

## DALIT AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN UTTAR PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF LUCKNOW

**Dr. Y. Swarupa R. Shankar<sup>1</sup> Sangeeta Kumari<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>M.A., Ph.D. Associate Professor (History), School of Social Sciences  
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad - 500046, Telangana

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D Research Scholar, University of Hyderabad, Department of History

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the many hurdles that lie in the path of Valmiki women seeking education. Focusing on the city of Lucknow, it will be an attempt to show how Valmiki women are subjected to a system of double oppression. It seeks to reveal the physical and mental violence they are subjected to. The Dalit Women is perhaps merely a phantom that serves everyone in society with little hope of any care or concern for herself. She is neglected by society. She works from being a scavenger to midwife, labourer to agricultural worker, housewife to warrior like other women; she is a mother, a sister, a daughter, a wife, a divine soul and carer. Her educational story is a long narration of wins and losses. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said, “Unity is meaningless without accompaniment of women, education is fruitless without educated women and agitation is incomplete without strength of women.” Dr. S. R. Radhakrishnan said, “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the condition of the status of the women.” For Dalit women, in every sphere, they have to face discrimination twice because of their identity, and are, thus, ‘doubly Dalits’ and ‘doubly jeopardized’. The Valmikis are one of the largest socially stigmatized Dalit groups numbering nearly 1.5 million in U.P alone and constitute about 3.3% of Dalit population of Uttar Pradesh. They occupy the lowest position of the caste system according to the social hierarchy among both the higher and lower castes in India. The Bhangis occupy the lowest of the low position as they are night soil removers. Prior to Independence, the Bhangis mainly worked as sweepers for higher castes.

Literacy rate among the Valmikis is low because they cannot afford it though they view education favorably. According to the 2001 Census report, among the major Scheduled Castes of U.P., Chamar and Dhobhi have shown the highest literacy rate (49%) while Valmikis have recorded the lowest literacy rate (33.8%). The graduates and above are just 1.4%. The non-technical and technical diploma holders constitute a mere 0.1% only.

The Educational status of Valmiki women is miserable as compared to others. This lack of literacy snatches from women their dignity, keeps the women economically poor and mentally isolated and does not allow them to play a dominant role in society. It acts as a brake on social development, economic progress and the political maturity of women. Also, due to illiteracy, Valmiki women fail to bring up their children properly. They cannot educate them properly. The inferiority complex is developed among them and they are incapable of building confidence among themselves.

The economic strength of women in this community makes them more important in the family. Boys go out to school while girls join their mothers at work at an early age. Despite the fact that women in the Valmiki community enjoy a lot of authority and respect, the attitude towards educating the girl child is still negative. Most of them are of the opinion that there is no need to waste money on a girl's education; it will not only keep them away from work but at the same time their marriage will become a problem. Among the Valmikis, education of the girl is not regarded as qualification at the time of marriage. It is a disqualification as an educated partner has to be found for her which is an expensive affair.

**Keywords:** Scavenger, Skelton, Community, Carer.

### Introduction

Without knowledge, intellect was lost; Without intellect, morality was lost; without morality dynamism was lost; without dynamism, money/finance was lost; without money Sudras were degraded (demoralized) , all this misery and disasters were due to lack of knowledge!

-Jotirao Phule, the pioneer of women's education in Maharashtra

Education is a very powerful instrument for emancipation. Further, it may be defined as the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills and altitudes by means of institutions that have been built up towards this end. It is an inevitable tool for the improvement of the socio-economic condition of people. Education helps to bridge the wide disparity in social status, political assertions and income distribution. This also plays a significant role in transforming the existing social order and in defining the aims and objectives of human beings. One of the major objectives of education in the post-independence era, specifically in 1950, was to cater to the educational needs and development of SC children who have remained quite isolated from the ambit of education for over ages. After independence; government started making systematic efforts to raise the educational standard of SCs although the result has not been satisfactory in terms of its implementation and outcome. Notwithstanding, education was an attempt at integration of Dalits with the rest of the society, yet, they continue to remain out of mainstream life. These groups of children are brought up in the society along with others but are away from the mainstream. It is only during the last few decades that there has been a social reorientation and acceptance.<sup>1</sup> In India, a good deal of emphasis has been laid since independence, on the spread of education. The Constitution, adopted in 1950, emphasized on the central importance of education in national development and included a Directive Principle to provide by 1960, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age group of 14 years. Educational development among socially and economically weaker sections such as SC has been considered an important obligation under the constitution. Article 46 provides to promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the population and in particular of the SCs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

