Higher Education of Dalit Women and Degree Completion in India

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ABSTRACT: This paper reviews diverse literature on Dalit women and higher education. Dalit women's inequality in terms of caste, class, and gender is more pronounced in some aspects of the higher education systems than in others. The analysis makes distinctions, the experiences of under graduate/Postgraduate Dalit women students in Indian universities/colleges, the status of enrolment and dropouts, hurdles in completing the degree successfully, and outcomes of the teaching-learning process. Fortunately, while the sociology discipline pays significant attention to caste-based violence in Indian contexts, Dalit women-related issues are a topic under-studied in the field. This article reviews the multidimensional literature on Dalit women and higher education, typically coming from Sociology, education, cultural studies, and feminist studies, and focuses on the phenomena's link to notions of caste and education. To bring out the major cause of concern researchers studied more than 20 articles/research papers. The paper concludes by pointing out gaps in the body of information and making recommendations for further research.

Introduction:

Caste discrimination, which negatively impacts more than 260 million people worldwide, is one of the most significant human rights concerns facing the world today. Sirswal, D. R. (2011). Dalits, often known as "outcasts," are the majority of caste discrimination victims in South Asia. Based on underlying ideas of purity and pollution, the caste system is a rigid hierarchical social structure. People who identify as Dalits are subjected to discrimination that affects all aspects of life and violates a variety of fundamental human rights, including civil, political, social, economic, and

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cultural rights. In terms of India, according to the 2011 census, India's most disadvantaged group is the scheduled caste population, which accounts for 201 million people, or 16.63 percent of the country's overall population. (Source, NSSO). Undoubtedly education systems are not free from biases; several studies claim that, on the one hand, overall educational attainment has been increasing among women, however, on the other hand, the gap between different socioeconomic strata has widened (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008). Education can help disadvantaged individuals boost their earnings. On the one hand, education contributes to ensuring that all people benefit from development, on the other hand, India devotes around 10.5% of its total government expenditure to education. But it's not evenly spread out. According to Oxfam, 78% of out-of-school children are girls. (OXFAME, 2018). Although Dalit women do not have a competitive edge, their status in higher education is steadily deteriorating. For the academic year 2017-18, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education was 21.2 percent (for both Dalit males and females), with just 9.3 percent of Dalit women enrolled (source: NSSO), and dropouts on the rise. The caste system and social class mobility are said to be linked (Thorat & Newman, 2012), which means that in most circumstances, lower-caste individuals have a lower social standing and their social class mobility occurs through different pathways than higher caste people, recent evidence suggest that, higher education develops "general and transferable abilities" rather than the specialized competences required for a first job, according to the distinction between the two levels of education (Brennan, 2014). Higher education, sometimes known as "third-level education," is provided by specialized organizations such as universities, academies, colleges, seminaries, and institutes of technology. By 2030, ensuring that all women and men have equitable access to affordable, high-quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including higher education, according to SDG 414. The author of this review article discusses Dalit-related concerns in the context of education, recording the main obstacles to accessing senior secondary and higher education (all levels of education), which will provide a future area of inquiry.

Dalit:

The term ``Dalits'', traces itself back to a Sanskrit word, dal, that implies being broken, cut, torn asunder, scattered, crushed or destroyed. Omvedt, G. (1979). The word "Dalit woman" refers to the women in South Asia who suffer prejudice because of their occupation, origin, or caste. Individuals who suffer from caste-based oppression go by several labels, including Dalits, Harijan, and SC. Dalit women experience discrimination on many different levels. South Asian study (2020). They endure gender discrimination as women, caste prejudice as Dalits, class discrimination as the

