

Educational Backwardness of 'Teli' Caste in Jammu Region: Exploration of the Factors Behind

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ABSTRACT

The word Tel means oil (cooking oil) and Teli means person dealing with manufacture and sale of cooking oil in Urdu. The word Teli comes from Tel, which means oil in Marathi, Hindi, and Oriya languages. Traditionally, the Teli are an occupational caste of oil-pressers and the name Teli is given to them because of their profession of "Making Edible oil". In old times, these people had their small oil mills known as Kolhu or Ghana driven by blindfolded oxen around the mill to make or extract edible oil from oil seeds like mustered and sesame. Teli caste is one of the most backward classes (as per Mandal commission) in the Jammu region of Jammu And Kashmir State. Their plights were never heard or addressed even after more than six decades of independence due to underrepresentation in both the houses of state legislature. Hence the investigator felt the need to explore the area which is yet to be explored. In this way efforts were made to study various reasons behind the educational backwardness of the community and to suggest remedies to improve their educational conditions. The sample for the present study comprised of the 15 community representatives selected by following snowball non-random sampling technique. All the representatives were interviewed to deeply understand and analyse the factors responsible for the undertaken phenomenon and to suggest remedies for the same. Community representatives revealed number of social, economic, educational factors which are collectively responsible for the educational backwardness of the community and also suggested suitable solutions or remedies for the same.

Keywords: Education, Teli, community, caste, backwardness

Justice K. Subba Rao, former Chief Justice of India, defined 'backward classes' as "an ascertainable ; and identifiable group of persons based on caste, religion, race, language, occupation and such others, with definite characteristics of backwardness in various aspects of human existence- social, cultural, economic, political and such others." We can generally define 'backward classes' as those social groups or classes or castes which are characterized by lack of education, poverty, exploitation of labour, non-representation in services etc. In simple words, the term 'backward classes' can be defined as a social category which consists of all the socially, educationally, economically and politically backward groups, castes, and tribes. In the Indian Constitution, OBCs are described as "socially and educationally backward classes", and the Government of India is enjoined to ensure

their social and educational development. For example, the OBCs are entitled to 27% reservations in public sector employment and higher education. The reservation Policy can be studied at two levels, namely at All-India level and at State-level. At All-India level both the Kaka Kalelkar Commission in 1955 and the Mandal Commission in 1980 depended on the findings of the last detailed community based census of 1931 to extrapolate on the population of Backward Classes The Kaka Kalelkar Commission used the term "Classes" as synonymous with "Castes and Communities" and prepared a list of Backward Classes on the basis of caste. The Commission listed 2,399 castes as Backward Classes. It chose 837 castes as Most Backward Castes for the purpose of development and upliftment. It also made various other recommendations. The Mandal Commission used a Sample Survey to

identify the social attributes of backwardness. The Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission) used eleven indicators or criteria to determine social and educational backwardness. These indicators were grouped under three broad heads, namely (1) Social (2) Educational and (3) Economic.

Recommendations of Educational Commissions and Committees for the OBCs

Indian Education Commission (1964-1966): The commission recognized the necessity to pay considerable attention towards the education of the children of backward classes. The commission observes: "One of the important social objectives of education is to equalize opportunity, enabling the backward or under-privileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their conditions. Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of the common man and cultivate all the available talent must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all the sections of the population. This is only guarantee for the building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimized" The Commission very emphatically states, "The education of backward classes in general and the tribal people in particular are a major programme of equalization and of social and national integration. No expenditure is too great for the purpose"

National policy on Education (1968): It recommend "Strenuous efforts should be made to equalize educational opportunities. More intensive efforts are needed to develop education among the backward classes and especially among tribal people."

Draft National policy on education (1879): It observed considerable expansion in all sections of Education in India, Imbalances and inequalities still persist. Girls, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Landless labourers, backward classes and urban slum poor generally lag behind in education. Special efforts must be made to identify the problems in these cases and to bring all such people in the fold of education.

Education (National policy on 1986): To promote equality, it will be necessary to provide for equal opportunities to all not in access but also in conditions of success. Awareness of the inherent

equality of all will be created through the core curriculum.

