

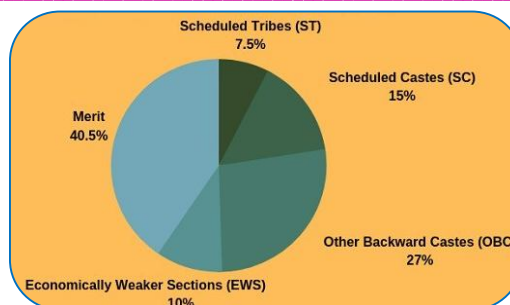


## RESERVATION IN EDUCATION OF SC WOMEN: A STUDY OF RURAL INDIA

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### 1.0. ABSTRACT

Education is a necessary element of human life. But from early ages, due to gender discrimination, women are less preferred to get even basic education for the survival. With respect to India, women are always considered to remain in home and confine themselves to do household chores and take care of family and children. Though this thinking of people is changing with the development of society, still gender discrimination prevails in many parts of India. Specifically, in rural India, women are still remaining backward. They are unable to get proper education because people think that spending money on the education of women is waste. And adding to it, if women belong to SC category, imparting education is no more than a dream in rural India. Thus, reservation has become necessity for women education, especially for women belonging to SC category in rural India. With reservation, women can get a bundle of benefits, right from paying low fees to getting good remuneration. The study undertaken deals with the importance of providing reservation to the rural women belonging to SC category. This will be helpful for the academicians as well as the officials associated with education department in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Education, Reservation, Rural India .

### 2.0. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a great role in the development of a civilized society. Education needs to be imparted to every element of the society, irrespective of gender, financial status or social norms. It can help the brain to be trained in such a way that not only the person himself/herself becomes skilled but also he/she contributes their skills to the society. Discrimination in education has been and is still prevalent in the society. To prevent this discrimination, the Indian Constitution holds the reservation system.

After India got independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, the Constitution makers realized that a great inequality existed among the people on the basis of financial status and class. This inequality pushed them to implement reservation system. According to the reservation system, in every sector from education to employment, a fixed percentage of seats are reserved for candidates belonging to OBC (Other Backward Class) and SC/ST (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes). There were basically 3 categories which were namely, General, OBC, SC/ST. All the categories had different percentage of seats reserved for them. Thus, this reservation of seats in different sectors called for equality in society. Apart from the reservation provided to OBC/SC/ST, there are various types of reservation provided in higher education. These include the following:

1. Girl students.
2. Children of government employees.

3. Residents of union territories and Jammu & Kashmir.
4. Children of Ex-servicemen
5. Candidates passed through the examination of same university as different from those of other universities, etc.

Though today people are very well aware of the reservation system that is being followed by the government of India, rural people are still unaware about the pros that reservation system holds for them. In a country like India where gender inequality has been so dominant, it has been a dream for people of BPL to get good education or good jobs. Women have always been suppressed and not given even basic education. They have been confined to the household responsibilities. Though in urban areas, gender inequality is decreasing, in rural areas, gender inequality exists at the same rate as in previous decades. When it comes to education, women belonging to SC category are not allowed to get basic education too, irrespective of the reservation that Government provides to them.

As a woman, it is important to have good and proper education because as it is said educating a woman is equivalent to educating many upcoming generations. Though the people belonging to General and OBC categories are making efforts to let the women study but because of the lack of money, women belonging to SC category are unable to get access to education facilities. As per the rural India is considered, reservation in education of SC women can help them to achieve good education, not only basic education but also higher education.

### 3.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brij Raj Chauhan (1975) in his study "Scheduled Caste and Education" examined the literacy rate of SC community. He also stated various problems by them for getting access to education. However, scientific methodology was focused but it could not give easy access to SC students to gain higher education.

C. Parvathamma (1982) conducted study on "Housing in Rural Karnataka", which stated the condition of SC community in rural parts of Karnataka. She gave a detailed discussion about the depressed class and its condition as "untouchables" referring to the study of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The study further suggested useful information to SC community gain superiority in the higher education easily.

Haroobhai Mehta and Hasmukh Patel (1991) in the study "Dynamics of Reservation Policy" discussed the background of SC community in Gujarat during the year 1984-85. The authors highlighted different issues of reservation system for SC, ST and OBC. Further the urgent need of proper implementation of reservation system by Central and State Government was discussed so that the reserved categories can also get empowered. The study also analyzed the Mandal Commission report scientifically and proposed a sociological treatment for the existing problem.

