



EXCLUSION OF MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF DALIT PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Dalit a discriminated and marginalized group has been slowly including in all spheres of Development. However, there are many impeding factors to exclude them. This research study has concluded that Dalit enrolment in higher level is higher but their continuation is major challenge in upper level. Major impeding factor of drop out and lower attainment of secondary schools are caste based discriminations, poverty, illiteracy in Dalit parents, no teachers inspirations and discrimination by peers and society. The policy has showed positive indication however there is still challenge in the implementation of these policies

Higher education in India

Education is the basic and significant factor for the overall development of human beings. Higher education is nothing but the education which is provided by the colleges, institutions and universities, and thereafter the academic degrees are awarded. Under Graduation, post-graduation, M.Phil, PhD and then finally Post Doctoral Fellows fall under the higher education. Higher education differs from other forms of education such as vocational, technical education etc. Higher education improves the quality life of an individual—improves economic stability and security, great and more prestigious employment opportunities, greater community service and leadership, more self-confidence and greater knowledge of government etc. It also helps in expanding the knowledge of an individual, improves the skills to express their thoughts clearly in speech and in writing and increases their understanding of the world and their community.

Social System and Education in India

Indian caste system is historically having a dimension where the people in India are socially stratified as a classes, religions, regions, genders, tribal's and languages. This stratification is considered as a rigid system, which means the status of a person is decided by their birth into which they are born. There was no interchange and there were limited interaction and behaviour with people from another social status. (Deshpande, 2010)

The Indian social system is known as Hindu system, and the entire Hindu system is based on the Varna system, which implies the role of four Varna's such as Brahmana, The Kshatriya, The Vaishya and Shudra. The roles and responsibilities of these varnas were pre-decided. Brahmana class was at the top of the ladder of the social system which



restricted their work to the reciting mantras and preaching, Kshatriya class has had the responsibility of protecting the state or a territory as well as the structure of the Varna system. The Vaishya class was the trading class and must sell the necessary goods. The Shudra class was at the lower strata of the ladder of varna system and should do the duty of serving above three classes. The food habits and rituals of these four classes differed from each other. Marriages between one another class are restricted. (Ibid)

Education was the property of only Brahmin class and for the little extent of kshatriya class, it was not universal. Attaining education for the shudra and ati-shudra classes was restricted and considered to be a sin. Due to the implementation of English education by the British has given some relaxation to the varna system, but since India's independence from colonial rule in 1947 and aftermath developments were officially given the checkmate to the varna system with the adoption of a new constitution to the independent India. The major challenge ahead of the independent Indian government was to provide adequate food as well as education to the people.

History of Indian Education System

The early education system in India is having its traces in the ancient period, which can be called as the Vedic education system. In this era, the education was based on Vedas and Upanishads. In the words of Dr P. N. Prabhu, "Education in the ancient India was free from the external control of the state and Government or any politics. It was the king's duty to see that learned pundits, pursue their studies and perform duty and imparting knowledge without interference from any sources what so ever" (Chandra and Sharma, 2006)

The main purpose of the ancient education was to install the glory of God into the minds of the pupil and the life of pupil was full of prayers, ceremonial ritual acts, and religious duties during that period education without religious instruction, not education at all. Gurukulas were the major schooling at that time where Guru is considered equal to the God and the pupil as his obedient. In the ancient period education is considered as the third eye as it operates ridded qualities and helps people to the forefront the solution to their problems. It will be considered as the idealistic form of education, where the teacher could stress upon the worship of God, spirituals. These educational institutions were maintained by the Brahmins and the medium of instruction will be in Sanskrit women also enjoy the equal status during the Vedic period they were deprived of equality in social and educational rules. During the Vedic age, girls can also have Upanishads. They also required to lead a life of celibacy (*Brahmacharya*) during education, ultimately ancient education system is for the protection, preservation, and propagation of national culture. (Ibid)

Dalit struggles for education

There are historical limitations to enter into education especially from Dalit community (untouchable caste), As Many Dalit Intellectuals and non-Brahmin Intellectuals



had argued that caste acts as a major hindrance for the Education and Empowerment of Dalit's as well as other Castes this faced the oppression on the basis of Caste. So, this results upper Caste people have achieved the social mobility through the colonial education, whereas lower castes turned into Laborers and occupations based on the liquor and manual labour etc.

Dr B R Ambedkar provided a radical slogan such as "Educate, Agitate and Organize". For the upliftment of Dalit's Ambedkar was influenced by Mahatma Jyothibha Phule. Phule in order to challenge the caste system he learned the Hindu scriptures thus makes him to start schools for Girls. He trained his wife as a teacher. He wrote a play "The third eye" this argued that symbolic capital of Brahmins and debunked the dominance of Brahmanic Knowledge system.