Programmes and Schemes of Union/J&K Government Regarding Educational Upliftment of OBCs'

In addition to two backward commissions and constitutional mandate, government of India launched number of schemes from time to time to give exclusive benefit to the students belonged to OBC castes. Example of such schemes are Pre-Matric scholarship for OBC students, Pos-Matric scholarship for OBC students, Construction of OBC boys and girls hostel, Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of interest subsidy on Educational Loan for overseas for OBC, National Fellowship for OBC Students (NF-OBC), Assistance to Voluntary Organizations working for the welfare of OBC's, Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNT's, Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls, Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loans for Overseas Studies For Extremely Backward Classes (EBC's), Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for EBC's etc.

Social Welfare and Empowerment ministry of J&K government is also not lagging behind in framing special schemes to benefit students belongs to other backward section of state. Example of few such schemes is Pre-Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship for Minority, Pre-Matric Scholarship to Minority Students, and Post Matric Scheme of Merit Cum Means for Minority Students etc. The Govt. of J&K has constituted two institutions on the nomenclature of Backward Classes: one as Backward Classes Commission in the light of the Honorable Supreme Court Judgment, Indra Sawhney Vs Union of India popularly known as Mandal Commission case and the other as Jammu and Kashmir State Advisory Board for the welfare and Development of other Backward Classes. In addition to this govt. of J&K provide hostel facilities to OBC students.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Education plays an important role in human development. Education is one of the most important means to improve personal endowments, build capabilities, overcome constraints and in the process,

enlarge available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained improvement in well-being. The process of education and attainments thereof has an impact on all aspects of life. It is a critical invasive instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion of people (NHDR, 2001). In 2015 an RTI data showed that inspite of these 27% reservations in jobs, at national level only less than 12% OBCs are in these jobs (in some departments only 6.67% of OBCs were given employment under these 27% reservations). The condition of State OBCs' in general and Teli community in particular is worse than at national level. As the part of the extended probing of educational and career status and development of the teli youth, the strong evidences of backwardness of the Telis as a caste category were also evident. The community youth exhibited very low levels of educational and career aspirations which were somehow historical in nature also. And, the dynamics get further complicated when geographical positioning and gender were used as broad dimension for analysis. With these specific directions, immediate need emerged for the identification of the factors which underlie in the educational backwardness of the teli community in Jammu division (as a caste category). And the perspective gave direction for the planning of the present study.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study was conducted to fulfill following objectives:

- To study the factors responsible for the Educational backwardness of the Teli community of Jammu division of J&K state.
- To Explore and suggest various possible remedies to improve educational status of Teli community of Jammu division of J&K state.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Methodology: The present study is primarily aimed on the study the educational backwardness of Teli community in Jammu division of J&K state. To fulfill this objective, it was needed to visit the field and observe the real situation and factors responsible for the educational backwardness of the community. Exploratory Research Design was adopted to conduct the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample for the present study comprised of 15 community members spread in three districts i.e. Jammu, Udhampur and Samba of Jammu division. They were selected following the below mentioned criteria:

- Age and gender
- Level of community contribution
- Status in the community (relative positioning in the community's social scale)

Those members who fulfilled the three identified criteria became the part of the sample. However, it is important to be mentioned here that out of 15 selected community members only one member was woman, exhibiting again the dearth of qualified and professionally contributing women members in the community. Some of the respondents had clear claim for their inclusion in the sample sue to their clear and broadly acknowledged contribution to the community and to the State as a whole. The other members were selected through the cross references of these members and hence snow balling as a sampling technique was adopted to choose the requisite sample units.

Tool for the Present Study: Self constructed Semi-structured Interview schedule was used by the investigator for the data collection. The tool was comprised of two broader themes having scope for further probing during the interview to illicit in-depth responses of the respondents.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 1 showing response of community members regarding factors responsible for educational backwardness of Teli Community:

Sl. No.	Themes/Sub-Themes	f	(%)
1	Lack of Guidance	15	100.00
2	Lack of parental involvement and support.	09	60.00
3	Poor Economic condition	13	86.67
4	Lack of Information regarding job oriented courses	12	80.00
5	Lack of awareness about financial schemes.	13	86.67
6	Lack of competitive spirit	07	46.67
7	Poor accessibility of secondary and higher education	06	40.00
8	Early Engagement or Marriage	14	93.33
9	Gender biasness	08	53.33
		N=15	

