

Empowerment of the Disadvantaged Through Higher Education

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Introduction: Social inequality had deprived certain sections of Indian society access to power, education, status, social honor and other resources, which a society bestows to its members. The Scheduled castes and the Scheduled Tribes were, at the lowest rung of the social ladder, were socially excluded from the mainstream society. MDG envisages an equitable, egalitarian social order through the upliftment of the disadvantaged sections.

The education of these disadvantaged sections began with the British when secular education was introduced. But the real noble effort began with in the post Independent India, when the planned efforts were made in the form of constitutional safeguards, provision of protective discrimination and welfare inputs. The Five year plans laid stress on the upliftment of these sections, through special and proactive initiatives pertaining to education, which was believed to have multiplier effect on their social, economic and political mobility and their social inclusion.

Higher education had been a key input for development in all the developing societies. It certainly triggers the upward surge by inculcating the needed knowledge, skills value orientation, confidence and the motivational drive. More than the attainments of SCs and STs at primary level, their Social inclusion or their empowerment can best be examined at the higher education level. Did higher education aid the SCs and STs in Anantapur district, for their social inclusion, is what is to be examined so that a true assessment of the effectiveness of the inclusive policies and initiatives can best vindicate the provision of welfare inputs and protective discrimination to the educational upliftment of disadvantaged sections, which is enshrined in the second goal of the MDGs.

Objective: This Paper seeks to examine to what an extent did higher education uplift and ensure the Social inclusion of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?

Method of Study: This paper is based on a study of 350 SC and ST boys and girls enrolled into various Post graduate courses Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh.

Conclusion: This paper draws the conclusion that the provision of reservations and other welfare inputs did propel the upward surge of the students belonging to SCs and STs to scale higher education in University. Their stint at the university has not only given them knowledge and skills but also socialized them to imbibe positive values and attitudes to brim with confidence to experience social empowerment and social inclusion into the mainstream society.

1. Introduction

Social inequality had deprived certain sections of Indian society access to power, education, status, social honor and other resources, which a society bestows to its members. The Scheduled castes and the Scheduled Tribes were, at the lowest rung of the social ladder, were socially excluded from the mainstream society. Access to education was denied to them for

centuries citing that education was not needed for the menial jobs they were expected to perform in the society. These castes remained disadvantaged socially, economically and politically.

The education of these disadvantaged sections began with the British when secular education was introduced. But there was not much progress during that time. The real noble effort began with in the post Independent India, when the planned efforts were made in the form of constitutional safeguards, provision of protective discrimination and welfare inputs. The Five year plans laid stress on the upliftment of these sections, through special and proactive initiatives pertaining to education, which was believed to have multiplier effect on their social, economic and political mobility and their social inclusion. Education performs the vital role of transforming human being into human resource. The policy paper of the World Bank vividly describes education as basic human need to acquire a broad base of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills, to respond to new opportunities, to adjust to socio-cultural changes, to anticipate in political, cultural, economic and social activities.

Harbinson emphasized that human resources, not capital, nor income, nor material resources, constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of the nations. Human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources build social, political and economic organizations and carry forward national development. A country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

After independence, special chapters have been added to the directive principle of the Indian constitution to provide special educational facilities to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Castes. Efforts have been made to give a new direction to education through the report of Education Commission also known as Kothari Commission (1964-66), the Education Policy of 1968, and again the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 that guided the formulation of educational policy in the country over the decades.

The Education system in India has been making fast progress. The data of students' enrolment at primary level had been the priority over the decades yet we are unable to reach total literacy in the country. The Universalization of primary education is still a mirage. The secondary education has yet a long way to go. There had been heavy investment going into higher education, with streams like Engineering, Medical, Agricultural, Veterinary, Pharmacy,

MBA, MCA Colleges and the traditional Universities, who play a key role in the generation, transfer and application of new knowledge. They also produce trained manpower required for industry, medical sphere banking and commerce, agriculture, animal husbandry and the administrative bureaucracies and all other service sectors.

The social inequalities that had been persisting in the Indian society had also crept into the levels of educational attainments, more so in higher education. Over the past hundred and forty years, this system has been dividing our society into two classes; the educated elite and uneducated masses, the powerful and the powerless. In most cases, the system has been used by those who already had the backing of educational traditions existing in their families and communities.

After independence there had been a phenomenal expansion of higher education in India as each year many new Universities and Colleges were established. Efforts were also made to examine the progress made in the field of education. This was carried out in the form of Kothari Commission (1966) which laid great deal of stress on the qualitative improvements in higher education and on linking it with other sectors of society and economy. New Education Policy 1986 (NEP) document has expanded on this theme of quality up gradation and character building through higher education.

