

WORLD INDIGENOUS DAY: RIGHT TO EDUCATION

(Prepared by Dr (Fr) Lalit P. Tirkey on the occasion of World Indigenous Day which was celebrated on 9th August, 2016 at Malbazar)

- Today August 9th, 2016 we are celebrating WORLD INDIGENOUS DAY not just here but throughout the world to pay tribute to the world's 370 million indigenous people, and we reaffirm UNESCO's determination to safeguard and promote their identities, languages and knowledge systems.
- For 10 years, from 1994 when first time WORLD INDIGENOUS DAY was celebrated till 2014 the theme was 'dignity of action/work' to show whatever small or menial work indigenous people do is dignified.
- The theme of this year's World's Indigenous Peoples day declared by UNESCO is THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION.
- Education as we know is the human capital that has the power to change the society, transform that community as we have seen in developed countries.
- Education' refers to all types and levels of education, and includes access to education, the standard and quality of education, and the conditions under which it is given.
- Education, the most powerful instrument in the struggle against exclusion and discrimination, is still elusive for indigenous people in Latin America who remain the most disadvantaged segment of the population despite their wide presence in the region.
- keeping that in mind Education was established as a fundamental human right in 1948 by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Since then, the international community has reiterated its commitment to providing quality education to all children, youth and adults in numerous declarations and documents.
- but the truth is that many communities in many countries are deprived of this basic human rights and therefore there is backwardness, poverty, malnutrition and overall around development of human society
- Therefore, **UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education** (1960).
(a) Of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level;

(b) Of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard;

(c) Subject to the provisions of Article 2 of this Convention, of establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or (d) Of inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are in-compatible with the dignity of man.

- but the sections or groups most deprived of education and educational facilities are the indigenous people variously known throughout the world.

- Too many indigenous peoples are still denied the full right to quality education.
- Linked with socio-economic and cultural barriers, this marginalization often creates a vicious circle of disadvantage.
- **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)** The right to education is fundamental
- And of course, this year 2016 on the DAY OF WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, UN is inviting the world to reflect over RIGHT TO EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.
- We the indigenous people present here are invited to think and reflect that EDUCATION IN INDEED OUR RIGHT.
- But not just simple, basic/primary education but good quality education... higher education/technical education/professional education that will take our society from backwardness to progress.
- In the **Outcome Document from the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014)**
- Article 11. We commit ourselves to ensuring equal access to high -quality education that recognizes the diversity of the culture of indigenous peoples and to health, housing, water, sanitation and other economic and social programmes to improve well-being, including through initiatives, policies and the provision of resources.
- The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that without access to quality education indigenous communities will not be able to fully enjoy their rights.
- Deprivation of access to quality education is a major factor contributing to social marginalization, poverty and dispossession of indigenous peoples”.

- The Expert Mechanism says that indigenous peoples have the “right to educational autonomy” including “the right to decide their own educational priorities [...] as well as the right to establish and control their own educational systems and institutions, if they so choose”.

Indigenous peoples and formal school education: constraints and concerns

- ❖ but let us first reflect what is the present status of education among the indigenous people vis-à-vis non-indigenous people
 - ❖ do you know that more than India it is the people in Australia, south America, America and Canada there are indigenous people ...known as aborigine, 1st nations, and so on.
 - ❖ Although they live in 1st world countries /rich countries, there are still at the bottom in their own country, their education level is the lowest. why why we may ask/ I had the fortune interact with some aboriginals in Canada and us and they say there is always a dominant versus suppressed group who are indigenous
 - ❖ In educational field gap between indigenous peoples and mainstream populations remains critical: rates of enrollment retention, Completion of and performance at primary school level are significantly lower and gender disparities are often pronounced.
 - ❖ Indigenous educational deficits range from generalized exclusion to limited access to the upper levels of primary and secondary education, with admittance to higher education still being the exception.
 - ❖ ---such as poverty (child labour), ethnicity (social stigma
- ### **Indigenous peoples’ acute educational marginalization –in india**
- ❖ And institutionalized discrimination), language barriers, gender-based discrimination.
 - ❖ Most national curricula tend to ignore indigenous peoples’ history, cultures and languages;
 - ❖ Textbooks and other educational materials reflect the values, norms and traditions of mainstream society.
 - ❖ • Formal school education is provided in the national STATE/REGIONAL language...
 - ❖ Languages of indigenous peoples - as well as their traditional knowledge and skills - are ignored or devalued (we can even imagine teaching in Sadri, Oraon,

Munda, Kharia)...Santhal has become medium of instruction and see how they are improving.

- ❖ The methods for imparting instruction and class discipline clash with those commonly practised in the students' home or community
- ❖ Most non-indigenous teachers are not prepared to teach in indigenous communities (lack of cultural training and understanding of indigenous peoples' values and ways of life). They often have wrong opinion/biased view about Adivasi children and treat them as "good for nothing"

❖ **INDIAN CONTEXT**

- ✓ We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture...We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.(Nehru, 58)
- ✓ Government planners see education as indispensable for helping tribal peoples cope with national integration. Education will also determine their prosperity, success and security in life.
- ✓ Consequently, the government's dream to assimilate the tribes remains unfulfilled and raises basic questions about the implementation of such policies and strategies.
- ✓ Government reports indicate that there is no scarcity of schools, other facilities or scholarships for the implementation of tribal education schemes

The following factors also negatively affect indigenous peoples' access to formal education:

- Lack of or deficient school infrastructure in the areas where they live;
- Financial burden imposed by tuition fees and the indirect costs of education (materials, uniforms, school meals, transport);
- Tribal students have different backgrounds from their non-tribal schoolmates and even the teachers, who are normally outsiders, do not understand the tribal students.
- These biases are expressed in various forms of discrimination. Tribal youths have complained that teachers did not teach them in the schools

because they believed that if they did, the tribal students would no longer be dependent on them. Tribal youths also feel that teachers endeavor to undermine the attitudes toward their own customs, mannerisms, language, or, toward their cultural heritage in general.

- I had many experiences which made me feel that I belonged to a primitive, uncultured group whose youth were not worthy of being students.
- ✓ Lack of qualified bilingual teachers and learning materials written in the learners' mother-tongue;