

Exploring Experiences of Tribal Students in the Higher Education Institutions

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by

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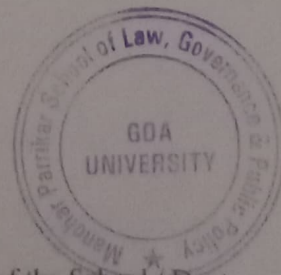


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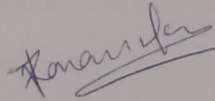
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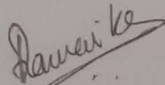
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This is to certify that the dissertation report “Exploring Experiences of Tribal Students in the Higher Education Institutions” is a bonafide work carried out by Ms. Deepaksha Dilkush Velip under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of Women Studies at the Manohar Parrikar School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Goa University.



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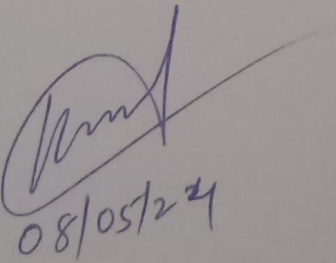
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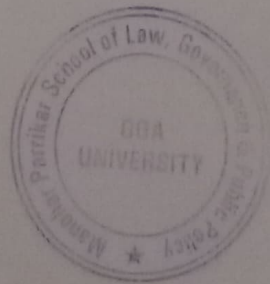
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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, "Exploring Experiences of Tribal Students in the Higher Education" is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Masters of Arts in Women Studies at the Manohar Parrikar School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Goa University under the Supervision of Ms.Vithai zaraunker and Ms.Vasudha Sawaiker and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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Exploring Experiences of Tribal Students in the Higher Education

Institutions

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

I still remember the talk of Dr. Andy Silveira on 'Queering the Spaces'. Dr Andy Silveira is a gay man and identifies himself as Queer. He has twelve years of industry experience in Learning and Development in several organizations, such as Deloitte and J.P. Morgan. He has spearheaded several initiatives around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Inclusion. Dr Andy Silveira's talk was on the topic "Queering Management Education Institutions through Coalition Building". During the talk, he spoke about his research, which is based on autoethnography, where he used individual experiences and explained how communities go through discrimination. He gave four interpretative frameworks to support his thesis, Post positivism, Constructivism, Transformative, Postmodernism and Pragmatic. Interpretive frameworks are those frameworks which the researcher brings to the practice of research. These frameworks can be theories or theoretical orientations to guide the process of research. Post positivism is thus the ideas and can be a identity of the researcher which may influence on what can observed. Post positivism differs from Positivism, where Positivism focuses on objective research whereas the post positivism gives more importance to subjective experiences. Post-positivism has the elements of being reductionistic, logical, empirical, cause-and-effect oriented, and deterministic based on a priori theories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Constructivism refers to 'the construction of the reality which is multi-dimensional and ever changing'. Social constructivism is another paradigm and in these paradigm, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences oriented towards certain objects and things. The basic principle of the transformative framework is that knowledge is not

neutral and it reflects the power and social relationships within society and thus, the purpose of knowledge construction is to aid people to improve society (Sweetman et al., 2010). These individuals include marginalized groups such as indigenous groups, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender persons, queers, and societies that need a more hopeful, positive psychology and resilience. (Khalifa, 2023). According to (Khalifa, 2023), Postmodernism might be considered a family of theories and perspectives with something in common. The basic concept is that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations. These are negative conditions, and they show themselves in the presence of hierarchies, power and control by individuals, and the multiple meanings of language. The conditions include the importance of different discourses, the importance of marginalized people and groups (the "other"), and the presence of "metanarratives" or universals that hold true regardless of the social conditions. Also included is the need to "deconstruct" texts in terms of language, their reading and their writing and the examining and bringing to the surface concealed hierarchies as well as dominations, oppositions, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Pragmatism basically focuses on the outcome of the research on the actions, situations and consequences of inquiry (Khalif 2023).

Through his interpretation he focused on individual, how individual experiences get connected to larger social issues. That's how I thought of researching caste discrimination after getting enlightened from his lecture, after talking to friends, teachers and many other people because I could connect my experiences with the larger social issues. And I realized that I am not the only one who went through such things but instead, there are many more individuals I came across interacted with, and got to learn/hear from. We often talk about experiences what is the term experience means to us, it is essential to define it because I will be using it throughout my study.

The concept experience in Cambridge Dictionary, means "(the process of getting) knowledge or skill from doing, seeing or feeling things'. As people experience the world and reflect upon those experiences, they build their representation and incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledge." It's crucial to take in more knowledge but also essential to know and understand how we as individuals are constructed in a particular society, how we behave or are made to behave in certain social institutions and how individuals are treated based on certain identities imposed on us. He also focused on the lived experiences of individuals from marginalized groups. Also, he emphasized why it is vital to center their lives because collectively we can reach to social justice. There is a need to disrupt the normativity in the society in order to bring sensitivity towards such issues.

I will be using the autoethnographic research method where I as a tribal will be able to connect my experiences to other tribal individual student's experiences in higher education institutions. According to the Oxford Learners Dictionary, Higher Education is defined as 'education at a college or university, especially at a degree level'.

According to All India Survey of Higher Education, Higher Education is defined as the education which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months(full time) or after completing ten years of schooling and is of the duration of at least three years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical Education.

There is not much research done on the tribal experiences of caste discrimination as compared to Dalit experiences of discrimination. My study will focus on tribal student's experiences in the higher education institutions. It is essential to learn, understand and be sensitive towards caste experiences because there is this perception that 'caste discrimination does not exist in today's world and the education institutions. But my experience at higher educational

institute reflects a different reality. This is why I am interested in learning about the experiences of students coming from tribal communities.

Priyanka Velip's article "A Velip Writes Back", published in the book "Hanv Konn? re-searching the self" made me realise who I am. I consider myself because when I read her article, I also got confused; as she mentions, any tribal student will get confused with the definitions historians and cultural theorists have given about tribals as a community. From schools, whatever was included in the syllabuses was taught to us, and we were made to refer to only those definitions which were included in the history books and nothing beyond that. Also, our point of view were not encouraged. I remember one incident of examination when I was completing my graduation. I did a Bachelor's in History at a renowned college in Goa. During examinations and as part of our study, we were told by the history professors that we had to refer to books which famous historians wrote, and also we were evaluated on that basis based on how much materials we referred to and how many historians we quoted in our answer sheets. In one paper or one or two answers, I wrote what I felt about the particular part of history. My statements were like "According to me", "What I feel" etc. So after completing exams, when the papers were shown, the professor called me and she asked me what is this? why have you written like this? This is history and not what you feel, I need facts what historians has to say about it. This is not accepted here and next time I will not give you marks. This was the professors reaction towards this. Priyanka Velip poses an important question to us all is that "what if after another twenty years a child of this community asks about her/his community, then what? If parents tell them to read those 'history' books written by various historians and cultural theorists, what impression would that child have regarding his/her own community? All this history is taught to us in the educational institutions. Again that is the teaching-learning process it matters how that history of tribals is explained or if ignored or not shown any interest in teaching that topic.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Exclusion, stigmatization or discrimination against the tribal students is an un-researched topic and to understand the experiences of tribal students and their academic life, it really deserves a wider study. There are studies done on Dalit experiences of discrimination in academic institutions. A recent study is done by Rathod (2021) on "Dalit Academic Experiences: Stigma, Social Reproduction and Systemic Exclusion in Indian Higher Education." He tries to explain through his study that his autobiography illuminates the ways in which the stories of his interlocutors is interwoven with his own life history and academic experiences. My research examines and investigates the lived experiences of tribal students in their academic institutional journey's. The questions include:

1. What is the nature of the experience of tribal students in education?
2. Do tribal students experience discrimination in education, if yes, what is the nature of that experience? If no, what helps them navigate the space of higher education?
3. What are the new patterns of discrimination faced by tribal students?
4. What according to the tribal students are the causes of their experience of discrimination? Has education been successful in doing away with the caste-based discriminations?

