

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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A Case of Andhra Pradesh

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NATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION

NIEPA Occasional Paper

18

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New Delhi - 110 016**

(India) NIEPA 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier version of this paper appeared in *Journal of Education and Social Change* (Vol. III, No. 1, April-June, 1989). In revising this paper, I was greatly benefitted from the comments of anonymous referees of the *Journal of Education and Social Change*, and NIEPA Occasional Paper. Additionally I have also been benefited from the valuable comments of Dr. Govinda and Dr. A. Mathew. I also acknowledge Mr. G.V. Subba Rao (DEO) and Heads of Ashram Schools for providing data related to various aspects of Ashram Schools in Adilabad district and Mr. B.V. Ravi Prasad for helping in tabulation of data.

EDUCATION IN ASHRAM SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Ashram schools have been viewed as effective institutions to meet the educational needs of tribals living in interior, most backward and scattered habitations where opening up of normal schools is not viable. The concept of Ashram school stems from the objective of providing an atmosphere in which the inmates are offered full opportunities for total personality development. Ashram schools are residential schools in which free boarding and lodging along with other facilities and incentives are offered to the inmates. One of the major thrusts of Ashram school is : imparting skills in crafts\ vocations, apart from providing general education.

Majority of the Ashram schools in the country are concentrated in six states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa and Rajasthan. The state of Andhra Pradesh has the highest number of Ashram schools (437) in the country with a student enrolment of 41,768. In view of the objectives with which Ashram schools have been established, the present paper examines the existing facilities, enrolment, dropout rate and working pattern of Ashram schools in Andhra Pradesh with special reference to Adilabad district. The first part of the paper gives a brief introduction of concept and objectives of Ashram schools followed by comparison of interstate pattern of Ashram Schools. The third part presents the growth, enrolment and distribution pattern of Ashram schools in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The fourth section examines the infrastructure facilities, enrolment, dropout pattern, teacher pupil ratio and staffing pattern of Ashram schools with special reference to Adilabad district. The fifth section describes the academic and other activities in Ashram schools. The final section draws some conclusions.

EDUCATION IN ASHRAM SCHOOLS

K. Sujatha

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of Ashram Schools for tribal children has been derived from the traditional Indian Gurukulas and the Gandhian philosophy of basic education, in which the teacher and the taught live together and have close interaction. This type of closeness helps the students not only in sharpening the capacities but also in full personality development.

Way back in 1922 Thakkar Bapa a social worker was influenced by Gandhian movement and he initiated an experiment of Ashram Schools in Panchmahal hills of Gujarat for tribal children. His efforts proved successful in imparting education to tribal children along with training in vocational/craft education. Later he replicated the same system in Maharashtra and Bihar. Soon after India got independence, as a part of the developmental work, various voluntary organizations in the-states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Orissa took immense interest in educating tribals by establishing Ashram Schools. During the First Five Year Plan there was an attempt by the Government of India to open such schools. However, the momentum in opening Ashram Schools started increasing from the Third Five Year Plan onwards.[1]

The Dhebar commission in 1961 reviewed the tribal development programmes and found that Ashram schools in Maharashtra and Gujarat were successful and suitable for educating tribal children. Therefore, the commission recommended to establish and expand them in more interior, inaccessible sparsely populated areas where opening up of a normal primary school in each small habitation is not viable. It was also emphasised that these schools should be centres for craft/vocational education and cultural activities apart from general education. Another objective envisaged was that Ashram schools should serve the most disadvantaged among the tribal groups.[2] Later the Education Commission (1964-66) also recommended opening of Ashram schools.[3] Based on these recommendations a centrally sponsored scheme of Ashram schools was initiated in different states and later it was transferred to respective state governments.

The main objectives of the Ashram schools as envisaged by the various Committees and Commissions are:

- i) to wean the children away from an atmosphere which is generally not conducive for the development of their personality and outlook;
- ii) to impart general formal education;
- iii) to impart socially useful vocational/crafts along with the general education;
- iv) to encourage tribal traditions like folk songs and dances so that the schools are not only mere learning places but also centres of cultural activities;
- v) to provide close interaction between the teacher and taught through increased individual attention; and
- vi) to reduce the dropout rate and to improve the retention capacity of the school.

Ashram schools are in general residential and the inmates are provided with facilities of boarding and lodging. Moreover, they function within highly structured and systematic framework.

The broad policy guideline for the Ashram schools as envisaged by various committees and study groups on tribal welfare programmes are:

- i) Ashram schools should be intervillage schools;
- ii) Ashram schools should be opened in such areas where normal schools cannot be opened;
- iii) Most backward tribal groups should be covered.

2. INTER STATE PATTERN OF ASHRAM SCHOOLS

Although the concept and objectives of Ashram schools are basically common in all states, however, their planning and management varies in different states. The levels of education, norms of establishing schools, and activities differ from state to state.

The working pattern, structure and level of education in Ashram schools differ widely among the states. In some of the states like Maharashtra and Gujarat they are mostly run by voluntary organizations as private aided schools. Whereas in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Ashram schools are exclusively under the Tribal Welfare department of respective state governments. Both primary and post basic levels of education is available in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Orissa. In case of Madhya Pradesh, Ashram schools are usually upto middle stage and at the secondary stage these are called 'model schools'. In Rajasthan all the Ashram schools are either primary or middle stage. In Andhra Pradesh, Ashram schools have primary, upper primary and secondary stages of education. In Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, Ashram schools are coeducational whereas in Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Ashram schools are separate for girls and boys. The money spent on food and other items varies from state to state which ranges between Rs. 85 to 100 for ten months in a year.

