



Original Article

Exploring Educational Barriers: A Study of Katakari, Dhangar, and Dalit Children in Alore, Raigad

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Abstract

The Katakari and Dhangar tribes in Maharashtra face numerous socio-economic and educational challenges that hinder their development and integration into mainstream society. These challenges are complex and interconnected, requiring a comprehensive approach to address their unique needs. The education system poses significant challenges for the Katakari and Dhangar tribes. The language barrier is a major obstacle, as the Katakari and Dhangar languages, Kathodi and Dhangari, differ from the dominant Marathi language used in education. This makes it difficult for students to adapt and succeed in the education system. Additionally, many families prioritize earning over education due to poverty, leading to low enrollment and high dropout rates. The lack of awareness about the importance of education and limited access to higher education further exacerbate the issue.

The tribal communities also have limited access to infrastructural facilities, and their perspective on development differs significantly from mainstream views. They prioritize their traditional lifestyle over urbanization and modernization, which can be seen as strength in preserving their cultural identity. However, this also means that youngsters lack technical education, limiting their participation in industrial jobs and perpetuating poverty. Ultimately, addressing the socio-economic and educational challenges faced by the Katakari and Dhangar tribes requires a nuanced understanding of their unique needs and perspectives. By working together with these communities and adopting a comprehensive approach, we can help bridge the gap between their current situation and their full potential.

Keywords: Educational barriers, Katakari, Dhangar, Dalit communities, Socio-economic challenges, Language barrier, Poverty, Government negligence, Alore, Raigad, Maharashtra

Introduction

Education is a key driver of social transformation, yet marginalized communities in India, particularly tribal and Dalit groups, often face systemic barriers that hinder access to and participation in quality education. The Katakari and Dhangar tribes, along with Dalit communities in Alore, Raigad district, exemplify this reality. These groups experience interlinked socio-economic and cultural disadvantages that contribute to high dropout rates, low literacy levels, and limited progression to higher education.

Language barriers, poverty, migratory lifestyles, and lack of infrastructural support combine to form a complex web of educational exclusion. While the Dalit community has benefitted from socio-political movements like that of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, which emphasized the transformative power of education, such cultural leadership and awareness remain largely absent among Katakari and Dhangar tribes. This study adopts a Marxist sociological framework to explore how these educational barriers are rooted in broader structures of inequality. It also aims to highlight the urgent need for context-specific, culturally sensitive, and community-driven solutions to promote inclusive education and social equity for these underrepresented communities.

Objectives

1. To understand the social, economic and educational conditions of Katakari, Dhangar and Dalits.
2. To compare their conditions and find reasons behind differences and similarities.
3. To search for solutions to their educational challenges.

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Hypothesis

The socio - economic and educational conditions and challenges of Katakari, Dhangar, and Dalit communities would be same.

Review of the literature

1) Charting the Journey: The Struggle of the Katkari Tribe for Sustainable Livelihood and Socio - Economic Development

Ref.: International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) ISSN: 2319-7064 SJIF (2022): 7.942

Writer: Chayanlal R. Pardhi

Tribal communities globally face challenges like poverty and lower life expectancy. In India, Scheduled Tribes, particularly PVTGs, encounter complexities related to displacement, resource exploitation, and socio - economic disparities. The evolution of nomenclature and recognition reflects efforts to address these issues, but the path toward the comprehensive well - being of tribal populations remains an ongoing endeavor. Tribal Classification and Evolution of Nomenclature information reflects the journey from primitive to scheduled tribe. This nomenclature aimed at identifying and differentiating groups based on physical features, language, religion, customs, and social organization. The Katkari tribe's struggle for sustainable livelihood is deeply rooted in historical classifications. The livelihood status of tribal communities is influenced by a myriad of factors, including government policies, economic shifts, environmental changes, and constitutional rights. While some tribes experience positive transformations through diversification and policy interventions, others face persistent challenges, necessitating comprehensive and context - specific interventions for sustainable development. The discussion and analysis underscore the complex web of challenges faced by the Katkari tribe, ranging from historical disruptions in livelihoods to contemporary issues in health and education. The role of social movements, governmental policies, and interventions by NGOs becomes pivotal in crafting sustainable solutions. The need for context - specific, community - driven approaches is emphasized, considering the unique socio - economic dynamics of PVTGs like the Katkari tribe. Continuous evaluation and adaptive strategies are essential to ensure the holistic development and well - being of the Katkari community.

