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ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AMONG SCHEDULED CASTE IN SHRAWASTI DISTRICT OF UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT:

After Independence, the major goal for development was the building of self-reliant nation through maximum utilization of resources and establishment of an egalitarian society. Education was considered as the primary tool for the national development. It has been realized that without proper and equal education opportunities to all, the achievement of economic and social development of newly independent country is not possible. Education for all was the basic thrust of the educational policies and priority has been given to the elementary education in educational planning and in the Constitution of India. Elementary Education sector is the most important sub-sector of the education system, laying the foundations of the education edifice. The goal of universal elementary education encompasses universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps, and improvement in the quality of education. Government schools are characterized by poor quality infrastructure, less than adequate number of teachers and lack of resources. This paper attempts to analyze the status of elementary education among Scheduled Caste in Shrawasti. This study is mainly focused on the participation and accessibility of school resources by scheduled caste children. The Constitution of India is committed to provide free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen years to all children, as per Article 45 of the same. Despite several policies and programmes made by the government including Right to Education Act 2009, that aim, to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to elementary level the educational condition of Scheduled Caste children is miserable, They face exclusion in everyday life which push them to drop school.

KEYWORDS: Right to Education, Scheduled Caste, Elementary Education, Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important means for an individual through which he or she can develop his/her personality and can live a dignified life. In a developing society, formal education becomes a fundamental prerequisite for improving a person's status. Better skills, a wide range of information and more knowledge are essential for administering programmes and agencies, improving productivity and a meaningful role in a democratic process. Now education is recognized as a Human Right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 26 states that "Everybody has the right to education, hence the right accrues to all individuals, although children are understood as main beneficiary". The fact is that it is the birthright of every man and woman and the state is required to ensure it to the citizens. Denial of access to education is the denial of access to power and status.

METHODOLOGY

This study is undertaken in two blocks of Shrawasti district of Uttar Pradesh. The respondents of the study are Scheduled Caste children their parents, peer group and teachers. Through this study an attempt has been done to explore the reasons behind the discrimination among Scheduled Caste children in government schools. The information has been collected through both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary sources used are: (a) Interview Scheduled (b) Observation. The secondary sources included various journals, Census of India reports, Yearly socio-economic report of the district, books and scholarly articles regarding social exclusion in elementary education etc.

PROFILE OF UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh, a state located in Northern India, is presented with the variety of geographical land and cultural diversities. It is often described as the "Hindi-speaking heartland" of India (UNDP Report 2007). The demography of the state delineates its caste, ethnic and gender features. Uttar Pradesh is known to be the most populous state of India with its contribution of 16.16 per cent (Census of India 2011) to the whole population even after the division of Uttar Pradesh in November 2000. According to Census 2011, Total population of Uttar Pradesh is 199,581,477 (Census 2011) out of which 155,111,022 (77.72 per cent) population lives in rural areas and its total urban population is 44,470,455 (22.28 per cent). The population of Uttar Pradesh has registered a growth of 20.09 per cent during the recent last decade (2001-11). In terms of rural and urban decadal growth, it is recorded as 17.81 per cent and 28.75 per cent respectively. The state has the largest share of rural population i.e. 18.62 per cent of the country's rural population for the decade (Census of India 2011). If the population of the state is seen on the basis of religion, then it is to be marked that Hindu comprises of 80.5 per cent and Muslim of 18.5 per cent. The remaining 0.9 per cent of population belongs to other religious minorities like Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains and Christians.

In terms of literacy, the total literacy rate is registered as 69.72 per cent in Uttar Pradesh as per 2011 Census whereas the total literacy rate of overall India is 74.04 per cent. The total percentile of women literates in India are 65.46 per cent whereas the percentage of male literacy rate is 82.14 per cent. Uttar Pradesh has enumerated 118.42 million literates in the last census survey. Among this 88.39 million (67.59 per cent) are recorded from rural areas and from urban area it is 30.02 million (77.01 per cent). Male literacy rate is 78.48 per cent which is far greater than female literacy rate that is 55.61 per cent in rural areas. In urban areas, the male literacy is 88.75 per cent and female literacy is 71.68 per cent (Census of India 2011).

