



Ambedkar's Contribution for upliftment of the Disadvantaged



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HYDERABAD

Mahatma Gandhi National Institute of Research and Social Action, 2010

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Social Exclusion of Scheduled Caste Population in India with Specific Reference to Education – An Exploratory Analysis

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“Education is the transmission of civilization”. Education is of great intrinsic importance with assessing inequalities of opportunity. It is also important determinant of individual’s income, health (and that of their children) and capacity to interact and communicate with others. Inequality in education thus contributes to inequality in other important dimensions of well being. Measuring inequality in education is not an easy task. (World Bank, 2006)

As the saying goes, education is the fourth necessity for man after food, clothing and shelter, in today’s competitive World. Education plays a significant and interventionist role in remedying imbalances in the socio-economic fabric of the country.

Education in India has not filtered down to the lower strata except marginally. The educational upliftment of the disadvantaged sections of the Indian society such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes assumed priority in planning in the post-Independent India. With a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of scheduled castes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests, special provisions were made in the Constitution. The track record of India shows that large sections of its population consisting of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to be extremely poor owing to the prevalence of socio-economic inequality.

Education is an important vehicle for social mobility among the scheduled castes. The studies made on the scheduled castes have shown that education as an important factor has contributed positively to uplift the status of scheduled castes in all manners.

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"Development and empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups is a commitment enshrined in the Constitution, and education is the most effective instrument of social empowerment. Schemes for the educational uplift of the scheduled castes have borne fruit although the gap between the general population and the scheduled castes are still at unacceptable levels. Some minorities have fallen far behind the national average in education. It will be necessary to go to the root of the problem and examine the reasons for the decline so that remedial measures can be taken during the 11th Plan." (Planning Commission, 2006)

The singular role that Dr. Ambedkar played in the upliftment of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the early 20th century and the importance that he gave to modern education for their betterment deserves special emphasis. The People's Education Society that Ambedkar established in 1945 was in tune with his conviction regarding the role that education could play in the social and economic advancement of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

In India, while the 83rd constitutional amendment recognizes education as a fundamental right of all Indian citizens, disparities continue to be pronounced between the various castes. People from the Scheduled Castes, previously referred to as the "untouchables", make up 16 percent of the population and consistently fare poorer across various indicators related to primary education. According to the 2001 Census of India, Scheduled Caste communities are among the least literate social groups in the country. The literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes works out to 43.35 against 64.8 for the general population.

Studies have also established that access to and performance in education continues strongly to be a function of social factors like caste, class, race and sex. (Changati Ram Reddy, 2010) In terms of educational practices, Nambissan and Sedwell (2002) state that "the perspective within which the educational concerns of Dalit communities should be addressed must be one of social justice as Dalit communities have suffered from social discrimination and have

traditionally been denied access to learning.” “Universalist approaches are essential to building a sense of social solidarity and citizenship.” (Kabeer, 2006)

Balanced regional growth is necessary for the harmonious development of a federal state like India. The gains of educational development have not only been socially inequitable and spatially limited but also significantly disparate across the various states of India.

In this context the present study on “Social Exclusion Of Scheduled Caste Population In India With Specific Reference To Education – An Exploratory Analysis” is an attempt to explore the state wise inequalities and disparities in the educational attainment of the scheduled castes in the major states of India.

The following were the objectives of the present study:

1. To study the regional disparities in the literacy rates, gross enrolment ratio and the dropout rates of scheduled castes versus the general population for the major states of India;
2. To find out the gender disparity in the literacy rates and gross enrolment rates across the states for the scheduled castes population and the general population of India and
3. To compare the composite educational attainment of the scheduled castes to the general population for the major states of India.

Methodology

The study was based on the data relating to literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio and dropout rate of general population and the scheduled caste population for the major 16 states of India, compiled from the reports of Census of India, 2001 and Selected Educational Statistics, 2006-07 published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of India.

As per Census 2001, the scheduled castes constitute 16.2 percent of the total population of the country compared to the scheduled tribes who constitute only 8.2 percent of the total population. At a Depressed Classes Conference on

August 8, 1930 Dr. Ambedkar outlined his political vision, insisting that the safety of the Depressed Classes hinged on their being independent of the Government and for this he believed that they must be educated for their social elevation and to cleanse their evil habits. The following table 1 gives the educational attainment by levels between the scheduled caste and the non-scheduled caste population in India.

