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Inclusive Higher Education: In the Light of Thorat Committee Report

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ABSTRACT

“Right education starts where discrimination stops”. The words of great Dr. B.R Ambedkar still creates consciousness on the very purpose of education system. To him, fundamental rights would mean establishment of equality and liberty to reform our social system which is full of inequalities, discriminations, and other which conflicts with our fundamental rights. Social movements are not only caused by a single reason but emerges as a burst out from incessant torturing and denial of justice. Atrocities, discrimination, exploitation and subordination have a cause and effect relation with people’s demand for justice. In India discrimination based on caste, creed, gender, economic status exists in every sphere of society. The glorified knowledge centers rich in traditions do not have a different story to tell. The steadily isolated Dalit students becomes martyr’s due to their sufferings. Movements arising from students of higher education is also a struggle that tries to counter attack the socio-cultural hegemony of the upper castes. Indian Dalits student’s life depicts definitions of discriminations, poverty, injustice, denial of education, and so on. The cruel fact is, in our so-called democratic country, 28% of village police stations are forbidden sacred places for Dalits. We can’t expect any shielding hands from temple of justice wherein no one is there from these communities to raise voice for the voiceless people who constitutes one fourth of Indian population. Students movements experienced a vibrant change across the country which depicts sever failures in administration of distributive justice. The first and foremost function of a state is administration of justice. But certain prejudice still hunts the democratic values that have been upraised by our constitution. The main objective of student’s movement recently arises from central universities like JNU, HCU is to establish an educational environment in India based on social equality.

Keywords: *Inclusive Higher Education, Gross Enrolment Ratio, B.R Ambedkar's Strategy, Aishe Report.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational **equity** is a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in **education**. The study of **education equity** is often linked with the study of excellence and **equity**. Education

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has both instrumental and intrinsic value for individuals and for societies. As the US Supreme Court stated in its unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), “In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education”. The instrumental goals of K–12 education for individuals include access to higher education and a constellation of private benefits that follow college education such as access to interesting jobs with more vacation time and better health care; greater personal and professional mobility, better decision-making skills (Institute for Higher Education Policy 1998) and more autonomy at work. Research further shows that education levels are correlated with health and wealth: the more education a person has, the healthier and wealthier she is likely to be. At the same time, education is also considered intrinsically valuable. Developing one’s skills and talents can be enjoyable or good and a central component of a flourishing life, regardless of the consequences this has for wealth or health. Ensuring access to education for the Dalits of India has been the greatest challenge for the Indian government in diminishing the social effects of the caste system, which remain entrenched in Indian society. There have been many different reasons proposed as to why they suffer from low rates of literacy and primary education enrolment, but the most realistic one describes history and unequal access as the causes. The ancient caste system of India, which has resulted in the social and economic oppression of the Dalits, continues to play a dominant role in India. The Dalits, also known as the scheduled caste or untouchables, have experienced consistent denial to access to education since the 1850s. This decade coincided with Britain’s established control over India, which meant many of the improvements to Dalit education were coming from outside influences, rather than from the national government. Because of unchanging social norms and behavior, incentives to pursue education were minimal for the Dalits who were still physically and emotionally harassed. Increasing efforts to eliminate caste discrimination combined with additional attempts to increase the accessibility and appeal for education have contributed to the slow progression of Dalit education. The responsibility for social equalization falls fully upon the Indian government when it gained its independence from Britain in 1948. While some benefits of social programs and government policies designed to increase primary education rates can be noticed, the Dalit literate population remains much lower than that of the rest of India. There remains still, hostility, oppression and flaws in social programs in Indian society that prevent an increase in education growth. Despite efforts to decrease caste discrimination and increase national social programs, the Dalits of India continue to experience low enrolment rates and a lack of access to primary education in comparison to the rest of India. The literacy rate among the Dalits, as per 1991 census, was 37.41% as compared to 57.69% for

non-Dalits. Untouchability in schools has contributed towards the dropout tendency and increased illiteracy levels for Dalit children. The 1991 census of India reported that Dalit communities were one of the least literate social groups in the country, with only 30% of Dalit children recognized to have basic reading and writing skills.