Towards the end of 1994, India had 218 University level institutions including 35 Deemed Universities, of these University level institutions, 151 are traditional Universities, 33 are Agricultural Universities, 15 Technical Institutions and 7 Open Universities. There are 7,520 Colleges, 46.11 lakh students (88% of all students) and little over 2, 50,000 teachers (University Grants Commission, 1993, AIU, 1994). By 2006 India had 712 Universities with 5,449 affiliated colleges all over the country. The state of Andhra Pradesh has 43 Universities as on date.

The significance of higher education has been reiterated by the Indian Government through the declaration of higher education to be the primary focus of the XI Five year plan because of the urgent need to meet the challenges that emerged as consequences of Globalization. The sense of urgency is also very much apparent from the fact that the government has recently undertaken the task of establishing a college in every district, opening over a dozen federally funded universities and starting several Indian Institutes of Technology in the coming couple of years. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his address to the nation has

underlined the significant role that higher education can and needs to play in our national economic development. Since this economic development, accelerated by the expanding base of higher education would lead to the reduction of other kinds of disparities social, regional, political—its contribution in stabilizing our society at this juncture of volatility cannot be underestimated which in turn would help the process of development further. In short, if India is to emerge strong and cohesive out of its present socio-political churning or it is to emerge as a global power, expansion and consolidation of higher education seems to be only panacea.

The latest document on higher Education the XII plan document, lays emphasis on quantitative leap in terms of enlarging enrolment base into higher education to phenomenal rise by advocating introduction of evening courses and start integrated courses to optimize the utilization of the infrastructure created in the Universities with a stress on equity, access along with quality and market orientation. The government also wants the disparities in the educational attainments reduced through various strategies and inputs to the socially disadvantaged sections.

1.1 **Paradigm of Social Exclusion**

The inequalities and the disabilities prevalent in the Indian society are best explained by the term that gained currency in the late eighties and Nineties. Social Exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen to when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (European Union, 1997).

Social exclusion is a process, which causes individuals or groups, who are geographically resident in a society, not to participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society. (Scottish Executive).The processes by which individuals and their communities become polarized, socially differentiated and unequal.

The Scheduled castes suffered from disabilities and discrimination through ages and these disabilities can be categorized as (a) occupational disabilities (b) educational disabilities (c) Social cultural and religious disabilities and (d) political disabilities. These disabilities are discussed here under in detail. The Scheduled tribes too were backward due to their prolonged isolation from the main stream society thus deprived of the resources of society particularly education, political power and economic status. They were experiencing a virtual social exclusion, while all others were partakers in the resources of the society.

1.2 Inclusive Policy in India and South Africa

Impressive constitutional and other policy efforts are a key feature of both these countries in seeking to effect the inclusion of marginalized groups. Both countries have what one might call activist identities. The role that the state plays is thus both protective and fundamentally anticipatory, in so far that it must be constantly alert to the different ways in which the social structure conditions and limits the policies made for the protection of weak groups. The significance of the state is thus enhanced by playing a stronger role in relation to weaker groups in society. It has to project a strong welfarist identity and manage this identity in relation to three connected pressures, namely, the often prescriptive global order, the influence of local dominant groups (who are often the managers of the state), and the demands and aspirations of weaker and more vulnerable groups within the state.

The Millennium Development Goals envisages an equitable, egalitarian social order through the upliftment of all the disadvantaged sections of the society. Higher education had been a key input for development in all the developing societies. It certainly triggers the upward surge by inculcating the needed knowledge, skills value orientation, confidence and the motivational drive. Education, particularly higher education triggers upward mobility of the people. More than the attainments of SCs and STs at primary level, their Social inclusion or their empowerment can best be examined at the higher education level.

Did higher education aid the SCs and STs in Anantapur district, for their social inclusion, is what is to be examined so that a true assessment of the effectiveness of the inclusive policies and initiatives can be made which also can vindicate the provision of welfare inputs and protective discrimination to the educational upliftment of disadvantaged sections, which is envisaged as the second goal of the MDGs.

1.3 Social Inclusion through Higher Education

These are challenging times for higher education in India and the challenges are both national and global. The national challenges arise out of the need for making a success of the policy of social inclusion in the field of higher education—a policy that has been put into place recently. Since it has been, by now, well established that there is a direct relationship between education and development, pursuit of such a policy of social inclusion in the realm of higher

education would in turn lead to the reduction of developmental inequities that are a part of the socio-economic reality of our society today.