Table 1
Educational Attainment by Levels (in percent)

Levels of education	Scheduled caste	General population	Disparity index
Upto primary	61.2	49.54	80.95
Middle school	16.3	16.21	99.45
Secondary level	10.4	15.12	145.38
Higher secondary	4.5	7.32	162.67
Graduate & above	3.1	7.64	246.45

Source: Census of India, 2001

The above table shows clearly the high inequality levels at all levels of education of the scheduled caste population when compared to the general population. The disparity index also shows an increasing trend at all levels of educational attainment. This clearly depicts that despite the various schemes, programmes and efforts taken by the government of India to improve the educational standards of the scheduled caste population, there still exists vast inequalities in their educational progress. Hence the present study has explored the extent of disparity in the educational level of the scheduled castes across the major states of India.

The study tried to construct composite educational index for the general and the scheduled caste population, following the approach of Nauriyal and Shahoo (2010). The composite educational index was calculated as:

$$\text{Composite Educational Index (CEI)} = (2*LI + GI)/3$$

Where LI (Literacy index) = $\frac{\text{actual literacy rate} - \text{minimum literacy rate}}{\text{Maximum literacy rate} - \text{minimum literacy rate}}$

GI (GER index) = $\frac{\text{actual gross enrolment ratio} - \text{minimum gross enrolment ratio}}{\text{Maximum gross enrolment ratio} - \text{minimum gross enrolment ratio}}$

Findings of the Study

1. Regional disparities in the literacy rates, gross enrolment ratio and dropout rate of scheduled castes versus general population.

Literacy rate has been considered one of the most important attributes of social and human development for a country. The following table 2 gives the literacy rates for the scheduled caste population versus the general population as per Census of India, 2001.

Table 2
State Wise Literacy Rates (in percent)

STATE	Literacy Rate	
	Scheduled Caste	General population
Andhra Pradesh	53.52	60.47
Assam	66.78	63.25
Bihar	28.47	47.00
Gujarat	70.50	69.14
Haryana	55.45	67.91
Himachal Pradesh	70.31	76.48
Jammu & Kashmir	59.03	55.52
Karnataka	52.87	66.64
Kerala	82.66	90.86
Madhya Pradesh	58.57	63.74
Maharashtra	71.90	76.88
Orissa	55.53	63.08
Punjab	56.22	69.65

Rajasthan	52.24	60.41
Tamil Nadu	63.19	73.45
Uttar Pradesh	46.27	56.27
West Bengal	59.04	68.64
INDIA	54.69	64.84

Source: Compiled from Census of India, 2001.

The above table shows that the literacy rate was highest for Kerala in terms of both the general (90.86 percent) and the scheduled caste (82.66 percent) population. Bihar had the lowest literacy rate in the general population (47 percent) and also for the scheduled caste population (28.47 percent). The All India figure also depicts clear inequality as the literacy rate for the general population as a whole was 64.84 percent while that of the scheduled caste population was 54.69 percent.

Gross Enrolment Ratio

Enrolment of students at the school levels is the most important indicator which would determine the future educational development of the underprivileged groups in the society. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the total enrolment of pupil in grade or cycle or level of education, regardless of age, expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age group population in a given school year. The gross enrolment ratio at the primary and the middle levels of school education is most crucial. The following table 3 gives the gross enrolment ratios for the year 2006-07 for classes I - VIII.

Table 3
State Wise Gross Enrolment Ratios
(Classes I – VIII)

State	Gross Enrolment Ratio	
	Scheduled Caste	General Population
Andhra Pradesh	94.57	88.13
Assam	130.50	85.92

Bihar	74.02	74.12
Gujarat	134.88	103.11
Haryana	101.80	85.17
Himachal Pradesh	118.07	111.07
Jammu & Kashmir	99.36	87.76
Karnataka	105.90	99.94
Kerala	107.13	95.48
Madhya Pradesh	144.66	130.07
Maharashtra	145.75	109.03
Orissa	114.63	98.88
Punjab	102.24	76.45
Rajasthan	111.24	106.42
Tamil Nadu	116.22	114.44
Uttar Pradesh	93.86	90.91
West Bengal	99.53	90.49
INDIA	105.96	97.08