II. THORAT COMMITTEE- CAUSES

The all India institute of medical sciences (AIIMS) being the country's premier medical college, continued to be center of aggressive anti- reservation agitations that began in early 2006. The scheduled caste /scheduled tribe students of the campus faced harassment from upper caste student groups which lead the SC/ST students moved out of their randomly allotted hostel rooms to live in clusters among themselves. the government appointed a committee headed by university grants commission chairperson, *Sukhdeo Thorat* to investigate and report on this matter, when the media reported this issue. It is said that the process of industrialization and education along with affirmative action-reservation has helped in overcoming the caste system to some extent but this very situation in the renowned institution of the country clearly shows the challenges to overcome the curse of caste system in institutions. Many Dalit student have to deal with the hospitality that comes with being a "reserved category students". Being the weaker section of the society, Dalit students must be provided with the constitutionally guaranteed safeguards to them. But AIIMS failed to have a grievance redressal mechanism to deal with complaints of non-compliance of constitutional protection or a special cell to help SC/ST students. The faculties of the institution also have a great role to play I the progress of those students not only in academics via class room teaching but by personal interactions. Most of the students complained that teachers are indifferent towards them and most of them are inaccessible to them, it is also reported that the examiners during the internal assessment, wanted to know their caste background. The committee found that the over that period around 29 SC/ST students moved from their allotted rooms closer to other SC/ST students. The one month of ragging to which the authorities turn a blind eye sheer hell for these students since they are publicly subjected to caste-based questions, taunts and jeering. Many of the students said they moved because their rooms would be locked from outside repeatedly while they were in, vulgar abuse would be scrawled on the doors and it would be made clear that This would stop only if they moved to floors where other SC/ST students stayed. They also faced social isolation, refusal to share books and notes and objection in sharing seats in class. While the general messes are open to them, they find it difficult to access to private messes. Again "casteist" attitudes lead to participation of these students in cultural events and sports activities. In short, every aspect of academics that makes it an enjoyable experience and helps to balance

the stress of rigorous studies is fraught with more stress and conflict for the SC/ST students.

(A) Scope and Objectives

The study sponsored by UGC as part of the resource material in preparation of “Report on Approach and Strategy for higher education in the 11th five-year Plan”. These studies were conceived by UGC for a specific purpose. The UGC was required to prepare a Report on Approach and Strategy for the development of Higher Education during the 11th Plan (2007-2012). This process began sometime in the middle of 2006. The studies covered several issues. It included estimation of enrolment rate in higher education at all India level and at State and district levels with alternative sources of data. It also includes the estimation of enrolment rate at disaggregate level by various groups (such as scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward castes and higher castes, women, religious groups and economic groups like self-employed and wage labour, groups based on income level and poor –non-poor) the committee clearly studied about the issue of equity and access to educational opportunities by examining the patterns of enrolment in higher education both at the aggregate and disaggregated levels by socio-economic categories of population as well as inter-state and inter-district levels. The current enrolment scenario in higher education reveals wide regional disparities both with reference to enrolment rates and availability of educational facilities across the states and districts. Disparities are equally large between rural and urban areas as well as among different class sizes of towns and cities. The pattern of disparities by class sizes of urban areas could not be attempted here due to lack of relevant data. The results of these studies have helped in developing the Approach and Strategy of the 11th Plan for higher education

The 11th plan proposed a number of measures for inclusive education.

- It proposed special support to universities and colleges located in rural, hilly, remote, tribal, and boarder areas. Further about 90 districts concentrated with Muslim population have been identified for central support. The plan also proposed enhanced support to universities and colleges with a high concentration of the student belonging to SSC/ST or OBCs, and Muslim population.
- the plan focused on developing schemes to improve language and competency through remedial coaching classes. Besides, the plan specifically emphasized on augmenting fellow ship and opening up of hostels, particularly for women to enhance their access to higher education.

