

**Dalit Women's Educational Experience in
Higher Education**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment
of requirements for the award of degree of*

Master of Philosophy

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **“Dalit Women’s Educational Experience in Higher Education”** submitted by **Manisha** bearing **Regd. No. 17SPHL10** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Master of Philosophy in Political Science** is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance which is a Plagiarism free dissertation.

The dissertation has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, **Manisha** bearing **Regd. No. 17SPHL10** , hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Dalit Women’s Educational Experience in Higher Education**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. I. Ramabrahmam** is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my dissertation can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 History of Dalit Women Education in India	19
Chapter 3 Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Quantitative Data	60
Chapter 4 Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Qualitative studies	84
Chapter 5 Conclusion	116
Bibliography	122

List of Tables

Table 1: Category and Gender wise Literacy Rate in India 1961-2011.....	61
(all figures in %)	
Table 2: Gross Enrolment Rate at Elementary Level (I-VIII) 6-13 years.....	63
Table 3: Gross Enrolment Rate at Secondary and Senior Secondary Level.....	64
(IX-XII) 14-17 years	
Table 4: School Attendance Rates among Children Aged 5-14.....	66
Table 5: School Dropout Rates (1980-81 to 2000-01).....	68
Table 6: GER of Higher Education.....	71
Table 7: GER of Higher Education (2010-11 to 2017-18).....	72
Table 8: Enrollment for the year 2011-12.....	74
Table 9: Enrollment for the year 2017-18.....	75
Table 10: Representation of SC students in different types of universities 2017-18.....	76
Table 11: Gender Parity Index.....	78
Table 12: GPI for SCs according to level of education).....	79
Table 13: No. of SC and overall teachers according to gender.....	80
Table 14: Representation of SC teachers.....	81

List of Figures

Figure 1: Literacy Rate across caste and gender.....	62
Figure 2: School Attendance Rate trend.....	66

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIIMS- All India Institute of Medical Sciences

AISHE- All India Survey of Higher Education

AIWC- All India Women's Conference

DNA- Deoxyribonucleic Acid

DU- Delhi University

EFLU- English and Foreign Language University

GER- Gross Enrolment Ratio

GPI- Gender Parity Index

HCU- Hyderabad Central University

IIT- Indian Institute of Technology

JNU- Jawaharlal Nehru University

MANUU- Maulana Azaad National Urdu University

NSS- National Sample Survey

OBC- Other Backward Caste

OU- Osmania University

PhD- Philosophy of Doctorate

PWD- Persons with Disability

SAR- School Attendance Rate

SC-Scheduled Caste

ST-Scheduled Tribe

UGC-University Grant Commission

VC- Vice-Chancellor

DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENT

Certificate.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgment.....	iii
Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Abbreviations.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
<i>Research Objectives.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Research Questions.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Theoretical Framework.....</i>	<i>4</i>
Intersectionality.....	4
Bourdieu’s concepts of Capital, Habitus and Field.....	5
Capital.....	6
Different forms of capital.....	7
Habitus.....	10
Caste and class forming habitus.....	12
Field.....	15
<i>Chapters in the Dissertation.....</i>	<i>17</i>

History of Dalit Women Education in India.....	19
<i>Traditional period.....</i>	19
<i>Colonial period.....</i>	23
<i>Perspectives on education during the pre-independence period.....</i>	29
The Nationalist agenda of Dalit education.....	30
The Nationalist agenda of Women's education.....	34
Protection of caste and sexuality.....	36
Exclusion of Dalit women.....	38
The Anti- caste agenda of education.....	41
Philosophy of Savitribai Phule.....	42
Philosophy of Jotiba Phule.....	42
Philosophy of Ambedkar.....	47
Ambedkar on Dalit Women education.....	51
Articulation on education by Dalit women.....	52
Education for the community.....	53
Education for the individual self.....	54
Education for political participation.....	57
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	59
Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Quantitative Data.....	60
<i>Literacy Rate.....</i>	61
<i>GER at school level.....</i>	63
<i>Attendance Rate.....</i>	65
<i>Dropout Rate.....</i>	67

<i>Higher Education- Insights from AISHE and other data.....</i>	69
<i>Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education.....</i>	71
<i>Enrollment Rate according to types of Indian Universities.....</i>	73
<i>Gender Parity Index.....</i>	78
<i>Representativeness of Teachers.....</i>	79
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	81
<i>Limitations of Quantitative Data.....</i>	82
Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Qualitative studies.....	84
<i>Caste discrimination in the Higher education.....</i>	85
<i>Gender discrimination in the Higher education.....</i>	88
<i>Humiliation in the Higher education.....</i>	90
<i>The idea of Merit and caste identity.....</i>	92
<i>Gender discrimination in the family.....</i>	96
<i>Lack of Capital among Dalit women Students.....</i>	98
Lack of economic capital.....	99
Lack of cultural capital.....	100
English language.....	105
Appearances.....	106
Food.....	107
<i>Pedagogical issues in the Higher education.....</i>	108

<i>Political issues in the Higher education</i>	109
<i>Different strategies of negotiations</i>	111
<i>Conclusion</i>	114
Conclusion	116
Bibliography	122
Originality Report	130

Chapter 1

Introduction

The condition of Dalit women in India captures the attention of many academicians and activists. There is a wide range of research and studies done on the lives of Dalit women in the political, cultural, social and economic spheres (Jogdand, 1995) (D'Souza, 2009). The lives of dalit women are shaped by the complex relationship of caste, class and gender.

Dalit women are triple oppressed in terms of their caste, class and gender and are positioned at the lowest order of the societal structure (V.Kumar, 2009). They have to suffer the brunt of poverty, caste system and patriarchy. Dalit women face the problems of untouchability and caste discrimination, displacement and worker's exploitation, state violence and lack of medical and educational facilities etc.

Manorama argues that they are the most marginalized section of India is Dalit woman, as they are "Dalit among the Dalits" and "downtrodden among the downtrodden" (quoted in Channa 258). The condition of Dalit women is even worst then the Dalit men. They face caste discrimination in the society and gender discrimination within their family, thus suffer from double discrimination (Paik, 2014).

Due to their structural location they are subjected to various forms of violence and humiliation- physical and verbal, caused by patriarchy, caste system and poverty. The acts of sexual violence on Dalit women are conceptualized as caste-based violence by highlighting the inter-linkages between caste and sexual violence (Patil, 2016). They are also sexually exploited on the basis of religious rituals and traditions such as *devadasi* and *Betalsseva* (Velaskar, 2016).

Thus, the lived experiences of dalit women are qualitatively different from non-dalit upper castes women (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015). Their caste identity is underlined in the sexual oppressions and exploitation they face at the hand of upper castes community. The structure of caste system forms a complex web of challenges and problems in their lives.

Also, the autobiographies of Dalit women which talks about their lived experiences are read and analysed. Their voices in their life history and personal narratives became a knowledge source on Dalit women. Also the formation of autonomous Dalit women organizations in the late 90's was seen as a "politics of difference" (Guru, 1995) which was later argued as a standpoint for liberation of mankind (Rege, 1998).

But the analyses of Dalit women's experiences are limited to the areas or issues of sexuality, caste violence, marriage, exploitation of their labor especially in feudal agrarian economy or informal sector, or absence of their voices from both Dalit movement and Women movement. The heterogeneity among the Dalit women is least explored. The experiences of discrimination, exclusion, violence and marginalization in the educational and employment sector need attention.

Education is unequally distributed in the society. Even after the provisions of reservation and various other government policies, there is a wide disparity in educational achievement in terms of caste, class, gender, religion, and region in India. So, the study aims to focus on Dalit women relationship with the education. Being at the intersection of caste and gender, what is the relationship of Dalit women with education? What are their perceptions about education? What is their representation in all levels of education system? How do the caste and gender affects their access and participation in the higher education? What are their experiences in the educational experiences?

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to develop an understanding of the educational experiences of Dalit women in the higher education. It examines the overlapping affect of caste and gender on the Dalit women's access and participation in the higher education. Thus, the study analyses the educational experience among three levels- entry, existence and exit.

Research questions

- How the intersectionality of caste and gender shapes the educational experiences of Dalit women students in the higher education?
- What is the historical relationship of Dalits with education?
- What is Anti- caste perspective of Dalit education?

Methodology

The study follows the method of systematic review of literature to understand the educational status of Dalit women. There are several existing literature mainly empirical studies looking into the question of Dalit women's education.

The study uses both the quantitative and qualitative secondary research studies to get a broad trend of education of Dalit women at macro level and also to analyse the specific experiences in the academic and social space in the higher educational institutions. Thus, it tries to get a comprehensive view of the educational experiences of Dalit women in the higher education.

The study also includes personal narratives and blogposts from various websites and web blogs. This makes the study more nuanced and detailed.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses the intersectionality approach and Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field to analyse and explain the educational experiences of Dalit women students in the higher education.

Intersectionality

The study uses the intersectionality framework developed by Black feminist such as Crenshaw, Collins, bell hooks and others. This framework highlights the simultaneous operation of structures of oppression such as race, class gender which makes black women's experiences of encounter with law, institutions qualitatively different in the society (Crenshaw).

The intersectionality framework rejects the single axis analysis of oppression and instead argues to use the multiple axis analysis of oppression. Collins writes how various oppressions work together in producing injustice and inequality (Collins, 2002).

The conceptual tools developed to study Dalit Women such as triple oppression and double discrimination underline the importance of intersectionality framework. It highlights that the experiences of the Dalit women are shaped by the simultaneous operation of class, caste and gender. It also highlights that the category of women is not homogenous. The experiences of all women are not uniform but determined by the social location such as caste, class, religion, and region etc.

But the theorizations are centered only on the suppressed and marginalized dalit women. Ciotti (2014) argues that Dalit women as subjects of study should not be assumed as victims always. The constitution of Dalit women as 'different' and 'other' at the first step do not help us to understand the specificity of their social and ordinary life.

According to her, “such subject construction constitutes an analytical alterity which allows neither a full understanding of Dalit women’s social alterity not that of their ordinary lives and the possibility of transformation” (p. 307). She argues for “documenting and unpacking of differences” rather than assuming it (p. 307).

Thus, she argues that there should be a reconstitution of Dalit women as non-victims, and all-round persons (p. 307). It will help us to understand the experiences of Dalit women in a better way without any pre assumptions. Therefore, in order to unpack or uncover the different experiences of Dalit women students the study uses the concepts of capital, habitus and field given by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Bourdieu’s concepts of Capital, Habitus and Field

The study also uses Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, capital and field to understand the educational experiences of Dalit women in the higher education. These concepts have been used in the educational research to understand gender, class, race differences and power relations, and to analyze the impacts of these social identities in shaping the educational choices, trajectories and experiences (Reay, 2004) (Reay, 1998) (Beteille, 1991) (Horvat, 2003).

There are usually two extremely opposite viewpoints to explain the inequalities in education. One, which argues that the reasons are mainly structural problems created due to the social stratification. Second viewpoint argues that the difference is due to the difference in performance, talent or hard work by the individuals. However, both of the views are unable to capture the complexity of the phenomenon, where we find the operation of both structure and agency.

It is captured well by Bourdieu's concepts where he argues for a dialectical relationship between both. Reay (2004) argues that he talks about the "mechanisms that tend to ensure the reproduction or transformation of social structures in education" (p. 431). The phenomenon through which social inequality of caste, gender and class is reproduced in the higher educational institutions can be understood using his conceptual tools of habitus, field, and capital. The concepts are also useful to uncover the process of social exclusion and hidden forms of discrimination in educational institutions.

It helps in drawing a relationship between unequal education achievements, outcomes among different social groups. This is important for the research as it explains how the social hierarchies are reproduced in the education system and to understand how the socio-economic and educational background of Dalit women influences their educational trajectory.

Capital

Capital can be understood as certain resources or means which plays an important role in educational achievement. Bourdieu (1986) argues that the distribution of various forms of capital among individuals gets affected by the structural inequality in the society (p. 15). Therefore, different social groups will possess unequal capital in relation to each other according to their social position which will lead to unequal scholastic results among students from different and unequal social groups (p. 17).

The transmission of capital is hereditary and inter-generational, sometimes in hidden forms, so the inequality produced by it appears to be 'legitimate' or 'natural' (p. 17). It is taken for granted. It is not taken into consideration for examining inequality.

The educational inequality is considered to be result of merit or natural aptitude but Bourdieu (1986) analyzes the unequal educational achievement as the result of unequal distribution of capital among students. This helps us to deconstruct the idea of merit which articulates academic success in terms of individual merit, hard work, talent or luck (p. 17). It is against the meritocratic ideology prevalent in the society which creates the binary of dull/bright, good/bad, and worthy/unworthy. Thus, gives a perspective to understand educational inequality and disparity.

Different forms of capital

This study concentrates only on three forms of capital- economic, cultural and social capital. The economic capital includes money and income. Both cultural capital and social capital are non-economic forms of capital.

Apart from ownership of material objects and wealth, capital also entails a set of dispositions which means lifestyle, manners, behavior and speech, knowledge and access to social network. Thus, Bourdieu goes beyond considering economic investment on education as the only factor helpful educational achievement. The investment of inherited cultural capital and use of social capital are the hidden educational strategies which reproduces social inequality in the educational sphere (p. 17).

Cultural capital is “command over knowledge, skills, tastes, etc., that are a part of its distinctive way of life” (Beteille, 1991, p. 16). There are three forms of cultural capital- embodied, objectified and institutionalized form of cultural capital. The cultural capital in the embodied form exists “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17). “The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is

called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor” (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 17-18).

According to Bourdieu (1986), the embodied form of cultural capital is a set of disposition, habits, manners, behavior, and lifestyle which an individual adopts or absorbs during early days of socialization (p. 19). To incorporate this form of capital in our body and mind takes a lot of time along with other form of capital.

The embodied cultural capital thus becomes “an integral part of the person” which “cannot be transmitted instantaneously by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange” (p. 18). It is only transferred through hereditary. The other forms of capital such as economic capital, property rights etc, can be exchanged or transferred from one person to another.

It can be acquired but “cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent” (p. 18). “Cultural capital can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously” (p. 18). For example, institutionalized form of cultural capital such as academic qualifications, degrees and school certificates can be acquired from going into schools and universities (p. 20).

When a person acquires institutionalized cultural capital, then it is usually perceived as a result of the individual’s efforts. This invisibilises the role played by economic or other forms of cultural capital in helping the person to acquire those degrees. There is a relationship between institutional cultural capital and economic capital, as the former can be converted into the latter,

thus the value of the academic qualifications can be exchanged into monetary value in the labor market (p. 21).

The cultural capital in the objectified state includes objects and goods such as “pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines” (p. 17). These are called as “cultural goods”. Cultural capital in embodied and objectified form takes time and generations to accumulate (p. 15).

Social capital refers to membership to a dominant group by virtue of birth in that social group such as a family, a class or in Indian context, caste (p. 21). The membership to an institution such as a school, a college, a university, a workplace or a party also forms the social capital of an individual.

Social capital does not depend on the natural membership but the network of relationships has to be maintained through rules and strategies. In Indian context, endogamy and social prohibition on inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are the strategies “aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships” (p. 22).

Maintaining the relationships of marriages and friendships, exchange of gifts and trades on the lines of caste system, in addition to reinforcing caste system, builds stronger ties and networks among them on one hand, and prohibits establishment of any stronger relationships or close proximity with other caste groups. Such individual or collective, conscious or unconscious attempts and investments build social networks and connections (p. 22).

Thus, the social capital is the result of both the past of an individual and the concentrated efforts and initiatives in the present to build a network. But the investment to build social capital needs other capital in the form of cultural and economic capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), “the transformation of economic capital into social capital presupposes a specific labor, i.e., an

apparently gratuitous expenditure of time, attention, care, concern” (p. 25). In return, social capital gives an individual or a group of individuals some material and symbolic profits.

Therefore, the interesting thing about capital is its ability to convert itself in another form of capital. Economic capital can be converted into social capital and institutional form of cultural capital. Cultural capital can be transformed into social and economic capital. Social capital can be converted into economic capital.

Habitus

The habitus is “an internalized structure or set of structures that determines how an individual acts in and reacts to the world” (Throop & Murphy, 2012, p. 186). It is “a set of complex, diverse pre-dispositions” (Reay, 1998, p. 521). It is a “the physical embodiment of cultural capital” (Routledge, 2016).

It is formed due to the “pre-existing external structures” (Reay, 2004, p. 432) (Throop & Murphy, 2012, p. 186). In simple words, it can be understood as a subconscious understanding that develops inside us through our surroundings.

It explains that the structure and the agency are not distanced apart from each other. There is a relationship between structure and agency as they continuously shape and affect each other. The agent works according to the outside structure because the structure is somewhere situated inside it.

It is important to keep in mind that, as Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990) write, "for Bourdieu, structural properties are always embedded in everyday events." He believes that action structures structure and structure structures action. Bourdieu advocates a

dialectical relationship between structure and action that results, he argues, in a better understanding of social practice (Horvat, 2003, p. 3).

It is formed both of life opportunities, freedom, independence and constraints, restrictions, prohibitions (Reay, 2004, p. 433). It is formed by the “familial legacy and early childhood socializations” (Reay, 1998, p. 521). Along with the personal or individual history, habitus is also formed by the collective history of the social class to which an individual belong (Swartz, 2002). “Habitus is rooted in family upbringing (socialization within the family) and conditioned by one’s position in the social structure” (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 195).

The collective habitus is formed due to the history of marginalization, exploitation, oppression, domination and privileges which ranks them in a hierarchy in the society. Thus, the habitus is “generated by the social conditions of lived experience including race, ethnicity, geographical location, and gender” (Horvat, 2003, p. 1).

But it is also continuously re-formed by the new experiences and interaction in the colleges, other institutions and the people we meet. Thus, the habitus is continuously shaped by our new encounters. Reay (2004) writes that, “thus, while habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it also carries within it the genesis of new creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced” (pp. 434-435). There is enough scope and chances where habitus changes and transform itself. It loses the effects of the social conditions it was constructed in. Thus, the habitus is transformative.

It shapes the mental attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of the agent. It is the social world in the body. It is embodied. Reay (2004) writes that “Habitus as the social is inscribed in the body of the biological individual” (p. 433). So, it also guides other activities such as eating, speaking,

gesturing, standing, walking, feeling and thinking (pp. 432-433). It is the habitus that determines differential access to economic, cultural, social and psychological capital and resources among individuals of various social groups thus also affecting the actions, practices and choices of the individual (Reay, 1998, p. 527).

Caste and class forming habitus

Beteille (1991) analyzes the role of the family in the reproduction of inequality. He argues that it is the family which reproduces class and occupational inequality. The modern occupations and professions such as doctors, engineers, academicians, in other words, the service class tends to reproduce itself from one generation to another with their ability to transmit cultural capital to the next generation and use social capital for their progress. These occupations decide their high economic and social status.

These families give their children “access to very different kinds and amounts of resources” in their homes apart from wealth and income (p. 15). The transfer of cultural and social advantages is guided by “complex social and psychological processes” which provides a particular kind of atmosphere to children (p. 16). The “status and personality of the parents” forms the background of their children (p. 18). The upper middle class “adapts and retain control over a changing social environment” (p. 17). The awareness of education and career consciousness is implanted in the children at a young age (p. 17).

The parents make investment on their children’s education in terms of money, time and support. They send them to English medium-private schools and colleges where high quality infrastructure and facilities are available. In addition to this, these children are surrounded by best teachers and elite-high cultured students from rich wealthy families. They take active

participation in their schooling, college education, other trainings and future employment prospects. They develop motivation and skill among them. They have the means to afford outside help from tutors, coaches and send their children to coaching classes (p. 18).

These professional, managerial and administrative occupations acquire high social prestige and enjoy greater social esteem than other formal qualifications in the society (p. 6). The rewards of income, esteem and authority gives such service class a high position in the society (p. 13). Such families are able to acquire enormous social capital in the form of social influence, connections, and relations developed in office, associations etc.

The capital is used to seek information, trust, and recommendations in order to succeed and progress (p. 19). In this way, children from such high occupations families tend to continue be in such professions. Other low income occupations which are not highly valued in the society lack such resources failing to achieve higher mobility and thus remain lower in hierarchy.

But Beteille (1991) also argues that the caste privileges and disabilities are no more due to various reforms in Hinduism, abolishment of caste discrimination and implementation of various other acts by the Constitution of India (p. 22). The class and occupational inequality takes the place of the hierarchical structure of caste in the modern India. He argues that caste has ceased to play a role in upper levels of social hierarchy and among urban professionals and intelligentsia. Caste is only present in political mobilization and elections directing our attention to lower caste assertion in Indian politics (p. 25).

By doing so he chose to ignore the continuous existence of caste in everyday lives of Dalits in educational and employment sphere which impedes their life opportunity and progress. Also pointing to dominance and over-representation of upper castes in the sphere of education and

modern professions, Deshpande (2013) argues that, “the ‘extra-electoral’ coup effected by the upper castes through the transformation of their caste capital into modern capital – is not so well known” (p. 33).

