Acculturation and Children's Education in a Rural Adivasi Community*

Ramesh Chandra Mishra** and Shobhna Joshi***

Abstract

The study focuses on the problems of education of the Kharwar Adivasi children in relation to acculturation taking place in the life of Kharwar people. Assessment was made of the level of acculturation that has taken place in salient domains of people's life. Participants (N = 400) were interviewed and were also asked to rate the importance of a number of factors, which they considered responsible for a variety of educational processes, such as children's attendance at school or their drop out, perceived value of education, needs beyond school education, perception of schooling and its contribution to the life of children, families and the community at large. The findings indicated family's economic and social resources as more important reasons for children's non-attendance of school relative to other factors, such as child's interest or the cultural tradition of not going to school. The benefits of schooling were regarded as confined to "personal" level. Absence of teachers and lack of discipline in schools were regarded as highly frustrating aspects of schooling. The participants did recognise the possibilities of economic gains/ employment and social recognition through schooling, but they reported schooling not really contributing much to this end.

Introduction

The Adivasi People

Inspired by the idea of social justice, development of several underprivileged and Adivasi groups of the Indian society has been

** *Professor*, Department of Psychology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (E-mail: rcmishra_2000@yahoo.com)
*** Department of Psychology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

the focus of policy planners, academicians and social workers for the last several decades. Psychologists have addressed this goal from a variety of perspectives, ranging from the analysis of individual through group to culture level processes. In this paper, we adopt the cross-cultural approach in which culture is taken as a context (a population level phenomenon) to understand human behaviour (individual level phenomenon). The study focuses on (a) acculturation taking place in the Kharwar Adivasi community living in Chanduali district of Uttar Pradesh, and (b) the response of the members of the Kharwar community to education being imparted in schools located in their villages.

The term 'Adivasi' literally means the first inhabitants on the land. In a common man's vocabulary, 'Adivasi' refers to a group of people who live a primitive life, usually in remote forest and hilly areas, many of which have quite difficult access even today. In the Constitution of India, the Adivasis are named as Scheduled Tribes (ST), which refer to groups of people who have been scheduled under the Constitution for grant of certain special privileges (e.g., quota in school admission or job) with the aim of enhancing their participation in the larger society and improving their socio-economic conditions.

In anthropological and sociological writings, the term 'Adivasi' or 'tribal' has been used interchangeably to refer to groups of people who (1) claim themselves as indigenous to the soil (2) generally inhabit in forest and hilly regions (3) largely pursue a subsistence level economy (4) have great regard for traditional religious and cultural practices (5) believe in a common ancestry, and (6) have strong in-group ties (Mishra, 2007). Since these characteristics do not strictly apply to all Adivasi people, for practical purposes, they represent a locally recognised and federally determined category of people in India. These groups have been subjected to several kinds of experiences, including those of the colonisation prior to the Independence of the country, and of developmental changes after the Independence.

Main Concerns for Education of Adivasi Groups

Adivasi People in India have undergone considerable changes during the last decades (Mishra, 2008; Mishra, Sinha & Berry, 1996) as a result of several planned activities initiated by the federal and state governments for their development. Formal education through schooling is one of these activities, which can

be claimed to have played a vital role in this process. As a social process, it has led to "capacity building" and nurtured the Adivasi society by preparing its members to function in different spheres of life more effectively than before. For generations, Adivasi people in India had been mostly concerned with the satisfaction of basic needs. They were mainly dependent on forest resources for livelihood. They had their traditional family or community based institutions, which imparted necessary knowledge and skills through which people's daily needs could be fulfilled. These institutions played an important role in the lives of Adivasi people by providing them with economically viable and culturally meaningful knowledge and life sustaining skills. During the last six decades, the picture has changed due to the introduction of formal education in Adivasi regions as part of social change and national development programs.