This research is intended to study and understand the exclusions tribal students face in their academic journey's and to analyse the power dynamics, resistance and resilience of their educational journey's. This research is also carried to analyse what could be the strategies to create a positive environment for the tribal students. There is a lack of studies done in this

particular areas. Therefore, I want to pursue this study where I will be able to contribute to the tribal literature being a tribal student itself. My interest drives me to this topic of study.

1.2 OBJECTIVES:

Various researches have explored about the tribal livelihood and cultures but there is rarely any study done on the experiences of tribals in the educational institutions in this changing societies. The objectives of my study includes:

- 1) To understand the experiences of the tribal students in the higher educational institutions.
- 2) To explore and address the specific educational needs, challenges and opportunities for the students coming from tribal communities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Universities and colleges have witnessed a significant change in the increase in the number of students from marginalized groups in recent years. Rarely there is any research done on this changing dynamics and on the narratives of the students coming from disadvantaged groups. Bhoi and Gorringer (2023) describes caste as a social reality that plays a dominant role in the everyday lives of those born into the system. Caste shapes life chances, opportunities and outcomes. They say caste acts as a 'marker' from birth to death. Everyday actions and attitudes of people are also shaped by this form of social stratification.

Rathod (2021) in his work on dalit experiences, he used the term "oppressed castes" refers to the castes to the lower end of the hierarchy of the caste system, which includes shudra ,dalit and tribals. The Constitution of India recognizes these communities as Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and and Scheduled Tribes respectively. Tribal communities represent indigenous groups that have historically faced marginalization and oppression due to the caste system. Article 342: Scheduled Tribes(2023) gives the definition as , " Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes". Students coming from such oppressed backgrounds are treated differently in the academic institutions. My study is specific to only higher educational setting and according to Oxford Learners Dictionary, "Higher Education is defined as education at a college or university, especially at a degree level". All india survey on Higher Education describes "Higher Education which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical education".

Discrimination can be termed as treating one or more members of a specified group unfairly as compared with other people. According to Article 15 of our constitution, discrimination is mistreating a person on the grounds 'only' of caste, religion, sex, race, and place of birth. Such kinds of discrimination and exclusions are faced by the people coming from lower castes who try working hard for their career and get trapped in this 'caste nets' put up by the people having privileged positions. Foucault(1979) sees individual identities are formed through power relationships. Bhoi has linked this systemic exclusion to academic failures and dropout noting how it may break the link between education and aspiration. Bhoi and Gorringer (2023) in their article "Caste in Everyday Life: Experience and Affect in Indian Society" suggests that 'the language of the upper caste is hegemonised to such an extent that it becomes the standard way of speaking'.

Suchi Thapar's (2016) article on *Exploring symbolic violence in the everyday: misrecognition, condescension, consent and complicity* emphasizes on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence where she explains how domination is practiced in everyday interactions. Scheper-Hughes (1992,1996) originated the term 'Everyday Violence' and explained how power plays a vital role in dominating the everyday interactions which is often normalised. This paper is based on empirical research and in-depth interviews are taken in order to understand the experiences of women facing violence in Sweden. There are four categories of violence given in this article i.e structural, symbolic, everyday and intimate which overlaps over one another in everyday communications between people. In this article, the author used Sweden as a case study in her research because the country Sweden is considered as 'progressive and effective in achieving gender equality policies. But the interventions did by feminists have found out the invisible and insidious workings of power and control by males within public and private spheres.

It is same if we link it to education sector, though it provides us a good quality of education for all. But the kind of invisibility which get's promoted based one's caste is very problematic.

We have one primary school in our village and a sir from Fatorpa used to come to teach the students of 1-4 from our area. He used to go in the morning according to his favourable time and no assembly for students nothing. Either he used to talk to the people who pass by that path or sleep. Teaching was also done, not that he did not teach anything but it used to be based on his mood. If he was in a mood to teach that day he used to teach and rest days the same two things of gossiping and sleeping. The fact that his family is well educated and he having a specific position of a teacher , wasn't he was responsible for all those students including me who couldn't cope up when they got admitted in the high school. Was it because he was not interested to teach them while on the other side he could support his own children's to reach to such heights in the educational sector. Or was it because of the perception that they are tribals what they will understand even if I teach something ? Isn't it the injustice on the part of tribal students ? And this was not the only case, from my primary to my siblings primary education it was identical. It was a trend of teachers like after you join the primary, come to class I will either gossip or sleep, I will teach you once-twice in a week when I am in a mood to teach or else you do whatever you want to and go home. Now whose mistake it is, of tribals? Of the education which they could have received? It all starts here at the primary where they lack the knowledge which they could have got at the initial stage and later they struggle and are excluded when they enter into the higher educational institutions. This type of invisibility is practised at the institutional levels whether it maybe at the lower level or higher level.

As Singh (2013) explains the experiences of discrimination at the administration level faced by the dalits and tribal students in his article ' Defying the Odds: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Dalit and Adivasi students in Higher Education.' Few days back my friend explained

to me one incident. She started the conversation saying "It was a horrible day dear" I asked her why ? what happened ? Then she narrated the whole incident to me of that day. She and her sister went to medical college for admission in BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery). They were told to go to other building by one lady staff to get the medical report, after entering inside that other building, the staff of that building told them that they don't give medical report and it will be given in the same first building which they had gone earlier. She told me that the staff was very rude to them and because they gave them wrong information, they had to cross twice the crowded roads. Who would have been responsible if they were dashed by any vehicle? The management that behaved with them that way? or they both who were not aware of the management setting and had gone there for the first time for the admission process ? It is the experiential institutional reality which often we ignore giving more strength to existing inequalities.

Another book I read was Sangeetha Muley's book titled "*Savitribai Phule and I*". This is a fictional story of a student who belonged low caste background, who was a 'reservation category' student where discriminations follows her like daily nightmares. From her school to college she goes through many exclusions and also violences. All such exclusions went to such an extent that she thought of rope and neck (suicide) when she was always at every point judged based on the tag as 'reservation student' One incident that shook me among those many incidents was when she tries to celebrate Savitribai Phule day and bring about awareness among the students about her contribution in the society especially to girls education. This happens to her when she was at the degree level in the engineering college where she had actively indulged herself in the student union. Her effort to bring about awareness, the way it was taken by the other group of students was very casteist. And because of doing all this things she was kidnapped by the upper caste boys and threatened her saying that "Do not meddle in things that do not concern you. This is a

warning we are going to let you go for now but next time you will not get off so easily". She was targeted for a simple reason that she was bringing awareness and it was seen as because she was from a lower background, that is why she is trying to promote Savitribai Phule. So, after reading that book, it gave me a deeper insight into what are the different forms of caste-based discrimination a person goes through, which may be sometimes visible and sometimes may not be visible. That day, I reflected on my past experiences, which I never realised, and I never thought it from caste perspectives, not even accepted as discrimination. I always thought those discriminations I came across were because of my faults because of a lack on my part. Then I realised why I was very interested or connected to this topic. I remember this instance that happened when I was in 12th standard when this incident happened to me. We were sitting in the English Class, and the teacher asked one question to all of us and she pointed it out to one girl, but she couldn't answer. I knew that answer but before I started our teacher made a statement that our girls 'please answer girls means those girls who studied from that convent school itself and the students from government schools won't be able to answer, she said. Just because that girl forgot or couldn't answer that question, how can one make such generalizations that government school students don't know to speak or to answer based on one's knowledge? How can a person be differentiated whether he is coming from government or private school? Though I took it very personally but, I did not went to counter-argue it but; I showed them through my mark sheet. Today, I reached one realization after going back to that incident, that I somewhere knew what was happening to me. Still, I had normalized myself by saying that 'see, it is the social institution and we need to behave according to it's need and how they want us to grow up in a particular setting.' And we, as girls in societies, are also socialized in specific ways that you shouldn't talk harshly or say anything to anyone because you are a girl and you should behave in a particular manner.

Wall(2008) in her article "Easier Said than Done: Writing an Autoethnography," discusses her experiences of doing autoethnographic study. "Autoethnography is a qualitative method and a way of giving voice to personal experience. It is the intersection of the personal stories and the societal issues. The word autoethnography can be divided into three parts: auto means self, ethno is the socio-cultural connection and graphy, the application of the research process. Autoethnography has been criticised for various reasons" In this given article, the author has described the challenges she faced while taking out her autoethnographic work. The Author faced ethical questions regarding her autobiographic work on 'adoption'.