GUJARAT

The credit goes to the state of Gujarat for having a first Ashram school. This state has another uniqueness in that all the Ashram schools are exclusively run by voluntary organisations. The government invites applications through advertisement in newspapers from voluntary agencies to open Ashram schools (Basic or post Basic) according to the need and financial position of the government. The voluntary agencies apply to the Director Education through the District Ashramshala Adhikari of their own region. After investigating the facts related to the voluntary agency particularly regarding suitability of location, availability of drinking water facility, land and other amenities the voluntary organisations are sanctioned grant to open-Ashram schools. Ashram school should have minimum 10 acres of land for agriculture and building purposes. The voluntary agencies are expected to obtain the free government land, grass land or waste land. If the free land is not available a token grant of Rs. 10000 is given for the purchase of 10 acres of land.

Ashram schools consist of classes from I to VII whereas post Basic Ashram schools have classes from VIII to X. Initially 15 boys and girls of age group of 7 to 9 years are admitted in to standard I in the Ashram school. In post basic Ashram school, initially 40 students are admitted in standard VIII. Students coming out of Ashram schools are generally given preference for admission in VIII standard. In Ashram schools, every year 10 boys and 10 girls are admitted. After six years the Ashram school develops into fulfilled Primary school having class I to VII with a student strength of 120.

In post Basic Ashram school every year 40 students are admitted along with addition of a class. After 3 years, the post Basic Ashram school is developed into fulfilled secondary school from VIII to X. If the management can make provision for, and demands for higher secondary standards XI and XII, the government provides sanction subject to budget provision.

In the first year two trained teachers are appointed by the voluntary agencies. The teachers have to reside in the Ashram School as they have to perform the duties of warden. A married couple is preferred. Free residence and Rs. 20 (warden allowance) are given to the teachers. Third trained teacher is appointed when the strength of the Ashram school is 90. For every thirty students an additional teacher is appointed.

Menial staff comprising a cook, kamati and kitchen servant are appointed from the very beginning of the establishment of the school. A second cook is appointed when the students strength reaches to seventy.

In case of post Basic Ashram school, one trained Head Master or Principal, trained teachers and one Field Assistant with Diploma in Agriculture are appointed. The pay scales of teachers and other employees are as per the government rules.

The syllabus and curriculum in Ashram schools and post Basic Ashram schools are as per the District Primary Education Committee and Gujarat Secondary Board respectively. Basic education is stressed upon, agriculture is the main craft and kitchen gardening and spinning, weaving, poultry and cattle breeding are some of the vocations implemented.

Voluntary organisations have to construct two units of Ashram schools as per the plan approved by the government.

Gujarat state is singular in having a district level Ashramshala Officer for inspection and supervision of the Ashram schools.

Rs. 100 per pupil per month for eleven months are paid towards boarding and lodging expenses.

MAHARASHTRA

The state of Maharashtra has adopted various approaches for running the Ashram schools. Before Independence the Ashram schools were run by voluntary agencies, and, later the government of Maharashtra started providing grant-in-aid to run Ashram schools. From 1960 the state Department of Education established some Ashram schools. In 1972 the Social Welfare Department has recognised the Tribal Development Corporation as a voluntary agency to run Ashram schools on grant-in-aid basis.

In 1975 Ashram schools run by Department of Education were taken over by Social Welfare Department. In 1980 finding it a problem to run Ashram schools the Tribal Development Corporation has transferred it's Ashram schools to Tribal Welfare Department. At present, Ashram schools are run by voluntary organisations and Department of Tribal Welfare. The Ashram schools offer both primary and secondary levels of Education. A perspective plan of Ashram schools based on the school mapping exercise was prepared.

Ashram schools are opened in such areas, where there are no educational facilities, inaccessible areas, in backward places and serving the most disadvantaged. Availability of land, water and other facilities are also considered for opening of schools.

According to Ashram school scheme every year one additional standard is to be opened and 20 pupils are to be admitted till it becomes a fulfilled school from standard I to VII with a strength of 120 children. The Ashram schools are further developed into Post Basic Ashram schools from VIII to X standard. Ashram School have co- education. In these schools besides general education more emphasis is laid on training in agriculture and crafts. Department of Tribal Welfare provides assistance towards recurring as well as non-recurring expenditure of the school.

The financial and administrative part of Ashram schools is looked after by Director of Tribal Welfare, whereas the academic inspection and supervision are the responsibility of Education Department. The qualification, and service condition of teachers in Ashram Schools are the same as in Education Department.

Under the scheme of Area Development the Government of Maharashtra through Tribal Welfare Department introduced the scheme of 'Ashram school complexes' in 1972. This scheme was aimed to speed up socio- economic development of the inhabitants of scheduled and hilly areas by adopt-

ing an area development approach through Ashram school as a focal point. For this purpose an area consisting of a population of about 5000 to 7000 is selected and multi educational activities are initiated for socio-educational development. Each compact area selected has an Ashram school, a Balwadi, an Agricultural Demonstration Farm, an Animal Husbandary Unit, a Health Unit and Vocational Educational center where adults in the compact area are trained in the trades.

Under the 'Ashram school complex' scheme the Ashram school is residential primary school. Training in agriculture is imparted to students alongwith general education. The school starts with standard I and developed into fulfilled Primary school having upto VIIIth standard. To begin with 20 students are admitted.

Each Ashram school has a Balwadi attached to it catering to 30 to 40 children. The major objective of Balwadi is to impart pre-primary education to tribal children.

Under the Agriculture Demonstration Farm a plot of land admeasuring 20 hectares is developed as a demonstration farm both for the school children as well the agriculturists in the compact area. This plot is used to grow the crops suitable to local conditions. The produce is supplied to the Ashram schools according to their requirement and the surplus is sold. Modern methods of agriculture including proper doses of manure and the use of insecticides etc are taught. The demonstration is given free of cost to tribals in the vicinity with a view to educate them about better and high yeilding varieties of crops.

In the Dairy Husbandary unit 10 cows or buffalos are provided. The milk produced in this unit is sold to the Ashram school and the cost thereof is adjusted to the receipt of the complex. The unit organises training in the care of milch cattle and organisation of dairy unit.

