

# **Empowerment of Marginalized Communities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research paper puts light upon the empowerment of marginalized communities. In India, there exists a considerable proportion of the marginalized communities- the disadvantaged people, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Adivasis, other backward classes, peasants, minority workers, women, people with disabilities, the aged, socio-economically backward sections of the society, poverty stricken people are the categories. The marginalized communities are undergoing a struggle to attain empowerment; they desire to attain educational qualifications and literacy skills and would like to enhance their living conditions by obtaining a good employment. The main areas that have been highlighted in this paper are marginalized communities and education in India, economic empowerment through finance and micro-credit facilities, disparities in India, factors promoting to empowerment and barriers to the empowerment of the marginalized communities. It has been observed that finances and monetary resources are regarded to be the most crucial aspects towards empowerment. Marginalized people desire to enhance their literacy skills of reading, writing and solving numerical problems so that they understand the worldly affairs. There are barriers during the course of empowerment of the marginalized groups and on the other hand, there are factors that have been promoted in order to lead to their empowerment.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Marginalized Communities, Capacity Building, Skill Development, Finance, Education, Literacy, Employment.

## **Introduction**

Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in making contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationships means that they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on development of human beings, as well as on society at large. As the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a productive, healthy, and creative life, it is important to address the issue of marginalization.

In general, the term 'marginalization' describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies, where people who they perceive to undesirable, or without useful function are excluded, i.e., marginalized. The people who are marginalized are outside the existing systems of protection and integration. This limits their opportunities and means for survival.

The initiative of empowerment in its present procedure is innovative. This thought is also utilized in the situation of the enhancement of the marginalized, unorganized and other disadvantaged sections of the society. After all, dominated groups such as unorganized workers, poor peasants, tribal people, minority groups and women are all involved in a great effort for control and judge the development procedure for their own understandings. The deprived people and their associations at the grassroots level are determined persistently to understand their dreams and expectations for a better future and an empowered life. The marginalized communities are continuously engaged in the struggle which is required on their part to attain empowerment.

Empowerment refers to the formulation of capabilities in the individuals or groups to contribute effectively in leading to their wellbeing. Theoretically, empowerment should be a process that helps individuals to acquire management, direction and organization of their own lives through promotion of knowledge, education, awareness, taking achievement and putting into practice the order to implement larger control. Therefore, empowerment refers to creation of capabilities among the individuals and groups through which they become self-sufficient, independent and organized. Among the diverse means put forward to accomplish this objective, empowerment through the development of the community, political and social

rights of citizenship is significant; it is a means of seeking empowerment within the democratic political process.

### **Objectives**

- To understand the causes of inequality and discrimination
- To study the insights for advocating rights and empowerment of marginalized communities
- To study the academic enrichment for their advancement of knowledge
- To have a glance over the community development initiatives for their improvement

### **Research methodology**

The support of secondary data was taken in order to accomplish the objectives of study. Sources such as magazines, journals, research articles, published papers, government reports, websites etc., were looked into for data collection.

### **Marginalized Communities and Education in India**

In India, among the marginal communities, the SC population is 201.4 million (16.6%) and the ST population is 104.5 million (8.6%). Their literacy rate is 66.1% for SCs and 58.95% for STs, which is lower than the overall literacy rate in India, that is, 74.04 %. Among the marginal communities, the literacy rate for the males is comparatively less than 75.2% for SCs and 68.5% for STs against 82.14% overall total male literacy. Similarly, for the marginal community's literacy rate for females, it is also comparatively lower, which is 56.5% for SCs and 49.40% for STs against 65.46% total female literacy in India (Census of India, 2011).

Likewise, the educational enrolment of marginal sections at school and intermediate level is also alarming in class I–XII, which is very less, 19.3%, for SCs, 9.7% for STs, compared to about 71% for 4 Contemporary Voice of Dalit the non-SC/ST population in India. And so, in higher education, the position of marginal communities is comparatively much lower than non-SCs/STs (ESAG, 2018). The overall higher educational enrolment of marginal community is extremely low, which is 14.9% for SCs and 5.5% for the STs, compared to 79.6% for the non-SC/ST population. Higher educational enrolment of marginal community's male is also low, which shows 14.8% for SCs and 5.4 % for STs compared to 79.8 % non-SCs/STs. Similarly, for females, higher educational enrolment for the marginal communities is likewise lower, showing 15% for SCs and 5.5% for STs compared to 79.5% non-SC/ST categories (AISHE, 2019).