**Background-** India claims to be the largest democracy in the world. The major factor which makes democracy a success is the quality of its men and women. Democracy becomes

meaningless for people if they remain uneducated and the number of illiterates remains high. Even today, the modern Indian state, despite its commitment towards addressing the problems of caste, has completely failed to address the question of increasing access to modern education. 80% of Dalits are living below the poverty line and 23.62% of them have marginal or small cultivator status. Besides, 3.42% were occupied in household whereas around 17.59% of Dalits are engaged under the category “other workers” which included employment in Municipal Corporation, Governmental organization, service sector etc.<sup>3</sup>

According to the 2001 Census, the population of Uttar Pradesh had reached 1, 66,197,921 out of which the SC population was 35,148,377 which was about 21.1% of total population. The population of Balmiki’s was 11, 66,383 (3.3%). The majority of the population belonging to the SCs is illiterate even today. The literacy rate has grown at less than 1% per year while population has been growing at the rate of 2% per annum. According to the 2001 Census, in U.P. only 47% of the Balmiki population is literate.

Table (1)

India	Literacy Rate	SC Literacy Rate
Male	64.13%	49.91%
Female	39.29%	23.76%
Total	52.21%	37.41%

Source: Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, Report Published in March 1998.

The report published in March 1998 by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, indicates the recent literacy figure of general communities as well as SCs. According to table 1, the general castes (male) literacy rate is 64.13%. Whereas it is only 49.91% in the case of SC male. While the literacy rate of women belonging to general communities was 39.29%, that of SC females was 23.76%. If we include male and female, the literacy rate reaches to 52.21% among general castes whereas it is 37.41% among SCs.

Only 1.9% of the population belonging to SCs were literate in 1951 which increased to 12.30% in 1961. In other words, the literacy rate among the SC increased by 10.4% in the first 10 years, In 40 years only 37.41% SC population were literate in 1991. In 2001, the literacy rate of SCs was 54.7%. It is very disappointing to see that the measures adopted to develop education among SCs have failed at every level. The literacy rate among them did not increase even at the rate of one percent in a year.

Table (2): Literacy Rate (SC)

Year	Percentage
------	------------

2001	54.7%
1991	37.41%
1981	26.48%
1971	18.28%
1961	12.30%
1951	1.9%

Source: Census Reports of various years

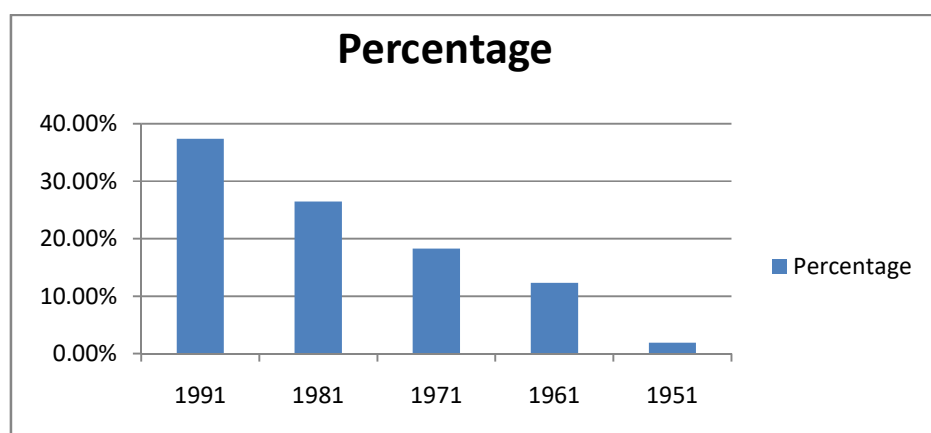


Table 2 shows the literacy rate of SCs in various years. According to the 1991 Census, India became more literate than it was in 1951.

**Progress at Educational level**

Education is the soul of human civilization development but it has been lacking among the SCs. To compete with general communities, it is necessary to equip them educationally. According to the 2001 Census, the population of Uttar Pradesh had reached 1, 66,197,921 out of which SC population was 35,148,377 which was about 21.1% of total population. The population of Balmikis was 11, 66,383 (3.3%). In 2001, the literacy rate of U.P. SCs was 54.7% out of which 60.3% for males and 30.5% for females. It is a matter of grave concern that out of a total 133 lakh children in the age group of 5-14 years. 58.3 lakh have been attending school constituting 56.44 percent. As many as 45.1 lakh (44.6%) children in the corresponding age group have not been going to school. The percentage of Balmiki children going to school has been 53.3% only.

