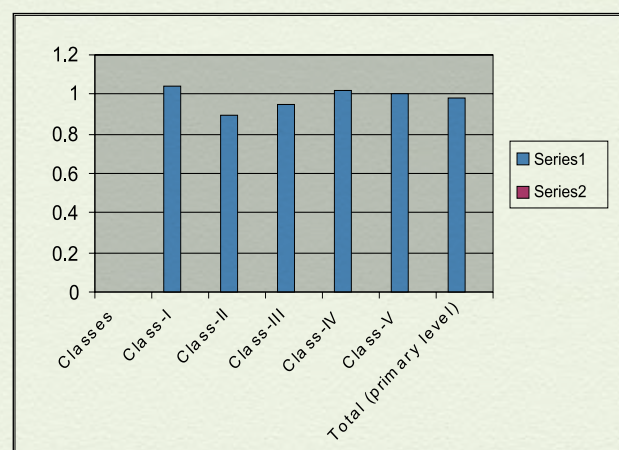


Table-IV
Percentages of Scheduled Castes
Children to Total Children

Classes	% of Scheduled Castes Children
Class-I	64.92
Class-II	64.34
Class-III	64.72
Class-IV	59.32
Class-V	59.09
Total (primary level)	62.47

The figures given in Table-IV clearly reveals that the Scheduled Castes children constitute more than sixty percent of the total children in first three classes from class-I to class-III and in class IV and V they are nearer to sixty percent. Thus the Scheduled Caste children constitute two third of the total number of children. Although, the upper castes and economically well-up Sikhs and Hindus prefer to send their children to the private school, yet the attainment of educational institutions by the economically weaker Scheduled Castes is one of the significant finding. Thus it can be said that the SSA driven interventions has promoted inclusive education at the primary level.

Suggestions

Some of the suggestions for strengthening inclusive education at the primary level are as follows:

- The panchayat member can play important role in promoting inclusive education. The village education committee should not be an ad hoc project arrangement and should be a permanent structure of the village panchayat. The Panchayati Raj Act of many states envisaged for the constitution of such committees at the village level.
- A frequent parent and teacher interaction will enhance student enrolment and attendance rate. However, the teachers are found to be interacting less with the parent because of paucity of time and sometimes even from the other side as the parents too busy in their livelihood earning activities also fail to make themselves available to the teachers.
- The incentives available to the students must be made at the beginning of the session. Any delay in the availability of books will de-motivate the students.
- The parents those who are not sending their children to the school particularly women must be employed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The linkage between MREGA and education must be established.
- The quality of Mid-day meal needs to be improved, which will attract children of the weaker sections of the society to the school.
- Village monitoring committees must be formulated so that they will monitor the enrolment and student absenteeism.
- The overall attitude of the people particularly the socially and economically backwards towards the education of the girl child needs to be changed

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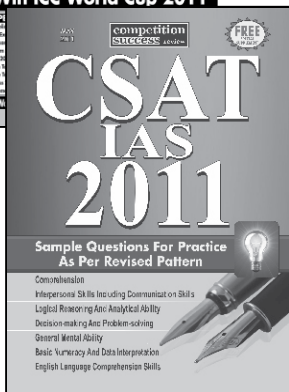
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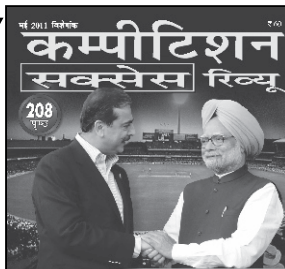
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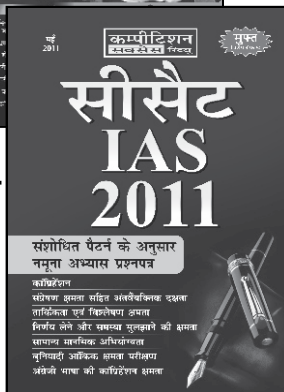
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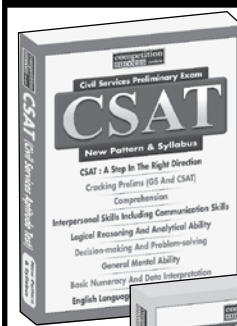
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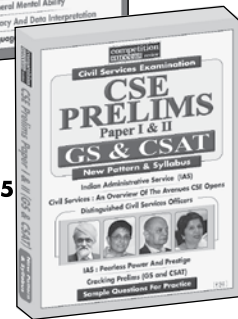


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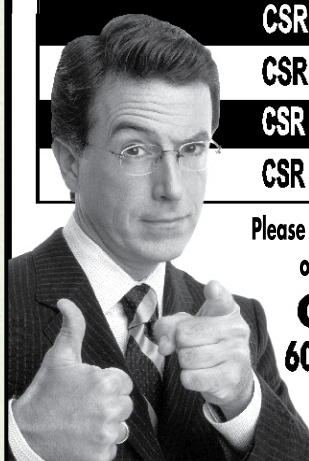
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THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

K.K.Khullar

There are a hundred definitions of Education but the one which comes closest to its core is that education is what remains with you after you have forgotten all what you learnt at school, college or university. Education breaks all barriers and strengthens all bonds. It is the training of mind, not the stuffing of brain. It is the assimilation of ideas, not the dissemination of data. It has continued to evolve, diversity and extend its reach since the dawn of human history.

Education is a process of character building, Strengthening mind and expansion of intellect. According to an old Indian proverb, a man without education is a beast without its horns or tail. He is a burden on earth and a parasite on society. The purpose of education according to Mahatma Gandhi is to establish a non-violent, non-exploitative social and economic order. Education is a highway to that goal.

The ideal man of India, said Dr.Radhakrishnan is not the magnanimous man of Greece, nor the valiant knight of medieval Europe, but the free man of the spirit who has attained insight into the universe by

rigid discipline and practice of disinterested virtues, who has freed himself from the prejudices of time and place. In the true Indian concept Education must free thought from all its fetters, social, economic, political, even religious and philosophical. It must remove darkness from mind replace it with light.

Dissent and verification of knowledge are the keynotes of ancient Indian education. The Guru had all the authority, yet the Shishya was given the free gift of dissent by the Guru-Shishya Parampara (Teacher-Disciple Tradition). When Gautama asked his favourite disciple, Ananda, to follow his new doctrine of eight fold path and four fold truth,



Ananda refused on the plea that he cannot do so unless he too, like his master, suffered as intensely as the Sakyamuni and verify the truth. Similarly when Akbar asked Raja Mansingh to accept Din-ellani, the Rajput Raja refused on the ground that he knew only two religions, Hinduism and Islam, no third religion. The fact that the Raja continued to remain as Akbar's minister is a tribute to India's culture of dissent. Even in recent time Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa told the young Vivekananda not to follow him blindly but to verify the truth. In the Indian tradition verification of knowledge is the essential condition of the pursuit of knowledge.

Vivekananda's Educational Vision

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest Indian mind since Shankara, defines education as the manifestation of perfection already in man. He also defines religion as the manifestation of divinity already in man. Religion, according to him is also a process of education. 'If there is a choice between football and Gita, I would want the children to play football, as there is the whole life to learn Gita. 'Football teaches how to kick and our children must learn it'. Simultaneously he talked of value-education.

Tagore's Vision of Education

According to Rabindranath Tagore 'Vidya is Vimukta' (knowledge is liberation). The spiritually liberated man is the aim of Indian education. Education alone can create a climate and establish a state 'where the mind is free and the head is held high, where knowledge is free, where the world has not been broken up into fragments of narrow domestic walls, where words come from the depths of truth'. Tagore sang this song with full-throated ease and sought the blessings of his people. 'Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake'. This was Tagore's vision of Education whose live image is manifested in the 'Abode of Peace' which he created and which goes by the name of Santiniketan. His words are music, his speech is dulcet, yet like Vivekananda's vision his influence on the mind of India was tremendous; Even just listening to him was education, his presence was sunshine. He brought west to the east and east to the west and gave the world a unique educational and cultural system which was Indian to its roots, yet international in character.

Gandhiji's Experiments

Gandhi went even further. He stood for open education, vocational education, work experience, earn –while you learn, empowerment of the girl child, of the handicapped, the blind, the deaf and the mentally retarded. It may be recalled that Gandhi had himself taught at the Phoenix Farm in South Africa when he started an Experimental school for Indian children. Education, he was convinced, had to be in the Mother Tongue and he himself taught Gujarati, Tamil and Urdu. He would enter the class with babes-in-arm. Asked what punishment should be awarded for an erring child, he replied, that it is not the child who has to be punished, it is the teacher who has to be punished himself till the child is cured.

Thinking Hand

His philosophy of the 'Thinking Hand' surprised every educationist. According to this theory it is the hand, the human hand which guides all human activities throughout the life of man. The Thinking hand, more than anything else, has guided the evolution of man and society and, therefore, the whole education of man can be imparted through the medium of basic handicraft. Gandhiji described this education as 'all in complex'. Spinning, he said, should be made compulsory in our schools. Khadi, he said, was the livery of our freedom struggle. He invoked Basic Education against bookish education. His Basic School was not an idyllic spot far removed from the problems of everyday life facing the child but a laboratory, where the children would be taught to find the test solutions of the problem in individual and community living, facing them and their villages, in a non-violent and democratic way, so that when they enter life, they would go fully equipped to face life. He established a Sangha called the Hindustani Talimi Sangha in 1936. 'Nowhere in the world have I seen the like of it. They are the only people who know their goals and the practical means of achieving it'.