These alarming figures of imbalances or differences within the literacy rates across the sections of society in India demand states' intervention for effective policy implementation to make a balanced growth in the literacy rate of the country across the diverse population in India. In particular, in higher education, the academic participation of these students needs to be focused on for better future attainments by these communities and by the nation as a whole. As a result to make this balance, the state took special efforts and made special provisions for the marginal communities in the field of education. This study found that public policy intervention is a big support that allows the SC and ST students to get enrolled at the higher education level. About 86% of the marginal students responded they have joined higher education because of educational fellowship provided by the government as public policy intervention. However, only about 14% of students seemed to be economically sound to independently finance their higher education in India and can manage to study without any financial assistance or fellowship provided to them by the government (Field Study Data). This shows the importance of public policy interventions to meet equal participation enhancing the participation of SC and ST students in higher education.

Government data on the Muslim community's enrolment in schools, collected for the first time, substantiates what the Sachar Committee (2006) report specified about their educational status. The research stated that Muslims were the most educationally backward community within the country; comprising just about 13% of India's population, Muslim enrolment at the primary school level from class first to fifth was an inadequate 9.39% of total enrolment figures for 2006-07. The national educational policy (1986) emphasizes upon the need of the liberalization of education to release marginalized sections of the society. The policy advocated for the utilization of distance education media in an immense way to reach those people in isolated and remote areas. The majority of the people, SC/ST's, backward classes, socio-economically backward sections of the society, women and physically disabled stay behind out of educational institutions. Distance education provides them with an original opportunity for acquiring education.

### **Economic Empowerment through Finance and Micro-credit Facilities for the Marginalized Communities**

Finance and monetary resources are considered to be extremely crucial in order to bring about economic empowerment of the marginalized communities. A person who belongs to marginalized community may not be willing to attend an educational institution and obtain a degree but he always looks out for a source of income. Finance, approachable, available and

affordable is one of the major restrictions in voluntary action amongst the marginalized, disadvantaged and economically weaker sections of the population towards attainment of self-entrepreneurship, empowerment and self-reliance. Positive opportunities are provided by the Government of India for making provision of loans at concessional rates to promote a range of voluntary activities amongst the marginalized, physically and socially backward, disadvantaged and economically deprived sections of the population towards attaining economic self-reliance. The schemes that have been generated are provision of micro- finance, setting up of self employment income generation projects, loans and grants, assistances, interest rates, pensions, disability benefits, Swarnima- a special scheme for women to provide them loans, belonging to other backward classes and loans for education, training and skill development programs.

### **Disparities in India**

The following areas have been identified which cause disparities concerning the marginalized communities in different regions:

- 1. Per Capita Income** - Per capita income is the core of the level of economic doings in the area. There are very broad regional differences in per capita income. There were only eleven States which had per capita income higher than the national average. The bottom seven poorest States that had per capita income below the national average are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh; these States are habitats to more than half of India's population.
- 2. Poverty** – State wise poverty ratios have observed a reduction over the years. Though the level of poverty has decreased at the macro-level, rural-urban and inter-state differences still exist; the poverty ratio is still moderately high in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Poverty rates in rural Orissa (43%) and rural Bihar (40%) are in an extremely miserable state; on the other hand rural Haryana (5.7%) and rural Punjab (2.4%) measure up to well even at global level with some of the middle income countries.
- 3. Industrial Growth** - The preliminary allocation of industries in India was established by the historical process of development determined principally due to the awareness of the British Rulers. As a result, most of the industries were established at a small number of centers. This outline has persisted in the post-independence period as well

despite all endeavors made so distant to expand the process of industrialization of various areas.

- 4. Agricultural Growth** - Regional disparities in agricultural growth have augmented over the years within the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, driving well further on of others. The per capita average food grain production has been the maximum in Punjab and the minimum in Kerala. Mizoram and Maharashtra are at the lowest level in respect of irrigated areas. States like Punjab and Haryana achieved high rate of agricultural production because of having extensive irrigation services and intensive use of fertilizers. In majority of the States, agricultural growth is yet to accept the required rapidity and come up to their potential.
- 5. Literacy** - It is one of the main signs of socio-economic development but there are immense disparities in this regard in various regions of the country. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate is the maximum in Kerala and the minimum in Bihar. Whereas the all-Indian average of literacy rate was 74.04 percent, it was 93.91 percent in Kerala and only 47 percent in Bihar; there are important differences among the rest of the States also.
- 6. Transport and Communications** - Transport and communication in India possess different varieties. The most common forms of transportation are roadways, railways, airways and waterways. For example, with regards of road length there are some States that are at a very advanced level, whereas there are some in which the road situation is in a deprived state. With concern to total road length per 100 km. Kerala tops the list whereas the State of Jammu and Kashmir is at the bottom.

