

Social Exclusion Relating Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Social exclusion and inequality is a global problem. India has deep rooted tradition of inequality. It is manifested in terms of caste, class and gender. The structurally set inequality has excluded large sections of population from socio – economic and cultural right. Education is one of them. Though India has an age old tradition of education but it was based on caste and social status. To reduce the problem of social exclusion relation higher education in India, successive governments have introduced caste based reservations in the institutions of higher education. Union government has launched a number of schemes and programmes to enhance the participation of deprived classes in higher education. In India, education was the legacy of upper caste only and it is ceased to those who are at lower strata. Castes based exclusion has been depriving large segments of SC and ST and other backward castes. In agrarian social structure in India, all lower castes people were landless agricultural labour and belong to lower status of class hierarchy. Existing socio-economic condition and situation pulls them in backwardness and do not let them to push off towards upward mobility. In our country, marginal group are submerged in poverty. Earning is prior to higher education. The expenditure incurred for higher education cannot be bear by them. There is provision of scholarship but it is allowed only to those who belong to BPL level. Again the enrolment rate of girl student does not signify gender disparity. A substantial number of girls especially in rural areas are motivated to enroll in higher education for engagement and to earn a qualification for marriage. Women folk are yet to come out from the status of inferiority in relation to men. Men are bread earner and women are object of domestic work. This traditional value persuades many girls to drop out study. This is of immense importance for socio-economic development of our Nation.

Keywords: *Social exclusion, Inequality, Higher education,*

Introduction:

India has been widely acclaimed to be a fertile soil of knowledge and wisdom since prehistoric times yet right to entry in education is limited to privileged stratum of society. The structure of caste based social stratification in India

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presents a systematic deprivation of a large section hereditary based low caste. Several attempts have been made by social reformers and others to make education accessible to marginal groups. Social inequality is a global problem and it always stands on the way to equity and justice. But it is held back by many forces. Social inequality is one of them. It is manifested in terms of caste, class and gender. India has deep rooted tradition of inequality. The caste system which is an unparallel social organization sanctioned inequality of different segments in terms religion. The Hindu religion which is dominant in India approves unequal status to women also. The religion sanctions uneven rights and privileges in socio-economic and cultural aspects to these two sections. Besides, schedule caste and women, schedule tribes are also disadvantageous group recognized during the British period. However, the structurally set inequality has excluded the large sections of population from their socio-economic and cultural right. Education is one of them. Educational inequality functions in inclusion in the society of which it is part.

Higher Education in India's Past and Present:

Higher education in India evolved over centuries and it was considered as the seat of learning for the whole world since times immemorial. India has an age old tradition of education but it was largely based on caste and social status rather than being equally available to all. Traditional Hindu education served the needs of the Brahmin families. Brahmin teachers would teach boys to read and write. The basic aim of Higher Education in ancient India was to impart spiritual and mental skills to the student unlike the economy based education popular now-a-days. The Vedic Education was mainly oral transmission of knowledge from *guru* to *sishtya*. Priority was on acquiring knowledge of religion, philosophy, agriculture, trade and statecraft, especially for a prince. During the ancient period there were three famous educational institutions in India viz., Takshasila, Nalanda and Kanchipura.

During medieval period education was similarly elitist favouring the rich rather than those from high-caste backgrounds. Important centers in South India continued along with Banaras, Prayag, Haridwar, Nadia, Ujjain, Mithila etc. located in North, with their *pathashalas* and tools devoted to the study of *Vedas*, *puranas* and other shashtras. In Colonial Period many drastic changes occurred in higher education in India. The medieval and ancient types of studies were transformed to modern, scientific, secular and logic based studies. But pre-existing elitist tendencies were reinforced under British rule. Even though the British colonial rule brought with it the concept of a modern state a modern economy and a modern education system. By linking entrance and advancement in government service to academic education, colonial rule contributed to the

legacy of an education system while preserving the position and prerogatives of the more privileged.

In present contemporary period the system of higher education in India has its root in 1857 with the foundation of universities in the three presidency towns. In post-Independence period, to inculcate the new and modern ideas, thoughts etc. in the minds of the youth and to make them good citizens of India, it was felt necessary to restructure the entire education system according to the needs of an independent nation in general and culturally diverse society in particular. Prime Minister Nehru envisaged India as a secular democracy with a state -led command economy. Education for all was seen as crucial to achieve economic prosperity and social equity. Following independence school curricula imbued with the twin scheme of inclusiveness and national pride. The need to overhaul the whole education system was felt by the then National leaders and as a result Radha Krishnan Education Commission was established in the year 1948-49 to review the whole system of education in the country. To ensure educational need of the country, entire educational system was rearranged in to: Elementary education, Secondary education, Higher education, Adult Education, Technical and vocational education .The Government decided to review the growth and development of Higher education through five years plans which paid rich dividends in promoting education in India including higher education. Higher education may include education in general or specialized or professional areas. There are many issues relating to higher education such as access, equity and quality. In the following discussions effort is concentrated to look at the issues related to access and equity in higher education.

