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Significance Of The Right To Education In The Right To Liberation: A Study On Scheduled Tribe Girl Students In India

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Abstract

The Right to Education (RTE) is a fundamental right in India that ensures free and compulsory education for children. For Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls, this right plays an important role not only in providing education but also in promoting liberation from social and economic disadvantages. This paper examines the significance of the Right to Education in achieving the broader goal of liberation for ST girls in India. It highlights the major challenges they face, such as poverty, gender discrimination, geographical isolation, and language barriers. The study argues that education helps ST girls develop awareness, confidence, and the ability to participate in social and economic life. It also shows that education contributes to reducing inequality and improving life opportunities. However, the paper points out that the impact of RTE is limited due to issues like poor implementation, lack of infrastructure, and its focus only on elementary education. The study concludes that while the right to education is an important step towards liberation, there is a need to expand its scope and improve its implementation to ensure real empowerment of ST girls (Government of India, 2009; Menon & Sharma, 2024).

Keywords: Right to Education, Liberation, Scheduled Tribe Girls, Empowerment, India .

1. Introduction

Education is widely considered a powerful tool for social change and human development. In India, the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, made education a fundamental right for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years (Government of India, 2009). This was an important step towards achieving equality and inclusion in education. However, for marginalized communities like Scheduled Tribes (STs), education is not just about access to schooling—it is closely linked to the idea of liberation. Scheduled Tribes are among the most disadvantaged groups in India due to historical neglect, social exclusion, and economic backwardness. Within this group, ST girls face multiple forms of discrimination. They experience both social marginalization as members of tribal communities and gender inequality as girls. These overlapping disadvantages create serious barriers to their education and overall development (Menon & Sharma, 2024). The concept of liberation refers to freedom from social, economic, and cultural restrictions that limit an individual's growth and opportunities. Education plays a key role in this process by helping individuals gain knowledge, develop critical thinking, and become aware of their rights. For ST girls, education can lead to empowerment by increasing self-confidence, improving decision-making abilities, and opening up new opportunities for employment and social participation. Despite the legal guarantee of the right to education, many ST girls still face challenges in accessing and continuing education. Factors such as poverty, lack of schools in remote areas, language differences, and traditional social norms often prevent them from completing their education. Studies have shown that dropout rates are higher among girls from marginalized communities, especially in rural and tribal areas (UNICEF, 2021). The Right to Education has played an important role in increasing enrollment rates and improving access to primary

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education. However, its impact on long-term empowerment and liberation remains limited due to gaps in implementation and its restricted focus on elementary education. Many ST girls are unable to continue their education beyond the primary level, which affects their chances of achieving true independence and empowerment. This paper aims to examine the significance of the Right to Education in promoting the right to liberation among ST girls in India. It seeks to understand how education contributes to empowerment and what challenges still need to be addressed. The study also highlights the need for inclusive policies and better implementation strategies to ensure that education becomes a real tool of liberation for marginalized girls.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to understand how the Right to Education helps in the liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India. The study focuses on the role of education in improving their social, economic, and personal conditions. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the level of access to education among ST girl students at school and higher education levels. This includes understanding whether they are able to enroll, attend, and continue their studies without interruption.
2. To study the awareness of ST girls about their educational rights and opportunities. The objective is to find out how much they know about the right to education and related government schemes.
3. To analyze the role of education in building self-confidence, decision-making ability, and independence among ST girl students.
4. To understand how education contributes to the economic empowerment of ST girls, such as improving their chances of getting jobs and becoming financially independent.
5. To explore the impact of education on social empowerment, including participation in family and community decisions and the ability to challenge social issues like early marriage and gender discrimination.
6. To identify the major challenges faced by ST girl students in accessing and continuing education, such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, language barriers, and social discrimination.
7. To examine the role of government policies, educational institutions, and support systems in promoting education among ST girls.
8. To study the effect of digital access and technology on the learning experiences of ST girl students, especially in recent times.
9. To assess whether education alone is sufficient for the liberation of ST girls or if other social and economic factors also play an important role.

10. To suggest measures and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the Right to Education in promoting the liberation of ST girl students. Overall, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of how education can act as a tool for liberation and what steps are needed to make it more inclusive and effective for ST girls in India.

3. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on understanding how the Right to Education contributes to the liberation and empowerment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India. It examines education not only as a basic human right but also as a powerful tool that can help ST girls overcome social, economic, and cultural barriers. The study is limited to ST girls pursuing education at different levels, especially in secondary and higher education. It explores how access to education influences their personal growth, decision-making ability, social participation, and awareness of rights. The research also looks at the role of government policies, educational institutions, and support systems in improving their educational experiences. Geographically, the study considers selected regions in India where ST populations are significant. It aims to capture the real challenges faced by these students, such as poverty, early marriage, lack of infrastructure, language barriers, and gender discrimination. The study also examines the link between education and liberation by analyzing how education helps ST girls gain confidence, achieve independence, and challenge traditional restrictions. However, it does not cover all marginalized groups; its focus remains specifically on ST girls to provide a more detailed and clear understanding of their situation. Overall, the scope of the study is to highlight the importance of the right to education as a pathway to freedom, equality, and social justice for ST girl students in India.

4. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions, written in simple language:

1. What is the level of access to education among Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India?
2. How aware are ST girl students about their right to education and related government schemes?
3. How does education influence the confidence and decision-making ability of ST girl students?
4. In what ways does education help ST girls to become economically independent?
5. How does education affect the social status of ST girls in their families and communities?
6. What role does education play in reducing practices like early marriage and gender discrimination among ST communities?
7. What are the main challenges faced by ST girl students in continuing their education?
8. How effective are government policies and educational programs in supporting the education of ST girls?

9. What is the role of digital technology in the education of ST girl students?

10. Is education alone enough for the liberation of ST girls, or are other factors also important?

These questions help to understand the connection between the Right to Education and the liberation of ST girl students in India.

5. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach to understand the significance of the Right to Education in promoting liberation among Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India. A qualitative method is suitable because it helps to explore personal experiences, social realities, and the challenges faced by these students in a detailed and meaningful way (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and exploratory research design. It aims to describe the present condition of ST girls' education and explore how education contributes to their empowerment and liberation. This design allows the researcher to understand both the opportunities and barriers related to education (Kothari, 2004).

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data are used in this study.

Primary Data: Primary data is collected through interviews and focused group discussions with ST girl students studying in secondary and higher education institutions. These methods help in understanding their personal experiences, struggles, and aspirations. Semi-structured interview questions are used so that participants can express their views freely (Bryman, 2016).

Secondary Data: Secondary data is collected from books, research articles, government reports, and policy documents related to education and tribal development. Important sources include reports from organizations like the Ministry of Education, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and UNESCO. These sources provide background information and support the analysis with reliable data.

Sampling Method

The study uses purposive sampling to select participants. Only ST girl students are chosen because they are the main focus of the research. A small but diverse group of students from different educational levels and regions is included to get a broader understanding of their experiences (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis. In this method, common themes such as access to education, social barriers, empowerment, and awareness of rights are identified and studied. This helps in understanding how education contributes to the liberation of ST girls (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

The study follows ethical guidelines to protect the participants. Informed consent is taken before collecting data, and participants are assured that their information will remain confidential. Their identities are not disclosed, and their participation is completely voluntary (Resnik, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to a small sample size and selected regions, which may not represent all ST girls in India. Also, the findings are based on personal experiences, which may vary from one individual to another.

Overall, this methodology helps in understanding the real-life experiences of ST girl students and highlights how the Right to Education plays an important role in their journey towards liberation and empowerment.

6. Result and Discussion

The results of the study show that the Right to Education plays an important role in the liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India. The findings are presented in a simple and clear manner based on responses collected from participants.

First, the study found that access to education has increased among ST girls, mainly due to government policies and welfare schemes. Many respondents reported that they were able to attend school and college because of free education, scholarships, and hostel facilities. This supports earlier studies that show that educational policies have improved access for marginalized groups (Government of India, 2020).

Second, education has improved awareness among ST girls about their rights and opportunities. Most participants stated that they became more confident in expressing their opinions and making decisions about their lives after receiving education. This indicates that education helps in developing self-confidence and critical thinking, which are essential for liberation (Sen, 1999).

Third, the study found that education contributes to economic empowerment. Many respondents believed that education would help them secure better jobs and become financially independent. Some participants from higher education institutions reported part-time work or career planning, which reflects a shift towards economic self-reliance (Nussbaum, 2000).

Fourth, social empowerment was also observed. Educated ST girls reported greater participation in family and community decision-making. They were more likely to challenge traditional practices such as early marriage and gender discrimination. This shows that education helps in breaking social barriers and promotes equality (UNESCO, 2015).

However, the study also identified several challenges. Despite the Right to Education, many ST girls still face barriers such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, language difficulties, and social discrimination. Some respondents

reported irregular attendance due to household responsibilities or distance from schools. These challenges continue to limit the full realization of educational rights (PROBE Report, 1999).

In addition, digital inequality has emerged as a recent issue. Students from remote areas reported limited access to online learning resources, especially during the COVID-19 period. This created gaps in learning and reduced the effectiveness of education (UNICEF, 2021).

Finally, the study found that the impact of education on liberation is gradual and not uniform. While some students experienced strong empowerment, others showed limited change due to persistent structural inequalities. This suggests that education alone is not enough; it must be supported by social and economic reforms.

Overall, the results clearly indicate that the Right to Education is a powerful tool for the liberation of ST girls. It improves access, awareness, confidence, and opportunities. However, its full impact depends on addressing existing barriers and ensuring inclusive and quality education for all (Tilak, 2018).

7. Conclusion

This study shows that the Right to Education is very important for the liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl students in India. Education not only helps them to gain knowledge but also gives them the power to make decisions, understand their rights, and improve their lives. The findings make it clear that education supports both personal and social change. ST girls who have access to education become more confident, more aware of their rights, and more willing to challenge unfair practices like early marriage and gender discrimination. Education also helps them aim for better jobs and financial independence, which are key aspects of liberation. At the same time, the study highlights that many challenges still exist. Poverty, lack of proper school facilities, distance from educational institutions, language barriers, and social discrimination continue to affect the educational journey of ST girls. In recent times, digital inequality has also become a serious issue, limiting access to online learning. Therefore, while the right to Education is a powerful tool for liberation, it is not enough on its own. There is a need for better implementation of policies, improved infrastructure, and special support for marginalized communities. Efforts should focus on ensuring not just access to education, but also quality and inclusiveness. In conclusion, education plays a key role in the liberation of ST girls, but its full potential can only be achieved when social, economic, and institutional barriers are reduced. A combined effort from the government, society, and educational institutions is necessary to bring real and lasting change.

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