

## MID-DAY MEAL AND SOCIAL EQUALITY IN TRIBAL AREAS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A STUDY OF PANGI INTEGRATED TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

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### ABSTRACT

Mid-Day Meal scheme was launched by the Department of Elementary Education with the help of Ministry of Human Resource, Government of India. The aim of the scheme was to boost universalization of primary education and increase enrolment especially of children belonging to poor and downtrodden sections of the society. It is also visualized that such a meal would promote friendship and feeling of brotherhood among the children belonging to different caste, colour and creed. In the present study an attempt has been made to analyse the effect of Mid-Day Meal on social equality in tribal areas in Himachal Pradesh. There are five Integrated Tribal Development Projects in Himachal Pradesh. For the purpose of this study Pangi Integrated Tribal Development Project was selected, because Pangi is most backward and most interior ITDP among all the five ITDPs. The areas like Pangi remains neglected in research point of view. There are 95 schools in Pangi ITDP covered under Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Among which 10 schools were selected for the study. It was 10 percent of the total schools. Among all the 10 samples schools there were total 50 student respondent, 50 parents respondents, 20 teacher respondents and 10 cook respondents. The data was based on Primary as well as Secondary sources. The results show that there is a positive effect of the MDM in the area of social equality.

**Keywords:** Mid-Day Meal, Social Equality, Tribal Areas, Himachal Pradesh, Pangi

### INTRODUCTION

The Mid-day Meal Scheme is a school meal programme of the government of India designed to improve the nutritional status of school age children nationwide. Until 2001, providing dry rations in most states, Things began to change after 2001 when a Supreme Court order in the right to food case directed all states to provide cooked meals to all primary school children. Despite all achievements, there are many problems in the implementation of this scheme. A major drawback found in this scheme is spending teaching time; insufficient basic infrastructure of school. Parents, Panchayats and local authorities are negligible in this scheme. Such place, access to MDMs for Dalit children is hampered by the fact that the meals are served primarily in dominant caste hamlets. In 2001 Mid-Day Meal Scheme became a cooked Mid-Day Meal Scheme under which every child in every Government and Government aided primary school was to be served a prepared Mid-Day Meal with a minimum content of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 gram protein per day for a minimum of 200 days. The Scheme was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children studying in Government, Government aided and local body schools, but also children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centres. In September 2004 the Scheme was revised to provide for Central Assistance for Cooking cost @ Re 1/- per child per school day to cover cost of pulses, vegetables cooking oil, condiments, fuel and wages and remuneration payable to personnel or amount payable to agency responsible for cooking. Transport subsidy was also raised from the earlier maximum of Rs 50/- per quintal to Rs. 100/- per quintal for special category states and Rs 75 per quintal for other states. Central assistance was provided for the first time for management, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme @ 2 percent of the cost of food grains, transport subsidy and cooking assistance. A provision for serving Mid-Day Meal during summer vacation in drought affected areas was also made. In July 2006 the Scheme was



further revised to enhance the cooking cost to Rs 1.80 per child/school day for States in the North Eastern Region and Rs 1.50 per child / school day for other States and UTs. The nutritional norm was revised to 450 Calories and 12 gram of protein. In order to facilitate construction of kitchen-cum-store and procurement of kitchen devices in schools provision for Central assistance @ Rs. 60,000 per unit and @ Rs. 5,000 per school in phased manner were made. In October 2007, the Scheme was extended to cover children of upper primary classes (i.e. class VI to VIII) studying in 3,479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs) and the name of the Scheme was changed from 'National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education' to 'National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools'. The nutritional norm for upper primary stage was fixed at 700 Calories and 20 grams of protein. The Scheme was extended to all areas across the country from 1.4.2008. The Scheme was further revised in April 2008 to extend the scheme to recognized as well as unrecognized Madarasas/Maqtabs supported under SSA.

### SOCIAL EQUALITY

Social equality is a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects, including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equal access to certain social goods and services. However, it also includes concepts of health equity, economic equality and other social securities. It also includes equal opportunities and obligations, and so involves the whole of society. Social equality requires the absence of legally enforced social class or caste boundaries and the absence of discrimination motivated by an inalienable part of a person's identity.[1] For example, sex, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, origin, caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health or disability must not result in unequal treatment under the law and should not reduce opportunities unjustifiably.

### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

To provide quality of education to its citizens the government has made efforts to established educational institutions at door steps. To fulfil this purpose the government has established 18208 schools in Himachal Pradesh. There are 11329 primary schools in Himachal Pradesh. Besides this 844 Primary with Upper Primary Schools, 612 Primary with Upper Primary, Secondary/Higher Secondary, 2065 Upper Primary, 1743 Upper Primary with Secondary/Higher Secondary, 678 Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary, 925 Upper Primary with Secondary and 8 schools are Higher Secondary only are available in Himachal Pradesh.

**Table 1 District wise Educational Indicators in Himachal Pradesh as on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2016**

Districts	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Primary with Upper Primary/Sec/Hr. Sec.	Upper Primary Only	Upper Primary with Sec./Hr. Sec.	Primary with Upper Primary and Sec.	Upper Primary with Sec.	Hr. Sec. only	All Schools
Bilaspur	643	61	39	103	106	33	49	0	1036
Chamba	1228	45	20	251	133	28	85	1	1791
Hamirpur	521	64	59	117	97	61	65	2	986
Kangra	1799	170	149	317	333	195	190	1	3154
Kinnaur	201	9	9	36	34	8	18	0	315
Kullu	787	73	23	130	90	50	50	3	1206
L & S	201	2	2	34	27	1	10	0	277
Mandi	1811	124	117	333	280	82	124	0	2871

Shimla	1709	120	60	327	261	101	125	0	2704
Sirmour	1063	53	22	192	139	50	91	0	1611
Solan	844	82	63	139	117	38	63	0	1346
Una	522	41	49	86	126	31	55	1	911
Total	11329	844	612	2065	1743	678	925	8	18208

Source: Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Himachal Pradesh 2016-17

### SCHEDULED AREAS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The Kinnaur, Lahaul Spiti, Pangi and Bharmour are five Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) constitutes the scheduled area in Himachal Pradesh, fulfilling the minimum criterion of 50 percent Scheduled Tribe (ST) population concentration in a Community Development Block. The most distinguishing mark of the tribal areas in the state is that they are very vast in area but extremely small in population with the result that per unit cost of infrastructure activity is very exorbitant.

**Table 2 Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) wise Distribution of Tribes in Himachal Pradesh**

ITDP	Area (Sq. Km)	Total Population	Scheduled Tribes	Density per Sq. Km.	Sex Ratio	Literacy %age
Kinnaur	6401	84121	48746	13	819	80.00
Lahaul	6250	19107	15163	3	931	74.97
Spiti	7591	12457	10544	2	862	79.76
Pangi	1595	18868	17016	12	970	71.02
Bharmour	1818	39108	32116	22	945	73.85
Total	23655	173661	123585	7	877	77.10

Source: Compiled from Directorate of Tribal Development Shimla-2

### PANGI (THE STUDY AREA): AN OVERVIEW

The Pangi valley is a most tribal area of Himachal Pradesh and a sub-division of Chamba district. This valley is mostly hilly and somewhat poorly developed remote area surrounded by Peer Panjal & Zanskar Ranges. This is an off-beat challenging tourist destination of Himachal Pradesh. Pangi valley is also known for its thrilling tracks like Manali-kullu, Kishtwar and keylong of Lahaul valley. These trekking sites are open during summer. Government has done and is doing the development of all possible infrastructures of roads and other essentials for the people and tourist's projects to invite them to witness the majesty of nature and enjoy the trekking.

The Pangi covers 1,601 square kilometres area having a population of 18868 and it's sandwiched between two sub-systems of the Himalayas. The river Chanderbhaga, flows from Lahaul and passing through the Pangi Valley. Pangi has 16 panchayats and 54 inhabited villages. Pangi valley is divided into the Saichu, Hudan Bhatori and Sural Bhatori valleys. These are inhabited at elevations of 7,000 feet (2,100 m) to 11,000 feet (3,400 m) above sea level. The Sach Pass at an altitude of 14,500 feet (4,400 m) is open for vehicular traffic officially between June to last 31st October, and remain closed with heavy snow in rest of the period of the year. With recent improvements to the roads, the villagers have started to grow cash crops such as peas, apples and other fruits. The Pangi is mostly inhabited by Pangwal and Bhoti people. The mountains are surroundings the valley range between 5,400 and 6,700 meters.

