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Economic Policy and Change in the Socio-Economic Conditions of Marginalised Groups (SC/ST) in Independent India

Prof. G. Nancharaiah

The major objective of planning in India right from First Five Year Plan onwards was acceleration of economic growth with justice. State has been assigned a crucial and active role in the process of economic development (Ahluwalia, 1991, P.9). In case of socially and economically deprived sections such as dalits- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, variety of special developmental programmes. Land reform was viewed as an important anti-party programme as it not only promoted equity but also increased the agricultural productivity. A specific sector of backward classes was included in the First Plan to cater to the specific needs of the SCs/STs/OBCs in addition to the general programmes. Special component plan for Scheduled Castes during the Sixth Plan, to facilitate monitoring of the developmental programmes of SCs, was introduced. National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, primarily to act as a catalytic agent in developmental schemes for employment generation and financing pilot projects was established. Special consideration was accorded to SC/ST families in the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), the most important poverty alleviation programme. In the wage employment programme of Jawahar Rojgar Yojana preference was given to SCs/STs and bonded labourers. It has been provided that at village Panchayat level 15% of the annual allocation must be spent on the items of work which directly benefit SC/STs. Through positive discrimination and scholarship facilities, it has been planned to promote education and employment among dalits.

In the light of the national economic policy of growth with justice and various developmental programmes initiated by Government of India for the economic development of Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes right from First Five Year Plan onwards, this paper attempts to study the Change in the Socio-Economic Conditions of Marginalised Groups (SC/ST) in Independent India and identifies the factors coming in the way of their economic development. The change is studied in terms of access to land, education, occupational distribution, incidence of poverty, and employment in government sector.

The major problem of Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes is poverty superimposed by social discrimination and segregation. Scheduled caste population which was 14.6 percent of total population in 1951 increased to 16.6 percent of total population of the country in 2011 while scheduled tribe population which was 6.2 percent in 1951 increased to 8.6 percent of total population of the country in 2011 (Table-1)

Table-I: Trends in Proportion of Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe Population

Census Year	Total population (in million)	Scheduled Castes population (in million)	Proportion of SCs population	Scheduled Tribes population (in million)	Proportion of STs population
1951	356	52	14.6	-	-
1961	439.2	65	14.7	30	6.9
1971	547.9	80	14.6	38	6.9
1981	665.3	106	15.7	52	7.8
1991	838.6	138	16.5	68	8.1
2001	1028.6	167	16.2	85	8.2
2011	1210.1	201	16.6	104	8.6

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, New Delhi, 2014.

The maximum concentration of SC population is in Uttar Pradesh, followed by West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. These five states together account for nearly 55 per cent SC Population in India. 68% of ST Population lives in seven major states, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, M.P., Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. 24% of SC population and 10% of ST population live in urban areas as against 35 % of non-SC/ST population. That is about 76% of SC population and about 90% of ST population lives in rural areas as against 65% of non-SC/ST population. (Primary Census Abstract, 2011).

Access to land:

From the Table II it follows that in 1982 SC households constituted about 20% of total rural households but control only about 8% of the total area owned, while other households constitute about 70% of total rural households but control 82% of total area owned. By 1992 the percentage of SC rural households increased to more than 21% and their share in land also increased to 10% while the other households which constitute 67.4% total households control 78% of total land owned. By 2003 the percentage of SC rural households remained at 21.58 percent, but their share in the land owned declined to 9.04 percent while other households which constitute 67.87 percent of total households control 79.81 percent of total land owned. And by 2013, SC households accounted for 20.06 percent of total households but control only 8.52 percent of total area owned while other households which constitute 23.23 percent control 32.02 percent of total land. Thus the percentage SC households in terms of their access to land deteriorated during 1992-2013.

In 1982, the ST households constitute 9.7% of total rural households and control 10% of total area owned. However, the quality of land owned by ST households is inferior to that of land owned by others and their agricultural productivity is very low.

By 1992 their households percentage increased to more than 11%, while their share in area owned increased to nearly 11%. By 2003, percentage of ST households declined to 10.55 and their share in land remains almost same at 11.15%. In 2013, ST households accounted for 11.89 percent of total households accounting for 13.06 percent of total area owned. OBC households registered 44.82 percent of total households but control 45.68 percent of total area owned in 2013.

Landlessness among the Dalits and others:

It is also seen from the Table II that landlessness is more prevalent among SC and ST households up to 2003. The percentage of landless SC households was 12.6%, while the corresponding percentages among the other rural households was 10.2% in 1982. By 1992, the landlessness among SC households increased to 13.3% while in the case of other households landlessness, remained at 10.2%.

The percentage of SC landless households declined to 11.31 in 2003 and further declined to 7.18 percent in 2013 while it declined to 9.51 percent in 2003 and it was 14.2% in 2013 in other households. The position of ST households is better in this respect also. Among ST households the percentage of landless households was 17.1% in 1982 and their position improved by 1992. The percentage of ST landless households declined to 11.5% in 1992 and remained almost same in 2003 but increased to 12.06 percent in 2013. 44.82% households of the total estimated households belonged to OBC, owning an estimated 45.68% of total land in 2013. It is to be noted that this is the highest among all the social groups in terms of households and area owned. Another interesting fact is that only 6.98 percent of landless households was registered in 2013 In case of OBC.

Table – II: Share of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Households in Total area owned and landlessness among them (Rural)

ITEM	SOCIAL GROUP					ALL HOUSE-
	YEAR	SC	ST	OBC	OTHERS	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1. Percentage of distribution of Households	1982	19.7	9.7	-	70.6	100
	1992	21.5	11.2	-	67.4	100
	2003	21.58	10.55	-	67.87	100
	2013	20.06	11.89	44.82	23.23	100
2. Percentage of distribution of Area owned	1982	7.9	10.1	-	82.0	100
	1992	10.2	11.8	-	78.0	100
	2003	9.04	11.15	-	79.81	100
	2013	8.52	12.06	45.68	32.02	100
3. Percentage of landless households owning no land less than 0.02 ha.	1982	12.6	17.1	-	10.2	11.3
	1992	13.3	11.5	-	10.5	11.3
	2003	11.31	12.81	-	9.51	10.03
	2013	7.18	9.41	6.98	14.2	7.41

Source: NSS Report No.399, (48th round, Jan – Dec.1992) 1997, P.33 & XI five year plan, Vol.I.

- NSSO Report No571(70th round, jan-Dec.2013 p.28)
- Other refers non- SC/ST up to 2003. In 2013 other refers to Non-SC/ST/OBC

Now, let us examine the changes in the occupational distribution of Dalits vis-à-vis general population in the context of land reform and agricultural growth in the post green revolution period.

Occupational distribution of Dalits:

The following Table III presents the changes in the occupational distribution during 1970-71 to 2011. It is evident from the Table II that during 1971 to 1981 there was an increase in the percentage of SC workers as cultivators from 27.87 to 28.17 while percentage of SC agricultural labourers declined from 51.75 to 48.22. In case of general workers the percentage of cultivators declined from 42.9 to 41.58. Percentage of agricultural labourers also declined from 26.9 to 24.94 during the same period. Regarding the non-farming workers it increased from 20.38% to 23.61% in case of SC workers. Thus, there is some marginal improvement in the SC workers as cultivators and also as non-farming workers. This indicates some upward mobility of SC workers also. This may be attributed to redistribution of waste lands and surplus lands under 20 Point Programme in 1970s. But during 1981 to 1991 the percentage of SC cultivators declined from 28.17 to 25.44, while there was an increase in the percentage of SC agricultural labourers from 48.22 to 49.06 indicating downward movement in the case of SC agricultural workers. During 1991-2001 there was an increase in case of SC cultivators from 25.44% to 26.78% while there was a decline from 49.06 to 46.15 in case of SC agricultural labourers during the same period. However there was an increasing trend in non-forming workers in all categories during all the three decades while increase is significant during 1991 to 2011. It should also be noted that the percentage of cultivators declined in all categories while it is very significant in case of SCs and STs. During 2001-2011 in case of SC cultivators it declined from 26.78% to 14.80% and in case of STs it declined from 54.32% to 34.50%.