Asked what books should be read by tiny-tots, Gandhi replied that books are meant for teachers to read. Children should play, instruction has to be mostly oral. Agriculture should be included in the curriculum. He stood for rural universities and prepared a fool-proof manuscript of 'Tali Talim' (New Education) also called basic Education. The scheme was successfully implemented in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan but after the independence it was abandoned.

Explaining Vivekananda's practical Vedanta to his western audiences, Swami Ranganathananda, senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and author of 'Eternal Values for a changing society' said : The strong point of the Indian tradition is , as we have seen, its vision of the spiritual dimension of the human personality, and the scientific tradition of religion in which this vision is embodied. Stressing as it does the spirit of seeking and inquiry, and upholding experiment and experience as the criterion of true religion, the Indian tradition frees religion from all dogmatic and creedal limitations and blends with the spirit of modern science. This Indian spiritual tradition has within it the energy and the power to deepen the scientific humanism of the modern west. The western tradition, similarly, has the energy and the power within it to broaden the scope of the Indian tradition, channeling its blessings from a small minority of spirituality gifted to the millions of ordinary men and women. This synthesis of the inner and the outer, of the sacred and the secular, had already been achieved in the plane of thought in unifying the philosophy of Vedanta, and especially in its great formulation, the Gita. Its achievement in the plane of work-a-day world is what Vivekananda gave to the modern India as his unique contribution in his philosophy and programme of practical Vedanta, and in what the nation is engaged in ever since'.

The question, therefore, arises as to where have the things gone wrong? How the creators of history have become its creatures/ Education has come to mean a paper degree, the teaching has been reduced to the transfer of notes from the professor's note – book to the student's exercise book , through his ball – point pen, without entering into the mind of either. The process of learning does not take place in our class rooms. There is deep-rooted schism in the formal system of education and the country's rich oral traditions. The cultural content in our educational system is rather low. The pre-occupation with modern technologies cannot be allowed to sever our younger generation from the roots of India's history and culture. Capitation fee is another irritant in our medical, technical and engineering education inspite of so many court rulings against commercialization of education. The so-called English-medium public schools continue to flourish in spite of the fact that only 2% people in India out of 130 crores can speak or understand this language which is not even included in the 8th Schedule of our Constitution. Yet the fact must be

faced that the educated classes in India have opted out of the National System of Education in India. There have been Committees and Commissions but these questions have remained un-answered.

'When you swim on the surface', said Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa', you get only cheap shells. To get pearls you have to dive deep. Our educational system, at present is swimming on the surface . It has to dive deep into our education ocean to get gems.

Teaching is not imparting doctrines. It is communication of minds and enrichment of personalities. It must create new humanity and our educational well-springs are quite capable to create such a humanity, our educational philosophy of knowledge and faith can certainly establish such a new educational order where there is neither hunger nor disease, neither exploitation nor war, neither any superstition nor blasphemy, which is keeping with our cultural and constitutional commitments, a learning society to suit our system of democracy, secularism and universal brotherhood.

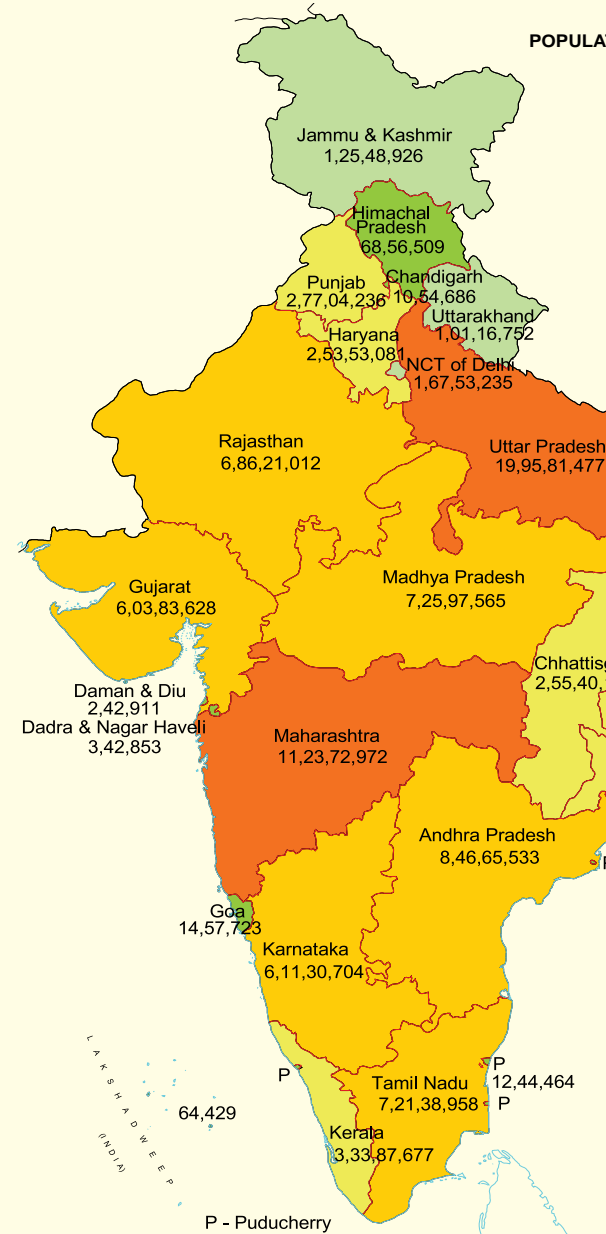
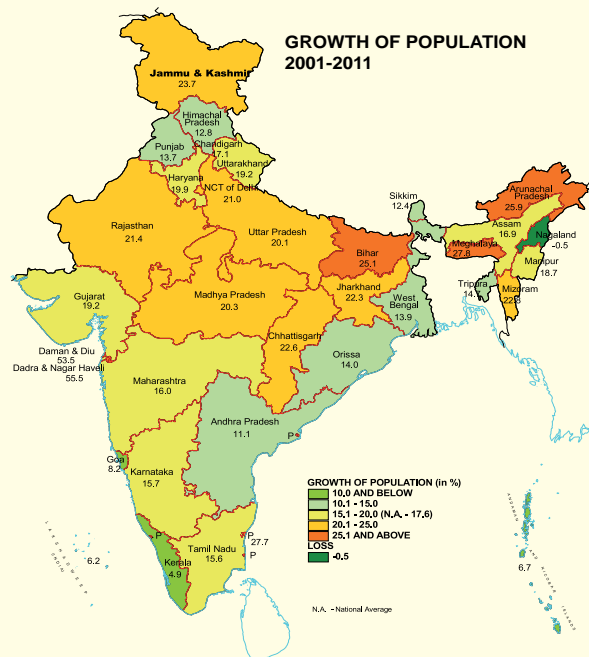
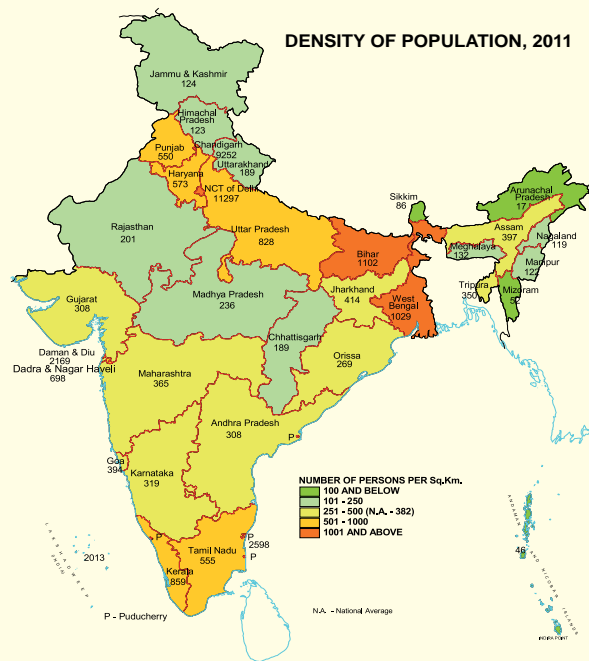
Indian educational philosophy had always stood for a peaceful international order. Gandhiji had said "I do not want my house to be walled and windows to be stuffed. I want the cultural and educational winds of all countries but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. Education is not a game of chess which can be played without a referee. It is a field where whistle blowers are required.

A few years ago we invited a Mexico-born educationist named Ivan Illych, the author of two famous books viz., "De-schooling Society" and its sequel "Re-Tooling Society" to suggest measures to re-orient our educational system to suit the modern requirements. He suggested non-formalisation of our formal school. We tried that but found that the non-formal stream turned out to be second rate system of education meant only for the deprived sections of society. Instead we have an effective scheme called 'Sarv Shiksha Abhyas' which is yielding good results with inclusive growth. There are moments in history where a new direction has to be given to an age old process. That moment is today, now, just now when the country is ready to accept any change for the better. We have missed so many opportunities in education before, let us not miss any more.