SHRAWASTI: AN EASTERN DISTRICT IN UTTAR PRADESH

Shrawasti district is one of the districts of the Uttar Pradesh state in India. It came into existence in May 1997. Shrawasti district is a part of Devipatan Division. Shrawasti is a newly created district carved out from district Bahraich. Shrawasti shares its border with district Balrampur, Gonda and Bahraich. Shrawasti is located near River Rapti. The district has 3 Tehsils, 5 blocks and 536 inhabited villages with 97 percent of the total population inhabited in the rural areas. Shrawasti district administers 1,640 square kilometres of areas. Moreover, the density of population is 461, which is lower compared to the state's average of 690. There is no town in the district above 50,000 populations. Bhinga town is district headquarter of Shrawasti and its total population is 23,780, (Census of India 2011, District yearly report).

DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE:

	Shrawasti	Uttar Pradesh
Actual Population	11,17,361	19,98,12,341
Male	5,93,897	10,44,80,510
Female	5,23,464	9,53,31,831
Population Growth in decade	30.5	20.23
Sex Ratio	881	912
Child Sex Ratio	928	902
Density/km ²	681	829
Area km	1640	2,40,928
Literacy	46.7	67.68 percent
Male Literacy	57.2	77.28
Female Literacy	34.8	57.18
Child Proportion (0-6 Age)	18.9	16.12
Schedule Caste population	1,89,334	4,13,57,608
Percentage of total Scheduled Caste population	16.9	20.7
Literacy rate of Scheduled Caste	40.9 (Male-50.3, Female-34.8)	60.9 (Male-71.8, Female-48.9)

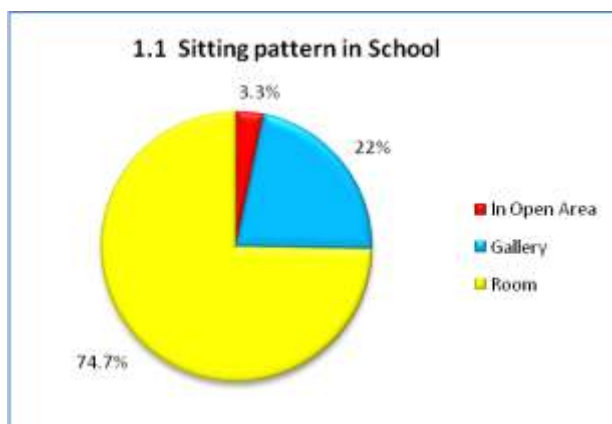
Source-District census handbook of Shrawasti.2011.Directrate of census operations Uttar Pradesh

SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Social exclusion and discrimination refer to the process and outcome of keeping a social group outside the power centre and resources. Social exclusion is powerful form of discriminatory practice by those who are in majority and in power. Exclusion has taken the form of segregating a group of people from the social, political, economic, cultural, educational and religious domains of societal life. It provides bases for sense of superiority and inferiority among the members of the same society or culture. The main focus is on elementary education, which is seen as basic education that is necessary for every individual. The study is located in the context of other research that shows unequal schooling to be the most important factor in causing educational disadvantage among Scheduled caste children. Most of the studies indicating that Scheduled caste children are mostly enrolled in government schools where they receive poor quality education. Scheduled Caste children face unequal educational opportunities as a result of the discriminatory social practices of caste system in government schools.