**Table 3 Population Growth in Pangri Block in Last Five Censuses**

Census Year	Total Population	Decadal Growth	Male Population	Female Population	Sex Ratio	Density Per Square km.
1971	9794		4996	4798	960	6
1981	12256	+24.62	6401	5855	915	7
1991	14960	+27.04	7722	7238	937	12
2001	17598	+26.38	9259	8339	901	14
2011	18868	+12.70	9579	9289	970	15

Source: Statistical abstract, District Statistical Office Chamba.

The data in the table number 3 shows that with the passage of time the population of Pangri also increases. It was 9794 according to 1971 census. The latest data shows a huge increase. It increases almost double in the last five decades. According to 2011 census it is 18868. The sex ratio of Pangri Block is 970 the sex ratio of the country is 940. Sex ratio of Pangri Block is quite high than the average rate of India.

**Table 4 Literacy Rate of Pangri Block in Last Five Censuses**

Census Year	Total Literacy	Decadal Growth	Male Literacy	Decadal Growth	Female Literacy	Decadal Growth
1971	1775 (18.12%)		1619 (32.40%)		156 (3.25%)	
1981	2400 (19.58%)	1.46 %	2060 (32.18%)	-0.22%	340 (5.80%)	2.55 %
1991	4673 (31.23%)	11.56 %	3477 (45.02%)	12.84 %	1196 (16.52%)	10.72 %
2001	9162 (52.02%)	20.79 %	6013 (64.94%)	19.92 %	3149 (37.76%)	21.24 %
2011	11768 (62.37%)	10.35 %	6913 (72.16%)	7.22 %	4855 (52.26%)	14.5 %

Source: Compiled from District Statistical Office Chamba.

The data in above table reveals that there is also an increase in the literacy rate of Pangri valley. In the census of 1971 the total literacy rate of Pangri was only 18.12 percent among which male literacy was 32.40 percent and female literacy was only 3.25 percent. Now there is a big increase in the literacy rate of Pangri valley. According to the censuses of 2011, the total literacy rate of Pangri valley is 62.37 percent, among which 72.16 percent males and 52.26 are female.

#### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN PANGRI

The development of Nation is not measured through the buildings it has built, the roads it has laid down, the bridges it has constructed and the like but by the human resources the nation has developed through well-defined system of education. Education is the most crucial factor not only to equip the new generation with skills so essential for earning livelihood but also to create among them an awareness to social and environmental realities, inculcates in them scientific temper independence of mind and spirit which are of paramount importance for them to become responsible citizen.



**Table 5 Detail of the Educational Institutions in Pangri Block**

SN	Name of the Educational Institution	No. of Educational Institutions
1	Government Primary Schools	66
2	Government Middle Schools	14
4	Government High Schools	7
5	Government Senior Secondary Schools (+1 Model School)	7+1=8
6	Government Degree College	1
7	Government Technical Institutions (ITI)	1
8	Private Middle Schools	1
9	Private Primary Schools	2
Total		100

Source: Obtained from Office of the Block Elementary Education Officer Pangri at Killar

The above data depicts that there are sufficient educational institutions in Pangri. There are 66 Government Primary Schools, 14 Government Middle Schools, 6 Government Secondary Schools, 1 Model School (Government Senior Secondary), 1 Government Degree College, 1 ITI, 1 Private Middle School and 2 Private Primary Schools situated in the Pangri. There are total 100 educational institutions in Pangri. It means that every village of the Pangri Valley having one or more educational institutions.