Table - III
Occupational Distribution at all India level

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE IN TOTAL MAIN WORKERS OF SCs.					PERCENTAGE IN TOTAL MAIN WORKERS OF STs.					PERCENTAGE IN TOTAL MAIN WORKERS OF GENERAL POPULATION				
	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Cultivators	27.87	28.17	25.44	26.78	14.80	55.60	54.43	54.50	54.32	34.50	42.09	41.58	38.75	31.07	24.60
Agricultural labourers	51.75	48.22	49.06	46.15	45.90	33.00	32.67	32.69	29.88	44.50	26.09	24.94	26.15	26.05	30.00
Non-farming workers	20.38	23.61	25.41	27.07	39.30	9.40	12.90	12.81	15.80	21.00	30.02	33.48	35.10	41.05	45.40

Source: 1. Government of India, VII Five Year Plan, (1987 - 1992), Vol. II, P.330.

2. Census of India, 1991, Series 1, Paper - I, Union Primary Census Abstract for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

3. Primary Census Abstract for Total population, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2011 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

Of course in the case of workers of general population also percentage of cultivators declined from 41.58 to 38.75 while percentage of agricultural labourers increased from 24.94 to 26.15 during 1981-91. Cultivators declined to 31.7 percent while percentage of agricultural labourers almost remained same during 1991 to 2001. Percentage of cultivators further declined to 24.60 in 2011 while agricultural labourers increased to 30%. However, percentage of non-farming workers increased from 33.48 to 35.10 in 1991 and further increased to 41.5 and

further to 45.40 in 2011 indicating the occupational shift in case of general population. In case of STs, there was a decline in the percentage of cultivators and also in the percentage of agricultural labourers marginally while there was an increase in the non-agricultural activities from 9.4% in 1971 to 15.8% in 2001. It further increased to 21.00 percent in 2011.

Thus, during 1971-2001 SC workers mainly remained as agricultural labourers although there was some change in the composition of agricultural labour. That is, it was revealed from the village level studies that the percentage of attached labourers significantly declined and converted as casual labourers due to market forces unleashed by green revolution and state intervention in the form of antipoverty programmes in the post green revolution period (Nancharaiah, 1988, pp.105-106). Many studies on poverty established that poverty has been concentrated among agricultural labour households. (Hanumantha Rao, 2005, P.210).

Incidence of poverty among SC/STs:

The data on incidence of poverty among various social groups at all India level are presented in the Table-IV.

Table - IV
Incidence of Poverty among Social groups in percentages
(Head Count Ratio)

YEAR	Total (population)		Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1993 - 1994	37.30	32.40	48.11	49.58	51.94	41.14
2004 - 2005	28.30	25.70	36.80	39.990	47.30	33.30
2009-2010	33.8	20.9	43.5	33.0	47.1	28.8

Source: 1. Government of India, XI Five Year Plan, 2007 - 2012, Volume I, P.107.

2. Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013, Ministry Of Tribal Affairs Statistics Division Government of India, p 94

It is evident from the Table-IV that the incidence of poverty has declined during 1993-94 to 2004-05. But the incidence of poverty among SCs and among STs was much higher than the incidence of poverty among general population in 2004-05. The above table shows that poverty among STs has declined sharply from 33.30 % in 2004-05 to 28.8 % in 2009- 10 in urban areas and remained same at 47% in rural areas. In case of SCs, it has increased from 36.80% in 2004-05 to 43.5% in 2009-2010 in rural areas and marginally declined from 39.99% to 33% during the same period in urban areas. In case of total population also incidence of poverty increased from 28.30% in 2004-2005 to 33.8 % in 2009-10 in rural areas while it has declined from 25.70% to 20.9% during the same period in urban areas.

Access to Education

In the case of social sectors like education and health special attention has to be paid as education and health are important components of human resource development. Education not only improves the skills of people leading to increase in the level of productivity but also acts as an agent of social change. Education particularly technical and vocational education helps the people in securing employment and increasing their levels of income, consumption and socio-economic status of people. Government of India has been allocating fifty percent welfare outlay meant for social and economic development of dalits educational development since the First Five Year Plan. The details of change in the levels of literacy among different social groups are presented in Table-V.

**Table-V:
Literacy Rates of SC/ST by sex from 1961 to 2011**

Year	General			Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
1961	34.44	12.95	24.02	17	3.29	10.27	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	39.45	18.7	29.45	22.4	6.44	14.67	17.63	4.85	11.3
1981	46.89	24.82	36.23	31.1	10.93	21.38	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	52.74	32.17	42.84	40.24	19.03	30.07	32.5	14.5	23.63
2001	63.24	45.15	54.51	55.1	34.62	45.2	48.23	28.36	38.41
2011	80.9	64.6	73.0	75.2	56.5	66.1	68.5	49.4	59.0

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, New Delhi, 2014.

It can be seen from the table V that the Literacy Rate of Scheduled Castes increased from 10.27 in 1961 to 66.1 in 2011 while the literacy rates of Scheduled Tribes increased from 8.53% to 59.0% during the same period. It is to be noted from above table that the percentages of literacy rates of SC/ST are always lower when compared with the literacy percentage of general population

Table-VI: Literacy gap of SC/ST to others in 2012-13

	Literacy Rates			Literacy gap of SC/ST to others	
	SC	ST	Other than SC/ST	SC	ST
1991					
Male	49.91	40.65	69.53	19.62	28.88
Female	23.76	18.19	44.81	21.05	26.62
Total	37.41	29.6	57.69	20.28	28.09
2001					

Male	66.64	59.17	78.7	12.06	19.53
Female	41.9	34.76	58.17	16.27	23.41
Total	54.69	47.1	68.81	14.12	21.71
2011					
Male	75.2	68.5	80.9	5.7	12.4
Female	56.5	49.4	64.6	8.1	15.2
Total	66.1	59.0	73.0	6.9	14.0

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource

Development bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, New Delhi, 2014. PP-22.

Although the literacy rate of SC/STs has increased considerably, during 1961 to 2011, still there is significant gap between literacy rate of other population and that of SC/STs. There is a literacy gap of 6.9 between SCs and others and 14.0 between STs and others. The gap is still wide between SC/STs female literacy rates and that of others females in 2012-13 (Table-VI)

Table-VII :
Dropout Rates, 2004-05 AND 2012-13- SC/ST (Provisional)

Category	Class I-V			Class I-VIII			Class I-X		
	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls
General	31.47	33.74	28.57	52.32	52.92	52.92	62.69	60.98	64.94
SC	32.7	36.1	34.2	55.2	57.3	57.3	69.1	74.2	71.3
ST	42.3	42.6	42	65.9	65	67.1	79	77.8	80.7
2012-13									
General	21.2	18.3	19.8	39.2	32.9	36.3	48.1	46.7	47.4
SC	17.7	15.4	16.6	42.4	34.4	38.8	51.8	48	50.1
ST	31.9	30.7	31.3	49.8	46.4	48.2	63.2	61.4	62.4

Source: Govt. of India XI five year plan, 2007-2012, Vol.i.P.105

- Educational Statistics at a Glance, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, New Delhi, 2014. PP-17

The School drop-out rate is a crucial indicator of lack of educational development. The dropout rates for SC children are still very high 32.7% in Classes I to V; 55.2% in Classes I to VIII; and 69.1 % in classes I to X in 2004-05. The gap between the SC population and the general category increases at higher levels of schooling. Although drop-out rates have come down in 2012-13, they are found to be on higher side in case of class 1-X with reference to SC/STs (Table-VII).

Access to employment in government sector:

From the Table-VIII it follows that there is some improvement in the SCs representation in services of Government during 1994-2013. But still there is a gap of 2% between their respective quota and the actual number of positions occupied by SCs even in 2013. In case of STs there is a gap of about 3.5% between their respective quota and the actual number of positions occupied by them in Class I positions in 2004. The representation is found to be better in case of public enterprises with reference to SCs in 2013. However, in case of group-D in government services their quota was more than filled as jobs like sweeping and scavenging are usually not taken up by the others due to social stigma attached to these jobs.