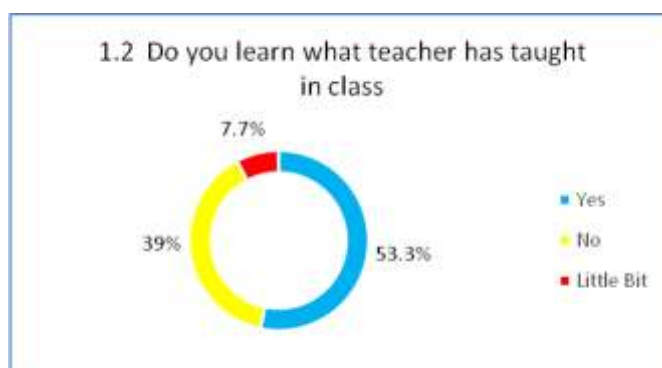
ACCESS TO CLASS ROOM AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN LEARNING

A school infrastructure mainly portrays as a set of interlinked structural components that provide an outline for support an entire base of development. Educationist also emphasize on the good infrastructure for education system. In that way it is natural that we need proper environment to study for instance, class teacher student ratio.



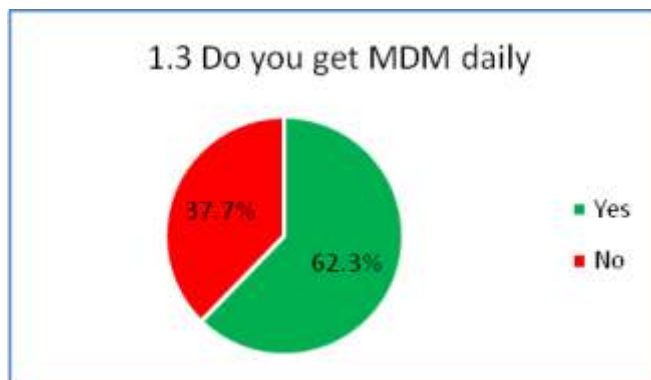
Access to classroom to various students from different sections of the society. Figure 1.1 shows that out of the total respondent only 74.7 percent children sit in the classroom whereas, 22 percent sit in the gallery during school hour. Although, government of India with the help of state government ensures equal education for all but in reality the atmosphere within school premises is totally different from the reports published by the government agencies. As the data reflect that the much number of children sits within the boundaries of classroom but the reason behind this is very different as it came out from various interviews. Through the interviews and observation, it reveals that children sit in the gallery since the unavailability of adequate number of school teacher in school.

As per figure 1.2 results that 39 per cent of school going children replied they do not understand what has been taught in class room. According to children it is reported that most of the time teachers do not teach them rather they only give them to writing lessons (sulekh). They give lessons to write and they make themselves busy in gossiping and at many times they are occupied with their mobile phones. There was no teacher-student discussion were observed. Another reason is that teacher appoints an intelligent student in the class for dictating lesson to the whole class and the rest of the children follow him.



ACCESS TO MID DAY MEAL

The structure of Mid Day Meal in schools has had a long history in India. In 1925, A Mid Day Meal Programme was introduced for disadvantaged children in Madras Municipal Corporation. Followed by this, by the mid 1980s three States viz. Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry had universalized a cooked Mid Day Meal Programme with their own resources for children who enrolled in the primary stage. Mid Day Meal was also being provided to children in Tribal Areas for instance, some States like Madhya Pradesh and Orissa . Mid day meals have an important social value and foster equality. As children learn to sit together and share a common meal, one can expect some erosion of caste prejudices and class inequality. Moreover, cultural traditions and social structures often mean that girls are much more affected by hunger than boys. Thus the mid day meal programme can also reduce the gender gap in education, since it enhances female school attendance. But in ground this programme is not implemented according to their objectives. Moreover, 37.7 per cent (figure 1.3) children of government elementary schools do not get mid day meal regularly in schools.



