

Gender Inequality in Education among The Harijans of Guwahati City, Assam

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Abstract

Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society. 'Education for all' is the main motto of Modern Indian Education system. In the context of Indian society, process of universalization of education is not a very easy task. The caste discrimination tends to create a hindrance in the path of development for the Harijans who are under the Scheduled caste category of India's population. They have been facing discrimination, torture and humiliation from several decades. The prevalence of untouchability system remains a major barrier for them in the path of development. Harijan women have to suffer a lot in comparison to their male counterparts and non-Harijan women. Education can play an important role in changing one's life but access to education is not a very easy task for them. Though these people have been provided various benefits through welfare schemes by the Government but the level of improvement is not satisfactory. The condition of Harijan women is even worse. Gender discrimination is well evident among the Harijans. The pressure of domestic chores, outdated and traditional thinking, early marriage remains as a major barrier for Harijan women. Education for Harijan girls is mainly limited up to primary level. Pursuing higher education after abstaining all odds is possible only for a few fortunate Harijan women. Thus the rate of dropout among the Harijan women is higher than among Harijan boys. Education has been a powerful instrument of socio economic change. The paper attempts to study the impact of education, level of education among the Harijan women of Guwahati city in six selected colonies and its influence of change among them.

Keywords: Harijan, Education, Discrimination, Gender and Women.

Introduction

Caste hierarchy place the *Brahmins* at the top and *Sudras* below. The Harijans were those groups of people who belong to the lowest order of the caste system that is fifth order caste. They are also sometimes considered as outcaste. Harijans who were also called as Dalits now comes under Scheduled caste category. The Harijans were tortured and humiliated for decades and this process is continuing till now. Harijan also suffer from the impurity status because of the polluted work connected with their profession. In this scenario the worst sufferers are Dalit women because they are not only humiliated as Dalits but also as women; She is the one who bears the most among all the divisions (Mintwal Monika 2017:17) Education plays an important role for the development of the society. A country's success depends on the citizens' progress and the progress of the citizens depends on to a great extent on their educational background. The Dalits have been cited as "outliers in development" based on the poverty, exclusion from education initiatives, lack of employment, lack of social mobility and landlessness that they have experienced across generations (Devika, 2010; Padmanabhan, 2010; Rammohan, 2008; Raj, 2013 as cited by Mathew 2016:2)

The study was intended to find out the educational level among the Harijans of the study colonies, gender inequality in education among them, reasons for girls' leaving schools and their attitude towards education in general.

The present study was made among the Harijans of six selected Harijan colonies of Guwahati that is in *Morisali* Harijan colony, *Rupnagar* Harijan Colony, *Uzanbazar* Harijan Colony, *Maligaon* Harijan Colony, *Panbazar* Harijan colony and *Fatasil Ambari* Harijan colony.

The paper presented is based on data collected in the course of fieldwork undertaken among the six selected Harijan colonies of Guwahati city in Kamrup(metro), Assam. Mixed method approach is being applied for the present study using both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data were collected using structured household schedules, followed by interview method and non-participant observation. Sample of 100 males and 100 females were randomly selected for study purpose. Secondary source such as papers, journals were also being consulted.

Harijans were considered as untouchables because of the polluting work and there are various stigma associated with them. The Dalits are considered "impure to the touch" and presumed to have been born impure (Still,2008 Mathew A Sera,2016:20). Additionally, with the stigma of being born impure, Dalit communities are often associated with "dirty" occupation in the community such as dealing with corpses and human waste, and working with leather(Still,2008 as cited by Mathew 2016 :20). Dalits represents 16% of the country population and still suffer to achieve social equality (Fraser 2010:2).The government have provided various welfare scheme for development of the Harijans .The untouchables who number more than 220 million known as dalits have been systematically neglected and ostracized in our Indian society for many years (Joseph 2008:632.The practice of Untouchability have been abolished and practice of untouchability in any form is a punishable act .Further Article 46 promotes educational and economic interest of Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribe and other weaker sections. Despite these protections, the lack of development of scheduled castes is indicative of low rates of employment, access to agriculture land, lack of access to education and social segregation (Karade,2008 as cited by Mathew2001 :21). Harijans have to face different types of discrimination, they were not allowed to enter into the houses of other caste population, have separate wells for them, sometimes even their shadow is considered impure. Government have made various reservation policies for them in order to bring them to the level of other caste population but still the desired result is not obtained. The policy of protective discrimination provides scheduled caste and scheduled tribes with three forms of reservation:1) Reservation of seats for these groups in the parliament/state legislatures;2)Reservation of jobs in government and semi-government services; and 3)Reservation in educational institutions specially in colleges and universities (Xaxa 2001 as cited by Mathew2016 :22). The reservation policies are only in name as discrimination is still present.

