

# Change in Socio-Cultural Status Due to Education in the Scheduled Caste Category

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses some features of social change associated with the advance of education among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes during the post-independence period. It considers these changes in their three constituents: changes within the segment of SC/ST; changes in the wider caste Hindu society; and changes in the inter-relations between caste Hindu society and the SC/ST segment. The discussion of the inter-relation between the SC and caste Hindu society touches mainly upon the problem of untouchability and caste discrimination while in the case of scheduled tribes, the problem of transition from tribal isolation and backwardness to assimilation into and greater interaction with the rest of Indian society is touched upon.

**KEYWORDS:** socio-cultural, scheduled, caste, education, society, India

## I. INTRODUCTION

The economic growth of a country depends upon its knowledge economy and skilled manpower. In every economy, skilled manpower helps to strengthen economic growth by extending knowledge to the productive process. The manpower of a country is known as 'social capital' or 'human resource'. In addition to this, social capital is usually empowered by education and innovative ideas.[1,2,3] Thus, to make a society productive and effective, education has become an important aspect in fostering growth and development for the nation. In this present context, the knowledge economy depends upon the development of science and technology with grasping the capacity of human resources. The economy of a country requires skilled human resources as a factor of production in the process of economic development, where the knowledge economy plays an important role in empowering the human resources in the growth process. Also, technological development is an indicator of the knowledge economy that originates from skilled human resources. India's long-term economic growth has accelerated since the 1990s and 2000s with an average rate of 7.1% and even stabilized during the 2010s and 2018s. The acceleration of growth is evident not just for aggregate gross domestic product (GDP), but even more strongly for per capita GDP (Economic Survey, 2017). The average pace of per capita growth was over 6% in the last decade. Interestingly, when compared with some of the world's largest emerging economies, this rate of acceleration of growth stands out as being unique to India compared to the world's other economies (Gupta, 2018).

### Economic Growth and Sectoral Allocation in India

During the world economic crisis of 2008, the economic growth of India was declared substantially high (7.75%). That remained high (7.86%) in 2009, continuing to 8.50% in 2010, 7.41% in 2014, 8.00% in 2015, 8.26% in 2016, 6.80% in 2017 and 6.53% in 2018. India's advancing growth can also be seen when, in the last two and a half decades (between 1990 and 2018), the average GDP growth rates (6.5%) have been greater than interest rates (2.6%). However, coming to the expenditure in the social sector, it was seen that the same year in 2008, the social sector expenditure on health was very low (1.41%) in 2008, and remained low (1.30%) in 2009, 1.40% in 2010, 1.30% in 2014, 1.2% in 2015 and 1.3% in 2016 of the GDP in the respective years (Economic Survey, 2016, 2017).

In the social sector expenditure, 'education', which fuels the economic growth both directly and indirectly, is seen as a neglected area compared to the percentage of GDP. In the year 2014–2015, for education, only 2.8% was expended of the total GDP. This grew by 0.7% only in the year 2018–2017 (Economic Survey, 2017). The Economic Survey, 2018–2017 also shows that economic growth does not co-exist with inclusive growth. And the economic growth shows higher inequality, which leads to adverse socio-economic outcomes in social sectors like education, health and life

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expectancy of the people of India. It also explains that both economic growth and inequality have similar relationships with socio-economic indicators.

Studies have been questioning how India can be expected to maintain its social development with extreme levels of disparities within the social system and inclusiveness in the economy. Neglecting inclusive growth engenders disparities of caste, class and gender within society and has been challenging the nation's economic growth. This reinforces the need to recognize the extreme nature of social inequalities. In addition to that, India also has a very low rank in the Human Development Index (HDI), which shows the replica of the exclusive and less social development index among the emerging economies. On contrary to the economic growth of India, its HDI recorded 131 out of 189 countries in the list of the HDI, 2018 (Dreze & Sen, 2018; Human Development Report, 2018).

For economic growth which was seen as non-inclusive for the last few years, Bhoi (2013) stressed on the need for inclusive development as an essentiality in every sector and, especially in the education sector, to maintain the stability in economic growth and to strengthen the human capital in our country. Though we achieved a high growth rate in our economy, still, we are unable to provide basic education to the marginalized, deprived and depressed categories in terms of accessibility and retention. As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2018), large portions of the population are deprived of getting quality education at different levels of education. They are also excluded from higher education, both in general and professional courses [4,5,6]. The participation of marginal communities in technical education and information technology education is also under-represented. Moreover, they are excluded from mainstream development as they are debarred from employability and economic development (Bhoi, 2016).

