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Access of Scheduled Caste across Indian Higher Education: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Education is regarded as an essential tool for progress and social transformation. Through education, individuals will be able to achieve significant transformational changes by improving everyone's socio-economic conditions. In India, the existing caste system and hierarchical society's access to educational opportunities are unequal and unfair, so the present study is about the Scheduled Caste and higher education. It primarily examines Scheduled Caste's higher education scenario, constitutional requirements for Scheduled Caste educational growth, and variables affecting Scheduled Caste's higher education status. This paper emphasizes how Caste forms the perceptions of those at the very bottom of the higher education caste hierarchy and provides an innovative perspective on Caste throughout modern India. There are similarities to that same discrimination, especially among elite context. The whole paper moved away first from Dalit mainstream in higher education by focusing not on the policy of numbers or reservations but the inner lives and struggles of Dalit students. Based on traditional untouchable practice, the Scheduled Caste categories' castes are characterized by significant social, educational, and economic backwardness. The Constitution, which addresses the present paper, has some provisions for scheduled castes' educational and economic advancement. There is a positive trend in literacy and higher education enrollment among Scheduled Caste students in India, but the rise in the Gross Enrolment Ratio is slow.

Keywords: Higher Education; Scheduled caste; Issues; Access

Introduction

Divisions of Caste, class, religion, region, or sex define Indian society. Caste seems to be the most prevalent parameter that divides Indian culture, mostly the Hindus, who make up almost 82 percent of the population, giving Indian society an extremely hierarchical nature. Caste or jati refers to an endogamous group, and many features of the caste system often distinguish other non-Hindu communities. Caste membership is hereditary. There are hierarchically organised castes. The castes also at the top and the bottom can be easily identified. However, it is difficult to define a nationwide hierarchy of the caste system because of their regional cultural origins. (**Karuna Chanana**)

Especially for the deprived areas of society, education has a special meaning. Articles 15(4), 29, 30, 45-46, and 350-A are the related provisions of the Constitution relating to the establishment of education for the population. The Government has made serious efforts to encourage literacy among the SCs since independence by providing free education, giving scholarships, reserving seats, and offering loans. Their literacy has not progressed satisfactorily, amid all these rights. In the field of educational advancement, they have to go a long way to get up. This Scheduled Caste holds the lowest level in the hierarchy of castes in the world. In the Hindu Community, the Scheduled Castes include many castes. Although the literacy rate amongst those planned castes raise from 10.27 percent in 1961 to 66.10 percent in 2011 at the national level, most planned caste groups also remain educationally behind and even those who do not have in their fold any single literate individual. Through modern days, the literacy rate does not necessarily show the education levels. Rising enrollment and declining dropouts are, therefore, two primary metrics for evaluating the development of education. (**Nabanita Dek**)

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India's higher education is 26.3%, which is estimated for the aged between 18-23 years. For the male population, GER is 26.3 percent and 26.4 percent for females. It is 23 percent for Scheduled Castes and 17.2 percent for Scheduled Tribes, compared to 26.3 percent for the national GER. Scheduled Caste students' current status is 14.9 percent or 5.5 percent of the total enrolment for Scheduled Tribes students. Some other Backward Groups include 36.3 percent of students. 5.2% of students belong to the Muslim community, and 2.3% belong to other minority groups. (www.aishe.gov.in 2018-2019).

OBJECTIVE

1. To find the educational status of Scheduled Caste individuals and backwardness problems in the growth and achievements of higher education.
2. To find a higher education paradigm and factors affecting scheduled Caste in higher education in India.

METHOD

- This research focused on secondary knowledge from different research studies, journals, and research papers.

Review of literature:

The reservation or affirmative action policy of the Indian Government in higher education for the Scheduled Castes, known as Dalits are generally referred to in India, is constitutionally enshrined in the 1950 constitution of India and was intended to address centuries of discrimination and oppression in all areas of life, from enforced residential segregation to the prohibited entrance to the temple. In encouraging access to government employment and higher education for the Scheduled Castes, such as how many subgroups throughout Dalit groups are the most likely to benefit from reservation policy. Obviously, the poorest of the poor among the Dalits are so structurally disadvantaged that it is not even a choice to aspire to university. The reservation policy has allowed increasing numbers of Dalit lower-middle-class students to join local institutions and highly selective universities whose access is decided by intense competition. Not only because studies indicate that SC students are more likely to drop out or be 'rusticated' or expelled, but also because the quality of life of socially disadvantaged students, both socially and academically, is essential in a more comprehensive sense of 'broadening access' From R. Ambedkar. Birth into the untouchable Mahar caste in 1891, Ambedkar had become a national icon for Dalit welfare and fought relentlessly to persuade his fellow citizens and untouchables themselves that Dalits were complete human beings worthy of respect and kindness. In reality, "educate, agitate, organise; keep believing in yourself" will be one of his most famous words of advice. Scholarship from Maharaja of Baroda state, Ambedkar was first untouchable who received a Ph. D., studying abroad to encourage him complete Ph. D. either at Columbia University and LSE, and a degree in law. In India, reservations have increased over time, mostly at the state or federal level. In 1980, Mandal Commission' appointed by the Government issued recommendations that reservations be extended to accommodate the 'educationally and socially backward' other backward Caste (OBC) groups. These recommendations were enforced in 2007 at central universities when, amid severe upper caste protests, the Government implemented a 27 percent OBC quota, especially in North India. In 2008, the Supreme Court upheld the OBC quota, including the "creamy layer" clause. (**Kathryn Lum**)

Training also has a direct effect on your economic circumstances. However, the rest of the scheduled caste students aren't motivated to select for secondary or higher education due to regional ambitions, work vulnerability, or poverty. Government funds and scholarships are deprived of a significant percentage of Scheduled Caste students. (**Nabanita Deka**)

The dropout rate is also a very critical factor that requires unique features. We would not be able to plan the caste system if we do not reduce the dropout rate. Education will assist in poverty reduction. There seems to be reservation of seats in the higher learning out rate institution that are very large they would not follow. (**Joseph Benjamin**)

Article 46 and its provisions, Article 15(4), Article 29(2) of the Indian Constitution, are essential articles in the sense of educational development. Article 46 says that the State shall support and uplift the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of people, and now in particular of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, with special care, and protect them from social inequality and all types of colonial

exploitation. Those inferred that Article 46 helps to simplify the definition of individual rights. (Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)

Factors affecting Scheduled Caste's higher education status in India:

Adverse Economic Status:

The natural consequences of unemployment and poverty amongst SC of India are high dropout or lower enrolment rates. The likelihood of educating SC as well as ST students it beyond the post-secondary level is significantly low than it is to the non-poor and upper castes. Between Sc / Sts, the opportunity cost of sending children to school is very high as children make a significant contribution as wage earners to the household economy. SC, ST children usually afford government school and grantable schools, since no fee is charged for these students, it has been said. And therefore, in reality, the direct costs of outstanding fees education, test fees, cost of reading and writing books, clothes, travel, study tours, contribution to the Parent-Teacher Association, and private tuition are direct costs. (Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)

History of the family:

Family plays a significant role in defining the character and deciding the children's well-being. The family history and family climate are the key variables affecting the student's enrolment, dropout, and academic success, mostly in the SC group. Second, throughout the acceptability of educational opportunities, parents' role and income decide future socio-economic conditions. Secondly, in academics, parents' children with high-status occupations and higher family income perform better than children with low-status fields and lower-income backgrounds. Since, in a better economic situation, high-income parents have money and resources to invest in their kids. Third, parents' educational history also plays an essential part in children's education. Parents who have attended university or college are literate and thus are more likely to send their kids to school. In academics, the children of parents with good academic history perform well. (Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)

Educational Discrimination:

In institutions of higher education, the tradition of untouchability, Caste, and casteism prevails. The low educational status of scheduled castes is responsible for the disparity of opportunities and caste-based inequality. Compared with general higher education, caste-based discrimination in technical and professional education is severe. Caste documents, internal examinations, experiments, viva-voce, classrooms, hostels, etc. are significant and potential scenarios for such discrimination. While there is caste-based discrimination, it's tough to prove that it is caste-based inequality. The academic achievement or disappointment and socio-economic adjustment of higher education students from Scheduled Caste and tribal groups depend heavily on their social system position, which marks them as stigmatised and gives them different labels as 'unable to succeed' and 'destined to fail'. (Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)

Language: The system of education that emphasises the national language to achieve a common culture and identity is an essential factor that harms the self-esteem of the child and decreases the probability of later years of successful learning. The marginalisation of students' mother language denies knowledge, and

it is a lack of some other way of understanding the world at the level of education. In the context of higher education, admission to higher education through the entrance test is possible for the upper castes, which have long been benefiting from education. Scheduled caste students with low language backgrounds, primarily English, certainly didn't feel comfortable answering in English and therefore declined admission to higher education. Thus, to complete higher education, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who take up primary and secondary education in languages other than English face numerous issues. **(Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)**