He also argues that upper castes in India have got various privileges and advantages because of their traditional caste capital which was converted into modern form of capital. The continuous accumulation of privileges and advantages due to their caste and class location is left unquestioned and unexamined because upper castes are perceived as being “casteless”. Thus, their privileges are seen as legitimate.

According to him, the upper castes in India has “encashed its traditional caste-capital and converted it into modern forms of capital like property, higher educational credentials and strongholds in lucrative professions, this section believes itself to be ‘caste-less’ today” (Deshpande, 2013, p. 32). He also argues that there are various “concrete ways in which an upper caste identity secretes and synergises the dispositions and embodied competences that add up to that abstract term: ‘merit’” (p. 39).

Thus, the ownership of cultural capital is also linked to caste in the Indian context. But it is disguised as merit. It leads us to avoid the examination of upper caste embodiment and analyze the inequality only through class lens.

Beteille (1991) also does not focus on the intersection of the caste and class which is integral to the structure of inequality in the Indian context. “Béteille’s approach to elite social reproduction primarily as a class phenomenon disregards the intersections of class and caste and places the onus for the persistence of caste on quotas and electoral politics” (Subramanian, 2015, p. 295). Even the relationship or connection between caste and occupation is not explored. For example,

in India Dalits in higher numbers are still involved in manual scavenging whereas on the other hand, Tamil Brahmins and other upper castes dominate technical education and modern professions (Subramanian, 2015, p. 305). Thus, caste also becomes a factor responsible in the reproduction of social inequality in educational sphere (Deshpande, 2013) (Subramanian, 2015).

Field

The fields can be understood as “various social and institutional arenas” with their own functions, structure, power relations and rules which need to be followed or understood by individuals in order to succeed in that particular field like educational institution, market, society etc. (Bourdieu and ‘Habitus’). Their position in the field is determined by the amount of capital they possess and how much capital they can mobilize from that field (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 195).

The field of higher education has its own autonomous functions and structure but still it is similar to the social space as it will have its “own mechanisms for reproduction of inequality and exclusion” (Naidoo, 2004, pp. 459-460). It also provides capital in institutionalized form such as degrees, skills, certain way of speaking or writing. Here the individuals “express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kind of capital” (Bourdieu and ‘Habitus’).

Naidoo (2004) argues that the higher education is hierarchical in nature as the agents and institutions are ranked due to “unequal possession of capital in relation to other occupants” (p. 458). The rules, criteria and procedures for selection, entry and success in the higher education are decided according to the “qualities commonly ascribed to the dominant group” such as kinds of economic, cultural and social capital (p. 459). This gives a higher value to certain type of

capital displayed by the habitus of students from the dominant group than the other students (Horvat, 2003, p. 6).

For example, the capital of dominant class, caste and gender receives higher value in the higher education field. The rules of the higher education reward their English and private education, confident and fluent English language, strong family background in terms of education, wealth and support system, membership to peer group, good rapport with teachers and administration. The field of higher education also provides institutionalized form of cultural capital such as degrees, knowledge, intellect and way of speaking and writing (Naidoo, 2004, p. 459).

The habitus in a familiar or in the same field in which it is produced, will take that field for granted. It means that as it knows the rules of the field, the habitus will have no problem in navigating the field. It can succeed easily. But in an 'unfamiliar' field the habitus will be of no use. In an unfamiliar circumstances an individual therefore is unable to overcome problems and challenges, performs lower than others, cannot succeed, or takes time to learn the rules of the new field (Reay, 2004, p. 436).

In the Indian context, the structures of caste, gender and class affects the distribution of capital among individuals. The Dalit women students' habitus is formed by the intersection of their caste, class and gender hierarchy. The family and collective history of caste discrimination and exploitation, gender socialization and poverty will form their habitus which will shape their perceptions regarding higher education. They also lack enough capital which is highly valued by the higher educational institutions to navigate it and achieve academic success. Thus, their educational experiences in the higher education institutions are shaped due to the interaction of habitus, capital and field.

Chapters in the Dissertation

Chapter 1- Introduction

This chapter briefly states the research problem of the study. It lays down the research questions and objective of the study. The introduction also discusses the theoretical framework and methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2- History of Dalit Women Education in India

This chapter aims to historically trace the education of Dalit women. It studies the educational status of Dalits in the traditional and colonial period. It studies perspectives of education which are Nationalist and Anti-caste perspective of education. It focuses on how Ambedkar and Savitribai Phule theorized about the importance of education in Dalit women's lives. It also includes the voices of Dalit women which were involved in Anti-caste movement regarding their educational interests.

Chapter 3- Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Quantitative Data

This chapter studies the broader trend at the macro level to get an overall view of educational status of Dalit women in the higher education. It also looks at gross enrollment ratio and dropout rate at the school level too.

Chapter 4- Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Qualitative Data

This chapter understands the educational experience of Dalit women students in the higher education. It analyses the findings from the secondary qualitative research on Dalit women students in the higher education using the theoretical concepts of capital, habitus and field from Bourdieu.

Chapter 5- Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the findings of the above chapters. It also discusses the major arguments of the study. It highlights the limitations of the study.

Chapter 2

History of Dalit Women Education in India

The previous chapter discussed the operation of caste and gender in the lives of Dalit women. It concluded that the Dalit woman is a heterogeneous category with intersection of class, region, education etc. It also argued that the literature on Dalit women is only limited to analyzing the condition of the Dalit women in the socio-economic and political sphere. But there is literature emerging on the experiences of Dalit women in the educational sphere too.

This chapter aims to understand the history of Dalit women's education. The issue of lack of education and especially higher education among dalits and other marginalized section is not a new issue. It has been there since traditional and colonial period. Therefore, it examines the educational status of Dalit women in the traditional and colonial period. It also analyzes the various perspectives on education in relation to Dalits and women. It also aims to understand the importance of education in the lives of Dalit Women and also their hopes and aspirations from education.

Traditional period

In the traditional period education was denied to *Shudras*, *Atishudras* and women. The *varna* system divided people into four hierarchical categories which are Brahmin, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* also assigned certain fixed occupations to these *varnas*. The Brahmin was priestly class, the *Kshatriyas* were warriors, the *Vaishyas* were involved in business and trade and the *Shudras* were given the job to serve the other higher ranks. The *atishudras* were excluded from the Varna system. They were considered untouchables and polluted. They were assigned the

occupation to do menial jobs for all the *varnas*. Each *varna* has to follow the occupation assigned to them by their birth (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 70).

Therefore, Ambedkar argues that due to *varna* system the nature of the education system was domestic as it was related to developing skills regarding one's own caste occupation (Mani, 2014). The formal education was restricted to the study the Holy Scriptures such as *Vedas* and some sections were excluded from accessing it (Ambedkar, 2014b, p. 42). They could not learn the Sanskrit language and the Hindu scriptures. They could not go to school to attain formal education. Thus, the *varna* system created a strict system to keep some sections away from accumulation of wealth and knowledge.

Only the Brahmins studied the *Vedas* and also taught them to the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*. The *shudras* were not allowed to read or even hear the scriptures. The women were also not allowed to read *Vedas* (Ambedkar, 2014b, p. 43). Therefore, as Brahmins were associated with religious activities, they engaged with reading and learning the scriptures and holy books. They were qualified to become priest and conduct rituals. Thus, the higher ranked Brahmins enjoyed hegemony over the knowledge. The *shudras*, the outcastes (*atishudras*) and women were excluded from the educational sphere.

The prohibition on education was religiously sanctioned in Hinduism through *varna* system. O'Hanlon (2010) argues that Hindu religion and its values of purity and pollution gave religious authority to Brahmins over literacy, learning, education and priesthood than other communities (p. 5).

There were laws prescribing punishments to these groups if they read or heard the *Vedas*. For example, *Shudras* should be punished if they are found learning *Vedas* by cutting off their

tongue, if found listening to *Vedas* lesson their ears should be filled with hot lead, if they start teaching *Vedas* they should be killed (Ambedkar, 2014b, p. 43). Ambedkar (2014b) writes that there were punishments for Brahmins also who taught excluded groups (p. 311). So, the laws and punishments in the traditional period did not provide freedom or any educational rights to *shudras*, *atishudras* and women. Therefore, he argued that illiteracy was an integral part of Hinduism (p. 42).

Thus, denying education was not incidental but essential to reproduce the occupational rigidity and maintain the caste system. It was part of the process of ensuring the continuous appropriation of physical labour of the lower castes by the upper castes. Giving free access to education would threaten the inequalities produced by the caste system.

Velaskar (2016) argues that the caste system assigns different work to women according to their caste which also attaches different value. The upper castes women are restricted to their household but kept away of the productive work and resources which was considered “prestigious” and thus highly valued. The Brahmin and upper castes women were “assigned critical roles in the social practice of cultural superiority and preservation of caste” (p. 405).

On the other hand, the lower castes women were forced to perform sexual and productive labour for the upper castes which considered as “impure” and “degrading” and rendered them a lower social position in the society and made them unworthy of receiving knowledge (p. 402). The denial of education to the Dalit women was essential to ensure that they perform forced and sexual labour. There is continuation of such practices like *devadasis* and prostitution, worshipping of dalit goddesses in *arundathiyar* community by the upper castes patrons (S, 2013).

The “lower castes”, Dalits and women were also excluded from the educational sphere by constructing stereotypes and negative images against them. The names that *varna* system gave to the different sections of the society lead to the establishment of socio-cultural hegemony of some and impoverishment of others. The names such as *shudra*, *atishudra*, *neech* and *rakhel* meant “subhuman”, “inferior”, “impure” and “incapable” who are “fit only for slavery and drudgery” (Mani, 2014, p. 189).

Such names constructed degrading images of the so called lower castes and women. On the other hand, the names such as Brahmins and *dwija* glorified the so called higher castes as “intelligent”, “superior” and “pure”. Such names are part of an oppressive language that encourages “oppressive behaviour and practice”. It is a form of symbolic violence on the oppressed sections which humiliates, discriminates and excludes them from power positions (Mani, 2014, p. 187).

Mani (2014) calls this naming process as “cultural and linguistic manipulation” which on the other hand helped the Brahmins to monopolize the knowledge production and establish their supremacy (p. 188). He thus uncovers the relationship between naming and power and argues that such language and words were invented to devalue and degrade them. It declares that the inferiors should not be given education because they are not deserving and not capable of receiving education (p. 188).

Paik (2014) argues that there was a nexus between the State and Brahmins which also helped the Brahmin class to hold monopoly over education (p. 35). In Maharashtra, Baroda, Darbhanga, Mysore, Vijayanagaram, Jaipur, Patiala, Jammu states exclusively supported Brahmin education. Ambedkar argues that during Peshwa rule in Maharashtra right to education was restricted to the higher castes. Bajirao II, a Chitpavan Brahman ruler, supported many Brahmin scholars

financially for their religious and Sanskrit education (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 5). Shobhana (2019) argues that it became a “state duty” for the Peshwa government to finance Brahmins education. It invested so much on fellowships and scholarships like *Dakshina* which was given to almost 40000 to 60000 Brahmins. “Under the Peshwa rule, the annual expenditure on *Dakshinas* was never less than ten lakhs of rupees. In 1758, during Peshwa Bajirao, the amount peaked as high as rupees eighteen lakhs” (Shobhana, 2019).

On the other hand, under the rule of the Peshwa government the lower castes and the untouchables were excluded from the spheres of education. Ambedkar (2014b) writes that,

It must be admitted that under the Peshwa's Government the Depressed classes were entirely out of the pale of education. They did not find a place in any idea of state education, for the simple reason that the Peshwa's Government was a theocracy based upon the canons of Manu, according to which the Shudras and Atishudras (classes corresponding to the Backward classes of the Education department), if they had any right of life, liberty and property, had certainly no right to education (p. 409).

So, in the traditional period the Dalits, lower castes and women were excluded from receiving education through the hierarchical and hereditary occupational structure called as *varna* system, formulation of the discriminatory laws, the threat of brutal physical punishments, and perpetuation of symbolic violence on them through the construction of the oppressive language.

Colonial period

In the colonial period, the British introduced modern education in India. The marginalized sections especially Dalits and non-Brahmins held great hopes of emancipation from the British government (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 409). Unlike traditional education which focused on religious

texts but the modern education was to be secular. It was expected to be open to all and thus had the potential to break the earlier inequality of access to education.

But in the colonial period too, the monopoly of Brahmin and upper castes on the education continued. They dominated the educational institutions and made full use of employment opportunities. The religious supremacy of Brahmin class and their traditional engagement with learning and education helped them to occupy various administrative civil services, clerical and professional occupations in the British government (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 7).

They were the most skilled and qualified castes among all due to the accumulation of cultural capital required for learning and modern employment. O'Hanlon (2010) argues that, "the old association of the higher castes with the skills of literacy gave them a much greater flexibility and readiness to exploit these new possibilities than was possessed by any of western India's agricultural or urban lower castes" (p. 7).

But such skills were absent among lower castes and class because of their engagement with other occupations and professions. Also as already observed in the previous section, the deliberate and systematic exclusion of *shudras*, *ati-shudras*, women and lower class prevented them from being educationally advanced class. They did not possess any skill or capital necessary for high class administrative and clerical jobs. They were used as agricultural laborers and workers with the continuation of their caste occupations.

Ambedkar (2014a) writes that the British government started the mass education since 1813 but the results were not positive. He examines the data of Hunter commission established in 1882 to study the Indian education system. The data shows that in 1881-82 out of total students present in the primary education only 0.87% were lower castes Hindus compared to 20.17% of only

Brahmins and 64.69% of other upper castes Hindus. Out of total students present in the middle schools, there were only 0.14% of the lower castes in comparison to 30.70% of Brahmins. There were no lower castes present in high schools and collegiate education in comparison to 40.29% of Brahmins out of total population in the high schools and 50% in the collegiate education (p. 416). Dalits were also absent from the modern jobs and civil services.

The colonial state brought modern western English education in India to civilize the “backward” Indians. Though they started the mass education across caste and class but did very less in order to actively support Dalits. The principle of equal and free education for all could not come out of the theory (Paik, 2014, pp. 36-42). It was not implemented properly in practice. What was the attitude or belief of British towards Dalits when they started mass education?

Paik (2014) argues that the attitude of the British government was ambivalent towards Dalits education (p. 37). She argues that the government was ‘divided’ in their opinions regarding Dalit education. Though they aimed for mass education but also wanted to control its distribution. British government was “cautious and conservative about interfering with the social order or initiating any educational or social reform among Dalits” (p. 38).

Also some of the British officials were against the entry of Dalits in the schools. Ambedkar (2014a) argues that when the British government started the education for natives, it was only restricted to and preserved for the higher castes and classes (p. 408). He examines the ‘Report of the Board of Education of the Bombay Presidency for the year 1850-51’¹ and analyses the nature of the British government towards Dalit education. The government strictly limited the education

¹ In the statement concerning the state of education of the Depressed Classes in the Bombay Presidency on behalf of the Bahishkrita Hitakarini Sabha (Depressed Classes Institute of Bombay) to the Indian Statutory Commission

to wealthy and upper castes “who can afford to pay for it, and to youths of unusual intelligence” (p. 414).

The British government was not ready to educate the Dalits. Paik argues that it believed in the trickle-down effect of education (Paik, 2014). They wanted to give education to upper class and castes first. British officers like Mountstuart Elphinstone used to justify the British Government’s decision to keep lower castes away from education. He argues that,

...it is to be feared that if our system of education first took root among them it would never spread further, and we might find ourselves at the head of a new class, superior to the rest in useful knowledge, but hated and despised by the castes to whom these new attainment would always induce us to prefer them (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 415).

The British government allotted very less funds to education and there were almost no special funds for marginalized sections. Due to this there was no specific agenda or model of educating the masses. But the British government continued supporting the Brahmin and upper castes education. They endorsed English education for a certain section which possessed “leisure and natural influence” which consisted of the powerful classes such as “the landowners and jaghirdars”, higher employees of Government”, “commercial class” and “Brahmins” (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 412). Mountstuart Elphinstone continued sponsoring the *Dakshina* scholarship for Brahmins and upper castes to encourage them to learn English along with Sanskrit language (Chandra, 2013, p. 29).

Even the poor higher castes were included in the education system. The Report of the Board of Education of the Bombay Presidency for the year 1850-51 declared that “...a very wide door should be opened to the children of the poor higher castes...” (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 414). It also

defined the poor Brahmin in accordance with the ideology of Brahminism as “...a respectable character and worthy indeed of veneration according to the Brahmanical theory, which considers him as one who has renounced all the pleasures and temptations of life for the cultivation of learning and undisturbed meditation on the Deity” (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 413).

So, according to the British government the capacity or ability to learn and educate was defined or determined by the occupation of the community. They declared the Brahmins as the most influential class which is capable of learning and receiving superior kind of education (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 414). They believed that the Brahmins possess “godliness” and “good learning” among them which makes them capable for receiving education. .

Paik (2014) argues that there were interlinks between state policies and Brahmanical pedagogical practices as the British officials and administrative also shared some of the views of the Brahmins and upper castes of India (p. 35). They also followed the caste prejudices and ideology of the purity and pollution advocated by the Brahminism (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 415).

The caste rules and beliefs got support from British as they sometimes did not resist or oppose such views and sometimes supported and shared such beliefs. The British government also believed in the misconceptions and stereotypes created by the Brahmins about lower castes that they lack any “liking or aptitude for education” (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 127). Like Brahmins, they also believed that Dalits themselves do not want to study and are indifferent to the education (Paik, 2014, p. 40).

The British followed the upper castes and Brahmins because they did not want to antagonize the Brahmins and upper castes Hindu communities and their religious sentiments (Paik, 2014, p. 40). Even the Hunter commission of 1882 admitted that British government did not take up any strict

and strong action to promote Dalit education due to the “desires of the upper castes to keep the low castes in a state of subjugation and servility” (Rao, 2010, p. 142).

The Brahmanical ideology of purity and pollution strictly prohibited the Dalits to sit, touch, or eat with Brahmin and upper caste children as it will pollute the latter. Therefore, the school committees and British officials thought that the Brahmins and other upper castes will take their kids out from the schools out of fear of pollution. The British did not want to hurt the feelings of the Brahmins and upper castes (Paik, 2014, p. 41).

Paik (2014) argues that both the Brahmins and colonial state created negative image of “Dalit intelligence, cultural competencies and affective sensibilities” and thus opposed education for them (p. 47). The Brahmins discriminated against the Dalits by arguing that they lack important cultural traits needed for education. They also argued that the Dalits should not be allowed to sit in the classroom with upper castes students as they possess “unclean habits” and “unpolished manners” (p. 43).

Another reason why there were less numbers of students from lower castes even after extension of education to masses is the dominance of Brahmin teachers. In the ballad titled “*Brahman Teachers in the Education Department*” Phule talks about the

dominance of Brahmins in the educational institutions of the British administration, their discouragement of the lower castes from educating themselves, and their hypocrisy in parading their social progressiveness before the British in order to win favours and employment while clinging in private to their idolatrous religious practices and their unregenerate caste pride (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 136).

Paik (2014) writes that many Municipal and government schools opposed the entry of Dalit children (p. 35). They faced violence and physical abuse when they tried to enter schools (p. 47). There were efforts to prevent interaction and maintain physical distance from Dalit children they were made to sit behind everyone, at the door of the classroom or even outside the classroom (p. 48). Even separate teachers were allotted for them (p. 59). There were separate *lotas* for Dalits to drink water (p. 56).

Inside the classroom the Brahmin and upper castes school teachers discriminated against the lower castes students which led them to drop out and hesitate or avoid going to classrooms. Jotiba Phule writes in the ballad that the Brahmin school teachers explained and taught their own castes students very well when they do not understand. But students from lower castes were punished and beaten up (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 214). They also sent “misleading reports of the educational aptitude” of lower castes children (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 215).

Perspectives on education during the pre-independence period

This section looks into the history of education in pre-Independence India. It discusses various perspectives on education which affected the education of marginalized communities such as Dalits and women. This section also looks at how the perspective on women education excluded the Dalit women. Their historical struggle for education includes their struggle against the groups such as the orthodox Brahmins, Nationalists, and feminists.

Rao (2016) writes about the various perspectives on education in India and classifies them into “old” and “new” perspectives of education. Two important perspectives that she categorizes as ‘old’ are imperialist and nationalist (pp. 2-3). She argues that these perspective are built on the binaries of East/West, colonizer/colonized, and superior/inferior. The imperialist perspective on

education treated Indians as “savage” and “uncivilized” and thus incapable of receiving any knowledge. The nationalist perspective on education argued that the British rejected the presence of any form of knowledge among the Indians and imposed European knowledge on them. In the similar way, they also asserted their “native superiority” but on the other hand they also excluded the marginalized sections of the society such as Dalits and women from the educational sphere (p. 30). The views of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on education are majorly discussed and analyzed as representative of the nationalist model of education by scholars such as Rao and Paik.

According to Rao (2016), the “new” perspective articulated the interests of the oppressed groups of the society who were excluded from the sphere of education such as poor, women, and Dalits. In this way, it brought out the actual facts and re-wrote the history chronologically (p. 30). The thoughts of Phule and Ambedkar can be discussed as “new” perspective on education as they worked and struggled for the education of lower castes and women.