**Table-VIII:
Percentage of SC/STs Representation in Central
Government Services in 1994, 1999, and 2004 (as on
1.1.2014)**

Group	1994			1999			2004			2013		
	Total	SCs	%									
A	59016	6046	10.25	93520	10558	11.29	80011	9744	12.2	69157	9043	13.08
B	103198	12442	12.06	104963	13306	12.68	135409	19602	14.5	153584	24906	16.22
C	2381613	374758	15.73	2396426	378115	15.78	2040970	344865	16.9	2555461	438724	17.17
D	1023285	209423	20.47	949353	189761	19.99	802116	147212	18.4	111878	33536	29.98
Total	3567112	602670	16.9	3544262	591740	16.7	3058506	521423	17.05	2890080	506209	17.52
Group	Total	STs	%									
A	59016	1727	2.92	93520	3172	3.39	80011	3311	4.1	-	-	-
B	103198	2902	2.81	104963	3512	2.35	135409	6,274	4.6	-	-	-
C	2381613	128228	5.38	2396426	145482	6.07	2040970	136630	6.7	-	-	-
D	1023285	62945	6.15	949353	66487	7	802116	53776	6.7	-	-	-
Total	3567112	195802	5.49	3544262	218653	6.17	3058506	199991	6.54	-	-	-

Source: 1. Government of India, XI Five Year Plan, 2007 – 2012, Volume I, P.114.

2. National Commission for SCs, annual report, 2013-14, p-9

Conclusion:

In the light of the national economic policy of growth with justice and various developmental programmes initiated by Government of India for the economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes right from First Five Year Plan onwards, this paper attempts to study the change in the socio-economic conditions of SCs/STs since First Five Year Plan and identifies the factors coming in the way of their economic development.

There was some improvement in the living standards of SC/STs in terms of their access to education, government employment and reduction in poverty. However, marginalized groups particularly, SCs essentially remained as agricultural labourers and there is no significant improvement in terms of their access to land despite land reforms and there is a substantial gap in the levels of development between SC/ST population and non-SC/ST population even after 69 Years of Independence. This is mostly due to inequitous agrarian structure due to the failure of the land reform. Hence, special measures like strict implementation of land reforms, redistributing surplus land, wastelands among Scheduled Castes agricultural labourers and marginal farmers required to be taken on priority while increasing welfare outlay for SC/STs. The State's role in implementing the programmes which improve their asset base and skills, particularly, education should be strengthened. State should also provide necessary credit to enable them to augment the productivity of their economic assets and extend financial assistance to improve their educational levels while increasing the share of expenditure on education in GDP from 4% to at least 7% for general population at National level.

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Democratization of Land, Capital and Power: A Fountainhead for Inclusive Growth

B. L. Raju

This paper tries to argue how the marginalized communities have been continuously and constantly raising their voices for the inclusive growth. The Constitution of India has laid some specific directives to be followed by the governments in order to bring out transformation in the life of these communities. But despite the constitutional directives, it is worrisome why and how do economic exploitation, social oppression and political marginalization of the weaker sections still continue to be the order of the day? Of course, India's true inclusive growth is very much depending on the spirit of Indian Constitution which advocates for the democratization of all the avenues and spaces of land, capital and power. Unfortunately land, capital and power are still the markers of oppression and the hegemonic structures control them. The same hegemonic structures have positioned themselves comfortably within the democratic spaces ensuring their domination and are dictating the terms of development of India. These structures are required urgently to be annihilated and brought on the lines of social justice by democratization of land, capital and power.

Key Words:

Hierarchy, Social Exclusion, Caste Structure, Paradigm Shift, Human Development, Marginalization, Political Economy, Deprivation, Indian Constitution, Distribution of Power, Democratization

Every Indian in his day-to-day living atmosphere experiences caste and its deformities in one or the other way. In other words, either he contributes to the caste structure or he is

subject to the bitter experiences of caste. No one can escape from the caste implications nor can be neutral to its influences. Caste is at the centre of all discourses. A noted thinker Nicholas B. Dirks in his book *Castes of Mind* defines caste as 'the core of Indian tradition and it is seen today as the major threat to Indian modernity' (1-5). He further comments, 'if we are to understand India properly...we must understand caste whether we admire it or revile it'ⁱ (1-5). Hence caste is a retrograde force of India that affects our consciousness, culture, epistemology, politics, development etc.

Caste as a social category places some groups in the upper strata of its hierarchy and accords them all the indubitable privileges and dignity in the society. The same caste category situates some other groups at the lower ranks of the hierarchy making them to suffer from the stigma of untouchability, hunger, poverty and violence, the shackles of oppression from which they have not been able to escape even after eight decades of democracy. Edmund Burke, a noted British public speaker of 18th century, pointing out the pre-democratic social scenario of India says 'in that country the laws of religion, the laws of the land and the laws of honor are all united and consolidated in one, and bind a man eternally to the rules of what is called his caste'ⁱⁱ(302-3). Caste has been a pride, privilege, identity, resource and at last the greatest social dignity that all together constitute power of dominance for the upper castes all the while the lower castes are subjugated to a sense of shame, inferiority, disadvantages and inhuman social exclusion called untouchability leading to their marginalization. Caste is such a categorical feature of social organization that Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the emancipator of the oppressed of India, identifies it as the most powerful instrument of domination in the hands of the upper strata for thousands of years.

A discriminatory social order and practice within the racial group, caste in principle is divisive force strengthened by equally invidious distribution of wealth and oppressive political power sanctified by unethical religious strictures and physical violence. Inequality and injustice are its spirit. Purity and pollution coupled with untouchability, inhumanity and irrational prohibitions are the driving forces of the caste structure.

Caste has been not just a social order; it is an economic and political reality too. The upper castes have been vested with power over economic resources like land and capital throughout the history. Abhorrent accumulation of the material wealth in the hands of upper castes has been unquestionably consented and celebrated by the society. So they enjoy their undue superior position and control the production, circulation, distribution of the economic resources according to their convenience and comfort. Casteism is not just a strict observation of the castiest principles in one's private or communal space; it is an inexorable regulation or obstruction of transfer of material and economic resources. Accordingly, the upper castes take utmost care in such way that the bit of land or capital or any other material wealth should not flow down to the hands of the landless, weaker sections. Consequently these communities are capable of using their higher social position to establish their economic monopoly and political hegemony over the lower castes. On other hand, they are able to manufacture the social consent from the lower castes to keep their hegemonic positions perennially secured.

By virtue of being positioned at the top of the social order and successfully settled their hegemony over the land and capital, they assume maximum political power too. The pre-independent Indian social and political system was highly feudal and castiest. Even the post independent India has not registered a scenario of the paradigm shift in its socio-economic-political

compositions. Today the markers of development of an individual or of a community can be recognized as land, money, education, material resource and political power without which nothing or no one can progress. They are the determining forces of civilization or growth of a society. A community or a caste is considered to have developed only the basis of the share it has got in the total economic production of the country. There has never been an interdependence or mutual cooperation as for development is concerned among the castes. Instead, all the castes which are politically conscious and economically strong aggressively acquire the ruling position.

The entire caste order has been structured on two aspects. Firstly, the upper castes are exercising some extra-constitutional rights and entitlements over the land, money, material resources and political power. There had never been a categorical political thought advocating equitable justice in the distribution of the material resources for all the marginalised castes until Dr. B.R. Ambedkar came and argued to this effect. In fact, there was no idea called society based on cultural and social intercourses, equal treatment and equal distribution of powers and privileges among all. All that existed were the castes that had closed the connections with other castes. Secondly, the lower castes have been continuously denied their due share of land, capital, power and other resources for thousands of years. They have been bound to various hard laboring and menial but stigmatized occupations on which they are made to survive and earn their livelihood. Transgressions of the caste bound occupations would often attract violent punishment. If we look at the position of the lower rungs of caste system, even today the situation is quite miserable and far away from the indices of human development. Naila Kabeer offers a very pragmatic definition of the major constraint for inclusive growth. She says:

Caste in the Indian context is a 'bivalent' collectivity. It is partly rooted in economic disadvantage, the religiously sanctioned segregation and ordering of occupations, with the lowest castes associated with the most stigmatized occupations.ⁱⁱⁱ

Marginalization of communities within the caste system has been constantly taking place in many respects. Marginalization is nothing but a practice of excluding a particular section of the society from development. It is certainly anti-human attitude of the people in power. The very names of the lower castes evoke contempt in the upper castes for no reason. Psychological, social and cultural inferiority in terms of ability, talent and social dignity and inability to appear in the public without shame are constantly filled into the minds of individuals of these marginalised communities to keep them in abeyance. Economic and political spaces are hardly accessible on part of these subaltern castes as and when they attempt to claim equal share of the rights and privileges. The political economy is based on explicit manifestations of violence in terms of deprivation and exclusion of these people. The state is always dominated by the upper castes that never encourage the lower castes to participate in the policy making and its execution in order to materialize empowerment of the deprived sections in true sense. In addition to all these, the marginalised sections have been subject to the onslaught of epistemic violence in a greater magnitude. Consequently, the marginalised communities feel greatly disorganized and always live in a profound anarchy. Inclusive growth of the society becomes completely impossible when a major portion of the total population is marginalised.