Kumar, V. (2021). article on "Nature and Dynamics of Caste Discrimination on Higher Education Campuses: A perspective from Below" discussed how discrimination and humiliation on higher education campuses in India take on different and sophisticated forms, making it challenging to capture. Examples include refusal to share rooms, dining tables or drinking water with Dalit students, as well as discriminatory treatment by peer groups. SC and ST students also face discrepancies in grading by upper-caste teachers. These instances highlight the need for a social audit and roster system to address caste discrimination in higher education institutions.

Maitreya (2023)highlights through his memoir that "Hate is so powerful an emotion in India because each caste reserves a feeling of revulsion against another.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the questions that guided my research and experience throughout the study. My autoethnographic work focuses on qualitative approach to understand students experiences in the educational institutions. My autobiographical study is then connected with the narratives of students who have experienced exclusion in the institutional settings. My approach towards this autoethnography is through my standpoint. I have used standpoint theory in my research study. "This phenomenon suggests that standpoint theory is a kind of organic epistemology, methodology and philosophy of science and social theory that can rise whenever oppressed individuals gain public voice" (Harding, 2009). An American feminist theorist Sandra Harding coined the term standpoint theory. She argued that "it is easy for those at the top social ladders to lose sight of actual human relationships and the true nature of social reality." She criticised through her theory that marginalised sections are always ignored and their marginalised positions make it easier for them to define significant research questions and explain social and natural problems. This chapter deals with data collection which will be done through snowball and purposive sampling methods and the data will be collected through students narratives because it will help the reader to understand my own life story better. This chapter also elaborates on the data analyses process, further describing the coding and analysis techniques. For coding and analysing the data grounded theory will be applied in order to systematize the data.

This study is designed to highlight the lived experiences of tribal students in the higher educational institutions. The concept experience means '(the process of getting) knowledge or skill from doing, seeing or feeling things'. (Cambridge Dictionary). John Dewey defines experience as the principal medium and means whereby world is encountered, enjoyed, appraised and transformed into a human habitation.

Gopal Guru argues "experience as a social force for radical mobilization against those dominant forces responsible for the creation of experience" (Guru,2002).In his essay 'experience, space and Justice', Guru highlights the importance of making experiences the precondition for doing theory." "Experience, which is subjectively realized but objectively produced through the logic of space, finds it's theoretical representation mediated by experiential space" (Guru,2017).

3.1 Research Site

For the data collection, my area of study will be South-Goa. The reason for choosing South Goa is because the maximum number of tribal population lives in the South Goa district of Goa. I have focused on the institutions of South Goa in order to get in touch with the students from tribal community and interact with them and understand their experiences of their educational life. I have employed purposive and snowball sampling methods. Purposive Sampling is used to select participants that are most likely to provide helpful information. As described in Leo Goodman's (2011) snowball sampling was developed by Coleman(1958-59) and Goodman(1961) "as a means for learning the structure of social networks". I have started contacting the targeted participants in my study. Observation is also one of the data collection methods of my study. I am also the participant observant for my study area.

I used interview as the main source for the data collection. I am focusing on a in-depth interview of the participants in order to understand their experiences deeply. The intensive interviewing method facilitated "an in-depth investigation of a specific topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry" (Charmaz,2006).The research tool is my interview guide explained below:

CHAPTER FOUR

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

According to the social stratification, I belong to the tribal community of Goa. I belong to a very normal family whose parents never denied from achieving heights of education. My aspirations became their aspirations and they struggled a lot to give me the best of education. My village setting is very cooperative and encouraging in giving us children's the best of everything. During my childhood we had no anganwadi in our village, hence I never went to anganwadi. We had a small primary school of one room called ('Shala' in marathi). As we had no aganwadi in our village, my parents made me sit and attend primary classes when I was just four years old. So, I developed this interest in studying at this age and continuously started attending classes when I was just four years and continued going for three years and at seven my primary education began. Though I had developed interest in studying at an early stage of pre-primary, the school was in marathi medium and the teachers never opened english books. Three teachers taught us at the primary level, second teacher came when the first got retired and the third teacher came after the second got transferred. They never took that interest to teach us. They used to come according to their morning time schedule, sleep, or gossip with the people who pass by. We were always been taught according to their mood. When we got promoted to high school, it became challenging for us to cope at the high school as we were not taught properly at primary level. Somehow I managed to have a stronghold over the subjects and had to put in lots of efforts in education as well as in the transportation from home to college. We were struggling with both in giving ourselves the motivation to go and attend the school and to cope up with the knowledge we lacked at the primary level. Me and my village schoolmates, till 7th std we had no school bus to go to school and we had to travel for 2 hours to reach to the school and while going home after the school getting over which was the only nearby school we had for us. Sometimes spent days

sitting in the completely wet clothes whole day after reaching school travelling for almost 2 hours during rainy days. Students who had easy access to educational institutions at their doorstep, is it not a privilege? I completed my high school education at a government school and moved on to private school and college for higher education in order to receive the best of education and there, I realized being coming from a tribal community and having such identities are made to consider as a sin because in everything you as an individual always remain the last choice to be asked for and to be chosen for. Institutions authorities make differences in giving equal preferences to all students.

I did my admission in University in 2022, I went to apply for hostel admission because of the long distance and it was the Second round of admission which was going on. I got the admission and I came with my all stuff and belongings to stay in the hostel. When I entered the office to confirm the room, I asked for room number and staff said immediately we do not have rooms for the students as all rooms are full and she said you'll will be allotted room with the two other roommates and the rooms actually are such that there are only two beds, two cupboards, two study tables and where will the third person go ? when I also have paid equal amount of fees and not getting equal opportunities with other students. I asked her why I can't get a separate room and she replied very rudely saying, " If you'll don't want room, you can go home". Then I had no option then staying in hostel. I did not keep quiet, time and again I went to the hostel office staff asking for a room or atleast a bed because I had paid the same amount with the other students and we had to adjust in three in a two students room. In the meetings I raised this issue of 'third person' in a two students room, and the students can't adjust with the stuffs and also with the studies. After much arguments, I kept quiet because nothing was coming out of such demands and time and again I was targeted in the hostel. Then one fine day, one girl was given a room with other two students. She somehow stayed for one month with the other two students. But

after one month, she was given a new room on her single request to change the room and I was denied who was asking for it again and again and was told that they had no rooms. Then I complained this to the higher authorities and I was told that "We will check who is given room and let you know if rooms are available" But they never took into consideration my request for a room and I stayed for two semester with my other two roommates, but the students who came late and after her single request she was given a separate room. I had complained about this issue to our head of the department at the start when I was given a room to stay with the other two roommates, I was asked whether it was because of caste discrimination but I had denied that time saying 'no, I don't think so' but when one student because of her privilege and power is easily allowed to take a room and me a powerless person without any privilege asks for my right for equal money I have paid like the all other students for the two semesters and for almost one year I was denied my equal right as a student of the same college .And in such drawn situations of equal 'right' and 'privilege'. Always the 'privilege' wins over the 'right'.

When I undertook this research, I discussed it with many people, and one incident made me firm on my decision to undertake this as a research study. I was discussing with my friends about the research area and briefed them about my research area that 'I want to find out whether really tribals are excluded in education settings or not, and I want to find out that by interviewing them', this statement they said it still happens you know, one of our classmates who was a tribal student and we were allotted guides for the project. The student discussed the research topic with the professor on the first meeting, and the second time when she met the professor, the professor asked her about the student's caste, and then the student was informed that professor is not willing to guide the research.. It was a difficult time for the student to find the research guide

A teacher during my educational journey made me feel low and neglected when teaching one of the subject. From starting the teacher never talked to me properly. Whenever we waited for the

key to go to the class. The teacher used to stay far away from me, never spoke to me. I don't know what problem that person had with me. Meanwhile, with my classmate, I found the teacher talking nicely. Experience from those few days of attending the classes. What could be the reason for doing this, we were very few in class. Why such distinctions, and differentiation among us students? I also accept that I never go to people to talk on my own, but it never happened from my side that if someone came to me and I ignored and stayed away from the person.. I never easily give up on anything or any subject, but this time, I couldn't take the pain I was going through. I struggled in the class to learn that subject, even the simple theories but the teacher shouted at me to such an extent that I literally used to cry in front of the teacher because I had developed that fear and everytime the teacher shouted at me and I used to be in a position that I couldn't even hold the pen properly, I was shivering to hold the pen and confused to do even the simple theories because of that fear which I had developed and on top blaming myself that I can't do anything, I am worthless of being in this world, being in the education setting due to such statements like, 'you reached the post graduation level and it's useless that you don't know such simple things', 'you better go and learn from the illiterate and your siblings, they are much better than you'. You are not a baby here to cry, when I even tried telling the teacher that we were not taught properly in the school'.