The Nationalist agenda of Dalit education

With the entry of Dalit children in primary and middle schools, we also see efforts to strengthen caste distinction from orthodox Brahmins and nationalist elite side. Some actively opposed the democratization of education among marginalized groups.

Their project of education was exclusive to Brahmins and exclusionary to Dalits. Chatterjee (1993) argues that the nationalist elite protected the “inner” domain from the interference of the colonial state to claim sovereignty, cultural difference and distinct cultural identity. According to him, the “inner” domain comprises of religious and cultural domain of the Indian social fabric. The interventions and reforms of the colonial state were restricted to the “outer” domain such as statecraft, economics, trade and technology.

The education was considered as inner domain. It was associated with the inner domain of religion and social system. In the educational sphere, we see that the nationalist elite resisted the colonial state to bring any drastic or radical policies such as equal education for all the masses across castes and gender because such policies had a potential of changing or at least challenging the social ideology and social structure of the Hindu society. Any educational reforms were understood as “coercion” by the upper castes (Paik, 2014, p. 41).

The dominant groups like nationalists opposed the modernization of marginalized sections like Dalits and women. The leaders who were fighting for independence of India also participated in perpetuating the oppressive ideology to stop the emancipation of the marginalized (Rao, 2016, p. 36). The nationalists like Tilak, S. H. Chiplunkar and M. B. Namjoshi dominated the municipalities, local bodies, and educational boards. Therefore, their opposition regarding the education of the Dalits and women was so strong that it hampered the process of Dalit education in many ways. Due to their strong influence, the compulsory education bill proposed by Gokhale was not passed and many reformers, Brahmins activists, and British government hesitated to actively work for Dalit and women education (Paik, 2014) (Rao, 2010).

There were oppositions to Dalits learning modern scientific knowledge (Paik, 2014). Tilak opposed the compulsory education for Dalits and lower castes like artisan and peasant communities because according to him it was “unsuited and useless” for them (quoted in Paik, p. 121). The modern education would do ‘more harm than good to them’ (quoted in Rao, 2010, p. 139). Instead Tilak defended the education according to the castes of the student (Paik, 2014, p. 46) (Rao, 2010, p. 139).

He endorsed Technical schools for lower castes and class where they should be taught “ordinary trades like those of a carpenter, blacksmith, mason and tailor” (Rao, 2010, p. 139). He argued that they should be taught “only those subjects which would be necessary for their living” (quoted in Rao, 2010, p. 139). Tilak even argued that the dalits and non-brahmins will not be happy and content in some alien setting, studying new subjects like geography, history, mathematics, and doing some other new occupation. He said that we should not take them out from their “sphere” (quoted in Rao, 2010, p. 139). The curriculum of Basic education prescribed by Gandhi included knowledge forms of lower castes such as spinning wheel which did not introduce anything new to lower castes which helps them to overcome their undignified life (Rao, 2010, p. 29).

There were oppositions to providing English education to Dalits and women. Tilak argued that English education can have negative influence on women and dalits (Rao, 2010, p. 140). He criticized the English education by arguing that the nature of English education is problematic as it undermines or attacks the old and traditional beliefs and institutions (Rao, 2010, p. 154). In Bengal too, the dominant castes and class opposed English education to dalits (Rao, 2010, p. 140).

There were debates around the issue of expanding higher education to dalits and non-Brahmins. Reformers like Ranade asked the government to lower down the standard of the university syllabus to provide non-Brahmins and Dalits easy access to the higher education (Rao, 2010, p. 144). Ambedkar also appealed for few major changes in the examination system in order to facilitate marginalized students opportunity to study in universities (Ambedkar, 2014a, p. 50). But Tilak strongly opposed democratization of higher education and supported maintenance of its exclusivity to small population of higher castes and class. He argued that “the natives of high

social order who are both intelligent and imaginative can understand English authors as correctly and enter into their spirit as fully as ordinary Englishman” (quoted in Rao, 2010, p. 144).

Like the traditional period, Tilak was also against Brahmin reformers like Ranade who defied caste ideology and supported the Dalit and women education (Rao, 2010, p. 144). He aimed for the production of Brahmins who are aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the society and do not demand extreme reforms (Rao, 2010, p. 147). He argued “the students should have strong Hindu religious moorings” (quoted in Rao, 2010, p. 144). Thus, he wanted to reinforce the caste morality through the education system.

Tilak’s criticism of democratization of education was based on the caste ideology of distributing the assets of modernity according to caste. The modern sphere does not belong to dalits and non-Brahmins but the benefits can only be enjoyed by the upper castes and Brahmins. The dalits and non-Brahmins belong to old-traditional caste society from where they should not be brought out.

The upper castes feared that the non-Brahmins and Dalits would stop doing their caste occupations and start boycotting them. Such arguments were made to push back them to the margins. The non-Brahmins and dalits would start struggling for modern employment. Due to the modern values and the ideology of anti-caste movement the lower castes started realizing the importance of the education and modern jobs. Many upper castes people “were afraid that the lower castes would demand higher wages, equality, and even the jobs so dearly held by the Bhadrak” (Rao, 2010, p. 140).

It was necessary for the nationalists to control the dissemination of the education among masses and make it exclusive for the dominant caste and class in order to protect their class- caste interests and privileges (Rao, 2010, p. 171). The orthodox Brahmins opposed the education for

Dalits and lower castes because the diffusion of education among all can attack their “traditional power, monopoly over education and administrative employment” (Paik, 2014, p. 44).

The fear of dalits defying the caste restrictions led to social anxiety among the elites. Tilak even argued that the entry of various lower castes in the educational sphere is dangerous as it will encourage them to revolt against the caste system (Paik, 2014, p. 46). The opposition to dalit education was aimed to curb the assertiveness of the non-Brahmins and the reforms of the reformers. Instead the education system was aimed to make students believe in the traditional socio-religious beliefs and institutions like caste system and its various regressive practices like untouchability, marriage in same caste etc and its ideology.

The nationalists rejected the English education and the western knowledge. They claimed their superiority from the west on the basis of the presence of an indigenous knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedas. They endorsed and supported teaching of Sanskrit and the religious scriptures like Vedas in schools and colleges. This led to the hegemony of dominant groups such as Brahmins, upper castes and elite class as Sanskrit and religious knowledge was not known to the masses. So, they do not want to recognize that such knowledge production process and institutions excluded the Dalits and non-Brahmins. Thus, Rao (2016) argues that the nationalist endorsed the “artificially drawn” binaries like East and West, tradition and modernity in order to claim their own supremacy (p. 3).

The Nationalist agenda of Women’s education

The Nationalist elite opposed the education of the women along with the education of Dalits. One of the reasons of denying education to women was the patriarchal set up of the Indian household which restricted women to the private sphere. The public sphere, politics, social work,

employment was traditionally meant for men. Their main job was only to take care of the home and serve their family members. The idea that women are naturally trained to take care of home and rearing the child led to their exclusion from the public sphere. So, education was deemed unnecessary for them.

When the education was extended to women in the pre-independence period, the nationalists opposed providing western and modern education to women. Their agenda of women's education was conservative and orthodox. Tilak argued that, "The object of female education is not to make the women equal of man" (quoted in Rao, 2008, p. 141). Through the agenda of women's education the nationalists reinforced the traditional gender-specific roles of women in the society. Paik argues that, "upper-caste men saw women's education, paradoxically, as enabling women to better fulfil their traditional roles, rather than creating new or different ones" (Paik, 2014, p. 129).

The Nationalists endorsed 'gender- differentiated' curriculum for boys and girls (Paik, 2014, p. 117). According to them, the aim of the education was to train women for marriage and motherhood. The women education should help them make "good wives" and "good mothers" and "good daughter-in-law" for their family (Paik, 2014, p. 114) (Rao, 2008). Therefore, the curriculum comprised of subjects which gives them knowledge related to domestic and household work. The subjects like Home Science, moral education, embroidery, sewing, cooking, home decoration, and child rearing were considered best for women. Thus, for the nationalists education system became a tool to enhance women's "feminine" qualities (Paik, 2014, p. 117).

The Nationalists stated that, “Our women should be taught to—educated to—love the Home more than anything else” (Rao, 2008, p. 146). They also emphasized that the home and domesticity should be given priority in the courses and syllabus of women’s university. They expressed that, “Our society would welcome the New University with a whole heart, if the Hindu Home is given consideration it deserves in the formulation of its courses” (Rao, 2008, p. 145).

Another reason of historical exclusion of women from the educational sphere is that they were perceived as intellectually inferior and weak in comparison to men. This perception shaped the curriculum of women’s education in the colonial period (Paik, 2014, p. 117). It is generally argued that “masculine” and “difficult” subjects like Science, Mathematics, English, History etc. need understanding and learning and women are capable only of “cramming” and mugging up. So, women should be taught only those subjects which are “feminine”, ‘not appropriate for boys’, ‘easy’, and ‘low standard’ (Gautam, 2015). Tilak suggested that women education should include “vernacular, moral science, Sanskrit, sanitation, and needlework” (Paik, 2014, p. 118).

Therefore, the women were allowed only to read mythology, literature, novels and story books in their leisure times. The curriculum designed for women included instructions on “reading, writing, a little arithmetic for daily budgeting, hygiene, needlework, tailoring, embroidery and some English” (Paik, 2014, p. 117).

Protection of caste and sexuality

According to the Nationalists, women education is connected with the prestige of the household. The Nationalists emphasized on teaching women moral and religious education. Such religious texts were included in their curriculum so that they understand their religion, caste, and customs and do not get corrupted.

Paik (2014) writes that, “For upper castes, the protection of girls’ chastity and hence their families’ and communities’ honour was certainly more important than the developments of their minds” (p. 139). Thus, the prime aim of the education was to curb their sexuality and discipline them so that they do not transgress the boundaries of the home, caste and religion (p. 114).

The responsibility of protecting the traditions, culture and caste of their community is also attached to their education. They were made the agents to transfer the religious and moral values to the future generations. For them, “The end of education is to produce self-respecting and practical men and women imbued with a pride in the race and religion and the community to which they belong and who will seek to base all reform on a sound knowledge of the past and the present” (Rao, 2008, p. 147).

There was also a fear among Nationalists that the secular education will ruin the women’s mind and they will start revolting against the system of patriarchy and caste. Rao (2008) argues that, “Tilak opposed imparting English education to women, as he felt it would enable them to not only question patriarchal constraints, but also gain the confidence to intervene in public spaces” (p. 143). He denied women English education because it would “de-womanising” impact on them (Rao, 2010, p. 105). He also viewed that it will “ruin their precious traditional virtues and make them immoral and insubordinate” (Paik, 2014, p. 113).

The Nationalists also viewed that through education women should be made aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the nation too. Paik (2014) argues that nationalist connected women’s education with the nation’s progress (p. 114). They viewed that women’s service towards nation is to become perfect and good housewives and mothers. Women should work hard towards nurturing children and making them patriots and good citizen. Paik argues that in

this way nationalists created the image of women as “mothers of nation” (p. 115). But women were not the active agents in the nation making (p. 115).

The Nationalist agenda of education thus wanted to develop feminine virtues such as “beauty, mellowness, moderation” and also “self-sacrifice, devotion to their husband and patience” among women through education (Paik, 2014, pp. 126-127). So, the public-private division, sexual division of labor and traditional roles associated with the gender leads to systematic exclusion of women from education.

Exclusion of Dalit women

The oppositions to Dalits and women education impacted the education of the Dalit women. Though women in general were discouraged from taking up education but there were very less Dalit women who got education in the colonial period. Pawar and Moon (2008) writes that according to the 1921 Census of India, in the districts of Maharashtra like Ahmednagar, East Khandesh, Nashik, Pune, Satara, and Sholapur, out of the population of over 4 lakh in the Mahar caste only 925 Mahar women were literate. Among the total population of above 1 lakh Maangs, only 236 Maang women were literate (p. 59). In the region of C.P. (Berar), out of total 450,000 Chambhar women, only 386 women were literate (p. 59).

In practice, the women’s education was restricted to the higher castes and classes women. There were very less number of Dalit women in the educational institutes. Sivakumar (1982) focuses on the education in the state of Karnataka in the British period. He argues that the Brahmin women took benefit of the women’s education much faster than other women. In 1911-16, out of total population in various schools in Karnataka there were 75.65% of Brahmin women students. There were only 5.71% of non-Brahmin women enrolled in the school (p. 23). The Ambil Girls’

School in Mysore was dominated by the Brahmin women who were “daughters or other relatives of the managers of the institution” (p. 12). In colleges also Brahmin women were more in number. In the Ambil College of Mysore 10 out of 16 students were Brahmin women (p. 23).

Sivakumar (1982) argues that there was absence of Dalit women in the college education even in as late as 1946-47. On the other hand, the population of Brahmin women grew in colleges and universities. Out of total 96 women students 65 students belonged to Brahmin castes. Rest of the students came from sections like Muslim, Christian and other non-Brahmin castes like Lingayat, Maratha, Vaisya etc (p. 31).

The Dalit women were also discriminated from the schools by upper castes teachers which discouraged them to continue their education. In the schools, Dalit girls were not allowed to study and sit together with upper castes women. Rao (2008) argues that, “Tilak attacked the lone girls’ high school in Poona ‘for teaching secular subjects and housing high class girls as well as low class girls’” (p. 141). Even the radical social reformers, who actively supported women’s education, discriminated the Dalit women from entering in the schools opened for girls. One of the examples is the girls’ school opened by social reformer D.D. Karve. He did not encourage the education of the Dalit girls in the school as he thought that “it would harm his cause, which was to fight against the traditional ill-treatment of high-caste widows” (Pawar & Moon, 2008, p. 27).

Paik (2014) argues that the nationalist agenda of women’s education excluded Dalit women. It restricted education to the middle class and upper caste Hindu women as it was “first formulated within the context of middle-class domesticity” (p. 114). It does not includes the needs of the poor and lower castes women of the Indian society. Some nationalists argued that, “education

was not necessary for women of all classes and castes because some castes and classes were ‘fit’ to do only certain kinds of jobs” (p. 121).

She argues that the Nationalist imagination of ideal woman was in opposition to the western and the lower caste woman. They imagined Indian woman as an “upper caste, chaste, virtuous, married and asexual” woman (p. 116). This kind of ideal womanhood was at the center of the nationalist model of women’s education. The ideal Indian woman has to “nurture her upper-caste cultural values and maintain her distance from lower-class/caste, ‘vulgar’ women who were different and who performed menial tasks” (p. 116).

Paik (2014) also discusses the role or contributions of Indian woman movement in the nineteenth century in encouraging women’s education. She argues that they failed to include Dalit women’s educational concerns in the women’s education. She gives the example of All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) endorsing the idea of equality and sisterhood but also rejecting the issues of inclusion of Dalit women in legislators, and councils through reservations, separate issues and interests, and also rejecting the term ‘depressed classes’. The intersections of class, caste and gender were not considered by the movement and they considered all women as “depressed” (p. 134).

Some of the upper castes women activists also endorsed the nationalist’s ideology of differentiated curriculum or education for different castes women. They made distinction between education and employment according to castes and classes. They believed that lower castes women are inferior who should not be taught the same subjects and should not work as upper castes. Manakabai Laad emphasized that “labouring in textile mills, selling vegetables and working as housemaids was the work of *khalchya pratichya*, a ‘lower quality’ of woman, and not

of high-quality women” (Paik, 2014, p. 135). Some upper caste women activist also expressed that the upper castes women should not mingle or interact with Dalit workers.

The Anti- caste agenda of education

The section understands the anti-caste agenda of education for Dalits and Dalit women. The section analyses thoughts of some important anti-caste leaders on education like Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule and B.R. Ambedkar. The anti-caste movement aimed to make formal education accessible to the excluded sections of the society and thus changed the demography of schools and colleges. “Anti-caste movements not only tried to change the social profile of those who could enter schools but also subverted the philosophical premise of education” (NCDHR-NDMJ, 2015, p. 11).

Paik (2014) argues that anti-caste movement struggled for education at two levels- external and internal. The external struggle was against agents of oppression like Brahmins and colonial state and the internal fight was against the inner consciousness and mindset of Dalits (p. 65).

For anti-caste leaders like Phule and Ambedkar the problem of exclusion in education is not an isolated one but is linked with ideological, social and political exclusion. In the same way, the struggle for education was also a political, civil and social struggle. She writes that for Ambedkar “the question of Dalit education was part of a larger set of processes. It was embedded in power relations and was inextricably connected with social relations, the local economy, religious ideas, ideological battles and political movements” (p. 72).

Their ideas originated from the vantage point of the oppressed. The philosophy of anti-caste leaders talks about the democratisation of education in the Indian society so that it reaches to the person who acquires the lower position in the society (Paik, 2014, p. 65). Their philosophy not

only impacted the lives of Dalits and inspired them to educate themselves but also introduced a new discourse on the importance of education.

There were hopes, promises and aspirations from education that it is “a way out from everyday violations of their human dignity” (Paik, 2014, p. 67). It emphasized that apart from gaining material benefits from education, education also helps in gaining self-reliance dignity and self-respect for both individuals and community. The struggle to achieve equal educational rights was also a “struggle for self-improvement, competency, self-reliance, honour, justice, egalitarian citizenship and political power” (Paik, 2014, p. 102). Thus, education on the other hand is also seen as a tool to remove all kinds of inequalities and hierarchies from the society.

Philosophy of Savitribai Phule

Savitribai Phule contribution to the formal education of women and lower caste is very important in the anti-caste movement. She along with Jotiba Phule and Fatima Sheikh opened school named ‘indigenous library’ in 1848 challenging the opposition from all sections of the society. Her philosophy of education can be understood from her poems many of which have directly focused on education. She talks about the importance of education in the lives of marginalized in her poems. In the poem titled “*Go, Get Education*” She appeals them choose English education over Hindu scriptures written by Brahmins to become wise, knowledgeable, self-reliant, industrious and rich. She argues that the pursuit of education by lower castes will “end misery of the oppressed and forsaken”. The prohibitions on education will break and thus it will lead to the annihilation of the caste system. In the poem “*The Plight of the Shudras*” she writes that “For education grants humanity, freeing one from an animal-like existence” (Navayan, 2015).

Philosophy of Jotiba Phule

The scholarship on Phule have analyzed and interpreted his various works to understand his views on the importance of education and knowledge. Phule felt that education was very important and necessary especially for the emancipation of the lower castes, lower class and women in the society. But saying this also reduces Phule's thought to a particular section or group. Rege (2010) argues that his thoughts on education are significant as it explains the power-knowledge nexus in the society and also in "everyday cultural practices, myths and history" (p. 93). He exposes the dominance of a particular group that is Brahmins and upper castes in education. He deconstructs the Brahmanical ideology to reveal that it benefits only a particular section so *Shudra-Atishudra* should stop following it. He also gives us an "alternative pedagogy" of teaching and learning and made education liberatory for all (Rege, 2010) (Paik, 2014).

Rege (2010) argues that Phule uncovers the "complex linkages between religious-cultural and educational authority" (p. 93). He has explained in his various writings how the traditional ruling and dominant castes such as Brahmins have monopolized the educational institutions and government services (Phule & Deshpande, 2002). He argues that this happened because they took all the benefit of the educational opportunity given by the British government and also systematically excluded lower castes by discriminating against them on the basis of caste prejudices. Therefore, Phule emphasized on the education of lower castes, lower class and females as these groups were socially oppressed and educationally not advanced in comparison to Brahmins.

Along with criticizing the traditional Brahmanical hegemony and its ideology of keeping lower castes, and women out of the education and knowledge, Phule also exposed the British government for not giving much importance to the education of the masses which means lower class, lower castes and women. Phule criticized the government to neglect the lower castes and

lower classes from the society. He presented a memorial titled “Memorial Addressed to the Education Commission” in 1882 in front of the Education Commission known as the Hunter Commission to put forward “inclusive policies on education” (Rege, 2010, p. 93). But his demands were not accepted.

He asked the British government to invest more money on the primary education than higher education. He argued that in the higher education students are mainly from the upper class and upper castes of the society. The investment on the higher education, the provisions of scholarships, allocating more funds and facilities to higher education by the British government thus leads to the sole encouragement of the higher castes and class. It is a boost to the already established or progressed social group. Phule criticized the British for their philosophy of “giving superior education to the superior classes” (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 104). He also argues that the educational advancement of the Brahmins has led to their monopoly on all the higher offices under British government (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 104).

Whereas on the other hand the lower castes and lower class population is absent from the higher education but also excluded from the primary education schools due to poverty and caste prejudice and discrimination at the hands of the upper castes (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 106). Thus, Phule argued that “a taste for learning” has to be created among Dalits and lower castes, lower class (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 106). The higher castes such as Brahmin and higher class such as business class are already taking benefit of the education system.

Therefore, he asked the government to focus on the primary education of the masses in order to spread education among the *shudras* and *atishudras* (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 104). Phule demanded for separate and special schools for them. He demanded for “an increase in the

number of schools, special inducements in the shape of the scholarships and half-yearly or annual prizes” to encourage lower castes and class to go to schools (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 106).