(The author is a freelance writer on Education and development issues.)



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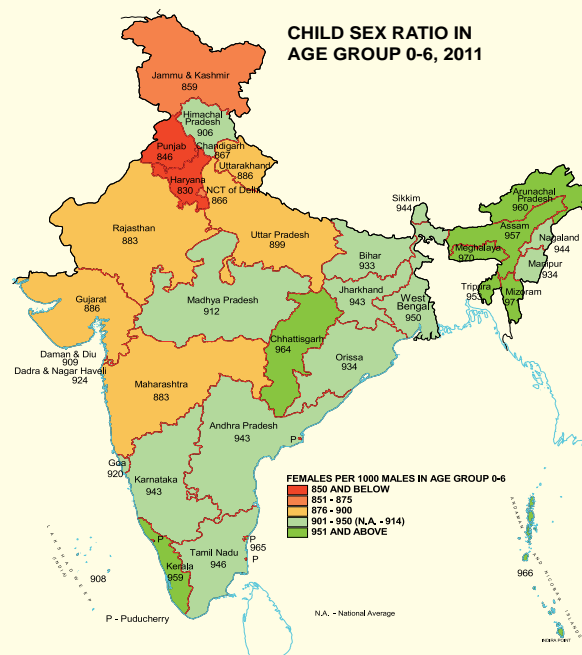
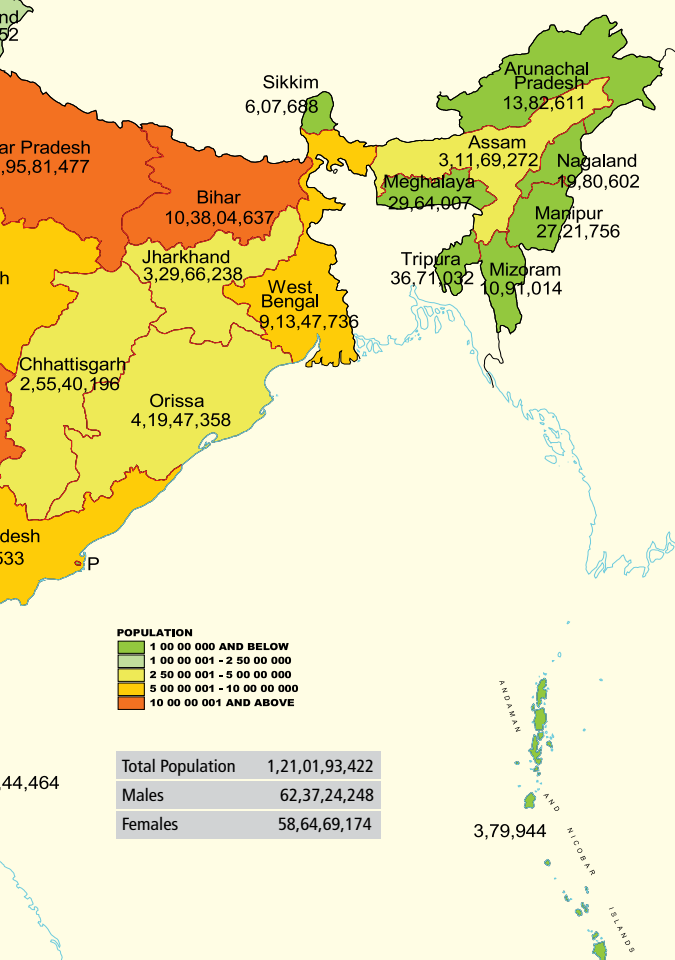
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PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Dr. Sanjay Kumar Pradhan

For the development of a society there is the need of equitable and balanced progress of all the sections of human communities and for this perspective, it is imperative to bring the weaker, deprived and discriminated sections such as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India to the forefront of educational revolution and mainstream of national development. Education imparts knowledge, and knowledge of self identity and human environment will infuse a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the weaker sections of the society to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, and avail socio-

economic and political opportunities extended to them. Although there is a significant increase in the literacy of population of all categories in India, the tribals are far behind from the national increase. Despite special initiatives on tribal education by the government, since independence, the achievement is not as per expectations and the problem of tribal education is still a matter of immediate concern. The tribal education, being a distinct discipline with different socio-cultural fabrics and hardships, needs to be analyzed to focus on the problems associated to it.



Profile of Tribal Literacy in India

Since independence there is an increase in the tribal literacy but not as per national average. The total literacy rate of the tribals in India is 47.1 percent whereas it is 64.8 percent at the national level. And on the basis of male-female percentage, the male accounts 59.2 percent (75.3 national) and female 34.8percent (53.7 national). There is wide variation of tribal education at the State or Union Territory level. For example Mizoram tops with 89.3 percent, followed by Lakshadeep (86.1), Manipur (65.9), Nagaland (65.9), Andaman & Nicobar (65.8) and Himachal Pradesh (65.5). The

most poor performing states in India are: Bihar (28.2), Uttar Pradesh (35.1) and Orissa (37.4). The female literacy of the STs in India is 34.8percent but yet much below the national level (41.9). States with low general and tribal literacy are also states with higher gender disparity. Accordingly, the ST female literacy rate in India varies across states and Union territories such as from 15.5 percent in Bihar to 86.9 percent in Mizoram. Except Mizoram, Lakshdweep, Nagaland, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar, Manipur, Meghalaya and Kerala, all other states and Union Territories have women literacy below the national level of 41.9 percent. (*Census of India 2001*).

Table 1: Tribal Literacy in India

Year	All categories			Scheduled Tribes		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1961	39.44	12.95	24.04	13.83	3.16	8.53
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	40.65	18.19	29.6
2001	75.3	53.7	64.8	59.2	34.8	47.1

Source: *Census 2001, and Working Group Report on on Education for Disadvantaged Sections-SCs and STs, Minorities, Women, Handicapped and other Disadvantaged Sections for the formulation of Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07)*, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, 2001

Table 2: Tribal Literacy in India (All India, States and Union Territories)

All India /States/ Union Territories	Total Literacy	Male	Female
Andhra Pradesh	37.0	47.7	26.1
Assam	62.5	72.3	52.4
Andaman & Nicobar	66.8	73.6	59.6
Arunachal Pradesh	49.6	58.8	40.6
Bihar	28.2	39.8	15.5
Chandigarh	NA	NA	NA
Chhatisgarh	52.1	65.0	39.3
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	41.2	56.0	27.0
Daman & Diu	63.4	74.2	51.9
Delhi	NA	NA	NA
Goa	55.9	63.5	47.3
Gujarat	47.7	59.2	36.0
Haryana	NA	NA	NA
Himachal Pradesh	65.5	77.5	53.3
Jammu & Kashmir	37.5	48.2	25.5
Jharkhand	40.7	54.0	27.2

Kerala	64.4	70.8	58.1
Karnataka	48.3	59.7	36.6
Lakshadweep	86.1	92.2	80.2
Madhya Pradesh	41.2	53.5	28.4
Meghalaya	61.3	63.5	59.2
Maharashtra	55.2	67.0	43.1
Manipur	65.9	73.2	58.4
Mizoram	89.3	91.7	86.9
Nagaland	65.9	70.3	61.3
Orissa	37.4	51.5	23.4
Podduchery	NA	NA	NA
Punjab	NA	NA	NA
Rajasthan	44.7	62.1	26.2
Sikkim	67.1	73.8	60.2
Tamil Nadu	41.5	5.2	32.8
Tripura	56.5	68.0	44.0
Uttaranchal	63.2	76.4	49.4
Uttar Pradesh	35.1	48.4	20.7
West Bengal	43.4	57.4	29.2
All India (Tribal)	47.1	59.2	34.8

Source: *Census of India 2001, Population Profiles (India, States and Union Territories), Total Population and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Population*, Office of the Registrar General, Government of India, 2004.

Problems associated with Tribal Education Poverty

The poor economic condition accompanied by subsistence economy is a great hindrance to successful education of the tribal children. Since the economy is not viable and the very survival being at stake, the importance of education touches only the periphery of the tribal life. Almost all the tribes-whether food gatherers, hunters, fishermen, shifting cultivators, or settled agriculturalists lack adequate food to maintain the family for the whole year. In this situation, they find it difficult to afford their children to go school; rather, they see children as an economic asset in the family and contributes to the family income by working along with the parents and with others (Hasnain 2004: 349). Boys work in the field with their parents and girls give every help

to their mothers at the housework. If the child is taken away from his normal economic work to attend school, the family deprives of the little income, which he brings. As a consequence, the parents have to feed the child out of their earning and resulted economic marginalisation of the household. In these circumstances, education, the basis necessity of life, is a matter of luxury for the tribal family. Further, the system of education and the economic benefit accrued from it is of 15-20 years of education from schools and colleges, where the parents have neither their patience or resource nor foresight to wait for such a long-term return.