This study continues with the idea of the human capital theory of Schultz (1972), where it engages in exploring the experiences of SC students in India, both from private and public managed higher educational institutions in the era of neo-liberalism. The theoretical framework for this article borrowed ideas from the theory of the possession of wealth to market managed economy and engaged in the experiences of SC students in educational attainment, retention and achievement at their higher educational premises.

Based on these inferences, this article engages with the discourse of economic growth and sectoral development with emphasis on social sector development. Today, when the world is in the neo-liberal era, it is important to see that, among the social sectors, is education a primary target of the forces of neoliberalism? Likewise, it also tries to discuss the position of different social groups in the economy's growth and the Scheduled Castes (SCs) who have a very low literacy rate (Census, 2011). Also, the study will follow SCs' human development, human poverty and social justice index (SJI) to determine their stake in accessing education at a national level and how the structural changes of neo-liberalization and its emerging issues determine access to education and their social and economic inclusion.

## Research Questions and Objectives

As advancing economy for the nation, which is not substantiated with the equitable economic growth of the nation this study is engaged with the discourse of neoliberalism on economic growth, development, social development and more particularly, SCs development India. Mainly, it enquires about the structural changes in education and the link between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its follow-up process. It also investigates how it is marching towards a private form of education on par with the expectations of the WTO through neo-liberal policy. The education policy has also been made on par with international frameworks which are completely captured under neoliberal rules and regulations. It engaged in exploring Indian experiences in connection to neoliberal discourse.

## II. DISCUSSION

The Scheduled Castes (SC) occupy the bottom most rung of the social ladder. They form the majority of the depressed classes. Scheduled Caste signifies those groups of people who were out of the caste system or varna hierarchy in the past. These castes have been discriminated against by the upper castes for ages and they never had any kind of social acceptance from the majority of the people who belonged to the upper caste. They are distributed throughout India. An empirical study on caste inequality and development in India by Borooah (2005) showed at least one-third of the average income generation differences between upper caste and SC/STs were due to unequal treatment of the latter. Another study by Sundaram and Tendulkar (EPW, December 2013, 'Poverty Among Social and Economic Groups in India in 1990s') has concluded that amongst the poor, SCs comprised the largest section of the deprived people. Their

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low social position continues even now, though lots of measures have been taken to make them equal with others. The population of the Scheduled Castes has been steadily increasing. According to the 1941 Census Report, their population was about 48 million and it increased to 1,028,610,328 as per 2011 Census Report. This would constitute 16.6 per cent of the total population of India. They have very few assets and are generally dependent on agricultural labour, leather work and other lower-income occupations. About 71 per cent of Scheduled Caste farmers are agricultural labourers—they work for wages on land they do not own. That figure is much lower among other groups: 47 per cent for Scheduled Tribe farmers and 41 per cent for non-SC/ST farmers (Hindustan Times, 2018). The few cultivators amongst Scheduled Castes are share-croppers or subsistence farmers. Others mostly pursue traditional occupations and are unable to avail themselves of the new employment opportunities. Most bonded labourers are Scheduled Castes. Their literacy level is only 66.1 per cent as compared to the all-India level of 73 per cent. Female literacy among them is as low as 56.5 per cent against all-India female literacy level of 64.6 per cent (Census Report, 2011). In spite of their adverse conditions they contribute significantly to the sustenance and growth of the production system of the country.[7,8,9]

The SC people who belong to the rural areas virtually live as agricultural labourers, tenants and marginal farmers. Almost all persons engaged in jobs like sweeping, scavenging and tanning, which belong to the Scheduled Castes. In addition to the majority of agricultural labourers, we also find among them good number of leather workers, weavers, fishermen, toddy-tappers, basket/rope makers, washermen, scavengers, artisans, fruit vegetable sellers, shoe makers, liquor manufacturers, drummers, carpenters, iron smiths and some others following petty occupations (Chanabasappa, 2000). Economic developments in India have so far failed to address this majority group of poor for the purpose of development not only in terms of income but also in terms of human development index. Behind the glaring statistics of economic growths in India in recent years such as increased FDI, foreign exchange and profitability of companies or for that matter soaring BSE index upon economic liberalization, Indian development scenario hides the suppressed voices and deplorable poverty of one-third of its Dalit population who still remain bypassed in asserting their rights for a normal life of human being (NCSC, n.d.). A crime is committed against a Dalit every 15 minutes. Six Dalit women are raped every day. Over the last 10 years (2007–2017) there has been a 66 per cent growth in crimes against Dalits. Further, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that the rape of Dalit women has doubled in the last 10 years (NCRB, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to know how far the socially marginalized group of Scheduled Castes lag behind the other sections of the Indian population with respect to attaining the desirable level in human development. Ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for Freedom. It is a battle for reclamation of Human Personality.—Dr B. R. Ambedkar<sup>1</sup>