2) Unknotting dropout challenges: Katkari migrant children in Raigad, Maharashtra

Ref.: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Trends 2024; 6(5): 19-24

Writer: Dr. Prashant Narnaware and Om Prakash Shukla

The study highlights the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions to address the educational challenges faced by the Katkari tribe in Raigad district, Maharashtra. By prioritizing inclusive and culturally relevant education, policymakers can empower marginalized communities like the Katkari tribe, fostering their socio-economic upliftment and contributing to equitable development. The Katkari of today are a fragmented and very scattered community, extremely dependent on others for their livelihoods and for a place to live. Most Katkari are landless workers with only periodic and tenuous connections to their original nomadic, forest-based livelihoods. Many have become bonded labourers working in brick kilns and charcoal units serving the urban and industrial interests of Greater Mumbai. Residential Schools, as an access strategy for girls from marginalized communities, have been part of programmes under the Department of Education. Besides, residential schools are also included in policies under the (1) Department of Social Welfare, (2) Department of Tribal Affairs and (3) Department of Women and Child Development. Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalayas (KGBV) and Ashramshalas are girls' two most crucial residential school programmes. KGBV is essential for its focus on empowerment. The validation came not only from the need for covering the living costs and making it possible to have access to physical, residential space and food to be able to access the schooling facilities but also from the need for providing a conducive environment for education where these children are not expected to participate in work and other chores. Although there is no definite policy on residential schooling in general or for girls in particular, several residential schooling strategies exist for girls in the public school system in India. Specific small-scale residential schooling strategies outside the state sector are also funded through public funds or other avenues. While a few of these have some interlinkages, many have evolved independently of each other, drawing their rationales from a variety of experiences within and outside the country. The information on the performance of these schemes/programmes/initiatives needs to be more balanced, isolated and sporadic. The benefits of this development paradigm have been disproportionately cornered by the dominant sections at the expense of low-income people, who have borne most of the costs. Development, which is insensitive to the needs of these communities, has invariably caused displacement and reduced them to a sub-human existence. In the case of tribes, it has ended up destroying their social organization, cultural identity, and resource base and generated multiple conflicts, undermining their communal solidarity, which cumulatively makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation. Displacement deprives of the vital sustenance of the tribal people who depend on the land, forests, and common property resources (CPR) for their livelihood, and finally, their long-term sustainability is also endangered.

Katkari-Tribals

There is a total of 47 tribal tribes in Maharashtra. Out of them, 3 are primitive tribes. Katkari is one of them. Katkari lives in majority in Raigad and Thane districts. They also have a large presence in four talukas in the north of Ratnagiri district, namely Mandangad, Dapoli, Khed and Chiplun. According to historians, Katkari are the original inhabitants of Maharashtra. This community is dependent on nature. As per the saying 'This world is my home', their residence has no geographical limits. They do not have much influence on private ownership of resources. Modern society, as well as the governance system it created later, established their rights over the lands and forests here in a documented manner.

Today, the Katkari have not been able to create their place in the new system. For their daily bread, they have to work for the wealthy class in the village. Their houses and mansions are mostly on the lands of wealthy landlords in the village. Therefore, they have to live under their bondage. In some places, they are in a state like a fortified fortress. Their deep knowledge of nature and readiness for extreme physical labor make them cheap but risky laborers. Even after working 15-15 hours a day, they do not get enough pay. They are exploited all around. Their life cycle is very unstable. They stay in the village for four months

during the monsoon season and work as wage laborers, and leave the village to survive after the rice harvest in October, and even till May for employment.