III. FEW RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE WORKING GROUP FOR 11TH FIVE YEAR PLAN

“Development Of Education Of Sc/St/Minorities/Girls And Other Disadvantaged Groups” For Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12)”

- Education Policy should be sensitive towards cultural and linguistic diversity of Indian society, and therefore uniform standards should not be applied.
- While minority institutions are kept out of the purview of reservation of SCs, STs and OBCs in general, they should be obligated to reserve certain seats for members of their own minority community who belong to SCs, STs and OBCs.
- All the universities should establish SC/ST/OBC/Disadvantaged Groups Cells at the earliest, which could also function as anti-discrimination Cell.
- Government should cancel the accreditation of the universities/institutions, which fail in implementing the reservation policy.
- UGC should make strict rules and regulations to fill in the post of reserved category. Defaulting universities or affiliated colleges should not be granted financial support or any grants.
- UGC should prepare norms and guidelines to allocate students for Ph.D. courses. The Professors guiding these Ph.D. students should be sensitive to their backgrounds. This should be mandatory to all universities. A monitoring mechanism should be devised to ensure its compliance. Defaulters should be heavily punished.

Definitions and some relevant data about population and educational status of SC/ST Groups

(A) Population Profile

a. Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes

As per the 2001 Census, the population of Scheduled Castes (SCs) is 16.66 crores amounting to 16.2% of the country's total population of 102.86 crores. The male population is 8.61 crores and female population is 8.05 crores which accounts for 16.18% and 16.22% respectively of the country's total population of respective groups.

The population of Scheduled Tribes as per 2001 Census is 8.43 crore accounting for 8.20% of the country's total population. Out of this, males are 4.26 crores and females 4.17 crores,

accounting for 8.01% and 8.40% of the total population of respective groups.

(B) Literacy Status

Despite the fact that there has been an increase in the literacy rates of SCs/STs since independence, the present position is still far from satisfactory. The overall increase in literacy rate in the country during the period 1961-2001 was 36.54 against which increase in literacy rate for SCs and STs during the same period was 44.42 and 38.57 respectively. The female literacy rates among STs continue to remain a serious cause of concern, as it is only 34.76% as against the total female literacy rate of 53.67%.

IV. FINDINGS OF THORAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON ISSUES RELATED TO INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUAL ACCESS

The access to higher education is measured in term of **gross enrolment ratio, (GER)** which is a ratio of persons enrolled in higher education institutions to total population of the persons in age group of 18 to 23 years. The estimate of GER is generally based on the data collected by MHRD/UGC from the educational institutions. The studies for the first time also estimated the GER based on National Sample Survey (NSS) data and population Census data. Although the enrolment rate in higher education is about 11 % there are significant inter group disparities in access to higher education. Ravi Srivastva and Amaresh Dubey based on the NSS data for the first time estimated the gross enrolment rate for various groups and bring out the variation in enrolment rate in 2004/5, between male-female, between SC, ST, OBC and other, between religious groups, economic group such as self-employed and wage laborer, between income groups (in term of per capita consumption expenditure) and poor and non-poor. The male female disparities are examined in greater detail in chapter 1V of this report. Put together these studies provided good insight into inter-group inequalities in access to higher education in Indian society.

The NSS data for 2004-2005 indicated significant rural and urban disparities as the enrolment rate being 6.73 percent and 19.80 percent for the rural and the urban areas respectively. The GER was three times higher as compared to rural areas.

Inter caste or tribe disparities were the most prominent. In 2004-5, the GER was about 11% at overall levels. The GER among the SCs (6.30 percent), the STs (6.33 percent), and the OBCs (8.50 percent) was much lower as compared with others (16.60 percent). Thus, the GER for the SC/STs was three times and that of the OBCs about two time less compared with the others.

Between the SC/STs and the OBCs, however the GER was lower among the former by about

two percentage points.

