

## SHADOW OF CASTE AFFECTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF SCHEDULED CASTES IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Poverty eliminates people from various social roles and create miserable situation in depriving the quality of life of people. Majority of Scheduled Castes (SCs) are most deprived and fall under poverty line. If they availing the services and opportunities would enhance their capability and standard of living. But the degree of deprivation varies across different subcategories. The very reason for deprivation may be just because of being at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The condition of excludes them from the mainstream society and also contributes to the further increase of social inequality. Thus, through the affirmative action's social mobility can be achieved by inclusion of people who still face different forms of exclusion which keep them out of these benefits.

**KEYWORDS:** Scheduled Castes, Caste System; Capability; Dalits

### INTRODUCTION

The Dalits are categorised lower among all other castes in India. The discrimination and denial of opportunity on the base of caste had been practiced for over 2500 years in the subcontinent. Discrimination including untouchability and stigmatisation from caste were practiced long years back to Dalits. They recognised as socially excluded community, outside the four Hindu varna system called Panchamas. Neither they were considered in varna system nor treated equally to any other castes among shudras (which is last in the ladder of varna system). These so called dalits, untouchables, oppressed, discriminated group are classified administratively as Scheduled Castes. The SCs comprises about 16.6% to the total of 1.3 billion population of India. Though their number is significant in total percentage of population, they are considered as 'lower' in status, ritually 'impure' and thus isolated physically, socially and politically from other castes and communities of the society. They are subjected to a massive volume of violence and atrocities, practiced by 'higher' status communities. In addition to the gross discrimination, SCs are excluded to access from various public and private resources and services which are common property resources to all.

As Bathran in 2017 reported that the year 2016 will see more focus on Digital India and Smart Cities, introduced by the Government last year. These initiatives involve the public at large. People in India are divided on the basis of caste, religion and ethnicity. It is important to have a vision of holistic development, where the Government simultaneously focuses on removing inequalities. It is broken into many pieces, its cities, religion, castes, people and even the minds of the people - Bapurao Jagtap (This Country is Broken, translated by Vilas Sarang).

### **A Change in the Social Psyche**

The purpose of the caste continues to serve further to monitor, sanction and discipline individual lives and represses possibilities through which a common social collective can emerge. After the constitution of India came to existence the novel ideas of human equality and fraternity have challenged age-old values of a hierarchy-based caste society. The constitution of India promotes equality between citizens and discards discrimination based on superior identities, including that of caste. Social reform movements have further restrained the role of caste affiliations and changed the mind-set of people for the ideas like citizenship, human rights and identity. This effort has gradually changed in the social psyche and gradually many do not value their caste affiliations as an advantage.

### **Persistence of the Sustainable Development Goals and Caste Shadow**

Healthy lives and well-being of its people is an advantage to any developing society. The average age at death of Dalit women at 39.5 years was nearly 34.5 years of Dalit men and 15 years less than upper caste Hindu women. This was showing that average age at death of Dalit men at the age of 43.6 years. It was nearly 11 years less than that for upper caste Hindu men and five years less than that for OBC men. The analysis of researchers found that Dalit women's life expectancy is lower as compared to other gender and resulted in mortality-inducing factors (Thorat and Lee, 2005).

As UNICEF 2016 reported, access to healthcare services is lower for SC women as compared to other Hindu caste women. Although 15% dominant caste women did not receive prenatal health care facility but it was 26% in the case of Dalit women. The risk is very high for children born in Scheduled Caste families when compared to other communities. A child born to an SC family has 13% higher risk of dying in the neonatal period as compared to others.

The recent literacy rate of India is almost 73%. However, for Dalits it is 66.1%. This gap continues between women and men of the same communities and between women and men of different communities. Literacy rate is lowest among SC girls (24.4%) compared to the national average of 42.8% for the female population. The high dropout rate is still persistent because of discrimination, poverty, malnutrition and lack of effective childhood care etc. There are 22.8% of Dalit children (aged 6-17) are out of school. Because of discrimination practiced in school, 50% of SC children and 64% of SC girl student's dropout from school. It is also reported that 37.8% of village schools force Dalit children to sit separately in schools (World Development - Dalit Minority in India). It is a challenge to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls to fight against both caste and gender discrimination. Empowerment faces further challenges to reach its goal. The majority of substitutions in political positions are primarily dominant caste men.