There is an annual cycle of living by moving to different places. Accordingly, this life cycle continues like this. During the monsoon and at other times, they have to work for the landlords as per their needs. Most of the farmers here have a mono-crop. Therefore, they need a large number of workers during the monsoon. Katkari are the rightful laborers for them. After the agricultural labor is over, the Katkari laborers go to the Sheth-loks for deforestation for the next six to eight months. The forests here are privately owned. Therefore, they are cut down on a large scale. This deforestation work is very skilled. The Katkari community is skilled in it. They can do this difficult work by climbing the ridges of high mountains. Deforestation is so widespread in Ratnagiri district that Katkari laborers are brought from outside the district, that is, from the neighboring Raigad district. This group lives in huts in the deforestation area. Once the work in one place is finished, they move to another place. This wandering continues for six to eight months. This community is tied to the back of the village, the sheikh in the forest and the moneylender in the market. In their spare time, they go to the rivers and streams to catch fish and crabs, and go hunting in the forests and collect forest produce. It is also true that recently, due to the cessation of the flow of rivers and streams, the depletion of forests due to deforestation and increasing legal restrictions, such businesses have come to a standstill! In this entire business, intimidation, fraud, and contempt are routine in making a living. Still, it is special that the Katkari are busy and happy in their lives!

This community lives in the villages, near the village headquarters. Basic facilities like water, electricity, and roads are not available in their houses. In this regard, a socio-economic survey of the Katkari community in Chiplun taluka was recently conducted by Shramik Sahayog in the year 2010. This survey revealed the serious condition of this community. 77% of the Katkari families here live on daily wages. 66% of the families are landless. 71% of families live in huts made of raw materials. 58% of houses are not registered with the Gram Panchayat. 61% of families do not have electricity connections. 60% of families do not get the benefit of the tap water scheme. Not a single wadi has its own well. According to the government policy, it is mandatory to give the benefit of the Antyodaya Scheme to the Katkari families. Despite this, 80% of the families did not have ration cards until 2010. Today, the Shramik Sahayog Sanstha has provided the benefit of the Antyodaya Scheme to almost all the families in the taluka. Therefore, today at least these families can get food grains for their daily needs. However, after migrating outside the village, they are not able to take full advantage of this scheme.

The problem of ill health and malnutrition of the Katkari community, which lives a very difficult and poor quality of life, has become very serious. The rate of addiction is also high. Due to the tendency to spend the money earned with endless hard work every week, they easily fall prey to the evil tendencies of the market. Due to the lack of awareness generated through education, this community has not developed sufficient self-awareness and awareness. The life expectancy of the people of this community is decreasing day by day due to all the above reasons. Today, this very virtuous community is fighting the battle for its survival and existence. It is becoming weaker, weaker and deformed day by day. The issue of protecting this primitive tribe is being constantly raised by scholars. The government has also taken note of this matter in its policy. However, it is not being implemented precisely. The schemes and concessions are on paper. But they are not being implemented. The wealthy class, the closed and insensitive government and administrative system do not take any notice of this.

The education of children in this community is a matter of great concern. In a study conducted by the organization in 2010, 57% of children in the age group of 4 to 18 in this community were found to be out of school. According to the new law, the names of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 in the village are enrolled in schools. This registration of children is done every year in the month of June. Most of the families come to the village in this month. However, only 43% of the children in this Katkari community are enrolled in school. Moreover, these enrolled children do not stay in school till the end of the year. When the parents leave for work, the children also leave the village with them. The modern education system has completely failed to include these children. Overall, we realized that the future of this primitive tribe is worrying and special efforts are needed to change it.

However, the experience in the Katkari community was different. There, it was very difficult to get the participation of not only the children but also the village. The Dhangar community is aware that at least its children should be like other advanced communities in the village, and for that, they are interested in education. However, the situation of the Katkari community is very different from that. On the one hand, that community is busy with its own life. No matter how difficult it is to live like that! Other working-class sections of society around us were moving forward with education, their conditions were changing, and the idea that we too should change and shape the future of our children through education was not rooted in their minds. However, in the minds of our group, schools were opening in Katkari Wadi.

Methodology

For this research work we have used mixed method and primary as well secondary sources.

To do the Qualitative study of the narratives of local people through sociological lenses, firstly a schedule was made, we framed questions to seek information about socio - economical - educational conditions. We discussed their issues with them. And tried to relate it with educational issues.

For this research paper, we have used Marxist perspective:

The Marxist perspective is based on the ideological viewpoint of Karl Marx, who emphasised the role of the economy in shaping society, including its educational systems. According to Marxists, education is a reflection of social inequality and serves to reproduce existing class structures. They posit that schools function as 'ideological state apparatuses', inculcating the values and cultural norms of the dominant, capitalist class.