There is another feature about access to higher education, which the studies brought out quite clearly. The access to these social group varies within the respective religion to which they belong. There for the SCs STs and OBCs suffer discrimination as religious groups.

India is a society with much complicated structure. Without eradicate the hierarchy exist within this land, it is impossible to go ahead.

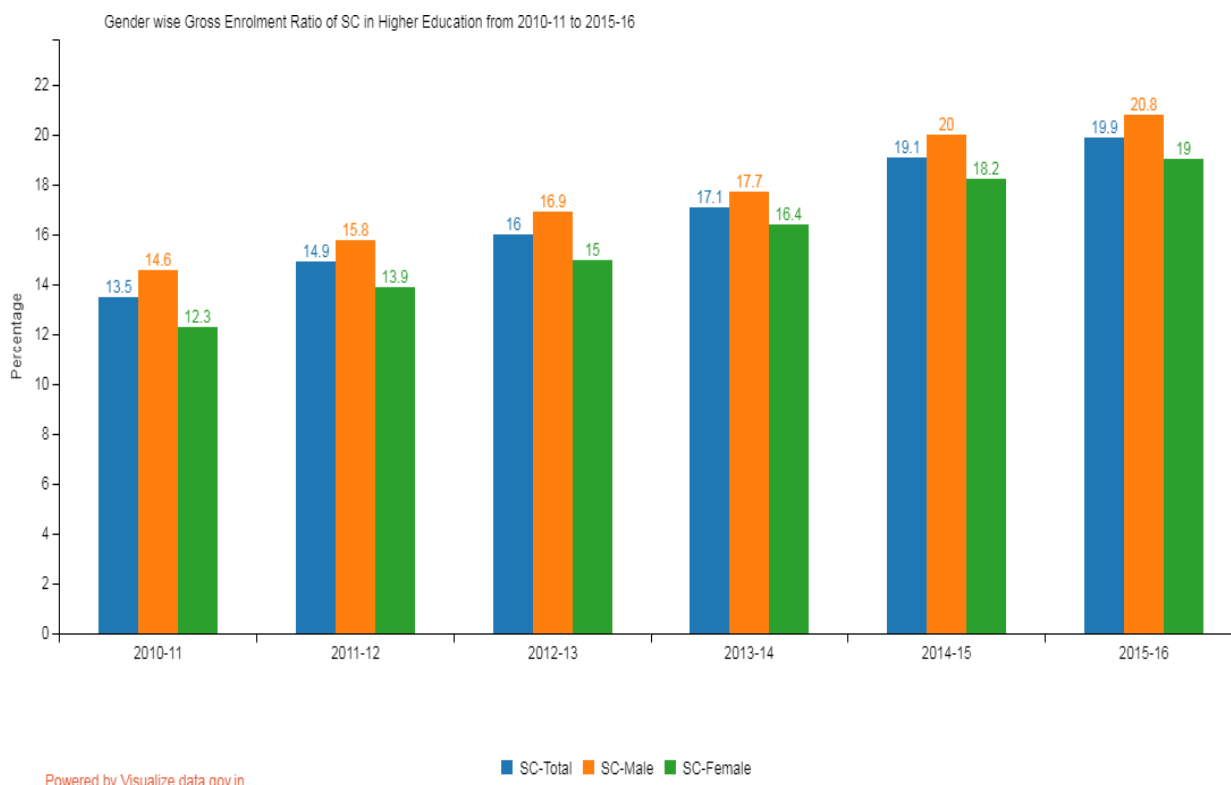
V. SUMMARY

- GER of SC, ST and OBC is lower as compared with the general Hindu population. Between them however the GER is lowest for ST, followed by SC and OBC.
- There are significant differences in the enrolment rate between various religious groups. The GER is the lower for the Muslim followed by Hindus.
- Sc/ST/OBC from other religion such as Muslim, Christian and Sikh religion also suffered from lower access to higher education as compared with their higher caste counterpart from these religions.