He also demanded to open separate government schools in rural areas far from the main towns where the population of Mahars and Mangs are high. He asked the commission to focus on the female primary education too (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 112). He thinks that women like *shudras* and *atishudras* are also oppressed by the Brahmanical system (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, p. 15). He recognizes the gender inequality in the society along with the caste inequality. Therefore, he focuses on the widow remarriage, female education, and reforms in family and marriage system. Jotiba Phule opened a school for girls along with Savitribai Phule and Fatima Sheikh in 1848 and mixed schools for Mahars and Mangs.

In the case of higher education, Phule demanded that the government-aid is highly important for lower castes and class. According to him, the government should place the higher education “within easy reach of all”, maintain the “neutrality”, and improve the system of scholarship by giving it to those classes “amongst whom the education has made no progress” (Phule & Deshpande, 2002, pp. 111-112).

Phule wrote a play in Marathi titled “*Trutiya Ratna*” in 1855. This play is important to understand his philosophy of education. The play shows how the Brahmins manufactured superstitions and myths in order to threaten and exploit the poor, illiterate and ignorant cultivators. The Brahmins looted money, and extract various kinds of service from them. It shows that the Brahmins controlled the mind of the other castes. The play on the other hand, shows the Christian missionary as empowering the cultivators by educating them about the truth

God and the society. They also revealed how they are exploited and deceived by the Brahmins since ages due to lack of literacy and knowledge. The play ends by talking about the significance of educating oneself (O'Hanlon, 2010, p. 124).

O'Hanlon (2010) writes that the title "*trutiya ratna*" means the third jewel or the third eye. It has two meanings. One meaning is the third eye of the Hindu lord Shiva. The second meaning of the title is that the "new modes of perception and new ideas and information with which to understand Indian society" developed due to getting education (p. 123). Paik (2014) argues that "metaphorically, the *trutiya ratna* symbolised the opening of the third eye and signified a mythically destructive ability to annihilate the prevailing power-knowledge nexus" (p. 76). Rege (2010) argues that Phule "reimagines education therefore as the *Trutiya Ratna* (third eye) that has the possibilities to enable the oppressed to understand and transforms the relation between power and knowledge" (p. 93).

Alexander in the article "Phule's tribute to those who opened his 'third eye'" writes that

Third jewel is a metaphor for critical, rational thought unrestrained by fear of the socially dominant classes. The jewel is more than mere literacy, or the mere ability to read and write. It is the ability to interpret life and what it reveals to you for yourself, without coercion or deception. The jewel, the proverbial third eye, is flowering of the intellect enthralled for ages by the mythologies and superstitions. It is the lifeline for dignified living as a respectable human being (Alexander, 2018).

For Phule education helps in building a critical consciousness or critical thinking among all. It helps in opening of minds and development of a rational thought and critical thinking leading to

rejection of religious texts such as *Shastras*, myths, superstitions and traditional socio-cultural practices which has chained the oppressed “lower castes” and women since ages.

It will help them to question the inequality, hierarchy, oppression and slave mentality among them. Thus, the spread of education among the oppressed enables them to understand the prevailing “knowledge” which is manufactured by the powerful and dominant class. Also education will help the marginalized “lower castes” in the caste system to seek the truth, question the superiority of upper castes and their inferiority and also the caste system itself. For Phule education is the only means of change of power structure and social transformation (Begari, 2010, p. 404).

Philosophy of Ambedkar

This sections looks into the philosophy of Ambedkar on education. It seeks to understand why he gave much importance to the education especially for Dalits and women. This section also looks at his views on Dalit women and their social status in the society. His philosophy on education is highly neglected by Indian Academics (Velaskar, 2012) (Rege, 2010). He, like other anti-caste philosophers and leaders, viewed education as liberatory and emancipatory for all especially for marginalized section of the society.

He writes that “Knowledge is Power in every field of life. The Scheduled Castes will not attain their goal of freedom and liberty until they drink deep of all knowledge” (Ambedkar, 2014c, p. 72). He argues that education provides them with a sense of freedom and equality. According to Velaskar, Ambedkar sought education as it is important for “the inner transformation of dalit society, and its thought, beliefs, behaviour and mindset. It was both a means to an end and also an end in itself” (Velaskar, 2012, p. 252). Ambedkar emphasized on the moral significance of

education in the lives of Dalits as it would lead to them overcoming “inferiority complex, unfreedom, dependency and servility” (Velaskar, 2012, p. 253).

Ambedkar (2014a) envisioned the Government to play an important role in the diffusion of the education among the marginalized sections. He demanded cheap, free and equal education for all from the Government. He argues that, “Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one. The Education Department is not a department which can be treated on the basis of quid pro quo. Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent” (pp. 40-41).

He further writes that the Government should provide easy access to higher education to the lower castes and classes at the time when children from these sections have just started to get into schools and colleges. He argues in the Bombay Legislature in 1927 that,

I urge this plea because I feel that we are arriving at a stage when the lower orders of society are just getting into the high schools, middle schools and colleges, and the policy of this department therefore ought to be to make higher education as cheap to the lower classes as it can possibly be made (pp. 40-41).

Ambedkar not only focused on sending Dalits boys and girls to the government and municipal school, but also demanded opening of other important facilities like hostels and library. Like Phule, he also emphasized on “cultivation of knowledge” among them. According to Ambedkar (2014a) the hostel accommodation will keep them away from “evil influences and surroundings” and “undesirable circumstances” (p. 44). Such facilities will also provide them “proper direction” and “effective inspection” to lead their education career (p. 44).

Ambedkar (2014c) founded the People's Education Society in 1945 in Mumbai to promote higher education among dalits. It was established to provide "special facilities in the matter of admissions, freeships, scholarships and hostel accommodation" (p. 443). But the degree colleges opened by this society were open to all the communities. The society organized various colleges in Bombay, Aurangabad, Pune, Wadala, Riagad; high schools in Mumbai, Aurangabad, Nanded, Solapur; and hostels in Pandharpur, Mumbai, Raigad (pp. 544-545).

Ambedkar (2014a) followed the principle of 'favoured treatment' to provide special assistance to the lower castes and classes (p. 42). He also supported the idea of representation of various marginalized communities in the university classroom, administration and other legislative bodies. While discussing the Bombay University Act Amendment Bill in the Bombay legislature 1927 he raised the issue of representation of the marginalized sections such as Dalits and other backwards castes in the Senate of the Bombay University which is the legislative body of a university (p. 50). He argued that the representation of marginalized section in the legislative bodies is important in order to safeguard their own rights and not be dependent on the higher castes and classes.

He also raised important questions on the Indian examination system. He criticized the policy of raising the standard or difficulty level of examination by arguing that it is not going to change the quality or standard of the education system (p. 50). Also he argues that the university examination system has negative impact on the enrollment rate of the marginalized sections in the university.

He argues that, "Examination is something quite different from education, but in the name of raising the standard of education, they are making the examinations so impossible and so severe

that the backward communities which have hitherto not had the chance of entering the portals of the University are absolutely kept out” (p. 50).

So, he wanted to make university accessible to all including depressed classes and backward classes which aim to disseminate the “highest education” (p. 61). He writes that, “...education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight. We may forego material benefits, we may forego material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forego our right and opportunity to reap the benefit of the highest education to the fullest extent” (p. 63).

Like Phule, Ambedkar also argues that education is important for Dalits to challenge the oppression they face. He emphasized that the entry of oppressed from lower to higher level of educational institutions will “change the historically determined relations of domination and subordination” (Velaskar, 2012, p. 253). He also believed that the education will help them to destroy the oppressive structure of the society and construct a new social order (Velaskar, 2012, p. 245).

Paik (2014) argues that in Ambedkar's view the education is the “prerequisite for annihilating caste and for political awakening and power” (p. 84). According to him, the Dalits will bring this social change only after getting education as it will “free their thought and allow them to analyse critically the religious-cultural-educational-social power hierarchy-that is, the Brahman Raj-and work towards dismantling it” (p. 86).

Ambedkar envisioned a modern education that would be open and accessible to all in opposition to the Brahmanical knowledge system which is discriminatory and exclusive in nature. The traditional education system thus helps the privileged and dominant group to increase/grow their privileges and maintain their social or political hegemony in the society. Therefore, it is

necessary for oppressed to enter the educational system for equal representation and also to change its nature.

Ambedkar's agenda of education focused on changing the structure of the society. Velaskar (2012) argues that he aimed at "using education to create a new moral and social conscience" (p. 252). Salagare (2018) argues that Ambedkar considered democratization of education as "the necessary precondition for the reconstruction of the society on the principles of equality and justice" (Salagare, 2018).

Ambedkar on Dalit Women education

Ambedkar (2014d) writes that, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved" (p. 282). He asked Dalit women to become aware of the importance of education and take responsibility for education of the Dalit children. He appeals them to "give education to your children. Instil ambition in them. Inculcate on their minds that they are destined to be great. Remove from them all inferiority complex" (p. 282).

The educational philosophy of Ambedkar regarding Dalit women emphasized on defining new social and political roles for them. Velaskar (2012) argues that he did not restrict Dalit women to the private sphere of domesticity like nationalists and conservatives. Instead he converted home and community into the sites of political action. He encouraged women to take active participation in the educational, political and social sphere. He appealed them to become political agents of modernity and development by instilling in the minds of young generations the values of self-respect, dignity, equality and rationality (p. 265).

Ambedkar wanted Dalit women to become important agents of changing the structure of the society. Velaskar (2012) argues that Ambedkar sought for Dalit women's active participation in

the anti-caste movement and develop its ideology of fight against caste system. They should also teach other Dalits about the importance of educational rights and freedom (p. 260). Ambedkar emphasized on importance of education for Dalit women as it will help them to critique and resist against the “social and cultural domination of caste and Hinduism” (p. 265).

The Dalit women should take up the role of social and community workers. They should raise awareness about women centric social issues like child marriages, untouchability, caste occupation, prostitution, superstition, rituals and traditions. They should appeal others to boycott such old traditions. Velaskar (2012) argues that “he challenged widely prevalent Brahminical notions of gendered spheres, constructions of ‘ideal’ womanhood and their nationalist reconstructions” (p. 255). He imagined Dalit women as “enlightened citizenship aimed at social transformation” which was “opposed to the dominant ideal of an enlightened domesticity for women that would preserve the purity and conjugality of Hindu culture and home” (pp. 264-265).

Articulation on education by Dalit women

There is some scholarship documenting the views of Dalit and other lower caste women on the importance of education in the lives of marginalized sections especially women. Dalit women talked about their sufferings, everyday oppression and also the demand to get education. They talked about the denial of education and other public services to them by the hands of oppressors including the upper castes women. Tulsabai Bandasode argued that “education was in fact more important for Dalit girls than for upper-caste girls” because “...due to Dalit women’s lack of education, upper caste women kept them at a distinct distance” (Paik, 2014, p. 109). Kumari Rukmini Kotangale argued that “due to lack of education we are denied in all places, and when

we complain to the municipality and the government about it, nobody pays attention to us and our opinions” (Paik, 2014, p. 122).

Education for the community

The spread of education among any oppressed section will lead to its emancipation and get equal status in the society. In the case of Dalit community too, the education was deemed important due to its emancipatory potential. It will lead to upward mobility of Dalit community in economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. It is important for the improvement, nurturing, and advancement of the Dalit community (Paik, 2014, p. 124).

Paik (2014) argues that education was important for Dalit women as they are ‘doubly burdened’ by the task of both ‘self-formation’ and ‘community development’ (p. 111). They have to become modern equal citizens and also impart wisdom to children and make their future. She includes the views of Manoramabai who argues that, “...without women’s education the community cannot advance because they make up half of its body. Women’s education is in fact more important than that of men. A women shoulders the responsibility of her household and children and hence an educated women is more competent than an uneducated one” (p. 123).

Velaskar (2012) includes the views of Indirabai Patel, an activist, also talked about the double responsibility of the Dalit women. She spoke in the Dalit Mahila Federation in 1942 that,

Women are way behind men in education. If we do not help the men in their work, we will be an obstacle to the progress of the community. That is why we need women’s education. At the same time, the world is changing rapidly. We have to survive, so we also have to change. We have this double responsibility (p. 263).

Dalit women also connected their educational development and success with the development of the entire nation. Manoramabai further argued that, " ...unless the bahun samaj [masses] are educated on a wider scale our nation will not change on social, religious, or political lines" (Paik, 2014, p. 123).

Education for the individual self

Paik (2014) argues that the modern education for Dalits was important to 'remake' and 'refashion' not only the Dalit community but also the individual self (pp. 124-125). So, apart from the community development, the education was a tool to come out of the 'stigmatized selfhood' and generate 'individuality' and 'personal identity' too (p. 125). Apart from gaining economic benefit out of education, Dalit women also considered education as a tool for the development of values such as dignity, self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance among the oppressed community (p. 123).

Velaskar (2012) includes the views of Mainatai Bhole who spoke at Maharashtra Dalit Mahila Parishad in 1938 that,

...To the dalit woman who has always worked (outside the home), the idea that work will bring liberation is strange. In urban areas, better-off middleclass women have just begun working. Widows need to earn their livelihood and therefore need vocational education. Education must bring self-respect, self-reliance, and freedom... (p. 261).

Paik (2014) argues that the Dalit women rejected the patriarchal values and codes of conduct for women which were upheld by the orthodox Brahmins and elite nationalists. She writes that Dalit women activists rejected "the lofty upper-caste, middle-class ideals of *saundarya* (beauty),

vaibhav (wealth and prosperity), *streedharma* (moral codes for women), and the ‘softer’ virtues of beauty, compassion and submission” (p. 124).

Instead they and appealed to develop such strong virtues and ‘inner resources’ like self-respect, dignity, self-reliance through education (p. 124). Mainatai Bhole argues that, “...Earlier reformers herded sheep from atop a camel, gave superficial messages regarding education, cleanliness, and neatness (to us). The purpose of education is self-respect and promotion of egalitarianism, not trivial benefit. Humanism, not personal gain, is our goal” (Velaskar, 2012, p. 260).

Paik (2014) also argued that unlike upper castes women, Dalit woman’s thought on woman education goes beyond connecting women education to the ‘traditional’, ‘familial’ and ‘feminine’ roles for women (p. 130).

Velaskar (2012) argues that the Dalit woman thought on education was not restricted to the learning domestic work, household chores like ‘cooking, sewing, childrearing, weaving, home remedies’ etc. Along with gender equality, they also associated the education with annihilation of caste and class inequality and oppressive Hindu religion (p. 259).

She further argues that, “the [Dalit women] activists implored women to give up superstition and ritual, to reject dogma and to adopt reason. They encouraged women to repudiate demeaning caste-ascribed occupations and village duties, and self-destructive Hindu customs such as child marriage” (p. 259).

Velaskar (2012) argues that Dalit women activists in their awareness programmes always compared their social and educational status with the upper-caste women. It was a like a “...message to dalit women being to emulate or compete with them and to gain equal status” (p.

261). A Dalit women activist named Venubai Jadhav spoke in Maharashtra Dalit Parishad Mahad about the status of upper castes women and the need for education in Dalit women's lives. She said that, "...It is upper-caste women who are progressing today, who are securing education and well-paying positions. They are not considered subhuman. We are far behind ... the first thing we must get is education" (p. 261).

Anusayabai Kamble calls out the real nature of Brahman and other upper castes-classes which oppose the women education in public but send their daughters to schools and even colleges. She said that,

Although the Brahmans and other so-called higher-caste and –class people at times seem to hinder women's education, in actual practice they never keep their women away from education....This can be gauged from the increasing activities of the Bharat Mahila Vidyapeeth [Karve's Indian Women's University, established in 1916]. What they want is that their daughters should pursue and profit from whatever education they like. Why will they then want to spend the municipality funds on the non-Brahman and the excluded community's education? (Paik, 2014, p. 124).

Thus, in this way it can be observed that the Dalit women activists tried to appeal to the Dalit community to open their eyes and minds to accept the education of women and also to make continuous effort for it. Anusayabai Kamble appealed the entire Dalit community that,

...Thus, in these times, we should not sit idle, but *eksaarakhi dhadpad karoon* [consistently struggle all the time] to execute the *pavitra kaayadaa* [pure law] of compulsory primary education, make our *bhaavi pidhi* [future generations] drink

shikshaamrut [the elixir of education], and clear their path in the journey toward *unnatishikhar* [the peak of advancement] (Paik, 2014, p. 124).

They also tried to educate the Dalit men not to copy/imitate the Brahmin patriarchal values such as imposing restrictions on women and prevent them from learning. They appealed Dalit community to support the compulsory education equally for both men and women. Sharda Shevale, another Dalit women appealed to the wider Dalit community that, “We should discard the belief that education spoils girls and parent[s] should resolve to educate their girls as much as the Brahmin girls” (Velaskar, 2012, p. 259).

Education for political participation

Apart from the social role given to the education, Dalit women also emphasized the political role of the education. The education was also important to understand the political struggle of Dalit community and to enable them to work for the community. Velaskar (2012) writes that the, “Education became the site for rejecting caste morality and for asserting the right to progress and develop” (p. 260). She further argues that, “The goals were to change caste and family conditions and to revolutionise young minds” (p. 260).

Various Dalit women educated themselves and later became teachers, activists, and social workers etc. They joined and participated in the political struggle of Dalit community (Velaskar, 2012) (Pawar & Moon, 2008). The education of Dalit women is connected to their increase participation in the anti-caste movement.

Velaskar (2012) discusses the views of Dalit women on the importance of politics and political participation in their lives. Divabai Bhosle, an activist, appealed that, “...Women should become

members of the Independent Labour Party [this was the first political party started by Ambedkar]. They should overcome their shyness and become public speakers” (p. 262).

Another activist Mukta Sarvagod argued that,

...We are trampled upon in the name of religion, and have suffered thousands of years of cruel tyranny. Our social status will be determined totally by our politics. There is no alternative to politics... We need to cultivate our intellect. Lacking this, we would be impoverished to the core... That is why we must all begin with education (Velaskar, 2012, p. 262).

Pawar and Moon (2008) creates an exhaustive list of Dalit women who were involved in political activism and Ambedkarite movement, social work and teaching. Some Dalit women teachers and activists opened schools too. For example, they write about Jaibai Chaudhari, a Mahar woman, who became teacher and later in 1924 opened a school named Chokhamela Kanyashaala in Nagpur (p. 208). There were 125 girls studying in her school in 1945 (p. 209). Anjanibai Deshbhratar opened a hostel for Dalit and orphaned girls to encourage their education (p. 212).

Various Dalit women organizations also emphasized on importance of education for Dalit women. The All-India Depressed Classes Women’s Conference passed many resolutions for women and their rights, and also focused on the women from depressed classes. The second session of the conference was held in 1942 at Nagpur. The conference passed the resolution on education of the depressed class women along with other important issues such as changes in the divorce law and polygamy, improvement of the economic condition of female workers, labor laws, and reservation for representation of the depressed class women in legislatures (Ambedkar, 2014d, p. 280).

The conference highlighted that there is high level of illiteracy and low educational status among the depressed class women. It demanded for some special provisions from the provincial government to spread education among the depressed section of the women and combat poverty which restricts them to access education such as compulsory primary education, scholarships for secondary and higher education, and construction of the separate hostels for them in each province (Ambedkar, 2014d, p. 280).

Conclusion

The chapter discusses the exclusion of Dalits and Dalit women from education in traditional, colonial period. It tries to understand the process of exclusion by discussing the ideology and attitude of both the Brahmins, colonial state and nationalist leaders towards Dalit education. The chapter also understands the hopes and aspirations of Dalits and anti-caste leaders from modern education that it will lead to a casteless and egalitarian society. It also examines how the anti-caste conception of education was different then the Brahmanical agenda of education which only focused on the accumulation of knowledge (NCDHR-NDMJ, 2015, p. 11).

The anti-caste agenda of education focused on acquiring equal citizenship, rights, freedom, self-respect and dignity. Where on one hand, the anti-caste leaders like Savitribai Phule, Ambedkar, and Jotiba Phule favored English education for Dalits, other nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Tilak prescribed traditional forms of knowledge with which lower castes were already familiar. This chapter is important in the sense that it forms a background to the historical struggle of Dalits and Dalit women to achieve education. The next chapter examines whether modern education lived up to that hope by looking at the experience of Dalit women in the present time. It looks at their experience through the lens of intersectionality of caste and gender.

Chapter 3

Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Quantitative Data

The previous chapter examined the relationship of Dalits with education in the traditional and colonial period. It found that Dalits were deliberately excluded from any pursuit of knowledge by Brahmins and upper castes. Though in the colonial period the British government is given credit for making attempts to include Dalits in the formal education system, it also followed the Brahmanical practices to keep Dalits away from education for a long time.

The previous chapter also understood the hopes and aspirations of Dalits and especially Dalit women from the education. They saw education as a modern tool to emancipate and liberate them from the inequality and oppression surrounding them.

This chapter examines the educational status of Dalits in the post-independence period when constitutional provision of reservation was started with the objective of including those people who had been kept out of the domain of knowledge for centuries. It ensured the entry of Dalits in the educational institutes for the first time.