The challenges are global because in the contemporary world, not only are nations linked with one another in almost all walks of life—social, economic, political and cultural but there is also a healthy competition among them for emerging as world leaders in terms of development. And here too, once again, the key lies in higher education, for it is in the domain of higher education that the production of knowledge takes place. And knowledge, we know, is empowerment. Knowledge is power, says Michel Foucault (1963).

The efforts of the Government, according to some studies have yielded favorable results among the Scheduled Castes and there is perceptible change among them. (Beteille, 1969; Lynch, 1969; Bhatt, 1975; Abbasayulu, 1978; Malik, 1979; Khan, 1980; Pimpley and Sharma, 1985; Joseph Mathew, 1986; Parmar, 1987; Nanduram, 1988; Selvanathan, 1989; Pandey, 1991; and Venkateswarulu, 1991.) Further, the studies also reveal that the pace of change is rapid in urban areas, (Jain, 1966; Dube, 1963, Kassembaum and Vidyasagar, 1974; Corwin, 1975; Siva Kumar, 1977; Berreman, 1972; Kolenda, 1984) whereas the change is slow or absent in rural areas. (Bailey, 1956; Desai, 1976; Elayaperumal, 1969; National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1989).

The most important contribution the welfare measures have made to the Dalits, is that they have enabled them to become socially and politically more conscious of their exploitation and social degradation. These measures, along with an overall change in the existing social political scenario in the country, have made them confident of retaining in some contexts, their traditional social identity with a new outlook and or claiming for new social identity of their choice in other contexts. In the latter case, they have partially succeeded in internalizing the new identity and convinced others to recognize that. The examples of Jatavas of Agra (Lynch, 1974) and of Mahars – Buddhists, Dalits of Maharashtra (Zelliot, 1996 as quoted by Nandu Ram, 2002).

Growth of higher education among a section of the Dalits, on the one hand and reservation of 15 percent of the jobs, under Article 16 (4) and 333 of the Constitution at all levels in the Union as well as state governments and public sector undertaking, have facilitated their entry into middle class in general and government white collar jobs in particular. The formation of this 'new middle class' among the Dalits, Nandu Ram argues is "vivisected in its role of

acting as catalytic agent of bringing social change and mobility among the Dalit masses and its efforts for getting structurally accommodated in the Indian middle class or classes as such” (Ghanshyam, 2002).

The educational progress of Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes had been examined in various surveys mostly in terms of primary and secondary education examining their enrolment but these studies did not examine the qualitative benefit accrued to these students from disadvantaged sections in terms of the enhancement in their value-orientation, confidence levels and progressive attitude.

The laudable effort of the Government in uplifting the disadvantaged sections to be on par with the other sections of the society, would have to be vindicated by studies to examine the real impact of these inclusive policies and programmes not only in quantitative terms but also in terms of the qualitative benefits accrued to the disadvantaged sections over the decades.

There are very few or no studies on the progress of SCs and STs in higher education, more so in graduate and Post-graduate levels of higher education. Crores of rupees have been going into these programmes for about six decades, but efforts were not made continuously to assess objectively, the impact of these welfare programmes and the educational development of these sections. To fill in the void in the educational research, the present research study is carried out also to highlight their consequent Social inclusion into the mainstream society, through their postgraduate education in the Universities

2. Objectives of the Study

This Paper seeks to examine the enrolment of SCs and STs into Universities and the role of higher education in upliftment and ensure the Social inclusion of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?

3. Method of Study

This paper is based on a study of 350 SC and ST boys and girls enrolled into various Post graduate courses Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapuramu, Andhra Pradesh.