Sahu Maharaj from Maharashtra realized that lower caste did not have any representation in state services then he started five independent schools. Similarly from Kerala Ayyankali formed an organization for Dalit's "Sadhujanaparipalana sangha" (Group that protects the Marginalised). He also started schools for girls. He challenged the upper caste people those who have disrupted the education for Dalits. Dalits faced many atrocities from upper castes during their protest for the right to education. He says that graduates must come from his community and construct the library. Another intellectual from Kerala Parkayil Appachan founded Dalit theological praxis "Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha" He burned the bible and founded primary schools.

Dalits in Higher Education

Education is the very important aspect of human lives and human being educated since the day they were born. As the world is growing fast, there is a rapidly growing demand for a higher education. Higher education plays an important role in country development, without which there will not be any knowledge production in both technology and non-technology fields. Second important thing is reservations in higher education institutions, after Mandal Commission report there is again raised the voices of reservations and open for the debate on the reservation system. Reservation is an entry point to all sections of people particularly for the socially and economically backward people, but here the interesting thing is even after constitution guaranteed the reservation in higher education institutions there is very low percentage of enrolment. It is evident that higher educational institutions like universities are becoming the spaces for the discrimination as many students of the universities across the country are undertaking the action of suicide in the name of discrimination and there are many arguments in favour and opposition of this argument

Education is regarded as both foundation and vehicle for the emancipation of the deprived sections of the society, especially for the Scheduled Castes. It can be observed that most of the Scheduled Caste students were failed to catch this vehicle in other words they were deprived by not providing the vehicle of Education by the other caste groups of Indian society. In the name of untouchability, they have been deprived of each and every opportunity of development The untouchables who number more than 220 million known as Dalits have been systematically neglected and ostracized in our Indian society for many



years. The Dalits still suffer the stigma of untouchability. Even after it has been declared as an offence under the law. They are socially frail, economically needy and politically powerless. Many Dalits are still illiterates. Education plays a vital role in the development of individual's personality. Education is the catalyst for profile development of any individual. In our Indian society, education plays a much more role in helping the individual acquire self-esteem. Denying education to an individual, therefore, amounts to denying him/her the basic source of self-esteem and dignity. Today Dalits students are still segregated from the rest and mistreated by the upper castes teachers. Calling caste names, verbal abuse, and assorted humiliation acts are common practice in many schools. This may be a reason for high dropout rates among Dalits. (Choudhry, 2007)

Indian caste system and its social system has the unique place in the world. Each caste according to the notion of purity and pollution ranked as higher and lower castes. Education is the basic necessity and also a caravan of change for any castes and this education has remained the property of only a few higher classes of the society where the downtrodden sections of the society were deprived of attainment of education for centuries. Even Vedas have incorporated the punishments for those who violate the rules of the caste system. As a result entire Scheduled Caste communities are deprived of equal status for centuries and it had continued till the arrival of British. Though it is not possible for the sudden transformation gradually the English education system started to incorporate Scheduled Castes in the realm of education system. Steadily, through the various reforms in the governmental activities, the so-called depressed classes have experienced the education at higher levels. But still, the number of Scheduled Caste who reached to the level of higher education is very less.

The role of higher education is not only to provide a certificate of qualification to the students. It bears more responsibilities both in socially and academically to the respective societies. India has a great antiquity of higher education. Both Taxila and Nalanda bear the reputation of the notable University of the world during its heydays. At the present scenario, the higher education is not only confined to the development of a student physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually, but has more responsibilities than these. Along with the development of necessary skills, the wellbeing of the students and the socio-economic development of the society, in general, are also important.

For centuries the lower caste people India has been neglected and deprived of their just status in the society. They have been treated as the second class people of the society. They were not allowed to walk down the same path the upper caste used to walk. It was the reservation policy that India is following has given the SC's an opportunity to pursue their desired course of life. It was the British Raj who took the initiation during its tenure in India and it worked as the basis for the reservation in free India. But it was again the British who make the caste system more rigid by making it as the central mechanism of their administration.



The period from 1860 to 1920 AD., they separated the Indians by providing lucrative jobs only to the upper caste Hindus of India. This policy had to change due to the social unrest of the 1920s. Susan Bayly has argued that the Indian Caste system is a dynamic process; it is not a static society. She has talked about the colonial construction of the caste in India. According to her, the word caste is used for both Jati and Varna. While Varna is the segregation of society on the basis of one's birth group, the jati is about the about the occupation. The jati is multiple. There may be multiple jatis within one Varna itself. Bayly has argued that this jati was fluctuating and could be changed with time, influence and occupation of one. She said that during British rule there were three phases came when one group got preference over another and established as powerful in the society.