Indian economy is obviously a socially regulated economy. It means India's economy is not neutral to the dynamics of social institutions which in turn are powerful to

dictate the terms to economic structure. They are quite powerful to affect the distribution of land, capital and power which are the markers of inclusive growth also. Barbara Harriss-White says(4-7) 'we need to examine the ways in which the most significant social structures of accumulation-religion, caste, space, classes and state-regulate India's economy'^{iv}. So economy and politics are required to be freed from the social forces that play a divisive role as for the inclusive growth is concerned. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, the former prime minister of India and Gunnar Myrdal, a great economist had endorsed the regulatory role of social institutions in Indian economy. Myrdal goes to the extent of calling these social institutions 'tremendous forces of inertia.'^v(101-4). Otherwise the concept of inclusive growth cannot be a reality to achieve social transformation in the life of the marginalised communities.

India's hard reality is entirely contradictory to the aspirations of democracy. Why the upper castes...tend to treat their fellow beings with aversion, refusing (them) participation in the 'associated activities' of everyday life- eating, living together, working together.^{vi} Deprivation of the marginalised sections has become almost a new Dharma and it has been a part and parcel of the social relations. Arjan De Haan defines (3-7)...exclusion as a 'process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live.'^{vii} Economic and political exclusions in addition to the social exclusion are blockading the development. He further clarifies that social exclusion...as the opposite of social integration, mirroring the perceived importance of being (a) part of society, of being included.^{viii}

India has become a democratic country ever since it got independence. It means she gave up all the anachronism of the past and got transformed to the new socio-economic-political paradigms based the spirit and ideals enshrined in the Indian

constitution which speaks of the cardinal doctrines like equality of rights, privileges and opportunities and liberty of occupational choices for every individual irrespective of his social differences and disabilities. Democracy stands for equal opportunity for all by breaking down the barriers of caste, space, class, gender etc that create a great divide between the upper castes and the lower castes. The marginalised sections are required to be accommodated in the dignified and democratic spaces with all the supports like land, capital and power for inclusive growth ultimately leading to the social transformation.

In this back drop of political significations, all that needs to be carried out immediately at the micro and macro level is restructuring the economic and political spaces and their democratization. The structural changes couldn't take place as they were expected at the time of India getting metamorphosed from the feudal and religious hegemonic state apparatus to the democratic collectivism. The feudal-religion nexus that had played a very active role in marginalizing the majority of the communities still continues to be a powerful oppressor even within the democratic locations and it is trying hard to defeat the constitutional promises. Therefore the economic exploitation, social oppression and political marginalization of the weaker sections of the society still continue to be the order of the day. The most daunting task set before Indian democracy at present is to destroy the hegemonic political and economic order managed by the upper castes and adapt the democratic order of equality.

Land plays a very crucial role. Agricultural land is a source of self-employment, self confidence, progress and a watermark of social dignity. At the same time, land is one of the major production forces in the non agricultural enterprises to be taken up. The marginalised community population is more than 60% of the total Indian population. Ironically their land holding

population is less than 20% and their proportion of the land holding is obviously miserable. The remaining 80% of this marginalised population are the landless agricultural laborers. But the major proportion of land holding up to 80% is with the upper caste communities who are not more than 40% of the total population. This is a paradoxical situation. The data I refer to here is just an illustrative data and not the exact statistics. Nobel Prize winning economist and thinker, Amartya Sen argues thus:

‘Landlessness... is an instrumental deprivation. A family without land in peasant society may be deeply handicapped...landlessness can also have constitutive importance in a world that values family special relation with its land. To be without land may seem like being without limb of one’s own.^{ix}

Capital is very crucial in creating employment for one as well as for others. Either for agricultural engagement or for taking up self-employment, capital is very necessary. But access to capital for both agricultural and non-agricultural purposes is highly difficult. The lowest proportion of self employment reflects the disparity that the marginal castes experience. Lesser land holding or lesser self employment shows the lesser degree of land ownership and lesser access to capital. This is all because of the ‘historical legacy associated with the restrictions of caste system.’^x It shows the intensity of discrimination that exists as for access to land and capital are concerned. A noted economist, Sukhdeo Thorat remarks (16-17) that ‘inadequate access to agricultural land and capital...leaves no option to...resort to unskilled manual wage labour; consequently it leads to enormously high level of wage labour.’^{xi} Inability to access to land and capital leads to failure of the marginalised communities to get better education and health facilities which are decisive in

their performance in private and public spaces. That is why it should be a prime concern for the social scientists and economists to find out the reasons as to why poverty, hunger and malnutrition are very much associated with the marginal communities on the hand and on the other, how the upper castes have escaped from the metaphysics of social exclusion, instead, the how do the upper castes construct the exclusion continuously and constantly for keeping the lower castes marginalised.

Lastly, political power is a master key with which one can open the locks of opportunities. In India, political power is very vital in achieving the progress. Political power enables the one who pre-empted it to access to the justice-social, economic. But political power is not something that comes easily to the marginalised communities since they are unorganised in nature and politically not conscious. Communities with higher possibilities and opportunities of access to land and capital will definitely gain political power. That's how the present political structure of India is highly dominated by the upper castes that are constantly at work against the marginalized to keep them in wretchedness. Hence the marginalised sections frequently fail to occupy the power positions and participate in democratic processes. But any society that practices democracy shall ensure equal distribution of power among all the segments of the society so as to bring out inclusive growth as a normative condition.

Marginalization is not that which happens on its own in nature; it has been invariably and deliberately manufactured. '(Marginalization) is not just a social and cultural phenomenon, but is closely related with the material condition, division of labour, economic status and occupation and therefore economic interest and privilege...of the upper castes. It is this which gives rise to conflict.'^{xii}

So the Governments at both the Centre and the States should act upon to bring in democratization. Democratization is nothing but equally distributing the agricultural land and capital to all the marginalised communities which predominantly depend on agriculture for their survival. Having no land or capital is sheer deprivation and the reason for this miserable state is their lower positions in the social hierarchy. Social hierarchy always breeds deprivations, failures and discriminations for the lower castes finally leading to their marginalization. The presence of the marginalised communities in a society will never be considered unless they are empowered economically and politically. Their contribution to the economy and to the per capita income would be very insignificant if they are not accommodated in the structural growth. India's true inclusive growth is depending on the democratization of all the avenues of land, capital and power. Democratization destroys the existing hegemonic structures that have positioned themselves comfortably within the democratic spaces and are dictating the terms of development of India. To put it in simple words, democratization signifies establishing an egalitarian society.

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Empowering the Scheduled Tribes: The Role of Literacy Programmes in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh

Dr. K. R. Rama Mohan

Adult and Continuing education particularly for the scheduled tribes is attributed with various important life consequences. There are only few research studies conducted on the significance of literacy and its implications on the adult scheduled tribes population in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh. It is widely accepted and proved that illiteracy and low level literacy are severe educational disadvantages for the scheduled tribe population. Additionally, lack of literacy shall have negative outcomes which dwarf individual capacities and abilities to enhance their livelihood opportunities. There are also other limitations being remained low literate is that, they may be excluded from the accesses to information and other resourceful opportunities. Lastly, without proper literacy and sensitization, scheduled tribes may not benefit and improve their status in the ongoing developmental programmes.

The paper shall address the role of literacy in the lives of adult learners among scheduled tribes in the context of development programmes that are currently taking place in this region.

Introduction:

As per 2011 census the state Andhra Pradesh represents 35 tribes with a population of 59, 18,073 lakhs (7 percent) as per 2011 Census. In Andhra Pradesh state, the district Visakhapatnam consists of 16 tribes with the population of 5, 57,572, which constitute 14.55% to total population of the district. More than 90% of tribal population in the district Visakhapatnam is distributed in eleven tribal mandals, namely, Aruku valley, Ananthagiri, Dumbriguda, Gangaraju Madugula, Paderu, Hukumpeta, Pedabayalu, Munchingput, Chintapalle, Gudem Kothaveedhi, and Koyyuru.