S.N. Singh (1996) in "Reservation Policy for Backward Classes", discussed the status of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes under the Government of India. The study also reported on several judgements passed by High Courts and Supreme Court on issues regarding reservation system, specifically about the pros and cons of reservation system with respect to modern era.

Jacob Aikara (1980) conducted the study on "Scheduled Castes and Higher Education", with the sample being SC students of different colleges in Mumbai. The author studied the basic causes of the rates of drop-outs among students of SC community and non-SC community. Further, the study investigated the reasons among the students for discontinuing their studies. From the findings, it was revealed that students of SC community were considered inferior in terms of economic, occupational, educational and academics. The rate of stagnation and dropout was relatively higher among the students belonging to SC community than non-SC community. For addressing the problem, it was suggested that the academic weakness of the students belonging to SC community could be met with special academic assistance like special coaching or additional lectures.

Mahendra Kumar Meshram and V.J. Nandapurkar (2012) in their study, "Educational Development of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe", stated that education plays a vital role in the

overall development. In this globalized world, accessibility and availability of education should be a part of every student's life, including Dalits and those belonging to poor sections of society. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar emphatically raised the slogan of 'Educate, Organise and Agitate. This slogan denotes that education can empower Dalits in today's modern society. The Constitution maker, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said, "Education is like the milk of lioness. The one, who consumes it, shall not rest without roaring." He emphasized that equal opportunities should be provided to all when it comes to education sector specifically. In the study conducted, it was observed that the SC students are suffering due to proper implementation of reservation system and negligence of Government mechanism. It is high time that the proper initiatives are taken to eradicate the problems that SC community is facing in educational sector.

#### 4.0. RESERVATION IN EDUCATION OF SC WOMEN

Education is one of the most important elements required for the development of a nation. Apart from basic education, higher education has gained prominence as it has helped to transform the traditional form of society to knowledge-based society. The disputes over the reservation system in India has always been emerging, specially when it comes to higher education. There have been heated debates over the existence of such policy or what should be the criteria for implementing it. But the strictness of violence has been backed by long-term caste dispute, giving rise to "identity politics" and social changes. The people belonging to upper caste have felt disadvantaged and facing discrimination because of the reservation system implemented in the Constitution of India. It has been seen that the special privileges are given to candidates belonging to SC when it comes to government jobs and higher education. Along with SC, these special privileges have been given to OBCs as well. This has called for equality in the Constitution but it is difficult for the governments to modify or re-define the responsibilities assigned by the Constitution.

Reservation system introduced in Constitution was brought into motion for providing equal opportunities to all the people. This was expected to remove inequality in the society. Education, being an important part of life, got place in the reservation system. Education system has been impacted by reservation system a great, both in positive as well as negative ways. Because of implementation of reservation system, seats were present for reserved categories, thus giving them special privileges. At the same time, reservation system was being criticized by some people because people belonging to General category were restricted and treated unequal as the special privileges were offered by OBC and SC/ST. Thus, reservation system had been always controversial.

Out of all the reserved categories, SC is considered as the weakest. This is because they have less financial facilities and thus, they are unable to afford fees of schools and colleges. At the same time, men belonging to SC manage to get education and employment while women belonging to SC category are restricted stating that they need to indulge themselves in household responsibilities. This can be reduced by imparting special reservation to SC women, though some universities provide facility of fees waivers.

The approach of Indian Government towards the people belonging to SC has been shaped in accordance with the provisions mentioned in the Constitution. These provisions guarantee equality among the citizens before law, thereby empowering the State for making special provisions for promoting educational as well as economic interest of the people belonging to SC category. The reservation system in education sector is mixed for the SC community students. Further, Article 15(4) has provided the State for making special provisions to empower the SC community. Under this Article, the seats are reserved for the candidates belonging to SC community in various educational institutions for different courses like engineering, medical and technical colleges and universities which fall under State government and Central Government. Along with these provisions, different financial schemes including scholarships, fees concession, grants for books, special hostels and coaching for students belonging to SC community.