In spite of all efforts made at the national level, social inequalities in the case of Adivasi people still stand out clearly when we look at some basic indicators of human development. Most Adivasi people still represent groups, which are "weakest among the weak" (Sivanand, 2001). Government has recognized ST as the most deprived and marginalised section of the Indian society. Census data indicate an uneven level of educational achievement of Adivasi people in different states and across various Adivasi groups within the same states. Some states (e.g., Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland) have done very well with respect to the literacy of the ST populations, while many states (e.g., Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh) are still struggling hard with the problem of literacy (Census of India, 2011). The long standing priority and urgency of education of Adivasi children have been reaffirmed in the policy document, "*Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009*". Intervention through *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* has resulted in positive trends in Adivasi children's enrolment at schools.

In spite of some statistical change in literacy rate, the state of affairs of 'quality education' for a huge population of children in remote rural Adivasi settings still remains an issue of serious concern. Mishra (1999) indicates that many schools lack even such basic infrastructure as classrooms, black boards, and safe drinking water. Teachers and their motivation to work with Adivasi children are other important concerns. Effective learning outcome for children in the face of these difficulties remains highly

questionable. Hence, it is not surprising to find a high percentage of children dropping school at some point of time during the primary years of education (i.e., between grades 1 and 5). Addressing these basic issues of school education, especially in remote rural Adivasi settings, is an essential step towards ensuring their development (Mishra, 2008; Sinha & Mishra, 1997).

This study examines some major issues related to children's education in the Kharwar Adivasi group residing in Chandauli district of UP. This group has escaped outside influences for a long period of time, but during the last three decades, it has taken part in various development programmes initiated by government and non-government organisations, including the programme of school education. Before presenting the state of affairs of education in this group, we will briefly introduce the eco-cultural setting and the life of Kharwar people in general.

The Kharwar

There are two different views about the origin of Kharwar. According to the first view, their origin is traced to Palamau region of Bihar (now Jharkhand). According to the second view, they initially resided in the Sone valley, but later on moved to many other places. The Kharwar people of Naugarh claim their origin from Palamau and dissent from Raja Harishchandra (a king of the family of Lord Rama). Their arrival in the Naugarh region is not well known, but according to legends, they settled there some 600 years ago.

Kharwar villages of the Naugarh region are situated within a distance of 10-25 kms from the Naugarh Block head quarter in Chandauli district. Although the members of *Yadav* and *Harijan* groups also live in the same villages, the Kharwar constitute the majority population almost in all villages. The Kharwar families generally occupy the central part of the village, while families of other groups are scattered on outer skirts of the villages. Due to the hilly landscape characterised by acute shortage of water, people of these villages, for a long time, have lived mainly on forest resources through hunting of animals and gathering of forest produce combined with a rudimentary form of agriculture. Dwindling forests during the last decades have forced the Kharwar to search for other economic options. Collection of leaves for making plates and *bidi* (indigenous cigarettes), and *mahua* flowers (all of these are sold out), constitute the major forest-related economic activities today. Cattle breeding, fishing, rudimentary agriculture, and periodical

wage earning also partly contribute to their livelihood. On the whole, the living conditions of the Kharwar of the Naugarh region are hard and challenging.

The Kharwar consider themselves to be Adivasi, but the government of Uttar Pradesh has granted them the status of a "Scheduled Caste" (SC). Despite being granted a caste status, they have great concerns about purity so much so that they would not accept food or water offered by the members of the *Musahar* or *Harijan* community (SC groups), who also live in the same villages. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that they consider them as *Kshatriya* (*Suryavanshi Rajput*, a high caste group of the Indian society) and nurture a strong Adivasi identity even today. The Kharwar families can be found spread in certain regions of Ballia, Chandauli, Deoria, Ghazipur and Sonbhadra districts of UP, but in none of these locations have they been given adequate attention. They still seem to be deprived of the privileges granted to other Adivasi.

The life style of Kharwar is very simple. They generally have mud houses with projected areas of roofs, which are covered with carvings. The walls are made of a mix of rice straw and mud. The roofs are often covered with locally made tiles. Each village has a headman (called *mahto*) and a priest (called *baiga*), who occupy a respectable place in the village and have strong say in several matters pertaining to villagers. Hunting is now almost non-existent (except for occasional traps), but gathering of forest products still constitutes a substantial part of economic activity. Forest provides people with fruits, flowers, timber, firewood, leaves, and herbal medicines. Rice is the main agricultural produce, which depends much on rainfall. Children also participate with their parents in forest-based and agricultural activities, and contribute substantially to the family economy.