The preventive curative Health Service unit is located in central place in one of the complexes. So that the tribal people of the nearby villages can be benefited by this institution.

The vocational training center was also contemplated with a view to impart vocational training like carpentry, wood work, smithy, tailoring, bamboo work etc. for 30 inmates. Intially one unit was catering to the need of 2 to 3 complexes. But their number would be increased if their need is justified by experience.

The school complex scheme was implemented by Tribal Welfare Department. Technical advice and guidance was sought from concerned departmennts. The approach was towards the integrated development. The key concept behind the strategy seems to be the human resource development. Due to various administrative reasons at implementation, Ashram school and Balwadi were successful and other activities met with limited success. Later the government has taken a decision to give more emphasis to education in Ashram Schools and Balwadis. Another important scheme entrusted to Ashram school complex was 'Scheme of Search and Development of talent among Tribal children' Examination is conducted for the award of various scholarships at the school stage. In order to enable the tribal students to appear for such competative examinations, necessary and proper guidance is provided by Ashram school teachers who are offered Rs. 10 per month for each student clearing the entrance examination.

ORISSA

Way back in 1949 the first Ashram school was established as 'Gurukul Ashram' with students and teachers living together emphasizing the basic education and managed by a voluntary organisation. At present the Ashram schools are residential and separate for boys and girls run by Tribal Welfare Department and also by voluntary organisations as grant-in-aid schools. They are of all three levels primary, middle and secondary. They are opened in scattered areas and backward parts. Students in these insitutions are imparted general education designed by education department from time to time along with vocational training in crafts and trades like carpentry, tailoring, weaving, shorthand, typewriting, motor mechanics etc. Remedial coaching in selected subjects is organised.

The sanctioned strength ranges between 60-200 students and belonging to distance beyond 3 KM. Others like Scheduled Castes, non Scheduled Castes within the radius of 3 km are admitted as day scholars. The District Education Officer has powers to inspect and supervise the schools, whereas the District Tribal Welfare Officers have administrative and financial powers. Recently the Tribal Welfare Department has recruited an Education Officer for academic supervision.

In Ashram Secondary schools students are involved in management of the mess under the guidance of teacher. The advisory committee of the school consists of 11 members, Project Administrator as the Chairman and Head Master as the Secretary. The committee has representation of local elected leaders, persons from Tribal Welfare Department, local tribals, teachers, and students. In case of primary Ashram Schools the chairman of the Panchayat Samithi is the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

The Tribal Welfare Department has introduced a prize scheme on the basis of institutional evaluation. The evaluation is based mainly on academic performance of the students in public examination at the end of secondary stage. The prize comprises award of Rs.1000 with a certificate. Similarly Ashram schools with better performance in the vocations receive a prize of Rs. 5000. Twenty such prizes are awarded ten for academic performance and ten for vocational training every year.

The money earned through the sale products of vocational activities like carpentry, tailoring, agriculture land etc. is deposited in the fund of Tribal Welfare Department. The produce of kitchen garden is used for the students' mess.

MADHYA PRADESH

Ashram schools in Madhya Pradesh provide education only up to primary stage and mostly run by State Tribal Welfare Department. There are separate Ashram Schools for girls. The primary stage begins at standard I and goes up to Vth standard. There are residential model secondary schools for talented tribal children in which admission is through entrance test. The preference for opening Ashram Schools is accorded to interior and, inaccessible areas serving disadvantaged groups.

In certain areas children are allowed to continue to reside in Ashram school hostel to attend the middle school nearby. In all Ashram schools at the initial stage 20 students are admitted but in special circumstances the sanctioned strength is raised up to 30-35 students. The admission committee consists of District Tribal Welfare and Education Officers, Panchayat President, M.L.A and Head Master of Ashram school. The admission criteria is distance from the Ashram school and economic and educational condition of the family. In Ashram school admission is provided to one scheduled caste and one non-Scheduled Caste student on reservation basis. Students from local village are admitted as day scholars. The criteria for admission is distance (beyond 3 km) and student's guardian should not possess more than 10 acres of land.

Each Ashram school has one graduate trained head master and one secondary grade trained teacher besides other staff like cook and kamati.

Earlier Ashrams were run by State Education Department and funded by Welfare Department. Recently the Ashram schools were taken over by the Tribal Welfare Department. However, now Education Department is in charge of Academic supervision, and the Welfare Department looks after the financial and administrative aspects.

The Ashram School organises not only educational activities but also cultural, literary and social forestry programmes. However, in Ashram Schools only general education is imparted and no vocational or craft training is provided to students.

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan has a unique pattern of Ashram schools. The Ashram (residential facility) is attached with either primary or middle schools run by local bodies. Earlier Ashrams were run by Department of Education and funded by Tribal Welfare Department. Recently the Ashrams are taken over by Tribal Welfare Department. The school is attended by both tribal and non-tribal students and it serves both local as well as students from far away place. Tribal children whose native place is beyond 3 K.M are admitted in to Ashram. Ashram provides free boarding, lodging and tutorial coaching. Ashram follows a structured time table for organising various activities. Usually the Ashram is located within 1 K.M distance from the school. It functions independently of the school. Besides providing residential facility in Ashram, students are taught different school subjects by a specially appointed trained teacher. No training is imparted in vocations or crafts. Ashrams are established in inaccessible and scattered areas.

3. ASHRAM SCHOOLS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

The state Andhra Pradesh is geographically divided into three regions i.e. Coastal, Rayalaseema and Telangna. The three regions are considered economically advanced, medium and backward areas respectively. According to 1981 Census the state total population is 53.4 millions out of which 6 per cent constitute scheduled tribes population. There are 23 districts in the state. According to 1981 census there are certain districts having more than 10 per cent of tribal population to total population i.e. Khammam (24.633), Adilabad (16.65 per cent), Visakhapatnam (14.03 percent) and Warangal (12.72 per cent). There are five districts with 5 to 8 percent of tribal population (Table No.1). There are 13 districts with tribal population ranging between 0.64 per cent to 4.59 per cent. There are 32 individual tribal groups among which 12 are considered as primitive tribes.