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 2006-07

The above table 3 indicates in the case of scheduled caste population, the gross enrolment ratio was the highest for Maharashtra (145.75) and lowest for Bihar (74.02), while for the general population the gross enrolment ratio was the highest for Madhya Pradesh (130.07) and lowest for Bihar (74.12) respectively. It is clearly evident that Bihar stands low in terms of both literacy rates and gross enrolment ratio. One interesting point noted is that for All India as a whole the gross enrolment ratio is higher for the scheduled castes (105.96) when compared to the general population (97.08). This shows the reach of the universal elementary education program by the government which strives to promote the literacy levels of the underprivileged class in tune with Dr.Ambedkar's philosophy.

Dropout Rates

Even though we have improved considerably on enrolment in primary and middle schools, the main worrying factor is the dropout rates. Since the enrolment alone does not give any substantial amount of educational achievement of the scheduled caste population, the rate of dropout is also considered for the analysis. Dropout rate is defined as the proportion of children that cease to remain enrolled in the schooling system. The following table 4 gives the dropout rates for the major states of India during the year 2006-07 for classes I – VIII.

The table 4 indicates that the dropout rate was the highest for Bihar both for the scheduled caste (80) and general population (76). There were no (zero) dropout rates in Kerala for the scheduled caste population. In the case of general population also the dropout rate was zero for Kerala, Haryana and Tamil Nadu. At the All India level, the dropout rate was higher for the scheduled caste population (53.05) when compared to the general population (45.90).

Thus it is clearly evident that in the regional variations, Bihar requires special focus in terms of educational upliftment of the deprived sections of the society, as their literacy rate is low, gross enrolment ratio is low and the dropout rates are also highest.

Table 4
State Wise Dropout Rates
(CLASSES I – VIII)

STATE	DROPOUT RATES	
	Scheduled caste	General Population
Andhra Pradesh	61.19	56.74
Assam	70.55	73.56
Bihar	80.62	76.11
Gujarat	48.86	49.29

Haryana	16.05	0
Himachal pradesh	17.33	4.5
Jammu & Kashmir	17.7	41.18
Karnataka	41.82	38.79
Kerala	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	43.73	48.42
Maharashtra	24	21.93
Orissa	70.27	62.59
Punjab	49.87	29.87
Rajasthan	65.01	61.07
Tamil Nadu	18.62	0
Uttar Pradesh	59.44	44.18
West Bengal	68.79	61.37
INDIA	53.05	45.9

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 2006-07

2. Gender Disparity in the Literacy Rates, Gross Enrolment Ratio and Dropout rates of the Scheduled Caste Versus the General Population

The present study attempted to find out the gender disparity index using the data on literacy rates, gross enrolment ratio and the dropout rates for the scheduled caste versus the general population across the major states of India. Gender Disparity Index (GDI) is measured as;

$$GDI = \frac{\text{female literacy/gross enrolment ratio/dropout rate}}{\text{Male literacy/gross enrolment ratio/dropout rate}} * 100$$

Gender disparity index for the literacy rates, gross enrolment ratios and the dropout rates for the selected major states of India are given in the following table 5.

Table 5
State Wise Gender Disparity Index (in percent)

State	Scheduled Caste			General Population		
	Literacy rate	Gross Enrolment Ratio	Dropout rate	Literacy Rate	Gross Enrolment Ratio	Dropout rate
Andhra Pradesh	68.25	99.87	105.95	71.71	99.21	103.90
Assam	75.43	97.14	99.76	76.61	99.45	102.74
Bihar	38.72	70.96	99.39	55.49	76.19	100.26
Gujarat	69.74	94.40	144.73	72.55	85.57	120.85
Haryana	63.15	105.21	126.01	71.00	103.86	0.00
Himachal Pradesh	75.43	100.36	107.23	79.00	98.82	182.61
Jammu & Kashmir	68.22	92.39	199.42	64.56	90.83	83.82
Karnataka	65.44	95.84	115.89	74.73	96.80	100.21
Kerala	88.07	97.14	0.00	93.08	98.90	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	59.84	95.84	108.05	66.12	93.78	98.67
Maharashtra	72.01	95.71	108.73	77.97	97.59	90.92
Orissa	57.23	95.39	100.04	67.04	93.72	90.85
Punjab	76.13	106.26	96.37	84.22	106.96	104.23
Rajasthan	49.10	86.90	115.06	57.93	87.88	115.75
Tamil Nadu	72.22	99.95	106.89	78.17	99.29	0.00
Uttar Pradesh	50.54	61.81	134.29	61.35	89.81	93.38
West Bengal	66.49	92.44	103.77	77.40	101.88	94.49
INDIA	62.87	86.16	106.63	71.32	93.07	97.37