The Present Study

For the last two decades the authors have been working with education and health related problems of Kharwar of the Naugarh region (Joshi, 2009; Mishra, 1997, 2005, 2009; Mishra & Vajpayee, 1996). The study reported here is concerned with educational issues, which are considered most crucial for human and social development. The study was carried out with 400 adults aged 24-45 years, displaying different levels of participation in the programmes of social and cultural change going on in their region.

The work started with discussion and informal interviews with villagers. At a later point of time, rating scales and standardised instruments were introduced, which primarily focused on what we now call the "value of education". The adults were asked a number of questions that probed into reasons for children's school non-attendance, reasons for children's drop out of school, significance of education for children, families, and the Kharwar community. The study also addressed issues related to children's future, children's needs beyond school education, perception of and satisfaction with school, positive aspects of schooling, negative aspects of schooling, and one most important gain from schooling.

Since the adults were mostly uneducated, we initially thought that questionnaires would provide more meaningful information than the standard instruments. Hence, we developed a number of questionnaires. Pilot study revealed that asking questions to people was not free from difficulties. The participants were quite hesitant in answering our questions. Those who answered, did it either in 'yes' or 'no', or occasionally spoke a lot, which apparently did not make much sense to us in the context of the problems we were trying to understand. Hence, we engaged in open dialogue, sometimes with individuals, and sometimes with people in groups. This brought about many important issues, which could be included in the study as the major points of inquiry.

There were also considerable individual differences in explaining the magnitude of the problem, suggesting that some sort of quantification was essential to capture participants' responses in precise terms. Hence, the questions were transformed into statements; each statement required rating on a five-point scale ranging from "do not agree at all" to "strongly agree". Unfortunately this procedure also did not succeed. It appeared that people needed some kind of probing to place their judgment into one of the five categories. It was also felt that the participants were not able to make sense of the category that denoted an "average level" of agreement.

Reflecting on various possibilities, the scale was converted into a four-point scale, which appeared more sensible to participants than the five-point scale. In order to ensure the accuracy of participants' judgment, a ladder-rating procedure (Sinha, 1969) was used. A model of wooden ladder (with which people were familiar) containing four-steps was placed in a vertical position. The

participants were asked to think of the degree to which they agreed to a given statement in terms of a particular step of the ladder. It was made clear that the bottom step of the ladder indicated "do not agree at all" and the successive steps indicated increasing levels of agreement with the statements. The participants were asked to render their judgments by touching a particular step of the ladder that was truly indicative of their opinion. This kind of anchoring was found to be very useful. Data collection was carried out with the help of local assistants, who were also very helpful in dealing with language problems that surfaced during testing.

The study was carried out in 18 villages all of which were relatively underdeveloped. All Kharwar families had their major economic dependence on agriculture and forest resources. During the field visits, we noted that people's participation in education and other development programmes was quite variable. There were families, which were enthusiastically participating in these programmes, while many others showed only a minimal level of participation. Thus, some families seemed to be much acculturated, while many others remained less acculturated.

A 'contact-acculturation scale' was used for measuring the level of participants' acculturation (Mishra, 1996). The scale is based on several indicators of contact, which include: knowledge of the Adivasi language, knowledge of Hindi (official language), knowledge of English and other languages, ownership of people (e.g., utensils, ornaments, furniture, etc.), dressing style, livelihood, technology use, travel experience and exposure to movies. A person is rated on each of these indices on 0-5 point scales, which are added up to derive an index of contact acculturation. The scale has been widely used for assessing the degree of contact acculturation of Adivasi people in India and Nepal. The median score obtained on the scale was used to distinguish between low acculturation and high acculturation groups. The analysis reported in the study is based on participants representing low acculturation (N=194) and high acculturation (N=206) categories.

