

TRIBAL CHILDREN IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM**Steen Pagan****Ph.D. Research Scholar****Jawaharlal Nehru University**

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural classroom has both benefits and challenges for children, particularly for tribal children. For teacher to deal with this, adequate training is required. Students from different cultural, economic and social environments, come to classroom. It is obvious that children face different problems as well as learn so many things in classroom with diversity. Tribal children also in the same way, face difficulties in classroom. But when the teacher at school, parents at school and neighbors in society start neglecting these tribal students, they create a silence world in classroom and also outside the classroom. It affects the education in classroom and in this connection, this paper presents that how tribal children isolate themselves from the normal life at school. When communications fail, a world of silence begins. Apart from this, this paper tries to come to some consensus for these tribal children for better education at the foundation level related to both sociological and psychological researches.

Keywords: Multicultural classroom, school culture, deviation, cultural capital, poles in education process, indigenous knowledge, tribal culture and ethos, culture genocide and culture of power.

Introduction

Education is key to social inclusion and social change. Education uplifts living standard and helps in making a status or position in the society, particularly for middle class, lower middle class, Dalits and Tribal people. Now every child has right to access, attend and complete, free and compulsory elementary education under the age group of 6-14 years in India (The Gazette of Govt. Of India, 2009). It is a welcome step. But still, there are numerous problems to achieve the desired goals of the nation and which needs a greater attention to look upon. So in this connection, tribal education and their problems in multicultural classroom can be discussed here. Why these tribal children make a silence world in multicultural classroom by isolating themselves, is matter of debate, consideration and understanding for their better education. Apart from this, the teacher as the captain of the classroom, how he/she deals with this challenge and creates a suitable environment for the learning of children as a whole, is a matter of great concern.

There are 705 Scheduled Tribe groups living which constitutes 8.6 percent of total population of India. Largest portion of tribal population are living in the state of Madhya Pradesh (14.7%), Maharashtra (10.1%) and in Odisha (9.2%). In 2011 around 23 million tribal households in India were living in rural villages. (Census Report, 2011). These tribal people have their own culture and social lives. Different languages are used for communication in their respective groups. When children from these groups come to classroom, they do not get familiar with others where children from different communities with different cultures and languages, are also there. Here they start to make their own peer groups by matching their own language, culture, attire, food habits, games, and environment and so on. Tribal children mixed with other children in school in different ways of conversation, playing, singing, prayer, cleaning. In other words, they are engaged in group activities (Woods, 1983). They learn so many things here which never they come across earlier in their tribal life. But when come across their friends at school and at neighbor, they know

about social construction of them and start self- construction in silence by observing all incidence and accidents around them. And from here, they make a silence world within themselves in classroom at school and outside.

Multiculturalism in Educational Settings

Teachers are needed to be trained properly to deal with multicultural classroom which is full of diversity. So that they can understand these tribal children and others in classroom. Teachers' perception on these tribal children is same what society's other members use to see and understand. It must not be on the part of a teacher in the classroom, because it is a challenge for the teacher to deal with these kind of issues and design such kind of methods which are suited to all children in the classroom, though there are diversities. Teachers must be trained to deal with these tribal students mainly in multicultural classroom. But in real, teacher do not even try to understand these children in the classroom (Sahu, 2013). He/she always discourage these tribal children in terms of their social lives, languages, food habits, ways of living, ancestors, parental profession and education and so on. Teacher develops a state of mind that these children can never come to the top level of education, they have no right for better education, it is not their business to access education, what they do with quality education, and so on. The inherent fear of tribal children towards the teacher and their inability to establish a communication link with the teacher and this is reflected in low attendance and high dropout rate. This can be tackled to a greater extent by using the regional language as the medium of instruction (Sujatha, 2010:4) In other words, the culture of power of tribal people is subordinate to those of others in the society and they must learn this also in school. It must be created environment by the teacher in school so that culture may transmit by respecting their culture. Changing of culture both at home and school by forced like the culture of people those who have power, may lead to culture genocide. Because everybody is expert in his own culture and experience which must not be interpreted as false consciousness. So teacher must aware about the culture of power and it explicit and implicit rules for a better society (Delpit, 1988). These prejudices constraint teacher to do better for these children and make teacher blind about his sole responsibilities in the society as a teacher.