### **Factors Promoting Empowerment of the Marginalized Communities**

- 1. Education and Literacy** – Education and literacy are considered to be extremely important factors in the promotion of empowerment of the entire nation. When an individual is an agricultural laborer or an electrician, he has to acquire the knowledge and the skills in order to perform well in his job duties. Therefore, education and literacy promote empowerment of the marginalized communities.
- 2. Health and Family Welfare** – Health and well being are important factors for an individual; it has been observed that marginalized workers also take out some time for themselves to get engaged in physical exercises, they prefer to obtain healthcare services and medical centers where facilities are provided free of cost.

Awareness regarding maintenance of good health conditions, well being, and healthy, nutritious and well balanced diet enables the promotion of empowerment.

3. **Labor and Employment** – Getting engaged within employment, performing labor, working, doing jobs are considered to be the most essential factors that brings empowerment of the marginalized communities. When a person is engaged in job, he becomes self sufficient, aware, and would effectively contribute towards the welfare of his family.
4. **Women and Child Development** – It is true that in India, crime against women is prevalent which is a major hindrance towards their empowerment; when a woman is subjected to crime and violence, there are legal authorities, organizations, helpline services that render assistance. Women and child development are extremely vital factors to be taken into account to bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities; medical services, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), immunization, supplementary feeding, education, knowledge regarding health and nutrition areas are some of the factors that need to be implemented to bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities.
5. **Rural Development** – In rural areas, provision of educational and training centers, health care facilities, efficiency in the agricultural methods, proper housing, electricity supply, job opportunities for individuals, clean drinking water, development of infrastructural facilities such as transport, roads and systems of communications and implementation of technology are some of the vital aspects that bring about rural development.
6. **Urban Development** – In the urban areas, advancements in the systems of education, generation of more and more enhanced employment opportunities, industrializations, development of the communication facilities, transportation, provision of houses even for the socio-economically backward sections of the society, eradication of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are some of the aspects to bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities.

### **Barriers to the Empowerment of the Marginalized Communities**

The following factors have been stated that prove to be barriers to the empowerment of the marginalized communities (Human Development, 2013).

1. **Poverty** – An individual or a family is stated to be in the conditions of poverty when their per capita income is extremely low, when they do not possess enough resources to meet their day to day requirements, when there is paucity of food

within their households, then they are stated to be living in the conditions of poverty. This is a barrier because, when a person or a group of individuals are in the conditions of poverty, they become helpless and cannot prove or accomplish themselves.

2. **Unemployment** – Education has been regarded as a significant aspect and has become widespread amongst the deprived, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population as well. When a person has acquired educational and literacy skills, but is unable to obtain a job, then this proves to be a barrier within the course of their empowerment.
3. **Illiteracy** – There are significant proportions of people among the deprived, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population who lack the basic literacy skills, who are not educated; this proves to be a barrier during the course of their empowerment, when a person is illiterate, he becomes deprived and dependent, he faces impediments during the course of self-sustenance and autonomy.
4. **Inequality** – There are differences in the status and position of marginalized and disadvantaged communities and upper class, wealthier individuals. It has been observed that in the houses of the upper class individuals, marginalized people are made to sit on the floor and they eat in different utensils, though well educated people communicate with them in an appropriate manner, show courtesy but there are differences observed as it has been stated above; therefore, it can be stated that inequality proves to be a barrier.
5. **Health and Welfare** – Though there have been healthcare and welfare facilities available for the marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population, but when a person is unwell, or suffers from the condition of malnutrition, or is in a depressed condition or suffers from health problems such as hearing impairments, visual impairments, autism, disabilities and so forth, then these health problems prove to be barriers.



## Recommendations and Conclusion

For the country to progress in all ways, economically, politically, socially, financially, and administratively, it is vital that the marginalized communities should be provided with opportunities that would lead to their empowerment. There have been disparities on the basis of factors such as per capita income, poverty, industrial growth, agricultural growth, literacy and transport and communications; improvements need to be initiated in these areas in order to generate empowerment. The main factors that need to be underscored are education and literacy, health and family welfare, labor and employment, women and child development, rural development and urban development. There are certain factors that prove to be barriers such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, inequality, health and welfare.

Family planning and welfare programs should be organized in such a manner that the requirements of the consumers must be adequately met. There have been provision of micro-finance and other programs that meet the financial requirements such as loans and grants, income generation projects, disability benefits, assistances, interest rates, pensions, provision of loans to women who belong to the other backward classes and loans for educational, training and skill development programs. Empowerment opportunities for the marginalized sections of the society would contribute in the advancement of the country as well as eradication of all kinds of problems.

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