### III. RESULTS

India is a country where people living together with variations such as rural urban, male female, and caste to caste variations and within these variations we need to be active in terms of employment and work with dignity. To fulfill these gaps there “education” plays an important role to achieve a respected and dignified life. After completing 70 years of independence and having experimented with special welfare programs for these sections, it is high time to assess achievements in the field of education. Considering the key role of education as an agent of change, it is worth seeing educational achievements among deprived sections like Scheduled Caste, Schedule Tribe and women. From centuries our government has restricted their analysis of the educational situation to the scheduled castes. In India the Scheduled Caste category have been the last on the hierarchical ladder of the society’s structure. Education and desired education achievement is a challenge itself to the lower middle and middle class category in India. The list of reasons for them and their family are many and varied. From an economic angle; they suffer from low income, [10,11,12]low productivity, low wages, conditions of work often onerous and employment not permanent. The standard of living which their earnings permit is miserably low and their daily lives reflect a phenomenon of large scale of underemployment and the problem of surplus population on land. They are asset less, unskilled and having high dependency ratio. The scope for any business in their place of living (in terms of petty shop or hotel or any other service activity) is limited. From political angle they are not allowed to represent frontline leader even government provision of Caste representation at various level. From social angle they are repressed by the Varna system and scared to initiate the positive attitude. As a result of all these factors, the student from this category would not be in a position to get desired achievement because he/she also has to contribute to nurture his family to fulfill their actual need. They can hardly think of any comfort or luxury. Their basic necessities of life are often left unfulfilled. Within this mishmash

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they unable to develop their aspirations for life and career therefore they started following the family occupations and ordinary work to survive.

The aspiration of a child is to achieve a desired goal with full enthusiasm. It could be of studying a particular stream or to choose a particular profession. The child inspires to see the limited environment available near him. This process takes a long way to go with dedication and punctuality. The process requires timely guidance, counseling, support of family & environment. Some of the tradition believes that education starts from mother's womb. The activity and behavior performed by the parents teaches itself to a child and it's proven psychologically. The education from the family and surrounding develops the needs and requirement for a child. Everything he asked for, would surely he learns from the family and environment. There are varieties within members in the family who creates an environment and tried to educate the child from their experiences and learning's. The right to education act came into force in 2009; however, the trend towards universal elementary education was well in place before that. The act provides the compulsory education for the age group 6-14, enrolment levels have been high and rising. The increasing demand of English education initiated to increase a casteless and classless society. Before independence, the progress of primary education was very limited due to structural, social economy. According to the report released by (ASER) Annual Status of Educational Report,<sup>1</sup> enrollment in Standard VIII almost doubled in the decade between 2004-05 and 2014-15, from 11 million to almost 22 million. With this data the census 2011, one out of every ten Indians is currently in the age bracket of 14-18. 86% of youth age group 14-18 is in the formal education system today. Now the problem not seems in the enrollment but somewhere it diverts the way of education and questions its quality. The implementation of the policy and programs is in alarming condition within country, the quality is compromised in many ways. The statistical data looks impressive when we look into enrolment but in country like India we just not to only look into quantity and lastly the quality should be in priority. The diversion of forms took different shape today especially in government funded schools. It has seen that the pressure on students of examination of good performances push them from schools. A student can be pushed when adverse situations within the school environment lead to consequences, ultimately resulting in dropout. This includes test, attendance and discipline policies, and even consequences of poor behavior. Student can be pulled out when factors inside the student divert them from completing schools. These situations occur when factors such as financial worries, out of school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage of child birth pull students away from schools. There would be illness and caste discrimination also can play their role.

There are 4 fold of Caste in the Education system showing how much of hierarchical category the government made to implement. The researcher chooses the last ladder within.

- A. Elite Private Schools
- B. KV's and Navodaya Vidyalaya
- C. Ashram schools, Welfare schools, Residential schools etc.
- D. General Government Schools

The present system of education is also seems so limited and inherently unequal then why not the other one pulled away for unequal opportunities (Dalit rights and Democracy workshop organized by Council for Social Development, Delhi from 28 August to 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2017). The rate of unemployment is increasing day by day and among the people from Scheduled Caste is also very huge. The problem faced by the student who came from the "Hindi medium" background is unlikely more than the private schools and English medium comparatively. The proper guidance to these children is less due to various factors existed in the family and society so the researcher wants to describe the problem and wants [13,14,15] to explore the generational factors to achieve aspirations.