When these children find no any encouragement, reinforcement, motivation and praise from the teacher and their friends in classroom, they start isolate themselves from the normal life in the classroom. We can say it as deviation (Hargreaves et al, 1975). It means they need special attentions. They find nobody familiar in the school and pleasant environments, they become sad and uninterested in school curriculum. Later they develop a silence world in classroom and outside the classroom.in other words, the uniform structure and transaction of curriculum, rigid system of formal schooling go against the ethos and culture prevalent at home of tribal children and this leads to sharp division between home and school which makes these children uninterested towards school (Sujatha 2010:4) They become helpless in classroom. From this, they start a self-construction and evaluate themselves in the society (Symbolic interaction theory). This unnoticed process develops gradually among these children and they leave school at the end.

On the other hand, at home, these children face same kind of difficulties from their parents. Most of tribal people are illiterate still today (Sahu, 2013). They are not able to understand the real value of education in live themselves. So in this case, how do they make understand their children? Instead of praising, reinforcement and motivating, they also do same like a teacher that education is not their business, what they do with these education, they are happy with the present lives etc. These kind of thinking also

affect children and start negating about schooling and education. Sometimes these children are forced to do child labor and earn bread for the family by leaving school. Many of the benefits do not reach to the beneficiaries. Even though some incentives are given, they are of poor quality and do not reach in time. So private expenditure on education for these people is difficult. Since education does not provide any visible and immediate benefits and tribals do not see beyond their present state, the participation of tribal children in education also becomes limited (Sujatha, 2010:4). In other words. At home also they do not get any encouragement in this case and develop another strong wing in the silence world which was developed in school earlier.

Here an example might be made of Aamir Khan starred Bollywood Hindi movie 'Taare Zamin Par' (Stars on the floor). In this movie how a child keeps aloof himself day by day when he does not get love, affection, motivation and reinforcement in school and at home. Here he develops a wide psychological gaps which is noticed by Aamir Khan as a teacher by observing daily life of the child and by noticing the painting copy and takes steps to bring back the child to normal and makes outstanding by fulfilling the psychological gaps.

The self-identity, made by these children as per the school and societal environment is very necessary to look upon. Everybody looks these children at school and outside the school in a different way, because of social taboos. Teachers and friends behave very differently in school which develops a wide psychological gaps among these children. They find closed none in school and they become uninterested for teaching. At home, these children face the same problems as their parents are illiterate and never give reinforcement. When this kind of environment is found by these children both at home and school, they psychologically depressed and imbalance. In this situation, psychology plays very important role for these children and teacher's training in both Psychology and Sociology is necessary to understand these children is needed.

In neighbor, these children observe the same pictures about them about everything starting from daily life small things to education and social taboos for them. Once a noted Psychologist said that give him children to make them what parents wanted to see them in the society. He meant to say that environment plays very important role for children in their lives to make a position in the society. So here, it is very important for the teacher to understand the surrounding of these children and takes care of in school accordingly. While talking about discipline in school, Durkheim (1968) says, a teacher must not be authoritative and rigid if a child is not punctual. He/she must not punish the child immediately, rather he/she must understand the surrounding and situations of the child and take decisions. The term 'Child-centered' education (Piaget) in entire teaching learning process, has special meaning for everybody those who are connected with teaching profession and particularly for teachers. In so many schools, untrained and disappointed teachers are teaching in state languages which tribal children do not understand (Haines, 1968). Teachers first understand children and present lessons as per the interests of children to grasp the objectives of the lesson and to make teaching enjoyable, successful and meaningful. So teachers are trained to create appropriate learning situations in classroom for better results. In this connection, to make conscious parents about home environment and children's progress at school, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) are formed in every school under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2000). It is nothing, but to understand children properly and to make suitable environment by parents at home.

In entire education process, there are three central poles, without which no better and effective teaching learning can be possible. They are the teacher, the child and the environment. So all these three poles must be taken care of for effective learning (Bhatia, 2002). Here the child is considered central theme of discussion belong to tribal families. But for his success, the other two important poles are so significant and in this connection, this paper has focused on these very closely. By the time tribal children reach to the 7th standard, their numbers are reduced to less than the half. The high dropout rate shows that primary education fails to prove its values and in such a situation many tribal children are leaving school and joining as child labor (Wetzlaugk, 1984:14). So understanding of tribal children in multicultural classroom is a matter of great concern at this juncture, particularly at micro sociological perspectives to about the silence world.