Analysis of Results

Two major problems related to education of children of the Kharwar community in Naugarh region were (a) school non-attendance, and (b) school drop-out. While approximately 67 per cent of the Kharwar children did not go to school, of those who got enrolled in

a school, approximately 70 per cent left the school within a year or two. We wanted to understand the reasons underlying these problems. We addressed these problems from children's and parents' perspective. With respect to children, our question was: "Do children have the basic cognitive abilities required for success in school?" With respect to parents, we asked the question: "Do they perceive education valuable for children and support it?" Our assumption is that effective school education is an outcome of these two important factors, namely the cognitive abilities of children and the parental encouragement for education. We have quite interesting data with respect to children's cognitive abilities, but we focus in this paper only on parents' perspective.

Reasons for Not Attending School

We included economic, cultural, social, and psychological factors for understanding why children did not go to school. Parents rated nine different reasons considered as barriers of schooling for children.

The mean scores of high acculturation (HA) and low acculturation (LA) parents with respect to the perceived importance of these reasons were calculated (Table 1). Generally speaking, the HA parents laid greater emphasis on 'lack of family tradition', 'lack of parental interest', 'lack of school facilities', 'children's involvement in child care' and other 'economic activities' for children's non-attendance of school as compared to the LA parents, who considered 'lack of economic resources' as a more important reason. The HA parents also considered people's belief in 'no gains from school education' as responsible for children's non-attendance of schools more than did the LA parents. On the other hand, the two groups did not differ significantly in their ratings of 'lack of social tradition' and 'lack of child's interest' as reasons for non-attendance of school by children.

Reasons for Drop out of School

Included here were some physical, economic and psychological qualities of children, parents, teachers, and some features of schools as factors in analysing children's drop out of school.

The mean scores of the HA and LA parents on these aspects are given in Table 2. The findings revealed that the HA parents considered 'non-attractiveness of schools', 'irregularity of teachers',

'difficulties in children's adaptation to school climate', 'lack of parental interest', 'distance of schools from home' (accessibility), and 'children's engagement at home' as more important factors

Table 1
Mean Scores of Groups (Score Range 1-4)

Reasons	Acculturation	N	Mean	S.D	t values
Family tradition	Low	194	1.24	.754	
	High	206	1.50	.909	3.13**
Social tradition	Low	194	1.47	.822	
	High	206	1.50	.860	0.31ns
Child's interest	Low	194	1.81	.887	
	High	206	1.90	.958	1.01ns
Parental interest	Low	194	1.69	.869	
	High	206	1.98	.995	3.10**
Value of education	Low	194	1.80	1.054	
	High	206	2.07	1.245	2.32*
School facility	Low	194	1.60	.790	
	High	206	1.99	.902	4.50**
Child care	Low	194	2.05	.750	
	High	206	2.28	.801	3.02**
Economic pressure	Low	194	2.15	.743	
	High	206	2.51	.831	4.62**
Weak resources	Low	194	2.54	.821	
	High	206	2.16	.899	4.42**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ns = not significant

in children's drop out of school in comparison to the LA parents, who considered 'lack of money' as a more important reason. With respect to 'child's interest', there was no significant difference between the two groups.

Table 2
Mean Scores of Groups (Score Range 1-4)

Reasons	Acculturation	N	Mean	S.D.	t values
Child's interest	Low	194	1.64	.872	
	High	206	1.81	.884	1.90ns
School attractiveness	Low	194	1.57	.760	
	High	206	2.03	.888	5.51**
Irregular teacher	Low	194	1.75	.816	
	High	206	2.18	.856	5.16**
Child's school adaptation	Low	194	1.50	.790	
	High	206	1.85	.882	4.22**
Parental interest	Low	194	1.66	.953	
	High	206	2.00	.968	3.49**
School accessibility	Low	194	2.03	.881	
	High	206	2.35	.950	3.47**
Pressure of economy	Low	194	2.09	.721	
	High	206	2.27	.779	2.32**
Lack of resources	Low	194	2.54	.802	
	High	206	2.14	.958	4.51**

** p <.01, ns = not significant

Perceived Value of Education

This aspect of schooling was assessed with the help of an open-ended questionnaire consisting of 17 items. We will present our findings on different aspects separately. It may be noted that the parents were free to indicate any number of benefits they perceived as accruing from education of children. The questions were asked about benefits from school education to children, to the village, and to the Kharwar community.