The level of discrimination among the Harijans is more in rural areas as compared to urban areas. In order to escape from discrimination, the Harijans have moved to the urban areas. In Urban areas Harijans were more free to work, to gain access to education and thereby lead a dignified life. The present study is made in the urban area of Guwahati city of Kamrup metro ,Assam .The

migration of Harijans to this part of India is from the colonial period .The population thus increased and gradually become exodus in Guwahati city, which has culminated in the growth and development of slum pockets in different parts of the city(Borah,GogoiandSaikia :2017, as cited by Tabrez and Dutta 2018:9).These people called as *SafaiKarmachari* were brought because of the reluctance to work as cleaning workers by the local caste population of Assam .The Harijans of Guwahati have settled in a colony wise settlement completely detached from the local caste population .The standard of living at present stage has much improved compared to the early decades. The present study focused on the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati –MorisaliHarijan colony, RupnagarHarijan colony,UzanbazarHarijan colony,Fata sil Ambari Harijan colony, Panbazar Harijan colony and Maligaon Harijan colony with respect to gender inequality in education among them.

Education of women were not give due attention in earlier decades. There are only a few fortunate ones who could complete their education in earlier decades. This is mainly because of early marriage, pregnancy, poverty, ethnic background, and traditional attitudes about their status. After independence several provisions were made to encourage women's education. Several separate schools were established to encourage female education. In Guwahati also several schools were opened to improve the level of literacy (co-educational). But it is seen that though there has been increase of female literacy rate but it is very slow in case of Harijan women (Still 2008, as cited by Mathew2016:22). It is seen that despite greater access to education, women have not gained from these incentives and policies like their male counterparts in Dalit communities. This difference in access is seen in households where young Dalit men do gain access to education while their sisters do not have the same access(Still2008 as cited by Mathew 2016 :22). The Harijan girls were not encouraged to go for further higher studies as some parents think that higher the education, greater the difficulty parents have to face for selection of grooms for their educated daughters. As in their society girls were given in marriage at tender age and if parents allowed their girls to go for further higher studies then the age factor will come at the time of their marriage and it will be very difficult for them to find a match for their girls. Harijan girls were mostly found to give up pursuing their education half way. There are only a few fortunate ones who could complete their higher education .Harijan girls were mostly engaged in all the domestic chores from a very tender age ,they have to do all the work in their homes from cooking food to looking after their small brother and sisters as both their parents were found to work outside to support their family .Thus they get very little time for their studies .It was found that there were many Harijan girls of Guwahati city who have very keen interest of pursuing their education after primary level but due to their pressure from their parents to work in homes they have to leave their dreams of pursuing further

education .Early marriage stand as barrier for a Harijan girls , where the opinion of the girls were not given due importance and they have again got trapped to lead a life of poverty and ignorance under the dominance of patriarchal society. Dalit women work as domestic help, construction workers or menial laborers(Sujatha,2014 as cited byMathew2016 :23).Although Dalit women support their families financially, they are treated as inferior members of the family in a patriarchal setting, which allows for a lack of decision making (Sujatha 2014 as cited by Mathew 2016 :24) The condition of the Harijan in Assam is much better if we compare it with other states of India .These people are living more freely in this part of India as compared to others parts .Cases of violence and discrimination is also much less and there is much relaxation with regard to caste mobility .People of Assam are very much hospitable to these people and for these reason no such cases of extreme violation were recorded in the history of Assam against the Harijans.Untouchability does not seem to have made deep influence in Assam .There is no evidence of restriction in the use of public wells or tanks of any school for any caste or class(Laskar 2018:73).The Harijan girls have been getting almost all the benefits from the Governments such as

Scholarships ,Mid-day meals, Attendance scholarships ,free uniforms ,free study materials .But then also it was found that there are only a few section of Harijan girls who are pursuing higher education. The Harijan women in Assam follows less restriction and rules related to caste dominance which they have to maintain in their native land .It was also found that the education level of Harijan girls of Assam is much satisfactory as compared to the Harijan girls of other states .The depressed castes in Assam faces the ill-treatment because of their inferior social status(Devi&Lahiri,1984, p-163 as cited by Laskar 2018 :73)In spite of all the benefits from the Government the level of education is low among the Harijans and it is even more low among the girls. The six different colonies under study are inhabited by Punjabi, Telegu and Bihari communities. Uzanbazar ,Panbazar and Rupnagar coloniesare mainly inhabited by Bihari speaking people, followed by Punjabi and Telegu speaking people. Morisali and Fatasil Ambari colonies are inhabited primarily by Punjabi speaking Harijans followed by Telegu and Bihari people. Maligaon colony is inhabited mostly by Telegu speaking Harijans followed by Bihari and a small number of Punjabis.