It's the responsibility of the state to promote sustainable, inclusive economic growth and productive employment and decent work for all its people. The daily wage employment status of Dalit was lower (46%) as compared with other workers (52%). This situation is not changed in urban areas also. The percentage of self-employed in urban areas was 21.5% as compared to 36% for others. According to 2011 census, SCs form just 9.5% of the workers in non-agricultural proprietary establishments. The unemployment rate (15 and 59 years of age) was 18% including marginal workers as compared to 14% of the general population. Both in public and private sector the SCs experienced discrimination. In the name of downsizing and optimising by the Government of India, employment rate is on the decline state.

## **STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTE**

Sharma and Reddy (1982) stated in his study that the Scheduled castes suffer today not only because of imposed social and cultural disabilities but more of the imbalances created by the emergence of structural differentiation within them. Caste discrimination continues to be social evil experienced every day in several covert forms and in periodic public acts of murder, rape and arson. Poor people identified as Dalit are routinely refused housing in communities dominated by the upper castes even in urban conglomerations. In India social exclusion is practiced on the basis of caste and untouchability which deny certain rights which are fundamental in nature. Even after the enactment of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, the drastic scenario has not been changed. Deshpande (2013) opined that the compensation for historical wrongs kept SCs (Untouchables) at the very bottom of social and economic order. Ambedkar (1936) stated that caste at the top of the social order enjoys more rights at the expenses or those located at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and have fewer economic and social rights.

## **DISABILITIES TO AVAIL EDUCATION**

The SC and STs were prohibited from taking up to education during the early days. Public schools and other educational institutions were closed for them. Because of this, even today majority of them are illiterate and ignorant. It is a complex socio-political process that has multiple roots and causalities. To examine access and to describe the various spaces where cohorts of children are included, excluded, or are at risk of exclusion, the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) has developed a framework of 'Zones of Exclusion' (see Lewin, 2007).

There are six zones identified in the CREATE model.

- Zone 1: children who have never been to school and are unlikely to attend school.
- Zone 2: children who enter primary schooling, but who drop out before completing the primary cycle.
- Zone 3: children who enter primary schooling but are 'at risk' of dropping out
- Zone 4 contains those who fail to transit to secondary education as a result of failing to be selected, being unable to afford costs, or located far from a secondary school, or otherwise excluded.
- Zone 5 includes those dropping out of secondary grades
- Zone 6 contains those at risk of drop out from secondary school
- Zone 0 captures those excluded from pre-school.

It is worthwhile to understand the learning process in initial stage (i) regular attendance; (ii) progression; (iii) meaningful learning and (iv) appropriate access to post-primary education are significant steps to be maintained (Lewin, 2007).

Social exclusion from education specifically can be summarised as the denial or restriction of access to the meaningful participation in educational institutions and processes as a result of social dynamics (Sayed and Soudien, 2003). However, the inclusive growth is an instrument to resolve the problem of regional disparities of all kinds (Indira and Prasad, 2013).

## CIVIC DISABILITIES

For long time, SCs are prevented from accessing public places and common resources. The untouchable castes were not allowed to use civic facilities such as—village wells, ponds, temples, hostels, hotels, schools, hospitals, lecture halls etc. They were overpowered by others to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during early days. Even today also evident in majority of villages, they are segregated from others spatially. In South India, restrictions were imposed on other modes also like: mode of construction of their houses, types of dresses and patterns of their ornamentation etc.

Though Uttar Pradesh reported most cases that year in absolute numbers — with 2,309 cases and 2,358 victims — the rate of cases was 5.6 per one lakh population of SC and ST members. Even though Karnataka reported fewer cases — with 1,298 cases and 1,520 victims — the rate was 12.8.

Karnataka had recorded the highest number of atrocity cases (in 2016) even in absolute numbers. The State has been reporting a large number of atrocity cases for several years. The police and a section of Dalit activists creating to better awareness to understand their rights. “It is true that the Dalit movement has empowered those from such communities to not take things lying down,” said N. Venkatesh, convenor of the Dalit Sangharsha Samiti, Karnataka.

## CONCLUSIONS

Shadow of caste always affecting the sustainable development of any state. The caste prejudice should be volatile to bring changes in the education and political system for long run development. Creation of awareness among the Dalits and also other community regarding the constitutional provisions and the aim of forefathers. Providing equal opportunity among all the caste and develop positive attitude towards the inclusion of gender may create harmonious and progressive society.

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