



A critical evaluation of Educational status of Scheduled Caste Women of Chitradurga District.

Dr.RANGASWAMY C

Assistant professor, Department of Studies In Education
Davanagere University, Shivagangotri, Davanagere District, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort to evaluate the educational status of schedule caste women of chitradurga district. The scheduled caste who are classified as untouchables appear to exist at the bottom of India's upper castes. Scheduled caste women are traditionally depressed and neglected in Indian society. They also remain at the bottom of economic hierarchy, having no land of their own. Education is the only weapon through which the status of the scheduled caste women in society can be improved. Governmental and non-governmental agencies have made a lot of efforts, provisions and reservation for the improvement of scheduled caste women. But even today scheduled caste a woman is designated as "disadvantaged group".

Key Words: Scheduled Caste, Educational Status, Disadvantaged Group, Modern Education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a very vital tool to improve and upgrade the social and economic conditions of the Scheduled castes population. Literacy rate is very important indicator that determines the progress of both society as well as the individual. "A comparison between the literacy levels between the general population and scheduled castes population indicates that in spite of all the constitutional guarantee and recommendations from different commissions to improve the literacy levels among the scheduled caste population there is still a considerable gap" (Pandey, 1986). "The women especially among these scheduled castes are doubly disadvantaged for the fact that they are women and belong to scheduled castes" (Dunn, 1993). Modern education system is able to completely remove the issue of illiteracy and equality among different caste, religion and tribe. Education serves to develop the mind of the people at a higher level and helps in removing all the discrimination among the people in the society. It helps us to develop the understanding to understand every aspect of life. It also helps us to understand all human rights, social rights, duties and obligations towards the country.

The expected caste population is distributed throughout the world. The only thing which is common with this caste is poverty and social disabilities especially in women due to which they remain ignored and backward for ages. For years, they have lived miserable life. Scheduled caste women are the most powerful weapon in changing their status in Indian society. Education also reduces social inequalities and boosts their status in society. The system of standard caste females was implemented at all levels and classes, colleges, and even universities were reserved exclusively for women, thereby promoting education. To bring more scheduled caste girls, especially from BPL families, into the mainstream of education. The government has offered compromises in the form of free books, uniforms, boarding and accommodation, hostile clothes, midday food, scholarships, free cycles, and so on. But despite all the government's facilities, they have not benefited. Women from scheduled castes have failed to develop a development strategy. Women from scheduled castes are still far behind in society.

Constitutional provisions

Article 46 of the constitution specifies that "the State shall encourage and secure the weaker groups, in particular the scheduled and the Scheduled Tribal, with special treatment, education and economic interest, and from social inequality and other types of social exploitation. Article 330, 332, 335, 338 to 342 and the fifth and sixth legislative schedules address unique requirements to meet the goals laid out in Article 46.

Special provision

After independence, the Government of India has taken number of the steps to strengthen the educational base of the persons belonging to the scheduled caste and schedule tribes. National education strategy (1986) and intervention program (1992) were merged into the thrilling program of the Department of Primary Education, Literature, and Secondary and Higher Education as follows.

- Abolishing tuition fees at least to the maximum primary standard in all states in government schools. In fact, most of the States have abolished tuition fee for SC and ST students up to the senior secondary level.
- Incentives like free textbook, uniform, stationary, school bags, etc. for these students.
- The statutory (86th) bill, informed on 13 December 2002, provides for free and obligatory primary education as a basic right for all children from 6 to 14 years old.

As per the Population Census 2011 data, following are some quick facts about Chitradurga Taluk.

Category	Total	Male	Female
Children (Age 0-6)	46,679	23,973	22,706
Literacy	79%	75.8%	64.66%
Scheduled Caste	101,532	51,160	50,372

Scheduled Tribe	69,629	35,198	34,431
Illiterate	125,905	51,929	73,976

The Scheduled Castes in Karnataka have a long history of receiving strong support from the state, commencing with the benevolent policies of the princely state of Mysore where, in 1919 the Scheduled Castes (known as 'Punchamas') got admission in all schools despite protests from the upper castes. By the 1920s a small but significant number of SCs had entered government service and statistics showed that there were 165 Dalits among a total of 4,234 employees in 1918 (about 3.8 per cent). After Independence and since its formation in 1956, Karnataka has pursued policies that have encouraged SCs to enter the education mainstream. Despite these proactive interventions, the performance of SCs is nowhere on par with the general population.