Indian school education scenario at a glance

Indian education system is one of the largest education systems in the world. According to HDI (Human Development Index- 2017), India stands at the 131<sup>st</sup> position out of 188 countries in HDI in literacy and enrolment. Out of the total 74.04 % literates in the country, 65.46 % are women while 82.14% are men. The literacy rate for SCs in 2011 was below the national average, at 66.1 per cent. In 2012-13, the drop in enrolment of SC children from the primary (classes I-V) to upper primary (classes V-VII) level was 54.4 %, compared to an overall dropout rate of 51.8 per cent. The participation of the children from Scheduled Caste in various activities found very low in schools. According to ASER,<sup>1</sup> only 54% within these are enrolled in standard 10<sup>th</sup> and 25% are either in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> and only 6% are enrolled



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in undergraduate and other degree or diploma courses. There are hardly any differences between boys and girls at the enrollment age at 14 but at age 18, 32% females are not enrolled as compared to 28% males. Gender gap seen everywhere in the country except some of the states but within Schedule Caste it is still huge and very gradually improving. 40% youth did not have any role models for the profession they aspired to. The substantial proportions of youth in the 14-18 age groups are working (42%). Of those who work, 79% work in agriculture almost all on their own family's farm; also more than 3 quarters of all youth do household work daily 77% of males and 89% of females.<sup>1</sup>

According to (ASER) Annual Status of Educational Report (2017), 25% of the age group (7-16) still cannot read basic text fluently in their own mother language. After Nehru intervention in language provision in 1964 the primary education will be taught in mother language. More than half struggle with division and only 43% are able to do basic calculation correctly. 53% of all the 14 year only students in the sample can read English sentences and for 18 years old this figure is closer to 60%. Among this age group of students who can read sentences only 79% can say meaning of the sentence. The reading habit does not impress at all at primary level. What do we know about the basic capabilities of those who have completed eight years of schooling? For over a decade, the ASER reports have been pointing out that foundational skills like reading and basic arithmetic even at the point of completion of elementary school are worrying low, about a quarter of all children in class 8 struggle with reading simple texts and more than half are still unable to do basic arithmetic operations like division and multiply. The survey conducted by ASER within various states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan etc. What does all this empirical evidence pointing to? At the time of secondary and senior secondary the student completed 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standard the student undecided to what further course he or she should pursue. As a developing nation we need to be ready for a new generation of young people. Every year we will be "graduating" cohort of close to 25 million young and hopeful boys and girls from elementary school. They can't enter the work force at least in the organized sector until they are 18. For many families these children are the first from their families ever to get this far in school. On the one hand aspirations run high parents and children expect that such "graduates" from school will go on to high school and college. Hardly anyone wants to go back to agriculture or their paternal work where their parents many have spent their entire working life.<sup>1</sup>

The time from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade has generally been considered an important transitional period for adolescents, because of their desire for autonomy and independence and their gradual detachment from their families. These important developmental changes in adolescents may make observing consistent findings about the effect of parental involvement on students' academic outcomes more difficult. There is still time to think on the side of provision; there are ongoing moves to universalize secondary schooling. There are serious efforts to expand skilling opportunities. But as a Nation we need to know not only prepare this generation for learning and knowledge but also what the young people are aspiring to do and aligning abilities and achievements with aspirations. Forging promising alternative new pathways forward is critical not only for youth but for the country as well. Educational aspirations are not only regulated by external influences or by saying anyone or motivating but it is extensively motivated by self influence. Yes it is true that we can influence by seeing others but the inherently motivation should be first in place. The aspiration influence itself resulted from observation, environment and social norms. It's inherent in nature but at some level it is influenced by the motivator which seems missing in disadvantaged groups such as scheduled castes and Tribes. There are enough constitutional provisions and legislation to promote education besides these there are number of people belonging to these groups are way behind in employment and work with dignity. They are somewhere remaining far from that desired end which they wish to achieve. While aspirations may be concrete or enthusiasm, the essence of the idea is that desired future events will direct and motivate effort in the present and thereby increase student's chances to succeed in the educational system[16,17,18]

Ensuring access to education for the Dalits of India has been the greatest challenge for the Indian government in diminishing the social effects of the caste system, which still remain entrenched in Indian society. There have been many different reasons proposed as to why the Dalits suffer from low rates of literacy and primary education enrolment, but the most realistic one describes history and unequal access as the causes. The ancient caste system of India, which has resulted in the social and economic oppression of the Dalits, continues to play a dominant role in India. The Dalits, also known as the scheduled caste or untouchables, have experienced consistent denial to access to education since the 1850s. This decade coincided with Britain's established control over India, which meant many of the improvements to Dalit education were coming from outside influences, rather than from the national government. Because of unchanging social norms and behaviour, incentives to pursue education were minimal for the Dalits who