TABLE 1: Percentage of dropouts in the(age group of 5 -22 years) among the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati city, Kamrup(metro), Assam,2019.

Uzanbazar Harijan colony		Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony		Morisali Harijan colony		Panbazar Harijan colony		Rupnagar Harijan colony		Maligaon Harijan colony	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
40%	47%	22%	35%	37%	43%	27%	29%	37%	43%	20%	22%
Bihari 15%	Bihari 19%	Bihari 11%	Bihari 13%	Bihari 16%	Bihari 20%	Bihari 10%	Bihari 13%	Bihari 18%	Bihari 16%	Bihari 7%	Bihari 7%
Punjabi 13%	Punjabi 15%	Punjabi 6%	Punjabi 11%	Punjabi 12%	Punjabi 14%	Punjabi 9%	Punjabi 9%	Punjabi 10%	Punjabi 14%	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 9%
Telegu 12.%	Telegu 13%	Telegu 5%	Telegu 11%	Telegu 9.%	Telegu 9%	Telegu 8%	Telegu 7%	Telegu 9%	Telegu 13%	Telegu 5%	Telegu 6%

The percentage of dropout in the six colonies signifies that that in almost all the six Harijan colonies the percentage of dropouts is higher among the girls.UzanbazarHarijan colony have high rate of dropouts of girls followed by *Morisali* and *Rupnagar* Harijan colony .While *Panbazar* and *Maligaon* have lowest rate of dropouts .The rate of dropout has

reduced in comparison to the earlier decades but still total eradication of dropout has not happened so far. There are three linguistic groups in each of these colonies. From a comparative perspective it can be stated that the rate of drop-out (in girls) is slightly higher among the Bihari group and lower among the Telegu speaking group.

Table2: Comparison of Dropouts among Harijan boys and Harijan girls in Primary, elementary level and after elementary level of six selected Harijan colonies of Guwahati city, Kamrup(metro), Assam,2019.

Total Population -4044 out of 529 households of the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati city Kamrup(metro) Assam.

Total Female Population 1877

Total Male Population 2167

Out of 4044 population 712 were Punjabi males and 621 were Punjabi females.

Out of 4044 population 623 were Telegu males and 533 were Telegu females.

Again out of 4044 population 832 were Bihari males and 723 were Bihari females.

Sex	Punjabi	Bihari	Telegu	Total
Male	712	832	623	2167
female	621	723	533	1877
Total	1333	1555	1156	
Literate Male	673	792	620	2167
Literate Female	612	676	528	1816
	1285	1468	1148	
Illiterate Male	31	36	10	82
Illiterate Female	35	38	12	61
	66	74	22	

Different Level of Education	Sex	Punjabi Harijan	Bihari Harijan	Telegu Harijan	Total
Master Degree Completed	Male	3	2	4	15
	Female	1	1	4	
Doing Master Degree	Male	18	16	44	116
	Female	8	6	24	
Graduation Completed	Male	38	28	64	219
	Female	18	20	51	
Pursuing Graduation	Male	31	26	60	203
	Female	22	16	48	
HS completed	Male	56	82	95	370
	Female	38	39	60	
Studying in HS	Male	48	51	74	295
	Female	35	44	43	
H.S.L.C	Male	90	74	132	494
	Female	48	50	100	
In Technical	Male	12	25	10	68
	Female	3	7	11	

The above table give a comparative view of the total population in the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati with respect to the three Harijan communities that is Punjabi, Bihari and Telegu Harijan inhabiting in it. The table also give an idea of comparative status of different level of education among the boys and girls in the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati. The above table reveals that the level of education is highest among the Telegu communities in almost all the six Harijan Colonies, followed by Punjabi and Bihari Harijan community. The table

reveals that the highest number of illiterate males (36) and illiterate females (38) are found among the Bihari speaking group. However, there are a very few members who have completed post-graduation and rate female as usual is low in comparison to males. The educational level also reveals that a significant number of the Telegu speaking people are pursuing higher education, both males and females. However, there is gender inequality in the number of girl students pursuing Higher secondary or class X among this group also.

