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PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN: A CASE STUDY

Dr. Durgesh Ravande
Associate Professor
Department of English
KKM College, Manwath, Dist. Parbhani
MS, India

Abstract:

The research paper attempts a field based study to unearth the progression to higher education of scheduled caste women in nearby villages of Manwath, Dist. Parbhani (Maharashtra) such as Hattalwadi, Sawali, Sawargaon, Ambegaon, and Bondar wadi. It is a preliminary attempt to elaborate the reasons behind this timid progression of girls from this community to higher education and illustrate possibilities to hike the progression. As it is a purely field based work; the method of research is relied on data collection and its analysis.

Keywords: *Caste, Education, Marriage, Progression, Security, etc.*

The purpose of education, as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has considered 'It is to socialize and moralize people.' The educational society can formulate morality as its essence. Dalit society in India even they are in seventeen percent of whole population, could obtain the right of education a bit later and even afterwards the condition of Dalit women remained pathetic for some decades. Mainly the political-legal concept 'scheduled caste' is actually sociological in nature. It indicates a group of people or community which has been constantly experiencing deprivation in terms of educational, economic and social conditions. The educational stature or the percentage of women belong to SC community is worse than percentage men. The GER for women in 2009-20 is 27.3 % as compared to 26.9% for men. Dr. Saidapur observes that "Scheduled caste women in India are targeted for violence and discrimination not just because of their gender but also on the basis of their caste, community, religious affiliation and other factors. The social deprivation of scheduled caste women revealed that these women had to shoulder as a burden, the women belonging to this segment had to bear the brunt as they became victims of double discrimination- as part of caste inequity on the one hand and as part of gender inequity on the other." (Saidapur, 2102). The scheduled caste women obtained school education but higher education remained beyond their reach for few more decades. Priyadarshani observes in her book *Scheduled Caste Women and Higher Education* that "Higher education in India today is in a unique state, it has to face the challenge to maintain a fair balance between the indirect demand for better quality and direct demand for expansion in enrolment" (Badiger, 02). Even today the percentage of women in higher education is not much satisfactory in comparison with men from their community and women from other communities. Maharashtra, one of the progressive states in the country, has still educationally backward regions like Marathwada and Vidharbha. The present study illustrates the condition of higher education of scheduled castewomen in the villages such as Hattalwadi, Sawali, Sawargaon, Ambegaon, and Bondarwadi of Parbhani district, Maharashtra. These villages indicate moderate signs of social, educational, economic and cultural development of the scheduled caste residing in respective villages for considerably long period of time. The girls or women from the community obtain moderate chances of progression through education. As per the National Health Survey (2009-2021), 23.3% women married before 18 of their age. It shows prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006. The act is not much effective in preventing child marriages more particularly



among poor castes and communities in our country. The act is often used against the girls who elope and marry against will of their parents. According to social activists working in different parts of the country, mentality of parents can play a vital role in changing the present scenario. Such marriages need to be stopped for betterment of girls. The girls should be encouraged to acquire higher education and strengthen their life.

Research Methodology:

The researcher is mainly relied on short interviews of village heads, some men and women from the community and data from *Grampanchayat* (Village Council) as primary and secondary sources respectively.

Research Objective:

The researcher with the help of data collected from authentic sources strives to state small percentage of progression to higher education of scheduled caste women even in last five years. The actual reasons behind this condition and solutions are also suggested.

The data collected from the village Hattalwadi, a tiny village in East of Manwath shows that only seven girls could complete their degree education in last five years. Surprisingly the village is just on three kilometres' distance from the town, Manwath. It is a considerably lesser than the percentage of boys and also general percentage of degree education from the village. The researcher interacted with a few villagers from the scheduled caste community to unveil the reasons behind such a small number of progressions. There was no uniformity in their responses. But at large their reluctance in promoting girls to higher education was found. They were seen interested in educating their boys but not girls. The data and interaction with a few individuals from Bondardai, a nearby village, repeat the same story or it is even worse than earlier as no girl from scheduled caste or community was progressed to higher education in last five years. The population of the village is 3500 among it nearly 600 scheduled caste with thirty to thirty five houses. Girls are taught or allowed to complete their education only up to 12th standard. Most of the parents found concerned for security of their girls.

On the other hand, the researcher learnt that only three scheduled caste girls from the village Sawli found themselves in the stream of higher education in last five years of total eight hundred population of scheduled caste in the village. There was no wider difference in the reasons as most of the villagers reiterated the same causes. They responded that there is no benefit in promoting girls for higher education as they have to get married soon. Mostly marriage of girls is being considered as the greatest responsibility. It can be added also that education up to 12th standard is sufficient for them. The village Ambegaon has the same story to convey as only one girl could reach at the pedestal of degree education in last five years. Whereas out of twenty five graduated girls in last five years from Sawargaon only one girl from this community could make her mark. The women belong to this marginalized community was found interested in educating their girls but they have little say in family decisions. Like girls from upper class communities they desire to see their own girls completing higher education and having their source of livelihood. As they realize very well that education only can lift them pathetic conditions of life.

The pathetic, disappointing figures of scheduled caste women in relation with the subject of the study denote the reasons such as early marriages, poor economic condition of parents, negligence towards the education of girls, lack of transport facility and also no assurance of security of girls if they are sent to degree college.

More than seventy years of independence demand for a secured, independent future of women is perceived. But as a matter of fact, this path of security and independence passes through education. Unified and directed efforts from various segments of the society may help to change this situation.



The solutions to the problem are found basically in taking initiatives from different stake holders of the society. Without their approach of coming together to tackle the situation there seems least possibility in changing the situation. The college teachers should constantly be in touch with the parents of these girls to encourage them for higher education. It is not the only solution but can be a better choice in this regard. The other government agencies like police should produce or create a sense of assurance in the minds of these parents so that they will be ready to send their girls to college without any fear, Even though the age of marriage of girls is increased in recent years but there is no serious consideration or actual implementation of it at ground level. The parents are in hurry to get their daughters marry as soon as they complete their secondary education.

Transport facility is also one of the crucial issues. Proper facility has to be provided to the students. The transport authority should show its social concern in this regard. A nation cannot progress when the women or girls lag behind in getting equal opportunities. Education to girls and more particularly higher education is an opportunity to stand equal. If some serious efforts are taken to resolve the issue; certainly the present scenario can be changed.

To conclude, the study of the research problem is primary in nature. It is a sincere attempt to comprehend the problem through direct or actual interaction with the people belonged to scheduled caste community in select nearby villages of Manwath. Multiple dimensions to the problem cannot be denied. But at large, a serious consideration of the issue is required.

References

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