- ❑ Every single respondent i.e. 100% agreed that lack of guidance on the part of parents is one of the major causes of educational backwardness of the community. It was evident from the discussion that the parents of these children are either illiterate or semi literate. Hence, the role of guidance ultimately shifts from parents to teachers but the respondents claim that even teachers are failed on this front.
- ❑ Parent's illiteracy does not only result in lack of guidance for their offspring but in other aspects too. In this regard 60% respondents agreed that due to parent's illiteracy, they are completely or partially failed to involve and support their kids in education which ultimately result in educational backwardness of the community.
- ❑ 86.67% community representatives accept as true that large portion of the population of the community lives in rural areas and are dependent on the agriculture. They do not have enough resources to invest on education of their wards. Moreover, technical/professional courses and higher education is costly and the parents who are just hand to mouth cant dream for such pricey courses for their children.
- ❑ Greater part of respondents i.e. 80% established that Teli youth especially hailed from rural areas have distorted information system. Large proportion of target students hardly knows about job market, job oriented courses and nature of competition. Moreover they don't know about various competitive exams which results in the educational backwardness of the community.
- ❑ 86.67% respondents think that there no dearth of scholarship and loan schemes for the OBC students run by the both union and state government but these schemes mostly remain on papers only. The parents, teachers and the students are unaware about such schemes which result in wastage of talent due to financial constrains. There are hardly few students who are availing these facilities. In addition to this they also claim that even if some students are getting financial help from the government in the shape of scholarship, that too is not enough and timely. In this concern one of the respondents quoted:

Ye mitti (Teli students) bahut zarkhez hai magar khushq hai. Agar isko bhi nam kar diya jaye to humare bache bhi desh ki taraki main bada tawun kar sakte hain.

(Translation: This soil (Teli students) is very fertile (talented) but dry right now (Lack guidance and economic constrains). If we irrigate it properly (if provide them financial support and guidance) our children can also contribute in the development of the country in a big way.)

- ❑ 46.67% respondents think that the discrepancy in reservation policy of union and state government is one of soul cause of educational backwardness of the community. Teli community is one of the most disadvantaged and backward community of the state and the students hailed from this community are not competent enough to give open competition. One of the respondents quoted recent example to strengthen this argument: *"Jammu is one of the districts in Jammu division which is inhabited by many Teli households and in 2015 the list of teacher was declared consisted of approximately 744 posts but only 3 candidates belonged from the community were able to find place in the final selection list. Out of those 3 candidates one was figured in open merit and rest of them was under OSC category"*.
- ❑ 40% respondents believe that poor accessibility of higher secondary schools is one of the reasons responsible for educational backwardness of the community. There are still many community dominated localities where there is no secondary school. Sandhi, Khda, Madana, Sumbli, Chatta, Bari-Brahmna etc is example in this direction. Moreover, the road connectivity is very poor in nearby secondary schools which forced the parents to give up the idea of education of their daughters due to security concerns. In this context one of the respondents quoted:
Humari Sandhi main sirf high school hai. Aage ki padai ke liye humare bacho ko ya to Sunjwan jana padta hai ya fir Purmandal. Dono hi jgayen sandi se bahut door hain (more than 10 km) aur sunjwan aane ke liye unko paidal aana padta hai aur purmandal ki bhi road connectivity achi nai hai jiski wajah se humare bache aage nai pad pate. Humari bachiyo ko to security reasons ki wajah se

maa baaap aage padne nai bejte kyunki unko paidal jana padta hai aur rasta jungle se ho ke jata hai.

(Translation: In our Sandhi there is only high school. For further Studies our students have to go to either Sunjwan or Purmandal. Both the places are far away (more than 10 km) from the Sandhi and students have to walk for coming to Sunjwan and the road connectivity from Sandhi to Purmanadal is very poor which forced the students to quit their studies. Parents don't send their daughters for the further education due to security reasons because they have to walk long distance and the way goes from the jungle.)