Apathy of the Parents

Both the tribal and non-tribal teachers find it very difficult to convince the tribal to send their children to school to adopt new ideas as they are

more concerned with the present than the future and their concept of time is circular rather than longitudinal (Sujatha 1994). A large section of tribal parents do not send their children to school to utilise the free education opportunities offered to them. It is practical, utilitarian and vocational aspect of education accompanied by the notion of immediate economic return appeals to the parents more than the academic discourse (*Shah* 2005: 114-133). In addition, there are many factors responsible for apathy of the parents towards education.

- Psychological and social factors like illiteracy of the parents and their indifference to education, lack of encouragement by the community, motivation and “insecurity” of future for being educated.
- Low social interaction between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents.
- Suspicion over the sincerity of the non-tribal teachers and shortage of tribal teachers.
- The scattered population with low density and location of schools at a long distance, in consequence, has resulted in the indifferences of the parents to send their children to walk a long to reach the school
- Parental hesitation to send the girls to co-educational institutions. (Mishra 1996 163-65 and Pradhan 2004: 150-153)

Apathy of children towards Formal Education

In many states tribal education is taught through the same book, which forms the curriculum of the non-tribal children. A tribal child who lives in an isolated and far flung place, untouched by civilisation, can hardly get interest in any information about Indian society, history, polity, geography, economy and technological

development of his country. So the contents of the teaching syllabus, instead of pleasing the learners, generate indifferences within the tribal students. All these are necessary part of any curriculum but the students are far away from these real perceptions and they do not understand what they are taught. For them these information and knowledge constitutes alien and imposed portions of their thought, which have nothing to do with tribal history and tribal surroundings.

Superstition and Prejudice

Superstitions, blind beliefs and prejudices play negative role in imparting education in the tribal areas and tribal schools. Expect tribal communities in north-eastern region, there is widespread feeling in the tribal community that education makes their children defiant and insolent and alienates from the rest of their society. Since some of their educated boys felt alienated and cut off their links with their families and villages after getting education and employment, a large section of tribal groups oppose the spread of education. This is further complicated when religious groups teach the students by focusing on the glory of their religion and religious values. This religiosity, in consequence, often encourages educated pupils to abrogate their ancestral village and their socio-cultural interaction with the kins as it found among Ziminagas in North East (*Panda* 1988: 79-83). Further, some of the superstitions and myth prevent parents to educate their children. Some tribal groups believe that their god shall be angry if they send their children to schools run by ‘outsiders’. Here outsiders include formal curriculum for education, non-tribal teachers and teachers outside their locality.

Problem of suitable Teacher

The competency and interest of the teachers is of prime importance in generating interest of the students towards education. The non-tribal

teachers treat themselves 'civilized' and tribals as 'uncivilized' and 'savage'. So there is little appreciation of the tribal values and way of life. There is no good relationship between children and the teachers. Sometimes the teachers for their personal work use the tribal students. For a non-tribal teacher, the cultural gap plays a vital role due to the long hanging dominant ideology, and he treats tribal students differently. Even a tribal elite, often a proactive teacher, has a special power in the village setting for which tribals are afraid of him. The ego and selfish motive of such tribal teachers have been discouraging the tribal to send their children to the educational institutions (Panda 1988: 79-83). Moreover, although there are views that the tribal teachers are best suited to non-tribal teachers, instances shows that the tribal teachers of one community looks students and parents of another community hesitantly. Some of the tribal groups, better educated and progressive in thinking have some prejudices against backward tribals e.g. the Valmik tribe in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh occupies lower ritual status than Kondareddi tribes, but are mostly educated. If a teacher from Valmik tribe teaches Kondaredies, the later will not prefer to give the former a house for shelter, and does not treat them equally. On the same way, Valmiki teachers feel that the Kondareddis are lazy and superstitious. (Sujatha 1994)

Effective functioning of the tribal education much depends on teachers and their willingness to teach and positive attitude to live in tribal areas-close to tribal schools. However, in practice the teachers are reluctant to reside in such areas, rather they stay in nearby towns. Only in those cases teachers would like to stay if the area is inaccessible. In maximum cases teachers in the tribal areas see the appointment as 'stop-gap' arrangement. So there comes the problem of insincerity and non-commitment of interaction

of the teachers with the guardians and discussion with them over the education of their children.

Problem of Language

Language provides social, psychological and emotional expression of an individual in a society. But in the absence of knowledge on tribal dialect both students and teachers face the problem of communication and teaching-learning. It is found that tribal students are often ridiculed, humiliated and reprimanded for speaking in their own language, and are punished for failing to talk in their standard language or continuously lapsing back in the mother tongue (Nambissan 1994: 2752). It is the regional and national language that reduces tribals to minorities in their own home. Educating children through the regional and national language is not wrong but the students should be familiar with her own language first to develop enthusiasm in education which in turn bring linguistic and social skills that prepare them for formal education in future.

Although there is the need of introduction of tribal dialect in the curriculum and teaching-learning process yet there is the paucity of literature and text books in tribal dialects. Developing script and vocabulary and preparing teaching and learning materials for tribal children is a complex and problematic task because of a large number of spoken languages involved and their rudimentary forms which have not developed into a written form that can be used in school language. The government and different commissions have recommended that the teachers knowing tribal languages are to be posted in tribal areas, the data reveals that only 6 percent of the teachers who are in the primary schools belong to tribal communities and out of this 50 percent of the teachers are untrained and are basically matriculates or below that (National Population Education 1996: 91).

Inadequate Facilities in Educational Institutions

School buildings in the tribal areas are without basic infrastructural facilities. The schools basically have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls and non-pastoral floors. In Ashram schools which are residential in nature, there is no space for the children to sleep. As a consequence, the class rooms turn into dormitory and vice versa. In addition to poor maintenance of the school and class rooms, inadequate teaching-learning materials such as blackboards and chalks causes problems for the teachers and students in teaching and understanding the content. There is the perception that opening of a school in a tribal area is of appointing a teacher in that school. In reality, most of the primary schools in the tribal areas are single teacher-managed whose presence in the school is more of exception than a rule (Hasnain 2004: 352).

Wastage and Stagnation

Problem of education in the tribal areas is also the problem of wastage and stagnation. Wastage is the withdrawal or dropping out of a student before completing the prescribed period of the concerned course. A data revealed by the Eleventh Five Year Plan also indicated the high drop out of the STs at different levels of study. As per the data, at the Primary level, the dropout rate among STs in 2003-04 was 48.9% and 70.1% at the Upper Primary level. It indicates the apathy of the Tribals and tribal students for the existing curriculum and system and problems of teaching-learning process. When a student takes more than one year to pass a class it is considered a case of stagnation. As per the 11 Five Year Plan report, stagnation at the primary level was 67.3 percent whereas it was 49.3 percent at the Upper Primary level. School timing i.e. clash of class hour with the working hour particularly, during the harvesting period, formal education, poverty, lack of academic atmosphere, unwillingness of the teachers to

convince the parents and parental apathy towards education and lack of proper medical aid, balanced diet and suitable self-employment opportunities are the major factors for which there is wastage and stagnation.

Conclusion

Education is the most effective instrument for ensuring equality of opportunity but the tribal people are lagging far behind non-tribals due to one or more reasons. The problems associated with the education of tribal children in India is manifold, complex and inter-related. Factors like poverty, apathy of the parents and children, superstitions and prejudice, lack of suitable teacher, alien language, inadequate facilities in the educational institutions and wastage and stagnation causes major hindrances in the process of education in the tribal schools, schools located in tribal areas and spread of tribal education. In this context, educating tribals needs concerted effort of the government and officials, dedication and sincerity of the teachers, awareness of the tribals and their involvement. Further, there is a great gap in the information and awareness for which the tribal parents and tribal children could not know about the importance of education and government policies and benefits accrued from them. So awareness generation in the tribal community and tribal areas either through governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations or public is of vital necessity to bring children from the house to school. Education of the tribals is not a mere learning process rather, it should be a process for creativity and occupation as per the requirements of the tribal community and national necessity.

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ALLOW THEM TO BE TAUGHT BY NATURE ALSO

Rajshekhar Pant

The other day he came to me running immediately after the morning assembly and blurted looking straight into my eyes,

“Sir..Sir yester-evening I saw two *minivets* in the slope close to the tuck-shop.... You know Sir *minivets* don’t like huge trees for nesting and that slope is so full of brush and weed.....Don’t you think Sir it is quite surprising to sight *minivets* at this height.”

His eyes were still riveted on my face. Undoubtedly he expected me to react in an equally excited manner. Wearing a ‘say cheese’ look on my face I dilated my eyes and said, “Wow! You are lucky, keep a watch on them from distance. If they nest here by the coming autumn we shall have plenty of them here.”

With a beaming face he doubled up to his class reassuring me,

“Don’t worry Sir, no one ever steps on that slope.....they are safe.”