Educational status of the scheduled caste women

The literacy rate of SCs has been consistently lower than that of the general population. The literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes was 27.62 per cent in 1981; it increased to 38.10 per cent in 1991 and further increased to 52.87 per cent in 2001. The literacy rate for the total population was 46.21 per cent (1981), 56.04 per cent (1991) and 66.64 per cent (2001). The gap between the literacy rate of the general population and the SC literacy rate is being bridged but not as rapidly as envisaged. The gap in 1981 was 19.59 percentage points, which fell to 17.98 in 1991 and declined further to 13.83 in 2001. Scheduled Caste literacy rates have been increasing at a faster pace: between 1981 and 1991 the SC literacy rate increased by 10.48 percentage points and by 14.77 in 1991-2001. The increase in literacy for the rest of the population was 9.83 per cent in 1981-1991 and 10.6 per cent in 1991-2001. The literacy rate of urban SCs in 2001 is 69.27 per cent, which is above the state average. The female literacy rate among SCs in 1981 was 15.48 per cent, which increased to 26 per cent in 1991 and 41.72 per cent in 2001. The female literacy rate for total population in 2001 was 56.87 per cent (Table 9.10). The gap between the SC male and female literacy rates hovered at about 23 percentage points (1981 and 1991) before declining marginally to 22 percentage points in 2001. The gap between the male and female literacy rates in the general population declined slightly from 22.92 in 1991 to 19.23 percentage points in 2001.

The gap between the SC female literacy rate and the female literacy rate for all hovered at 18 percentage points (1981 and 1991) and then fell to 15.15 percentage points in 2001. The literacy rate of SC women is abysmally low in rural areas. The literacy level of SCs in Karnataka was higher than the all-India SC literacy level with reference to both female and general literacy in 1991. In 2001, the SC literacy rate was found to be lower than the all-India literacy rates for SC male, female and 'all', which is a matter of great concern. The literacy rate of SC women continues to be a matter of concern. Districts with the lowest SC female literacy rates are Koppal (25.6), Raichur (26), Gulbarga (27) and Bagalkot (28.7), followed closely by Bellary (29), Bijapur (31.9), Haveri (36.9), Davangere (38.2), Chitradurga (40.92) and Belgaum (41.6), which are below the state average. All these districts except Davangere and Chitradurga are located in north Karnataka.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER)

The state (classes I to VIII) has increased from 92 in 1996-97 (KHDR 1999) to 99 in 2000-01. The GER for SCs was a high 104.57 in the same year. In fact there has been a great improvement in 221 GER of the SCs, which has overtaken the GER of the general population. Among districts, Udupi led with a GER of 323.27, followed by Shimoga (154.65) and Bangalore Urban (137). Districts with a low GER were Raichur (78.97), Bellary (84.87) and Koppal (87.89) all in Hyderabad Karnataka where SC literacy levels are very low. There is little difference between SC children and the rest of the population with regard to mean years of schooling. Dropout rate School dropout is another important indicator of educational status. The Sample Survey (DES: 2004A) canvassed persons aged between nine and 35 years and found that five per cent of SC persons in that age group had dropped out at primary school level and 17.12 per cent at higher primary/high school level.

The dropout rate for SC females was marginally less than SC males. The reasons offered for dropping out offer insights into the biases that SC female's experience: 36 per cent mentioned the inability of parents to pay for their education and 32 per cent discontinued their education to work at home. Scheduled Caste males dropped out to do family work (26 per cent) or because the school was at some distance from the residence (24 per cent) – a factor which does not seem to have discouraged SC women. The opportunity costs of education are very high for SC girls. They are pulled out of school to attend to domestic chores and sibling care, thus enabling their mothers to work as agricultural or casual labor. In secondary education, in 2000-01, the GER for SC boys (97.63) and girls (90.77) is higher than for all boys (92.86) and girls (86.89) for classes I to X, but there is a decline at the plus 2 stage for SC boys (86.94) while SC girls (80.99) have a GER similar to all students (80.28) in Classes X–XII. Raichur district had the lowest GER (Appendix Tables: Series 4 and 10).

Outcomes In terms of outcomes such as performance in the Class VII examinations, there is very little difference across castes. In 2002, for example, SCs and STs outperformed non-SC/ST students. The pass percentage for SCs was 87.87, for STs 88.25 and for others it was 87.31. Scheduled Caste girls, like girls in all social groups, outperformed their male counterparts. When this data is viewed in the context of high dropout rates and the persistence of low literacy rates among SC females, it becomes apparent that if SC girls are enabled to remain in school, then their performance will be exemplary. Unfortunately, despite having the capacity to benefit from education, SC women are not in a position to truly enlarge their choices. The scenario alters somewhat in class X (SSLC) examinations where testing is clearly more rigorous. Among all social groups, SCs have the lowest outcomes in terms of percentage of students clearing the examination from 2001 to 2005 except in 2001, when SC girls performed better than SC boys. The gap in performance between all students and SC students was 6.04 percentage points in 2001 and it increased to 13.8 in 2005. This increase is a cause for concern.

Conclusion

If schedule caste girls are enabled to remain in school, then their performance will be exemplary. Unfortunately, despite having the capacity to benefit from education, Schedule caste women are not in a position to truly enlarge their choices.

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