4. Findings and Discussion:

- i. Boys belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe background, are relatively higher than the girls from these disadvantaged sections.
- ii. Girls belonging to SC and ST category found to be falling short of their reservation percentage by about 2.47 per cent on the whole and by categorywise. (SC girls fall short of about 1.62 per cent and Tribal girls by about 6.02 per cent).
- iii. It was found that 33.45 per cent of SCs and 30.16 per cent of STs are in the right age of enrolment, while 66.55 percent of the SCs and 69.84 per cent of the STs are in the over age group for PG studies.
- iv. The enrolment of the SC and ST Students into Post Graduate courses Faculty Wise, indicates that, 92.86 per cent of the respondents SCs (48.78%) and STs (44.03) are in Arts courses while 44.57 per cent of them are in Science courses. Law and Commerce are the least preferred courses among these disadvantaged sections.
- v. It has been found that 77.35 per cent of Scheduled castes and 85.71 per cent scheduled Tribes had come from rural areas of Anantapur district. On the whole 91.43 per cent had come from rural and semi-urban areas.
- vi. It can be observed from the data that 86.93 per cent of the respondents are from land owning families, having land holding size of less than 5 acres of land.
- vii. The mothers of the respondents (63.14%) had education levels ranging from primary to degree level, which might be the reason for their wards to have educational level up to Post graduate level. It was observed that only 36.86 per cent of the parents of the respondents had no education at all.
- viii. The parents of the SC and ST students, were toiling in occupations mostly manual as Cooley labourers (60.86 %). Only 27.43 per cent of the Mothers were not employed but the others are toiling to support their families.
- ix. At their X class level, these students hailing from predominantly rural areas could register moderate percentage of 50-69 per cent, mostly (78.57 %). There is marginal difference between SCs and STs at class X level. At the Higher percentage level of 70-80 % and above (6.34%) STs have scored relatively higher percentage than SCs (5.22%).

- x. At Intermediate level 62.00 per cent of them had scored I class marks. About 26.29 per cent had scored II class marks. Put together about 79.37 per cent had scored between 50-69 per cent. By about 2.87 per cent of respondents comprising predominantly of SC students had scored the high percentage ranging between 70-80 and above. ST students are very meagre (0.05%) at this level.
- xi. The level of performance, has improved by about 7.16 per cent compared to their performance at their Class X and on the other hand, the percentage of those who scored higher than 70 per cent has also declined at this Intermediate level.
- xii. At their Graduate level, 67.14 per cent of them had scored First class Percentages while about 25.40 per cent had scored Second class marks. Put together 90.48 per cent had scored between 50-69 per cent at their Graduate level which shows in terms of their self confidence,
- xiii. Among the respondents, 69.99 are quite confident of matching students of other communities in studies at postgraduate level, which only indicates their social inclusion into the main stream society.
- xiv. It was found that 86.58 per cent of them had indicated positive value orientation like getting a job at the earliest, getting respectable status in the society, where their parents were disadvantaged earlier. By and large these students in higher education did exhibit positive values and achievement motivation.
- xv. A majority of the respondents (SC, 83.27% & ST, 80.95) could acknowledge the fact that the reservations ensure their empowerment and social Inclusion into the mainstream society, with the resultant feeling of being part of the main stream society.
- xvi. On the whole about 69.14 per cent of the respondents firmly affirmed that the inclusive Policy initiatives provided to uplift the SCs and STs are certainly beneficial to these disadvantaged sections to aid their social inclusion into the society in which their forefathers were once excluded for generations.
- xvii. On the whole 85 per cent of the SCs and 82.54 per cent of the STs feel that there is Certain to Most inclusion into the main stream society.
- xviii. It can certainly be said that about 79.71 per cent of the SC and ST Students do acknowledge the fact of the emergence of equality of opportunity in the realm of education more in higher education.

- xix. It was found that 95.47 per cent of the Scheduled Caste students and 95.24 per cent of the ST students have excellent level of attitude scores ranging between 50-75 points. The average attitude scores of the SCs are slightly higher than that of the ST students.

5. Conclusions

This paper draws the conclusion that the provision of reservations and other welfare inputs did propel the upward surge of the students belonging to SCs and STs to scale higher education in University. Their stint at the university has not only given them knowledge and skills but also socialized them to imbibe positive values and attitudes to brim with confidence to experience social empowerment and feel Social Inclusion into the mainstream society with an egalitarian feeling.

6. References

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Table No. I: Faculty wise distribution of Respondents pursuing PG Courses

Sl. No	Faculty	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribes	Total
1.	Arts	140 (48.78)	29 (46.03)	169 (48.29)
2.	Commerce	16 (5.57)	07 (11.11)	23 (6.57)
3.	Law	01 (.35)	01 (1.59)	02 (3.17)
4.	Sciences	130 (45.30)	26 (41.27)	156 (44.57)
Total		287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No. II: Distribution of Respondents by their Places of birth

Sl. No.	Place of Birth	No. of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Rural	222 (77.35)	54 (85.71)	276 (78.86)
2.	Semi-Urban	37 (12.89)	7 (11.11)	44 (12.57)
3.	Urban	28 (9.76)	2 (3.17)	30 (8.57)
Total		287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No III: Distribution of respondents by the Annual Income of their parents