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were still physically and emotionally harassed. Increasing efforts to eliminate caste discrimination combined with additional attempts to increase the accessibility and appeal for education have contributed to the slow progression of Dalit education. The responsibility for social equalization fell fully upon the Indian government when it gained its independence from Britain in 1948. While some benefits of social programs and government policies designed to increase primary education rates can be noticed, the Dalit literate population still remains much lower than that of the rest of India. There remains still, hostility, oppression and flaws in social programs in Indian society that prevent an increase in education growth. Despite efforts to decrease caste discrimination and increase national social programs, the Dalits of India continue to experience low enrolment rates and a lack of access to primary education in comparison to the rest of India.

### Historical Context

Deeply entrenched in Indian society is the complex social stratification of individuals known as the caste system. It is a division of society traditionally based on occupation and family lineage. In India, the caste system is divided into five separate classes. The highest class in Indian society is that of the priests and teachers, or Brahmins, followed by the warrior class, the Kshatriyas. Third ranked are those who fall in the farmer and merchant class, the Vaishyas, followed by the fourth ranked labourer class, the Shudras ("The Caste System in Hinduism"). The fifth group, which was seen as being so low as to not deserve being placed in a caste, were the Dalits. Often referred to in Indian culture as the untouchables, these were the people who have the harshest and most unjust restrictions imposed upon them (Desai & Kulkarni).

The organization of the caste system and its entrenchment within Indian history has resulted in centuries of hostile interaction between classes. In rural areas, Dalits were excluded from temples, village wells and tea shops. In some areas of the country, the Dalits were not permitted to walk in daylight for their shadows were considered pollution (Nambissan 1011). In addition to the cruel and humiliating circumstances the Dalits have been put in, their efforts to improve their situation have often been squashed by assault, rape and murder by upper castes threatened by the Dalits' search for equality (Bob 173). The cruel and unjust treatment imposed upon the Dalits has decreased in frequency as history has progressed, although it still continues in today's society.

After the introduction of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989, the practice of the caste system became illegal in India. Despite increased government intervention, the discrimination and mistreatments of individuals of lower castes still occur. Today, the Dalit population represents 16% of the country's population and still struggles to achieve social equality. There remains geographic division within Indian cities and villages which exemplify the role that the caste system plays in today's society (Desai et al). Many Dalits have attempted to avoid the caste system by converting from Hinduism to other religions, although this rarely allows these individuals to escape their social and economic hardships.

The Dalits have experienced a bit of progress in establishing an equal position in Indian society. Under the Poona Pact, a reserved number of seats in the national legislature were reserved for Dalit candidates only who would be elected based solely on the votes of their Dalit constituents (Bob). Their movement has also been encouraged by slow societal shifts towards a greater acceptance of Dalit equality and a greater role played by local and international nongovernmental organizations (Bob 173). The Dalit population continues to struggle for equality, though the progress of the past few decades shows hope for an improved level of equality within Indian society.

### The Importance of Education

Before beginning to examine methods of improving enrolment in primary education and literacy rates, it is important to know why education is such an important topic in development studies. The past century has been characterized by a global expansion of education. Alongside this growth in education has also been an increase in the gap between different social strata (Desai & Kulkarni). Education can be a way to increase the incomes of impoverished people. Education helps to ensure that benefits of growth are experienced by all. Economic perspectives see education as a means to make individuals more productive in the workplace and at home. It can also be seen as a means of empowering socially and economically deprived groups into seeking political reform. By using any of these reasons as motivation to pursue educational development, governments are attempting to generate some form of social or economic equality for the population.

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Some of those who study development see education as a means of improving social welfare through economic means. When compared to secondary and university level education, rates of return are highest for primary education, which means that the costs associated with providing basic education are much lower than the benefits received from learning to read and write. About 17.2% of economic growth in Africa and 11.1% in Asia between the 1950s & 1960s have been credited to increases in education (Psacharopoulos 102). In addition to an increase in economic growth, primary education is also said to lead to greater income distribution. Providing primary education to 10% more people would equate to a decrease in the inequality index of 5% (Psacharopoulos 103). The economic advantages of increasing enrolment rates for primary education emphasize the importance of increasing education accessibility for the dalits of India.

An alternative reason to study education is for its ability to empower the individual to strive for an improved quality of life. A big factor impacted by education is that human beings often base their life goals and everyday actions on what they perceive to be feasible (Simon Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 290). Education expands the knowledge of possibility to poor individuals, and is often a necessary factor in providing incentive to escape poverty and social oppression.