It examines the quantitative data on the educational status of Dalits and its analysis by scholars in detail. It looks at literacy rate, Gross enrollment ratio and attendance rate and drop-out rate at school. It then goes onto examine the access of Dalit women to the higher education. An analysis of these macro level indicators will help us to understand the broad patterns and trends. Since category-wise and gender-wise break up is available, it will help us to understand whether caste and gender have an impact of these indicators and to what degree.

Literacy Rate

A person is considered literate if the person can read, write and understand in any language. While being literate and being educated are not synonymous, literacy is linked with education. Thus, the literacy rate is an important indicator of the progress of a society and a community. Table 1 compares literacy rate in India, from 1961 to 2011, of total population and of Scheduled Caste population, subdivided on the basis of gender.

Table 1: Category and Gender wise Literacy Rate in India 1961-2011 (all figures in %)

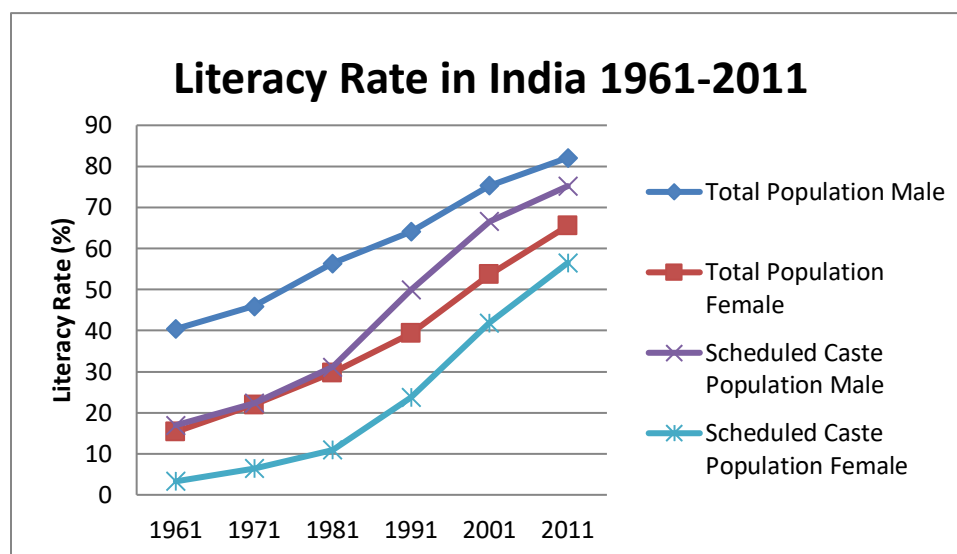
Year	Literacy Rate (Overall) (%)			Literacy Rate (Scheduled Caste) (%)			Non- SCs/STs (%)	Gap
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total		
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3	16.96	3.29	10.27	27.91	17.64
1971	45.96	21.91	34.45	22.36	6.44	14.67	33.80	19.13
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57	31.12	10.93	21.38	41.30	19.92
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	49.91	23.76	37.41	57.69	20.28
2001	75.3	53.7	64.8	66.61	41.9	54.69	68.81	14.11
2011	82.1	65.5	74	75.2	56.5	66.1	-	-

Source: Table No. 2 in (Dhende, 2017) and last two columns from Table 10.1 in (Thorat, 2009, p. 98)

This table shows that literacy in India has grown substantially from 28.30% in 1961 to 74% in 2011. However, we find that the literacy rate among the SC has remained substantially lower than the overall percentage throughout. An intersection of caste and gender is clearly visible in

the data that the SC females had lower literacy (56.5%) than both SC males (75.2%) and overall female (65.5%).

Figure 1: Literacy Rate across caste and gender



While Dhende (2017) compares the literacy of SCs to the total, Thorat (2009) shows the difference between SCs and non- SCs/STs. This is a clearer reflection of the disparity since comparing with total will underestimate the difference. Another point that must be taken note of is that non-SCs/STs would also include Muslims and OBCs, who are also lacking in education. Hence, the actual over representation of the upper castes would be even higher.

Thorat (2009) also analyses the variation with gender between 1991 and 2001. He writes,

In 1991, the male literacy rate for SCs stood at 49.9 per cent, which increased to 66.6 per cent in 2001. Similarly, the literacy rates for SC females stood at 23.8 per cent and 41.9 per cent, respectively. The literacy rates for the non-SC/ST females rose from 44.8 per cent to 58.2 percent during the same period. The growth of literate SC females was observed to be higher than that of non-SC/ST females. However, the gender gap among

the SC population, remains significantly higher as compared to the non-SC/ST population, especially in the urban areas, owing largely to their multiple exclusions and deprivation. (p. 98)

Figure 1 shows the clear difference in the literacy rate across caste and gender. While the rate is increasing for all over decades, the lag of Dalit women in literacy continues to be large. This shows that access to basic literacy is also influenced by the person's caste and gender identity. Similar trend is observed in the Gross Enrolment Ratio.

GER at school level

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Rate at Elementary Level (I-VIII) 6-13 years

Year	All Categories			Scheduled Caste		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1990-91	90.3	65.9	78.6	85.1	50.8	68.4
2000-01	90.3	72.4	81.6	97.3	75.5	86.8
2005-06	98.5	91	94.9	109.5	93.7	102
2010-11	104.5	103.3	103.9	116.9	116.5	116.7
2015-16	94.5	99.6	96.9	105.3	110.8	107.9

Source: Compiled from Table 29 of Educational Stats at a Glance (2018, pp. 28-32)

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Rate at Secondary and Senior Secondary Level (IX-XII) 14-17 years

Year	All Categories			Scheduled Caste		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2001-02	38.2	27.7	33.3	37.2	26.9	32.6
2005-06	44.6	35.8	40.4	41.6	30.9	36.4
2010-11	55.7	48.5	52.5	57.3	52.1	54.9
2015-16	67.6	68.7	68.1	70.1	72.7	71.4

Source: Compiled from Table 29 of Educational Stats at a Glance (2018, pp. 28-32)

One interesting thing in this table is that the value of GER goes beyond 100 in some cases. This happens to due to the very definition of GER. GER is “Number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education” (UNESCO). According to an explanation provided by World Bank “it (GER) includes students whose age exceeds the official age group (e.g. repeaters). Thus, if there is late enrollment, early enrollment, or repetition, the total enrollment can exceed the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education – leading to ratios greater than 100 percent” (World Bank). Thus, there are limitations in the concept of GER itself. Net Enrolment Ratio, which would exclude overage and underage students, is a better indicator, but it is not calculated in India. In this context, let us see what insights the data on GER offers to us.

In Table 2, we find that GER is 1990-91 is much higher for all categories than for Scheduled Castes. This indicates the lower entry of SCs into elementary education. Subsequently, 2000-01 onwards we find that SCs have a much higher GER compared to all. Similar trend is observed in

Table 3 as well. How do we understand this change? One possible explanation lies in the above definition of GER. When GER crosses 100, it indicates that there are many cases of late enrolment, early enrolment or repetition. Early enrolment is unlikely to be the prime cause of such drastic rise. It is more likely that those SCs who didn't get education at the right time entered school late. It is also likely that many SCs may have failed to clear the exam and had to repeat in school. Thus, the higher GER of SCs may not be a reflection of greater participation of SCs but a sign of repetitions or late enrolments. The lack of such a dramatic rise in the overall category might be a reflection of lack of repetitions and late enrolments.

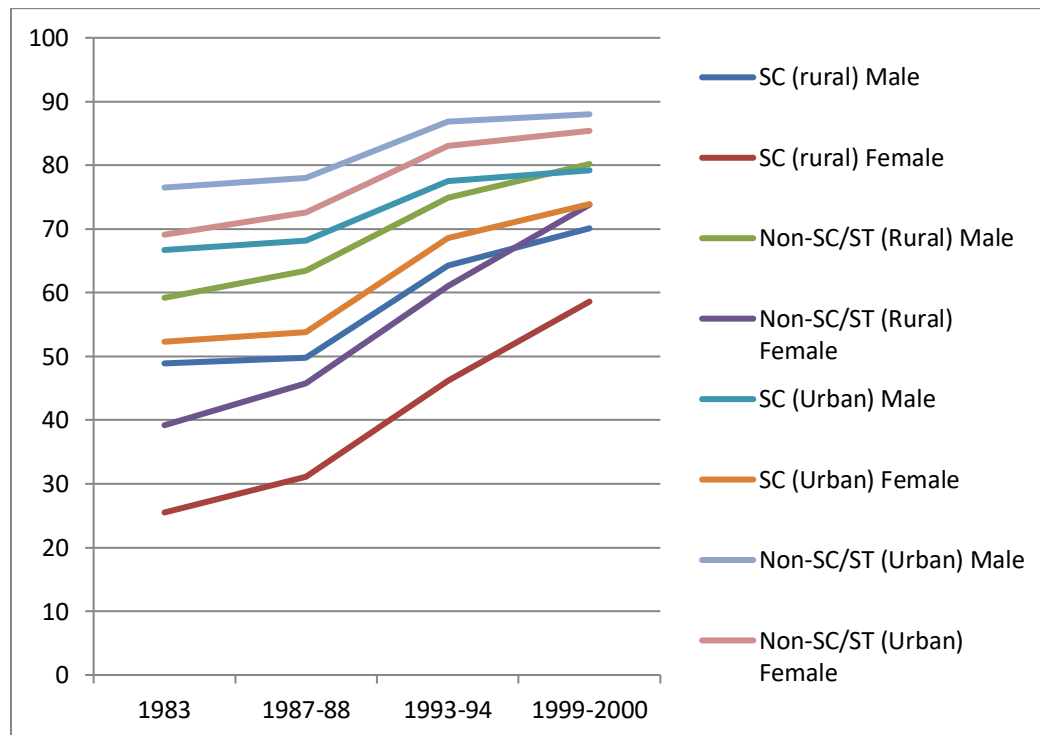
Attendance Rate

While enrolment of students has increased across identities, enrolment itself is not enough of an indicator of the participation of the students. As we have seen above, GER has its limitations in measuring participation. Arguing that GER ends up overestimating enrolment since it does not take into account whether a child attends school or not, Thorat (2009) analyzed attendance rate for a better indication (p. 101). Thorat's analysis shows (in Table 10.5, not included here) that in the year 2001, the level of attendance is lower among SCs in all the age groups. In the age group of 15-19, the attendance in college among non-SC/ST is 5.9% while it is 2.9% in SCs. In the age group of 20-24, the attendance in college for non-SC/ST is 9.6% while it is just 5.3% in SCs.

Table 4: School Attendance Rates among Children Aged 5-14

Year	SC (rural)		Non-SC/ST (Rural)		SC (Urban)		Non-SC/ST (Urban)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1983	48.9	25.5	59.2	39.2	66.7	52.3	76.5	69.1
1987-88	49.8	31.1	63.4	45.8	68.2	53.8	78	72.6
1993-94	64.3	46.2	74.9	61	77.5	68.6	86.8	83
1999-2000	70.1	58.6	80.2	73.8	79.2	73.9	88	85.4

Source: Table 10.6 in (Thorat, 2009, p. 102)

Figure 2: School Attendance Rate trend

We find the following trend in the attendance rate in declining order- non SC/ST male, non SC/ST female, SC Male and SC Female. This is reflected in both rural and urban areas. Lower attendance rate indicates constraints on education while higher attendance rate indicates lower burdens. Thus, we can say that non-SC/ST males have the least burdens and most opportunities while SC Females have the most burdens and lowest opportunities.

Table 4 shows that there are Urban and Rural differences among SC Males and Females as well. For example, in 1999-2000, SAR (School Attendance Rate) was higher in urban areas (79.2% for SC boys and 73.9% for SC girls) than in the rural areas (70.1% in SC boys and 58.6% for SC girls). In fact, the lag between urban and rural is evident for all categories. Interestingly, non-SC/ST Rural Male has greater attendance than SC Urban Female. This indicates that an upper caste man in rural areas has lesser constraints than a Dalit woman in urban areas. The complex functioning of intersections is evident from this.

Dropout Rate

We have already seen that enrolment doesn't necessarily mean positive participation by looking at the level of attendance. Another important phenomenon is that of dropouts from education. Many students drop out of school without finishing their education at different levels. Dropouts are rarely willful choices but mostly driven due to constraints. Looking at the category wise trend of dropouts becomes important in this context.

Table 5 shows the school dropout rates upto the Class X. In 1980-81, the dropout rate (I-X) for all communities was 82.5%, which was lower than dropout rate among SCs (86.9%). While the dropout rate for all communities has declined to 66% in 2000-01, it is still 72.1% among SCs. Thus, more number of SC students dropout from education.

Table 5: School Dropout Rates (1980-81 to 2000-01)

Years	All Communities			SCs		
	I-V	I-VIII	I-X	I-V	I-VIII	I-X
1980-81	58.7	72.7	82.5	60.2	76.8	86.9
1985-86	47.6	64.4	77.6	52.5	72.5	81.4
1990-91	42.6	60.9	71.3	49.4	67.8	77.7
1995-96	42.1	58.8	69.6	45.7	67	77.7
2000-01	39	54.6	66	45.2	60.7	72.1

Source: Table 10.7 (Thorat, 2009, p. 103)

The dropout for SC Females is higher than SC Male students. Pandita (2015) writes “During the period of study (2001-02 to 2010-11), compared to 51.41 per cent SC male students, 52.16 per cent SC female students dropped out” (p. 112). She argues that while economic status of SCs is one of the factors behind higher dropouts, there are several other factors like: difficult for a first generation learner to appreciate the importance of education, illiteracy of parents, treating girl child as a burden, early marriage, rearing and caring of the younger siblings, pushing younger children in doing odd jobs and to work as child labors to support their family and tendency of psychological weakness (pp. 113-114).

The low literacy rate, lower enrollment and attendance ratio and higher drop-out ratio among SC male and female in the school both reflects the inequality in education at the different levels of schooling. Thus, fewer SC (especially female) students are entering into schools compared to others. They are also attending less than others and dropping out at a greater rate. Although the data does not answer why this is so, it can be understood that this is likely to be the result of

constraints and not an outcome of choice. This is a clear manifestation of inequality working in the school education. This also impacts their access and participation in the higher education. The lower enrollment ratio and high drop-out rate in the high school logically means the percentage of SC students able to access higher education will be less in comparison to the higher castes groups. In other words, towards the end of school education, there are fewer SC students (especially females) compared to other groups. Thus, fewer of them will be entering into higher education.

Higher Education- Insights from AISHE and other data

This section looks at the Dalit women access to the higher education in terms of Gross Enrollment Ratio and Gender Parity Index. It also looks at access to higher education according to the type of Indian university and educational institutes. It also looks at the category wise representation of teachers in the higher education.

The literature on assessing the inequalities in the higher education suggests that the caste and gender inequality still persist at all level of education- primary, secondary and higher education (Nambissan & Rao, 2013) (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008).

Chauhan (2008) argues that there has been a significant increase in the enrollment rate among Dalits but they are still under-represented in the higher education in comparison to the non-SC/ST population. He analyzed the course wise enrollment among SC, ST and non-SC/ST population and found that the enrollment of SC students in general courses from 1978 to 2005 increased from 6.88% to 9.86% which was less than 86.45% of other non-SC/ST population (p. 223).

He also discusses the SC enrollment in the professional higher education which is also less than their share in the population. In 2004-05, there were only 9.84% of SC students in all professional, 8.51% in Engineering/technology course, 11.53% in Medicine, 12.91% in Education, 9.66% in Polytechnic, 6.17% in Research (p. 224).

Tilak (2015) examines the Gross enrollment ratio and completion of higher education from the NSS data from 1983 to 2010. But he argues that in the higher education the educational disparity on the basis of caste, gender, religion and region has decreased significantly (p. 216). He finds that there has been an increase of 12% to 15% in the gross enrollment of SC and ST which is higher than the 3% growth experienced by the non-scheduled population (p. 212). But such differences in the improvement rate can be the result of the lower starting point of the former than the latter.

If we look at the reports of All India Survey of Higher Education which shows the gross enrollment of students from different sections of the society in higher education, we find that the increase in the enrollment rate has happened overall among all categories of students.

Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education

Table 6: GER of Higher Education

Year	General Category			Scheduled Caste		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2001-02	9.28	6.71	8.07	7.67	3.64	5.76
2002-03	10.3	7.47	8.97	8	3.73	5.97
2003-04	10.59	7.65	9.21	8.34	4.34	6.44
2004-05	11.58	8.17	9.97	8.1	5.2	6.72
2005-06	13.54	9.35	11.35	10.14	6.4	8.37
2006-07	14.53	10.2	12.39	11.52	6.96	9.35
2007-08	15.87	11.05	13.58	13.79	9.08	11.62
2008-09	16.1	11.3	13.8	13.2	8.6	11
2009-10	17.1	12.7	15	13	9	11.1

Source: GER of SC and General Category students in Higher Education in India (18 to 23 years age group) from Table no. 3 (Dhende, 2017, p. 348)

But there is a continued wide disparity along the lines of caste and gender. Table 7 compares the gender-wise GER of SC students with that of General students (non SC/ST) between the years 2001-02 to 2009-10. It finds that the GER for general male students (17.1%) was almost twice of SC Females (9%) in 2009-10. The GER of general females (12.7%) and SC males (13%) was also much higher than SC Females.

Analysing the GER in the higher education, Thorat (2009) notes that, “For instance, in 2003–04, as against the overall average of 11 per cent for females, the GER was 3.2 per cent for ST

females, followed by 5.6 per cent for SC females, 8.7 per cent for OBC females and 20 per cent for other females. Thus, the GER of SC females was lower by more than three times compared with higher-caste females” (p. 107). John (2012) also argues that “an even greater gap exists among women from different groups than among men” which is the “interlocking effects of other structures of discrimination and exclusion” such as caste, religion and region. Gender does not work alone (p. 215).

Table 7: GER of Higher Education (2010-11 to 2017-18)

Year	All Categories			Scheduled Caste		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2010-11	20.8	17.9	19.4	14.6	12.3	13.5
2011-12	22.1	19.4	20.8	15.8	13.9	14.9
2012-13	22.7	20.1	21.5	16.9	15	16
2013-14	23.9	23	22	17.7	16.4	17.1
2014-15	25.3	24.3	23.2	20	18.2	19.1
2015-16	25.4	24.5	23.5	20.8	19	19.9
2016-17	26	25.2	24.5	21.8	20.2	21.1
2017-18	26.3	25.4	25.8	22.2	21.4	21.8

Source: Compiled from ‘Table 47. Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education during last 8 years’ from AISHE 2017-18 (2018, p. T 47)

Table 8 compares the gender-wise GER of SC students with that of overall GER between the years 2010-11 to 2017-18. Here too we see the same trend. The disparity along the lines of caste and gender is clearly evident in the difference in the GER. The Dalit women access to higher education is increased significantly over the years from a GER of 12.3% in 2010-11 to 21.4% in

2017-18. It is almost equal to GER of Dalit men i.e. 22.2% in 2017-18. But it is still less than the GER for total male (26.3%) and total female (25.4%) in 2017-18 (All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, 2018).

Desai and Kulkarni (2008) argue that though enrollment rate has increased among Dalits, the probability of completing graduation is low among them in comparison to upper castes students (p. 12). In 1999-2000, the percentage of college completion among upper caste Hindu men increased from 8.91% to 14.41%. In comparison to this, there were only 2.18% Dalit men who completed college in 1983 which just increased to 4.83% in 1999-2000. So, the college completion rate is still very low among Dalit men (p. 5).

If we look at the intersection of caste and gender, we can find similar pattern among Dalit women. The college graduation percentage slightly increased from 0.46% in 1983 to 1.67% in 1999-2000 among Dalit women. The upper caste Hindu women have significant higher percentage of college completion than Dalit women from 4.21% in 1983 to 9.09% in 1999-2000 (p. 4).

Desai and Kulkarni (2008) argue that it is due to the problems such as caste discrimination and social exclusion that “even upper-class dalits fail to achieve their educational potential” in the higher education (p. 15).

Enrollment Rate according to types of Indian Universities

If we look at the enrollment rate in the various types of Indian Universities, the unreserved category women are overrepresented as per their population, while the SC Women are underrepresented as per their population.

