

**A STATUS REPORT OF SCHEDULED CASTES IN HIGHER EDUCATION****Sarbari Behera (Research Scholar)****P.G. Department of Public Administration****Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India*****Abstract***

*The state and place of the Scheduled Castes was very critical in ancient and in medieval periods. But when the Western ruler held the power in India, the position of the Scheduled Castes was improved. Their status has still improving due to constitutional provisions. The Twelfth Plan has highlighted expansion, equity and excellence as the major concerns in higher education. India has observed significant increase in gross enrolment ratio and inclusivity through affirmative action. The present paper aims at examining the educational status of scheduled castes in India. It explores an analytical report on the status of Scheduled Castes in higher education. They are neglected sections of our society. The introduction focused on the fundamental position of the Scheduled Castes in India. The second section briefly explains importance of higher education in human resource development of the nation. The third section supplies a brief account on the present status of the Scheduled Castes in the field of higher education. The fourth section analyse the reason for unequal educational capabilities of Scheduled Castes and governmental interventions. Finally the discussion ends with a positive need of inclusive education in India*

*Key words: Capability deprivation, Inclusive Growth, Protective discrimination, Reservation, Social injustice, Sustainable development.*

## INTRODUCTION

Social inequality has been a structural property of all human societies. Inequality stands from the age old nature of our society. It was constituted with a number of castes and sub castes. The Scheduled Castes are not homogenous group. They are divided into many castes and sub castes. The Scheduled Castes have been considered as the weakest section of the Hindu social structure. Collectively they are designated as Untouchables, Harijanas, dalits, depressed classes, weaker sections, avarnas and atisudras. The "Scheduled Castes" is the legal and constitutional name given to the traditionally neglected sections of the people. The Scheduled Castes are the worst victim of social inequality. This kind of inequality is based on purity and pollution. In mythological sense these people are born as impure. They are linked with impure occupations. 86.25 per cent of the Scheduled Castes are land less and 49 per cent of Scheduled Castes in the rural areas are agricultural workers. In 1971 the Scheduled Castes population consists of 14.8% of the total population. But it increased to 15.7% in 1981, 16.5% in 1991, 16.2% in 2001 and now 16.6% in 2011. The census of 2011 explains that Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West-Bengal, Utter Pradesh and Haryana are the five states where, the percentages of Scheduled Castes population are higher. The highest percentage of Scheduled Castes population is found in Punjab (31.9%). The sex ratio of Scheduled Castes population of India is also increased from 937 to 945 in 2011. The literacy rate of India is 74.04% where as the Scheduled Castes literacy rate is 66.1% in 2011.

Now-a-days untouchability is outlawed. The Scheduled Castes people are recognised to be especially disadvantaged. So they are provided certain preferential treatment. The Scheduled Castes are specified with the article 341 of our constitution. The socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes are traced an attention of the founding fathers of our constitution. They realise for their emergency of social inclusion. So the constitution of India made some provisions for their welfare. The article 15(4), 16(4), 19(5), 23, 46, 330, 334, 335, 338 deals with the upliftment of the weaker sections. The policy of reservation also reflects in the form of protective discrimination. This policy helps in institutional arrangement of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There has been reservation of seats in parliament, higher education institutions, employment sector etc. The fixation of quota was 15% for Scheduled Castes in governmental sector also.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study based on secondary data. Data were collected from the census report 1961s to 2011 and AISHE. Data were also analysed through the consecutive enrolment rate of students in higher education.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