Table : 3

The Population Structure of The six Harijan Colonies of Guwahati City, Kamrup (metro) Assam, 2019

Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony 100 household		Morisali Harijan colony 100 household		Uzanbazar Harijan colony 100 household		Maligaon Harijan colony 100 household		Panbazar Harijan colony 100 household		Rupnagar Harijan colony 29 household	
male	female	Male	Female	male	female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
430	370	432	404	399	350	416	353	410	324	80	76
800		836		749		769		734		156	
Punjabi Harijan Male 712 Female 621											
Male	212	Male	180	Male	93	Male	113	Male	89	Male	25
female	183	female	157	Female	83	Female	100	Female	76	Female	22
Bihari Harijan Male 832 Female 723											
Male	124	Male	163	male	207	Male	105	Male	198	Male	35
Female	107	Female	145	Female	196	Female	87	Female	150	Female	38
Telegu Harijan Male 623 Female 533											
Male	80	Male	87	Male	132	Male	181	Male	123	Male	80
Female	63	Female	68	Female	125	Female	163	Female	98	Female	76

The above table gives information of the population structure of the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati city. The Harijan colonies are inhabited by three linguistic communities. They are Punjabi, Telegu and Bihari. The Morisali Harijan colony is mostly dominated by Punjabispeaking group followed by Bihari and Telegu speaking groups. While Uzanbazar Harijan colony is dominated mostly by Bihari speaking followed by Telegu and Punjabi speaking groups. Panbazar Harijan colony also have majority of Bihari speaking people and there are good number of

Telegu speaking people also but the number of Punjabi speaking people is less in comparison to the above two groups. Punjabi speaking isdominated in the Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony next to Bihari and Telegu speaking groups. Teleguspeaking group is dominated in the Maligaon Harijan colony and there are also good number of Punjabi and Bihari speaking groups also. Rupnagar Harijan colony have Bihari speaking people in majority followed by Punjabi and Telegu speaking people.

Table: 4
Rate of Dropout in Primary, Elementary and after Elementaryof The six Harijan Colonies of Guwahati city, Kamrup (metro) Assam, 2019

Name of the colony	Primary Grade & Elementary grade		After class VIII--	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Maligoan Harijan colony	12%	12%	22%	26%
	Bihari 6%	Bihari 5%	Bihari 10%	Bihari 12%
	Punjabi 4%	Punjabi 4%	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 8%
	Telegu 2%	Telegu 3%	Telegu 4%	Telegu 6%
Morisali Harijan colony	25%	36%	40%	48%
	Bihari 11%	Bihari 15%	Bihari 17%	Bihari 21%
	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 11%	Punjabi 13%	Punjabi 15%
	Telegu 6%	Telegu 10%	Telegu 10%	Telegu 12%
Rupnagar Harijan colony	18%	26%	36%	47%
	Bihari 6%	Bihari 8%	Bihari 15%	Bihari 18%
	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 10%	Punjabi 11%	Punjabi 16%
	Telegu 4%	Telegu 8%	Telegu 10%	Telegu 13%
Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony	10%	16%	22%	28%
	Bihari 3%	Bihari 5%	Bihari 11%	Bihari 11%
	Punjabi 4%	Punjabi 7%	Punjabi 6%	Punjabi 10%
	Telegu 3%	Telegu 4%	Telegu 5%	Telegu 7%
Uzanbazar Harijan colony	25%	32%	43%	52%
	Bihari 11%	Bihari 12%	Bihari 18%	Bihari 25%
	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 12%	Punjabi 13%	Punjabi 15%
	Telegu 6%	Telegu 8%	Telegu 12%	Telegu 12%
Panbazar Harijan colony	11%	13%	25%	36%
	Bihari 3%	Bihari 3%	Bihari 10%	Bihari 19%
	Punjabi 4%	Punjabi 4%	Punjabi 8%	Punjabi 9%
	Telegu 4%	Telegu 6%	Telegu 7%	Telegu 8%

The above table shows the rate of dropouts both at the primary, elementary and after elementary level. It is seen that in the primary and elementary level the rate of dropouts is low both for boys and girls but after that level that is after elementary level the percentage of dropouts rises specially for Harijan girls. The rate of dropouts is highest in Uzanbazar Harijan colony followed by Morisali and Rupnagar Harijan colonies. While in the other colonies there are also moderate rate of dropouts. In all these colonies

the percentage of dropout is highest among Harijan girls. A gradual increase is noticed in the rate of dropout among girls after completing elementary level in all the three linguistic groups among the six colonies. Here also the Bihari speaking group shows a higher rate in comparison to the other groups. The main reasons cited by the parents are early marriage, puberty problems, safety of the girls, to help in the household and economic reasons.