Development projects focused on increasing access to basic education, rather than ones that increase capital to improve current levels of education, ensure governments are able to know that the benefits of these programs are experienced by all, rather than a select few. As mentioned previously, the rates of return for primary education exceed those of secondary and university levelled education. It is therefore of greater value for governments to focus first on increasing access to primary education before moving onto to increase levels of education. By focusing development on a human-capabilities approach, governments and aid organizations are able to increase the number of people with the fundamental skills of reading writing and arithmetic (Simon Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 288). These skills allow individuals to communicate, argue, count, and problem solve so that they are able to become more aware and in control of their own lives. This allows them to better deal with problems in their everyday lives including taking [19,20]a loan out from the bank, defending them in a court of law, escaping unhealthy personal relationships or avoiding jobs which would expose them to unsafe working conditions (Simon Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 293). Even the value of holding a basic education is in itself a frequently overlooked asset. Education has had an independent effect on life expectancy, increasing the age for educated individuals (Simon Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 290).

One of the most important Dalit political activists who saw the value of social equity within India was Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who became the chief architect of India's constitution after years of social activism. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Ambedkar dedicated a significant portion of his life to improving the quality of life and social status of Dalit Indians. He established the People's Education Society in 1945 which believed that increasing access to education to the Dalits would increase their empowerment. He thought that a higher level of education would cause the Dalits to realize their position so that they would aspire to the highest of Hindu positions, and that they would consequently use political power and influence as the means to an end to their oppression (Nambissan 1014). Ambedkar believed that the value of education was in the empowerment of Dalits to pursue political action for social reform through informed lobbying.

### A History of Education

The 1991 census of India reported that Dalit communities were one of the least literate social groups in the country, with only 30% of Dalit children recognized to have basic reading and writing skills (Nambissan 1011). These high levels of illiteracy are a result of insufficient access to primary education. Reasons proposed for this low primary education rate amongst the Dalits have ranged from blaming family values to universal acceptance of social behaviour. In reality, it is a history of constant oppression and missing incentives that have been the reason why India's lowest caste has struggled to take advantage of public education programs.

For centuries, the Dalit population of India were forbidden from gaining access to education. Originally reserved for upper castes only, the denial of conventional education to Dalits was designed to prevent them from increasing their quality of life and to highlight caste divisions. Caught in a colonial struggle between European nations, Indian society had no motivation to determine who should manage social programs until the British established control over India.

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Volume 6, Issue 7, July 2019

Then, during the 1850s, the British began the long process of increasing the accessibility of education to all citizens on India.

Signed in April of 1850, the Caste Disabilities Removal Act theoretically abolished all Indian laws which challenge the rights of those who are members of any caste or religion. To most, this was the first step towards social equalization within India. It was also the beginning of a series of attempts to increase accessibility to education for members of the dalit caste. To coincide with the signing of the act, the Indian education system became accessible to every member of society. However, one hundred and sixty years after the Dalits were granted permission to attend schools, the primary education rates of the Dalit population compared to those of upper castes remain as low ever.

There have been a number of suggestions proposed as to why the Dalits have yet to take advantage of open access to education. Some have suggested that Dalits possess an apathetic attitude towards education, and so the thought of attending school seems unappealing and inefficient compared to entering the workforce or doing nothing at all. Another suggestion of the cause for lower access to education to Dalits is that most families are caught in a vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty. Therefore, not only do parents have no incentive to have their children attend school, but they also frequently lack the financial means to send them to the fee-based schooling system of India (Nambissan 1011). The final and often most realistic reasons for why the Dalits have failed to take advantage of their access to education is a combination of a history of oppression and a lack of access to local, quality education systems.

A historical back-drop of mistreatment and class hierarchies has provided little incentive for the Dalits to pursue education. Throughout the 1800s and into the mid 1940s, conditions for Dalit children within the Indian education system were very poor. Due to discrimination from higher castes, the Dalits did not feel comfortable attending schools. Dalit children were required to sit outside the school, listening on the veranda while those in higher castes would be taught inside. Teachers, who refused to touch the Dalit children even with sticks, would throw bamboo canes as undeserved punishment while children of other castes were permitted to throw mud. The Dalit children, who knew retaliation would result only in increased abuse, would be essentially scared into not attending school (Freeman 67). Of the limited number of Dalit children who were attending school, the majority were male; a trait which continues even today (Nambissan 1012).