It reminded me of our maiden interaction-

It was the opening of the new session and he had his birthday. With a pack of ‘Perks’ he came to me in the quadrangle during the recess. While wishing him many happy returns of the day I noticed that he was trying to crush a lady-bird that sat on his toe. Desisting deliberately from some spontaneous articulation to deter him from doing so, I picked up the insect softly. Lady birds have a tendency to creep on your upright palm till they spot the tip of your finger. They stay there for a brief spell and then fly away. Showing him the



colours on that tiny thing creeping on my palm I said,

“Look! how nice a T Shirt with this amber colour on the collars and waist-line and this ocher on the rest would look like.”

Putting my hand closer to his fingers holding the chocolate box I allowed the insect pass on to his thumb. He shuddered for a while and then kept on looking at it till it flew away. That day in the third period when I went to class IX, a class of freshers assigned to me for the first time, I saw him occupying a seat in the front row. A brief interaction with the kids revealed it to me that the majority of them were from towns and cities in plains. Staying atop a verdant hillock- the valley view wherefrom is often eclipsed by the speeding flakes of the famous brown-fog of the Central Himalayan region infusing a somewhat eerie feeling of getting marooned in an alien Shangri-La –was more instrumental in dampening their enthusiasm than arousing a sense of childlike wonder in them. Always an articulate and outgoing kid he, while introducing himself, did not mince his words in criticizing blatantly the frightening darkness, “especially when the raindrops platter on rooftops and harrowing wind rustles through the deodar trees.”

While talking to him I suddenly noticed a chick of *laughing thrush* knocking the window-panes with his yellow beak –a popular pastime with this friendly species when the lights of the room are on and the outside is all enveloped in fog. Interrupting him I asked the class quite abruptly, whether they knew anything about that bird. No one seemed to be aware of it and I told them about it being the last in the avian fraternity to go to bed and first to announce the crack of the dawn. They were quite excited to know that it has the longest and one of the sweetest call

among all the Himalayan birds and it can imitate quite a few of its compatriots.

Triggered with the chance arrival of a *thrush* our friendly chit-chats in the days to come would often meander to so many other interesting themes. I would tell them of the friendly *river-chats*, I saw just once in my life at the origin of a glacial stream in the alpine heights of the Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve. Passages lifted from the stories of Jim Corbett for comprehension exercises would charm them and exciting tales of the chance discovery of Nainital by a liquor-baron traversing over seven hundred miles across the Himalayan region way back in 1840 would often be instrumental in running their imagination wild while attempting a short composition. It indeed was nothing short of a pleasure seeing them identifying a *foxglove* from a *larkspur*; talking of blotches and variegations in the newly arrived pots of *zinnia* in the school or writing to their parents about the blooming of the *Rhododendrons* or *Azaleas* when they were back after the winter vacations. One could even see that their stationery was tucked rather more properly inside their bags or desks and the jostling crowd in the elongated gallery with the row of classrooms on either side, immediately after a period was over, was thinning gradually. The furniture in the classroom, with its twin windows always open, was invariably to have a perfect layout and one day when I tore a page from the copy of a boy to substitute the missing duster he did not miss to inform me in private that at least two kg of wood is consumed in making the centre spread of a copy.

‘A spirit from the vernal wood’ was teaching them ‘more of men’ and the world than I with all my efforts put together could ever do.

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Alarming State of Child Nutrition in India

Arpita Sharma

In India 20% of children under five-years-old are wasted [too thin for their age] due to acute under-nutrition and 48% are stunted [too short for their age] due to chronic under-nutrition and 70% of children between six months and 59 months are anaemic. The percentage of children below five years of age who are underweight is 42.5% as compared with 4% in Brazil and 6% in China.

Adequate and balanced nutrition right from early in life is a key input for human capital formation and a foundation for a sustainable and equitable economic growth of the nation. Children who are under-nourished have substantially lower chances of survival. They are prone to suffer from serious infections and are more likely to die from common childhood illness, such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, and

measles. Nutritional intervention is a *sine qua non* when mothers are pregnant and during children's first two years of life, after which the opportunity for child's development potential is lost forever. Ten proven evidence-based, high-impact essential nutrition interventions that lead to unprecedented reduction in child under-nutrition, as recommended by UNICEF, need to be popularized among women and delivered



nationally. These include [i] timely initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth [ii] exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life [iii] timely introduction of complementary foods at six months [iv] age-appropriate foods for children six months to two years [v] hygienic complementary feeding practices [vi] immunization and bi-annual Vitamin A supplementation with deworming [vii] appropriate feeding for children during and after illness [viii] therapeutic feeding for children with severe acute malnutrition [ix] adequate nutrition and support for adolescent girls to prevent anemia and [x] adequate nutrition and support for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Provision of universal preventive health services and nutritional interventions for children under two and their mothers during pregnancy and lactation can reduce under-nutrition by 25% to 36%. Assured access of poor to pulses and cooking oils at subsidized rates can reduce protein and calorie deficiency among the poor.

Indian Scenario: The child under-nutrition in India is a major threat to child's survival, growth and potential for full development. According to third National Family Health Survey of 2005-06, in India 20% of children under five-years-old are wasted [too thin for their age] due to acute under-nutrition and 48% are stunted [too short for their age] due to chronic under-nutrition and 70% of children between six months and 59 months are anaemic. The percentage of children below five years of age who are underweight is 42.5% as compared with 4% in Brazil and 6% in China. More than a third of all deaths in children aged five years or younger can be attributable to under-nutrition. Infancy deaths were 53 per 1000 live births in 2008. The Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh had once referred to under-nutrition as a '*matter of national shame*'.

The Global Hunger Index [2010] identified child under-nutrition as a major contributory

factor behind '*persistent hunger*'. According to Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute India, is among 29 countries that face '*alarming*' situation of hunger. Malnutrition among children under two years of age is one of the serious challenges to reduce hunger, which if not timely attended can cause lifelong harm to child's health, productivity and earning potential.

India, acknowledging that the problem of malnutrition is multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral and inter-generational in nature, and that a single sector scheme cannot address the multifaceted problem, introduced a number of schemes to improve nutrition needs of children and pregnant mothers from time to time under different Ministries, such as [a] **Ministry of Women and Child Development:** [i] Integrated Child Development Services [ii] Kishori Shakti Yojana [iii] Nutrition Program for Adolescent Girls [iv] Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls; [b] **Ministry of Human Resource Development** [i] Mid-day Meals Program [c] **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** [i] National Rural Health Mission [ii] National Urban Health Mission [d] **Ministry of Agriculture** [i] National Food Security Mission [ii] National Horticulture Mission [e] **Ministry of Rural Development** [i] Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission [ii] Total Sanitation Campaign [iii] Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana [iv] Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program; [f] **Ministry of Food** [i] Targeted Public Distribution System [iii] Antyodaya Anna Yojana [iii] Annapoorna. These schemes have had limited success to improve nutritional status, due to fragmented leadership and coordination and reflecting Nutrition is nobody's responsibility. They need to be re-looked and a more focused and comprehensive effort is called for.

Real per capita GDP in India has grown by nearly 4% per annum over the past 15 years

whereas over the same period, the malnourished infants reduced from 52% to 46%. The report '*Lifting the Curse: Overcoming Persistent Under-nutrition in India*' by Lawrence Haddad reflects a failure of governance at several levels of implementation and identifies a number of shortcomings in nutrition service delivery system, such as [i] services are not provided where they are badly needed [ii] some really deserving groups of citizens are systematically excluded from services [iii] services are of low quality [iv] accountability for service providers is weak [v] leadership and coordination is fragmented [vi] awareness of the public to demand services is poor [vii] annual nutrition data are not available to enable monitoring of progress. Nutrition is nobody's responsibility. The Government is expanding funding to the ICDS, the main program tasked with malnutrition reduction among infants but without governance reforms. The World Bank's study on the working of ICDS [2005] highlighted three important mismatches, namely [i] the gap between design and implementation, [ii] the neglect of the poorest and the most vulnerable, and [iii] the poor quality of services.

Melghat: Ms Meena Menon an expert while studying the case has aptly termed Melghat, a synonym for malnutrition: Melghat region, comprising Chikhaldhara and Dharni talukas in Amravati district of Maharashtra, inhabited mostly by Korku Adivasis officially reports from 2005 every year 400-500 deaths of children between the ages of 0 to six. Official statistics for malnourished children from Amravati district health office revealed that there were 11,343 [32%] children with normal weight out of 35,431 children examined in March 2005 at PHCs and as many as 68% were in various grades of malnutrition whereas in 2006, 13,168 [35.4%] were of the normal weight out of the 37, 215

children examined. In the next three years more than half the numbers of children were in various malnourished categories, exhibiting some in grade three and four, which is very severe. The study of the project area reveals that this area represents the highest under-five mortality rate, especially malnutrition-related deaths in Maharashtra. The common causes of mortality and morbidity among infants and children, among others, include neonatal sepsis, birth asphyxia, low birth weight, diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory tract infections, protein energy malnutrition and malaria.