poor, and in certain countries, religious/ethnic discrimination as a result of their faith and ethnicity. Although the definition of the notion varies from country to country, the bargaining ground for their socioeconomic existence is the same across South Asia. A Dalit woman has to face gender discrimination being a woman. And economic and caste exploitation being a Dalit and at the same time, she is oppressed by the patriarchy from which the Dalit communities are not free. Rege (1998). Hinduism as we know it now is the consequence of the Indian subcontinent's diversity being consolidated via the adoption of local customs. This was often accomplished via violent struggle, but it resulted in socio-political and economic control over the populace and area (Omvedt 2011, 2)4. Here are a few things to consider in relation to intersectional and solitary consciousness studies. First of all, these ideas have their roots in the context of interactions between various groups that have a similar identity (e.g., gender). Therefore, both intragroup and intergroup comparisons may benefit from intersectional awareness. For instance, it enables us to analyze relationships among a group of women (e.g., Greenwood, 2008), additionally relationships between women from various origins (e.g., Greenwood & Christian, 2008; see also McCall, 2005). The common identity is the single consciousness' next main emphasis. The operationalization of singular consciousness appears to capture perceived sameness in the experience of all women while ignoring intersectional differences, despite the definition of singular consciousness being perceived "similarity" arising from this shared identity (which in theory allows for also perceiving intersectional differences in power and privilege). Finally, among White women, acknowledging White privilege is a crucial component of intersectional consciousness (Case, 2012; Greenwood & Christian, 2008).

Dalit women and education:

Dalits saw secular education as a key instrument for modernity and emancipation, especially after the end of the nineteenth century. They took education away from the British and Brahman Raj and used it to form their own resistance in colonial India. Dalit Women's Education in Contemporary India is a social and cultural history that examines the social, economic, political, and historical factors that both opened and closed doors for many Dalits, challenging the triumphal narrative of modern secular education. Dalit Women's Education in Modern India is a notable resource for students of history, caste politics, women's and gender studies, education, urban studies, and Asian studies. (Paik, 2014). Dalit women of India have been living in a culture of silence throughout the century. Gail Omvedt a feminist sociologist has called Indian Dalit women "Dalit among Dalit". Dalit women have been experiencing multifaceted discrimination for ages, apparently, Dalit women are triply vulnerable in terms of their gender, caste, and discreet patriarchy

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from their own community. In the Indian state, caste is an unavoidable factor in education, as it is in many other sectors of public life. Although educational standards have improved throughout the course of Indian history, enslaved Dalits, particularly female children from this caste, continue to experience caste prejudice in society and in the educational system. Despite the introduction of state education plans, the breadth and scope of these measures have not resulted in a greater number of Dalit women enrolling in higher education. Harinath, S. (2014). To get into college, you need a certain amount of money, supplies, and freedom to work. You also need a certain amount of social resources, and information). Contacts, self-assurance, assistance, counsel, etc. Both of these resources are mutually beneficial. They support each other. Differences in access to both economic and social resources. The variations in enrolment in higher education across castes are explained by social capital. Scaria, S. (2014).

There was a widespread attitude in the community that females should not continue their education since they would marry and move in with their in-laws. Another major macro-societal barrier was the worry of a girl's reputation and family's honor being harmed as a result of concerns about perceived or genuine 'love relationships' with other pupils. There were further hurdles to girls attending schools, such as low educational quality, violent instructors, and male harassment, Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S., Hiremath, T., Raghavendra, T., ... & Beattie, T. S. (2016). Gender disparity levels in the scheduled groupings. Women in these categories have considerably less access to educational and employment resources than males, according to the findings, Dunn, D. (1993). Education has numerous benefits for an adolescent girl. However, there are several challenges to staying in school for an SC/ ST adolescent girl in these two districts, which need to be addressed. Focusing on adolescent girls, especially in rural Northern Karnataka, where they face a wide variety of issues is crucial to allowing them to reach their full potential, Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S., Hiremath, T., Raghavendra, T., ... & Beattie, T. S. (2016).