Government Facilities or provisions: Many Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students may be able to reach and stay in school and higher education by providing scholarships, unique hostels, mid-day meals, books loans, etc. While this funding isn't sufficient to meet all students' economic needs and social needs, it positively affects students' decisions to pursue their education. But all these programs had minimal enforcement, and harsh governmental apathy suffered from their service. The coverage of the services remains incomplete. There is no adequate control arrangement for running these services, the quantification of the goals of success, and the assessment of financial outlays. The comparatively stronger and better off Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups receive the real benefits and the actual benefits. Inefficiency, poor management, partiality, and corruption in the mechanisms of government facilities are stated by overuse and overcrowding in granted hostels, unhygienic living conditions, low quality of the food, zero medical facilities in hostels and Ashram schools, delay in disbursement of scholarships, etc. **(Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)**

Reservation policy: The rising proportion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe enrolments in higher education institutions is the product of India's admissions reservation policy. The degree to which this approach has made a difference is challenging to measure. However, this policy does not always play a positive role in education and social mobility because Caste is the policy's foundation. Over the last few decades, it has created controversy, tension, and violence in society in general and in education. However, this program reduces the academic quality according to opponents and gives advantages to the community's undeserving portion. So, this policy has just become a topic for the public to hate. The reservation policy of private financing and public funding entities has not been properly implemented. **(Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)**

Privatization of Education: Higher education institutions appear like mushrooms following the Government's new economic strategy. Self-funded institutions are founded at different education levels, primarily providing professional courses such as medical, nursing, engineering, MBA, MCA, teacher training, etc. Such institutions did not take caste criteria into account during the educational enrolment process. The caste reservation must be interfered with by the Government. Privatization has also increased education costs. For Scheduled Caste, technical training becomes more costly, so they cannot enroll for these programs due to the high fee structure. **(Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)**

Gender Disparities: In society, gender, class, Caste, and regional criteria are crucial to deciding access to higher education. The most have of education in India is gender. Due to the low socio-economic status of families interested in supporting their daughter at home, taking care of siblings, or earning income for the

family, girls' enrollment in India is low. The dropout among girls is that very few girls can participate or enroll in higher education. Other than this early age, girls' marriages in rural areas, the dowry system, and parental illiteracy are responsible for Scheduled Caste women's low educational status. **(Dr. Lata Digambar Dhende)**

Findings:

The SC persons for which the provisions are rendered do not depend on government assistance. They are not aware of their rights and the rules of the Constitution. They were given a lack of knowledge of SC individuals regarding educational significance, educational compromises, scholarships, reservations, etc. Scheduled caste children find it challenging to be in schools because of their socio-economic conditions. Owing to a lack of schooling, they cannot take advantage of the policy because of the reservation policy. Higher education and occupations which are reserved for them will not be extended to them. Lack of progressive perspective and for centuries underprivileged circumstances does not inspire them to receive an education.

Conclusion:

Scheduled caste students gain significant attention in higher education in India, but the rise in the gross enrolment ratio is incremental. If Government successfully implements reservation policy, different educational development programs and policies for Scheduled Castes students; social activism coexists with a tranquil and invisible form of violence on particularly elite university campuses, where specific caste debate is taboo, and being SC exposes one to even higher levels of stigma, discrimination, and violence. In daily life, political exposure correlates with pervasive stigma and countless social contexts where power ties are weighted among Dalits. With increasing ambitions, and therefore pressure to eradicate Caste, and an ideology of merit discourse and formidable work accomplishments of all Dalits, reservations have created a more significant Dalit middle class. The majority of Dalit students at the prestigious university were 'happy' to graduate, concentrate on everyone's studies and positions, and do not consider Caste or reservations. There, the Dalit closet helps Dalits to access elite rooms and graduate with prominent degrees, even as it socially handicaps them, destroys their self-esteem, and consigns them to campus and maybe beyond strangeness. The ultimate purpose of reservation, a fully egalitarian community, will not be reached unless followed by systemic and broader cultural change. Dalit and non-Dalit students, socio-economically or linguistically, and psychologically arrive at university with very different starting points. The former frequently fail to embrace and embrace them, leading to a social trust difference between Dalits and non-Dalits. It is possible to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio and decrease the dropout if the syllabus's improvements should be made and resolve the issues discussed above.

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