The establishment of Ashram schools in Andhra Pradesh began as a result of recommendation of Dhebar Commission in late sixties with central assistance which later came under state sector. During 1970-71 the number of Ashram schools were 187 with an enrolment of 10,150 students. In one decade i.e. 1970-81 there was four fold increase in number of Ashram schools (410) and the enrolment went upto 30,603. In 1985-86 there were 437 Ashram schools with the total enrolment of 41,768 tribal children. The enrolment in Ashram schools constitutes 6.61 per cent to total enrolment of tribal students at primary, middle and secondary stage in the state.

To begin with Ashram schools in Andhra Pradesh were only upto primary level. In fact, in many cases the normal primary schools were simply converted into Ashram schools without creating extra infrastructure facilities needed for boarding and lodging. Thus in many cases the class room and residential place was one and the same. Slowly the situation has improved either by construction of buildings or hiring accommodation. From early eighties onwards, some of the Ashram schools were upgraded into upper primary and secondary schools.

In Ashram schools admission is open for Scheduled tribe students with a reservation of few seats for scheduled castes and others. These are inter village schools and children from 5 K.M. and above are admitted into these schools. However, local children are admitted into school section as day scholars.

Out of total 23 districts in Andhra Pradesh Ashram schools are found in 18 districts. Table No.1 presents district-wise distribution of tribal population, Ashram schools and enrolment in them. The number of Ashram schools and enrolment varies widely among different districts. A glance at the number of Ashram schools and of tribal population at district level shows that there is no corresponding relation between the two. Though the highest tribal concentration is found in Khammam, the largest number of Ashram schools are situated in East Godavari district which consists of only 4.82 per cent of tribal population of the state. Similarly there is no relation between literacy level and provision of Ashram schools. For example the district with high literacy rate like Krishna, Prakasham and Kurnool have nominal number of Ashram Schools. Similarly in some of the districts where the literacy rate is low, the Ashram schools are also very few in number e.g. Nalgonda, Medak, Nellore and Mehahboobnagar etc. However equally interesting trend is that those districts with large number

of Ashram schools are having equally low literacy compared to other districts. Thus there is no clear policy guide lines for opening of Ashram schools. Neither population concentration nor educational backwardness of tribes is the basis for establishing an Ashram school. They are, in fact distributed at random.

There is striking inter-district variation in enrolment pattern among Ashram schools (Table No.1). Though the highest number of Ashram schools are found in East Godavari district the largest student enrolment is found in Adilabad district. The average strength in an Ashram school ranges between 64 to 348 as the lowest and the highest in Khammam and Nellore districts respectively. There are 8 districts in which the average enrolment of Ashram school varies between 100- 150. There are three districts among which the average strength ranges between 151-348. In many districts the Ashram schools have much less than sanctioned students strength. This problem is further discussed in detail in the next section with special reference to Adilabad district.

The disparity in distribution of Ashram Schools may be attributed to geo-political and administrative factors. The geographical location of tribal habitations varies in different districts. In some districts they are concentrated in particular pockets and they constitute majority and the area is covered under scheduled area for all administrative and developmental purpose. While in some other districts though tribes are in considerable number, they are scattered and live in plains with non-tribals. In this case their development particularly education is covered under general rural development. For instance in Nellore district the tribal population constitute more than 1.5 lakhs and one single tribe Yanadi constitutes 90 per cent, and they are scattered through out the district in small numbers. But there is only one Ashram School in this district. Since the tribals live in mixed villages, they are expected to send their children to primary schools available in the village without taking into account their cultural and socio-economic problems.[4] Contrary to this, in exclusive tribal villages and areas the facilities are specially created for tribals and they are more aware of various benefits and also they do organise themselves for getting certain facilities like Ashram Schools. Above all many times Ashram Schools are opened due to local political pressures. The articulate and powerful political leaders often corner the benefits to their areas. However the extent of political pressure varies in different areas.

Another important reason for wide gap among different districts is the administrative structure for Tribal Development. The wide gap between different districts can also be attributed to the differential administrative approaches adopted for tribal development. In tribal concentration pockets there is a single line unified administration called Integrated Tribal Development Agency adopting sub-plan approach with micro level planning. In these districts planning of various developmental activities including education is done at micro level, whereas in scattered areas sectoral approach is in vogue and tribal development is planned at macro-level. Another important reason for irrational distribution of Ashram Schools is lack of school mapping exercise. The school mapping exercise takes into account the catchment area, availability of educational facilities in vicinity; potential age group population, and ecological barriers. If the considerations of school mapping are also applied in the case of opening of Ashram Schools, it would effectively take care of problems like irrational distribution of Ashram Schools due to political pressures.

4. ASHRAM SCHOOLS IN ADILABAD DISTRICT

The tribes in Adilabad district constitute 16.65 per cent to the total population of 16.39 lakhs in the district and 8.58 to total tribal population of the state. They are mostly concentrated in four tribal development blocks. There are 62 Ashram schools in the district situated in four tribal concentration blocks. Out of the total 62 Ashram schools, 25 are primary 22 upper primary and 15 are secondary schools. All the Ashram schools have classes from Ist standard and are co-educational.

A. Infrastructure

Ashram schools are residential in nature and had been viewed to provide congenial atmosphere for teaching learning process and total personality development of the tribal child. In fact this is one of the objectives with which Ashram schools were established. The extent of infrastructure facilities

like physical space, equipment and teaching aids available in the school are some of the indicators for the quality of education provided in Ashram schools.