The school dropout rate is a matter of concern. 72.91% SC students dropped their education before they could reach high school. The data available from the U.P government gives details of SC students studying at various levels.

**Table (3): SC student Registered between Primary and Ph. D levels**

S.No.	Class	No. of Students
-------	-------	-----------------

1	Primary(1-5)	24,11,563
2	Junior high school (6-8)	07,34,330
3	High school (9-10)	03,14,686
4	Above high school and up to Ph.D. Level	02,34,776
Total		37,35,355

Source: Government of U.P. Report, 1992-93.

Table 3 reveals a very pathetic picture of SC students registered at various levels. At primary level around 24 lakh SC boys and girls were registered. Out of this number, only 729 students reached up to Post graduation in Science. In other words, in a state like U.P where the SC population is around 3 corers, not even 1000 students of this community are doing M.Sc. Besides, 3 lakh boy and girl students were studying in High School out of which only 11,000 boys/girls reached the level of Post-graduation. In most of the cases, it has been observed that the economic backwardness of SC family is the only barrier in gaining access to education.

### Dropout Problem

A Conference was held on “Education for all” in New Delhi, in which the Ministry of Education, Government of India came out with a statement in the form of a booklet which dealt with the dropout rate among SC students at various levels.

Table (4): SC students Registered at Graduation and Post- graduation

Graduate Subject	Degree Course	Class SC's
Art and Literature	B.A	37,217
Science	B.SC	04,966
Commerce	B.com	02,739
Engineering	B.E. etc.	00,091
Medical	M.B.B.S	00,182
B.Ed.	B.Ed.	1,555
Total		46,748

Post-Graduation	Ph.D./M.Phil.	0,224
Science	M.sc	0,729

Commerce	M.com	0,632
Art and Literature	M.A	9,526
	Total	11,248

**Source: Government of U.P Report 1992-93**

The dropout rate given here is on an all U.P basis. There is a specific mention about Lucknow. The dropout rate in Lucknow is more or less equal to all India. Because barring two or three states, the status of Scheduled Caste education is more or less the same. However, in many cases, Lucknow is in the worst position in comparison to other states.

Table 4 shows that among 100 boys/girls admitted in class 1<sup>st</sup>, 80 out of 100 dropped out before they could reach up to 10<sup>th</sup> and at the P.G level, numerically they were very few. For instance, in the year 1992-93, 4 lakh SC students were registered at primary level but only around 24,000 of them were able to reach up to P.G level.

Some reasons for high dropout rate raise several questions:

1. Several lakhs of SC boy/girls registered themselves in primary school but out of them only a few hundreds or thousands students could reach up to P.G level. Is it because these students are not interested in gaining education?
2. Just imagine those SC students who scored 70% marks but had to drop their studies. Because they spent their childhood in schools where modern education was not introduced, they failed to go for further advanced education. Realizing this dismal possibility of securing jobs, they opted out of their education.
3. Lakhs of SC boys/girls failed to pass through 12<sup>th</sup> standard and these students certainly have crossed their 16 years of age.
4. Think about those SC students with the age ranging between 17 to 22 who have cleared Graduation and Post graduation either in third division or failed.
5. The representation of SC boys/girls in Science subjects is too negligible. Are the SC students not interested in studying Science or do they lack proper guidance or even if they get admission in Science subject, they lack resources to pursue their studies in Science subject.<sup>4</sup>

### The Phenomena

Before delving deep into the poor success rate of Dalits in higher education, it would be significant to examine the value system of higher education. By its very nature, higher education is elite. Only 6% of the relevant age group enrolls in higher education. Most of these children are from families of politicians, bureaucrats, landlords, businessmen and professionals hailing from upper castes and classes with a clear value system of their own. A few years ago a survey was done on the beneficiaries of higher education that indicated that 80% of the students who attend universities came from the top 20%.<sup>5</sup>