Table 8: Enrollment for the year 2011-12

Type of University	All Category			SC			%SC students	%SC Male/Total Male	%SC female/Total female
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Central University	309162	245791	554953	31187	20387	51574	9.29	10.09	8.29
Central Open University	310334	222959	533293	21657	12963	34620	6.49	6.98	5.81
Institute of National Importance	91709	19681	111390	11538	2502	14040	12.6	12.58	12.71
State Public University	1434703	1012480	2447183	163504	125360	288864	11.8	11.4	12.38
State Open University	544717	365283	910000	91418	58276	149694	16.45	16.78	15.95
State Private University	193298	77197	270495	7638	2544	10182	3.76	3.95	3.3
Institute under State Legislature Act	591	1108	1699	103	238	341	20.07	17.43	21.48
Deemed University- Government	27653	8468	36121	2194	607	2801	7.75	7.93	7.17
Deemed University- Government Aided	58708	38317	97025	4628	3274	7902	8.14	7.88	8.54
Deemed University- Private	350492	201247	551739	9261	5574	14835	2.69	2.64	2.77
Others	1098	1294	2392	193	154	347	14.51	17.58	11.9
Grand Total (teaching Departments and Constituent Units/Off Campus Centres)	3322465	2193825	5516290	343321	231879	575200	10.43	10.33	10.57
Central University	393183	467063	860246	44557	45756	90313	10.5	11.33	9.8
State Public University	11235136	9758438	20993574	1420769	1201740	2622509	12.49	12.65	12.31
Grand Total (Affiliated and Constituent Colleges)	11628319	10225501	21853820	1465326	1247496	2712822	12.41	12.6	12.2

Source: Table 27 Category-wise Enrolment in various types of Universities (a) Teaching departments and Constituent Unit/Off-campus centres, AISHE 2011-12 (2014, pp. T-95)

The last three columns in the Table 8 represent the percentage of SC students with respect to all students, percentage of SC male students with respect to all male students and percentage of SC female students with respect to all female students, respectively. Reserved seats for SC students is 15%, therefore to be representative in proportionate terms, universities must have at least 15%.

In the 2011-12 data, we can see that there are very less SC women students in the Deemed University-Private (2.77%), State Private University (3.3%), Deemed University-Government (7.17%), Central Open University (5.81%), Central University (8.29%). In most of the universities the percentage of SC female students do not cross the 15% mark. Only in the State

Open University (15.95%) and the Institute under State Legislature Act (21.48%) the SC female are more than 15%.

Table 9: Enrollment for the year 2017-18

Type of University	All Category			SC		
Central University	375928	347751	723679	45874	42642	88516
Central Open University	554164	307111	861275	64922	31804	96726
Institute of National Importance	154302	48895	203197	21687	5975	27662
State Public University	1329314	1267319	2596633	172413	158781	331194
State Open University	685748	404335	1090083	91143	55033	146176
State Private University	686424	349305	1035729	47980	24572	72552
State Private Open University	19	7	26	0	0	0
Institute under State Legislature Act	1523	2186	3709	150	356	506
Deemed University- Government	30515	12406	42921	3294	1134	4428
Deemed University- Government Aided	29468	26526	55994	2894	2802	5696
Deemed University- Private	399025	253126	652151	16294	11087	27381
Grand Total (teaching Departments and Constituent Units/Off Campus Centres)	4246430	3018967	7265397	466651	334186	800837
Central University	356255	403588	759843	38317	40913	79230
State Public University	12908133	12884325	25792458	1977590	1970230	3947820
Grand Total (Affiliated and Constituent Colleges)	13264388	13287913	26552301	2015907	2011143	4027050

Source: Table 27 Category-wise Enrolment in various types of Universities (a) Teaching departments and Constituent Unit/Off-campus centres, AISHE 2017-18 (2018, pp. T-27)

Table 10: Representation of SC students in different types of universities 2017-18

Type of University	%SC students/Total Students	%SC Male/Total Male	%SC female/Total female
Central University	12.23	12.2	12.26
Central Open University	11.23	11.72	10.36
Institute of National Importance	13.61	14.05	12.22
State Public University	12.75	12.97	12.53
State Open University	13.41	13.29	13.61
State Private University	7	6.99	7.03
State Private Open University	0	0	0
Institute under State Legislature Act	13.64	9.85	16.29
Deemed University- Government	10.32	10.79	9.14
Deemed University- Government Aided	10.17	9.82	10.56
Deemed University- Private	4.2	4.08	4.38
Grand Total (teaching Departments and Constituent Units/Off Campus Centres)	11.02	10.99	11.07
Central University	10.43	10.76	10.14
State Public University	15.31	15.32	15.29
Grand Total (Affiliated and Constituent Colleges)	15.17	15.2	15.14

Source- Calculated from Table 9

In the 2017-2018 data, we see that the enrollment rate of SC women has increased from 2011-12 to 2017-18 in almost every type of university. Again only in the State Public University affiliated and constituent colleges (15.29%) and the Institute under State Legislature Act (16.29%) SC women student are present more than 15%. But there are very less SC women students in the Deemed University-Private (4.38%), State Private University (7.03%), Deemed University-Government (9.14%). There is no SC women student in the State Private Open University.

So, there is a pattern that Dalit women are more in numbers in the public State universities than in the private universities and central universities. Shobhana in his analyses of the AISHE 2016-17 argues that,

The largest section of the Bahujan students presently in Higher Education are enrolled in B.A. degrees in State Public Universities. While, one does know about the enrollment numbers, there is no clear data on how many of them actually get a degree. And furthermore, does the degree fundamentally transform their life chances and employment opportunities? The issue of employability and possibilities of moving away from caste-gender ordained occupations/roles should categorically inform any discussion on caste in Higher Education (Shobhana, 2018).

Thus, while we know the data on marginalized sections, and also explain and interpret it to some extent but the other nuanced details of their educational attainment are left uncovered.

Gender Parity Index²

Table 11: Gender Parity Index

Year	Gender Parity Index	
	All	SC
2010-11	0.86	0.84
2011-12	0.88	0.88
2012-13	0.89	0.89
2013-14	0.92	0.92
2014-15	0.92	0.91
2015-16	0.92	0.91
2016-17	0.94	0.93
2017-18	0.97	0.96

Source: Compiled from ‘Table 48. Gender Parity Index during last 8 years’ from AISHE 2017-18 (2018, p. T 47)

Table 10 shows steadily rising Gender Parity Index among SCs and overall students. The GPI has almost come at par in 2017-18. How do we understand the high GPI index for Dalits, almost at par with overall GPI? While overall the GPI has improved significantly, the improvement is not the same for all levels of education. A closer look at GPI for SCs at different levels of education (Table 11) shows that GPI is higher in school education and is significantly lower in Higher education. Thus, Dalit girls are getting school education, but many are stopped from getting higher education. If we look at the table 11, we find that while the number of females per

² Gender Parity Index refers to number of female students with respect to male students

males among SCs is good in the school level, when entering higher education, there is a sudden drop in the ratio, indicating lower continuance for Dalit girls as compared to Dalit boys.

Table 12: GPI for SCs according to level of education

Level of Education	Gender Parity Index for SC		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Primary	1.02	1.02	1.03
Upper Primary	1.07	1.09	1.1
Secondary	1.02	1.03	1.04
Senior Secondary	1.02	1.03	1.04
Higher Education	0.92	0.91	0.91

Source: Compiled from Table 45 of Educational Stats at a Glance (2018, pp. 70-72)

Representativeness of Teachers

At the all-India level, teachers belonging to unreserved General category are more than half, that is 56.8% of the total number of teachers in India; OBC follows with 32.3%; while SC and ST with 8.6% and 2.27% respectively (2018, p. 20). “At the all-India level there are 72 female teachers per 100 male teachers. Similarly, in SC category there are 56 female teacher per 100 male teacher and in case of ST and OBC, it is 66 and 68 females per 100 males teachers, respectively” (2018, p. 21).

This data shows that SC teachers are highly underrepresented in Higher Education. The lack of representation of diverse groups in the teaching community may add to the problem of SC students. This is reflected in the stories of discrimination in the hands of upper caste teachers.

Table 13: No. of SC and overall teachers according to gender

Type of University	All Category			SC		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Central University	7745	2753	10498	812	234	1046
Central Open University	105	83	188	15	7	22
Institute of National Importance	8321	2029	10350	585	132	717
State Public University	31560	17466	49026	3892	1621	5513
State Open University	318	156	474	48	15	63
State Private University	23882	16112	39994	695	407	1102
Institute under State Legislature Act	532	242	774	42	23	65
Deemed University- Government	3262	894	4156	230	47	277
Deemed University- Government Aided	1052	1024	2076	95	69	164
Deemed University- Private	24210	17084	41294	998	690	1688
Grand Total (teaching Departments and Constituent Units/Off Campus Centres)	100987	57843	158830	7412	3245	10657
Central University	12900	14135	27035	1309	951	2260
State Public University	549656	411040	960696	53517	29643	83160
Grand Total (Affiliated and Constituent Colleges)	562556	425175	987731	54826	39594	85420

Source: Compiled from Table 30 (a) and (b) in (All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, 2018)

Table 14: Representation of SC teachers

Type of University	%SC Teachers/Total Teachers	%SC Male/Total Male	%SC female/Total female
Central University	9.96	10.48	8.5
Central Open University	11.7	14.29	8.43
Institute of National Importance	6.93	7.03	6.51
State Public University	11.25	12.33	9.28
State Open University	13.29	15.09	9.62
State Private University	2.76	2.91	2.53
Institute under State Legislature Act	8.4	7.89	9.5
Deemed University- Government	6.67	7.05	5.26
Deemed University- Government Aided	7.9	9.03	6.74
Deemed University- Private	4.09	4.12	4.04
Grand Total (teaching Departments and Constituent Units/Off Campus Centres)	6.71	7.34	5.61
Central University	8.36	10.15	6.73
State Public University	8.66	9.74	7.21
Grand Total (Affiliated and Constituent Colleges)	8.65	9.75	9.31

Source: Compiled from Table 12

This figure shows the extent of the under representation ranging from 11.4% in the State Open Universities to 81.6% in the State Private Universities.

Conclusion

The overall insights from the data give a mixed message. It shows that historically, literacy and enrolment has improved and dropout has declined. However, it also shows that the entry of marginalized groups is still not up to the prescribed mark and even the reserved seats for them are not filled. In all the indicators that we examined- literacy rate, GER, Attendance Rate, GPI, and representation of teachers, - wide gaps are seen on the lines of caste and gender.

We see the same pattern throughout- Upper caste male scoring the best followed by Upper caste females followed by Dalit males and lastly Dalit females. This shows that even after decades of reservation policies, the inequalities in access and educational experiences and outcomes based on the intersections of caste and gender continue to operate. This reaffirms the framework that we have selected for this research, i.e. intersectionality of caste and gender.

Limitations of Quantitative Data

The biggest limitation of above mentioned quantitative data is that while it shows that caste and gender is operating, it does not show the process or how it is operating. This data clearly shows the trend but doesn't offer any explanation behind this trend. Poverty and weak financial background is considered as the major factor behind lack of access to education (Thorat, p. 109). Though the economic mobility among Dalits has led to rise in the enrollment ratio but the possibility of college completion is still less than the upper castes (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008). Discrimination on the basis of caste and gender is also a factor which restricts the access of Dalits and Dalit women in the higher education (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008).

While the quantitative studies provide statistical grounding to our framework and arguments, they do not uncover the various experiences of students pursuing the courses and do not explore their life inside the educational institutions. Also, asking about discrimination and experience in a crude way using survey method or questionnaires (for ex, here they asked them directly if they faced discrimination), may not be best suited since not everyone wants to admit or recall it.

For this we must look at qualitative studies and understand the experience of Dalit women in these institutions. This would help to uncover the processes that led to these unequal outcomes. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interview and ethnography would be useful to understand

the context and uncover discrimination and experience in detail. Thus, the next chapter systematically studies the experiences of Dalit women in the higher education using the secondary qualitative research on the Dalit women. It thus understands the working of caste, class and gender in educational institutes.

Chapter 4

Dalit women in the Higher Education- Insights from the Qualitative studies

In the previous chapter we analyzed the quantitative data to understand the educational status of the Dalit women. It found that though percentage of Dalit women in the higher education institutions is increasing, it is still lesser than the total male and female population and also Dalit male population. It also found out the limitation of using quantitative data that it does not reveal the lived experiences of the Dalit women students in the higher education institutions. Therefore, this chapter uses secondary qualitative studies on experiences of Dalit women students who are pursuing higher education.

This chapter explores what are the educational experiences of those who enter the educational institutions? What are the problems and challenges they face in the institutions? How do caste and gender affects the educational experiences of Dalit women? What is the role of identities in the educational sphere, how do they operate and in which manner they impacts the lives of Dalit women students? It tries to answer the question whether the modern education system is emancipatory or oppressive for Dalit women? How does the education system reproduce the structural inequality and oppression?

There is a vast amount of studies and data produced on education inequalities in terms of access, participation and attainment. Velaskar (2013) argues that it is mostly descriptive in nature and not analytical. Such empirical research lacks theoretical approach to understand and make sense of the educational experiences. It prevents “a deeper understanding of patterns and forms of educational inequality, the direction in which they are changing, and solid explanations of

unequal situations” (p. 118). Also the studies describing the incidents of discrimination lack an “in-depth analysis” of discrimination (Wankhede, 2013, p. 187).

Therefore, in this direction this chapter attempts understand and explain the major findings of secondary qualitative studies on experiences of Dalit women students in the higher educational institutes using the concepts of habitus, capital and field given by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Such explanations will help us to uncover the hidden forms of discrimination and exclusion of Dalit women students.

The chapter systematically classifies the major findings affecting Dalit women participation in the higher education into economical, social, cultural, academic and political factors. It finds out that the major factors affecting Dalit women participation in the higher education are poverty and forced labor, high drop-outs after secondary school, gender discrimination by their family, sexual division of work and patriarchal values of marriage and dowry (Dhende, 2017).

Dalit women students experience discrimination and exclusion in the educational institutions due to the intersections of caste and gender. But the literature also suggests that the educational experiences in higher education gets impacted due to other factors such as their class, socio-economic status, level of parental education, region-rural or urban (Ovichegan, 2013, p. 280). The classification of Dalit women into ‘privileged’ and ‘less privileged’ based on their region and class location is also analyzed.

Caste discrimination in the Higher education

Dalit women students face discrimination on the basis of caste in the higher educational institutions. Discrimination means an unfair or differential treatment on the basis of a person’s identity to oppress or suppress that person. It is important to study the discriminatory practices

happening in the higher education as the incidents of caste discrimination are rampant in the higher educational institutions even in the ‘elite’ and ‘prestigious’ institutions like AIIMS, IITs, JNU etc.

Also caste discrimination at higher education level is much more intense, covert and manifested in various forms in comparison to discrimination at school level (Wankhede, 2013, p. 187). The forms of discrimination in the higher education institutions are most of the time “hidden” which needs to be uncovered (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 226).

Dalit women students face caste discrimination at the hands of the upper castes teachers, students and the administrative staff. Thaali (2015) gives information about an incident of discrimination against a PhD scholar named Deepa M Mohan in Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala. She faced caste discrimination at the hand of her supervisor in MPhil and PhD course in the centre of Nano Technology. She was accused of plagiarism of her MPhil thesis. While other students were allowed to access laboratory without registration in PhD she continued to face harassment. Thaali writes in the article that, “Not only that no course work was offered to her till the end of the first semester, she was also not allowed entry into the laboratory” (Thaali, 2015). She was once locked inside the laboratory by her supervisor while she was working in the lab. No actions were taken against the faculty after the complaint filed by her. “She also feels that it would not have happened, had she belonged to an upper caste” (Thaali, 2015).

Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) found that Dalit women researchers face caste discrimination in various ways such as “problems created in the allotment of research supervisors, indifference and discouragement from their supervisors, forced to change their topics or supervisors refuse to supervise and force to opt for others, supervisors refuse to sign fellowship form or extension

applications, research work is seen with skepticism” affecting their academic career negatively (pp. 278-279).

Sangole (2017) found that in Siddhartha College, Mumbai dominant Maratha women students abused Dalit women students on the basis of their caste identity. They also excluded Dalit women students from their friend group (p. 3). Ovicegan (2013) also finds that non-Dalit women students maintain physical or social distance from Dalit women students, mistreat them, and do not interact and support them (pp. 275-278). This leads to exclusion and isolation of Dalit women students.

Even in elite universities Dalit women students face discrimination on the basis of their caste. The documentary *India Untouched: Stories of a People Apart* shows a Dalit women student in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi telling about her experiences in the hostel. She recalls that after knowing her caste identity her roommate started maintaining distance and stopped taking help from her in order to avoid any physical touch (K, 2007).

Madhavi (2014) in her blog post writes that Dalit women students in University of Hyderabad campus face suspicion and ill-treatment in the hostels from their roommates. They are asked to do the cleaning jobs inside the room by their upper castes women roommates. Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) found that in EFLU, a dalit woman was forced to change the hostel room (p. 280).

Such practices of discrimination and exclusion against Dalit women students by upper castes are the result of their upper caste habitus which gives them a sense of being “privileged, “superior”, and “entitlement” over others. The habitus also includes the caste biases and prejudices against Dalits which shapes their actions in the educational institutions (Wankhede, 2013, p. 189).

Gender discrimination in the Higher education

Dalit women students also face gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the educational institutions. Suresha and Mylarappa (2012) found that rural-Dalit women students face ill treatment based on gender from the teachers and administrators (p. 366). Recently the issue of sexual harassment in Indian campuses came up. A list of professors who had predatory behavior according to anonymous accounts of female students was released by Raya Sarkar, starting a debate around relation of caste, gender and sexual violence (Ayyar, 2017) (Pujari, 2017).

Jagadeeswari (2014) found that Dalit women students face problems such as “lack of cooperation from the male head of the departments, limited scope to participate in the administration and college programmes to exhibit their leadership skills, lack of gender awareness programmes in the colleges, lack of training and special programmes to improve leadership skills, capacities, education and to promote self confidence” (p. 7).

Thus, Dalit women students face ‘double discrimination’ on the basis of both caste and gender in the educational institution. It makes their experience different from both upper castes women and Dalit men students.

Due to such practices of caste and gender discrimination and exclusion Dalit women students would be unable to mobilize and acquire the institutionalized form of capital such as degrees, skills, certificates, power positions etc. For example, recently in 2017, a case of discrimination against a Dalit women student, Srilakshmi Prabha in Bharathiar University, Coimbatore came up. She could not access a post- doctoral fellowship which was granted by UGC as the University Chancellor did not give the necessary documents to her on time due to which she lost the fellowship. Srilakshmi also claims in 2016 she filed a case against him in the Madras High

Court for giving the post of Assistant Professor which was reserved for women to a man. So, the VC did this deliberately in order to take revenge on her (Mathew, 2017). So, the caste and gender discrimination excluded her from accessing fellowship, being an academic and teacher in the university.

As mentioned earlier, experiences of a social class like marginalization, exploitation, oppression etc also forms the habitus. Dalit women's habitus incorporates the structure of the overall social sphere. Studies on Dalit women show that they face the threat of discrimination and harassment in the society which impacts their habitus. This habitus will be in form of suspicion of social sphere, feeling of alienation, unconfident behavior among other things. Thus, their habitus has a disjuncture with the field of education.

Bourdieu argues that “a body incorporates the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world- a field” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 81 as qtd in Reay, 2004, p. 432). When Dalit women enter the field of educational institutions (which is part of the world), their habitus incorporates the structure through all these experiences of discrimination and exploitation as well. We find a continuity of such discrimination and marginalisation. This reinforces their habitus and does not allow Dalit women to transform their habitus to their advantage. This ensures that their habitus remains unfamiliar with the rules of the educational field. The field of education would be alienating for them, shaping their behavior and experiences as we see in the later sections.

These constraints can be understood as a part of structural inequality where the structure of the institution corresponds with the dominant culture of the upper class and caste. Thus, the institution is not accessible to all students equally. The Dalit women find it difficult to navigate

the institutions as their habitus is different and does not resemble with the culture of the higher educational institutions.

Humiliation in the Higher education

Apart from overt caste discrimination, Dalit women students also face subtle discrimination and exclusion due to certain stereotypes and prejudices attached to their caste identity. The reservation system which enables their entry in the higher educational institutions also becomes a source of humiliation for Dalit women students. There is stigma and inequality associated with being reserved category students in the university space. When Dalit students enter into universities and institutions, they carry the tag of being “reserved” or “quota” students. They are called out names like “*quota wallas*”, “*quota doctors*”, “*schaddu*” etc (Guru, 2009, p. 18). “Dalit women students are labeled as cheap, characterless or very forward, Scholars in a sarcastic way” (Guru and Sarukkai, 2014 quoted in Sangole, 2017, p. 2).

Caste continues to affect the educational experiences of Dalit women students. Ovichegan (2013) found that they are continuously reminded of their caste identity. They are pressurized to admit about using reservation or quota scholarships. They are asked about how they managed to get admission with even with the “low” grades in school and made feel inferior by asking how their “low” cut-off in the entrance exam facilitated their entry in the higher education (p. 269). Thus, “...caste takes centre stage when one becomes part of a class embraced by educational institutions” (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 230).

Dalit women students are perceived as ‘meritless’, ‘dull’, ‘not up to the mark’ and ‘incapable’ who ‘do not struggle for their career’ and ‘do not perform well’ in academics upper caste

students and teachers (Thaali, 2015) (Paik, 2014). They are considered as “undeserving” by upper caste students on the use of reservation.

Pandey and Pandey (2018) find out the perceptions of upper castes students and teachers towards Dalit students in Indian Institute of Technology- Banaras Hindu University. They found that 61% of general category students considered that SC/ST students have lower academic ability and 55% of general category students believed that general category students are superior to others (p. 11).