Table No. 2 shows the picture of infrastructure facilities available for each category of Ashram schools. All the 15 secondary Ashram schools have their own pucca buildings. Four of these schools have 4- 6 rooms where as 8 schools have 8-9 rooms and 3 schools consist of 10- 12 rooms. Majority of the school buildings are still under construction.

At primary stage, the situation is quite different as majority of the schools are run in rented houses which are of semi-pucca or thatched kutcha houses with inadequate space, poor ventilation and without other basic amenities like drinking water facilities. Most of these schools have only one or two rooms which are used for both residential as well as class rooms. It is not an uncommon scene to find that 40-50 students are accommodated in a dilapidated thatched single room. Infact children huddle and struggle to find adequate space either to sit or sleep in the night. It is not exggeration to say that an Ashram school some times, is like a cattle shed with leaking roof and flood ground during rainy reason. The over all picture shows that there is acute scarcity of physical space for primary schools which are situated in ill ventilated houses often in delapidated state. Whereas the situation is slightly better in case of high schools. Hardly found are the basic amenities like toilets, bath rooms in Ashram schools. Due to lack of ventilation, hygenic sorroundings and basic amenities, the children suffer from various contagious diseases like scabies, diarehea and malaria etc. As a result of frequent illness, the children often visit their homes which in turn effects their interest in studies and leading to dropout. Thus one of the objectives of Ashram school i.e. creating congenial atmosphere is neglected to a large extent. No doubt that the tribal children live in small huts in their habitations but they have lot of open space whereas in ashram schools the overcrowding and lack of basic amenities is one of the reasons for common ailments like scabies and other contagious diseases. There is no need for big modern buildings but adequate space for boarding and lodging and class room with hygenic sorroundings would certainly help to make children to be free from many common ailments. Otherwise to expect a tribal child to concentrate while his hands are itching with scabies is undesirable. Without considering these aspects usually teachers comment that tribals are slow learners.

In case of upper primary schools the situation is slightly better as 21 out of 22, schools have their own buildings and 2 schools have 10-12 rooms. However, 11 of them have rooms numbering between 4-6 only.

Infrastructure : Teaching Aids

Table No. 3 presents the picture of teaching aids available in Ashram schools. The teaching aids like black-board which is minimum essential for teaching learning process at primary stage is not available in 52 per cent of Primary Ashram schools. Another 24 per cent of schools do not have adequate number of black boards to teach all classes at a time. None of the primary Ashram schools have other teaching aids like maps, charts, globe, audio-visual aids as well as games materials. In nine of these schools no furniture is provided to the teachers in the class rooms. Obviously inadequate or lack of teaching aids affect the quality of teaching and learning process and results in low performance of students which in turn affects other levels of education.

The situation in upper primary schools is slightly better. But all the upper primary schools also have inadequate number of black boards. Similarly, other equipment like radio, science kit and games equipment are either inadequate or out of order.

Secondary Ashram schools are in better position as per the teaching aids particularly black boards, maps and charts are concerned. All the schools have adequate number of black boards though, the furniture, science and games equipment are quite inadequate. Surprisingly, none of the Ashram schools have library facilities.

Staff Pattern

Table No. 4 presents the staff pattern at all the levels of Ashram schools. At primary stage all the teachers are secondary grade trained, with an exception of one teacher with B.Ed qualification and one P.E.T. teacher. At upper primary stage, out of 22 schools, 21 are having one language teacher (Telugu Pandit) alongwith secondary grade trained teachers. None of the school has separate teacher for craft and physical education.

At secondary stage, there were 89 secondary grade teachers and 45 B.Ed Assistants. Only 7 out of 15 schools have separate qualified teacher to teach regional language, Telugu. Surprisingly the secondary schools do not have Hindi teachers, though Hindi is a compulsory third language from class VII onwards.

Out of fifteen secondary schools only seven of them are having one craft and one P.E.T. teacher, remaining schools neither have Drawing/craft nor P.E.T. teachers. Infact the state government norms shows that all the secondary schools should be provided one craft, one drawing and one P.E.T. teacher besides language and subject teachers. Separate warden is appointed in only secondary schools to look after the hostel section of the Ashram schools, where as in case of upper primary and primary schools the senior teacher is made in charge of the hostel.

Teacher Pupil Ratio

Teacher-pupil ratio is considered as one of the indicators for quality of education provided in the schools. As it is already mentioned that Ashram schools have been viewed to provide opportunity for intimate and individual interaction between the teacher and taught in the school.

The Ashram schools in Adilabad district widely vary in teacher-pupil ratio between different levels of schools as well as with in the same level. Table No. 5 and 6 show the differential teacher-pupil ratio at different levels i.e. primary, upper primary and secondary.

There is a sharp inter school variation in teacher-pupil ratio among different levels of Ashram schools (Table No.5). There are 25 primary Ashram schools in the district in which the teacher-pupil ratio ranges between 1:37 and 1:67 as the lowest and highest ratio. There are 5 schools where the teacher-pupil ratio is above 1:45. Another 13 schools are having teacher-pupil ratio between 1:25 to 1:45. In 5 primary Ashram schools, teacher pupil ratio is less than 1:25. Interestingly, there are 2 primary Ashram schools in the district without regular teachers. It is evident that the Ashram schools at primary stage do not have a qualitative teacher-pupil ratio input. The primary stage is a crucial stage in education but they are at more disadvantageous position in their qualitative aspect.

There are 25 upper primary Ashram schools in the district with high variation in teacher-pupil ratio as it ranges between 1:72 as the highest and 1:19 as the lowest teacher-pupil ratio. Out of 22 upper primary Ashram schools, 12 schools have a teacher-pupil ratio of less than 1:25. Another 8 upper primary Ashram schools are having a ratio between 1:25 to 1:45. There are 2 schools where the teacher-pupil ratio is above 1:45.