It started affecting my studies, and mental health to such an extent that I thought of dropping my degree in between and leave the academic journey which itself was not easy for me to do because I never compromised on my education because of anyone. Thanks to the teachers, my friends, and my family who supported me throughout this phase; otherwise, I don't know where I would have been by this day. I could share with them all the things that happened to me and cried a lot in front of them and when I reflect back to this, I realise, I never cried in front of anyone so

easily and that too because of any educational issues. All these above-mentioned people supported me a lot throughout.

As I told, I developed depression and fear and was about to freeze my degree. I couldn't because I realised and also my supporters made me realise about my potentials which I had completely erased from my mind at that point and had started blaming myself. My hands are still shivering writing this experience because I reopened this page of my life in front of you which I had closed and kept far away from me so that it doesn't affect me and my mind which has reached very far away from this incident and is more focused on this research itself which is very close to my heart because my participants have shown a lot of interest in my topic who also have experienced such things.

To end this, it's not that I had no interest in learning that paper. I had a lot of interest. It's just that I could have taken a little more time to learn it. I had told the person that 'it will take a little more time but I will assure you, I will improve on it and also I made attempt to improve on myself'. But the statement, 'I don't have time to sit with you with such simple things', made me feel low and developed that fear and I never wanted to go in class and everytime when I went, due to that fear I couldn't do even the simple calculations. And the statement, 'see that your dissertation should not be withheld'. This changed my mind completely of dropping that subject and choose another alternative. So through my experience, I ask this question, why this to only me ? is it because I am different from the teacher, because I don't have that power which that teacher has?

After my research topic got finalised, I started searching students for the pilot study and contacted one student and took her pilot interview. In this interview session, she mentioned to me one experience of one teacher towards her and I realized that the same teacher was my mentor earlier in college. In our college we all students of the college were allotted mentors from different departments (subject teachers). And I was under the same person every once in a weekend we

had to meet our mentors and discuss about our educational progress. I still remember I went to that person only twice then after I left going there. We were total of 5 students under that person. The person used to call all of us together and used to ask me first if I had anything to say, the person used ask me just how your college is going, Good know? You can go now. And with rest other students that person used to sit for hours discussing their reports and academic progress. The day I presented my research proposal, everyone's teachers behavior changed entirely towards me. I developed self-doubt and everytime I tried to prove myself but they did not try to see potential in my research.

"Waiting for a Visa" by Dr. Ambedkar symbolizes the profound sense of exclusion experienced by Ambedkar and millions of others belonging to the oppressed castes. (Ambedkar). His writings inspired me a lot after reading his experiences. Ambedkar through his writings highlights and expresses how can a normal human being be treated like a 'dirty water', if touched will get polluted. He highlights the different aspects of exclusion faced by the marginalized groups. First he mentions, social exclusion where he highlights how an individual is excluded and are subjected to inhumane treatment in every sphere of life. In the educational struggles, Ambedkar discusses challenges faced by the students belonging to the lower castes in the academic settings. Ambedkar talks about the economic exploitation where marginalised were relegated to the menial anddegrading occupations with little opportunity forsocial mobility. He also highlights the legal and political marginalization wherehe discusses the systemic denial od rights and opportunities to the lower sections who were then deprived of political representation and subjected to discriminatory practices. His heartfelt writings guided me throughout this research process.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS ON PARTICIPANTS ACADEMIC JOURNEY'S

This chapter highlights the experiences of the tribal student's educational journey of multifaceted explorations of various challenges, difficulties and unique experiences. These discussed experiences are the student's narratives from their schooling to their degree-level journey. Within the broader landscape of academia, student's narratives offer invaluable insights into the complexities of navigating educational systems shaped by cultural, socio-economic and historical contexts. This chapter delves into findings through in-depth interviews with the tribal students and understanding their diverse experiences, which they encountered within their educational institutions.

The focus area of my dissertation centers on exploring the experiences of tribal students in higher educational institutions. Through coding the grounded theory method of qualitative inquiry methods of interviewing, a rich tapestry of data has been woven by capturing the voices and perspectives of tribal students navigating the educational settings.

These are the shared narratives of the participants and all this data went through the process of coding from initial to theoretical codings. These are the terms repeatedly used by the participants while sharing their experiences, and these terms are used to analyse the findings of the participants.

5.1 Attitudes of the Administration Staff

There are different attitudes of the administrative staff towards the ST students. The disrespectful behavior is shown by the admin staff towards one of the participants for not stapling the documents by using harsh language "Konak davarla hanga stappler marpak tumi" which translates into Who you have kept here to staple your documents? This behavior indicates a lack of respect and patience especially towards the ST students. To continue to this attitudes of the staff, the staff of the department asking the participant on the last day of submission of scholarship forms by taunting the participant and her friends "tumchi scholarshipachi date jaavun geli mago, tumi bharli go scholarship"? It was due to getting prior information about the filling up of scholarship forms from her friends, the person could complete her scholarship forms and being an office staff she did not inform them and on top of it taunted them. Also the participants have shared the staff's discriminatory treatment towards them. The students shared that they are treated differently based on their caste identity. Here is the incidence that one of the respondent shares the student was not allowed to choose a particular subject combination despite having a high percentage than the non-ST category student who was allowed to choose the same subject combination. The person has also mentioned that the staff sometimes behave in such a way that as if they are doing a favour on us by fulfilling our rights, for example, in submitting scholarship forms. This is due to the lack of acknowledgement of student's rights and entitlements. Some of the respondents have expressed their frustration wherein they feel that the staff does not support them appropriately in obtaining necessary documents and also the unresponsiveness to the complaints when student complained to the principal about the subject combination but did not receive any response or resolution to their concern while the institutional authorities perpetuating discriminatory practices.

5.2 Attitudes of Teachers towards ST students

Institutions are considered as the second home and teachers as the second parents. Still, the exact opposite happens when such homes and such parents are not welcoming the certain category students due to differentiations along the lines of caste. It creates a divide which often sideline the lower caste students and their educational aspirations.

Tribal students are often denied opportunities such as participating in the competitions, presentations and hosting events despite their talents and capabilities. A narrative was expressed by the student in the drawing competition, which was held at a school in the North of Goa. After insisting the teacher take him to the competition as he was good at drawing and had secured many prizes, Even after insisting him for many a times, the teacher contacted other student to accompany him for the drawing competition and gave reason to the participant that "it will be very far for you to come from south to the north"." In contrast, the participant was the resident of the same area where the other student belonged, who was taken for the competition but the castes differed. Villages, too are different in that same area. Teachers and students make taunting remarks regarding the reservation policies ,english fluency, capabilities of the ST students which negatively impact the students self-esteem and motivation to pursue education, leading to dropping out from the institutions. One student left the college because of the discriminatory reactions and responses received from teachers and also from students during her presentations demotivated her aspirations to study, who used to secure ranks during her school, higher school and graduation level and the reactions towards her on the proficiency in the English language, laugh by the students and the statements like, "what more can we expect from the reservation category students like you, it's high time that you should focus on your English first" led to her dropping out from the college. In events and all, it is the fact that mostly the tribal students are not encouraged to do compering or stage preparations. Teachers always give opportunities to

those students whose English language is perfect and also to look at the privileges and get a general perspective from the participants. As they said, we never get opportunities or are never encouraged to walk on the stage to host any event. One participant shared with me her experience when she asked for compering, but the teacher said, 'You do off-stage preparations. Next time, I will give you the script for the hosting. But the next time never came, and almost the college will get over now.