These kinds of negative perceptions towards lower caste students are shaped by the habitus of the upper castes which includes the sense of being “meritorious” and “superior” in comparison to others. Their habitus is also formed of prejudices and stereotypes against students from lower castes community which shapes their perceptions and opinions regarding Dalit students (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 230).

Even some of the Dalit students also perceive themselves as “lower” “inferior” and “meritless” than others. Pandey and Pandey (2018) found that 46% of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students perceive that SC/ST category students have lower academic ability in comparison to general category students (p. 11). On the other hand, they consider upper castes students as “superior” and “meritorious” among all students. All (0%) SC/ST category students said that general category students have less academic ability than others (p. 11).

Such negative self-perceptions are produced due to the habitus of Dalit students which is formed of their collective history of facing caste indignities in both social and educational sphere (Vasavi, 2006, pp. 3766-3771). Their habitus is formed of internalization of hierarchical caste values, continuous acceptance of their lower caste status and past experiences of caste discrimination in the school or previous college. It shapes their perception of self, worth, and

value, academic ability. Such negative self-perceptions and also perceptions and actions of others towards them affect their experiences, academic performances and also future educational prospects (Pandey & Pandey, 2018) (Vasavi, 2006, p. 3766).

This is what Bourdieuan analysis would term as the ‘incorporation of immanent structures’ in the individuals. The social structure becomes embedded in the individuals. The individual agents therefore also become responsible in reinforcing the social structures and perpetuating inequalities.

The idea of Merit and caste identity

The dominant conception of ‘merit’ is behind the discriminatory practices of upper castes faculties and students and the prevailing prejudices among them. If we examine the construction of merit we see that there is a commonsensical linkage drawn between the idea of merit and caste location. The reserved category students are recognized by their caste identity whereas general category upper castes students are recognized by their qualifications and not their caste (Deshpande, 2013, p. 32). Here exist prejudices against reserved category students that they get admission into the higher education just because of the constitutional provisions of reservation.

On the other hand, the upper castes transformed the traditional caste capital into modern form of capital (Deshpande, 2013, p. 32). They used their traditional caste privilege, cultural and social capital into academic degrees which is seen as individual merit. Also “in the very effort to account for historical injustice through the reservation of seats for low castes in education and employment, those who fell under the non-reserved, or ‘general category’, were by extension deemed casteless” (Subramanian, 2015, pp. 297-298).

According to Deshpande (2013), merit is understood in the terms of “castelessness”. As the general category students are casteless so their success in an entrance test, competitive exam, or

classroom participation is the product or outcome of their individual merit, talent and hardwork. This creates their image as being ‘meritorious’ also.

Thus, the upper castes or general category students are also seen as the “legitimate inheritors of modernity” (Deshpande, 2013, p. 33). Being modern then means being ‘socially disembedded individuals’, ‘self made’, and ‘divorced from social and political influences’ who are “free of the social and political encumbrances of the past” such as caste (Subramanian, 2015, pp. 300-301). For example, being meritorious and modern is also seen in “transcending the state and the public sector” (Subramanian, 2015, p. 300). The private sector appears to be caste-free (Subramanian, 2015, p. 301). It is the sphere where only hard work, talent and intelligence work not the caste identity of an individual. The increasing migration of IITians to abroad and taking up jobs in transnational private companies is seen as meritorious. On the other hand, due to the implementation of reservation and entry of subalterns in the public sector and bureaucracy, the public sector is considered as “an extension of ‘vote bank politics’ where group identity matters more than your merit” (Subramanian, 2015, p. 300).

The other conception of merit is through claiming to be meritorious with a sense of upper caste consciousness in the context of subaltern assertion. It can be observed from the arguments put forward against OBC reservation. The implementation of OBC reservation in 2006 faced huge opposition from upper castes and Brahmins by calling it as “end or death of meritocracy”. There were arguments that this will lead to the “depletion of the quality” of the institutions (Raman, 2010). It means that the elite educational space like IITs or AIIMS will lose their “merit” or “intellect” with the entry of lower castes through social justice provisions.

These institutions were considered as meritocratic due to the domination of upper castes and the absence of subalterns from such space (Subramanian, 2015, p. 307). The upper castes or

Brahmins thus make claims of being meritorious by highlighting their association with the educational institutions (Subramanian, 2015, p. 307). In return, the Brahmins and upper caste students get merit by accumulating degree from there. So, in order to save this modern space which is marked by upper-caste self, upper castes and Brahmins conceptualize the idea of Merit against the entry of the Dalits and OBCs.

They make claim to merit also by self-defining them through the racial characteristics of being “bearers of the higher knowledge”. They claim as being “superior” and “deserving” than others. Thus, the caste belonging and being meritorious co-exists with each other. This leads to a perceived conception of merit which gives the idea that being meritorious is being upper castes. Subramanian also talks about how in IITs the Dalits and OBCs getting admission from general category gets misrecognised as an upper caste or Brahmin (Subramanian, 2015, p. 309).

So, here the notion of merit is associated with one caste i.e. upper caste and disassociated with another caste i.e. lower caste. There is a lack of imagination of lower castes being part of such elite institutions. Thus, the claims of being meritorious are based not only on being casteless and modern as Deshpande argues but also on the basis of the caste identity. The caste ideology and mentality of upper castes further perpetuate caste inequality and deprivation in the educational sphere (Pandey & Pandey, 2018).

Thus, the formation of the notion of the merit can be understood through both ‘disavowal of caste’ and the ‘affiliation to caste’ in the context of subaltern context (Subramanian, 2015, p. 293). Such conceptions of merit are a construction and myth. As Bourdieu’s framework tells us, such an explanation through natural aptitudes is flawed. The merit of an individual is not due to their ‘talent’, ‘intelligence’, ‘being modern’ but due to their ‘superior caste identity’. It is the

result of the application of various forms of capital generated through castes in the educational institutions. The process of historical accumulation of cultural and social capital needs to be analyzed to understand the monopoly of the upper caste and class over education.

Subramanian (2015) analyses the case of Tamil Brahmins monopoly over modern education and technical training. Due to their easy access to the educational institutions and spread of literacy among them they got benefit from the colonial rule before any other social group such as inclusion in the bureaucracy. The colonial rule operated according to the distinction of caste status and gave different technical training according to the caste for example craft enhancement for artisans and professional education to Tamil Brahmins (pp. 304-305). Their dominance continued “within the fields of law, science, and mathematics and their more recent ascendance within the technical and management sciences” (p. 303).

She further argues that “the cumulative effect of this history has been their production as a highly educated, urbanized, and mobile caste” (Subramanian, 2015, p. 303). The Tamil Brahmins made use of their cultural capital of knowledge and social capital to migrate to cities for employment, thus got school education in the better quality private schools and Central Board schools, over-represented in the state bureaucracy.

Thus, we find that traditionally upper castes had monopoly over knowledge. In colonial period also, they could successfully convert this monopoly into other forms of capital. Since habitus is formed initially in the early socialization of a person, subsequent generations benefitted in the form of ingraining habitus which was helpful to them and made them familiar with the field of education. This habitus also led to them gaining valuable capital. All types of capital were also

inherited and passed on within the family due to practice of caste endogamy. Thus, upper castes continue to benefit from these historical advantages this way.

Gender discrimination in the family

Apart from caste and class oppression, Dalit women students also face discrimination on the basis of gender within the family (Ashappa, 2015, p. 46) (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7) (Harinath, 2013, p. 58). Due to the sexual division of labor within the family, they are restricted to the private sphere and household work considered as their prime duty (Harinath, 2013, p. 58) (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7). The Dalit families have negative perceptions towards the higher education and employment of the Dalit women (Harinath, 2013, p. 60). They think that pursuing higher education is of no use of Dalit women. It is considered as a waste. In rural areas, they also lack “awareness and consciousness” regarding importance of the education of the women impacting their education negatively (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7) (Harinath, 2013, p. 61)

In the poor economic condition, the education of the male child is given preference over them (Sangole, 2017, p. 3) (Harinath, 2013, p. 61) (Ashappa, 2015, p. 46). If a Dalit girl asks for financial help for books, college fees, they are immediately asked to participate in the agricultural or household work (Harinath, 2013, p. 58). Their financial requirements are not taken care of. The patriarchal nature of the family does not encourage the education of Dalit women (Harinath, 2013, p. 58).

But on the other hand, Dalit females also have to face pressures of marriage, dowry, and child rearing from their family and society (Harinath, 2013, p. 62) (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7). It leads to less life opportunity and chances coming their way as these factors lead to leave higher education (Harinath, 2013, p. 72). Therefore, even the educated Dalit women in the community are not considered equal in relation to the Dalit men (Sangole, 2017, p. 3).

The safety and security issues also affect the higher education of Dalit women. The Dalit families do not send their daughters to pursue higher education, if there are inadequate hostel facilities for women and less number of female teaching staff in the colleges due to the fear of sexual violence inside the college (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7). The other problems like ‘lack of means of transportation’, ‘long distance of the college from the home’ or ‘coming home late’ make lower class Dalit women students even more vulnerable to insecurity (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7) (Harinath, 2013, p. 69). They face sexual harassment, eve teasing, molestation, sexual abuse and rape while going to the colleges leading to drop-out (Harinath, 2013, p. 69).

In the urban areas too, the higher education of Dalit women is not given much importance. The higher education of Dalit women gets affected due to the continuous dominance of male figures, traditional gender roles and the pressure of marriage in the Dalit households (Ovichegan, 2013). If they are allowed to study, the family even pressurizes and decides their educational choices and aspirations for them (Ovichegan, 2013, p. 261).

The extensive supervision and surveillance by parents towards their daughters lead to lack of exposure to peers, social interaction and mobility (Ganguly, 2018, p. 59). As they are dependent on their family for financial help they are forced to follow the patriarchal controls of the family over their education, life choices and future goals (Ovichegan, 2013, pp. 264-265).

Such experiences in their socialization shape the habitus of the Dalit women students. It attaches ‘low value’ to their education and employment. They are constantly forced to prioritize family over their own interest, which gets ingrained in their behavior, mental attitudes and actions. A very low sense of accessibility to education gets ingrained in their habitus. Suresha and

Mylarappa (2012) found an absence of employment desire among Dalit women (p. 366). Thus, within a Dalit family also, the habitus would be different based on gender.

It restricts their access and participation in the higher education (Harinath, 2013, p. 60) (Suresha & Mylarappa, 2012, p. 364) (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7). Since Dalit women are discouraged from pursuing higher education, they will not be able to gain institutionalized cultural capital. The difference in habitus would also affect the distribution of capital within the family as well. It would lead to the male member of the family getting more economic capital as the family prioritizes spending on them. They get more resources, support, opportunity, and freedom from their family in comparison to Dalit women.

This shows that the experiences of the Dalit women are different from Dalit men as gender continues to affect the education attainment of Dalit women students. It also shows that some of the experiences of Dalit women are similar to upper castes women (Ovichegan, 2013, p. 261).

Lack of Capital among Dalit women Students

The research on Dalit women students argues that there is a link between their socio-economic background and educational attainment (Suresha & Mylarappa, 2012, p. 363). How is it affecting the education? What are these problems? Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) argue that the social interactions among men and women students in higher educational institutions are shaped by the social identities of regional/linguistic, economic, caste, class and gender. But how is this happening? The concepts of habitus, capital and field help to understand the process of structural inequality shaping the practice of the students in higher education.

The possession of capital among the students is unequal according to their social location in an Indian classroom. The amount and kind of capital a student possesses determine his/her position

in the higher education field and affects performance. The nature of their habitus is also different which shapes their actions, choices, and attitude. It shapes their perceptions about themselves, others and the world around them. Thus, the educational trajectory of students is shaped by the interaction of capital, habitus in the field.

Lack of economic capital

The intersectionality of caste, class and gender leads to unequal distribution of capital among Dalit women students. It also structures the habitus of Dalit women students. It is formed by the constraints, challenges, and lived experiences of caste and class identity. Most of the Dalit women students in the secondary research findings belonged to lower class rural families which were involved in caste based occupations, agricultural or manual labor (Suresha & Mylarappa, 2012, p. 365) (Harinath, 2013, p. 57). In the urban areas too, they were involved in the low-paying, odd and menial occupations such as “lower-level apprentices, temporary labour, or at most clerks” (Paik, 2014, p. 192).

The findings show that the poor financial background of Dalit women is the major factor behind the lack of access to higher education (Harinath, 2013). They do not get support for their higher education from their family due to weak financial status. Thus, they lacked economic capital such as money and wealth and cannot afford material resources necessary for education such as fees, books, tuitions etc which leads to poor academic performance and high dropouts among them in the collegiate level (Harinath, 2013, p. 57) (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7). Even those studying in some private colleges have to share agricultural work with their parents or work as daily wage laborers to afford fees, books and transport charges (Harinath, 2013, p. 57).

Suresha and Mylarappa (2012) found that a majority of the Dalit women were present in the general and cheap courses like B.A. (37.2%), B.Ed. (13.6%), and B.E. (18.4%) and under-represented in the highly prestigious and expensive professional courses like M.B.A. (0.4%), M.Ed. (1.2%), and M.B.B.S. (4%) (p. 363). So, the low economic capital among the Dalit women students also determines their course choices in the higher education. These course choices are the result of lack of economic capital. It can also be the result of their gender habitus as they are socialized to opt for “simpler” subjects (Gautam, 2015).

Lack of cultural capital

The Dalit families not only lack economic capital but also lack cultural and social capital. The historical exclusion from education sphere due to the caste system, involvement in caste occupation and other menial low paying jobs leads to lack of cultural capital among Dalit families. In most of the studies, the Dalit women students do not come from highly educated families which are involved in low quality jobs (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 7) (Suresha & Mylarappa, 2012, p. 365) (Suresha & Mylarappa, 2012, p. 365) (Harinath, 2013, p. 61).

Paik (2014) also includes narratives of first generation Dalit women learners’ who reveals that their parents, never saw schools, never had opportunity to go to schools and didn’t know anything about education. Their parents had to face overt and harsh caste discrimination from the upper castes in the society and upper castes teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the classroom. They sat outside the classroom, sometimes even outside the school and heard whatever they can (p. 190).

Their habitus lacks ‘active parental guidance’, ‘positive interaction’ and ‘engagement’ in their education (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 6) (Harinath, 2013, p. 59). They lacked information and

knowledge about various career opportunities, educational institutions and courses (Harinath, 2013, p. 62) (Ganguly, 2018, p. 63). This can lead to them not knowing “how to select courses, how to navigate through complex application procedures, how to avail scholarships available to minorities” (Ganguly, 2018, p. 64).

This leads to a significant absence of cultural capital among them which could help them in their educational participation inside the educational institutions such as receiving guidance about navigating the higher education institutions, conducive-supportive environment for pursuing higher education, minimum knowledge about the courses etc. (Harinath, 2013, p. 60) (Ganguly, 2018, p. 58).

The other reasons which lead to a non-supporting atmosphere include the common habits or practices found among low income and uneducated Dalits were “gambling, participation in street brawls, use of abusive language and indifference to education” (Ganguly, 2018, p. 57). Even alcoholism is prevalent among Dalit localities (Harinath, 2013, p. 60). In such family and social surroundings, there is no involvement of Dalit children in any ‘productive work’ or any ‘proper recreational activities’ after school hours (Ganguly, 2018). Harinath (2013) also found that Dalit women students in higher secondary school “often interact with illiterates and spend time without any productive work” (p. 63).

Paik (2014) argues that most of the first generation and second generation households perceive that reading hundred books or novels is not going to fetch them anything. She writes that, “Dalit parents actively discouraged wider reading habits, believing that schools offered the ultimate knowledge and anything besides that was an irrelevant waste of time” (p. 239).

Thus, the habitus of Dalit students lack development of higher skills, tastes for cultural objects such as art, music etc. and mannerisms among them. Thus, they also lack embodied cultural capital such as knowledge of English education and bodily disposition among them (Ganguly, 2018, p. 68). Instead the habitus leads to internalization of behavioral patterns such as ‘idleness’, ‘lack of interest’ and no sense of ‘competitiveness’ or ‘desire’ to pursue higher education, ‘low value ascribed to education’ leading to dropout after school and not choosing higher education among Dalit children (Harinath, 2013, p. 63) (Ganguly, 2018, pp. 58-59).

The Dalit women students stay in separate areas segregated on the basis of caste and class both in rural and urban areas (Harinath, 2013, p. 61) (Paik, 2014, p. 190) (Ganguly, 2018). The hope and imagination of Dalits that caste will disappear in the urban areas does not get fulfilled. According to Paik (2014), the spatial inequality and residential segregation in the urban areas of Pune and Mumbai led to social and educational subordination of Dalits (p. 190). It leads to lack of cultural capital among Dalits.

In her historical study of Dalits in Maharashtra she writes about the separate localities for each caste known as *wada* in Marathi³ language. In Pune, the centre of the city was occupied by the upper castes and Brahmins. “Chitpavan Brahmins dominated the inner core of Pune; their parts of the city included the Sadashiv, Shaniwar, Narayan and Shukrawar peths, which formed the robust heart of Pune city”. The localities where Dalit and other “lower castes” lived were on the outer areas or periphery of the city such as Yerawada, Vishrantvadi, Vadgaon Sheri, Dhorvadi, Kondhava and Hadapsar (p. 198).

³Marathi is the state language of Maharashtra.

Even the cheap housing colonies for low income class were divided on the basis of caste such as Mahars in Siddharthanagar, Mangs in Yashwantnagar and Kaikadis and Wadaris⁴ in the interiors of Yerwada slum (p. 193).

The poor Dalit families do not have proper housing and comfortable living conditions (pp. 189-190). They have to live in *jhopadpatties* (slums) and cheap *chawls* which are very “overcrowded, unhygienic, and with a very low quality housing” (p. 198). “These *chawls*, which housed many Dalits and other lower castes and classes, were poorly lit, ill-vented, and barricaded with grilles, a constant reminder of their use as colonial prisons. They smelled of dampness and were breeding grounds for many diseases, most prominently tuberculosis and asthma” (p. 201). Dalit families live in small houses in one or two room sets (Paik, 2014, p. 198) (Harinath, 2013, p. 60). Prof. C. Lakshmanan⁵ said that the poor Dalit first generation learners do not own a separate study room in their houses.

Paik (2014) also argues that the Sanskrit and English education, better quality schools and high cultural practices such as theaters, music and arts restricted to Brahman localities. Dalits were not allowed to enter in these schools (p. 190). The *sanskriti* culture was reinforced “by conducting weekly classes in temples to teach Sanskrit *shlokas*, Hindu prayers, and good manners and habits to children” by Brahmans in their closed localities (p. 197).

Sadashiv peth is replete with most of the esteemed, prestigious, quality schools; theatres like the Bharat Natya Mandir and Tilak Sabhagruha (for Marathi plays and talks); the Bharatiya Itihaas Saunshodhak Mandal (Association for the Investigation of Indian

⁴ These are the ‘lower castes’ communities in Maharashtra.

⁵ Prof. C. Lakshmanan is a professor in MIDS, Chennai. This quote is from his talk organized by Bahujan Students’ Front, an anti-caste student organization in Hyderabad Central University.

History), Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Asthtanga Ayurvedic College, Maharashtra Mitra Mandal, and many small music schools and social and cultural centres (p. 197).

Thus, it explains the lack of embodied cultural capital among the Dalits families such as development of high skills, cultural practices of dominant groups, taste for cultural goods (theatre, arts etc), elite and high caste mannerisms, food habits etc.

Such segregated living based on caste and class also leads to lack of social capital among Dalit families as there is no or restricted interaction/networking with dominant groups owning various forms of capital (Harinath, 2013, p. 72).

Such habitus does not correspond with the culture of the higher education field. It does not possess cultural capital which is highly valued by the field. The field of the higher education rewards and values the capital belonging to the dominant group (Naidoo, 2004, p. 459). In order to “decode the field” and succeed dominant cultural capital is needed (Reay, 1998, p. 521). It leads to their exclusion from academic and social space within an institution.

Most of the Dalit women students in the secondary research findings reported facing discrimination and exclusion on the basis of language, dresses they wear, the way they look, their skin color, lifestyle etc. How do we understand such experiences?

Dalit women students do not inherit embodied cultural capital which helps the students to play by the “rules of the game” of the higher education. For example, they lack certain level of linguistic fluency and prowess especially in English language, communication skills, and familiarity with elite mannerisms, lifestyle, habits, certain way of looking, dressing, and beauty standards which are needed in the higher education for academic success, and also to create

rapport with the teachers and fellow classmates, networking, and speaking in public space and to get included in the social space. They remain unfamiliar with the “rules of the field”.

English language

Language barrier and communication hurdle is a major problem for Dalit women even in the higher educational institutions such as HCU and OU (Pappu & Satyanarayana, 2018, p. 277). They have problems in reading and writing English. Due to this they are not able to understand the lessons in the classroom. It also limits their confidence to participate in the seminars, conference and even in the classroom discussions (Pappu & Satyanarayana, 2018, p. 277).

Thaali writes that,

The Brahminical knowledge dominance operates in academics through its language elitism, and a particular style of articulation and use of jargon which is considered essential for scholarly articulation. Despite being in terrible situations, it is demanded of Dalit women to ‘prove’ their scholarship with engagements within this exclusive framework (Thaali, 2015).