Tabl :5 Comparison of illiteracy percentage among Harijan boys and Harijan girls of six study Harijan colonies of Guwahati city, Kamrup (Metro), Assam, 2019.

Name of the colony	Percentage of Illiteracy	
	Boys	Girls
Maligoan Harijan colony	8%	9%
	Bihari 4%	Bihari 4%
	Punjabi 2%	Punjabi 3%
	Telegu 2%	Telegu 2%
Morisali Harijan colony	22%	28%
	Bihari 12%	Bihari 13%
	Punjabi 5%	Punjabi 7%
	Telegu 5%	Telegu 8%
Rupbnagar Harijan colony	22%	25%
	Bihari 10%	Bihari 12%
	Punjabi 7%	Punjabi 7%
	Telegu 5%	Telegu 6%
Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony	18%	20%
	Bihari 8%	Bihari 11%
	Punjabi 6%	Punjabi 5%
	Telegu 4%	Telegu 4%
Uzanbazar Harijan colony	28%	36%
	Bihari 15%	Bihari 14%
	Punjabi 7%	Punjabi 12%
	Telegu 6%	Telegu 10%
Panbazar Harijan colony	10%	12%
	Bihari 5%	Bihari 5%
	Punjabi 3%	Punjabi 5%
	Telegu 2%	Telegu 2%

The above table reveals that the percentage of illiteracy is more among the Harijan girls than the Harijan boys. The level of illiteracy is more among the girls of Uzanbazar colony followed by Morisali and Rupnagar Harijan colony. While the percentage of illiteracy is lowest in Maligoan Harijan colony and

Rupnagar Harijan colony. The slight differences among literacy rates between the colonies does not help in arriving at some conclusions. But it is clear that the percentage is overall low among the girls in all the colonies.

Table: 6

Level of encouragement to pursue higher education among the Harijan girls of six selected colony of Guwahati city, Kamrup (metro) Assam, 2019

Name of the colony	Percentage of Encouragement toward pursuing higher education among Harijan girls	
	YES(Encouraged)	NO(Discouraged)
Maligoan Harijan colony	70%	30%
	Bihari 20%	11%
	Punjabi 15%	10%
	Telegu 35%	9%
Morisali Harijan colony	40%	58%
	Bihari 10%	20%
	Punjabi 15%	22%
	Telegu 15%	16%
Rupnagar Harijan colony	38%	58%
	Bihari 12%	22%
	Punjabi 13%	18%
	Telegu 13%	18%
Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony	60%	36%
	Bihari 14%	15%

	Punjabi 14%	11%
	Telegu 32%	10%
Uzanbazar Harijan colony	38%	60%
	Bihari 12%	21%
	Punjabi 14%	23%
	Telegu 12%	16%
Panbazar Harijan colony	75%	20%
	Bihari 22%	10%
	Punjabi 23%	6%
	Telegu 30%	4%

The above table shows the Level of encouragement toward education or pursuing higher education among Harijan girls. It is seen that highest level of encouragement toward girls education is found among the people of Panbazar Harijan colony followed by Maligaon and Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony. While in the Uzan Bazar Harijan colonies the level of discouragement is more followed by Morisali and Rupnagar Harijan colony. The Telegu speaking groups are found to be more in favour of girls education.

The Government have taken various incentives for encouraging education among the Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribes. They are –

1. Financial Intervention: cash transfer directly to a family/child or in bank (to access later); scholarship/stipends; provisions of textbook, stationery and uniforms; school vouchers and transport assistance (bus passes/cycles)

2. Provision of Mid-Day Meals and other health related interventions: provision of free meals, food distribution to Iron and Vitamin A tablets, inoculation and vaccination, separate sanitation facilities and provision of water.
3. Social welfare Intervention: provision of hostel and interventions for children with special needs.
4. Additional Incentives aimed at qualitative improvement: improving infrastructure, provision of quality teaching-learning, introduction of computers sports facilities and remedial teaching, bridge courses and appointment of parateachers. (Educational Research Unit, 2006 as cited by Sedwal and Kamat :26)

The schemes though are given by the government for encouraging education among the SC, but there are many people who have not availed these schemes. This may be because of ignorance and lack of proper education in this regard.