Almost all the respondents have experienced taunts from the teachers for coming from a reserved category. The taunts such as , "Reservationak lagun konakui kama meyta" translate, "today anybody can become a teacher because of reservation".But the student's perception is "Privileges and facilities differ".

ST students face lack of support from teachers when seeking help with the academic subjects and are more willing to help the Non-ST students, leading to academic struggles and backlogs for ST students. One of the respondent shared that The teachers neglected and was not helpful in teaching him because he was weak in mathematics and science, and on his many requests also, not even a single teacher helped him to cope up with the studies and got backlogs in the ninth standard. In contrast, students from the higher community received immediate help from teachers at their request. The negative attitude of teachers towards reservations is also prevalent and teachers used to taunt the lower caste students "Kaich jaavchena jar ST scholarship divuna jalyar" to translate it, "nothing will happen if the ST students are not given scholarships." Students also found teachers and students not cooperative, teachers behave differently and students too according to their experiences. Students also expressed that teachers also easily don't go to speak to the lower caste people due to different perceptions which they have in their minds.

Discriminatory behavior and remarks by the teachers are often normalized or brushed off as jokes, minimizing the impact on ST students and perpetuating the cycle of discrimination. One of the

participant narrated that, they had one programme in their department and staff told her to call that teacher, 'I went near his cabin and knocked his door and asked him, sir are you free? He immediately taunts me “tuka kity dista hanv free basla hanga, hanv head mago kity free basla ashe disle tuka?’ To translate this, What you think I am free here? I am the head of the department (position changed).After coming in the class he asks, Rag yelo go, fakana kartalo hanv? You felt bad, I was just joking? I told him straight away, whatever you have said I did not like it,then he started normalizing it by cracking jokes.

There are experiences of the participants who were ignored in the classes and other students who came from higher communities were encouraged for the activities. An experience of the participant itself wherein the participant and her friend were asked by the teacher have you got passed and got promoted to 10th std ? because we were average students and had secured 67% and the participant narrated that her tone of asking this question was very weird towards us. The respondent also mentioned the power which plays an essential role in marginalizing the students. Priviledged have been given more importance than the underprivileged. One tribal student was given more importance because she had some power due to her political background and also due to her looks.Even if they lose competitions still those selected students including her were given that priviledge to participate in the competitions by the teachers.

It highlights the different attitudes carried by the teachers towards the tribal students within the educational institutions in giving lack of opportunities, support and recognition for their talents and capabilities.

5.3 Attitudes of Non ST students towards ST students

The experiences shared by the participant of their higher educational journey's include, a general view of the participants was that the non-ST students often express jealousy and resentment towards ST students who benefit from reservations, especially in terms of scholarships and admissions. This leads to a change in behavior towards ST students, including exclusion and marginalization. One of the respondent shared his experience, he said 'the perceptions of higher communities students towards reservations are very much different, they don't see the reasons why reservations are important but instead they say you have a lot of benefits and also their behavior changes towards us ST students'. The privileged students taunt us saying "Tumka sagle asa amka kai na". Another participant said during B.ed admissions, he was getting admission through General category so my classmates started arguing with me "Tu aamcho chance vadaytle ?" to translate into, "You will take our seats and we will not get chance for B.ed admission"

Most often, the ST students face exclusion and discrimination within social groups, particularly among higher caste students. They are usually treated as inferior and are not included in social gatherings or discussions. Their attempts to integrate with privileged groups are met with rejection and feelings of loneliness. Another respondent said, the higher caste students, always used to talk to those students who are good in studies and get good marks only then they include in their group. Also the participants tried to involve among the higher communities students groups, she narrated, When 'I also tried to roam with the privileged students groups, they always make me feel low and always excluded me from the group'. Now, 'I left that group because it later led to depression, and I felt lonely in the class, sitting alone, and nobody was bothered'.

Caste-based hierarchy is evident in social interactions, where higher caste students assert dominance over ST students. ST students are expected to remain submissive and are discouraged from challenging the status quo. One of the classroom experiences of the narrator is that 'whenever the high caste students proudly talk about their caste, students listen to them very carefully. But the same if I do, when I speak about my identity proudly, student's facial expressions change immediately. Also, to share with you, one participant discussed the experience of being in mixed groups. 'I had friends who were from higher castes. They were good, I would say, but we had to always stay lower to them, and if I showed dominance they would not like it. They would stop me at that point if I went to talk much. They felt that they were dominant over us and we were subordinates and we should not say anything wrong about them, but they could say anything that means anything bad about us'. ST students experience unequal classroom treatment, including assigned seating arrangements and exclusion from decision-making processes. They are often overlooked for participation in activities and events, further perpetuating their marginalization. Another respondent while sharing the experience, highlights that they were not selected to organize or host any event. The student says, 'We were never allowed to , they already had their students selected who will organize the programme. And students used to think that we didn't participate. We were never informed about any programmes, first their higher castes favourite students were called and were been given the opportunity to host the activity to be held in the department, and then through them, it was communicated to all of us. Most of the time, they used to forget to tell the whole class and ended up informing only in their other groups. When they decide about the activities all are informed, but we are never included in the decision-making process. Students never talk to us properly, and in our class, the hierarchy and the supremacy are maintained constantly.

ST students are denied opportunities for participation in college events and activities, as they are perceived as less capable or knowledgeable by non-ST students. This lack of recognition further reinforces stereotypes and biases against ST students. According to the participants, in the big college events also they prefer not to take low background students because they consider us as 'dumb' that we don't know anything.

The discriminatory behavior and exclusion faced by ST students contribute to feelings of depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. The social dynamics within the classroom create an environment where ST students feel marginalized and isolated. There are unequal treatments among the students in the classrooms. Students also don't sit at place where tribal students sit, they have their fixed places.

5.4 Stigmatization based on the attires

Some of the narratives shared by the tribal students who experienced stigmatization based on the attires. Students said that there are 2 -3 teachers in their department who judge them on the basis of the students dressing and specifically on them when doing presentations, they judge them on the basis of dressing sense and not on the matter which they are presenting.

Participant have also heard the taunts like , 'What type of clothes she is wearing'? Tribal students are subjected to judgement and scrutiny and both by the peers and also by the teachers. This reflects upon the lack of acceptance of the tribal identity. When the tribal student transition from rural to urban settings for education they are mostly targeted, judged and get stereotyped based on their identity and the attires. Tribal students are most often seen through the urban-centric norms which may lead to feelings of alienation and marginalization. The data also suggests that the teachers hold biases against the tribal students on the basis of clothing.

5.5 Stigmatisation based on the Identity

This analysed data on this theme highlight stigmatization faced by the tribal students on the basis of their identity, social background and geographical location. The experiences shared by the tribal students stigmatization include,

Tribal students are subjected to derogatory names and taunts, such as "Gawdyachi" and "Gavti," which serve to marginalize and stigmatize them. This language perpetuates negative stereotypes and reinforces social hierarchies that place tribal communities at a lower status. Students from tribal backgrounds are stigmatized based on their geographical origins, especially if they come from rural areas or forested regions. One incident where head of the department she asked the participants one fine day, Tumi khaichi? (Where do you'll come from ?) They said Pednem (name changed) Ahh from Pednem ? from south know, from those forests ? Head of the Department's tone of asking that was totally unbelievable that day. Additionally, there is stigma associated with the occupations of their parents, such as manual labor or sweeping, which reflects a lack of respect for different livelihoods and perpetuates social inequality. The students who came from very far of social location who were made to sweep and were stigmatized that they come from the areas, from where their parents used to do that work. The tribal students cried that they had come to learn and not to sweep in the school. Always they were targeted based on their dressing, tone of speaking and the occupation which their parents used to do. Because of such stigmatization that student had to leave the school, who had a lot of interest in learning because she was very active in class and also was one to answer the questions first.

Stigmatization based on identity and background can have detrimental effects on students educational experiences and social integration. It can lead to feelings of shame, inferiority, and exclusion, ultimately impacting their academic performance and mental well-being. In extreme cases, stigmatization may even force students to leave school or educational institutions.