- ❑ Large portion of respondents i.e. 93.33% consider that early engagements and early marriages (Between Cousins) is one of the major factor responsible for poor educational trends in the Teli community. Islamic fundamentalism forced parents for early marriage of their offspring. In 1990's the trend of early engagements (during birth) and early marriage below the age of 18 was one of the distinguished feature of the community. But with the passage of time this trend was reduced gradually but not vanished completely. No doubt there is decrease in early engagements and pre mature marriages but still prevalent in one or other form. The terms like "Kudi Chukni" and "Kudi Mangni" is used for the early engagements. At present 18-22 age is considered as suitable age for the marriage. When the adolescents are burdened with responsibilities of their spouse and children and are in the shackles of family life in early age, then how could we expect them to concentrate on their education?
- ❑ 53.33% respondents believe that gender biasness by the parents is one of the causes of educational backwardness of the community. Many parents (especially in rural areas) are still considered their girls as kitchen material and are not ready to invest on their education which results in very low female literacy rate and loss of half of the talent of the community

Table 2 showing remedies suggested by Community members to improve educational status of Teli community:

Sl. No.	Themes/Sub-Themes	f	Percentage
1	Provision of Guidance	14	93.33
2	Abolishing restrictive community traditions	08	53.33
3	Parental encouragement and support	07	46.67
4	Gender Equality in the matter of education	05	33.33
5	Awareness about various scholarship and loan schemes	13	86.67
6	Access of secondary schools and higher Education	04	26.67
7	Residential Facility	06	40.00
		N=15	

- ❑ Most of the respondents i.e. 93.33% suggested that educational and vocational guidance to the students is one of the most appropriate ways to improve educational condition of the community. It is evident from the discussion with the members that chunk of the parents are either illiterate or semi-literate, so they hardly can guide their offspring in appropriate direction. In such a case, community members suggested the role of teachers, the educated youth of the community and retired members of the community. The educated youth and retired government officials hailed from the community should come forward voluntarily and provide educational guidance to the younger ones. They should organize small get together monthly in their own localities and make the students aware about demands of the job market and various job oriented unexplored courses. Skill development is one of the main objectives of the 21st century educational system of leading countries of the world. Hence, efforts should be made by them to guide young minds in appropriate directions as per modern trends.
- ❑ 53.33% community representatives agreed that educational condition of the community can be raised by abolishing the practice of early engagements and early marriages. Children should be motivated and encouraged to work harder to reach at the top of their career and marriage should be thought only when they clinched their aspired educational

goals and mature enough to take up the responsibility. They should not be shackled in the responsibilities of marriage at early age as it serve no purpose other than putting burden on their weak shoulders and causing their mental unwellness. Saba Noor (KAS topper of 2014) batch should be considered as role model by the girls of the community while Boys should follow the footsteps of vibrant and dynamic youth like Abdul Satar (KAS 2011 batch) and Ehsan Malik (Assistant professor in physics selected in 2017).

- ❑ 46.67% purposed that the parents should support and encourage their children because this will shape the aspiration of their brood. Parents should involve themselves in the education of their children and express solidarity with the aspirations of their kids.
- ❑ 33.33% community representatives recommended that parents should not discriminate their children on the basis of gender as far as the educational opportunities of their children are concerned. They should treat them alike. Man and women are two wheels of a same cart if one wheel is missing the cart can't move properly. Mhatma Gandhi, rightly remarked that" if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a women you educate an entire family" so the community should give up tradition of gender discrimination. Both the gender should be given equal chances and avenues to get desired level of education and aspired level of career.
- ❑ 86.67% respondents purposed that making Teli adolescents and their parents familiar with various available scholarship and loan schemes run by both union and state governments. There are number of scholarship and loan schemes of both the governments for the OBC students but those schemes are not properly advertised. The concerned departments of the government should mobilize teachers, students and parents about those schemes so that their education may not be obstructed due to financial constrains. In addition to the government, intellectuals belongs from the community should also create awareness regarding above cited aspect among the masses.

- ❑ Lack of accessibility is one of stated reason for the educational backwardness of the community. In this concern 26.67% respondents recommended educational opportunities at the door steps of the people. As stated above there are still many community dominated areas which are still without higher secondary schools. They demanded that either higher secondary schools should be established in these localities or existing high schools should be upgraded so that poor accessibility may not hinder their educational aspirations.
- ❑ Chunk of the respondents i.e. 40% advocated residential facilities (separate hostel) for the community students in Jammu city so that constraints regarding accommodation and transportation can be fixed.

CONCLUSION

Finally it comes out that there are many social, economic and political factors which are collectively responsible for the educational backwardness of the community and called for immediate solution. The Teli youth do not have dearth of talent, they can also reach at heights and can contribute in the national development if the various push factors (obstacles) can be dealt with stern hands taking time as bar.

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