The study of the status of malnutrition revealed 6.98% in 19 Melghat villages. The Bombay High Court has often passed severe strictures on the Government for its neglect. At the instance of a writ petition filed by the activist on malnutrition deaths in Melghat in 1997, the Bombay High Court said 'we are prima facie of the view that it is the primary responsibility of the Government to provide adequate food, health care and adequate employment opportunities to Korku tribes and other tribals in Melghat area. The court specifically pointed to Article 47 of the Constitution, which postulates a duty on the State to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living and to improve public health. Twelve years later, the court once again reminded the State of its constitutional obligations.

On a PIL petition filed, the court said on January 15, 2009, 'we have no hesitation in observing that the progress in preventing malnutrition and infant deaths is hardly satisfactory. Meetings after meetings in the State administration may be held but so far results are not shown and as matter of ground reality, the picture is dismal. We are afraid the State is failing in its duty to provide due protection to the life of poor citizens of the

State. The areas with which we are concerned are remote areas of Maharashtra. Various orders of the court have really not persuaded the authorities concerned to take effective steps.' According to the petitioner in Maharashtra the Infant Mortality Rate is 38 per 1000 live births while in the Melghat region it is 74 to 78. The court asked the Additional Chief Secretary, Public Health and the Tribal Department for filing detailed affidavits on the ground situation.. The court noted that there was persistence and even an increase in malnutrition and infant deaths and it appeared that none of the competent authorities took its directions seriously. The court found the replies inadequate. It also noted that crores allocated by the Center to the ICDS were not properly spent. The court had asked once again for detailed replies. It is feared that absence of political will accompanied by food insecurity, lack of employment opportunities and high rate of illiteracy would continue a devastating effect of severe malnutrition on the tribal of Melghat.

Public policy even needs to be reordered to improve nutrition right from the period spanning –9 months to +24 months [i.e from conception to the second birthday] as against past policies targeting children under the age of five.

Suggestions

Public policy even needs to be reordered to improve nutrition right from the period spanning –9 months to +24 months [i.e from conception to the second birthday] as against past policies targeting children under the age of five. Besides, as malnutrition is a consequence of multiple deprivations a comprehensive policy addressing all related issues impacting multiple deprivations is needed to tackle malnutrition effectively. This is evident from a study by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, which showed that while 38.9% of the poor in India were under-nourished they were also faced with severe

deprivations in other specifically related areas, such as cooking fuel [52.2%], drinking water [12%] and sanitation [49.3%]. Efforts to fight creeping nutrition insecurity accompanied by poverty and gender inequality have to be redoubled.

Field studies and observations by experts on the current implementation of programs suggest, *inter alia*, to [i] undertake social audits of the ICDS with reference to effectiveness of services delivered [ii] monitor the Government's role & action on nutrition by empowered authority [iii] to simplify implementation of ICDS as there are too many interventions and too many age groups. It is complex to implement, especially in relation to several and different contexts.

At present, it tries to do many things for many people and in the process it can satisfy none. [iv] put in place an effective cross-ministry mechanism to deliver food, care and health in combinations that work. Efforts to lift the curse of malnutrition must be unified. [v] involve historically excluded groups in the design, outreach and delivery of nutrition programs, reaching

out to women from these groups in particular [vi] devise simpler but more frequent monitoring of nutrition status mechanism so that civil society and the media can hold the Government and other implementers to account for year on year slippage and reward them for good progress [vii] develop new ways of teaching and doing research on how to improve nutrition.

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Improving Rural Livelihoods – *The Gram Sabha Approach*

Awanish Somkuwar

India suffers from over governance. A nation with socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic diversities finds it difficult to deliver quality public services. The governance issues specially development planning, policy making and implementation mechanism have become complex enough to be resolved only by the Executive.

The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions therefore assumes greater significance in development process at grassroots level. So far, the participation of Panchayats in planning and implementing development agenda has been limited to district, intermediary and village level. It is now imperative to rope in the institution of Gram Sabha for better results.

The most challenging issue is to eradicate rural poverty. The practical option is to improve rural livelihoods by mobilizing local resources and enabling the rural poor. The recently done study by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative presents a distressing scenario. The magnitude of poverty in eight Indian states namely Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal has been measured higher than the most chronically affected poor nations of sub Saharan Africa. Interestingly these eight states contribute significantly to India's fast growing economy. The multi dimensional view of poverty in these states takes into account the multiple deprivation



of rural poor from basic services, rights and entitlements. There is a continuous debate about exactness and accuracy of data on number of the poor and extent of poverty. Interestingly again is the implementation of well-designed poverty eradication programmes both by the Centre and the States. Yet expected impact eludes. This is here intervention of the Gram Sabha becomes urgent.

Gram Sabha and Rural Poverty

India observed by the year 2009-10 as the year of Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha is a constitutionally mandated body so powerful that its decision is binding and final. Members of the Gram Sabha have amply demonstrated their innate wisdom regarding their understanding of poverty and rational utilization of resources. There are poverty eradication projects like DFID aided Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project that has adopted the Gram Sabha approach to poverty alleviation in 23000 remote tribal villages. When India is witnessing increasing number of grassroots level governance issues. There is no option but to strengthen the Gram Sabha. Unquestionably, decentralized planning and implementation of rural development agenda can not be done effectively without involving the Gram Sabha. There are certain fundamental processes that need support of the Gram Sabha like well-being ranking, participatory planning and decision making, selection of actual beneficiaries, communication channel, village level monitoring network, social auditing etc. There are pre conditions that decide the performance of ambitious rural development programmes meant to mitigate poverty.

Capacity Building of Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha enjoys extensive financial and administrative powers regarding planning, monitoring and implementation of development

initiatives. The learning of working with Gram Sabha clearly underlines the urgent need for capacity building of Gram Sabha. For example Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project initially decided to work on the rural wisdom-based poverty alleviation strategies designed and suggested by the Gram Sabha. It was starkly a bottom up approach. A special component of Gram Sabha strengthening was to be integrated. Capacity building of Gram Sabha is a stupendous task, India must take up in view of reaching out to people and targeting the genuine stakeholders. The capacity building agenda must concentrate on continuous orientation of Gram Sabha towards development issues, constitutional mandate, rights and entitlements, utilization of human and natural resources, revenue generation and financial literacy etc.

NRLM and Gram Sabha

The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) promises to address the needs of 6.5 crore rural poor households and proposes to bring substantial changes in the lives of the rural poor. As the Mission document says its focus is on the people led and people-centric organizations. It will follow demand driven approach for release of funds on receipt of state level action plans. About one crore rural youths will be covered. The question is that such an ambitious targets can be achieved only with the active support and cooperation of Gram Sabha. The Village, Block level and Zila Panchayats can deal with operations but understanding at Gram Sabha level must prevail.

This redesigned programme further seeks to improve livelihood options by strengthening SHGs is going to make a fundamental difference. The rural livelihoods have got so much prominence for the first time in the post-independent era. Now there is an integrated approach to rural livelihoods. The concept of inclusive growth

is in sharp focus. The promotion of rural enterprise through Self Help Groups individual and community based livelihoods initiatives for strengthening rural economy is a welcome step. In order to optimize the impact, the phenomenon of SHG formation needs to be understood by the Gram Sabha, whose adult members are the members of SHG and encourage formation process. Many SHGs and their products die out for want of marketing facilities. The SHGs can survive only when they have sound financial base. Inter-loaning for consumptive needs and pretty requirements cannot help the longevity of SHGs. Their products if not done on economic scale cannot resist the inflow of branded products in the open market economy. The Gram Sabha has to take up responsibility of building a favourable atmosphere for survival of SHGs. Buy rural products as they come from fellow villagers. This spirit should be the core theme of advocacy, which Gram Sabha must take up.

Legal Literacy and Development

Legal understanding quickens the development processes. The Gram Sabha has a crucial role to play in spreading legal literacy among the rural masses. It is the most suitable institution and needs to be strengthened to take up such a challenging responsibility. There are enough logics why Gram Sabha can effectively spread out legal literacy. It is –

1. A constitutionally mandated body.
2. A cornerstone of grassroots level democracy.
3. Instrumental in planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes.
4. An institution enjoying extensive administrative and financial powers.
5. Responsible for raising awareness and ensuring sustainability of knowledge about issues of public interest.

Some States have already capacity building of Gram Sabha on legal issues. The Gram Sabha is an implementing agency for many development programmes as their constitutional status remains unchallenged and supreme. If Gram Sabha becomes alive to the legal issues and develop legal understanding with a constant legal literacy campaign, the participatory democracy will attain maturity with greater sustainability of development initiatives.

Right To Information Act, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Tribal Rights Act, Gram Nyayalaya Act, Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 and proposed legislation for Food Security are the milestones in the post-independent history of India. They intend to address social justice issues and arrest rural poverty. Access to information and its constructive application are two different things. The RTI Act originally aims at discouraging corrupt practices and promotes greater accountability to people in the government machinery if used as tool of empowerment. The RTI Act is a step towards creating transparent systems of governance. The Gram Sabha can use it so constructively with its raised legal understanding.

Keeping in view the increasing work load on the government agencies and administrative units and expectations for performance, there are limited options. Voluntary sector has already been opened up. Strategies like Public Private Partnership and Public Private Community Partnership are also being tried out with a lot of limitations. The only permanently remaining institution is Gram Sabha. Its strengths must be respected.

