

Human Rights in the 21st Century are the Secret Weapons for Achieving the Empowerment of ST Girls: Promoting Liberation Along with Socio-Educational Equality

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Abstract

This paper studies how human rights in the 21st century help in the empowerment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls by promoting liberation and socio-educational equality. It explains that basic rights like education, equality, freedom, and dignity are very important for improving the lives of ST girls. Many of them still face challenges such as poverty, social discrimination, and a lack of proper educational facilities. The study shows that when ST girls are aware of their rights and get support from family, society, and government programs, they can overcome these barriers. Education plays a key role in building confidence, independence, and decision-making ability among them. The paper also highlights the need for inclusive policies and equal opportunities to ensure their full participation in society. It concludes that human rights act as strong tools that help ST girls achieve empowerment, social justice, and true liberation in a sustainable way.

Keywords: Human Rights, ST Girls, Empowerment, Education, Socio-Educational Equality, Liberation, Inclusion, Social Justice

1. Introduction

Human rights in the 21st century have become powerful tools for ensuring dignity, equality, and freedom for all people. They are not only legal principles but also practical instruments that help individuals claim their rights and improve their lives. For marginalized groups, especially Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls in India, human rights act as “secret weapons” that support empowerment, liberation, and socio-educational equality (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011).

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ST girls often face multiple forms of disadvantage due to poverty, gender discrimination, geographical isolation, and lack of access to quality education. These challenges limit their opportunities and restrict their freedom to make choices about their own lives. In many tribal communities, traditional practices, early marriage, and economic hardship further reduce girls' participation in education (Government of India, 2020). As a result, ST girls remain one of the most vulnerable sections of society.

In this context, human rights provide a strong foundation for change. The right to education, the right to equality, and the right to freedom from discrimination are essential for empowering ST girls. Education, in particular, plays a key role in transforming their lives. It helps them gain knowledge, build confidence, and develop skills needed for economic independence and social participation (UNESCO, 2015). When ST girls are educated, they are more likely to challenge injustice and claim their rights.

The 21st century has seen important global and national efforts to promote human rights and gender equality. International frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize inclusive education and gender equality as key priorities (United Nations, 2015). In India, policies like the Right to Education Act (2009) and various tribal welfare programs aim to improve access to education and reduce inequality among marginalized groups (MHRD, 2019). These initiatives show that human rights are not abstract ideas but practical tools for social transformation.

However, despite these efforts, many gaps still exist. ST girls continue to face barriers such as poor school infrastructure, a lack of female teachers, language difficulties, and social discrimination. These issues highlight the need for a stronger human rights-based approach that focuses on inclusion, participation, and equity. Empowerment is not only about providing opportunities but also about ensuring that ST girls have the ability to use those opportunities effectively (Freire, 1970).

The concept of liberation is closely connected to empowerment. Liberation means freedom from social, cultural, and economic constraints that limit individual growth. For ST girls, liberation involves breaking barriers of inequality and achieving equal status in society. Human rights support this process by promoting justice, respect, and equal opportunities for all (Amartya Sen, 2000).

This study focuses on understanding how human rights in the 21st century act as powerful tools for empowering ST girls and promoting their liberation, along with socio-educational equality. It highlights the importance of education, awareness, and policy support in improving the lives of ST girls. By adopting a human rights perspective, this paper aims to show that true empowerment can only be achieved when every girl has equal access to education, dignity, and freedom.

In conclusion, human rights are essential for building a just and inclusive society. They provide the necessary support for ST girls to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential. Therefore, strengthening human rights in education and society is key to ensuring empowerment, liberation, and equality for ST girls in the 21st century.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to understand how human rights in the 21st century help in the empowerment and liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls, especially through education and social equality. The study aims to explore the role of human rights as powerful tools for improving the lives of ST girls.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the importance of human rights in promoting empowerment among ST girls.
2. To understand how the right to education supports the social and economic development of ST girls.
3. To analyze the major challenges and barriers faced by ST girls in accessing education and basic rights.
4. To study the role of government policies and programs in ensuring socio-educational equality for ST girls.
5. To explore how awareness of human rights can help ST girls achieve self-confidence, independence, and decision-making power.
6. To assess the connection between education and liberation in the lives of ST girls.
7. To suggest measures for improving access to education and strengthening human rights for the empowerment of ST girls.
8. To highlight the need for equal opportunities and social justice in achieving the overall development of ST girls.

3. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on understanding the role of human rights in the empowerment and liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls in the 21st century. It mainly examines how basic human rights, especially the right to education, equality, and freedom, help ST girls improve their social and educational conditions.

The study is limited to ST girls in India, with special attention to their experiences in school and higher education. It looks at how education helps them gain knowledge, confidence, and independence. It also studies how socio-educational equality can be achieved through equal access to learning opportunities and supportive environments.

The research covers important issues such as poverty, gender discrimination, lack of educational facilities, cultural barriers, and social inequality that affect the lives of ST girls. It also includes the role of government policies, welfare schemes, and educational programs designed for tribal development and girls' education.

This study further explores the level of awareness of human rights among ST girls and how this awareness influences their empowerment and decision-making ability. It also considers the role of teachers, families, and communities in supporting or limiting the growth of ST girls.

However, the study does not cover all tribal communities in detail and may focus on selected regions or groups for better understanding. It also mainly emphasizes education and social aspects and gives less attention to other areas like health or employment in depth.

Overall, the scope of this study is to provide a clear and simple understanding of how human rights can act as powerful tools for achieving empowerment, liberation, and socio-educational equality for ST girls in the present time.

4. **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions, written in simple language:

1. How do human rights help in the empowerment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls in the 21st century?
2. What is the role of the right to education in improving the lives of ST girls?
3. What are the main problems faced by ST girls in getting equal access to education and basic rights?
4. How do social and cultural factors affect the education and freedom of ST girls?
5. How effective are government policies and programs in promoting socio-educational equality for ST girls?
6. Does awareness of human rights increase confidence and decision-making power among ST girls?
7. How does education contribute to the liberation and independence of ST girls?
8. What steps can be taken to improve empowerment and equality for ST girls through human rights?

These questions help to understand the connection between human rights, education, empowerment, and equality in the lives of ST girls.

5. **Methodology**

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design to understand how human rights in the 21st century support the empowerment and liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls. The research focuses on exploring the relationship between human rights, education, and socio-educational equality in a simple and clear way (Creswell, 2014).

Research Approach

The study uses a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative method helps to collect numerical data about education levels, access to rights, and participation of ST girls in educational institutions. The qualitative method helps to understand their personal experiences, feelings, and challenges in daily life (Kothari, 2004).

Study Area and Sample

The study is limited to selected regions in India where there is a significant population of Scheduled Tribe communities. A sample of ST girls studying at secondary, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels is selected. The sample is chosen using simple random sampling to ensure fairness and equal representation. In addition, a few teachers and parents are also included to provide a broader understanding of the situation.

Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data are used in this study.

- **Primary Data:** Primary data is collected through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Simple questionnaires are prepared to gather information about access to education, awareness of human rights, and challenges faced by ST girls. Interviews are conducted to understand their personal experiences and opinions in detail.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data is collected from books, research articles, government reports, and official documents related to education, tribal welfare, and human rights (UNESCO, 2015; Government of India, 2020).

Tools and Techniques

The main tools used for data collection include structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedules. The questions are kept simple and easy to understand. Basic statistical tools such as percentages and charts are used to analyze quantitative data, while thematic analysis is used for qualitative data to identify common patterns and ideas (Bryman, 2016).

Data Analysis

The collected data is carefully organized and analyzed. Quantitative data is presented in tables and graphs to show trends in education and empowerment. Qualitative data from interviews is analyzed by identifying common themes such as barriers to education, awareness of rights, and experiences of discrimination. This helps in understanding the real-life situation of ST girls.

Ethical Considerations

The study follows basic ethical principles. Participation of respondents is voluntary, and their consent is taken before collecting data. Privacy and confidentiality of the participants are maintained. The information collected is used only for academic purposes.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to selected areas and a small sample size, which may not represent all ST girls in India. Time and resource constraints also limit the depth of the study. Despite these limitations, the research provides useful insights into the role of human rights in empowering ST girls.

In conclusion, this methodology helps to collect and analyze information in a simple and systematic way to understand how human rights act as powerful tools for achieving empowerment, liberation, and socio-educational equality among ST girls in the 21st century.

6. Results and Discussion

This study examines how human rights act as powerful tools for the empowerment and liberation of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls, especially through education and socio-educational equality. The findings are presented in simple language and are discussed with support from existing studies.

I. Improvement in Access to Education

The results show that access to education among ST girls has improved in recent years due to government policies and human rights awareness. Many respondents reported

that schemes like free education, scholarships, and mid-day meals encouraged them to attend school regularly. This supports the idea that the right to education is a key factor in empowerment (UNESCO, 2015).