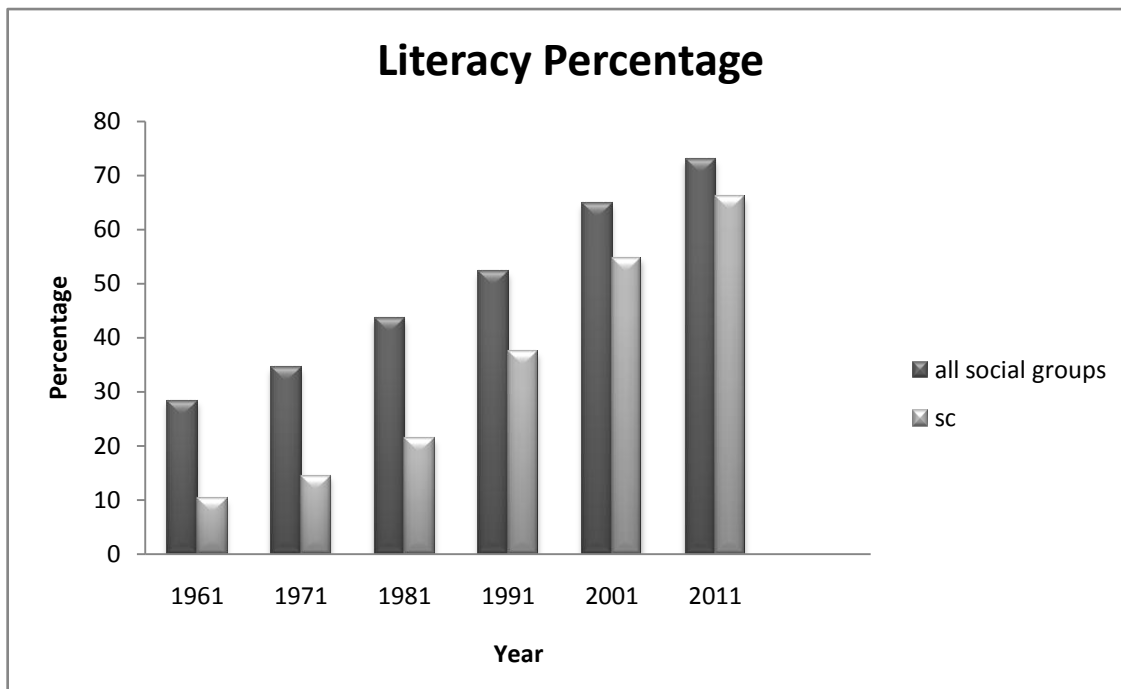
Literacy is an important indicator of human development. In 1947 the literacy rate was just 12%. Now India has changed socially, economically and globally. But historically Scheduled Castes were strictly prohibited from getting education. The past education system was not a universalistic nature. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century education was preferred for only few sections of people. The arrival of the British proved to be a blessing for the untouchables. They opened the door of education for Dalits in India. But they have their own political interest behind it. After independence the government provides special privileges in the field of education. The first constitutional guarantee says under article (46), "The state shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the

people and in particular of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations”.

Higher education plays an important role to achieve sustainable development of the nation. It is a source in all steps of life which supplies the fuel to social inclusion. Higher education has successfully registered in India under the National policy of 1948. This higher education commission was headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. He emphasizes on general education for national development. India's higher education is recognised by UNESCO as the third largest system in the world. The Kothari Commission (1964) was focused on the need for vocational course in higher education. The National Educational Policy (1986) recommended developing autonomous colleges for improving the standard of education. Fifteen years after the NEP, Birla - Ambani Report (1992) said, to upgrading the educational content, delivery and process. They gave importance on 'delivery of service' rather than on exploring of knowledge. The system of higher education transferred from vocationalisation to professionalisation. The technical and managerial education was given priority by this committee. Now the higher education system adopted bottom-up people centric approach which is also called as 'Efficiency Approach'.

The HE cell's find out the key problem of higher education system in India. The lack of poor research training, weak assessment structure, lack of relevant resources, poor infrastructure etc. are detecting as the problem of higher education. The USA President Obama's proposal was to develop a national scorecard for ranking universities. It was a valuable contribution to improving the accountability for higher education. Because the public benefit arise only from broad access to high quality of education.

Fig.1 Literacy rate of Scheduled Castes & All Social Groups



Source: (Census Report. 2011)

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**PRESENT STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Education is the main foundation for social and economic growth. It is a powerful tool to build a knowledge- based society in 21<sup>st</sup> century. But it gets affected by the mechanism of caste system. Almost 90% of the Scheduled Castes still live in rural areas. They are suffering from acute economic exploitations. So the constitutional policy of “positive discrimination” favours a lot to the Scheduled Castes students. Rastriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme (CSS). It aims at improving the overall quality of higher education institutions by adopting a mandatory quality assurance framework. It also improves equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, minorities and disabled persons. UGC provides financial assistance to the Scheduled Castes students for accessing higher education. The plan “Operation Knowledge” was launched to spread technical education among the students. Higher education comprises under-graduate, post-graduate degrees, doctoral and pre-doctoral programs. It is at the apex of educational pyramid.