#### **INFERENCE DRAWN FROM THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of existing literature revealed that the area of social equality under Mid-Day Meal has been neglected under the research point of view. There is no study on Mid-Day Meal in tribal areas in Himachal Pradesh. Tribal areas are well known for their cultural heritage and hospitality. These areas are also connecting with rest of the world with the passage of time. So it is very important to study these areas equally.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

To find out the results the questionnaire/schedule was framed in bi language i.e., Hindi and English. The questionnaire/schedule was divided into four parts i.e. teachers, parents, students and cook. The opinion of the teacher shows that there is not even a single complaint regarding untouchability during Mid-Day Meal in the study area. Majority of the teacher respondents make sitting arrangement during serving of MDM is all castes students together, followed by roll number wise and boys and girls separate. There is no caste wise sitting arrangement during serving of MDM. The parents have no objection ever sharing the meal with children of other castes. Majority of the teacher respondents responded that the MDM is playing key role in social equality for large extent. All the teacher respondents responded that the caste system is destroying our brotherhood. The results from the parents respondents show that there is no complaint from their children regarding caste based discrimination during MDM. All the parents respondents responded that students of all castes should sit together. There is no objection to parents respondents if all castes students share common meal at school. There was no discrimination with the children at school while serving MDM. Majority of the parents respondents responded that the caste system is destroying our brotherhood. The results of the student respondents show that all students like to sit together while eating MDM. 80 percent of the total respondents responded that their parents never asked them not to sit with other castes students while eating MDM. 10 percent of the respondents responded that their parents sometimes asked them to not to sit with other castes students and 10 percent responded cannot say. 76 percent of the responded that the teachers never make caste based discrimination with them during serving of MDM. 24 percent responded cannot say. 56 percent respondents responded that the cook never make caste based discrimination during serving of MDM. 16 percent responded that the cooks make caste based discrimination and 28 percent responded cannot say.



78 percent student respondents responded that casteism destroying our brotherhood and 22 percent sad cannot say. The opinion of the cook respondents regarding social equality out of total 10 respondents all responded that the parents of the students do not discriminate them. The students of all castes always eat the meal happily cooked by them. 80 percent of the cook respondents responded that MDM is a weapon to fulfil social gap and 20 percent responded that it is not a weapon to fulfil the social gap. The cook respondents responded that the teachers never make caste based discrimination with the students. 60 percent of the cook respondents responded that casteism is destroying our brotherhood and 40 percent responded cannot say.

#### MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The major finding from the teacher respondents is that there is not even a single complaint regarding untouchability during MDM in the study area.
- There is no caste wise sitting arrangement for the students during serving of MDM.
- MDM is playing a key role in the social equality.
- The major finding from the parent respondents is all the students should sit together while eating MDM and they have no objection regarding this.
- The major finding from the student respondents is all the students like to sit together while having MDM.
- A very shocking finding from the student respondents is that their parents sometimes ask them not to sit with the other caste students while eating MDM. This may because of the low illiteracy among the parents.
- There is no discrimination from the teachers. It shows that literacy has an effect on social equality.
- The students of all castes eat meal happily cooked by the cook.
- A common finding on caste system in the society is that all the teacher respondents responded that the casteism is destroying our brotherhood. But there is a mix response from the parents, students and cook respondents. No doubt majority of the respondents among them responded that the casteism is destroying our society, but some of the respondents responded that they cannot say anything regarding this.

#### CONCLUSION

The Mid-Day-Meal scheme has many potential benefits: attracting children from disadvantaged sections (especially girls, Dalits and Adivasis) to school, improving regularity, nutritional benefits, socialisation benefits and benefits to women are some that have been highlighted. Studies by economists show that some of these benefits have indeed been realised. In many parts of our country caste based discrimination continues to occur in the serving of food, though the government seems unwilling to acknowledge this. But in the study areas such happenings are negligible. Media reports also document the positive effect of the programme for women, especially working women and its popularity among parents, children and teachers alike. Media reports have also highlighted several implementation issues, including irregularity, corruption, hygiene, caste discrimination, etc. No doubt the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme is a noble programme satisfying the hunger of millions of children per day throughout the country. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is one of the major initiatives started for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education in India. But at present is also become a media to reduce the caste based discrimination. All the students sit together for MDM. It makes the positive effect on young minds and youth can change the social minds also. There is a need to gear up this programme and reduction of caste based discrimination from the society should be one of the specially focused areas in incoming time besides the attracting students to schools, increasing enrolment, nutrition benefits and satisfying the hunger.

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