Education among SC candidates were becoming popular because now they were also getting admissions in the same schools and colleges where the candidates of General category belong. Proper

basic education was provided to all the candidates, irrespective of the categories, because of reservation system. Good education means good employment which further means development in living standards. Among these candidates, there may be men and women as well. But gender inequality clashed with the reservation system. Thus, women belonging to SC category were not given equal opportunities to men belonging to SC category.

From times immemorial, the society has always considered women the weaker section in comparison to men. The women have been facing a great number of problems such as domestic violence, socio-cultural problems, economic problems, etc. Apart from these, the main problem that restricted women development was financial problem. So, the reservation system for women was a boon. It has been backed by women empowerment as well so as to raise the status of women in the society. The problems that have been faced by women has decreased to a large extent as there has been a decline in gender discrimination.

With the rise in feminism and women empowerment, gender inequality decreased to a large extent but not abolished. Now, women are also being sent to schools and colleges for getting proper education. This education power in the hands of women has enabled them to become self-independent and knowledgeable. The gender inequality is diminishing which further has encouraged women to get good education. The same applies to SC women. Today, education reservation for SC women through the feature of fee waiver has made it easier to get good, proper, basic as well as higher education to SC women.

#### 5.0. EDUCATION RESERVATION IN RURAL INDIA

In rural India, people are still not allowed to get education. Some parts of rural India are of the opinion that it's the agriculture occupation which has to be followed by generations while women have to fulfil household opportunities and help in labour work. On the contradictory, some other parts of rural India are of the opinion that upcoming generation should increase their living standards by an increase in per capita income. They understand that this can only be possible when they get good and proper basic and higher education. To afford high fees of schools and colleges, reservation in education system has contributed a lot by lowering the fees for the reserved category. Thus, reservation system in education sector has contributed to a rise in the development of rural India.

Concentrating on women in rural India and their status, it is evident that rural people are still restricting women to go out for education. The women are only considered to remain inside four walls, do household chores, and take care of family. In the wave of feminism and women empowerment, some people in rural India are still orthodox in their opinion stating that spending money on education of women is waste.

The past studies have shown that affirmative policies are being undertaken by the government for educating women particularly of SC community. Earlier, the majority of SC girls did not have easy access to basic education. The drop-out rates in education among SC girls was higher than the present rate. Also, today, people are understanding the importance of inclusion and participation of SC girls and women, not only in educational development but overall social and economic development. To increase literacy rates among SC girls, many programs are being launched by the Government like:

- (1) Pre-Matric scholarship for children of people engaged in unclean occupations.
- (2) Mid-day meals
- (3) Grants-in-aid to voluntary organizations.
- (4) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- (5) Loans to students for pursuing education
- (6) Operationalization of UEE (universal elementary education) with special focus on low literacy rates in S.C. dominated regions.
- (7) Residential courses for girls at higher secondary stage.
- (8) Training program at secondary stage in form of vocational courses.

The literacy among SC women is less than that among SC men. SC women are confined to holding responsibilities of housewife. It has been evident that the majority of SC people don't give equal freedom to men and women. Though with the changing time, the living standards of SC has also changed. The SC people have also started to walk on the footpaths of upper caste people. They are understanding that educated SC men and women can get more chances of employment in government jobs and public undertakings department with the help of reservation. With the help of education, SC people are extending their approach towards inter-caste marriage with no barriers of age for men and women. Child marriage which was widely prevalent among SC people has seen a decline with the rise in literacy rate. Further, it is expected that social mobility can bring a great change in the relationships between SC and upper castes. With the help of education, Harijans are slowly and gradually becoming the elite part of the society and are getting into bureaucratic interaction among Hindus and non-Hindus. Also, literacy rate of women among the SC category is much higher in comparison to other communities.

## 6.0. CONCLUSION

Though the current government is making many efforts for encouraging education of women by undertaking 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' initiative, in rural areas women do not have access to proper basic education, specifically those belonging to SC community. There are various reasons for the failure of accessibility, major being poverty and patriarchal suppression. In rural areas, women are being discouraged from getting even basic education. The reservation for education among women in different educational institutions may prove to be one of the most important opportunities for such women, who find it difficult to attend schools and colleges. This would provide good incentive for them to pursue academic career for themselves.

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