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## **Educational Status of Dalit Women in Contemporary India: Issues and Challenges**

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*I measure the progress of the community by the degree of the progress  
which women have achieved in that community.*

*Dr. B R Ambedkar*

According to Oxford dictionary, dalit is relatively a new term, while scheduled caste is a statutory term used for those caste, which have been included in a particular schedule in the constitution but dalit is not a new word. It was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of depressed classes. Dalit women are traditionally untouchable and depressed class in India. According to Varna system they are bottom on the line and are excluded from educational system and property. Education to dalit women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. In order to encourage education of dalit women at all levels and to reduce gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of education, schools, colleges and even universities were established exclusively for women in the country. To bring more dalit girl children, especially from marginalised BPL families, into the mainstream of education, Government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, mid-day meals, scholarships, free bicycles and so on. But all social groups have not benefited equally

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India, the largest democracy of the world, unluckily the largest number of underprivileged section of the society remained deprived to education. However it is detrimental to find that why education has been denied to a substantial portion of population, based on inequalities i.e. on caste, class and gender.

After Independence; Indian traditional society has undergone a change due to various factors, e.g., urbanisation, changing occupational structure, rising literacy, democratic value system, Constitutional and legal measures for protective discrimination. Government started socially desirable and economically viable developmental measures to protect equality of opportunity of every individual. But all social groups have not benefited equally in last seven decades. Scheduled Castes women (Dalit, used in exclusive sense of the term) is designated as 'disadvantaged group' even today. A stock taking of the status of Dalit women reveals that problem of dignity and freedom from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment remained unresolved.

#### **Objective this paper**

The present paper is an attempt to highlight educational status of dalit women in contemporary india I have used Secondary data collected from internet, Government documents, newspapers, published papers, books and speeches delivered by Dr. Ambedkar on dalit education and other right of women.

#### **Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of all women's right in the political vocabulary and constitution of India.**

Article 15 : The states prohibits the discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. This Article to be the first article which talk about the reservation of Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribes. It provides that the state can make special provision

for the upliftment of some selected people and nothing in the constitution comes in contradiction to this provision. This Article provides the foundation for the building of Reservation in the constitutional frameworks.

Article 16 (4): This article further enables the government to enact laws to give reservation to Dalits in public employment. To bring equality to the situation, the preamble contained an ideal. In the race for development, it becomes necessary to support those who are pushing them forward. And this Article 16 (4) enables the government to take a concrete step for this purpose.

Article 17 : this Article abolish the practice of untouchability in any form to bring about the equality in social circles.

Article 41: directs the government to provide work, facilitation and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability in eligible and desirable cases. Since reservation in public right is a process for time and cannot last forever, it becomes necessary for the state to promote education and capacity among the children of Dalits so as to make them competitive. As soon as these children become competitive, they become fit and do not lag behind in the race for development

Article 45: This Article direct the Government to provide free and compulsory education for each and every child upto an age of 14 years. Many concessions and scholarship are given for the children belonging to the SC.

Article 330: This article provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled caste in the house of people. This article guarantees perhaps the biggest promise for the people of the reserved class Scheduled castes in the name of reservation. According to this article seats shall be reserved in the House of People both for the Scheduled caste and some Scheduled tribes.

Article 335:- To secure their position in the administration, the claims of the Scheduled caste for the services and posts in administration have been made acceptable under Article 335.

Article 338:-It has been provided in article 338 of the constitution that all the matter, relating to the safeguard provided to Scheduled Caste, will be reported to this special officer, who in turn will report the same to the president.

**There are many educational policies for the upliftment of the Scheduled castes in India.**

***Central sector schemes of up gradation of merit of Scheduled castes students :*** This scheme was sponsored by Ministry of welfare 1993-94. The objective of the scheme was to upgrade the merit of SC students by providing them with opportunities for all- round development through education in residential schools. Under the scheme, 100 percent central assistance is released to states/UTs to arrange remedial and special coaching for SC students studying in class IX to XII. ***Centrally- sponsored coaching and allied scheme :*** This scheme was modified in September 2001. Under this scheme, funds are released for Pre- Examination Training centres in various parts of the country to prepare SC candidates for competitive examination held by the Union Public Service commission, the state service commissions etc. The objective of the scheme is to improve the representation of candidates belonging to the SC community for whom posts are reserved in the State/ Central services.

***Pre- Matric scholarship for children of those engaged in unclean professions :*** The scheme was launched in 1977-78 with the objective of financially assisting the children of scavengers of dry latrines and sweepers who had traditional links with scavenging, flaying and tanning, irrespective of their religion, to pursue education up to matriculation. Students with disabilities among the target groups were also assisted. The scheme was last modified with effect from 25 February 1994, following which there is no income ceiling prescribed. Up to two children of the same parents can get benefits from the scheme if they are pursuing education in class IX and X. Although no such restriction has been placed on children who are pursuing

education up to class VIII, an additional/ Third/ subsequent child born after 1 April 1993 will not benefit from the scheme.