Sl. No.	Annual Income in Rupees	No. of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Not Alive	10 (3.48)	3 (4.76)	13 (3.71)
2.	< . 20000	31 (10.80)	10 (15.87)	41 (11.71)
3.	20,000 – 25,000	2 (0.70)	1 (1.59)	3 (0.86)
4.	.25,000 – 50,000	162 (56.45)	29 (46.03)	191 (54.57)
5.	.50,000 – 75,000	54 (18.82)	17 (26.98)	71 (20.29)
6.	75,000 – 1,00,000	25 (8.71)	2 (3.17)	27 (7.71)

7.	1,00,000 >	3 (1.05)	1 (1.59)	4 (1.14)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table IV: Academic Performance level of respondents at Class X

Sl. No.	Class X	No of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Out Standing (80%>)	5 (1.74)	2 (3.17)	7 (2.00)
2.	Distinction (70-79%)	10 (3.48)	2 (3.17)	12 (3.43)
3.	A – 1 st Class (60-69%)	139 (48.43)	24 (38.09)	163 (46.57)
4.	B – 2 nd Class (50-59%)	87 (30.31)	25 (39.68)	112 (32.00)
5.	C - 3 rd Class (<50%)	46 (16.03)	10 (15.87)	56 (16.00)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No. V: Academic performance average of respondents at Intermediate level

Sl. No.	Intermediate	No of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Out Standing (80%>)	5 (1.74)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.01)
2.	Distinction (70-79%)	7 (2.44)	3 (0.05)	10 (2.86)
3.	A – 1 st Class (60-69%)	179 (62.37)	38 (60.32)	217 (62.00)
4.	B – 2 nd Class (50-59%)	80 (27.87)	12 (19.05)	92 (26.29)
5.	C - 3 rd Class (<50%)	16 (5.57)	10 (15.87)	26 (7.43)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No VI: Academic performance average of respondents at Degree level

Sl. No	Degree	No of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Out Standing (80%>)	4 (1.39)	1 (1.59)	5 (1.43)
2.	Distinction (70-79%)	12 (4.18)	2 (3.17)	14 (4.00)
3.	A – 1 st Class (60-69%)	194 (67.60)	41 (65.08)	235 (67.14)
4.	B – 2 nd Class (50-59%)	65 (22.65)	16 (25.40)	81 (23.15)
5.	C - 3 rd Class (<50%)	12 (4.18)	3 (4.76)	15 (4.29)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No VII: Over all aggregate percentage at Class X, Intermediate and Degree Levels

Sl. No	Performance	No of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1.	Out Standing (80%>)	06 (2.09)	01 (1.59)	07 2.00
2.	Distinction (70-79%)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 0.00
3.	A – 1 st Class (60-69%)	177 (61.67)	32 (50.79)	209 59.71
4.	B – 2 nd Class (50-59%)	92 (32.06)	24 (38.10)	116 33.14
5.	C - 3 rd Class (<50%)	12 (4.18)	06 (9.52)	18 5.15
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No. VIII: Distribution of Respondents by their confidence to match other caste students in studies

Sl. No.	Level of Confidence	No. of Respondents		Total
		SC	ST	
1	Certainly Confident	131 (45.64)	18 (28.57)	149 (42.57)
2	Mostly Confident	79 (27.53)	17 (26.98)	96 (27.42)
3	I Can't Say	44 (15.33)	18 (28.57)	62 (17.71)
4	Doubtful	15 (5.23)	3 (4.76)	18 (5.14)
5	Never	18 (6.27)	7 (11.11)	25 (7.14)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No. IX: Respondents' opinion as to whether they feel and Experience Social Inclusion

	Opinion	SC	ST	Total
1	Certainly Included	173 (60.28)	41 (65.08)	214 (61.14)
2	Mostly Included	72 (25.09)	11 (17.46)	83 (23.71)
3	No idea	26 (9.06)	9 (14.29)	35 (10.00)
4	Very little included	13 (4.53)	2 (3.17)	15 (4.29)
5	Not at all included	3 (4.53)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.86)
	Total	287 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	350 (100.00)

Table No. X: Opinion of the Respondents as to whether there is equality of opportunity for SCs & STs

Sl. No	Opinion	SC	ST	TOTAL
1	Certainly	141 (49.13)	34 (53.97)	175 (50.00)
2	Some what	89 (31.01)	15 (23.81)	104 (29.71)
3	No idea	26 (9.06)	7 (11.11)	33 (9.43)
4	Very little	25 (8.71)	6 (9.52)	31 8.86)
5	Not at all	6 (2.09)	1 (1.59)	7 (2.00)
	Total	287	63	350