The data also highlights instances of institutional biases, particularly when the head of the department engages in discriminatory language and attitudes towards students based on their social background or geographical origin.

5.6 Exclusion and Marginalization

The educational experiences of marginalization and exclusion faced by tribal students within education institutional settings follows,

Tribal students experience exclusion and targeting by their peers, particularly when they receive scholarships or benefits from reservations. This exclusion creates resentment and misunderstandings about the purpose and impact of reservation policies. Some of participants experiences when they entered the higher educational level, when they transitioned from government school to private school. More than teachers, the students in the institutions excluded the tribals. Because of the scholarship they were targeted every time. Because of reservations also they were targeted, Participants tried to question it, 'We want to ask this question that out of 100, ST and SC and have only 1 seat reserved in a given position and OBC's have 5 seats rests all goes to the General Category then why the General category student question us ? We don't think they should have any problem to this distinction of reservations.' "Ti amka facilities meyta tejer question karta pan temka kity priviledges asa tajer kon question karina" to translate this, "people always see the facilities and the advantages we get but the priviledges which they have they don't want see it or accept it." There is a huge difference between facilities and priviledges .Whenever somebody talks about our facilities we should ask them about their priviledges.

Tribal students are often marginalized and ignored within group settings, where their suggestions or contributions are disregarded. This reflects a lack of recognition and respect for their perspectives and abilities, leading to feelings of isolation and disempowerment. They said, 'We

often get excluded, sidelined or rather I would say discriminated against whenever we are in a group and one participant expressed , 'Whenever I try to give any suggestion or try to speak in between nobody is actually bothered about my presence in the group.'

Some teachers engage in discriminatory practices, such as favouritism towards sure students based on attire or caste background. This perpetuates social hierarchies and reinforces biases within educational institutions, further marginalizing tribal students. Tribal students face judgment and stereotyping when they transition from rural or tribal communities to urban cities for education. This can lead to feelings of alienation and insecurity as they are subjected to unfair scrutiny and discrimination by both peers and teachers.

Participants have experienced teachers practicing exclusion wherein they keep the students in their 'Goodbooks' based on the students attire and also the caste which is kept invisible always and they ignore the other 'low caste students' students. Tribals when move on to urban cities for education, get judged a lot, even I was judged a lot in the college itself among students and to some extent by teachers. Taunts like 'Gavti' meaning 'rural people' people who live in rural areas' as expressed by one participant during interacting session while taking interview. The experiences of marginalization and exclusion have a detrimental impact on the mental well-being of tribal students, leading to feelings of shame, inferiority, and disempowerment. This can hinder their academic performance and overall educational experience.

5.7 Lack of Belongingness

Tribal students express a fear of approaching teachers for help or clarification due to the perceived risk of being scolded or laughed at. This fear stems from a lack of confidence and a sense of vulnerability in academic settings. Tribal students reported feeling alone and left out in classroom settings, leading to a reluctance to attend classes. The absence of a supportive social network exacerbates feelings of isolation and disconnection from the educational community.

The lack of belongingness and negative experiences with teachers and peers have a detrimental impact on academic engagement and motivation. Tribal students may struggle to maintain focus and interest in their studies, leading to academic underperformance and disengagement.

Tribal students highlight the stark contrast between their previous environments and the academic setting, contributing to feelings of alienation and difficulty adapting to the new social norms and behaviors expected of them. Despite feeling out of place and disconnected, tribal students feel pressured to conform and try to fit in with their peers. This internal conflict between their desire for acceptance and discomfort in the academic environment further compounds their alienation. There are some of the experiences which the participants have discussed, they are:

'We don't go to the teachers to ask for any help or to ask for any clarification because we have that fear I don't know what fear but to open our mouth in front of them is very fearful, fear of scolding, fear of laugh by teachers if we don't know any answer.'

One participant shared, 'I don't feel like going to classes and also attending the classes. If my friends are going to attend classes, I feel like going to classes and attending. Because we feel alone, left out, sitting in one corner of the class. "I don't want to do Masters, but forcibly trying myself to put in efforts to be on track". Because I never came across such behaviors, such attitudes from people, this is the complete different environment for me to survive in. People see me very differently also behave with me very differently.'

5.8 "Rude" Behaviors

It is evident through the participants' experiences that institutions carry out rude behaviors towards the Tribal students. In the first narrative, a student faces anger and harsh treatment from the principle when they mistakenly bring a form to her office instead of having the teacher do it. This response is disproportionate and the statements such as, "Tumka manners na, ashech yevpak meyta offican signature ghevapak, teacherin ghevun yevpak jai tye tuven ni", because of

you'all we have to hear from the prinicpal now.You will get your money but because of you'all we have to suffer here" may contribute to feelings of humiliation and inadequacy among students.In the second narrative, tribal students encounter rudeness from their classmates when seeking help with the a new subject.Despite their classmates having knowledge of the subject, they refused to assist or provide guidance, they reply very rudely saying "We only don't know, what to tell you"?, leaving the tribal students feeling isolated and supported.Rude behaviors from both teachers and peers create barriers to learning and contribute to a hostile learning environment for tribal students.The responses from both teachers and peers reflect a lack of empathy and understanding towards the challenges faced by the tribal students.instead of offering assistance or guidance, they respond with rudeness and blame further marginalizing tribal students within the educational context.

5.9 Humiliation

Bhoi and Gorringer (2023) speak of language and hegemonisation, how the language is hegemonised and becomes the standard way of speaking in everyday situations. When interacting with the participants, the shared narratives included how the institution's staff humiliated them when they went for submission of scholarship forms.One participant narrated, "We have one sir in our department who got his job through reservations and we hear often about him from our teachers that you know people easily get jobs through reservations, when they are not capable enough also.Whereas we have experienced his lectures, he come to class and is much focused on his syllabuses but the those teachers are most of the times go out of the syllabus."

This theme highlights instances of humiliation experienced by tribal students within educational institutions, particularly in interactions related to scholarship submissions and perceptions of reservations.

Tribal students report experiences of humiliation when submitting scholarship forms, suggesting that institutional staff may treat them disrespectfully or unfairly during administrative processes. This treatment undermines the self-worth of tribal students and can contribute to feelings of marginalization and exclusion.

Tribal students are subjected to negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding reservations, particularly in relation to employment opportunities. Despite experiencing the effectiveness and dedication of a teacher who secured their job through reservations, teachers continue to perpetuate the stereotype that reservations lead to incompetent individuals obtaining positions.

Tribal students observe a discrepancy in teaching styles between a teacher who obtained their position through reservations and other teachers. While the teacher who secured their job through reservations is described as focused and diligent in delivering syllabi, other teachers are criticized for deviating from syllabus content. This suggests a bias in the evaluation of teachers based on their background rather than their performance.

5.10 Harassment

The participants have discussed the instances of harassment experienced by tribal students within educational settings, particularly related to the scholarships and caste based teasing.

The incident in the canteen where a friend publicly remarks about the possibility of receiving a scholarship causing embarrassment and humiliation for the tribal student highlights the insensitivity and lack of awareness among peers. The laughter and mocking behavior from non-ST friends further exacerbate the sense of isolation and stigma faced by the tribal student. The narration given by the participant, our whole group, we were sitting in the canteen and one of my friend who had gone to the office for some work came to me and told me by pointing at me "you are called in the office for some scholarship thing, go and check, you will be given 2 lakhs I think". Almost the whole canteen heard it and all started giving different faces. My own friends

started laughing at me who belonged to Non-ST Students. I felt embarrassed in front of them, it was very insulting to hear this from my own friend. I could not argue with him because he was my friend, If I would have asked him about their privileges he would've got angry at me" Then caste would've come out as a major serious discussion and thinking that I stopped myself from further argument.

The tribal students reflects on the misconception that scholarships are exclusively available to ST students including non-ST and general category students have opportunities to apply for scholarships. This highlights a lack of understanding among peers regarding scholarship eligibility criteria and perpetuates stereotypes about ST students receiving unfair advantages.

The incident of caste-based teasing in the 12th standard reflects the prevalence of discriminatory behavior among peers. The intervention of a teacher in addressing the teasing demonstrates a positive step towards protecting the tribal student from harassment and creating a supportive environment. These experiences of harassment and teasing have a significant impact on the emotional well-being and self-esteem of tribal students. They feel singled out, humiliated and marginalized, leading to feelings of shame and frustration.