Enrollment in Higher Education:

India is moving towards optimistic expansion in the realm of higher education. Flowing table indicate depicts increasing trend in the scenario of higher education irrespective of any social category. Enrolment in higher education institutions has mounted by 6 folds from 1.71 million to 10.16 million students between 1970-71 and 2005-06. Social group wise distribution reveals the same trend too. The share of girls in enrolment at higher education level increased from 24 per cent in 1970-71 to 39 per cent in 2005-06.Enrollment of SC has been increased from 8.5 percent in 1970-71 to 2005-06.This is followed by ST 2.1 Percent to 4.3 Percent. The Inclusive schemes like special scholarships ,fee waivers, separate hostels, etc for girls along with attitudinal change are all contribute to this positive development.

Table 1: Enrollment in Indian Higher Education, 1970-2006

Year	PG and Ph.D	Graduation	BE	B.Ed	MBBS	Total
A. Total Enrollment						
1970-71	136825	1363060	88494	48893	78244	1715516
1980-81	316788	1886428	103195	68250	67822	2442483
1990-91	387684	3285776	241368	92217	84393	4091438
2000-01	692342	7244915	418193	121733	148699	8625882
2002-03	847947	6864812	708643	118593	208465	9516773
2003-04	872252	7052274	772923	114681	223236	9035366
2004-05	845619	6728029	696609	155192	256748	8682197
2005-06	1230054	6741592	1681716	199676	308705	10161743
B. Share of Girl' Enrollment (%)						
1970-71	25.8	24.4	1	37.3	22.4	23.6
1980-81	31.7	27.8	3.6	40.9	24.3	27.5
1990-91	32.2	34.7	10.9	44.2	34.3	33.2
2000-01	36.7	37.4	22.3	42.8	40.6	36.8
2002-03	42.3	42	22.6	52	41.6	40.1
2003-04	42.8	41.5	23.8	49.9	42	45.3
2004-05	44.2	41.2	26.4	36.9	36.5	40.1
2005-06	33.6	41.9	26	43.7	47.5	38.5
C. Share of Enrollment of SCs (%)						
1990-91	8.7	8.7	5.7	8.4	8.6	8.5
2000-01	10.1	9.6	8.7	12.3	9.6	9.7
2002-03	11.4	12	6.7	13.9	13.2	11.3
2003-04	11.6	12	6.3	15.7	13	11.5
2004-05	12.5	12.7	8.5	12.9	11.5	12.3
2005-06	9.5	13.3	9.7	16.2	14.5	12.3
D. Share of Enrollment of STs (%)						
1990-91	1.8	2.2	1.1	2.3	0.7	2.1
2000-01	2.6	3	3.3	5.3	3.6	3
2002-03	2.7	3.7	3.2	5	4.9	3.6
2003-04	2.8	3.8	2	5.5	4.5	3.6
2004-05	4	4.4	3.1	5.9	3.7	4.2
2005-06	3.2	4.6	3.5	4.7	6.2	4.3

Source: Selected Educational Statistics (Various Years), MHRD, New Delhi, 2008.

Now the affirmative policies are influential in bringing up changes and to heighten up the index of girl, SC and ST students. But it cannot minimize male-female disparity as well as social categorical disparity. Data reflect that Girls share in different courses in higher education is not even 40% in comparison to boy in 2005-06. Course wise, only little over 40% of them are doing graduation.

Even in B.Ed courses their share is less than half of their counterpart. In this regard it is worth mentioning that B.Ed course is compulsory for teaching profession. In patriarchal Indian social structure most of the people desire a girl to be in teaching profession. In engineering courses girls share is hardly a fourth of the total enrollment. The proportion of SCs in enrolment at higher education has increased from 8.5% in 1990-91 to 12.3% in 2005-06 which is almost 4% lesser than their share in the total population. The Proportion of STs in enrolment at higher education has increased from 2.1% in 1990-91 to 4.3% in 2005-06, which like SCs is almost 4% lesser than their share in the total population. It shows that though some ground has been covered but still their share in enrolment in higher education is less than their share in the total population. This is further confirmed by GER by social groups as discussed below.

GER at Higher Education Level:

The human resource development (HRD) ministry has set a goal of doubling GER to 30% by 2020 from the current 15%. The ratio was approximately 12% in 2008-09 - only a fourth of the average GER in developed countries (54.6%). In 2007-08 gross enrolment ratio of Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Caste (OBC) was 11.54%, 7.67% and 14.72% respectively as against 17.21% in general (The Indian Express, 10-3-13 www.indianexpress.com. accessed on 10-3-13). For higher education GER has risen from 0.7% in 1950-51 to 1.4% in 1960-61, and 8% in early 2000. The current GER which was about 10%, stands very low when compared to the world average of 23.2% and an average of 54.6% for developed countries. On one hand GER stands low for the overall population, while on the other hand large variations among the various categories of population was major concern. The GER for girls was 9.4% compared to 13.6% for boys in 2005-06. Similarly, the GER for SC girls was 6.4% compared to 10.16% for boys in 2005-06. The GER for ST girls is 4.69% compared to 8.59% for boys in 2005-06. It shows that the GER for girls was almost 4% lower than the GER for boys across various social groups. Concerted efforts are, therefore, required to close the inequalities on the one hand and increase their participation rates on the other (Vedprakash, 2008). The recently released All India Survey in Higher Education has given Indian women a reason to cheer as their Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) had shown an impressive jump between 2009-10 and 2010-11 from 12.7% to 16.5%. This clearly indicated that a larger number of women in the age group of 18-23 years were going in for higher studies now. However, though the enrolment was highest at the under-graduate level, it witnessed a sharp drop at the post graduate level. Similarly, diploma and certificate courses also appeared to be quite popular among women with 3.13 lakh women having completed their certificate and diploma courses in 2009-2010 with the number crossing the 10 lakh mark in 2010-2011. The percentage of