About 56.4 percent of the geographical area in the district is covered with thick forest growth of numerous trees and dales where the tribals inhabits centuries together. The tribes found to live in the Visakha agency area are 1). Bagata 2). Valmiki 3).Kotiya 4).Rena/Rona 5). Reddi Dora 6). Konda Dora 7). Nooka/Mooka Dora 8). Manne Dora 9). Agency Goudu 10). Konda kammara 11). Konda kapu 12). Mali 13) Dulia/Mulia 14). Khond 15). Gadaba and 16). Porja. Among these tribes, Gadaba, Khond and Porja are considered as most vulnerable groups and these groups are at pre-agricultural stage of economy. Large majority of the children in vulnerable tribes are not access to school education, and very low literacy rate recorded among these tribes.

For the above Scheduled Tribes, 'Education' is an integral part of the empowerment process. Empowerment of the tribal groups is a continuous process where it means that capacitating all the geographically isolated different tribal groups to secure access and control of their land, forest and water resources as well as sustain and promote viable alternatives for security of their livelihoods.

Further, empowerment process is an interactive process whereby all the different tribal communities are enabled to participate actively in local governance (decision making that affects their own life situation).

At this backdrop, the role of adult education is very important in their empowerment process, as the tribal demographics is being changing and the adult population is growing

The Social Context of Adult Education:

All the tribal group representatives and individuals must to have a comprehensive understanding and need to develop an analytical capacity for assessing their external and internal environment impacting on their own communities.

The tribes should develop enough confidence and capacity to articulate their interests and perspective thereby participating in decision making processes leading to better governance in their villages/hamlets

The tribes need to develop skills to initiate local relevant alternatives to improve livelihoods and

Challenge external pressures especially due to climate changes

It is important to safeguard and value self and community history with a critical appreciation of age old knowledge practices and systems related to livelihoods and cultural systems.

It is widely accepted and recognized that adult literacy constitutes an important part of adult education, hence the importance of adult education processes must be linked with Basic human rights education especially in the current context where there is an increasing threat to access and control of natural resources by indigenous communities Continuous

development of skills to initiate and sustain relevant micro alternatives that

Address livelihood issues from a long term perspective Value based education with critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems (herbal medicine and local agricultural products

Need to create special opportunities to respond to the educational needs of women. Consequences of the development processes are not neutral. They militate more against women than men and hence tend to result in greater negative effects on women.

Loss of access and control of resources in tribal areas tend to push women Out of productive activities. This also affects adversely their status in their family and Community as their participation in the economy decreases. Lack of basic services, particularly related to health and education makes women especially vulnerable.

Moreover, atrocities on women are on the increase, as tribal areas become accessible to outsiders and commercially oriented activities. The major strategy to address this issue is to educate the 'panchayat' representatives to safeguard the position of women in the areas under their jurisdiction.

There is a need to develop an informed cadre of tribal citizens in law related processes is vital.

A critical understanding of the customary laws and the legal provisions in the tribal context is necessary to achieve social justice. The legal machinery in the current circumstances is either insensitive or manipulative in character.

In order to safeguard human rights and ensure enlightened governance there is a need for a special focus on educating elected leaders on relevant laws, their role and

functions. In the light of the specific application of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution to tribal areas, a pertinent law known as the Panchayat (Extension to Schedule Areas Act) was enacted in 1996. This Act facilitates the participation of the 'gram sabha' and the panchayat leaders in playing a role in governance issues at the grassroots level. Several NGOs all over the country have taken this up as a challenge. However, the point remains that respective State governments are slow to act. For example in Andhra Pradesh even the rules and regulations pertaining to the Act are not framed as yet!

Tribal institutions of secondary education are irrelevant and do not 'educate'. The main reason for this is that the content of education does not take into account their traditional knowledge systems, an understanding of their own environment which is rich in natural resources, relevant skills to provide access and control of their environment and recognition of their own identity as tribal communities. Also where relevant, a major concern is the need for providing primary education in their mother tongue in order to create an opportunity for them to enhance their learning capacities. Mainstream educational institutions tend to create an alienated group of youngsters with few opportunities to use their capacities. There is a need to review the relevance of curriculum and methodologies of education currently in the tribal context. More specifically we need to campaign for a policy, which takes into consideration the learning needs of tribal youth dropouts at the school and pre university levels.

Any educational process has to be sustained through creating conditions for being updated on current events and how they impact local communities. This means that processes of creative literacy must be accompanied by follow up measures whereby avenues for deliberation and some reading material is made available on a continuous basis.

A Sociological Understanding of Caste Inequalities

Saurabh Khanna

We understand the world around us, at a cursory view, in a commonsensical dimension. Consider this very moment, as I am typing out my analysis in formal English to be assessed for presentation at a seminar. I often think why I can't make such submissions in my first language here, or what is even so important about a degree. I also dwell upon the fact that I have to incur expenditures for renting a room near my institute, while rooms are reserved for many of my friends stay in the institute hostels. In order to conduct a deeper analysis of such pointed questions, my commonsensical understanding falls well short. I need be reflexive in my views – having an inside view of my own thoughts, as well as an outside view as a member of the larger society. I also need to de-familiarize some terms that form a part of my commonsensical understanding now, such as reservations. In this study, I have dealt with the issue of caste inequalities in India. I shall describe how, as a student of education, I have developed a 'sociological imagination'. This sociological imagination has altered many of my views, to varying extents, regarding the origins, mechanisms, and spread of the caste system in India, as well as its implications for the present times.

Caste inequalities in India

Commonsense understanding of caste

As far as my earliest childhood memory goes, *caste* for me was synonymous with *surname*. I remember telling friends and family that my name is Saurabh and my caste is Khanna. I was able to make out, though, that different castes had different cultures. Looking back, I find it surprising now that I was never

exposed to the difference between the two till my upper primary grades. As I grew older, I began to understand caste differences in economic terms as well. Popular Hindu television shows, such as Krishna and Mahabharata, were bereft with stories in which the low caste subjects would often reach the all-powerful king's gates for financial aid. I also vividly remember older ladies in my locality often deriding their housemaids, who were paid extremely low wages. Derogatory terms such as 'neech' (lowly; alluding to their lower caste) were used profusely and without disdain. Another common instance when caste was mentioned was issues of matrimony. My parents used to get advertisements posted in the local newspaper, looking for a groom for my aunt, making sure to filter out potential suitors through terms like 'upper caste Hindu male wanted'. Although I saw caste inequalities as a social evil, I often felt that their lot has improved considerably after independence. I also believed that positive discrimination through policy and abolition of untouchability had done them a lot of good. In fact, I was amazed to see these very commonsense misgivings mentioned in Satish Deshpande's work (Deshpande, 2003: 224).

Higher secondary grades made me much more familiar with the term 'reservation'. My discussions with family and friends often centered around the Supreme Court verdict that had increased the percentage of seats reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs in educational institutions to 49 percent. I was angered by the unfairness of such a legislation, and remember the teachers and students in my coaching class share my views. During my undergraduate studies from BITS Pilani, a private university, I somehow took pride in the fact that admissions to my institute were based on merit alone.

Sociological Imagination

My views on caste were based on my commonsense understanding alone. Even as an adult, there were no drastic alterations in my previously held views. I found good reason in Mills' explanation, that while staying too involved in my personal life, I seldom find time to look at the bigger picture – that of the intricate connection between our own lives and the course of society. It is not even a question of time, I did not possess the 'quality of mind' to grasp the interplay of self and the world (Mills, 1975: 10). It is this 'quality of mind' that he calls the sociological imagination. Sociological imagination enables one to 'use information and to develop reason' in order to understand the affairs of the world, and what might be happening within oneself, and finally 'the relations between the two within society' (Mills, 1975: 12).

Mills has made a distinction between the personal troubles of milieu (values cherished by an individual are threatened), and the public issues of social structure (values cherished by the public are threatened). He claimed that the prevalent times are marked by an *indifference* – where people neither cherish any value nor experience any threat, and an *uneasiness* – where people don't cherish any value but are aware of a threat (Mills, 1975: 18).

Although these thoughts date back forty years, I can still see similar traits in our present age. This indifference and uneasiness can be overcome if we confront both our personal troubles and public issues, through a 'sociological imagination'. As a student from a social sciences institute, I shall use the sociological imagination and understanding I have developed, in order to understand the issue of caste inequality of India.