Drop Out Rates(%) for SC Children at Primary and Elementary Stages

Year	Primary Grade(I-V)			Elementary (grade I-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC
2001-2002	43.7	47.1	45.2	58.6	63.6	60.7
2002-2003	41.1	41.9	41.5	58.2	62.2	59.9
2003-2004	36.8	36.2	36.2	57.3	62.2	59.4
2004-2005	32.7	36.1	36.1	55.2	60.0	57.3
2004-2005	33.6	34.0	34.0	53.7	57.3	55.2

Source: Government of India (2006) and Government of India (2008) as cited by Sedwal and Kamat 2008 :20)

Education of a child start from family itself and mother is the first teacher of a child. If the parents of a Harijan child were educated, then there is much probability that their children were educated but if the parents were not much educated or barely educated it is very difficult for them to help their child in education. A study conducted in Tamil Nadu illustrated that mother's education also plays a significant role in girls' enrolment and grade attainment (Sedwal and Kamat 2008 :23). It emphasizes that girls tend to access public school within villages, as they are not allowed to travel long distances to attend schools because of social custom and safety concerns (Duraisamy, (2001) as cited by Sedwal and Kamat : :23). The Harijan colonies of Guwahati were located in the center of city and there were good number of Government and Municipality schools near these colonies. Teachers of these schools pay regular visit in these colonies in order to encourage education among these people. Teachers informed that parents belonging to Harijan community prefer to send their sons rather than their daughters to school. These

people think that sons are only responsible to look after their parents and daughter has to leave their parents after her marriage. This kind of thinking hamper a Harijan girl in pursuing her further education. Most of the Harijan girls are found to have completed up to primary / elementary level or at least to class X. There were even some fortunate ones who have completed up to Higher Secondary level and are pursuing Graduation. But it was found that most of them study up to elementary level and then leave school. Girls were more preferred to be expert in household works rather than in class work. And it was seen that once a Harijan girl left her education the preparation for her marriage starts. Girls are particularly disadvantaged because family and social roles often do not prioritise their education (Bandyopadhyaya and Subramanian 2008 as cited by Sedwal and Kamat :23) Dropout remains a major issue among the Harijans specially among girls . Getting livelihood opportunities is more important for the parents of Harijan community than getting educational opportunities for their children.

Table:7 Reasons for leaving education mid-way by the daughters of the of Six Harijan colonies of Guwahati ,Kamrup(metro) Assam,2019.

Causes of dropout	In percentage %
Domestic chores	55%
	Bihari 25%
	Punjabi 15%
	Telegu 15%
Early marriage	50%
	Bihari 22%
	Punjabi 15%
	Telegu 13%
Pressure of earning	45%
	Bihari 18%
	Punjabi 14%
	Telegu13 %
Financial problem	50%
	Bihari 19%
	Punjabi 16%
	Telegu15%
Health issue	38%
	Bihari 18%
	Punjabi 12%
	Telegu 8%
Lack of support from parents in study	62%
	Bihari 25%
	Punjabi 21%
	Telegu 16%
Responsibilities in homes	48%
	Bihari 18%
	Punjabi 14%
	Telegu 16%
Not interested in studies	43%
	Bihari 20%
	Punjabi 16%
	Telegu 7%
Caste discrimination	23%
	Bihari 8%
	Punjabi 7%
	Telegu 8%
Poor in studies	44%
	Bihari 21%
	Punjabi 12%
	Telegu11%
Language problem	38%
	Bihari 7%
	Punjabi 11%
	Telegu 20%

The above table reveals that a Harijan girl has to face many hurdles while pursuing her education which often leads to the problem of leaving education mid-way. Domestic chores and early

marriage remains the two most important reasons. Next come financial problem and parents' lack of support for their girls rather than boys in pursuing higher education which results in poor performance in exam. Responsibilities at home are more for girls than that for boys. Language problem and caste discrimination also creates burdens for girls to pursue their goals in education. Health issues and not being able to cope with studies are other minor reasons for leaving education mid-way. Among the Telegu speaking group in all the colonies, language problem seems to be the main reason for leaving school. Domestic work and lack of support from parents are the major reasons behind the Bihari speaking group to leave studies. The Punjabi ones leave studies due to lack of support from parents and lack of interest in studies.