female students among the Schedule Castes (SC), Schedule Tribes (ST) and the Other Backward Classes (OBC) were equivalent to that of male students. In Fact, it was slightly higher than male students in the case of the ST category with 4.6% women enrolled in higher education as against 4.3% male students. For Schedule Caste (SC), it was 10.1% women as against 10.3% of male students and 26.8% girl students for Other Backward Caste (OBCs). Minority constituted 9.51% and non-Muslim 18.54% (NSS 64th round). Data indicate although share of SCs in enrolment at higher education has enhanced from 8.5% in 1990-91 to 12.3% in 2005-06, which was almost 4% lesser than their share in the total population. The Proportion of STs in enrolment at higher education has increased from 2.1% in 1990-91 to 4.3% in 2005-06, which like SCs is almost 4% lesser than their share in the total population. It shows that their share in enrolment in higher education was less than their share in the total population.

To ameliorate the embedded problem of social inequality, successive governments have introduced caste based reservations in the institute of higher education. At present the caste-based reservation is applicable in only government funded institutions, and amount to approximately 49% of the total seats. Union Government has launched a number of schemes and programmes for the purposes

Of enhancing the participation of deprived classes in higher education, India has about 21,092 institutions of higher learning including universities, institutes of national importance and colleges. It compulsory for all these institutions to provide 15% reservation to Schedule Caste (SC), 7.5% reservation to Schedule Tribe (ST). Additionally, provision for the Central Government has now provided for 27% reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) has been made by Union Government in all centrally funded institutions of higher learning. Apart from reservation, there is also a relaxation given in the minimum qualifying marks for admission for these students. Many other facilities like scholarship to SC/ST students, free remedial coaching and hostel facilities are also given.

Even though enrolment pattern is not indicating equity, caste and gender differential is worth mentioning. Enrollment rate is not equitably distributed. Causes of differential distribution of enrollment can be explained in terms of socio-structural and socio-cultural background. In India, traditionally, caste based inequality have been depriving large segments of schedule caste and schedule tribes and other backward classes. Education was legacy of upper caste only and it ceased to those who were at lower strata. Lower caste people were assigning to perform all degrading task, as in India caste and class be present simultaneously (Throner, 1955 and Dhanagre, 1983). In agrarian social structure

in India all lower caste people were land less agricultural labourers and belonged to lower strata of class hierarchy. In post-independence era the tradition continued. Existing socio-economic condition pulls them in backwardness and do not let them to push off towards upward mobility. Marginal group in the country are submerged in poverty. Earning is prior to higher education. Further the expenditure incurred for higher education cannot be bear by them. Although there is provision of post matric scholarship but it is allowed to only those who belong to BPL level. The amount of scholarship is not substantial enough to meet all the requirements of higher education.

Conclusion:

It is observed, cultural capital is not favourable to marginal group. Most of the Schedule caste (SC) students are either first generation educated or second generation educated. As a result they are neither motivated nor helped by the family in comparison to upper caste peer. The term cultural capital is used by Pierre Bourdieu. In his theory cultural reproduction Bourdieu makes effective use of the word cultural capital which refers to the form of knowledge, skill, education and any advantages a person has which gives him a higher status in society. Cultural reproduction passed from one generation to the next. Thus, unfavorable cultural capital of lower caste may further contribute to their less participation. Although the enrollment rate of girl student does not signify gender disparity at under graduate level. But dismal situation prevails at post graduate and research level. It also indicates an increase in the enrolment of women in the higher education institutions in 2010-11 by nearly 30 per cent in all India level. This is of immense importance for development. But quiet a substantial number of girls especially in rural areas are motivated to enroll in the higher education for engagement and to earn a qualification for marriage. As their proportion is meager in PG and research level Motivations of competition and carrier orientation to girl student are real challenges of society. Girls are yet to come out from the status of inferiority in relation to men. Men are bread earner and women are object of domestic work this traditional value persuades many girls to drop out study.

Suggestions:

In order to improve the situation, the paper ends with the following suggestions:

- i. To enhance the amount of scholarship of schedule caste.
- ii. To provide adequate infrastructural facilities in schedule caste villages.
- iii. To make provision to improve their skill.
- iv. To make provision for further motivation for individual dignity self respect, and values of education especially to women.

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