(A) Thirteen years after Thorat Committee Report

After thirteen years, in this so-called globalized world, India had witnessed tremendous changes in each and every sphere but what about social equality is still a challenge to be faced. 12th five-year plan was proposed with a keen observation to the Thorat committee report. The total cost of the scheme is Rs.99 crores for the duration 2012-17. Objectives of the Scheme Strengthening Official Statistical system to produce data. The XII Plan categorically highlighted the need for a strong current and comprehensive data for evidence-based policy making and effective planning. The Plan document also took note of the **All India Survey on Higher Education** initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and indicated that it can provide useful insights and can be the first step towards creating a comprehensive higher education data management system. Keeping this in view, a new plan scheme Higher Education Statistics & Public Information System (HESPIS) was proposed in XII Five Year Plan. The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee (SFC) was held on 05.12.2013 under the chairmanship of Secretary (Higher Education)

VI. GENDER WISE GROSS ENROLMENT RATE OF SC IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM 2010-2016



Source : <https://data.gov.in/catalog/gross-enrolment-ratio-ger-higher-education>

India has witnessed an increasing trend in gross enrolment ratio(GER)in higher education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled caste and total scheduled caste students from 2010-11 to 2015-16. During 2010-11, GER in higher education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled caste and total scheduled caste students were 14.6, 12.3 and 13.5 respectively. During 2011-12, GER in Higher Education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled caste and total scheduled caste students were 15.8, 13.9 and 14.9, respectively. During 2012-13, GER in higher education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled caste and total scheduled students were 16.9, 15 and 16 respectively. During 2013-14, GER in Higher education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled caste and total scheduled students were 17.7, 16.4, and 17.1, respectively. During 2014-15, GER in Higher Education of male scheduled caste, Female scheduled caste and total scheduled caste students were 20, 18.2, 19.1, respectively. During 2015-16 GER in Higher Education of male scheduled caste, female scheduled Caste and total scheduled caste students were 20.8, 19 and 19.9respectively. The last update was in the year 2022.

VII. ESTIMATED ENROLMENT IN VARIOUS SOCIAL CATEGORIES

As per AISHE REPORT 2017-2018

ALL			SCHEDULED CASTE			SCHEDULED TRIBE			OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES		
MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
19204675	17437703	36642378	2774933	2505428	5280361	1001989	911875	1913864	6688668	6144337	12833005

Scheduled Casts students constitute 14.4% and Scheduled Tribes students 5.2% of the total enrolment. 35.0% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 5.0% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.2% from Other Minority Communities. From this latest result, it is clear than the percentage of scheduled caste students enrolled in Higher Education has fallen from 19.9 to 14.4 within two years. **When we speak about the development concerns of Indian depressed classes like Dalits, in this globalized scenario we must note this lowest enrolment rates.** In New Delhi, on March 15 a few Dalit faculty members of DU, JNU, Jamia along with Dalit writers and activists demanded implementation of the Sukhadeo Thorat committee's recommendations against caste-based discrimination at educational institutions. As per AISHE **Report 2018-2019**, The percentage of Scheduled Caste students enrolled constitutes 14.9, Scheduled Tribe is 5.5, Other backward classes are of 36.3 percentage.

As per AISHE **Report 2019-2020**, SC Student enrolment is 14.7%, ST Students Enrolment is 5.6%. As per **AISHE Report 2020-21**, Enrolment of SC Students is 14.2%, ST Students is 5.8%, and OBC Students is 35.8%.

As a report submitted by competent authority, this report deserves a keen acceptance. This report striven itself for decreasing imbalance between various social groups, but unfortunately, by reason of political and economic reasons, depressed classes are still depressed in higher education system also. **Affordability is an important aspect of inclusiveness.** Without affordability, it is not possible to increase access and promote inclusiveness. Thus, affordability will have to be ensured through special measures. Even though there are number of central and state scholarships to depressed class students, the access to higher education is not sufficient. when we look in to the implementation status of recommendations made by Thorat committee report even the premier universities like Delhi university has failed to comply with the recommendation. UGC grants for SC/ST and OBC too has been going under-utilized and has

been lapsing year after year.