Table – 1: Gross Enrolment Number (GER)

Level	All			SC		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary (I – V)	98.1	100.6	99.3	110.8	112.2	111.5
Upper Primary (VI – VIII)	84.9	90.3	87.4	93.2	96.5	94.8
Elementary (I – VIII)	93.3	96.9	95.0	104.2	109.4	102.8
Secondary (IX – X)	73.5	73.7	73.6	76.0	76.2	76.1
(I – X)	89.4	92.4	90.8	98.6	103.0	97.6
Senior Secondary (XI – XII)	49.1	49.1	49.1	48.1	49.7	48.8
(I – XII)	83.3	85.9	84.6	91.1	93.3	92.2
Higher Education	22.3	19.8	21.1	16	14.2	15.1

Data Source: For School: U-DISE – 2013 – 14 (Provisional)

For Higher Education: AISHE – 2012 – 2013 (Provisional) Report

The access to higher education can be measured in terms of gross enrolment ratio Government (GER) in the age group of 18-23 years. Government has set a target of increasing GER 30% by the year of 2020. In India the enrolment of Scheduled Castes students in higher education has been making a great step since independence. But still there is a disparity between the Scheduled Castes and non-scheduled population in our country. It is very surprising to observe the enrolment gap between general and Scheduled Castes students in higher education. However there is a remarkable difference in enrolment of Scheduled Castes students. Our GER is merely 11per cent as compared to China 20 per cent and USA 83 per cent. This table present a clear picture of their enrolment. It is clear that the traditionally neglected sections of people are far behind from the general group of people. There are very less number of Scheduled Castes students attaining higher education in India.

Table – 2: Level-wise Enrolment in Higher Education (in '000')

Level	All Categories			SCs		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Ph.D	50	34	84	NA	NA	NA
MPhil	16	19	35	NA	NA	NA
Post Graduate	1744	1631	3374	NA	NA	NA
Under Graduate	12723	10815	23538	NA	NA	NA
PG Diploma	164	51	215	NA	NA	NA
Diploma	1500	624	2124	NA	NA	NA
Certificate	81	95	176	NA	NA	NA
Integrated	51	32	83	NA	NA	NA
Senior Secondary	11747	10406	22153	2036	1815	3851
Higher Education Total	28076	23743	51782	2036	1815	3851

NA – Not Available

Data Source: Higher Education: AISHE – 2012-13 (Provisional)

The table indicates that there has been a massive increase in the participation of general students in higher education but a very low number of Scheduled Castes students are pursuing higher education.

### **REASON FOR UNEQUAL EDUCATIONAL CAPABILITIES OF SCHEDULED CASTES**

There are many critical reasons behind unequal accessing of higher education among SCs students. One can realise the Scheduled Castes are not only socially and disadvantaged but also in economical sphere. The economic condition of the Scheduled Castes people is very poor. So the parents do not desire to spare their labour power. The attitude of the parents prefers to engage their children in family income. Because education does not provides immediate economic returns. The Physical barriers like location of villages are creates a hindrance for SCs students. They are facing the 'double jeopardy' of poverty and social discrimination. The Noble laureates Amartya Sen, advocated a broader approach called "capability deprivation". It means the weaker section people have no freedom to choose any other alternatives due to their low economic status. That is the foremost reason of educational inequalities among the Scheduled Castes in India.

Education is the single most instruments for social and economical transformation. So the government has implemented various schemes for Scheduled Castes to access equitable and qualitative higher education. Meritorious dalit students are assisted with fellowship like Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) for conducting research. Numbers of post-metric scholarship, subsidized hostel facilities and loans for professional courses have also increased. The National Literacy Mission Scheme, 1986 has improved and expanded higher education among all groups of people. There is also relaxation for admission in college, universities and professional institutions. UGC has also reduced the minimum percentage of marks for SC students for appearing NET examination. Apart from that reservation policy marked as a preferential treatment to the Scheduled Caste students. UGC has set up a standing committee to review the implementation of reservation policy. Social security of students is of a great concern in all educational institutions also.

### **CONCLUSION**

Today India is one of the fastest developing countries of the world. The nation enjoys its independence more than 60 years. Still there are endless problems with the Indian higher education system. We are lacking the world-class institution. The standard of academic research is declining day by day. The unequal representation of Scheduled Castes students in higher education brings exclusive growth of the nation. We need highly skilled educated people to move forward the nation. The higher education system should focus on the inclusive development of Scheduled Castes students. The nation wants growth with social justice. The development without some groups is not an inclusive growth of the country. Higher education plays an important role in social change. It also brings radical transformation in socio- economic outlook. The low enrolment of Scheduled Castes students in higher education make our development exclusive one. Now the government should modernise our educational system in an inclusive way.

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