Sociological understanding of caste inequalities

Caste can be understood through Weber's framework as a closed system of status groups, each having restricted rituals of eating, physical contact and marriage. The writings of Ambedkar and Chakravarti have dispelled many of the commonsense understandings that I had previously held regarding the origins, spread, and mechanism of operation of the caste system in India.

Origins: Ambedkar has drawn our attention to the fact that Indian population had been originally exogamous, and that endogamy is foreign to Indian people. He also mentions that at the very outset, Hindu society was composed of four major classes – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The class, unlike caste, was an open system, since individual mobility was always possible among classes. Ambedkar claims that at some point in history, the class of Brahmins moved away from the rest through the closed door policy of endogamy (Ambedkar, 2002: 256). This superimposition of endogamy on the original exogamy made it absolutely necessary to define a rigid boundary outside which marriages could not be contracted. Hence, the creation of caste.

Spread: Ambedkar has refuted the widespread notions that the caste system originated and spread out as a law given by Manu through the Shastras, or by the will of the Brahmins. It was too big a task for one person or class. He also refutes the view that occupations were the nuclei around which castes were formed. He proposes the theory that classes had gradually turned into castes through the processes of imitation and excommunication. The Brahmins enjoyed prestige in the class system, and interacted considerably with other class members. Both these facts satisfy the pre-conditions of Tarde's laws of imitation. He proposed that the lower classes imitated the Brahminical practice of endogamy, leading to further spread of caste system. This imitation also varied inversely with the distance, with the

groups nearest to the Brahmins imitating them the most. Excommunication, according to Ambedkar, was mechanistic and unavoidable in a 'system of castes'. In other words, if one group decides to be endogamous, the other group has to be so by sheer force of circumstances (Ambedkar, 2002: 260). Such excommunication further lead to the creation of new castes.

Mechanism: Ambedkar has identified 'endogamy' as the key element in the functioning and reproduction of caste. He mentions that any endogamous caste strives to 'preserve the parity' of marriageable males and females within it. The widow (surplus woman) is either burnt with her deceased husband through the practice of Sati, or compulsory widowhood is enforced on her for life (Ambedkar has called this a milder form of burning). The widower (surplus man) is rather considered an asset, and must be 'conveniently' disposed. This is done either by imposing celibacy on him, or by marrying him off to a girl not yet marriageable (Ambedkar, 2002: 250). It is also mentioned that these means of preserving the caste, are always disguised as unquestionable ideals. Ambedkar says that this portrayal is necessary to obscure these abominable mechanisms of reproducing caste differences.

Uma Chakravarti has added another dimension to my understanding of caste by critiquing the Dumont-ian framework of caste, which focusses on the dichotomy between 'purity' and 'pollution' as the foundational basis of the caste system (Chakravarti, 2006: 7). Such a depiction in ritual and status terms legitimizes the hereditary exploitation of the disadvantaged sections by obscuring the injustice that happens in reality. Chakravarti has also refuted a functionalist approach to caste by stating that a concentration of privileges at the top and disabilities at the bottom cannot seen as a system of mutual obligations and interdependence (Chakravarti, 2006: 11), and is

rather a system of 'institutionalized inequality'. Another important aspect pointed out by Chakravarti is the lack of attention given to the counter-hegemonic views of Dalit writers. Writers such as Omprakash Valmiki and Shivaram Karanth have depicted that they face struggles not only on an economic front, but also against socio-cultural oppression as well as in upholding their identities.

Chakravarti also stresses on the role of 'violence and coercion' in the origin and functioning of the caste system. She mentions how the caste system persists through the dual hierarchy prevalent in the Indian landscape - based on ritual purity (Brahmins and untouchables at each end), and based on political and economic status (Landlords and laborers at each end). She has cited multiple examples, one being of the Kallars of Ramanad turning to violence against the lower castes if they refused to follow their ascribed occupation or tried to educate their children (Chakravarti, 2006: 14).

Chakravarti also mentions how the upper castes control means of economic production, as well as those of symbolic production. The vocational and domestic knowledge of the so-called lower castes was denigrated as inferior and polluting. Brahmins themselves held a monopoly over ritual knowledge, while the Kshatriyas held monopoly over arms and means of coercion. This dominant alliance of Priests and Kings was too difficult to contend against for the weaker sections.

Implications for education

As a student of Education, I shall describe my insights and the implications of caste inequalities for the field of education. During the colonial period, it was Jotirao Phule who argued that the weaker sections contribute more to the economy than the elite classes, and the education policies should look after them more. He demanded more schools for the 'Sudras' and entirely rejected Brahmin teachers as unpractical and untrained men. Phule was one of the first voices raised for compulsory education up to 12 years, female primary education, and training of teachers (Deshpande, 2002: 13). He also opposed granting of scholarships based on merit alone, and demanded them to be more focused towards the underprivileged.

Padma Velaskar's works showed me a critical perspective highlighting the role of schools in reproducing inequalities of caste, class and gender. She mentions showing that the access to schools in India has consistently favored the dominant sections, as is evident by the low attendance and high dropout rates of the lower castes. Moreover, free education is only available till the elementary levels, which demotivates lower caste students looking for long-term progress. Schools are criticized for having a curriculum based on subjects rooted in technocratic rationality such as the hard sciences, which automatically suits the 'cultural capital' of upper caste students, and the weaker students are left behind. There is also mention of a 'hidden curriculum' maintaining the ideological hegemony of the dominant sections, such as the culture of the middle class/caste being glorified in texts (Velaskar, 1990: 139). Students from weaker sections are also channeled to low status knowledge streams (85% of them studying arts and commerce subjects), in line with their anticipated futures. These are also the very avenues where unemployment strikes the hardest.

Velaskar has also mentioned Sinha's study showing the differences between Scheduled Caste and non-SC students in even good schools increasing with age.

Weisskopf's analysis based on concrete data has brought about a significant change in my views regarding 'positive reservation' policies and caste-based reservations in higher education. I understood how a large proportions of reserved seats are left unfilled as there are not enough applicants from these group who have completed secondary education environments. Their lack of access to private coaching facilities means that their chances of admissions to elite colleges would have been negligible in absence of reserved seats and low cutoffs (Weisskopf, 2004: 4340). Admission to reserved seats also opens up opportunities of financial aid through college, such as tuition remittance and hostel reservations (a concern I mentioned at the outset). Weisskopf points out that SC students admitted to colleges experience high dropouts, along with performing poorly in academics. Apart from the economic aspect, the reason for this is the SC/ST students' lack of cultural capital (such as a good command of English). This is due to low levels of education among family members, as well as a life divorced from cultural activities. As a result, these students often face discrimination from other students. They need institutional facilitation as well as peer support to overcome these handicaps. After graduating, the SC/ST students have a limited degree of social mobility, though they earn considerably higher than their parents. They opt for secure government jobs rather than private practice. Velaskar's study found that these students were more motivated to help out their communities. Patwardhan and Palshikar's study further mentions that those SC students who reach the ranks of the professional elite often distance themselves from potential leadership of their disadvantages communities (Weisskopf, 2004: 4346).

The issue of reservations benefitting the well-to-do Dalit castes (creamy layer issue) is countered saying that most of these students still lag behind their general category counterparts in financial terms. Regarding the inequalities created within the weaker sections due to this issue, improving access and quality to primary and secondary education for Dalits is seen as a better remedy (Weisskopf, 2004: 4347). There have also been considerable arguments against reservations, demanding admissions being based on 'merit' alone. Sanil has entirely rejected this idea of merit as a relevant concept. He has argued that the merit cannot be any generalized ability of an individual, it has to be domain specific. Moreover, institutes' admission tests, such as JEE, hardly judge a candidate's ability to 'do engineering'. They are only seen as fair eliminators. He further claims that modern capitalist democratic societies have freed themselves of the myth of merit (Sanil, 2006).

Deshpande's work was insightful to me as he uses multiple data samples to highlight the reality of caste inequalities - such as the 1999 NSSO survey data, and employment data in government and corporate sectors (Deshpande, 2003: 233). An important takeaway for me was that Deshpande has raised concern regarding the lack of any quality data on castes, despite it being a major socio-political issue since Independence. He openly criticizes Indian sociologists of having constantly neglected a sociological analysis of caste, and of hovering around commonsense views. The only data we have, has been collected during public upheavals such as during the tabling of the Mandal Commission Report of 1990. Consequently, he recommends a macro-level data analysis for the future, in order to even out differences in individual data.