(a) Benefits to Children

Parents were asked to tell the benefits of schooling for the concerned child and a variety of benefits were pointed out. A large number of parents (about 89%), almost equally from the HA and LA groups, indicated 'personal gains' from schooling, meaning 'better growth and development' of the child. About 7 per cent parents, mainly from the LA group, considered the possibility of better 'economic

opportunities or employment' as the next important gain from schooling. Other gains, such as 'developmental', 'social' or 'health/hygiene' were represented infrequently in parents' responses. Some parents of the HA group also indicated 'no gains' for children from schooling. Overall, there was no significant difference in the perception of the HA and LA parents with respect to the perceived benefit of schooling for the child.

(b) Benefits to the Village

Parents were asked to indicate the benefits that child's education might bring to the village. The analysis revealed that 56 per cent parents from the LA group (against 28% of the HA group) indicated 'developmental gains' (that their village would develop), whereas 42 per cent parents of the HA group (against 29% of the LA group) indicated 'personal gains' to some people in the village. These differences in percentages were statistically significant. A few parents pointed out other benefits (e.g., social, economic, health). There were also a few parents who perceived 'no gains' from schooling for the village, and of course, a few who did not give any response.

(c) Benefits to the Kharwar Community

When asked about the benefits of schooling for the Kharwar community, parents indicated a number of benefits. About 74 per cent parents (78% from the LA group and 70% from the HA group) again referred to 'personal benefits', again meaning that children of the community would certainly develop from schooling, but that development would not directly bring anything meaningful for the Kharwar community at large. While other benefits, such as 'economic', 'developmental', or 'social', were indicated by a few parents, many parents (11% from the LA and 17% from the HA) considered child's schooling as of 'no gain' for the community. The LA and HA parents did not differ significantly in terms of the perceived benefits of schooling for the community.

Other Aspects of Schooling

In addition to asking parents about the benefits of schooling, we also asked several other questions in relation to children's future with school education, children's needs beyond school education, parents' perception of school in terms of its adequacy, their satisfaction with school, positive and negative aspects of schools,

and one most important gain for children from schooling. The following pages present the findings on these aspects of schooling.

(a) Future of the Child

When asked, "What will be the future of your child after schooling", the parents pointed out a number of prospects, although about 32 per cent of the parents were 'uncertain' about the future of children with school education. Many parents of the LA group (47%, against 19% of the HA group) considered school education to provide children with options for 'new economic activities'. This indicates a relatively greater optimism with education among the LA as compared to the HA parents. On the other hand, many HA parents felt that school education would provide them with 'better life' (17%, against 13% of the LA group) and a sense of 'self-efficacy' (13%, against 7% of the LA group) so that they would be more confident in meeting and talking to outsiders, including the government officers.

(b) Needs Beyond School Education

We asked parents to tell whether there was a need to teach something else besides the usual basic curriculum prescribed in schools. We also asked them to tell us specifically what they would like to be added to the existing school curriculum. Analyses of responses showed that parents indicated 'additional tuition', knowledge about 'farming' and 'household activities', 'vocational education', and 'morals' as additional courses in school education. A sizable number of parents from LA group (51%, against 28% of the HA group) gave emphasis on 'additional tuition', while those from the HA group emphasized on 'morality' and 'vocational education'.

(c) Perception of Schools

Parents were asked to tell how they perceived the schools that were functioning in their villages/adjacent to villages in terms of their adequacy for education of children. The analysis suggested that a majority of parents (56%) perceived schools to be 'inadequate'. Difference between the LA and HA groups in terms of their perception of school adequacy (57% vs. 55%) was not significant.

(d) Satisfaction from School

Parents were asked to tell whether they were satisfied or not satisfied with the existing schools in their area. The findings indicated that

an absolute majority of parents (98%) was 'not satisfied' with schools. It was true for both the LA and HA parents.

(e) Positive Aspects of Schools

Parents were asked to tell the things, which they considered good and which they liked in schools. In general, four different kinds of responses were made. The most dominant response was 'education' (61%), which indicated that a majority of parents felt that schools were, at least, educating their children. A greater number of parents from the LA group (74%) than from the HA group (49%) considered this as an important positive aspect of schools. On the other hand, more of the HA parents (20%) considered 'company' of other children as another positive aspect of schooling in comparison to the LA parents (4%). Some parents also considered 'social/moral education' or 'hygiene education' as other good things in schools. Several HA parents (26%, against 14% of the LA group), however, did not speak out anything.