At secondary stage also there is a sharp variation in teacher-pupil ratio among the schools. It is found that the highest and the lowest teacher-pupil ratio varies between 1:55 and 1:11 in these schools. Out of 15 secondary Ashram schools, 7 are having teacher-pupil ratio less than 1:25 in which one school has 1:11 ratio. Another 7 schools have teacher pupil ratio between 1:25 to 1:45. One school is having the highest teacher pupil ratio as 1:55.

While at upper primary and secondary stage the average teacher-pupil ratio is 1:27 which is an ideal proportion as intimate interaction between teacher and taught has been one of the objectives of ashram schools. At primary stage the average teacher-pupil ratio is 1:35.

By observing the teacher-pupil ratio at all levels in all the 62 Ashram schools in the district it is quite clear that many of the schools are having under enrolment where as some of the schools are under

staffed. The situation is paradoxical where in a small unit like district some of the Ashram schools are suffering without adequate number of teachers. At the same time many of the schools are having low enrolment. It is quite clear that the uniform norms under which teachers are allocated in the schools basing on levels of education could not serve the purpose for providing quality education to tribal children.

When compared the teacher-pupil ratio at primary and upper primary levels, Ashram schools are in better position compared to non-Ashram schools. It is found that (Table No.5) in secondary stage both the Ashram and non-Ashram schools were having similar pattern of teacher-pupil ratio. At upper primary level the Ashram schools are far advantageous compared to non-Ashram schools with a significant difference in the teacher-pupil ratio as it is 1:27 and 1:40 respectively. There is a marked difference in teacher-pupil ratio between the Ashram (1:35) and non-Ashram Primary schools (1:47).

Enrolment Pattern

One of the major goals of Ashram School is to bring tribal children in to the fold of education. In this context, it would be interesting to examine enrolment pattern at inter and intra levels of Ashram Schools.

The enrolment in all Ashram schools from class I to X is 10,957 (1986-87) which constitutes 26.23 percent of total enrolment of Ashram schools in the state. In fact all the upper primary schools in the district during 1986-87 are having only upto VIth class. This is due to the fact that majority of them were newly upgraded from primary to upper primary schools. Only five schools are having enrolment from class I to V. Only five years back five of the upper primary schools were upgraded to secondary and other schools two years back.

The students strength in three levels of schools is given in Table No. 7. The secondary schools have a total enrolment of 4,118 in classes I- X, there are 3632 children enrolled in upper primary and 2847 in primary schools. The strength of the students varies widely among the schools as well as in different classes (Table No. 8).

At primary stage, out of 25 schools two schools were having an enrolment of less than 55 students. There are eight schools having enrolment between 56-101 among which three schools have more than 75 students on the rolls. Fifteen schools are having enrolment between 102-157 students. Only one school has 213 students. Thus the highest and lowest enrolment varies between 41 and 201 among 25 schools.

The variation in enrolment is not only among the schools but also there is striking differential students' strength in different classes in the same school (Table No. 9). The total enrolment in the first standard was 4,189 where as in fifth class there are only 855 children. Though it is crude method of calculating dropouts from the variation in enrolment in different classes, however, it is nevertheless one of the important factor for variation. Similar pattern of variation in enrolment exists in both upper primary and secondary Ashram schools.

Ashram schools differ very widely in their enrolment pattern. At upper primary stage 4 schools were having enrolment between 56-101 where as eight schools have between 102-157. There are 7 schools having 158-270 children on the rolls only 3 schools have above 270 children. The situation in secondary schools is slightly different. There are 11 schools with more than 200 students and 4 schools between 100-200 students.

Dropout Rate

Table No. 10 exhibits the trend of dropout pattern among the students enrolled in classes I to V and VI to X in seven selected secondary schools in Adilabad district.

Data for 1986-87 has been analysed to examine the classwise dropout rate. Quite contrary to the common tendency that the dropout rate is less in higher classes, in the present sample schools the maxi-

imum dropout rate was found in class IV (20.98%) in primary section and class VI (20.99%) in secondary section. The lowest dropout rate was found in class III (7.62%) in primary section while in secondary stage the minimum dropout rate is found in class IX (6.74%). It is quite surprising that the dropout rate in Ashram school is equally alarming though they are providing boarding and lodging facilities. Equally interesting phenomenon in Ashram schools is that the dropout rate in class I was only 11.85% which has slowly reduced in class II-III but it steeply rises in class IV and VI. Similarly, in class X the dropout rate is considerably increased compared to VIII and IX classes. Considering the usual magnitude of dropouts in the non- Ashram schools the Ashram schools are in better position as the dropout rate is comparatively low (Sujatha,1983). However, even the marginal wastage in Ashram schools is quite expensive in economic terms as the unit cost of education in Ashram schools is much higher than non-Ashram schools due to free boarding and lodging.

The age of a child in class IV would usually 9-10 years which is crucial to parents to continue the child in school or to withdraw to help in their occupations. Till the child reaches the age of 9 or 10, they have very marginal role to play in economic contribution of the family except to look after younger siblings. Therefore the parents may decide to send children to Ashram schools.

5. TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

Academic Activities

The syllabi, textbooks, and examination system in Ashram schools are the same as in non-Ashram schools which is prescribed by the state government. Multiple class arrangement is very common in majority of the primary schools as the number of teachers are less than number of classes in the school. The regional language Telugu, is the medium of instruction in these schools. Promotion of the students is based on attendance except in VII and X class where common and public examinations are held.

In all the primary and upper primary Ashram schools the school hours and timetable are routine type like in non-Ashram schools. No periods are provided either for work experience, socially useful productive work or vocational training.

One of the important question is whether the education in Ashram Schools adequate for educational and total personality development of the child in order to fit in to it's cultural milieu and integrate with the main stream?

There are three goals of the general as well as the Ashram Schools, namely, the national, institutional and societal goals. However, the dilemma in the core of the Ashram Schools has been to relate these goals with their syllabus and curriculum. For, the syllabus and curriculum of the Ashram Schools tear away the tribal children from their life situation and cultural background.