Conclusion

I second Mills' claim that neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. Sociological understanding is essential as it allows us to challenge our presumed commonsense understanding, and facilitates a more critical approach to the social facts. This understanding has organized and further consolidated my knowledge of caste inequalities in India.

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Reservation for Women in State Legislatures and Parliament: An Analytical Study

Prof. S.A. Palekar

There can be no true democracy, or no true people's participation in governance and development without equal participation of men and women in all spheres of life and at different levels of decision-making. The goals of development may not be fully realized without women's full and active participation not only in the development process but also in the shaping of its goals. Needless to reiterate that parliamentary democracy is the rule of majority. Fifty per cent of women's population cannot be left behind in the country's march towards attaining the goals of justice, liberty and equality under the socialist, egalitarian and democratic framework of India's Constitution.

It is in this context, the concept of political empowerment of women assumes special significance. Empowerment is envisaged as an aid to help women achieve to equality with men, or at least reduce the gender-based discriminations considerably. Empowerment would enable women to perform certain social roles that they cannot perform without it. Gender equality-political, economic or social-is enshrined in the Fundamental Rights under the Constitution together with equality of opportunity to employment and appointment to office. Political equality includes not only equal right to franchise but also more importantly, the right to gain access to the institutionalized centers of power.

Political status of women implies a degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power and importance given by the society to the role of women. The equality is inseparable from active political participation.

Participation of women in political life is integral to the advancement of women. Their political participation means not only using the right to vote, but also power-sharing, co-decision-making, and co-policy-making at all levels of governance of the State. Women's equal status in every sphere is inextricable linked to country's progress and development.

While dealing with gender issues, it is important to mention that the Constitution of India has guaranteed equality before law and equal protection of law (Article 14) and prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex alone and it has empowered the State to make special provisions for women and children (Article 15). It has made provisions to prohibit traffic in human beings and to provide for just and humane conditions of work along with maternity relief (Article 23 and Article 42). It is a constitutional duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51A). In this respect, India's Constitution has a place of distinction among the comity of nations.

The Indian constitution made a deliberate radical departure from the age-old poor social status of women by granting them equal, social and political status. Constitutional equal status means that every adult female. Whatever be her social position or accomplishments, has now the opportunity to function as a citizen and individual partner in the takes of nation building.

In view of the constitutional obligations, during the post-independent era, women have been recognized as a separate target group and the government has directed its efforts towards mainstreaming of women into the national developmental process. This period has witnessed far-reaching changes in almost all spheres-political, economic and social. In terms of constitutional, legal and administrative measures, many

commendable initiatives have been taken. Prominent among them are the Constitutional provisions for gender equality and justice, enactment of new laws and amendment of existing laws to protect and promote the interests of women, setting up of women-specific administrative and economic structures, such as Women and Child Development Department at the Union and State Government levels, formation of National Commission for women in several states, State Women Development Corporations, orienting plan strategy to include women specific and women related programmes, launching of special schemes like Rashtriya Mahila Kosj and Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Indira Mahila Yojana, etc.

Village panchayat and Empowerment of Women

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution passed by the Parliament in 1992 and ratified in 1993 to provide reservation for among elected representatives to the local governments. This has been hailed as a watershed achievement in empowerment of women, as over one million rural women have joined village panchayat posts as sarpanch or adhyaksha or members of community administration. According to Majumdar, a feminist author, this legislation brought about the 'political dynamism' of female voters, leading her to conclude, "It is time for India to try out some new experiments in achieving real democracy₁

The kind of political empowerment is unprecedented even from the Western standard. For the first time in the history of this country, low caste people are substantially represented in statutory panchayats. Although most panchayat women are illiterate and poor and belong to the category of other backward classes, and yet, many of them have proved their mettle and won acclaim as able administrators. For instance, Fatima Bee of Kalva village in Andhra Pradesh, who is unlettered and never

seen a city, became sarpanch of the village through reservations under the panchayat legislation, and flew to New York in 1998 to receive the “UNDP Race Against Poverty” award from the Secretary General for her work relating to the programme of poverty alleviation.

In terms of percentages, women’s representation in different bodies may not seem significant, but statistics do not always reflect the reality of changing perceptions at the community level. It is a political awareness rather than conventional schooling or education in terms of degrees or number of years of schooling that makes a real difference.

The 50 percent reservation for women in panchayat elections has made a significant beginning. However, experiences of women elected as members have been both positive and also disheartening. The fact that about one million women came into the public arena for the first time is expected to create ripples in a tradition bound Indian Society, but then the quality of participation in the panchayat bodies may not be so effective in the beginning. But at the same time, it is also true that most elected women have no idea, as to what being an elected member really means, and just do what the men (as brother, father, father-in-law and husband) tell them to do. Illiterate women cannot take autonomous decision. They are bound to be dictated by educated and crafty male members of their family in the background. Mrs. Rabri Devi, the present Chief Minister of Bihar, is a glaring case in point. Like her, illiterate women in politics have to remain proxy political figures.

The elected women themselves, however, are not yet seeing them as empowered for want of education and, therefore, lack the required confidence in asserting themselves. Some do not assert themselves, because they do not know what their

rights as village administrators are – the issue being one of awareness. The other point is that community does not perceive the women as capable or worthy of leadership. The attitude of rural people towards women as political leaders is yet to undergo sufficient change. Besides being a votary of political empowerment of women, I really wonder whether empowerment in such a situation would really make much difference in the life of illiterate women. However, in the long run, political empowerment may help them gain social acceptance and they would be quite effective and autonomous in the decision-making process.

Women in National Power Politics

From a minimum of 37 per cent in 1952, women voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections reached an all-time high percent in 1984. However within the Parliament, the presence of female parliamentarians has been poor. The percentage of female parliamentarians has at no time exceeded 10 in the Lok Sabha. The highest was in the 8th Lok Sabha (1985-90) with eight per cent of total number of 544. Though under the Constitution and under ordinary laws, women enjoy same political rights as men, enabling them to take part effectively in the administration of the country, why is it that even today, there is no adequate representation of women in the political sphere? Very few women dare to venture in this field, except those who come from politicians families and have necessary political exposure. The lists of candidates over the years show that most of them belong to influential or political families. Such candidates are generally shy of taking a stand that is likely to embarrass their party, jeopardize their own interest or that of their male patrons.

The presence of a few women in active politics may not make much difference in the structural set-up. A study on

women in public life, carried out by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), also argues that only a critical mass of women allows female politicians to bring different values to public life. The 73rd and 74th Amendments are a laudable step towards achieving this 'critical mass'. However, there is need to extend this affirmative action from panchayat level to the state and national level.

Despite constitutional and socio-economic changes, the participation of women in political process has so far been negligible. It becomes quite obvious if we consider the percentages of women in state legislatures and Parliament. Women's marginal political presence is often attributed to their apathy and unwillingness, the influence of patriarchal culture, the negative female response to increasing criminalization of politics or the general stigma associated with women politicians. But such a simplistic interpretation needs to be explored empirically.

Strategies for Enhancing Political Participation of Women

In addition to those stated above, there are some other factors too. In the empowerment route, participation of women, at different levels, have many obstacles as follows: (1) Relatively short historical tradition of women's political participation (especially during the freedom struggle); (2) Prevailing negative attitudes towards women's active participation in public life; (3) Difficulty in combining a political career with parental and conjugal role of women; (4) Economic dependency on male or lack of financial means; (5) Poor female education and lack of awareness of their rights. Illiteracy happens to be an important stumbling block towards empowerment.

Political empowerment of women is not to be viewed in isolation. Structural changes in the formal power institution,

economic independence, increasing awareness through education and gender equality in the social and cultural ethos are important prerequisites for political empowerment of women. The political participation of women generally suffers on two counts; first, because the society as a whole is impoverished, and second, because they are women.

The strategy should be to empower a still greater number of women in the decision-making process. Governments, political parties and other organizations should encourage women's participation in politics and in the exercise of political responsibilities. The women's organizations should exert pressure on political parties to open up opportunities to women as candidates for elections and encourage female functionaries in political parties.