(f) Negative Aspects of Schools

We asked parents to tell the things, which they did not consider good, and which they did not like in schools. In general, five different kinds of responses were obtained. About 35 per cent of the parents did not point out anything negative about schools. Others indicated 'absence of teachers', 'ineffective teachers', 'lack of discipline in schools', and 'absence of incentives' as major negative aspects of schools. Parents of the LA group indicated 'absence of teachers' (35%), 'lack of discipline' (18%) and 'lack of incentives' (13%) more often as negative things in schools than did the parents of the HA group. The latter indicated 'ineffective teachers' as a negative aspect of schools more often (12%) than the former (8%). A few parents also indicated that 'schools often remained closed'. The analysis suggested that although the LA and HA parents considered the same factors as negative aspects of schools, the frequency with which they subscribed to these different factors differed significantly.

(g) One Most Important Gain from Schooling

Parents were asked to tell "one major gain" from schooling that they considered as most important. The analysis indicated two important categories of gains from schooling in the opinion of parents. The

first one was related to the 'prospects of new economic activities' (i.e., wage employment). Relatively more number of parents of the LA group (52%) considered this as a major gain from schooling than those of the HA group (36%). The second one was linked to 'social recognition of the family', which was suggested more often by parents of the HA group (42%) than those of the LA group (28%). This suggested that the value of perceived gains from schooling differed significantly between the LA and HA parents. Besides these two broad gains, parents also pointed out children's 'personal growth', 'development and progress', 'chances of better future', and 'reduced insecurity' as other important gains from schooling. These gains were indicated almost equally by the LA and HA parents

Discussion

Much has been written about education and its role in the development of individuals and groups all over the world. The goals, forms, contents, modes of delivery, and other aspects of education present considerable variation across as well as within many cultures (Dasen & Akkari, 2008). That schooling produces any new cognitive structures among individuals seems to be doubtful (Mishra & Dasen, 2004). On the other hand, schooling does increase the possibility of the existing cognitive abilities of children and adults to be applied to other situations. There is also evidence to suggest that in unfamiliar encounters, schooling makes people feel more at ease because of which educated people can control and manage the affairs of their life more effectively than those who have not been to school (Mishra & Dasen, 2004). It is in this sense that school education is believed to lead to general "empowerment" that gets manifested in individuals' functioning in personal, social, economic, work, and other important domains of life. These positive influences of education are also perceived and acknowledged to a considerable extent by parents and other members of the community whose children participate in schools (Mishra, 1996; Serpell, 1993).

The above-mentioned observations of researchers, who have worked with children of weaker, marginalised, rural, and Adivasi communities in different parts of the world, generally find support from the findings of our study. The Kharwar parents perceived several benefits of school-based education, but children's personal development was most important among them. With education parents clearly perceived better economic possibilities (i. e., wage employment) and a better future for children. They also visualised

a better life for children, including their movement away from home along with enhanced feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. Thus, the idea that school education prepares future generations for change in any society gets resonated in the responses of the Kharwar parents in the study.

In psychological research, a distinction has been made between 'cognitive' and 'non-cognitive' effects of schooling (Mishra, 1996). The cognitive effects are observed in the form of specific knowledge and general reasoning skills that children acquire while they negotiate life in schools. The non-cognitive effects are observed in the form of changes in beliefs, attitudes and values towards work, society, and the life in general. Both these effects were found to be represented in parents' responses. That school education can impart knowledge and skills to enhance chances for wage employment and improve economic conditions of individuals, and that it can prepare children to accept many responsibilities as adults in the society are the facts deeply realised by the Kharwar parents. The parents perceived children, village, and their community as closely interlinked, and believed that development of children could be instrumental in ameliorating the conditions of their personal lives more than their family and the community.