It illustrates that, even at the conceptual level, the educational policy fails to unify these functions, which remain sectoral goals. Gender, caste, class, and geography are also important factors in deciding access to higher education in India's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic culture. Gender is once again the all-encompassing negative dimension that confers cumulative and conflicting disadvantages on women. Finally, educational policies and programs are unable to capture the complex social reality inside a single framework, and hence fail to bridge the policy-practice divide, Chanana, K. (1993). Academic disciplines are not objective; rather, they are

cultures, each with its own unique lens through which they see and make sense of the world (as cited by Thomas, 1990: 7). There are still sociocultural issues that need to be addressed in rural areas, such as untouchability and restrictions on access to public spaces. On the other hand, the majority of respondents ranked economic woes as the most significant concern, trailed by educational challenges, Asrani, S., & Kaushik, S. (2011).

In spite of India's significant expenditures on primary education, there are still disparities in the amount of time spent in school by gender and caste, with girls from scheduled castes being at a significant disadvantage. It's possible that if there were more women from SCs groups in state legislatures, this disadvantage might be lessened. Specifically, an SCs woman legislator may retain a strong feeling of solidarity, especially with other SCs girls and women, as a result of the intersecting gender and caste/tribe identities that she carries, and she may support legislative legislation that is beneficial to SCs girls. As a result of this, and for this reason, we anticipate that the likelihood of SC/ST girls completing primary school, progressing through the grades, and doing well may improve if they live in a district with a larger number of SCs women serving in state legislatures. We put this theory to the test by using district-level data from the Indian Election Commission between the years 2000 and 2004, as well as data from the 2004/5 India Human Development Survey and the Indian Census from 2001. The presence of SC/ST women in state legislatures was shown to have a favorable association with SC/ST girls' grade completion and age-appropriate grade advancement. However, this association did not seem to have any effect on SC/ST girls' performance in elementary school. It is possible that the gender and caste discrepancies in primary education completion rates in India may be reduced if more women from SC/ST communities served in state legislatures. Our research confirms that gender inequality remains strong in these communities in North Karnataka and gender roles for girls are socially constructed and maintained in this context. This is amplified in the case of SC/ST girls, given their perceived lower status and worth, Scaria, S. (2014).

Higher education and Dalit women:

Since 1991, several things in India have undergone transformations. The stance of the government has been the subject of the most significant shift. which is reflected in a reduction of state funding to higher education, the entry of private players, an increase in the individual cost of higher education (i.e. the self-financing of higher education), the entry of foreign institutions, a large number of Indian students who go abroad on a self-financing basis, changes in the academic

environment of higher educational institutions, the impact on teachers' conditions, and so on. All of these factors have contributed to everything that has to be looked at from a feminist point of view, Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S., Hiremath, T., Raghavendra, T., ... & Beattie, T. S. (2016). There are increasing higher education institutions, but their quality is questionable, effectively making islands of excellence amidst the sea of mediocrity. Increased accessibility to low-quality higher education systems has democratized mediocrity. There is an issue with both the quantity and the quality of the work. According to the gross enrolment ratio (GER), only 24.5 percent of people are enrolled full-time in higher education, according to the gross enrolment ratio (GER). Despite the fact that education policy has an elitist tilt in favour of higher education, the situation of higher education is far worse than the state of elementary and secondary education. There has never been a comprehensive study conducted on the level of education received by college students at the national level. Apparently vulnerable caste-like Dalit women or Scheduled caste are more deprived in terms of enrolment and dropouts and their mobility is also hindered due to expenses of higher education.

Students from socially disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes, as well as women who lack social capital and cultural capital, face significant challenges in gaining entrance to top higher education institutions and high-value academic courses. Furthermore, geographical, socioeconomic, and pre-college educational route disadvantages, including regional language as a medium of instruction, have a detrimental influence on students from socially disadvantaged groups' academic performance and learning outcomes, Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S., Hiremath, T., Raghavendra, T., ... & Beattie, T. S. (2016). Higher education may be a catalyst for the establishment of more equitable societies if progressive and inclusive governmental policies and higher education practices are implemented, Sabharwal, N. S. (2021).