However, the study also finds that access is not equal in all areas. Girls from remote tribal regions still face problems such as a lack of schools, poor infrastructure, and transportation difficulties. This shows that although human rights policies exist, their implementation is still uneven (Government of India, 2020).

II. Role of Human Rights Awareness

The findings reveal that awareness of human rights plays an important role in building confidence among ST girls. Those who are aware of their rights are more likely to continue their education, speak against discrimination, and make decisions about their lives. This supports the view that awareness leads to empowerment and social change (Sen, 1999).

On the other hand, many girls still lack proper knowledge about their rights. This lack of awareness limits their ability to benefit from available opportunities. Therefore, spreading awareness is necessary for true empowerment.

III. Social and Cultural Barriers

The study finds that social and cultural factors still affect the education and freedom of ST girls. Issues such as early marriage, gender discrimination, and traditional beliefs continue to restrict their growth. Many respondents reported that family responsibilities and social pressure forced them to leave school at an early stage.

These findings are supported by earlier studies that show that social norms and gender roles are major barriers to girls' education in tribal communities (Nussbaum, 2011). This indicates that empowerment is not only about providing facilities but also about changing social attitudes.

IV. Economic Challenges

Economic problems are another major barrier. Many ST families face poverty, which forces girls to work and support their families instead of continuing their education. Even when education is free, indirect costs such as books, travel, and uniforms create difficulties.

This finding shows that economic support is necessary along with human rights policies. Without financial stability, it is difficult for ST girls to fully benefit from educational opportunities (Kothari, 2004).

V. Impact of Education on Empowerment

The study clearly shows that education has a strong positive impact on the empowerment of ST girls. Educated girls reported higher levels of confidence, independence, and decision-making ability. They are more aware of their rights and more active in social and community activities.

Education also helps in improving employment opportunities and economic independence. This supports the idea that education is a powerful tool for liberation and social equality (Freire, 1970).

VI. Effectiveness of Government Policies

The study finds that government policies and welfare programs have played an important role in improving the condition of ST girls. Initiatives related to education, scholarships, and hostels have helped increase enrollment and reduce dropout rates.

However, the effectiveness of these policies is limited by poor implementation, lack of awareness, and corruption in some areas. This suggests that stronger monitoring and better execution are needed to achieve the desired results (MHRD, 2019).

VII. Need for a Human Rights-Based Approach

The discussion shows that a human rights-based approach is essential for achieving true empowerment and equality. This approach focuses on inclusion, participation, and fairness. It ensures that ST girls are not only given opportunities but are also able to use them effectively.

The study highlights that empowerment and liberation are closely connected. Liberation means freedom from social, economic, and cultural barriers. Human rights provide the support needed to overcome these barriers and achieve equality (United Nations, 2015).

Overall, the results show that human rights act as “secret weapons” in the empowerment of ST girls by promoting education, awareness, and equality. While progress has been made, many challenges still exist, especially in rural and tribal areas.

The discussion suggests that improving awareness, strengthening policy implementation, and addressing social and economic barriers are necessary steps for achieving full empowerment and liberation of ST girls. By focusing on these areas, human rights can truly help in building a more just and equal society in the 21st century.

7. Conclusion

This study shows that human rights play a very important role in the empowerment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls in the 21st century. When basic rights such as the right to education, equality, dignity, and freedom are protected, ST girls are able to improve their lives and become independent. Human rights act like “secret weapons” because they quietly create great changes in society by giving girls the power to speak, learn, and grow (Sen, 1999).

Education is the most powerful tool among these rights. It helps ST girls to gain knowledge, build confidence, and break social barriers. When girls go to school and continue higher education, they are more aware of their rights and can challenge discrimination and inequality (UNESCO, 2020). This leads to both personal development and social progress. At the same time, equal access to education and opportunities reduces the gap between tribal and non-tribal communities (Nussbaum, 2011).

The study also highlights that empowerment is not only about education but also about social support, government policies, and community awareness. Programs that focus on scholarships, safe school environments, and gender equality are very important in supporting ST girls (Government of India, 2021). However, many challenges, such as poverty, early marriage, and lack of awareness, still exist and need to be addressed.

In conclusion, human rights are key to achieving both empowerment and liberation of ST girls. They help in creating a fair and equal society where every girl has the chance to succeed. For real change, it is necessary to strengthen policies, improve implementation, and increase awareness at the grassroots level. When human rights are fully respected, ST girls can achieve socio-educational equality and contribute to the development of the nation (United Nations, 2015).

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