In the phase, it was the 'man of prowess' who become important in the society. The warlike peasants who supposed to be in the fourth Varna, the shudra joined the warlords and become kshatriya during the period when the central Mughal power was declining and the regional powers were emerging only to give way to the British at a later period. The British also hired these warring peasants as soldiers. These processes have created a new group in the society, which is very difficult to place into any of the varnas, especially in the southern parts of India. The Reddys, the Kammas, the Nambiar's and so on cannot be placed into the Kshatriya category and at the same time, they would not be considering themselves into the shudra category. This creates an awkward situation in the caste hierarchy of the Varna.

In the second phase, the Brahmins become active in administration, especially in the Maratha kingdom, unlike their predecessors, who were mostly concerned with the religious activities and giving advises to the Kshatriya to rule. This created different sections within the Brahmin varna like the Chitpavan Brahman, Lokika Brahman (Susan Bayly: 1999) etc. This was a new beginning to the Hindu social order.

Then in the final phase, the Brahman and the Vaishyas worked as the help for the British as Dobhasis (translators) and junior in administration, which further strengthen their social and economic position in the society. This reinforces their caste hierarchy in Hindu social order.

From the above-mentioned discussion, it becomes clear that the Sudras remained backwards in the process and their position degraded in the long run. Therefore an affirmative action was necessary for their up liftment in the society both economically and socially. This dissertation tried to see the processes of implementation of reservation in Indian higher educational institution and how this has played a positive impact into the life of the untouchables in particular and the whole schedule caste in general.

Socio-Economic background of Dalits in Higher education

Most of the scheduled caste population are resides in rural areas as their main occupation for livelihood is agriculture or agricultural labors, some people do not have lands to do the agriculture than they go for any other labor works few number have got settled in government sector jobs this is pure because of not attaining proper schooling and education.



Students have come from a rural background and they will not have proper schooling and does not have proper English skills more over the elite teachers they won't allow lower caste students to get into public sector employment. Most of the SC people are settled as agricultural labours working in the leased lands very less number of SCs are employed in government sector jobs like group C and group D services under various departments. We can understand that most of the government employees are from upper caste communities and very less participation of SCs are there in government employment.

Parent's education also plays an important role in the academics of their children as most of the parents are illiterates as they don't know anything about the education. By this, we can understand that less number of SCs have educated from decades so it will result automatically in their children as they do not get proper guidance regarding the education. Many students expressed that they got very fewer marks in the semester exams as well as in the internal examinations, laboratories, viva voice marks, as these students belonging to Scheduled Caste groups. So SC students get low marks as teachers show partiality in giving marks.

Since a decade, Dalits and other marginalized sections have been hugely into higher education system due to various fellowships such as RGNF, MNF, Single Girl-child etc., heartfelt thanks to the then UGC chairman Sukhdev Thorat.

Issue of Rohith Vemula

Rohith vemula is a PhD research scholar from the university of Hyderabad. He hailed from Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh he belongs to SC (Mala community) caste he has completed his bachelor degree in Guntur district he pursued his masters in science from HCU and got admitted PhD in the year 2014 he qualified twice for CSIR fellowship and UGC JRF in general category. In the university Rohith used to protest, resist and condemn the anti-student policies of the administration he fought against the communal forces and superstitious beliefs he is the follower of Ambedkar ideology and science writer like Carl Sagan and he used to discuss and debate and disseminate contemporary issues in the society so he has great understanding on the science and social perspective and he is the leader of the ASA (Ambedkar Students Association) at a time when ASA is pioneering its struggle to achieve justice for the marginalised communities. The HCU administration it was guided and supported by saffron party planned to weaken the ASA which was the direct threat to manuvadi administration it planned systematically to wipe out ASA from the university campus. A conspiracy has been hatched to morally, physically and mentally attack ASA leaders and Rohith was one of its targets in a small incident which is very natural in the students campus life the administration unjustifiably and illogically in human only suspended five of ASA leaders and whereas the suspension its self a one-sided decision laid by the casteist Apparao who hates Dalits and Rohith vemula continued his fight against the anti-student policies of the administration. the university deliberately stopped fellowship of Rohith and encouraged ABVP the right-wing force to file the cases against the Dalit leaders in the campus all cases were filed against ASA leaders based on false allegations and accusations which are not true so the entire process to fight from every side was difficult to



even though the Dalits are entering into higher educational institutions they are frequently harassed and tortured by the casteist people.

CONCLUSION:

The progress of any nation depends on the progress of all the sections of people in it. So, the government must take unprecedented steps to promote higher education among the Dalits and other marginalized sections for whom the higher education institutions are 'forbidden territories' with full of caste prejudice, caste discrimination, violence and violation of basic human rights. The government also should educate and sensitise all the people of India right from the childhood, especially the faculty who are in the education system. The government also see to it that the present reservation system serves the most deprived of the deprived.

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