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Topic of Research: Tribes, Education and Nationalism: A Study of Tribal Students in Chhattisgarh

FINDINGS

This ethnographic study of school education in a Muria Adivasi village in rural Bastar, conducted between March 2017 and June 2019, reveals several critical findings about the role and impact of schooling on the Adivasi community.

1. School Education: Reproduction or Emancipation:

Schooling serves as both a tool for social reproduction and potential emancipation. While it reproduces existing social hierarchies through symbolic violence and imposition of the official language, it also provides a pathway for students to contest historical inequities and imagine a different future.

2. Construction of Nationalism

Schools act as crucial sites for instilling notions of nationhood and nationalism. They serve as ideological state apparatuses that shape students' allegiances to the nation-state, often aligning with aspirations to join the armed forces, as evidenced by five students who joined the forces by June 2019.

3. Representation in Textbooks

Adivasi students engage critically with their representations in social science textbooks. The content often perpetuates stereotypes and fails to reflect the community's complexities, prompting varied responses from students, from internalizing these images to actively resisting them.

4. Sociological Impact of Schooling:

The introduction of school education has necessitated significant social restructuring within the community. This includes shifts in labour organization within families and broader community roles, highlighting the tension between traditional practices and the demands of formal education.

5. Classroom Dynamics and Language:

The classroom environment reveals a strategic use of silence and withdrawal among students, stemming from the imposition of the official language. This symbolic violence leads to learning deficits, beginning in primary school and persisting through secondary education, necessitating coping strategies like mnemonic learning and reliance on guidebooks.

6. Student Agency and Resistance

Despite the challenges, students exhibit agency in various forms, from persistence in schooling to strategic dropout and migration. These actions are not mere failures but acts of resistance against systemic inequities and efforts to seek dignity and equality.

7. Historical and Cultural Contexts:

The community's movement towards school education is influenced by historical factors, including the colonial construction of Adivasis as "savages" and the necessity to engage with the state through literacy. This has led to a perception of education as a means of transitioning from oral to written traditions and contesting imposed identities.

8. Generational Change and Aspirations:

Schooling fosters generational change by altering aspirations and providing new opportunities, despite the persistent structural challenges. Students' engagement with education reflects a broader desire for upward mobility and improved socio-economic status.

9. Gendered Educational Experiences:

The study highlights gender-specific labour forms within school education, revealing how cultural capital and educational processes are deeply intertwined with gender norms, impacting both boys and girls differently in their educational journeys.

In conclusion, the thesis underscores the multifaceted impact of school education in the Adivasi village, portraying it as a site of both possibility and limitation, shaped by historical inequities and the community's aspirations for a better future.