There are two main areas, in which Ashram Schools need to improve upon education. One is the making curriculum relevant, decentralised and flexible and the other is to adopt appropriate pedagogy. There are many Research studies which pointed out that the present educational content and curriculum are not in consonance with the socio-cultural background of the tribes.[5] In the context of Ashram Schools the important aspect is how to bridge the gap between the tribes and the schools, how to relate life-experience with the class room situation and how to re-orient the planning of academic activities at institutional level? It is neither possible nor desirable to have separate syllabus which is determined on wider considerations as certification, equivalence, mobility, credibility, etc. Therefore, the only place where the Ashram schools and teacher is free to change is the curriculum and pedagogy. The organisation of teaching-learning process is entirely in the hands of the teachers. And it is here that they can make the most important differences in the education of tribes by orienting the curriculum and pedagogy to their milieu, life, combining craft with education. The variety of life situations of the tribes can be woven into the curriculum which then becomes a suitable education to tribes. Thus a relevant decentralised, work-based and flexible curriculum should be the half-

mark of Ashram Schools even while adhering to the given syllabus. Thus the four-fold features should permeate the teaching learning activities in all subjects taught in the Ashram Schools.

Change in the curriculum would remain incomplete, and largely ineffective, unless patterns of teacher-student interaction move towards greater understanding of background of tribes [6]. The teachers working in Ashram Schools were trained to teach in general school and are not oriented to the objectives and special features of Ashram Schools. Majority of the teachers working in Ashram Schools are non-tribals and lack understanding of tribal culture, life and their language. The teacher with an alien language and culture, often becomes the most serious impediment in the tribal children's learning process.

The knowledge of social reality, particularly related to social structure of tribes is quite essential to the teacher to play his role effectively. The performance level of the tribal children are often said to be low, but earnest attempt to remedy their inadequacies are not made. Ashram schools are not exception in this aspect. The fact remains, however that unless the methods of teaching and communication are drawn from the tribal life situation, the perception and performance level of tribal children will continue to be low.

In tribal culture, besides oral tradition, art and motifs in all their magnificent forms are used for transmitting information and knowledge from one generation to another. Use of teaching aids would help for effective teaching learning process in Ashram Schools. For this purpose illustrations in each subject can be thought of. The approach of proceeding from the known to the unknown (locality, region, nation and globe than the other way round); highlighting the tribals' contribution to national integration, national life, rather than talking merely about struggle for independence or national leaders etc. can be thought of for social science, history etc. Such instances of the existing incongruities on the one hand and potential for drawing heavily from the tribes life situation, on the other can be multiplied. But these point only to the urgent and indispensable need for adopting the pedagogy relevant to tribal environment.

One of the objectives of Ashram schools is to impart craft/vocational education along with general education. But in practice there is no trace of any attempt to impart skills in crafts and vocations. Even in those schools where craft teachers are employed they were either allotted to teach one of the subjects or to look after the administrative affairs of the school. In fact, the period allotted to the crafts are utilised for routine teaching or sometimes students are dispersed. Thus, the importance of craft education in Ashram schools is not realised.

Besides class room teaching, supervisory studies are organised only in secondary schools and that too only if the teachers are residing in close proximity to the Ashram schools. However, the responsibility of conducting supervisory studies is assigned on rotation basis.

Maintenance of school garden or agricultural farm is not at all considered part of curricular or co-curricular activities in these schools though it is a common feature in Ashram schools in Gujarat and Maharashtra state.[7]

The objective of Ashram school is that to develop the total personality of the tribal child in consonance with tribal culture and ethos, towards this end, organisation of cultural activities was strongly emphasised in the guiding principle of Ashram schools. However, in reality, in Ashram schools none of the tribal cultural activities either in the form of dances, festivals are celebrated. In last few years none of the Ashram schools in Adilabad district have conducted any cultural activities. Very rarely excursion and Scout Camps are organised that also reported by one or two secondary schools.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Ashram schools were conceived to provide qualitative and relevant education to tribal children in consonance with their culture and ethos. Wherever opening of normal primary schools is not viable in scattered and interior tribal habitations, Ashram schools are expected to provide accessibility to

education. The difficult areas and the most backward groups among the tribes were expected to be served by the Ashram schools. The situational analysis of Ashram schools in the State of Andhra Pradesh shows that these schools are unevenly distributed in different districts. The norm for establishing the Ashram schools is neither based on proportion of tribal population nor their educational backwardness. There is a wide variation in average strength of the Ashram school in different districts. Even within the district there is striking difference among different Ashram schools particularly between levels i.e. Primary, Middle, Secondary with regard to infrastructural facilities, enrolment and teacher pupil ratio. Though providing training in craft/vocational education is one of the objectives with which Ashram schools were established, but there is no trace of such an effort to impart skills in crafts or vocations. In fact most of these schools have neither craft nor vocational teachers. Thus the major objective with which the Ashram schools were conceived are not reflected in these schools. Per student cost in Ashram schools is higher than in the non-Ashram schools due to the provision of free boarding and lodging facilities. This could be rationalised if Ashram schools are functioning more qualitatively and effectively in terms of academic activities.

The proportion of teacher to pupils in many Ashram schools seems to be neither based on any norm or need. In many schools, the enrolment is low to the proportion of teachers, whereas in some schools the teacher pupil ratio is considerably high.

Taking into account the high cost of education in Ashram schools, the dropout and wastage is more expensive compared to non-Ashram schools. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reorganise the academic activities in Ashram schools in order to meet the needs of the tribals.

Primary Ashram schools in the district are at a more disadvantageous position as per provision of infrastructural facilities and teacher strength. Unless the primary level education is strengthened qualitatively other levels of education may suffer qualitatively.