The level of parents' optimism, however, was not without preconditions. Children's engagement in economic activities and child care responsibilities, possibly due to lack of resources available with families, were mentioned by parents as important barriers in children's attendance at schools. On the other hand, several factors were held responsible for children's drop out of schools. These factors included less attractiveness of schools, irregularity of teachers, children's difficulties in adapting to school environment (e.g., staying whole day in school surrounding) and inaccessibility of schools. It may indeed be difficult for educational planners and administrators to deal with economic conditions of people, but the latter set of factors are certainly modifiable. What the results of the study ask for are greater sensitivity, motivation, commitment and dedication on the part of school teachers. Research carried out with primary school students generally suggests that teacher motivation is a far more important factor in children's school achievement than children's abilities, capacities, or any other set of factors (Mishra, 1998).

In traditional societies, formal schools might be perceived as alien institutions and not openly welcome by many. Once rooted

and recognised in a community, however, people develop many expectations from such institutions. Especially in cities, much of the responsibility of child socialisation has now been shifted from family to school with which children negotiate a considerable part of their active day time. Studies often point to a gap between children's life in cultural contexts and life in schools. For example, Smith and Sobel (2009) indicate that school life deprives children of many rich experiences available to them in community environments. The gap is highly accentuated for children who attend schools in big cities. This happens mainly due to children's connection being almost completely severed from the life of natural environments, which is characterised by the richness of landscapes, streams, rivers, and a wide variety of flora and fauna. Knowledge provided in schools is in no way similar to the first-hand experiences available to children in community schools situated in natural environments.

A majority of the Kharwar parents in the study perceived schools as inadequate and school education as not satisfactory. The parents expressed some other needs besides the teaching of regular curriculum during school hours. These needs included provisions for additional tuition, knowledge about farming and household activities, vocational training and moral lessons. Such expectations of the community members suggest that schools have to fulfill many more obligations if education really aims at bringing about positive change in people's life. Whether teachers employed in the government schools can accept these responsibilities as a kind of social service to the 'weaker sections' of the population is not easy to answer. On the other hand, teachers working in schools run by non-government organisations in the Kharwar villages are doing a commendable job by addressing these 'other' needs of the community in addition to imparting routine school education. The effects of such organisations on the life of children are pervasive, and they receive greater acceptance, respect and recognition in the community than the teachers employed in the government schools.

Whether education is effective or not, inroads from schools have already been made into the life of the Kharwar of Naugarh area. The problems of children's enrolment and drop out of school, however, need careful attention. More or less similar experience has been recorded with regard to education of children of other Adivasi groups living in other regions of the country (Mishra, 2007). The findings offer support to the observations of Sinha and Mishra (1997) that only a culturally appropriate, locally meaningful, and

economically viable form of school education stands a chance of success in Adivasi communities. This kind of education is likely to keep children in place by providing all necessary skills needed for negotiation of life in most effective ways in their respective cultural environments. Many Kharwar parents indicated the need for education with respect to 'farming' and 'household activities'. This fact essentially requires some 'tailoring' of school curriculum in tune with the demands of the Kharwar life. Teachers can make valuable contribution in this respect by integrating education with agricultural and other local developmental needs of the Kharwar community. Lessons on horticulture, herbal farming, and cattle breeding along with some vocational education may be useful in generating income opportunities for the people locally.

The most crucial element of school is a motivated teacher. As Adivasi settlements are located in remote areas, which are poorly connected by means of transportation and devoid of many basic facilities of living, government teachers (often socialised in urban way of life) find these conditions highly frustrating. Their irregularity in schools can be partly accounted for by difficult physical working conditions. The option is to find a teacher locally, which has been a practice in majority of schools for quite some time. But this arrangement has its own limitations: a local teacher lacks many of the experiences and skills that can be helpful in connecting children with the realities of the global world (Mishra, 1999).

The study addresses an important goal of the government, i.e., 'education for all'. Parents' perspectives on school education brought out in this study may be helpful in lifting some of the barriers that block the progress of the Kharwar community on the path of educational development. The findings suggest that lack of resources and pressures of economy stand as two strong barriers in children's attendance at school. Findings also suggest a number of school-related factors, which work against a child's continuity in school. Both the set of factors require serious attention in order to facilitate education of the Kharwar children.

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