Financial problem remains a major barrier for the girls to pursue their education. High dropouts and lower enrollment rates are natural outcomes of poverty and unemployment among SCs in India (Lata 2017:349). The chances of SC and ST students being educated beyond higher secondary level are comparatively lesser than that of non-poor and upper castes (George & Naseem 2010 as cited by Lata 2017:349). It was found that scholarship scheme was introduced for the benefits of Scheduled Caste community but the money of scholarship took a very long time to reach the real needy ones and for this a Harijan girl has to depend on parents to buy the important study materials which in return become very difficult for the poor parents to manage with their income. The rate of fees of Private schools also creates lots of problem. Some parents want their child to get admission in English medium schools but after few years they have to again shift their child from the school to Government school due to their low income which creates lots of stagnation and wastage in a child's education. Language barrier also remains a major problem of dropouts as most of Harijan students study in Hindi medium schools upto primary level and after that they have to move to another school for further education and as there are lack of such Hindi medium schools at higher level in Guwahati, they have to adjust with either Assamese or English medium schools which results in lots of problems and sometimes leads to dropouts. Even though government of India gives option to answer in the vernacular languages of the student, the medium of instruction remain in English and suggested reference material is also in English (Bhatty, K 1998 as cited in Lata 2017:349). The Practice of untouchability, caste and casteism prevails in the schools and higher education system (Lata 2017:349). Caste discrimination is found to be prevalent in some form or other in the society which hamper a student from Scheduled Caste community in pursuing higher education. A Harijan student has to face caste discrimination mainly when they move from their community based schools to the school for general students that is not reserved for a special class. The students of high caste also do not usually like to share their things with Harijan students. The academic success or failure and social adjustment or

maladjustment of students from Scheduled Caste and tribal group in higher education strongly depends on their place within the social structure, which identifies them as stigmatized and assigns them various labels as 'not capable of success' and 'destined to fail' (Lata 2017:349). Family background and family income plays an important role in the education of the child. Parents who were financially sound and who were literate understand the value of education and provide every possible support for their childrens'education. In the case of SC students, hence at all educational level including higher education, low enrolment, poor academic achievement and high dropout are the result (Acharya and Behera D.2005; Lata 2017:349).Health related issues also creates dropout among the Harijan girls most than the Harijan boys. Girls of a family is concern with the duty of cleaning the house and everything related to it. The Harijan community mainly lives in slum areas where there is no proper drainage system, irregular supply of water, no proper disposal of garbage, use of community latrines and bathrooms. The Government have now taken positive steps in solving these problems but they have much to do in this regard. Various health camps are organized by NGOs in these areas.

Despite having such discrete facilities, the slum dwellers are unable to improve their poor living condition and health status in terms of diseases, nutritional deficiency and affordable health facilities (Marimuthu, Palaniappan,et al.(2016) as cited byZaman Uz Tabrez 2018).Other than this early marriages of girls in rural areas, dowry system and illiteracy of the parents are responsible for low educational status of Scheduled Caste women (Chouhan,P(2013) as cited by Lata ,(2017):350).The Harijans of Guwahti though live in urban settings their traditional thinking and outlook cannot be changedeasily. Again the slum environment of the Harijan colony also provides a hamper for girls to go out and study as eve teasing were frequent in these colonies and they become afraid of it and stop going to school , which ultimately leads to dropouts from school .Again many Harijan girls, overburdened with household work, ultimately fail to clear the exams in the class and ultimately leads to dropouts from their school .And once a Harijan girl fail in the class their parents were not at all interestedin allowing their girls to continue with her studies again. This may not be the same with boys.Ultimately girls weremade to sit at homes doing all domestic chores.

Table 8
Benefits from the Government received by the daughters of the study colonies of Guwahaticity, Kamrup (metro), Assam (in percentage). 2019

Benefits	Uzan bazaar Harijan colony	Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony	Maligaon Harijan colony	Panbazar Harijan colony	Morisali Harijan colony	Rupnagar Harijan colony
Mid day meal	80%	76%	80%	80%	76%	78%
	Bihari 29% Punjabi 26% Telegu25%	Bihari 28% Punjabi 25% Telegu23%	Bihari 30% Punjabi 26% Telegu24%	Bihari 28% Punjabi 26% Telegu26%	Bihari 28% Punjabi 26% Telegu22%	Bihari 29% Punjabi 26% Telegu23%
Scholarship scheme	40%	68%	72%	70%	43%	38%
	Bihari 7% Punjabi 16% Telegu 17%	Bihari 22% Punjabi 20% Telegu 26%	Bihari 23% Punjabi 19% Telegu 30%	Bihari 28% Punjabi 22% Telegu 20%	Bihari 12% Punjabi 16% Telegu 15%	Bihari 16% Punjabi 10% Telegu 12%
	45%	63%	69%	74%	54%	46%
Free uniforms	45%	63%	69%	74%	54%	46%
	Bihari 16% Punjabi 15% Telegu 14%	Bihari 19% Punjabi 21% Telegu 23%	Bihari 21% Punjabi 23% Telegu 25%	Bihari 25% Punjabi 24% Telegu 25%	Bihari 19% Punjabi 18% Telegu 17%	Bihari 17% Punjabi 14% Telegu 15%
	36%	47%	55%	65%	36%	50%
Free study materials	36%	47%	55%	65%	36%	50%
	Bihari 12% Punjabi 10% Telegu 14%	Bihari 16% Punjabi 15% Telegu 16%	Bihari 16% Punjabi 17% Telegu 22%	Bihari 21% Punjabi 21% Telegu 23%	Bihari 13% Punjabi 12% Telegu 11%	Bihari 17% Punjabi 15% Telegu 18%