Data analysis

We have classified and analyzed the data as follows:

A) Social aspect:

1. Major tribes: Katkari, Dhangar. Dalits too live here. Their residential areas are segregated on the basis of tribal and caste identity.
2. **Language:** Kathodi, Dhanagari, Marathi.
Some similarities with the dialects of North Maharashtra area, like Ahirani, konkani.
3. **Occupation:** Agricultural labour. Almost 100 % katkaris lack land ownership. Thus, dependent on other's land, have to work as labourer. Some youngsters have taken jobs in near the city area's hotels.
4. **Gender equality:** Inequality in wages. Men get Rs. 300 whereas Women get Rs.150 for the same labour.
5. **Health facilities:** Primary healthcare is available. But it is far away for Dhangars.
6. **Social welfare policies:** Not good implementation. Very few have got the benefits. Merely one house in Dalitwadi was found which has secured that house from Gharkul yojana. A Street light was there in Katkari wadi which runs on solar light, provided by the government initiative.
Some women have got the benefits from Ladki Bahin Yojana.
7. **Issues regarding children and childhood:**
Parents have to go to work. There's no one to look after the kids. Poverty, thus many don't have access to education. Their language is Kathodi, Dhangari, but school education, exam system is based on marathi. This too creates hurdles in taking education. Since covid pandemic, they came in contact with online education. But this too has shown some negative consequences on their educational growth, like distraction, time wasting, etc.
8. **Impact of urbanization:**
Youth have attraction for bikes. Instead of having urge to learn, urban things are becoming popular among them. Due to smartphones, distraction is there, negligence towards studies.

B) Political aspect:

Katkaris seemed uninterested in Grampanchayat. They feel nothing can happen there. Sarpanch isn't much active and lack good communication with the villagers.

In Dalitwadi, some kind of political awareness was seen.

C) Economical aspect:

Infrastructural facilities didn't seem enough. Roads were well and good. Street lights were available. Water availability was also seen.

The katkari's perspective towards development is quite different. For them, urbanization, industrialization, modernization doesn't seem attractive. They feel happiness in their own tribal lifestyle. Youngsters lack technical education, thus have less participation in industrial jobs, leading to poverty.

D) Educational challenges:

1. Language barrier: Katkari's and Dhangar's languages are Kathodi and Dhangari respectively. But the education is in marathi, english, which seems foreign and uninteresting to them. Teachers too would require to learn these native languages to teach there. Thus, a smaller number of skilled teachers are ready to come there.
2. Negligence to Higher education: As children grow up, they feel to earn for family's livelihood. Thus, very few of them opt for higher education, others start earning at a very low age. Also, the highschool and Colleges are far away from their locality, it's not possible to every child, especially girls, to commute everyday for the sake of the education, as they lack money and Familial support.
3. Poverty: Many families work as a laborer; thus, the average income is very low. Many can't pay the fees. Thus, leaves the education.
4. Lack of awareness: Still, many are unaware that education can solve the poverty and other issues. They don't feel urge to get educated. It was seen that Dhangars at least feel to educate their children but katkaris still are not much aware. Many parents are uneducated; their children are first generation to go to school. Thus, seriousness towards education is low.
5. Negligence of government: In such tribal areas, number of students is very limited. Thus, to start a school there becomes difficult for government, thus such tribal students' educational needs and Right to Education, gets neglected.
6. Lack of legacy of cultural movement:
7. It was seen that Dalits are taking education and they are quite aware of education, because of the Ambedkari influence. But, similar cultural leadership for education among katkaris and dhangars is absent.

Conclusion

Poverty, lack of awareness, government's negligence, lack of infrastructural facilities are some of the common causes responsible for educational challenges. There are two major causes which contributes more to the educational challenges, those are: lack of cultural movement and lack of educational system suitable for the tribal needs.

Dhangars live on top of the hills, and their main occupation is dairy. Still, they are aware to educate their children. But, katkaris are still not serious regarding this. Dalits are at least have come in contact with the educational mainstream due to the cultural movement against casteism led by Dr. Ambedkar. Thus, they seem more serious about education than the katkaris and dhangars. But the tribals lack such leadership. All three things i.e Government's efforts alongwith the help of NGOs and tribal's willingness to educate themselves are required.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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