Owing to their internalized caste values in the universities and colleges Dalit students feel inferior. The students from upper caste communities feel superior and treat Dalit students in line

with the internalized caste values. What the centers of higher education do is merely perpetuate the notion of purity and impurity, superiority and inferiority, high and low, the very same caste sentiments existing in society. This is the reason behind many dropouts among Scheduled Caste students for they find the environment not congenial. Those who survive, either pass out with a feeling of inferiority or have to compete with the higher castes and classes. By moving them out of their social environment, the higher education system gives blows to the culture of the Dalits. Who determines the culture of the universities? The caste culture which is prevalent in higher education is the creation of casteist teachers and administrators who teach and administer the centers of learning. Generally, caste teachers are not expected to behave very differently in colleges and universities than the way they behave in society. Consciously or unconsciously, the teachers and administrators do perpetuate, through their own interaction with Dalit students, their internalized caste values, thus posing a threat to the achievement of Dalit students. Thus a Dalit student, besides getting rid of his/her own internalized self-image of inferiority, pollution, self-rejection, impurity and fear, has to encounter teachers and students who too have a hostile attitude towards him. Educational system does not function in a vacuum. It is built on our social system of caste, and it is the same caste people who oppress and unleash atrocities on them that manage and run administration of our colleges and universities. **Dr. Ambedkar** has rightly said “no real progress can be made in education, if education was entrusted to the teachers from the Brahmin community whose minds conceived abhorrence for the lower classes and showed callous disregard for the intellectual uplift of any other classes.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Difficulties to cope with**

In India there is a dual system of higher education. The elegant English medium schools have always been under the domination of the upper castes, the rich and the powerful. These institutions are reserved for the children of politicians, businessmen, professionals, all hailing from the upper strata of society. The institutions with high standards in our country like the J.N.U. (Jawaharlal Nehru University), I.I.T (Indian Institute of management and Technology) and others demand a very high standard of English. Those who have not had their education in English medium schools cannot compete for these institutions. Given their poor economic condition as a community, Dalits cannot afford sending their children to these schools. Besides, illiterate and uneducated Dalit parents are unable to introduce their children to the culture that the elite educational system represents. They are forced to send their children to village schools where teaching staff and the infrastructure are in poor shape. That is why even those who aspire for higher education are compelled to join liberal B.A, M.A. programmes.

As a result most of the SCs are confined to government colleges and universities. We are all aware how these institutions are run. Apart from the dearth of teaching staff, those who are on the regular role don't do regular teaching. Classes are hardly held.<sup>7</sup>

### **Efforts for change**

If concrete changes are to take place in Dalit higher education, one may have to take recourse to Dalit culture. If caste culture has prohibited them to climb the ladder of success in higher education, can Dalit culture bring about a change in their self-perception and lead them to

empowerment? Is it possible for Dalits to change their self-image, denouncing the caste image they have acquired by announcing a new image that is historically theirs?

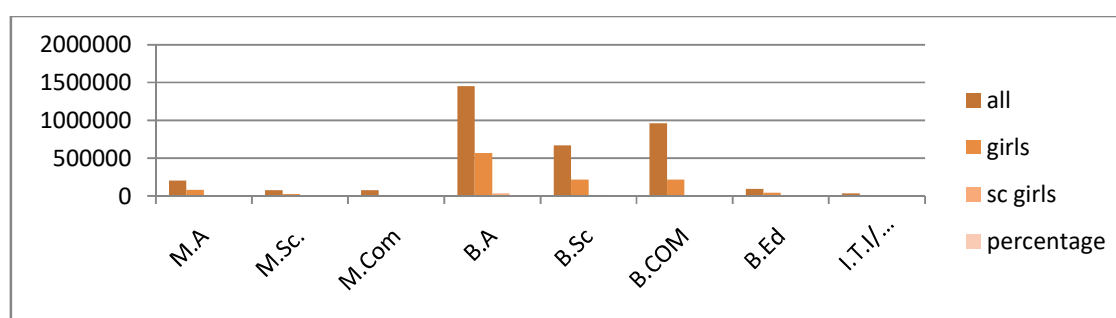
One may ask whether Dalits have their own culture. Historically, Dalits claim that they had a rich culture.<sup>8</sup> Here is a statement by **Dr. B.R Ambedkar**: “The Hindus wanted the Vedas and they sent for Vyasa who was not a caste Hindu. The Hindus wanted an epic and sent for Valmiki who was untouchable. The Hindus wanted a constitution and they sent for me.”<sup>9</sup> The crux of this statement is that it makes a bold claim to a great spiritual and academic tradition and culture.