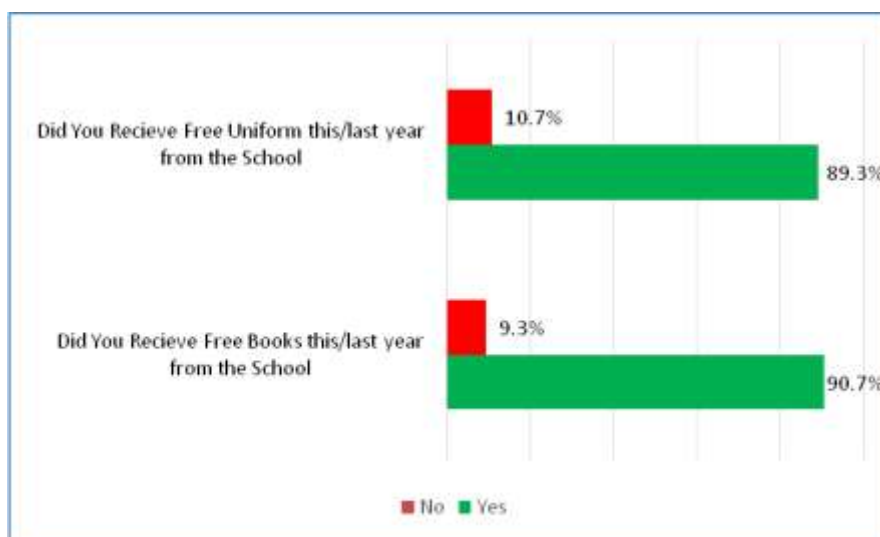
According to field data 87.3 percent of children do not get food according to roster. It was observed that Most of the times, in regular mid day meal they get 'Khichdi, Sabji- Chawal', Tahri. They never get boiled milk and a fruit in school as recently state government has promised to provide boiled milk on every Wednesday and a fruit on every Monday.

ACCESS TO SCHOOL DRESS AND STUDY MATERIAL

The maximum numbers of children have access to free of cost school uniform and study material for instance books as if the state government ensures through its provisions. Nonetheless, the children and their families have different perceptions on the quality of school uniform though they get 2 pairs of school dress for their children. They complained with regard to school uniform that:

“ye kapde jaada din chalet nahi hai. Bahut jaldi inki silai bhi tut jaati hai. Sarkar to bahut achha saaman deti par ye maastar saahab log hmare bachho ko kam paise wala kapda batatte hai. Aur bacha hua paisa aapas me kha lete hai”.

Figure 1.4: Dress Material and Books



Access to Water

Hand pump (India mark) is the main source of drinking water in government schools rather purified water facilities. There is no facility of tap water or any vessel placed on the place of drinking. The area where hand pump was located was extremely broken and in some schools it was full of mud.

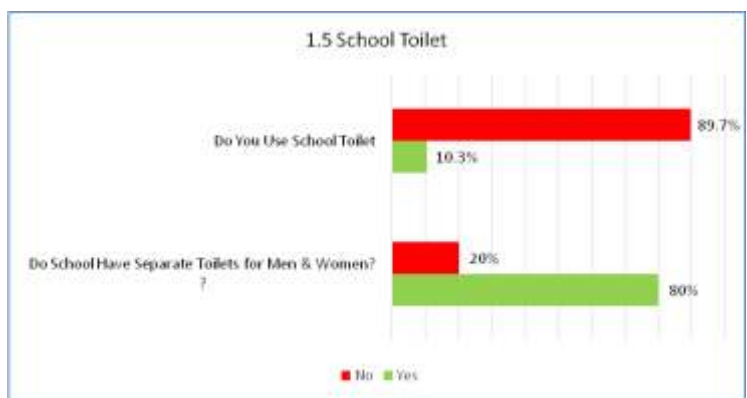
Access to Toilet

Toilet is an important and a necessity for a good school. It is a part of sanitation programme which ensures cleanliness, good health, and prevents from various diseases. The government of India has introduced a programme named "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan dated on October 2nd 2014 to facilitate cleanliness among people with other objective to achieve an open defecation free India by 2 October 2019. In line with this, Right to education act-2009, ensures separate toilet for girls and boys, but in reality in the rural villages of Shrawasti adequate toilet facility is unavailable.

In schools where toilet was available it has two different compartment one for boys another for girls. Among those schools where toilet facility was available only two schools do not have separate toilet for girls. According field data, only 10.3 percent of children do use toilet facility who were mainly girls. When they asked, "why they do not use toilet rooms for their purposes?"

In response to this question 38.7 percent children said that, "doors of the toilet room always remains locked whereas 26.3 percent children said that "the only school teacher uses toilet. He does not allow us to use.