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Unlocking the potential of rural unorganized sector

Sunil Amar

When we talk of India's mammoth work force, be it in rural or urban scenarios what naturally comes to mind is the 'unorganised' sector. They form the multitudes that do not 'belong' to a sector governed by a slew of measures in accordance with labour laws or employment terms defined by policy measures. These are the multitudes then which fall outside the ambit of Central Government legislation pertaining to wages and salaries. It falls within the laws of the state governments to cover them.

In an urban scenario the two sectors stand out distinctly. While a peon or a clerk or a security guard or say a teacher in the unorganized sector would have no benefits, no perks or job security, his or her counterpart would in the organized labour force would be cushioned. As we go down the social ladder things would get tougher. For a vegetable seller or a shoe-polish boy or a hand-cart puller any

disruption in the service would mean loss of a daily income for survival.

What would be interesting would be to overlay this clearly segmented work-force in a rural scenario. Here the dividing lines are not so much the 'outside' influences say the corresponding entity of an 'employer' but the relationship with the means of ownership of resources, in most cases is land. Thus in the rural scenario, one finds it is the landless who form the bulk of the 'unorganised' sector, eking out a living by working on other people's farms as agricultural labour. It is another matter that it is this 'landless' segment which finds its way into construction sites in urban or semi-urban centers, outside the purview of the 'rural'.

The 'rural unorganized

The 'rural unorganized poor' are the ones that invariably migrate. They are the ones that



form bulk of the agricultural labour not only in their home states but prosperous regions like western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Given the fact that the system of contractual labour would be exploitative, not being governed by any Central laws or state-level measures, it nevertheless continues to be driven by the needs of both, the owners of land and those who labour on it. It would naturally follow that any measure to augment rural livelihoods would come into conflict with this neatly balanced system. The flagship programme of the Central Government, Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act perhaps the first one of this scale and specific intent has infact been the 'spoiler' in this game.

If we really care to examine the content, the MNREGA is geared completely to the needs of the unorganized sector in the rural scenario. By ensuring that poor households find a minimum number of 100 days employment for one member for a fixed rate of Rs.100/- in effect means that migration of this work-force would stop or slow down. This has had a ripple effect in the areas where the rural work force would migrate to and has been the single-most effective mechanism to push up wages for agricultural labour in these lands.

The ripple effect is evident in other ways as well. Now the poor illiterate, unskilled rural labourer has more than one option open. While one person in the family can avail of the MNREGA provision and thus bring home a steady income, other able-bodied persons in the family can still migrate. Given the enhanced wages in agriculture-rich areas for wooing the labour despite MNREGA's attractive package, would mean a substantial boost of overall income of the family unit. The scope of the flagship programme thus expands and goes beyond its intended targeted beneficiary. In effect it is addressing the issues of the unorganized rural sector. Sans laws which govern urban industries or establishments, it these socio-economic dynamics that set the tone for bettering the conditions of the agricultural labour force.

In many areas in UP, the results are tangible. Increased prosperity at an individual or family level has led to cemented nullahs, concretised roads, street lights, cemented wells, ponds, over-head water tank to supply drinking water ; trappings of

a semi-urban settlement. Today TV antennas and Dish TV on the roof and a cycle and/or motor cycle parked in front of the house is not uncommon in villages. House construction has gone from mud as a basic material to bricks and concrete. This transformation is due in substantial measure to the expansion of the powers of the Gram Panchayat's to allocate resources which has gradually come into its own over the last one decade. The right to plan and execute development works has contributed to the changed rural scene to a large extent.

Though there is an air of prosperity in some of these villages, yet it does seem fragile. After all it has arisen more from a set of 'market' forces in play in the rural scenario and not as a stated policy intent. It also does not absolve the system of laws, state policy or programmes from taking care of the needs of the agricultural labour force. The most that can be said that in the absence of that, these trends, boosting off-farm incomes are welcome and if at all need to be strengthened. The setting up of small-scale industries on a big scale can certainly be a step in the direction, one that needs political will to sustain it and ensure it actually mops up the ones who have somehow been left out from these 'mega' livelihood options Ultimately it is unacceptable that a country like ours to shut our eyes to the enormous potential of the unorganized sector in rural India nor to overlook its genuine demands to strengthen and stabilize itself. It is simply unacceptable that the growth and living standards of rural and urban India should be so markedly divergent from each other.

Growth needs to be equitable and modern developing nations need to make that an integral part of their planning process. . Today this crucial element is obviously lacking. Large segments of our population, the adivasis, and the nomadic communities, those living in remote rural pockets may have an identity and a mention in official records but remain excluded from the fruits of development. Unless policy is able to provide them with opportunities for growth and include them, prosperity in pockets of urban India or within the organized sector alone will be meaningless.

[courtesy Charkha features]

Growers Adopt Baby Corn for 'Fat' Income

Baby corn, a specialty maize having a niche market in India and abroad, has become a potential money spinner for Indian farmers. This is thanks to the maize scientists developing maize varieties and hybrids that are suitable for baby corn production. They have also drawn up packages of agronomic practices for growing this crop in different parts of the country.

The Directorate of Maize Research (DMR) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is promoting the cultivation of this fancy food item to improve farmers' income. While earlier, the local demand for baby corn came largely from five-star hotels, airlines, shipping companies and restaurants serving Chinese and East Asian foods, now its household consumption and processing has also begun to look up, leading to increased demand. Its exports are surging rapidly. Baby corn growers can now easily earn in excess of Rs 1 lakh per hectare in a year.

Baby corns are basically young, small and slender unfertilised cobs of maize that are tender enough to be eaten raw as well as in cooked form, or can be preserved for deferred consumption. These cobs are usually plucked from the plants within one to three days of the emergence of cob silk when this hair-like growth is just 2 to 3 cms long. The baby corn crop normally completes its life cycle in two to three months.

Farmers in several states are showing great enthusiasm to grow this crop. The reasons for this are many, apart from the high prices it fetches in the fast expanding domestic and export markets. For one, the short growing period of baby corn crop allows raising of as many as three to four crops in a year on the same piece of land. Besides, almost all parts of the baby corn plants can be utilised gainfully. While its small cobs of 6 to 11 cms in length constitute the main product, the stalks and leaves of the plants, being nutritious and easily digestible animal feed,



can provide fodder for cattle throughout the year. The farmers can, therefore, use the land, which they normally devote to fodder cultivation, to grow other crops for additional income.

Moreover, as many as 20 different crops of vegetables and pulses and even some flowers like gladiolus can be grown as inter-crops in between the rows of baby corn to increase net income from baby corn fields. There is also scope for value addition of baby corn through preservation and processing to prepare chutneys, pickles and other products. Baby corn can be consumed in several other ways, such as salad, pakora, soup, raita, kheer, and the like, in Indian homes.

“Due to increase of urbanisation, change in food habits and rise in incomes, specialty corn has gained significant importance in peri-urban areas around major towns of the country”, says ICAR’s Project Director (Maize), Dr R. Sai Kumar, who heads the New Delhi-based DMR. Expansion of baby corn cultivation would help check migration from rural to urban areas by enhancing the profitability and livelihood security of farmers, he maintains.

Though at present Thailand is the world’s top producer and exporter of baby corn, India has a good chance of not only competing with it but also emerging as a dominant exporter of this much sought-after up-market food. Low cost of production and strategic location of the country gives India an advantage over other exporters to cater to markets in the Asian, European and Gulf nations. India exported over 267 tonnes of baby corn, worth nearly \$1 million, in 2008. Since then the exports are believed to have risen sharply to cross 750-tonne mark, earning foreign exchange worth over \$3 million a year.

High nutritional quality is the main asset of baby corn that lends it a superiority edge over many other seasonal vegetables as a food item. Besides proteins, vitamins and iron, it is one of the richest sources of phosphorus. Moreover, it is a good source of dietary fibrous protein and is also easy to digest. Most significantly, it is a safe food, free of any pesticide residue hazard. Even if pesticides are sprayed on the crop, they cannot penetrate through the natural vegetative wrapping of the cobs, making baby corn safe to eat. Maize hybrid HM 4, developed by the Haryana Agricultural University at its Karnal research centre, has been found to be a very good hybrid for producing baby corn in the northern region. This ‘single cross hybrid’ is the first generation of cross

between two distinctly different parents. “The maize hybrid HM 4 possesses all the desirable traits of ideal baby corn. The cultivation of HM 4 is gaining momentum not only around the national capital Delhi but also in peri-urban areas in other states”, Dr Sai Kumar points out. This hybrid is preferred over others because of its desirable cob length, an attractive cob colour and a sweet taste besides, of course, high yield potential of around 12 quintals of baby corn a hectare. Its cobs have attractive cream to light yellow colour and the most desirable size of between 6 and 11 cms length and 1.0 to 1.5 cm diameter. Its grains are sweet in taste.