***Post Matric scholarship for Schedule caste & Schedule tribes:***

The main Objective of the scheme is to provided financial assistance to students belonging to the SC/ST category to pursue post matriculation education in recognised institutions, including correspondence courses with in the country. The scheme has been implemented by various state governments and UT administrations, which receive 100 percent central assistance, over and above their committed liability, for the north- eastern states, there is no such liability.

***Book Banks for SC/ST students :*** This scheme is intended to provide SC/ST students access to the latest textbooks in medicine, veterinary, engineering agriculture and polytechnic courses that require expensive books.

***Scheme for girls/Boys hostels students :*** The objective of this scheme is to provided hostel facilities to SC/St students while they are studying in middle, high and secondary schools, colleges and universities. The Scheme is implemented by the state governments and central government.

***National Overseas Scholarship for SC students :*** The National overseas Scholarship is a non-plan scheme under which 17 scholarships of 30 are awarded annually to SC students. The scheme, which also includes SC converts to other religions, intends to provide financial assistance to meritorious SC students who have no means to fund themselves for higher education abroad in courses for which adequate facilities are unavailable in India.

***Dr. Ambedkar National merit Scholarship for scheduled caste :*** This scheme was lunches in 2003 with the objective of recognising, promoting and assisting meritorious students belonging to the marginalised communities to pursue higher studies.

***Tenth Plan Provisions: Empowerment through Education :*** The main objective of the scheme is the welfare and development of

socially disadvantaged groups by removing the existing inequalities, inequalities and other existing problems, besides providing easy and equal access to basic minimum services.

### After upliftment program impact of the government initiatives on dalit women's education

#### Progress towards universal enrolment

Table 1.1: Enrolment in primary (class I-V), upper primary (class VI-VIII), and secondary (class IX-X) education scheduled caste children (2000-01 to 2015-2016) in Millions

Year	Primary Education (Class I-V)			Upper primary education (class VI-VIII)			Secondary education (class IX-X)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	female	Total
2000-01	121	<b>91</b>	212	41	<b>26</b>	67	18	<b>11</b>	29
2005-06	140	<b>113</b>	253	53	<b>38</b>	91	23	<b>15</b>	38
2006-07	145	<b>118</b>	263	55	<b>40</b>	95	25	<b>16</b>	41
2007-08	137	<b>126</b>	263	53	<b>46</b>	99	24	<b>18</b>	42
2008-09	140	<b>127</b>	267	56	<b>49</b>	105	28	<b>22</b>	50
2009-10	135	<b>125</b>	260	58	<b>51</b>	109	30	<b>24</b>	54
2010-11	140	<b>129</b>	269	60	<b>53</b>	113	31	<b>26</b>	57
2011-12	148	<b>139</b>	287	63	<b>59</b>	122	35	<b>31</b>	66
2012-13	141	<b>132</b>	273	65	<b>61</b>	126	NA	<b>NA</b>	63
2013-14	136	<b>127</b>	263	6	<b>63</b>	129	36	<b>32</b>	68
2014-15	134	<b>126</b>	260	67	<b>64</b>	131	37	<b>34</b>	71
2015-16	133	<b>124</b>	257	67	<b>64</b>	131	38	<b>35</b>	73

NA: Not Available

Source: Statistics of school Education, 2017-2018, GOI; Educational statistics at a glance, 2018, MHRD, GOI; Statistics of school education, 2017-2018, MHRD, GOI; and U-DISE, NUPEA.

During the period 2000-01 to 2015-16, Number of SC girls enrolment in primary section of education was increased from 91 to 124, whereas SC boys enrolment increased from 121 to 133, enrolled in primary education while the number of SC girls in upper primary education increased from 26 to 64 and SC boys enrolment was increased from 41 to 67. The number of SC girls enrolled in secondary

education increased from 11 to 35 and SC Boys enrolment increased from 18 to 38 during this period.

**Literacy level of Scheduled Caste in India**

Literacy is defined as an ability to read and write with an understanding in any language and is applicable to the population aged seven years and above.

—Census of India

As per 2011 census, literacy rate in India has been reported as 74.04% with a 14% increase to that in 2001, whereas the hike is maximum for rural women at 26% in the last decade, which may be attributed to literacy mission of Government of India. Overall female literacy rate in India is much lower than that of male literacy rate. The female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% whereas the male literacy rate is 82.04%.