The 1948 independence of India prompted an increase in responsibility for the government to promote the economic and educational interests of the lower castes and to protect the Dalits from social injustices and exploitations. Over the next few decades, the Dalits would see very little action to support the claims and progress made during the fifties to help improve their access to primary education. The 1950s saw subtle improvements in the number of schools being built in India, as well as the amount of money being allocated towards primary education programs. The efforts being put forward by the government lost momentum over the next few decades however, as the rate of primary schools being constructed slipped from 5.8% in the 1960s, to 2.1% during the 1970s, and eventually down to only 1.3% through the 1980s (Nambissan 1015). This was complemented by a shift in funding from primary school education to middle school education. This transition exemplified the government's shifted focus from increasing primary enrolment rates to increasing the quality of the education provided to those already provided with sufficient access to education.

Between 1983 and 2000, improvements in access to education for all of India have been made, although the difference between education rates for Dalits, especially females, and those in higher castes remained constant. In the seventeen year period, enrolment rates for Dalit boys grew from only 47.7% to a meagre 63.25%. When compared to those males in upper castes, enrolments jumped from an already relatively impressive 73.22% to 82.92%. Even poorer results were observed when looking at the female Dalit enrolment rate, which inched from 15.72% to 32.61%, when compared to their upper-caste counterparts whose enrolment climbed from 43.56% to 59.15% (Desai & Kulkarni). The education gap can also be understood to translate through the entire schooling system, with the proportion of Dalit to non-Dalit success remaining at a constant low rate through primary, secondary, and post-secondary schooling. Although large improvements have been made to increase enrolment rates in India, statistics show that there has been little progress in decreasing the education gap between castes.

The lack of success in increasing primary enrolment rates for Dalits over the past one hundred and fifty years is evidence that very few projects have had any success in increasing social equality within the Indian Caste system. In



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the next section, the paper will look at some of the programs which have attempted to provide incentive for India's poorest to seek primary education.

### Education-Based Development Programs: Can they Work?

When discussing methods which seek to improve enrolment rates, it is important to analyze which circumstances prevent Dalit children from attending school. A family's financial situation plays a role in whether or not they are able to afford to send a child to school. This is a major contributor to low Dalit enrolment rates since Dalits have considerably lower incomes than those in upper castes, and therefore have a hard time paying for education. Distance also plays a key role in determining a child's ability to attend school. Because Dalit homes are often located outside of a village, it is more dangerous for Dalit children to travel to and from school by themselves without risking assault, sexual abuse or abduction (Desai & Kulkarni). In addition, teachers at the schools are often members of upper castes who set low expectations for the Dalit children and rarely seek to provide them with a positive learning environment. There are many factors that act as obstacles for Dalits attempting to gain a primary education, and which many development methods have attempted to overcome.

India has attempted many different strategies to help increase the incentive to receive education for Dalit children. Earlier strategies focused on finding ways to give Dalit children an education without exposing them to the harshness of upper castes. As time progressed and the caste system began to weaken in India, there was a greater shift towards equalizing society so as to provide safer and more positive learning environments. Since gaining its independence, the Indian government has continued to make progress on improving the quality of life for India's lowest caste. Modern exposure to international thought has increased access to ideas and methods on how to increase education rates for the Dalits, providing for some of the best results in recent years (Nambissan 1011). The remainder of this section will examine some of the strategies used over the past one hundred and fifty years, attempting to look at how effective they really were.

Following the creation of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act, the British government attempted to increase Dalit school attendance through methods which took into consideration the sensitivity of the caste society. Because the Dalit children were often harassed when they attended schools, the British chose to propose alternative teaching methods, rather than directly addressing the caste issue. One proposed alternative was the use of night schooling for Dalit children. In this manner, children would not need to worry about attending school with members of upper castes, but would still face dangers of travelling without daylight to and from school. Another proposed solution was the use of all-Dalit schools. This solution eliminated the dangers associated with night-time schooling, but also did not help to decrease hostility between the classes. These two methods combined resulted in a 4% primary enrolment rate for Dalit children by 1931, 81 years after education was first opened to all citizens on India. Of these Dalit children, 93% were attending all-Dalit schools. A problem occurred when there were insufficient all-Dalit schools at which children could pursue secondary education. Only 1% of all students at the time ever made it past primary education (Nambissan 1012). It was because of this, that when the British handed over control of the country to India in 1948, the Indian government began thinking of new ways to increase access to education.