Due to the difficulty in overcoming language barriers, they cannot mix up well among classmates and friends leading to ‘self-isolating’ themselves. Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) quote a women activist from an Ambedkarite organization in HCU, “our girls isolate themselves, they feel inferior because of language, dressing, lifestyle. Our girls are from rural areas, first generation, they don’t attend seminars, don’t come to the public spaces” (p. 277).

The lack of linguistic fluency and prowess is due to lack of embodied cultural capital among them. Also, their habitus is unfamiliar with the dominant cultural capital which is highly valued

in the higher education field. Jagadeeswari (2014) argues it is because the language and accent prevalent in the college is different from the language they speak at home (p. 6). Suresha and Mylarappa (2012) found in their study that there is a high familiarity with regional language such as Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Lambani rather than English language among Dalit women students which does not fetch them any benefit in the field of higher education (p. 365).

Thus, the English language is not the part of the habitus of the Dalit women students especially those who come from rural areas thus making it difficult for them to adjust and cope up with it (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 6).

In addition to this, there is a lack of support from the teachers and classmates and absence of effective institutional mechanisms (Pappu & Satyanarayana, 2018, pp. 276-277). Instead, they are stereotyped as a group with no knowledge of English. They are perceived as “dull” and “inactive” by others making them “unworthy” of any social interaction for “cultured” people.

It leads to lack of peer group support among Dalit women students (Jagadeeswari, 2014, p. 6). It restricts their friendships with students with capital, and thus formation of social network. Dalit students already lack social capital before entering into universities. Even after entry into institutions we see that they are unable to build their social capital by enhancing their networks.

They are more vulnerable to face discrimination and exclusion on the basis of their identity as reserved category student, the type of language they speak, and use of quota scholarships than those Dalit women students who possess capital (Ovichagan, 2013, pp. 267-269). And in this process, they suffer from a sense of alienation and loss of confidence.

Appearances

Dalit women also face exclusion due to their dark skin by students belonging to upper castes (Sangole, 2017, p. 3). There is a perception that caste also determines skin color. Dalits are dark and higher castes are white due to their caste. Pandey and Pandey (2018) found that the upper castes students believe that these qualities get reproduced due to the ‘pure’ DNA, genes and even hormones of upper castes (p. 6). They are perceived as ‘lower’, ‘dirty’, and ‘inferior’ and thus get excluded from the upper caste or class groups within the institution.

They are also humiliated and insulted inside the college by calling out names on their physical appearances and the dresses they wear. Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) argue that “...Clothes call out the caste along with class” (p. 283). They are called “Kakubai (aunty), Behenjhis (elder sisters), and scholars, for dressing in ‘non-modern’ ways” by the upper castes students of the college (Sangole, 2017, p. 3).

It is due to the habitus of the upper castes/class students which is formed due to the elite mannerisms, caste prejudices and stereotypes against lower castes/class. Thus, they perceive dark skin color, non-modern ways of dressing, and non- English background as “inferior” to them.

The unequal possession of capital along with the perception of the upper castes/class students towards Dalit women students gives the later a sense of ‘discomfort’ and ‘deficit’ in institutions. It also leads to lack of ‘sense of belonging’ to the field. They lack the sense of how to just be in the classroom (Kumar V. , 2019) (Kumar V. , 2018).

Food

The food choices of Dalit students shape their experiences within the campus. For example- the Hindu upper caste culture of vegetarianism identified as ‘pure’ becomes the dominant culture in the hostel food menu of the campus (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 229). “Caste-related tensions,

however, do flare up in OU, such as on occasions like the beef festival where food choice became an open marker of caste and eating beef was stigmatized as a lower caste practice” (Pappu & Satyanarayana, 2018, p. 281). Eating beef and pork is identified as ‘impure’, and ‘polluted’, thus becomes illegitimate and subordinate culture. So, in the campus too the embodied food habits of Dalits is not allowed or celebrated as it is not ‘worthy’ enough to get highly valued in the higher education field.

Pedagogical issues in the Higher education

Sonkenapalli argues that there is a systematic discrimination against Dalit women in the universities by not including them in the academic discourse on either women or Dalits (p. 86). The issues of Dalit women and their lived experiences shaped by the intersections of caste and gender do not become a major part of any academic course or discussion. The courses are not changed to take up dalits or women issues. “...some faculty and the administration feel that Dalit and women’s issues are given too much importance; as a result, they grow hostile to such research as well as to students invested in those areas” (Pappu & Satyanarayana, 2018, p. 278).

Jenny (2003) in a personal narrative writes her experiences of PhD course, about the students and the discourse around her. She argues that the mainstream discourse produced by all progressive sections including feminists in the institution alienates and isolates Dalit and Bahujans. She highlights two major groups one which talks about the grand and great theories, literature, art, culture, cinema of a group of people which were all strange and alienating for her. The other group criticized the first one but it was also inaccessible to her due to the use of abstract language (p. 33).

She argues that both the groups lack any discussion on lived experiences of marginalized sections. The mainstream feminism in the Indian universities is elite in nature. Whereas the Dalit feminism discourse on caste system gives vocabulary to understand the different life experiences of Dalit-Bahujan women students. She argues that the popular discourse excluded such experience of lower-backward castes and lower class women who are “diffident, inarticulate, and caught in a social/familial situation that none of them could understand let alone theorize” (p. 34).

Political issues in the Higher education

Dalit women are excluded from the political space too due to the intersection of caste and gender. The number of Dalit women was less in comparison to upper castes women and also Dalit men in movements and political organisations. Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) discussed the political life of the students in four major universities in Hyderabad- University of Hyderabad (UoH), English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Osmania University (OU), and Maulana Azaad National Urdu University (MANUU). They found that the Dalit women students are under-represented in the leadership positions both in the “mainstream” organizations and even in the Dalit or women organizations. If they are made leaders they are perceived as mere ‘tokens’ (p. 284).

Dalit men students dominate the anti-caste organizations political organization and thus decision making process (Madhavi, 2014, p. 2). Sowjanya in her blog post criticizes the attitude of Dalit men students towards them in political sphere (Sowjanya, 2014). She attacks the perceptions of Dalit men students that Dalit women students are politically inactive and weak. Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) also find that it is commonly understood that the under-representation of Dalit women is because they lack “leadership qualities, both in terms of confidence as well as

being willing to spend time on organizational activities” (p. 285). Sowjanya instead highlights the fact that the population of Dalit women students in the campus is low in comparison to other women and Dalit men (Sowjanya, 2014).

Madhavi in the blog post criticizes the patriarchal and sexist attitude of Dalit men students towards the Dalit women students. They do not take strict actions against the sexual harassment of Dalit women students by Dalit men students and faculty or for that matter even recognize it. “Instead, these men look down upon women complainants” (Madhavi, 2014, p. 2). They do not raise the gender questions and focus only on Caste.

Pappu and Satyanarayana (2018) found that in the women organizations, there is a domination of upper castes women students. They included the narratives of Dalit women students activists on exclusion of Dalit women students from the political space in the campus. They found that the “Dalit women expressed their sense of discomfort with both groups. They felt that Dalit girls were only seen as a ‘vote bank’ during student elections, and were not regarded as leaders by student organisations” (p. 286).

Thus, the Dalit women students argue that it is because of lack of embodied form of cultural capital that restricts their participation in the political activities. It is also seen as legitimate reason by others to exclude them. The narratives like “Her (an upper caste woman student) arrival made us inactive. They (upper caste women) have language, physical appearance...they (JAC) don’t include us” and “...they are compared with upper caste women activists and branded as being less competent” reveals the role of capital in the exclusion of Dalit women students in the political activities of campus too (p. 285).

Also the coming out as Dalit women make them more vulnerable to face caste discrimination and humiliation. Sonkenapalli argues that the Dalit women in the higher educational institutions are discriminated and excluded due to their Dalit consciousness by upper castes teachers and students (Sonkenapalli, p. 86). Being powerless they won't be able to take strong actions. These organizations have nothing to say on the condition of Dalit women student in the campuses (Sowjanya, 2014, p. 1). Also the specific issues and concerns of Dalit women students are hardly understood or raised either by Dalit or women organizations. One such issue can be reservation within reservation for Dalit women in higher educational institutions, student union or any other elections.

Political organizations are a way of building social networks and enhancing social capital. It can also be a medium of cultural assertion and raising grievances. However, the exclusion of Dalit women from these spaces prevent them from acquiring social capital.

Different strategies of negotiations

Dalit women students face various hurdles and challenges in the interaction between the familial habitus and institutional field. But they also negotiate with the structural challenges in their daily lives in order to get 'included' and to 'adjust' in the 'unfamiliar' environment of the campus but within their limited means (Sangole, 2017, p. 3). Thus, while the structure of caste/class/gender leads to the "unfavorable" inclusion of Dalit women students in the higher education, they still use their agency to negotiate and navigate the exclusionary institutional space.

Dalit women in the higher education hide caste identity from others as a strategy for a "greater level of acceptance from non-dalit individuals" (Ovichegan, 2013, p. 255). They also do not reveal using reservation and other special group rights provisions in order to avoid dealing with

the anti-reservation comments and any sort of confrontation with upper castes classmates and teachers which can lead to their isolation and exclusion.

Sangole (2017) in the study on Sidharatha College, Mumbai highlights some common practices and strategies adopted by the lower-middle class Dalit women students to deal with caste discrimination, humiliation and elitism in the college. They imitate and adopt the lifestyle of rich/upper castes students. She found that they try to look and behave like dominant castes and class by “using altered trendy dresses, using replica-branded mobile phones, using social networking sites such as Whatsapp, Facebook, use more English words” (Guru and Sarukkai, 2014 qtd in Sangole, 2017, p. 2). They carry extra “trendy” clothes which they change after reaching college (p. 3).

By speaking broken English language, use of inexpensive duplicate technological gadgets, and cheap modern-trendy clothes, Dalit women students are trying to have access to the “legitimate culture” of dominant class which is rewarded in the campuses. This act of trying to assimilate in the campus culture, within a limited sense, helps them to escape their caste-class identity. They also sometimes try to “pass” as upper castes by accumulating institutionalized form of cultural capital, change of lifestyle and deliberately hiding caste (Dutt, 2019, p. xviii).

The second generation middle class urban Dalit women students gain cultural capital in the “institutionalized” form. Due to enough economic capital, they have managed to choose private-English medium schooling and college education with all the necessary and high level facilities.

The environment of these private schools is characterized by “less caste discrimination, more attentive teachers and competition for quality” (Paik, 2014, p. 240). In colleges too, they learn and improve English, work on communication and other skills, organize and try to build a community or support group, or social networks inside the university campus.

The English education and better-quality schools and colleges are seen as necessary and important by Dalits. English language is seen as a symbol for higher social status and position in the society. It also helps to “inculcate self-respect, confidence and prestige” and “a high degree of sophistication” (Paik, 2014, p. 241). They also gain respectability and acceptability from the society.

These Dalit families also started adopting other middle class- dominant values and virtues by sanitizing their untouchable culture of food, language dress, names and locality. Paik argues this as “appropriation of modernity to refashion their individual selves and futures” (Paik, 2014, p. 233). She argues that the second and third generation Dalit women students were also encouraged by their families to take up extra-curricular activities by their family. This includes reading story books or novels other than the syllabus, arts, music, culture, theatre, and modeling (Paik, 2014, p. 240).

Thus, they acquired “institutionalized” form of cultural capital such as knowledge, educational qualifications, communication and language skills, and vocabulary etc. The capital accumulation makes Dalit women capable to navigate the campus, assimilate in it and get mixed well thus placing them in a better position than lower class rural Dalit women students. Also helps them to avoid some of the exclusionary practices in the institutions (Ovichegan, 2013, p. 280).

Ovichegan (2013) argues that it also facilitates close affiliations and friendships among Dalit and non-Dalit students in the university space (p. 278). Ovichegan includes the narrative of a Dalit women student who talks about other Dalit women student who possesses capital in comparison to her. She said that “...Sunita blends in easily with her non-Dalit friends, with whom she shares an accent (she “talk[s] like them”), a style of dress, mannerisms, a privileged class background, and

so on” (p. 256). Other student also says, “My non-Dalit friends think I talk like them maybe because of my good schooling” (p. 255).

Dalit women students also assert and fight for their right to education. Sangole (2017) argues that Dalit women students are not the passive recipients of any sort of violence or harassment. Sometimes they adopt some “covert ways to manage existing hegemonic system and it includes means such as pacts, excuses, networks, lies, and tricks” (p. 3). She found that Dalit women students facing harassment or physical violence from male students took strict actions against them. They also fought verbally with the administration, and non-teaching staff to get their work done (p. 3). She found that a Dalit woman who was bullied by her neighbors for going to college, did not leave her education but in order to avoid the harassment started leaving early for the college (p. 4). She argues that such negotiations with the hegemonic society and educational system are necessary to maintain their dignity, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-determinism (p. 4).

Conclusion

This section tries to understand and explain the major experiences such as exclusion, isolation and unequal performance faced by the Dalit women students by understanding the formation of their habitus, lack of capital among them and how it together affects their educational experiences the field of higher education institutions. It found that not only class but caste and gender also affect the capital accumulation among students. It argues that the unequal possession of capital along with difference in the habitus of Dalit women students affects their access, participation, and performance in the higher education. The habitus of upper castes/class students and teachers shapes their perceptions and behavior towards Dalit women students. The practices

of discrimination and humiliation lead to their exclusion from academic and social space in the higher educational institutions.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study is a systematic study of Dalit women's educational experiences in the higher education institutions. The second chapter used historical approach to study the relationship of Dalit women and education. It showed that Dalit women were historically excluded from the education due to their caste, class and gender by the dominant section of Brahmins and upper castes for their own interests. The *varna* system restricted them to menial occupation of serving upper castes. The operation of patriarchy confined them to the private household sphere. Thus, the exclusion of Dalits women led to establishment of Brahmin-male hegemony over the education sphere.

In the colonial period, the perpetuation of caste ideology in the educational sphere made the education experiences of Dalit women. The chapter found that though British government was open to educate Dalits but they also end up believing in the caste ideology, Brahmanical stereotypes and beliefs regarding Dalits. Those Dalit women had to face discrimination inside the classroom. Thus the education was restricted to wealthy, upper castes section of the society.

The chapter also argued that the anti-caste and Dalit women perspective on education changed the meaning of education for Dalits and women. It prescribed social and political role to Dalit women and made them active agents of transforming the caste and patriarchal society. Thus, Dalit women also had high hopes and aspirations from education.

The third chapter first analyzes the quantitative data sets. It analysed the literacy rate, gross enrollment ratio, attendance rate and dropout rate at school level. It found that though enrollment rate among Dalit girls has increased over years but the dropout rate is higher than Dalit boys. It

also analysed the gross enrollment ratio, enrollment rate according to types of universities, gender parity index among Dalits at the higher education level. It found that the enrollment in the higher education among Dalit women has increased over years but it is still less than unreserved category. Also the gender parity index showed that the enrollment of Dalit women gradually decreases from school level to higher education level, indicating that Dalit women are less likely to continue their education and go for higher education.

As it does not provide us insight into what are the factors affecting education of Dalit women and what are their experiences inside the classrooms or campuses after getting admission, the fourth chapter explored the secondary qualitative research studies on Dalit women students' educational experiences in the higher education. The major finding is that the educational experiences of Dalit women students are shaped by the intersection of caste, class and gender. They experience discrimination, humiliation and exclusion in the higher education institutions.

Though there will be certain experiences which are similar to Dalit men and other women but we can see some specific experiences which are due to the moments of intersections. For example- they face double discrimination in the higher educational institutes on the basis of both caste and gender identities.

The chapter explained the experiences of Dalit women through the concepts of habitus, capital and field borrowed from Bourdieu. The experiences of Dalit women students are shaped by the interaction of their habitus and capital with the higher education field. An examination of specific field of interaction in terms of "rules governing the field" and the "power context of the field" is necessary to explain the experiences of Dalit women in the higher education.

The field of higher education is exclusionary towards Dalit women students. As seen in the third chapter, there is under-representation of Dalit women students in relation to upper castes, domination of non-Dalit faculties and significant absence of Dalit faculties specifically Dalit women faculties in the higher education universities. Also the habitus of upper caste/class students creates an elite and caste culture in the higher educational institutes (Pathania & Tierney, 2018, p. 221).

Such elite and caste culture is reflected in the upper castes/class practices of caste discrimination and humiliation, criticism of reservation system, meritocratic beliefs and stereotypes regarding Dalits are prevalent in the higher educational institutions. This leads to socio-psychological violence on Dalit women students and ultimately their exclusion from academic and social space of educational institutes. Such practices also restrict them to acquire the institutionalized form of cultural capital such as degrees, skills, fellowship, designation or job.

The intersection of caste, class and gender plays an important part in forming the habitus of the Dalit women which does not equip them with the forms of capital which are valued and rewarded by the higher educational institutions. It influences their access to and participation in the higher education, unequal outcome among the students and leads to systematic exclusion of Dalit women students from classroom, social and political space.

The lack of capital among the Dalit women students restricts the chances of educational opportunity and also academic success for them. For example, rigorous training from expensive coaching institutions has become necessary for cracking the competitive or entrance examinations related to engineering, medical, business studies, or any other professional courses or to study in prestigious institutions such as IITs, AIIMS, JNU, DU etc. Such examination

system becomes a system to eliminate and exclude students who are not suitable according to the markers of the dominant culture of the institutions.

Dalit women students who are interested in these exams, but lacks enough economic capital (money) and social capital (information regarding which coaching centre to attend, which colleges are the best, how to apply or peer group for academic help) to attend coaching classes would surely face difficulties in getting entry in these prestigious educational institutions. This leads to less number of Dalit women in comparison to others in the higher educational institutions.

Also, the lack of cultural capital among Dalit women students leads to “unfavorable” or “unequal” inclusion of Dalit women in the higher education (Deshpande, 2013). For example, the lack of embodied cultural capital (proficiency in the English language and other soft skills etc.) makes them unprepared, less confident and hesitant to perform in a classroom.

The habitus of Dalit women is also shaped by the socialization according to gender, caste and class hierarchies and their collective history of marginalization. The internalization of “inferior” status also shapes their perceptions about themselves and the world around them. Thus, the habitus of Dalit women students, characterized by poverty, lower caste status, and patriarchy does not correspond with the culture of the institution making it inaccessible to Dalit women students. They find the field of institution ‘unfamiliar’, ‘alienating’ and ‘isolating’. Thus, the research moves beyond the discussion on discrimination and uncovers the conditions of inferiority complex, helplessness and social isolation, Dalit women find themselves in, which shapes their educational experiences in the higher education.

Such analysis of the educational experiences of Dalit women students can be used as evidences for public policy research to develop certain institutional mechanisms in apart from reservation system or quotas which provide “protected entry into a hitherto prohibited domain but does not offer any support after this point” (Deshpande, 2013, p. 4). So, programme such as ‘capital distribution’, ‘skill enhancement and development’ are important for marginalized students leading to their “substantive inclusion” by “equalizing their access to higher education” (Deshpande, 2013, p. 4) (Nampoothiri, 2013, p. 285).

The category of Dalit women is not homogeneous. The heterogeneity among Dalit women students in the higher educational institutions is due to the class difference and rural/urban difference among them. Also, their experiences can be similar to the group they belong, does not need to be different or unique all the time.

The second/third generation Dalit women students especially from middle class, urban area acquire capital from quality-English medium schooling, coaching, parental guidance etc. This helps them in navigating the field in a better way than rural-lower class Dalit women students. So, they also negotiate with the oppressive structures and practices. The agency of the individual comes into play with to overcome the unequal conditions. Thus, the experiences of Dalit women students are shaped by the intersections of not just caste and gender but also region, class, previous schooling, capital, and family educational and income level.

But in cases where certain capital is accumulated by middle and upper class Dalit women in urban areas their caste continues to shape their experiences. It is not lost. So, the argument that economic capital makes them “privileged” or “elite” does not hold as caste discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices still impacts their lives.

The study concludes that the social location or identity of the students makes the category of students as heterogeneous. The students are embedded in the social structures. The experiences of students are different from each other as they are marked by their multiple identities of caste, class and gender. They are not just rational actors making decisions on the basis of their rationality but their social location or social identities determine their educational trajectory.

It also concludes that the education system is both emancipatory and oppressive for Dalit women. The education system is seen as oppressive as it reproduces the social inequality of caste, class and gender through classroom composition, practices and culture in the educational space. Thus, it has not lived up to the hopes and expectations of Dalit women. But it is emancipatory in the sense that it leads to acquisition of institutionalized form of cultural capital among them which is needed for modern jobs and employment.

Limitations of the study

The study is a review of secondary research on the experiences of Dalit women students in the higher education. The use of existing limited data and observations leads to no new findings for the research problem. The study reviewed, analysed and explained the existing findings using the lens of intersectionality and the concepts of capital, habitus and field.

Also, the study only focuses on experiences of Dalit women students. It excludes ST, OBC, PWD students from its purview.

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