In addition, political parties need to express clearly their commitment to end discriminations against women and to ensure women's development as an integral component of their policies of national development and as their party ideology. As a supplementary measure, political parties need to encourage women at all decision-making levels, if necessary, by providing affirmative measures to strengthen and consolidate women's presence at various organizational and decision-making levels. Lack of education and political awareness partly accounts for deprivation of women. In such a situation, the main objective of women's education should be on mainstream gender issues and strengthening the capability of women to make them aware of their rights so that they are able to face the challenges in securing gender equality.

Women's Bill and Political Empowerment

There is nothing wrong with increasing political participation of women, but the moot question here is that: Is the passing of pending bill for reservation for women in legislative bodies most essential at this juncture? Is it the only effective option for empowerment of women in the Indian context at the moment? If the purpose of empowerment is to attain equality with men or to cope with gender-based discriminations, there is, in fact, some other effective option too. The protagonists of women liberation movement should also think other option, in fact more seriously, than mere reservation of seats in state legislatures and parliament.

The parliamentary bill for 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has been pending as the 81st Amendment. It has been shelved repeatedly in spite of political promises made to the electorates. The champions of the feminist movement see the provision for providing reservation as a unifying instrument for women, which would enable them to join the political mainstream and usher in an egalitarian society. It has always been the contention that equality in all spheres is inseparable from active political participation and is integral to the process of women without active and continuous participation of women at all levels of the government, including local party structures, equality in true sense will continue to remain deceptive.

Female protagonists of reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies are terribly worried over such a fate of the bill. Making a strong reaction to it, they often say that the bill is pending because it is against the established values of a male dominated society. However, the charge is frivolous because the bill was not moved by a female-headed or dominate government. It is also said that the low female

representation in the decision-making organizations is because the political parties harbour very conservative view about women. Different parties champion the cause of women in their manifestos, but during election time they give tickets mostly to men. All political parties do have a women's wing, but the access to the inner ring of the party, which is the core of the power structure of the party, is not very easy for women for various reasons. Increasing lumpenisation and use of muscle power in political game keep the women away. The criterion for political parties for their selection of contestants in the 'winnability factor' rather than their identity in the constituency. Some political parties deny tickets to women on the ground of non-winnability factor.

There is strong apprehension about the necessity of reservation for women in the highest legislative body at this juncture. Many people, even those who are strong votary of gender equality, feel that it would be premature to initiate affirmative action for women through passing the women's bill. The level of literacy for women is quite low and the country is way behind in matters of development compared to most developing countries, leave the developed world aside, Indian democracy has not really come to the stage for such an action. There is no need to caricature or emulate blindly what is seen in some developed countries. India should wait and watch for some more time and assess the effectiveness or success of reservation for women at the local level government.

Different political parties, however, are opposed to the passing of the bill for reservation of women in legislative bodies some other reasons. The political parties, which stand for the cause of backwards, minorities and other socially and economically under-privileged sections of society, apprehend that through reservation for women the political interests of the

under-privileged would suffer. At that time, the journalist Rajshekhar rightly held that the bid to introduce the women's bill on gender quota was an upper caste ploy to stem the rising tide of lower caste men in legislative bodies.² This was one of the important reasons why most leaders of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Dal (U), Samata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajvadi Party and other parties and politicians with socialist leaning opposed introduction of the bill in the Lok Sabha. In a similar vein, on the contrary, the feminists outside the Parliament support the bill in no uncertain terms because they mostly belong to the elite sections of upper castes with strong vested interests in their political career.

Due to low level of political awareness and education and widespread poverty, these women from disadvantaged sections of society would not match the relatively developed women from upper castes and upper echelons of society in electoral race and thus the causes of dalits and Other Backward Classes along with those of minorities would ultimately suffer because of consequent decline in representation in legislative bodies. The issue of reservation for women is supported quite vociferously, mostly by those who belong to the elites from upper castes, because they know that they would instantly benefit from the women's bill. This would not help larger sections, of women from lower strata of society, who are mostly illiterate and hardpressed from poverty. This would also help those women whose husbands or other close kinds are in politics. Thus, in ultimate analysis the political gains of women community in general would result in redundancy of the bill. Furthermore, the Indian politics has become so dirty that women's involvement in politics would merely make them corrupt and criminal along with their husbands.

The Indian history, in fact, is replete with plethora of evidence that men have done more for the women than women for themselves during the whole period of modern India. Therefore, it is absurd to mistrust the male because male belongs to the opposite sex. Man should not be accused for the plight the women had to confront in their life. Cultural heritage, which is obviously not the creation of men alone, is no less a responsible factor, besides their inherent biological constraints. However, males are not exonerated of the charge that they have often subjected them to discriminations to exercise undue authority over them. Here, it is also not suggested that women should make mercy appeal to men for their empowerment. They should certainly struggle to attain gender equality, but choosing the right course under the given circumstances is a very important strategy to empower women.

Most middle class urban women are virtually crazy about the ideas put forth by intellectual Marxist women from the Western world. What they see the women doing in the US, Germany, Norway, UK or some other Western countries through media or through personal experience, they try to emulate the same in India, without giving any thought to their necessity or relevance in the Indian context. They fail to recognize that India is ahead of most developed countries in granting equal rights and privileges to women in politics. To be objective, the level of economic development of India is comparable to the 19th Century Western World, and the position of women in the 19th Century Western World was relatively much worse in many respects. Spain, for instance, being a developed country, gave equal civil rights to women as late as 1978.

Indisputably, India is committed to the cause of empowerment of women. However, the journey towards progress is long and arduous. In a world of challenge and

competition, both the State and the society have to constantly adjust themselves to the changing needs. It is recognized that the development of the country is not possible if women, comprising half of the human resource, as labour force and citizens, stay away from the national development process. Women's participation in the political process of development is of crucial importance from the consideration of both equity and development.

India has witnessed significant changes. Age-old prejudices and gender-biases are giving way to gender equality and harmonious development. Women of today are no longer content to remain peripheral actors, and want to play their rightful role in the spheres of life. Political emancipation and social empowerment will act as main catalytic in achieving the empowerment of women to a large extent. However, in the present circumstances, empowerment of women is possible more effectively through economic empowerment rather than through reservation or some seats in Parliament or state legislatures.

At the broad societal level, both sexes share a common humanity, which is the basis for the notion of equal human rights and freedom if any section of society – men, women, children caste or class – is denied dignity and respect than this must be restored to them. India has heralded the new millennium by pronouncing the year 2001 as Women's Empowerment Year. In terms of political empowerment, lakhs of women occupy positions as members and chairpersons of grassroots democratic institutions in India following reservation of one-third seats at village and municipal level for women. In fact, right from the days of freedom struggle the Indian women have been consistently encouraged to take part in active politics. But due to the vitiated political milieu, resulting from increasing

politicization and criminalization of politics, the level of political participation of women has been adversely affected despite the fact that there has been a marked increase in the level of literacy and political awareness of women.

Notes

1. Vina Majumdar, "Historical Soundings", Seminar, Vol. 457, September 1977, p.19.
2. See editorial of P.T. Rajeshwar in Dalit Voice (The Voice of the Persecuted Nationalities Denied. Human Rights), Vol. 17, No. 18, August 1-15 1998, pp.3-5.

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The Journal promotes original academic research in adult education, humanities, culture, comparative education, social sciences, rural development, science & technology for 'development, gender & development, security issues, domestic politics, governance & social movements, grassroots governance etc.

Objectives

The Millennium Development Goal the emphasis has shifted towards people centered approach that recognizes human and social capital leading to sustainable development. In other words, developments from efforts include economic strategies tied with resonance development inputs. It is an under pinning factor for many emerging programmes. The main goal of our development policy is to create sustainable improvement in the quality of life among common people. In area of development programmes much stress was given to stakeholders oriented programmes, to facilitate increase in per capita income of individual families. Attempts are being made to empower people in all aspects like health, economy, polity, education and so on. Objectives of IJLLAD, specifically, are to publish original empirical research and theoretical studies on adult education, lifelong learning, extension, and economic relations, gender and development studies, civil society movements and studies on democracy, problems of marginalized sections, cross border terrorism and violation of human rights, ecology and environment, issues in governance at the local, national and regional levels

Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

AIMS

The Department aims at conducting Lifelong Learning programmes to meet the demands of emerging knowledge society.

OBJECTIVES

- Impart education and training in Lifelong Learning in order to provide professional manpower for the development of human resource.
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- Integrate theory and practice in the field of Lifelong Learning.
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