The above table reveals the different types of Government schemes availed by the Harijan girls from the six Harijan colonies of Guwahati. The mid-day meal is in highest percentage in all the six colonies. The scholarship scheme is highest among the girls of Panbazar and Maligaon Harijan colony followed by Fatasil Ambari Harijan colony. It is lowest among the Rupnagar Harijan colony followed by Uzanbazar Harijan colony and Morisali Harijan colony. It is seen that they have availed most of the schemes provided by the Government.

It is noticed that in some colonies in spite of getting almost all the benefits from the Government

the Harijan Girls are not encouraged to go for further education .According to some of the teachers, the girl children of these colonies are being excluded from education as many of their parents prefer them to stay back at home to handle certain responsibilities, which are like taking care of siblings ,attending household works, in addition to avoiding eve-teasing and sexual harassment (Wesly2017:18).Teachers from the Municipality school in the nearby areas of Harijan colony informed that they arrange regular parents and teachers meetings in order to encourage girls' education among these people but the desired achievement is yet to be achieved.

Recent changes among the Educated Harijan women. Modern exposure has increased access to ideas and methods on how the positive impacts of education among females. Education has made impact upon the lives of Harijan women. Education has made them self-dependent. The new generation girls of Harijan colony have understood the importance of education in their lives. The traditional occupations were discontinued among the educated girls. Many were engaged in other sectors. Some among them have been able to get a white collar job for themselves. And others go for private jobs. Some of the Harijan girls have started their own business of clothes, doll making, tailoring, stationary shops, small hotels, beauty parlor etc by taking loans from the government. These girls have not only made themselves self-employed but also made other girls of the Harijan colony self-employed. Education provides individuals with the means to increase their income and engaged in economic activities (Fraser 2010 :6). The girls who are educated are not married off at a tender age. These Harijan girls are supporting the family like their brothers. This results in the change in the mindset of the people of the colony. Now the educated girls are more respected by other caste population. The educated girls prefer an educated husband. Education has made the girls more conscious with regard to their health issues and educated girls are more conscious of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in their families.

Conclusion

Relative to minority men, minority women in India have far more limited access to both educational and employment resources. For these women, the hardships associated with living in a 'low-income' developing nation and the deprivations associated with minority status are compounded by a patriarchal value system (Dunn 1993:12).

Despite all the incentives given for the encouragement of girls' education among the Scheduled Caste communities, it is seen that people still do not encourage girls. The main reason behind all this is lack of awareness among the parents themselves. They feel that if girls start to go to school then they will be deprived of a helping hand at home. Moreover, they fear that their girls may remain single all their lives if educated as they will fail to find a suitable match. Some of them even feel that it is futile to pursue education irrespective of gender as they have to pursue their traditional occupation. The Telegu speaking people in all the six colonies were found to be more enlightened and encouraging in comparison to the other groups. Their only problem is language and sometimes the fear that they might suffer from discrimination because of caste. So making these people aware of the possibilities of education, removing language barriers in schools, and removing caste disparities (if any in Assam) can really boost their morale and help in increasing the enrolment of girls in schools. Ensuring security to girls from sexual harassment and providing proper sanitation in schools will also encourage them to pursue education and chase their dreams.

The condition of a Harijan women have changed with the passage of time. This is evident in their increasing level of pursuing education but the rate is slow if we compare with the non-Harijan girls of other caste population. The impact of change is uneven between rural and urban settings. Several social movements and awareness camps are organized to make women aware of their rights and raise their voices against exploitation. The impact of mass media also helps a lot in making the Harijan women more aware as nowadays every news reaches every corner of the world. A woman can be independent in a society only if she is educated. Empowering women through education can help in restraining all social evils practicing in the society such as child marriage or dowry system. A Harijan woman when she gains access to education can break the chain of bondage of caste discrimination can move forward in her life. A large majority of Dalits have consciously disassociated themselves from their 'polluting' occupation. This is evident among the educated Harijans. The educated Harijan women will surely come out from all those hurdles in the near future and will be like the torchbearers or guide for the people of their community. The complex stratification systems in India give rise to a multiplicity of social categories which often obscure the relative status of women and men within the more disadvantaged segments of the population (Dunn 1993:1).

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