Ashram schools were supposed to be centres for tribal culture and art. However, there is no trace of any cultural activities of depicting tribal life in these schools. Considering the importance of Ashram schools, there is an urgent need to revitalise the academic and other activities of Ashram schools in order to meet the objectives with which these schools were opened.

Table No. 1
District-wise Distribution of Ashram Schools, Enrolment, Tribal Population

S1. No.	Name of the District	No. of Ashram Schools	Enrolment in Ashram Schools	Average Enrolment of Ashram School	Per-centage of literates	Percentage of tribal population to the total state population
1.	Srikakulam	29	3,130	107	9.6	3.31
2.	Vizianagaram	36	3,448	95	8.0	4.83
3.	Vishakhapatnam	67	6,924	103	6.3	11.15
4.	East Godavari	71	4,904	69	12.6	4.82
5.	West Godavari	30	2,679	89	11.4	2.10
6.	Krishna	1	218	218	14.6	2.11
7.	Guntur	2	300	150	13.6	4.40
8.	Prakasam	13	1,482	114	14.7	2.45
9.	Nellore	1	348	348	8.2	5.59
10.	Chittoor	-	-	-	8.7	2.48
11.	Cuddapah	-	-	-	11.1	1.18
12.	Ananthapur	-	-	-	12.1	2.58
13.	Kurnool	7	599	85	14.0	1.26
14.	Mahabubnagar	9	901	100	4.3	4.89
15.	Ranga Reddy	3	397	132	7.1	2.29
16.	Hyderabad	-	-	-	29.5	0.46
17.	Medak	1	234	234	5.6	2.16
18.	Nizamabad	-	-	-	4.6	2.84
19.	Adilabad	62	8,304	134	6.8	8.58
20.	Karimnagar	7	718	102	5.2	1.91
21.	Warangal	28	2,521	90	5.1	9.21
22.	Khammam	62	3,977	64	6.3	13.54
23.	Nalgonda	8	684	85	4.5	6.16
	Andhra Pradesh	437	41,768	95	7.8	100.00

Source : Hand Book of Statistics Andhra Pradesh 1985-86.

Table No. 2
Physical Facilities Available to Ashram Schools in Adilabad

	Type of Schools		
	Primary	Upper Primary	High
Number of Schools	25	22	15
Ownership of Building :			
Own	3	21	15
Rented	18	1	-
Rent free	4	4	-
Type of Building :			
Pucca with adequate facilities	4	9	2
Pucca without adequate facilities	7	7	13
Semi Pucca with adequate facilities	4	-	-
Semi Pucca without adequate facilities	-	4	-
Thatched	6	2	-
Number of Classrooms :			
1-3	10	2	-
4-6	14	11	4
7-9	1	7	8
10-12	-	2	3

Table No. 3

Teaching Aids available in different Ashram Schools of Adilabad district

	Number of Primary Schools Learning			Number of Upper Primary Learning			Number of Hogh Schools Learning		
	Ade-quate	Not Ade-quate	Nil	Ade-quate	Not Ade-quate	Nil	Ade-quate	Not Ade-quate	Nil
Black Board	6	6	13	1	21	-	15	-	-
Furniture	-	16	9	-	22	-	-	15	-
Science Eqpmt.	-	1	24	-	22	-	-	15	-
Audio-Visual aids	-	-	25	-	22	-	-	-	15
Library	-	3	22	-	22	-	-	-	15
Games Equipment	-	-	25	-	22	-	-	15	-

Table No. 4
Strength of teachers in different schools

Type of Schools	Strength of the Schools	Particulars of the Staff						Total
		B.Ed. Assts.	Secondary grade	School Asstt.	Tel. Pandit	PET	Craft teacher	
Primary	2847	1	78	-	-	1	-	80
Upper	3632	-	73	44	21	-	-	138
Primary High School	4118	45	89	-	-	-	-	155

Table No. 5
Teacher-pupil Ratio in Ashram and non-Ashram Schools in
Adilabad District (1986-87)

Type of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Teacher-pupil Ratio
Ashram Schools			
Primary	2847	80	1:35
Upper Primary	3632	138	1:27
Secondary	4118	155	1:27
*Non-Ashram Schools			
Primary	77683	679	1:47
Upper Primary	38014	969	1:40
Secondary	40645	1560	1:27

*Source: Hand Book of Statistics, 1985-86.

Table No. 6
Inter-school variation in teacher-pupil ratio in three levels of
Ashram Schools of Adilabad district

Ranges of Teacher-Pupil Ratio	Number of different levels of schools		
	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
Less than 1:25	5	12	7
1:25-1:45	13	8	7
Above 1:45	2	1	1

Table No. 7
Number of Ashram Schools And Enrolment in
Adilabad District(1986-87)

Level of Schools	No. of Ashram Schools	Enrolment
Primary (Class I-V)	25	2,847
Upper Primary (Class I-VII)	22	3,632
Secondary (Class I-X)	15	4,118
Total	62	10,597

Table No. 8
Enrolment pattern in Ashram Schools

Strength of the schools	Type of schools			Total
	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	
0-55	2	-	-	2
56-101	7	4	-	11
102-157	15	8	1	24
158-213	1	3	3	7
214-269	-	4	6	10
270-325	-	2	1	3
325+	-	1	4	5

Table No. 9
Enrolment in Class Ist and Class V (1986-87) in Ashram Schools

Enrolment	Type of Schools			Total
	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	
Class I	1,482	1,530	1,177	4189
Class V	189	278	388	855

Table No. 10
Drop out pattern in each class among students in Seven Selected
Secondary Ashram Schools of Utnoor block in Adilabad (1986-87)

Class	Enrolment	Number of students dropped	Percentage of dropout
I	464	55	11.85
II	205	19	9.26
III	118	9	7.62
IV	162	34	20.98
V	234	24	10.26
VI	174	40	22.99
VII	66	9	13.64
VIII	88	8	9.09
IX	89	6	6.74
X	58	10	17.24

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