5.11 Exercising Dominance

The findings reveal systemic discrimination experienced by the Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in educational institutions based on caste and unequal opportunities.

Participants have described how tribal students are systemically excluded from participating in the student election due to caste-based differences and political domination because of the ongoing traditions of caste and political hegemony over such positions. One participant shares, 'In our college, the age-old hierarchy is maintained. General secretary is the one and will be the one who belongs to the higher castes because they say we don't have the power to hold such

positions of power.' Despite their desire to contest for the elections ST students face resistance and lack of support from peers, the institutional structures perpetuating a cycle of marginalization. Tribal students are given limited opportunities in the sports like kho-kho kabbadi and are discouraged from participating in the games like chess, which are perceived as being played by intelligent people and; thus, the tribal lack the same. One of the participant shared 'we were never taught chess game in our school, and our physical education sir used to say that, "what will you do after learning this chess? It is challenging to learn, and you will not be able to learn it", So let's keep this chess game aside." This results in discriminatory beliefs about the capabilities of the tribal students and leading to the exclusion.

According to the participants, there is a perception of the non-ST students towards the tribal students that Tribals get unfair benefits through reservations, which leads to resentment and discrimination towards the ST students.

There are instances of differentiation in the assessments where the Tribal students receive differential treatment in assessments and it reinforces injustice and inequality faced by them in their educational settings. One such instance of the participant includes, 'In our department in one paper of languages, we had ISA of Presentations and in those presentations If I compare my presentation with the others who were given above 15 marks were not deserving those marks because I tried to cover all the points whatever sir had told to us but the students did not even focus on the topic much and even not covered the points but were given marks more than me. I could feel that kind of demotivation that day because when you give your 100% and just because those students are more familiar with you, you gave them unexpected marks.

Belonging to the lower communities is considered as a sin and an individual problem. One incident wherein a teacher discriminated against and denied the opportunity to go on stage because she belonged to the lower caste, The Participant narrated, 'To talk about racism and caste

discrimination. In school, we had done one project by our 4 group members. And we secured 2nd place for that project when the time came for receiving the gift. I told another group member that you go and receive the prize, but our teacher did not allow her to go and receive that prize. Instead, she said, Why she ? You go and bring that prize? To tell you she belonged to the SC community, I still have that guilt ,I felt very bad that day.How one can make such distinctions among students. She actually wanted to go on the stage and was not allowed to and was denied of her opportunity.

The exclusions towards tribal students are most of the times considered as the individual misconduct and not as institutional problems, that they feel it is their fault.They narrated,whenever people used to say such things to me and to my friends, I never thought from that perspective.I always used to think that it was my fault that I am lacking something in myself and I need to improve it.But always whenever I tried to improve it, I always have faced much than before.Whenever I tried to improve myself always I was put down upon and the behaviors of teachers,students,staffs etc. remained same towards us.They always spoke to us very rudely as if we were making mistakes everytime, even if we were silent.Then I reflected to myself that it is not the lack in me but it is the lack in the teachers,students to treat us equally with them.I never voiced out such things and I used to reflect to myself that who are they to treat us like that, but also I did never voiced out such things in the fear "If I say something to them next time they will not entertain us" thinking this I used to keep quiet always. Because there was no point discussing with them such issues because 'power was in their hands'. If we were given opportunities, we would have been excellent in the extra-curricular activities, also in studying. If we were treated equally, we would not have cried for discouraging us and stigmatizing us based on our identity and attires.Parents based power preferences were very much prevalent in our school.So, whose

parents were connected with the institution were given more privileges. And those parents were made the PTA chairmans of our institution.

There are many experiences shared by the participants based on the kinds of discrimination happened towards them in participating in the activities and also in taking up jobs. Such experiences include, a participant said, 'me and my friends, we never participated in the programmes and always became the audience. Because we were never allowed to, they already had their students selected who will organize the programme. And students used to think that we didn't participate. We were never informed about any programmes, first their higher caste favourite students were called and were told about any activity is to be held in the department and then through them it was communicated to all of us. Most of the times, they used to forget to tell the whole class and had ended up informing only in their other groups itself. When they decided about the activities all are informed but we are never included in the decision making process.'

Another narrative, In our school there was this category of 'selective students' who were always given chance in the extra-curricular activities. They were all from the higher communities except one from ST itself but political fit and also was looking beautiful and would perfectly fit for cultural events according to the teachers. To add one more experience, 'From my schooling I never got any opportunity in various activities, competitions etc but I remember there were selected students (belonged to the privileged groups) who were always given opportunities.'

Also while taking up jobs, participant discussed 'When I was in college because some of my financial problems and went to take up job simultaneously during my Third year of bachelor's in the bank. When I went there for the interview, the Branch Manager asked me "Are you a tribal? Will you be able to handle this position?" What could have been his perception of asking such questions? He did not allowed me take up job and after one month, he calls me and tells me about one guy he had taken instead of me, he is not working properly, if I can join there? I joined

because of my financial conditions as I had no other option. In the bank setting also, whenever I interacted with the customers often they used to ask about which background I was from ? and which caste I belonged to ?. I want to ask this question to all , is there any place where caste is not asked, or caste is not highlighted ? Such were my experiences of educational journey throughout my schooling to till Post Graduation learning.'

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS,RECOMMENDATIONS & LIMITATIONS

The research aimed to comprehend and unearth the stories of tribal graduates. Caste continued to be cherished and perpetuated in both subtle and complex ways because social and cultural prejudices continue to exist in spite of the collapse of feudal systems and hierarchies, reinforcing material and cultural inequities. One of the most common ways that the favored castes institutionalize caste in higher education, where students perform worse academically due in large part to discrimination based on caste.

By analyzing the educational experiences of students in relation to their political and cultural orientation on the one hand, and their rejection, discouragement, and bad experiences in the context of Tribal identity on the other, this study provides an alternative perspective on comprehending the entire academic journey of Tribal students. This chapter is divided into three sections: Discussion, recommendations, and a description of the academic paths of the students.

6.1 THEMATISED DISCUSSION ON TRIBAL STUDENTS ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES:

In this discussion chapter, I would like to discuss the findings which the participants have shared based on their experiences. These findings are again thematised accordingly to have an impactful discussion for inclusive strategies. The data draw a picture of marginalization faced by ST students within educational institutions where power imbalances, underrepresentation, symbolic violence and intersecting identities intersect to create barriers to the tribal students academic success and social integration.

6.1.1 Discrimination and Marginalization of ST Students in Educational Settings

The theme that emerges is the pervasive discrimination and marginalization experienced by Scheduled Tribe (ST) students within educational settings. There are various factors led to the emergence of this theme, which includes:

Denial of Opportunities and Unfair Treatment

ST students face denial of opportunities such as participating in competitions, choosing subjects, and accessing scholarships despite their talents and capabilities. Discriminatory remarks and attitudes from teachers and peers contribute to a hostile environment, impacting students self-esteem and motivation.

Normalization of Discrimination

Discriminatory behavior is often normalized or dismissed as jokes, perpetuating the cycle of discrimination against ST students. Social hierarchies and biases are reinforced, leading to unequal treatment and opportunities for ST students compared to their non-ST counterparts.

Socio-Cultural Bias and Stereotyping

ST students are subjected to judgment based on their dressing sense, geographical origins, and perceived capabilities. Urban-centric norms and stereotypes contribute to feelings of alienation and marginalization among tribal students.

Impact on Mental Health and Well-being

Discrimination and stigmatization have detrimental effects on the mental well-being of ST students, leading to depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Feelings of isolation and lack of belongingness further exacerbate the challenges faced by tribal students in educational environments.

Institutional Biases and Lack of Support

ST students encounter biases and lack of support from institutional staff, including delayed scholarship disbursement and inadequate assistance with administrative processes. Teachers may engage in discriminatory practices, favoring certain students over others based on caste or background. There are different attitudes and behaviours prevalent in the educational institutions itself when the term 'reservation' comes into picture as evaluated through the participants narratives. The non-reservation category students and teachers say that it is an injustice towards them, but the reservation category students say that 'having privileges and having facilities differs' Privileged in education atleast have the right of education and having the right of education for tribals is through getting this facilities because it is the ultimate source of being educated.