Source: Estimates calculated based on Selected Educational Statistics, 2006-2007.

The above table brings out the fact that the gender disparity index at the all India level is higher for the scheduled castes in the case of dropout rates 106.63 percent, while that of the general population is 97.37 percent. Hence adequate measures to check dropouts of the scheduled caste population especially girls are essentially for the country as a whole.

The gender disparity index for literacy rates was highest for Kerala (88 percent) and lowest for Bihar (38 percent) in case of the scheduled caste population, while for the general population it was highest for Kerala (93 percent) and lowest for Bihar (55.49 percent).

The gender disparity index for GER was highest for Punjab (106.26 percent) and lowest for Uttar Pradesh (61.81 percent) for the scheduled caste population, where as for the general population it was highest for Punjab (106.96 percent) and lowest for Bihar (76.19 percent).

Gender disparity index for the dropout rates shows that it was highest for Jammu and Kashmir (199.42 percent) and zero percent for Kerala for the scheduled caste population, while for the general population it was highest for Gujarat (120.85 percent) and was zero percent for Kerala, Haryana and Tamil Nadu.

Although the Millenium Development Goals of Indian government aims at removing gender disparity in education, there is still dearth in the literacy level achievement of the women at all levels especially for the scheduled castes of India.

3. Composite Educational Attainment of the Scheduled Caste Versus the General Population.

Using the two basic educational parameters literacy rates and gross enrolment ratios for the major states of India, the composite educational index was calculated and is given in table 6. Composite educational attainment

Table 6
Statewise Composite Educational Index

STATE	SCHEDULED CASTE	GENERAL
Andhra Pradesh	0.67	0.70
Assam	0.88	0.71
Bihar	0.44	0.56
Gujarat	0.92	0.80
Haryana	0.71	0.74
Himachal Pradesh	0.86	0.88
Jammu & Kashmir	0.72	0.66
Karnataka	0.71	0.78
Kerala	0.91	0.92
Madhya Pradesh	0.87	0.86
Maharashtra	0.97	0.88
Orissa	0.75	0.75
Punjab	0.72	0.72
Rajasthan	0.72	0.76
Tamil Nadu	0.81	0.87
Uttar Pradesh	0.62	0.68
West Bengal	0.73	0.76
INDIA	0.72	0.76

The composite education index was lower for the scheduled castes (0.72), while for the general population it was 0.76, showing the clear social inequality in provision and achievement of education.

The state wise analysis of the composite education index shows that for the scheduled caste population Maharashtra (0.97) topped the ranking, while Bihar (0.44) ranked the lowest, but for the general population Kerala ranked the top with 0.92 and Bihar had the least composite educational index of 0.56.

Overall analysis of the current study shows disparities in the educational pattern of the scheduled caste population when compared to the overall population.

Suggestions of the Study

- While it is true that the tremendous expansion in educational facilities since independence has, to some extent, benefited all sections, the overall situation reveals a disturbing increase in sectional disparity and this is evident from the findings of the current study.
- The central focus in the scheduled caste's educational development is their equalisation with the general part of the population at all stages and levels of education.
- Constant micro-planning and verification to ensure that the enrolment, retention and successful completion of education at the school levels by the scheduled castes is the need of the hour.

Education: The Only Key to Dalit Progress. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar correctly understood the importance of education as the most powerful instrument to free the scheduled castes from the century-old miseries, sufferings, insult and stigma inflicted on them by the caste system. Educated persons are more likely to be more active, better informed, and racially tolerant citizens. Hence Ambedkar's philosophical and ideological roots for social equality of the scheduled castes in India will come to reality only when the literacy aspects of the scheduled castes and that of the general population converge.

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