Dr. Ambedkar writing in the Harijan in 1933 noted: “The outcaste is a byproduct of the caste system. There are outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system. Nothing can help to save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of this odious and vicious dogma. In reconstructing their cultural heritage it is quite important for Dalits to express themselves through a common identity. Today they want to be known as “outcaste”. The idea behind is that Dalit want to remain representatives of the original casteless human community. This is the most important factor gaining their original human status.”<sup>10</sup>

**Table (5): No. of Scheduled Castes Students studying in Higher Education 1995-2000**

Course	Total Student	Girls	SC girls	Percentage
M A	201733	77756	3332	4.2
M .Sc	73347	24410	873	3.5
M .Com	75870	13983	540	3.8
B .A	1451919	568913	31962	5.6
B .Sc	666405	212432	11041	5.1
B .Com	959786	215539	6375	2.9
B .Ed	91017	40435	2196	5.4
I.T.I/Polytechnic	31386	10439	182	1.7

Source: Record available in Academic office of various girls' colleges in Lucknow



The overall literacy rate among the SC female population does not tell the whole story of their educational backwardness in Lucknow. Their participation at various stages prominently magnifies the extent of their educational deprivation. An examination of the SC female enrollment in various classes from M.A to B.Ed. classes clearly shows the glaring under

representation at various stages of education in 1995-2000. In M.A classes out of the total enrollment of 77,756 girls only 4.2 percent were SC students. Almost the same situation could be observed in M.Sc. classes too. Only 3.5 percent SC female students were enrolled during 1995-2000 in M.Sc. classes.

Same Level of participation of SC women could be found in M.Com classes during the same years. Only 3.8 Percent SC female students were enrolled during 1995-2000 in M.Com classes.

The enrollment rates of SC girls in various Undergraduate courses were not very satisfactory either though the situation was slightly better as compared with the enrollment rates in Post graduate courses. Table 5 shows that in B.A. classes out of the total female enrollment, the enrollment rate of the SC was 5.6 percent during 1995-2000. Only 5.1 percent SC students were enrolled in B.Sc. programme. 2.9% of participation SC students could be found in B.Com classes during 1995-2000.

However, among professional courses, the representation of the SC girls is very poor. Only 5.4 percent of girls were enrolled in B.Ed courses. 1.7% SC girls were enrolled in I.T.I. Colleges during 1995-2000.

**Table (6): No. of Valmiki Caste Student studying in Higher Education 1995-2000**

S.No.	Course	Boys	Girls	Total	Percentage
1	M.A	348	528	876	8.8
2	M.Sc	60	63	123	5.6
3	M.Com	22	22	44	2.6
4	B.A	7069	7298	14387	10.8
5	B.Sc	589	645	1234	7.4
6	B.Com	681	452	1133	5.5
7	B.Ed /BTC	260	428	688	18.1

Source: Record available in academic office of K.K.C and K.K.V. P.G College, Lucknow

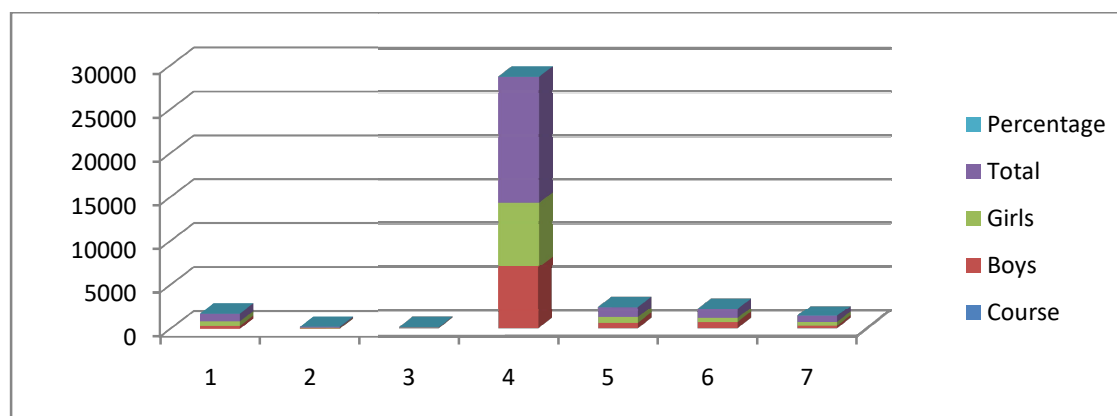


Table 6 shows the data supplied by K.K.C, K.K.V P.G College. 876 Valmiki caste students in the M.A programme were mere 8.8 percent of total students. Almost the same situation could be observed in M.Sc. programme also. Only 123 students were enrolled during 1995-2000 in M.Sc. classes. Only 2.6 percent of Valmiki students were enrolled in M.Com classes.