Table 1.2 Literacy rates of SC/ST by sex and rural- urban distribution

Year	Urban			Rural			Combined		
	Male	Female	total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	66.90	<b>42.29</b>	55.11	45.95	<b>19.45</b>	33.25	49.91	<b>23.76</b>	37.41
2001	77.93	<b>54.49</b>	68.12	63.66	<b>37.84</b>	51.16	54.69	<b>41.90</b>	34.76
2011	83.30	<b>68.60</b>	76.20	72.60	<b>52.60</b>	62.80	75.20	<b>65.50</b>	66.10
Percentage increase in 2011 over									
2001	7%	<b>19%</b>	12%	14%	<b>39%</b>	23%	38%	<b>35%</b>	90%

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India

The literacy rate among scheduled castes and scheduled tribes remains well below the rest of India’s population, but the gap has closed significantly in the last decade. During this period (2001-2011), SC women made the most rapid progress, latest census data reveals. Data shows a 39% percentage point increase in literacy among SC Rural women over the decade, compared to a jump of 14 percentage points for rural males. The literacy rate of total SC has jumped from

54.76% to 66.10% from 2001 to 2011 respectively. SC women showing a higher increase in literacy holds well across almost all states, and in both rural and urban areas. Of course, the base was very low to start with in the case of both women and men in the SC communities, compared to the general population. Bihar, with around 16% of its population comprising SCs, shows the biggest increase in literacy among SCs - a jump of 20.2 percentage points, from 28.5% in 2001 to 48.6% in 2011. 20

#### **Educational challenges of dalit women in India**

Education is an important means for overall growth of individual in particular and for all round development of the society in general. Education plays crucial role in social mobility for all social categories. Dalits has been economically deprived, socially discriminated and politically marginalized since centuries. Their educational development is extremely crucial to bring them into mainstream of our society.

**According to National Commission of SCs and STs (2000);** dropout rate of dalit girls is 75 percent at school level. In spite of government and non-governmental measures educational participation of dalit girls is fairly low. Early marriage, social pressure, support for domestic chores, need to work to supplement family income, poor educational infrastructure and distance of the schools, many of them are forced to leave their school at the early age, resulting into high dropout rate and low rate of literacy among dalit women. However; educational status of dalit women has substantially increased. This may have positive impact on traditional patriarchal social structure of india. The extent and depth of these impacts need to be analyzed to understand the social dynamics of the india.

*Mrs. V.Lalitha (2001)*, has examined that dalit women suffer from harassment, operation and exploitation than their counter part. literacy rate is very low, infant morality and malnutrition is equally high.

*Kaul's, (2001); Thorat (2002)*, highlights that many Scheduled



Caste children were scared to talk about the unequal treatment meted out to them, such as verbal abuse, physical punishment or avoiding touching, by some of the upper caste teachers in their schools.

*Apartheid in Times of Equity Tilak's (2002)* analysis of the NCAER survey data states that there is nothing like 'free' education in India. He reports that household expenditure on education is sizeable; households from poor socio-economic backgrounds (i.e. Scheduled Castes) often spend considerable amounts of their income on education.

*Sitting Arrangement Shailaja Paik 2009*, in one of the interview a Dalit women said ... "I have never been to School, but i remember that my brother sitting in the corridor outside while the teacher taught inside the classroom:

*Shailaja Paik (2014)* states that Difficulties at home environment. Dalits lived in poor home environment that is not conducive to education. Subsistence and indebtedness are perennial problems and the home could hardly provide a space where difficulties pertaining to home work or school could be solved.

*Mid-Day Meal Scheme:* According to various reported in the Newspaper Dalit children are not allowed to join food and other activities in MDMS. Dalit students are not allowed in school ceremonies and are not being allowed to serve guests during the annual celebrations of national festivals.

### Dropout level of scheduled caste in overall India

Table 1.3 : dropout rates in percentage for Scheduled caste in primary to secondary stage

Year	Primary			Elementary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2013-14	4.42	<b>3.85</b>	4.14	3.75	<b>5.04</b>	4.38	18.96	<b>18.32</b>	18.66
2014-15	4.71	<b>4.2</b>	4.46	5	<b>6.03</b>	5.51	19.6	<b>19.1</b>	19.36

Data source : National institute of educational planning & administration (new delhi), MHRD, 2018

According to National Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, (1998) only economic pressures is not reason that children leaves. Memories of humiliation can also play an important role in the decision to leave. The public report on basic education in India (PROBE, 1999) is exposed that The poor quality of education is another critical factor that leads to lower retention. Majority of students from Scheduled Caste communities study in government schools that are badly-equipped in terms of the number of teachers, infrastructure and school environment.

### **Conclusion**

Education is perceived as an instrument for social and human development. Indian constitution provides equality to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, region and gender and also directs the state to take various measures to remove the different form of discrimination and inequality, still the problems persists. This is true of large sections of dalit women of the country as well, who have not adequately benefitted from the country's social, political, educational and economic progress. Even after seventy two year of independence, many women particularly those from the dalit community still fall under the illiteracy and development deficit trap. It has happened in spite of various programs such as free education for all dalit women by the Indian and state governments. This prompts several questions as to why illiteracy remains so prevalent, and consequently gender inequality and discrimination.

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