Enrolment, dropouts, and degree completion:

This age group has a very low enrolment rate. At this level, there is a significant gap in digital literacy. At this level, the quality is likewise consistently poor. In addition to this, there is a significant degree of absenteeism. According to Educational Statistics at a Glance (ESAG) 2018, the focus on delivering elementary education has reportedly increased the Gross Enrolment Rate across all socioeconomic and gender groups (GER).

In terms of female involvement up through the secondary level, advancements have been achieved, and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls has surpassed that of males. However, the percentage of girls who enroll in higher education is far lower than the percentage of guys who do so. There is a discernible divide, in terms of enrolment rate at the level of higher education, between different socioeconomic groups. The 71st round of the National Survey of Student Outcomes (NSSO) was conducted in 2014 and found that dropout rates for secondary school males were very high. The same can be said about the reasons behind this, which include economic activity, a lack of interest in education, and financial restraints. There is a very low proportion of students who continue their education through the secondary school level and enroll in colleges and universities. According to an overview of educational statistics published in 2018 by Educational Statistics at a Glance (ESAG), the focus on ensuring access to elementary education has At the level of education, children from low-income families are overwhelmingly represented in public schools. Because of this, these children are disproportionately affected by the low quality of government schools, which in turn creates a vicious cycle of illiteracy.

The situation is worse for those who are enrolled in higher levels of school. One of the motivations for the development of the National Medical Commission Bill is the need to put a stop to the outrageous tuition costs that are levied by medical schools.

Caste-wise enrolment amongst different age groups:

In addition, there are significant gender differences in access to higher education. Girls have less access than boys, with a GER of 12.42 percent for males and 9.11 percent for females. It is important to note that, although female enrolment rates are often lower than male enrolment rates, Males from lower castes, girls from lower castes, and various religious groups have more difficulties in gaining access to resources. Females with a greater level of education. In 2004-05, for example, compared to the global average of 9.11 percent, The ST, the SC, and the GER among females were 4.76 percent, 4.43 percent, 6.60 percent, and 19.53 percent, respectively, for the ST, the SC, and the GER. OBC women, as well as other females. As a result, the ST/SC girls' GER was around five times that of the ST/SC men. In comparison to upper caste ladies, OBC females earn around three times less. University Grants Commission. (2008).

SC and ST children had a higher rate of dropout than children in the OBC and general groups. According to the report, children in rural regions (13.7 percent) are more likely to drop out of school than children in urban areas (11.9 percent). The main reasons for dropout given by the

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families were that "children were not interested in studies," "cost was too high," and "children were expected for domestic duties as well as outside jobs to contribute to family income." When they were married, about 6% of the females dropped out of school. In this research, an effort was made to classify the most common reasons offered by families for their children's dropout. Nearly 46 percent of dropouts were attributed to home circumstances, according to this classification. School-related concerns such as insufficient infrastructure, a shortage of instructors, and other causes contributed to 15 percent of females dropping out and 4% of boys dropping out. It's vital to note that increasing school infrastructure, education quality, and massive investment in school education can only go so far in reducing dropout rates. Unless and until there is a significant increase in family economic position and a shift in societal views, Gouda, S., & Sekher, T. V. (2014).

Degree completion:

Degree completion programmes are typically designed to enable students to complete the credits necessary to earn a bachelor's degree (B.A.) and Master Degree at an accelerated pace or on a flexible schedule despite having already completed a significant portion of the requirements for an undergraduate/postgraduate degree but having been away from the university environment for some time to finish the credits necessary to achieve a bachelor's degree (B.A.)/Postgraduate on fixed period of time. Wikipedia contributors. (2020, December 7). However, not every group in society can make the same level of advancement. And complete their degree, even though degree completion become more challenger for them, Rakesh Kumar Maurya study revealed that, On January 17, 2016, Rohit Vemula, a Dalit research assistant at Hyderabad Central University, hung himself in the dormitory of a friend. "My birth is my deadly accident," the author of the suicide letter stated. I was usually in a hurry, eager to begin a life... Not at all. I'm simply empty. I'm not worried about myself. That is pitiful. At BYL Nair Hospital, on the top of that other Dalit women, Payal Salim Tadvi, 26, was a second-year resident physician earning her master's in obstetrics and gynecology. She belongs to the Maharashtra-based Tadvi Bhil tribe, a scheduled Muslim group. After finishing her undergraduate education at a medical college in Jalgaon, she relocated to Mumbai and enrolled in the BYL Nair Hospital. She was perhaps the first person from her community to obtain a degree in the medical sciences. On May 22, 2019, Payal reportedly killed herself after being harassed by three of her superiors at the BYL Nair Hospital and Topiwala National Medical College. Three of her former co-workers have already been named in a lawsuit for allegedly harassing Payal because of her caste. Not only these two cases are in Indian educational institutions there are several study explored the detrimental situation of Dalit community one of

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another study was done by Dr. Rakesh Kumar who's study says that, Dalit students whose identity of caste always been matter for other students, they said that, in the beginning of the semester, when caste identities are concealed, the majority of participants said that students act normally and get along well with Dalit students. Kids begin to disregard Dalit students as time goes on and their caste identities are revealed. Maurya. R.K (2018). Not only are caste prejudices a problem, but linguistic barriers are also a problem for the Dalit community's ability to finish their degrees. Dalit students lack English language proficiency due to their educationally underprivileged socioeconomic background, further alienating them from their peers. Sukumar (2013).

According to Asian research, Dalit women's access to higher education is a concern. The community brought up the need several times. Evaluations of the train, as well as the stipends, should be carried out. This will be the responsibility of the entity that represents the local government. Nevertheless, the local government does not have any.

The Dalits are not a secret, and the government is aware of all there is to know about them. In addition, no paperwork is given to Dalits that would allow them to be recognized. It is quite difficult to get work [after completing skill training]. Training that is completely unconnected to the job market is being provided by the government. It would be wonderful if they did some kind of study on the market.

Conclusion:

The present studies show how Dalit women are facing challenges to access higher education. Two major concerns were significantly highlighted concerning increased dropout rates among Dalit women in higher education. These were poverty and caste, and class barriers. Both these factors hurt the higher education of Dalit women. In addition to the obstacles that have been described above, it is difficult for Dalit women to get entrance to higher education. As Simon Chauchard (2014) pointed out in his discussion, the Dalit community experiences prejudiced comments about SCs, their own beliefs about inter-caste relations, or how they have behaved with Scheduled caste (Dalit) villagers. Caste stigma also plays a vital role in the lack behind them. Dalit girls are forced to make sacrifices in their education at the request of their parents because they are reduced to a low social status as a result of a long-standing gender bias. This causes the girls to be condemned to a poor social status. Even the findings of older studies have been called into doubt. The results of the present study are supported by research, which also highlights the significance of the fact that the socialization process has a considerable impact on the educational process. The formation of a

female's identity might be affected by parenting styles that are considered to be regressive. Girls who do not get enough emotional care from their parents are more likely to experience mental stress and despair (Froerer, 2012, p. 347). According to one of the conclusions of the research, when parents do not provide their children with emotional support, such youngsters are more likely to suffer from psychological unease and poor academic performance (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Hunt, 2008). For children, especially female children, to realize their full potential, there is a pressing need to strengthen the relationships that exist within their families between their parents and themselves. In addition, research has found that Dalit women make up just 19 percent of students enrolled in higher education, but they make up 58 percent of students enrolled in senior secondary school. Because of these circumstances, they were compelled to give up working in the formal labour sector. As a direct consequence of this, an effective institutional approach, such as the training, the acquisition of practical knowledge, and the provision of free education.

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