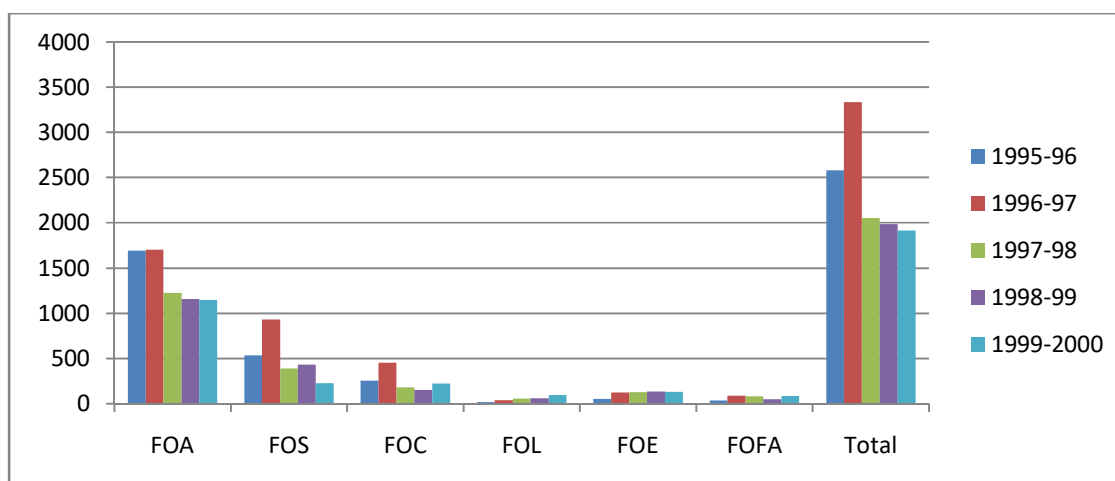
At the Graduation level, once again the Valmiki students enrolled in B.A programme were 10.8 percent and the B.Sc. 7.4 percent and B.Com 5.5 percent. 18.1 percent of students were pursuing their B.Ed. degree.

There is ample evidence to indicate that in spite of 6 decades of protective discrimination, Schedule castes lag far behind the rest of the population in education. School and University enrollment is yet another indicator of the educational backwardness of the Valmiki caste. The unsatisfactory situation of course-wise distribution of Valmiki caste student population is further revealed by the fact of those who go up for higher education. The number of those who go for certificate courses is higher than the number of those who go for degree courses.

**Table (7): Number of SC students admitted in various faculties of LU during 1995-2000**

School. Course	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
FOA	1690	1701	1225	1157	1147
FOS	533	929	388	431	228
FOC	254	454	178	153	225
FOL	16	39	54	60	98
FOE	52	123	129	136	132
FOFA	34	90	81	48	87
Total	2579	3336	2055	1985	1917

Source: Record available in Academic Office in Lucknow University.



Higher Education is the most crucial sector in the educational system of a country. In fact, this sector is the backbone of any industrial country. These sectors not only develop human capabilities to a maximum extent possible but also empower a person with knowledge, perception and ideas which help him/her to contribute to the development process of society more meaningfully and rationally. However, higher education has still remained a far off goal for the majority of the people in India and more so with regard to the scheduled castes. The participation of the SCs in higher education is very low in the city of Lucknow.

Table 7 shows that during the last decade the growth of SC students in higher education has been at a snail's pace. During the year 1995-96 the total was 2579 only. These figures were highly disproportionate to the total number of students. Similarly, during 1996-1997, the total enrollment of SC students was 3336 only. Almost the same situation could be observed during 1997-98. The total enrollment was 2055 only. In 1998-99, the enrollment of SC students was 1985, which is very poor. The poor representation during the year 1999-2000 and the enrollment of SC student in 1917 in higher education was partly the result of their low participation in the college sector and higher dropout rates.

### References

1. Rajawat, M., Dalits: Role of Education, Anmol publication Pvt. Ltd., 2005, p.9.
2. Ibid, pp.9-10.
3. Ibid, p.11.
4. Ibid, p.16.
5. Ibid, p.112.
6. Muralidharan, V., Educational Priorities and Dalit Society, Kanishka Publishers, 1996, p.168.
7. Singh, Bharat, Dalit Education, Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd., 2004, p.47.
8. Pinto, Ambrose, Culture, Values and Dalits in Higher Education, Orient Longman, 2002. P.187.
9. Mathai M.O., Reminiscences of the Nehru Age, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978, p.25.
10. Bhattacharya, S., Education and the Disprivileged, Orient Longman, 2002, p.189.