VIII. EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT: AMBEDKAR'S STRATEGY

Born to Ramji Sakpal and Bhimbai on 14 April 1891 in the military cantonment of Mhou in the central provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh), Bhimrao Ambedkar belonged to the Mahar caste. Mahar cast was one of the many untouchable castes in Maharashtra. Nineteenth century reformer Jyitiraophule's work among the lower classes of Maharashtra had a bearing on Ambedkar's formative years. Although socially mobile, the label of an untouchable never left his life. Before joining the London school of economics in 1920, Ambedkar was associated with the formation of the Depressed Classes Forum and organized the first all India conference of the Depressed Classes in Nagpur. After his return to India he initially engaged himself with legal profession and took to teaching law in Government Law College, Bombay. Simultaneously, he involved himself with social activism that directly addressed the lives of the Depressed Classes. For the average Indian, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's name is etched in history as the prime architect of free India's constitution. Ambedkar's incisive on the future of the constitution bears a deep commitment to the principle of justice, liberty and equality.

“Until the advent of the British, the untouchables were content to remain untouchables. It was a destiny preordained by the Hindu God and enforced by Hindu State. As such, there was no escape from it. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the East India Company needed soldiers for their army in India and it could find none but the untouchables. In the army of the East India company, there prevailed a system of compulsory education for Indian soldiers and their children both male and female. The education received by the untouchables in the army while it was open to them, gave them one advantage which they never had before. It gave them a new vision and value. They became conscious that the low esteem in which they have been held was not an inescapable destiny but a stigma imposed on their personality by the cunning contrivances of the priest.

Freedom from the Governing Class

(Dr. B.R Ambedkar)

Being the first and foremost development concern of the Depressed class, education deserves an indispensable role. In his speech “Annihilation of Caste” he raises the question, to political Hindus, are you fit for political power even though you do not allow a large class of your countrymen like the untouchables to use public schools? He correctly said that right education starts where discrimination stops.

The Kerala renaissance also witnessed movements for education. Ayyankali (1863-1941) is considered to be one amongst the first tide of social reformers from the east while state of Travancore in British India, who paved the way for many radical changes towards elevating the social wellbeing of lower caste communities in the region and **improving access**.

He even prompted the Travancore government to issue an order mandating the admission of Dalit children in public school in 1907. This too found great resistance from upper class officials in the assembly, but Ayyankali wasn't one to give up, after coming this far. After struggle for three long years, the order was finally passed in favor of the general people in 1910.

For achieving the correct aspect and meaning of the word equality embodied within the preamble of Indian constitution, it is necessary to ensure inclusiveness and quality in higher education. After thirteen years from Thorat committee report, there exists an imbalance in access to higher education. These disparities seen not only in social groups but also in economic groups. While broadly speaking, the enrolment rates are low for the women as compared with the men.

IX. CONCLUSION

India being a complex structured society, while studying the progress of higher education system, uniform measuring methods are seemed to be inefficient. Hence the study of Throat committee has influenced the consciousness about the higher educational status of depressed class. The committee report gives a clear-cut idea on inclusive quality higher education and need to evade disparities which exists between various social groups. India witnessed revolutionary movements from students of renowned central universities for establishing social democracy instead of political democracy. According to the great humanist Dr.BR Ambedkar, social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's name will be written in golden letters in the history of India as a creator of social justice. Thorat committee report strives for establishing a higher education where in all social and economic groups have equal access. The GER of various groups in 2018 shows the recommendations of Thorath committee report doesn't Implemented in its letter and spirit. Affordability being the very aspect of inclusiveness, the government should continue and expand economic support to the depressed class. By educating the depressed classes they might be elevated to the main stream of Indian society.

EDUCATE, AGGITTATE, ORGANISE, HAVE FAITH IN YOUSELF...!

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