Often, governments try to bring in international assistance in dealing with a national crisis like severely low primary enrolment rates. Prescribed to the Indian government by the World Bank, the District Primary Education Program was designed to increase primary enrolment rates within India. The goal of the program is to reduce differences in enrolment between gender and social standing to 5%, and to decrease the dropout rate to 10%. The DPEP receives the majority of its funding from the World Bank. It calls for the formation of local committees that oversee the hiring and management of Para-teachers. These Para-teachers are trained teachers hired by the DPEP program to fill growing vacancies in primary schools. They are hired on a short term basis but are offered extended terms as an incentive to perform well (Kumar, Priyam, & Saxena 565). They are a low-cost alternative to permanent teaching staff and their performance is often higher due to increased incentives. Since the introduction of the DPEP, India has actually managed to see decreasing primary enrolment rates (Kumar, Priyam, & Saxena 567). It is possible that national campaigns to increase enrolment in primary education fail to have a direct intended impact. Instead, the management of such programs are so focused on a top down approach to education development that they are not able to discover and acknowledge specific issues.

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A smaller scale, and more capital based approach to development and increasing primary enrolment rates is the allocation of additional textbooks to a community. In developing countries, textbooks are often the only basis for a curriculum in a subject. If a school is not able to purchase its own textbooks, then knowledge resources will be limited. By increasing the amount of textbooks, development projects are attempting to increase the ability of schools to take in more students and they hope that additional resources so that performance in school will increase (Crossley & Murby 111). The biggest concern which arises out of providing textbooks is that it will not increase enrolment rates. New textbooks provide little incentive for Dalit children to attend classes as they do not alleviate any of the barriers currently blocking them from access education. Increasing access to text books has assisted in increasing the quality of education despite having little or no impact on enrolment rates.

Lastly, this paper will look to an outside approach to increasing school enrolment and attendance by observing how school-based drug treatments to common diseases attempt to provide incentive for enrolment. Many preventable diseases, including hookworm, roundworm and whipworm affect millions of children worldwide every year, preventing them from attending any sort of school or doing any physical labour (Miguel & Kremer 159). In this sense, the free drugs associated with this program not only provide incentive for children to come to school and learn, but they also serve a second purpose in that they keep students healthy, ensuring they are physically capable of returning to school. Children who attended schools which offered this program not only remained healthy, but felt more comfortable attending school on a regular basis. It has been proven that programs which offer medical incentives decreases absence rates by 25%. This method has also proven to equally increase the amount of girls and boys who are being enticed to attend regular primary schooling (Miguel & Kremer 190-191). In a case examined by Miguel and Kremer, female attendance increased by 10% in subject areas, nearly two times that of males (Desai & Kulkarni). The medication has also proved more cost effective for the organizations administering the medication. This method has been proven as a more effective way of increasing education levels compared to food incentives. On average the annual \$5 cost of administering deworming medication to a child is six times cheaper than providing the same child with food incentives. School uniforms, which are often so expensive as to prevent young girls from attending school, have had relatively equivalent success in increasing enrolment rates in young females. Deworming, however, remains more effective because costs associated with deworming medication are twenty times less expensive than providing school uniforms (Bossuroy & Delavallade). Using medication and deworming medicines as incentives, international organizations including the World Health Organization and The Forum of Young Leaders' campaign, Deworm the World, have developed a successful outside-the-box approach to increasing enrolment and attendance rates.

### IV. CONCLUSION

There have been many attempts over the past one hundred and fifty years to help increase the quality of life for the Dalits of India through development focused on enrolment in primary education. Education provides individuals with the means to increase their income and to engage in economic activities. In addition, it can help empower individuals to lobby for social change through political activism. The lack of incentives to pursue education for the Dalits of India can be traced back to a long history of mistreatment and oppression. Still occurring today, caste harassment makes teaching environments unstable for caste children, it places caste homes on the outskirts of towns so that children have greater distances to walk to school, and it economically suppresses the Dalits so that they are unable to pay for their children's education. Many suggestions, both traditional and modern, have arisen on how to go about resolving issues surrounding Dalit primary enrolment. Night classes and all-Dalit schools provided a safer learning environment for the Dalits, but did not address any issues of caste conflict. Twentieth century policies helped officially decrease some of the animosity and inequality between groups so that the Indian government could have a greater focus on national primary enrolment rates. Larger operations, including the DPEP cooperative project with The World Bank failed to resolve some of the grass-root issues which deterred Dalits from attending school. Funding increasing supplies of textbooks to Indian schools do not address any of the core reasons as to why dalits are not attending school. Instead of increasing enrolment, additional textbooks only had an effect on increased performance levels. Providing free deworming medication at school has proven successful both in increasing the health of children which prevents absenteeism, and in increasing enrolment levels. Minor increases in incentives for Dalits to pursue primary education have been beneficial, but not sufficient in equalizing the enrolment gap between the Dalits and members of upper castes. In order for significant progress to be made in increasing the primary enrolment rates of Dalit children, development organizations must continue to explore varying levels of incentives and pursue national social equality in India.[20]

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