Other suitable high-yielding baby corn varieties are also available for growing in other regions of the country. The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, for instance, is recommending maize hybrid Parkash for baby corn production in the region because of its very high productivity potential of around 17.5 quintals per hectare and uniform and good quality of baby corn ears. Another variety suggested by the PAU is Kesari which has a yield potential of around 14.2 quintals a hectare.

According to a booklet on the production technology and value addition of baby corn, brought out recently by the Maize Research Directorate, a single crop of baby corn, involving an expenditure of about Rs 15,420 a hectare can yield a gross return of about Rs 67,500 per hectare, including the value of baby corn and fodder in two to four months. This estimate is based on the assumption that one hectare’s produce of around 12 quintals of baby corn can be sold for around Rs 60,000 at the rate of Rs 5,000 per quintal (Rs 50 per kg), and about 150 quintals of fodder for Rs 7,500 at Rs 50 per quintal. A farmer growing three to four crops of baby corn in a year can, thus, easily earn between Rs 1,00,000 and Rs 2,00,000 per hectare annually, which is far higher than the returns from most other crops.

However, marketing is still a problem for baby corn, especially in the areas away from big cities. At present, there are only a handful of industrial units engaged in processing and packaging of baby corn for domestic market and export. Some baby corn processing units around Karnal in Haryana have, of course, begun exporting baby corn pickle to the USA and some other destinations. Once more processing units come up in near future, the baby corn cultivation is bound to get a big boost.

(courtesy Indian Council of Medical Research)

House Sparrow–Population Crash

Kalpna Palkhiwala

Goraiya, the house-sparrow, the little sweetie in countless poetry, lyrics, songs and folk-songs and paintings, is today facing a crisis of survival. It's been several years now that we miss the familiar "chi-chi-chi" every morning and the lovely sight of Goraiyas dancing around.

Following inspiration from a retired forest officer in Gujarat, a movement is on to save house sparrow. People get artificial nests for sparrow, parrot and squirrels either in terracotta or from waste of corrugated boxes, hang them at their places on trees or passages, plant them in farms, fields and even residential bungalows. And regularly put water and grains.

Universally familiar in appearance, the widespread and once abundant house sparrow has become a mystery bird and is becoming increasingly

rare all over the World. Perky and bustling, house sparrows have always been gregarious, mingling with finches in the fields in autumn and winter, especially when stubble is available to them. For years we felt irritated by this permanent resident in our garden taking more than a fair share of food during the winter, but now weeks pass without a single one putting in an appearance. That took me to my school days when we read the well known Hindi writer Mahadevi Verma's story 'Goraiya'. That time it felt surprising- neither a king nor a fairy nor a great leader was the subject of a story, but a small Goraiya! Subramanyam Bharti also said , "A bird of freedom..."

A springtime hazard was sparrows' unexplained liking for destroying flowers, especially yellow primroses and crocuses. Kicking up dust and bathing in new seedbeds was a further irritation. Noisy and



gregarious, these cheerful exploiters of human beings' rubbish and wastefulness have colonized most of the world. Found from the centre of cities, kitchen gardens, vacant places in houses to the farmland of the countryside, sparrows feed and breed near habitation. They are vanishing from the centre of many cities, but are not uncommon in most towns and villages. Sparrows might appear to be opportunists, but they are now struggling to survive everywhere on the earth along with many other once common birds. Their recent decline has earned them a place on the Red List in the Netherlands.

India has seen a massive decline of sparrows in recent years. Once a common- place bird in large parts of Europe, the sparrows' population has now seen a sharp fall in United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Italy and Finland.

The house sparrow is an intelligent bird that has proven to be adaptable to most situation, i.e. nest sites, food and shelter, so has become the most abundant songbird in the world. Sparrows are very social birds and tend to flock together through most of the year. A flock's range covers 1.5-2 miles, but it will cover a larger territory if necessary when searching for food. The sparrow's main diet consists of grain seeds, especially waste grain and live stock feed. If grain is not available, its diet is very broad and adaptable. It also eats weeds and insects, especially during the breeding season. The parasitic nature of the house sparrow is quite evident as they are avid seekers of garbage tossed out by humans. In spring, flowers – especially those with yellow colours- are often eaten; crocuses, primroses and aconites seem to attract the house sparrow most. The birds also hunt butterflies.

Nesting

House sparrows are generally attracted to buildings for roosting, nesting, and cover. They look for any man-made nook or cranny in which to build their nests. Other sparrow nesting sites are clothes line poles with the end caps open, lofts, garden

kitchens, or overhangs on a roof without a soffit. The sparrow makes its home in areas closely associated with human habitation. It is a common resident of agricultural, urban and sub-urban communities. The male house sparrow is highly territorial, aggressively defending the nesting site during breeding season. Species that attempt to nest within the sparrow's territory are often be evicted; their eggs destroyed and at times incubating females are killed. The nest is a ball of dried vegetation, feathers, strings and papers with an opening on one side. It is a bulky mass also lined with grass, weeds and hair.

The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is a member of the old world sparrow family Passeridae. Some consider it to be a relative of the Weaver Finch Family. A number of geographic races have been named, and are differentiated on the basis of size and cheekcolour. Cheeks are grey in the west and white in the east. The shade of the colouration, particularly of the chestnut area in the males is also considered. Birds of the western hemisphere are larger than those in the tropical South Asian populations. Some varieties are the *passer domesticus* in Europe, In India, it is popularly known as Goraiya in the Hindi belt. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala it is known as Kuruvi. Telugu language has given it a name, Pichhuka, Kannadigas call it Gubbachchi, Gujaratis call it Chakli where as Maharashtrians call it Chimani. It is known as Chiri in Punjab, Chaer in Jammu and Kashmir, Charai Pakhi in West Bengal, and Gharachatiain Orissa. In Urdu language it is called Chirya while Sindhi language has termed it as Jhirki.

Features

This 14 to 16 cm long bird has a wing span of 19-25 cms. It is a small, stocky song bird that weighs 26 to 32 grams. The male sparrow has a grey crown, cheeks and underparts, and is black at the throat, upper breast and between the bill and eyes. The bill in summer is blue-black and the legs are brown. In

winter the plumage is dulled by pale edgings, and the bill is yellowish brown. The female has no black coloring on the head or throat, or a grey crown; her upper part is streaked with brown. The juveniles are deeper brown.

The sparrow's most common call is a short and incessant, slightly metallic 'cheep, chirrup'. It also has a double call note- 'phillip' wherein originated the now obsolete name of 'phillip sparrow'. While the young are in their nests, the older birds utter a long churr. At least three broods are reared in a season.

The nesting site is varied under eaves, in holes, in masonry or rocks, in ivy or creepers on houses or riverbanks, on sea-cliffs or in bushes in bays and inlets. When built in holes or ivy, the nest is an untidy litter of straw and rubbish, abundantly filled with feathers. Large well- constructed domed nests are often built when the bird nests in trees or shrubs, especially in rural areas.

Five to six eggs, profusely dusted, speckled or blotched with black, brown or ash-grey on a blue-tinted or creamy white ground, and usual types. Eggs are variable in size and shape as well as markings. Eggs are incubated by the female. The sparrow has the shortest incubation period of all the birds: 10 -12 days, and a female can lay 25 eggs each summer. The reproductive success increases with age and this is mainly by changes in timing, with older birds breeding earlier in the season.

Causes of Decline

Various causes for its dramatic decrease in population have been proposed, one of the more surprising being the introduction of unleaded petrol, the combustion of which produces compounds such as methyl nitrite, a compound which is highly toxic for small insects, which form a major part of a young sparrow's diet. Other theories consider reducing areas of free growing weeds, or reducing the number of badly maintained buildings, which are important nesting opportunities for sparrows. Ornithologists

and wildlife experts speculate that the population crash could be linked to a variety of factors like the lack of nesting sites in modern concrete buildings, disappearing kitchen garden, increased use of pesticides in farmlands and the non- availability of food sources. The recent threat is from mobile towers. The emission they sent out is disturbing to the sparrows. Which also effects the insects and the hatching of bird's eggs.

K.S. Gopi Sunder of the Indian Cranes and Wetlands Working Group says: "Although there is no concrete evidence or study to substantiate the phenomenon, the population of house sparrows has definitely declined over the past few years." He attributes this to a number of reasons like widespread use of chemical pesticides in farmlands, increased predation by crows and cats while crows grow in number as a result of garbage accumulation in the city.

According to Dr. V S Vijayan of the Coimbatore-based Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, though the avian species can still be spotted over two-thirds of the world's land surface, "ironically, there has been a rapid decline in the population of these once abundant birds." Changing lifestyles and architectural evolution have wreaked havoc on the bird habitat and food sources. Modern buildings are devoid of eaves and crannies, and coupled with disappearing home gardens, are playing a part in the disappearing act.

Today I miss the sparrows chirping and hopping from branch to branch in the bushes outside my house and remember Mahadevi Verma's famous poem Goraiya - in which a sparrow is eating grains from hand and jumping on her shoulders and playing hide and seek. It is as vivid as if it were being played in front of me. I wish that it does not remain confined in the pages of Mahadevi Verma's story and comes back to us as ever before.

(PIB Features)