He says that “ghar se kar k aaya karo, khud k ghar me to hai nhi, yaha chale aate hai ganda karne” (Do not use toilet here, you people do not have toilets back in your homes you make dirty.) Thus, children of the school prefer to go outside for toilet



The stereotype ideology of teachers decides their behaviour with the scheduled caste children. Teachers often discussed the situation of scheduled caste peoples, as they are engage in menial work; teacher uses derogatory words (Syed etal 2007:91) . Majority of teachers from non-scheduled castes, practise derogatory words to call children of scheduled caste. A regular practice prevalent in schools is that of teachers’ calling children by their ‘caste name’, or ‘son of a caste’. Peers often did likewise. This activity makes the Scheduled caste student to ‘lose confidence’ and ‘feel low’.

TEACHERS BEHAVIOUR

Figure 1.6 shows that 69.3 per cent children complain about teacher that he uses derogatory words to address children in class. This is quite high in modern society which supposed to free of any sort of biases. When it was asked that, “what kinds of derogatory words they use in schools?” In response to this question 28.3 percent children have reported that teacher call them by the caste instead of their name whereas 10 percent said that a teacher call them by their parents name such as (*Kali Chamar ki Aulad/ Son of Kali Chamar*). This whole thing spins around the concept caste such as purity and pollution. It was also observed that if these scheduled caste children does not perform according to teacher’s expectations in school/class or do some mistake teacher call them *gadha* (Donkey) and said you will never learn, your mind is full of chaff. This kind of discrimination and behaviour of some teacher shows how egalitarian the school environment is? Respondents in the field clearly articulated that naming by caste creates tension and distress among them.



Peer Relation

The difference between two individual castes affects the social interaction among children as well. In this context Nambissan writes that peer relations are neglected sphere of school life but it is extremely critical for academic and interpersonal relations and their interface. The relationships and networks among children in school are seen as important factor for academic and emotional support systems. The extent to which a child is included or excluded from such relationships hence this harmonious relationship is important for ones’ identity

and well being in school (Nambissan 2009). Scheduled Caste children appear to largely interact with members of their own sub-caste and nearly as often with those of another Scheduled Caste. The large number of respondents who said that upper caste children do not behave normally (102/34 percent), whereas 25.7 percent were reported that upper caste children always show superiority and start fighting without any logical reason. On the other hand, only 19 percent said that they behave normally but only while they talk. These upper caste children do not share foods with schedule caste children, do not play with them and also do not visit their places. . In a few cases, older youth from schedule caste community mentions that they roam or mingle with multi-caste groups but it is restricted to only school boundaries it does get extended to their villages or the places they live. The schedule caste children cannot enter into the upper caste child's habitation and the reverse is not also expected. One of the informants reveal that, "We are of 'low caste' so their parents will not allow them', 'they do not eat and drink what we offer to them". It shows that relationship between the two different caste children within school is not normal most of the time.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the nature of exclusion faced by Scheduled Caste children in every step in school premises. Children are denied education due to their low ascribed status from their position in the traditional social structure in relation to caste and culture. These children belong to illiterate or poorly schooled families, who fail to provide the necessary cognitive, language and social skill which is necessary for social adaptability in schools. Thus, these socially excluded communities are not easily able to access schooling because they find school environment and their social setting totally different. The egalitarian character of the schools behaves differently, when they are in a situation to access school. At schools they face different types of discrimination like they were made to carry task such as cleaning the toilet, broom to sweep the school premises, make them sit separately from the other student in the classrooms, getting meal at last and least during mid day meal. Majority of the Scheduled Castes live in the rural areas, have less access to education, as these schools are normally located in the higher caste dominated area, making them not only physically distant from Scheduled caste habitation but also socially inaccessible as well. The stereotype ideology of teachers decides their behaviour with the scheduled caste children. Teachers often discussed the situation of scheduled caste peoples, they use derogatory words, some time, call them according to their fathers name. This type of discriminatory behaviour of teacher affects the confidence of growing child.

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