While talking about the research related to this micro perspectives, is so negligible. Tribal children are neglected since so long. Numerous researches are there related to school education and tribal education. But even today, there is less such research which talks about the root causes of isolation, aloofness, low achievement and dropout of tribal children. The dropout rate among tribal children in the year 2009-10 in primary education is 34.50% (Boys 35.19% and Girls 33.72%), in elementary education is 57.73% (Boys 55.15% and Girls 60.64%) and in secondary education is 75.21% (Boys 74.71% and Girls 75.85%) (Sujatha, 2009) So it is very important to look upon these children in multicultural classroom closely and make effective quality education for them along with other children. The government of India has been also taking so many steps since independence for the development of tribal people and to bring them in to main stream of life. Different kind of activities are carried on for the education of these tribal children at all level of education to employment. But alas, the benefits are not reaching to these people. The situations before independence are still continuing of these people after six decades. So the greater use of tribal vernacular at primary level, substantial financial incentives, proper training for teachers in tribal schools and more research in tribal education is necessary (Haines, 1968).

The school culture, teacher strategies and student strategies are to be understood as the school is a world itself (Woods, 1983). There are numerous things happening in school and classroom. The classroom interaction between teacher and children must be analyzed properly. It would help to understand these tribal children with other children in classroom. In this connection a teacher must have knowledge about Symbolic Interaction theory, labeling theory, cultural reproduction theory, language code theory in sociology and psycho-analysis theory, Flanders's Interaction Analysis, learning theories, social construction theory in Psychology. The government must initiate to include all these in teachers' training course so that they can understand children in multicultural classroom.

Child's mind is tabula rasa or empty slate (Durkheim, 1956). It is 'banking education' where knowledge is deposited by the teacher (Freire, 1988). In other words, children learn what we teach. So it is important to take care of that what a teacher or parents is imparting teaching at school and home. Of course, when these tribal children are also familiar with so many concepts from society like other children do have. But they do not get familiar here in school, because they have their own cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1971) which makes them uninterested. Another important thing is language spoken by these tribal children which is different from the major language used in instruction by the teacher in classroom. It also affects these

children in classroom achievement (Bernstein, 1974). These tribal children have indigenous knowledge of their own. They develop concepts in their own language in community which are often neglected by teacher at school. If a teacher integrates the indigenous knowledge with the classroom knowledge, it is easier to understand these tribal children as they are not ineligible for better education. They can also show their talent in effective environment (Panda, 2006). In this connection, the government of India has also made provision to impart teaching in mother tongue for two initial years under article 350A since 1956 to these children in school (Nambissan, 1994).

So there are so many benefits and challenges in multicultural classroom both for the teacher and these children to learn and to face (Gupta, 2010). For teachers, it must be made conscious them at teacher training institutions properly about different cultures, social and psychological theories to understand children and their backgrounds for effective teaching and on the other hand, for children it must be taken care of at home, at school and in society to develop proper normal concept about the society itself and about themselves in the society in comparison to others. Everybody those who are related with teaching of children, must aware about all these. Otherwise, these tribal children would remain silence in their silence world for ever by leaving school at the middle. All the programs and investment for education of these children would be in vain, if these children are neglected and unnoticed by teacher and parents at school and home. So proper teacher training, investment with proper inspections and monitoring by the government, medium of instruction in school of these children, parents-teacher meeting, teaching with realities and relevance with life in society, tribal community involvement in education, decentralization of educational management etc. are taken care of to understand these tribal children and better needed teaching can be arranged for them at school.

Conclusion

In this connection, it is necessary to understand these tribal children both sociologically and psychologically at home, at school and in the society. Prejudices in society about these people must be rectified. An example might be made of 'A letter to teacher of my son' by former American President Abraham Lincoln (16th President, USA), which clearly explains about the responsibilities of teacher, parents and of the society for a child. Tribal children are not coming from any other world that they cannot do what others do in the society. Just here, a positive thing is lacking. When culture of two groups do not transmit, communication breaks down which often never seems in same culture of power group. It is not necessary to alter culture, but need to identify the expertness in them. Otherwise, the dialogue of two different groups having different culture of power, may lead to communication failure and this failure leads to a world of silence what happens with these tribal children in multicultural classroom (Delpit, 1988). Apart from this, the socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions of the tribal people must be taken care of. The most important factor to consider is to look upon the poverty which slows progress in tribal education and forces children to child labor (Nair et al, 1979:13). So it is possible to break their silence world and to bring them to normal classroom behavior by considering their socio-economic, socio-cultural, language and ethos. Then, the benefits of multicultural classroom can be visible clearly, otherwise it would be remained as challenges in the history, contemporary history and history to come.

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