Limited Opportunities and Representation:

ST students are often excluded from extracurricular activities, student elections, and committees due to caste-based biases and political dominance. Differential treatment in assessments further perpetuates feelings of injustice and inequality among ST students.

Power

As Foucault(1979) focuses on power and identities as 'power' get practised at all levels and everywhere in the society but the matter of concern is always who is exercising it, to what an extent and as a result who is subordinated. Through the findings participants have narrated, it reflects that there is a clear power dynamics within the educational institutions wherein the non-ST students and teachers hold significant power over the ST students. This power manifests through various forms such as denial of opportunities, exclusion from decision-making processes and discriminatory treatments. The teachers and peers exercise power by dismissing ST students concerns denying them opportunities for participation and perpetuating stereotypes that maintain

their marginalized status. In the educational settings these caste hierarchy are always maintained which automatically put privileged castes at the 'higher strands' and the other groups at the 'lower strands'

Symbolic Violence

Symbolic Violence and Everyday Violence Scheper-Hughes (1992,1996) is evident in the data through the use of derogatory language, discriminatory remarks and stigmatization experienced by ST students within educational settings. It manifests as humiliation, discrimination and exclusion which perpetuate feelings of inferiority and shame among ST students.

Thus, ST students experience various forms of discrimination including denial of opportunities, exclusion from social groups, unequal treatments in classrooms and harassment based on caste identity. Discriminatory attitudes and behaviors perpetuate social hierarchies and create barriers to educational success and social integration for ST students.

Intersectionality

The experiences of ST students are shaped by intersecting identities, including caste, socioeconomic status and geographic background. These intersecting identities compound the discrimination and marginalization they face within educational institutions. ST students from rural or forested areas may face additional challenges in adapting to urban educational environments while those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may lack access to resources and support systems that could mitigate discrimination. Through this findings I was able to bring this intersectional approach to my study because whenever we talk about marginalization there is always overlapping of identities. Having an identity as a 'tribal' was my main area of focus and when I navigated through the interviews I could connect to different identities which fits this approach. There are identical overlappings in the shared experiences of the participants based on caste, color, language, occupation etc. Students highlighted concerns on the issues of racism

where a particular student is given opportunities based on their colour and look,also, based on one's language tone of speaking, students are targeted and are made to do the work which their parents did by denying tribals interest in studies.

Addressing these issues requires dismantling existing power structures, challenging stereotypes and biases and creating inclusive environments that recognize and value the diversity of student experiences.Efforts must be made to empower ST students amplify their voices and ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources within educational institutions.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

As I draw upon these experiences of the tribal students. I came to a point to recommend the specific needs of the tribal students in the higher education. Sensitization towards the tribal identity is very important because the stigmatization which is carried out by the higher institutions towards the tribal students leads to degrading one's identity. Awareness about the students cells,policies is very less and it is very important to take into consideration during the orientations sessions that students are made aware of the student cells responsibilities and policies for the students.

6.2.1 Inclusive Interventions

There are various policies adopted by the educational institutions in their rules and regulations but how far they are active needs to be checked into. Even if the the committees are formed but how far the students are aware about such policies and committees is again a big question mark. All these channels needs to be revived because there is an urgent need to investigate into the challenges faced by the tribal students in the higher educational institutions. There is a need for a mutual understanding among all the students and not the hatred towards one another based on reservations and to have this understanding there is a need for sensitization towards the

reservations and it's importance so that the tribal students are not targeted for availing these facilities. Institutions can organize workshops where storytelling activities can be a part of the session so that the students narratives are heard which can lead to improvements in the educational environments. There are allotted mentors for the students in every institutions under whom the student has to complete mentoring sessions, during these mentoring sessions it should be the responsibility of the mentor to guide if the students educational progress is not affected by an other factors and the mentor refrain themselves from judging and normalising any issues faced by the students and guiding the students properly. Teachers should be inclusive in giving all the students opportunities to grow educationally. There is also an urgent need to train and create awareness among the non-teaching staff so that they don't discriminate the students based on the castes. Inclusivity in the election processes is important where all the students get equal opportunities to be in the decision making and represent themselves which may foster a sense of encouragement among the students. It is very much important to treat everyone equally because we all are in the same learning process. Studies like this should be welcomed so that a more inclusive environment is built for the students coming from the marginalised sections and they can aspire for better educational experiences and for their beautiful educational journey's.

6.3 Limitations

Through the experience of undertaken satisfying dissertation, I advice that caste based discriminations can be researched through the different lenses by focusing on the uncovering the life of caste, historically and contemporary revealing the caste changes in the priviledges, priviledges institutions promoting and institutional life of priviledges. My limitations to this study are, I could conduct only 12 interviews with the students because of the hours in-depth inetrvIEWS conducted. All the institutions of the south-goA are not completed due to the time constraint to complete the dissertation task on time

Conclusion

As I have reached to the point to conclude my study here, After going through rigorous interviews and navigating through the transcriptions I take this opportunity to say that Caste based discriminations has been most of the times treated as isolated incidents and the individual misconducts and are not accepted as systemic or institutional problem. This undertaken study explores diversity and campus climate research to highlight the issues faced by tribal students. It comes out clearly that caste hierarchies and exclusionary practices remain rigid and firm towards the lower communities, even if there is a change in the socio-economic conditions status of the marginalised. The extent and the forms of such practices may vary from past but the 'identity formation' and the 'line of differentiation' remains the same. However lack of institutional interventions to support disadvantaged students in the indian higher education facilitates a greater opportunity to study the topic through the research lenses.Rathod,(2021). Therefore I see potential in my research study. And this research "Exploring experiences of exclusion faced by tribal students in higher education" is essential for building a more just and inclusive society. This research will contribute valuable insights that can guide efforts towards creating a higher education system that truly provides equal opportunities for all regardless of their background.

The data underscores the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address discrimination and marginalization of ST students within educational institutions. Efforts should focus on promoting awareness, challenging stereotypes, fostering inclusivity, and providing support systems to ensure equal opportunities and respect for all students, regardless of their caste or background. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment is crucial for the academic success and well-being of ST students. As I navigated months to find answers to my research questions and now through this

study of mine I can prove that my objectives are met of understanding the tribal students experiences and the research questions, has education been successful in doing away with the caste based discriminations. Now I am in a position to say that 'systemic oppression' is still prevalent in our educational institutions and largely is practised invisibly and also normalised easily.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

About my research

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "Exploring experiences of tribal students in the higher education and discovering pathways to social equity". This research aims to gain insights into the challenges and experiences faced by tribal students in higher education settings. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved and your rights as a participant.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of exclusion that tribal students may encounter in the higher educational institutions. By participating you will contribute valuable information to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education practices and policies.

- Your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced by tribal students in higher education. This findings may help inform future policies and practices to create a more inclusive educational environment.
- There may be minimal risks associated with discussing personal experiences related to exclusion. However, all efforts will be made to ensure your comfort and well-being during the process.

- Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the study. All data will be anonymised and any identifiable information will be removed to protect your privacy.
- Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at anytime without any consequences.
- Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the institution.
- If you have any question about the study or your participation, please contact the researcher at (9373158310/ deepaksha11460@gmail.com)

APPENDIX II

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN MY STUDY

CONSENT

I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and gave and received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study "Exploring Experiences of Exclusion of Tribal Students in Higher Education."

Participants Name:

Participants Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX III

THEMES OF INTERVIEW

1. Demographic Details

Name

Age

Gender

Educational Background

2. Documentation and Accessing Information

Admission Process

Scholarship Forms

3. Classroom Experience

Teaching-Learning

Assessment

Belonginess/Participation

5. Extra-Curricular Activities

Events -Competitions

Sports(Chess/Kabbadi)

Committee Forming - Elections of students

Educational Infrastructure

Accessible facilities

Administrative staff

Library Staff

Teachers

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences or thoughts on the topic of exclusion faced by tribal students in higher education?

Thank you for your participation! Your insights are valuable in understanding and addressing the challenges faced by tribal students in higher education.