Higher Education in India and Austria: State Approach and Impact on Students from Marginalised Communities

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Abstract: Education has been termed as the most powerful weapon to fight against injustices. Quality education with adequate infrastructure and supportive human resources are key factors in strengthening any nation's educational system to achieve the goal it has set for itself. In the era of neo-liberalization, privatisation of education in underdeveloped and developing countries has become one of the serious concerns for their citizens. The ongoing conflict due to financial crunch and restriction on the freedom of expression of the students and faculty members in various higher educational institutions in India by the present Bharatiya Janata Party government has not only invited well-informed debates but also pushed people to get on the streets to register their protest.

This paper is based on the author's educational experiences along with an analysis of socio-political and economic developments with regard to public education in India and Austria (Europe). The paper demonstrates that Austria's public education policy has provided adequate freedoms, financial and otherwise, to its students in accessing education for their personal and professional development. Whereas, India's growing privatisation of education and rising educational costs work towards diverting students' focus from education to arrange for financial resources to meet educational expenses and struggle against the state for their right to free and compulsory education. Further, the paper argues that India's caste-based hierarchical social order ties in with the regressive educational reforms and has a significant negative impact on the students coming from socially disadvantaged and marginalized social groups such as the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), lower Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other marginalized groups.

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Introduction

Since independence of India, there has been a significant change in the various sectors including education and employment amongst the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) who have had to suffer socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation historically (Ambedkar, 1945; BAWS, Vol 13:1192, 2014; Thorat & Newman, 2010; Govt. of India, 2021). However, it is important to understand the change in comparison with other developed countries such as Austria, which is known for its quality education, health, infrastructure, per capita income and overall human development index (UNDP, 2020).

The education system of India is one of the most exclusive systems with its roots in the overarching social structure informed by caste. The discrimination and exclusion against lower castes of India are not just limited to schooling and to rural areas but these practices also have a strong presence in the urban spaces including educational institutions, the bureaucracy as well as student political parties. Data released by the Ministry of Education, Government of India in July 2021 shows that more than 33 percent of students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes drop out of state government schools by Class 10 (Government of India, 2021). Primary and secondary education is considered to be a foundation of higher education and has an impact on the way students will have access to further education and employment. This data suggests, to some extent, how the foundation of education is made to be weak for marginalised caste students.

The situation in higher education is not very pleasant either, especially in the reputed institutions and universities that provide professional courses. For instance, if we look at the data from Indian Institute of Technology, it informs that in 2020-21, 82 percent of seats reserved for STs were left vacant, whereas 80 percent of the seats for the same category were left vacant in the previous academic year 2019-20. Of all the seats reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) category, 61 percent were vacant in 2020-21 and 62 percent in 2019-20. Almost half the seats reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) were vacant in both the years (HT, March 2021). One of the key reasons for vacant seats and dropouts of students from marginalised caste communities is the humiliation and exclusionary behaviour of the faculties from these institutions. Thus, social locations of faculty members become a crucial part of this process.

The data accessed through the Right to Information Act by media houses informs that only 3.47% of the total number of professors in the Indian central universities belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) category. For scheduled tribes, this figure stands at an even lower 0.7%. Among associate professors, only 4.96% come from the SC category and 1.3% from the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category. Similarly, 12.02% of assistant professors of the overall figure in that category are SCs,

whereas 5.46% are ST and 14.38% come from Other Backward Classes (OBC)[1]. As per the existing provisions in the Indian constitution, there is a 16% reservation for SCs, 8% for STs and 27% for OBCs in all government jobs. This is a clear indication that constitutional provisions are rarely implemented in their full capacity. The above data was just for the teaching posts in 48 central universities.

As per the University Grant Commission (UGC) annual report 2018-19 (p-107), there are a total of 911 different types of universities in India. Besides that, there is a deliberate exclusion of the students/candidates belonging to marginalised castes by the dominant castes in the Indian educational spaces. A survey of the selection process at the Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies in the School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, for instance, showed that out of the 92 students who participated in the viva voce, over 92% of the students who did not qualify belonged to SC, ST and OBC categories. Out of 37 students who received only one or two marks out of a possible 30 in the viva, 36 students were from these categories (Mehar, 2017).

This paper is an attempt to bring out the field realities with a focus on the everyday practices in educational institutions in India and their impact on the students from marginalized castes. Further, the paper draws upon educational practices in Austria, a European country, so as to develop a comparative perspective. It seeks to answer the following questions,

i)   What practices facilitate the students, faculty and non-teaching staff to make the educational system-friendly and accessible to its stakeholders in India and Austria?
ii)   What are the key initiatives with regards to providing quality education in three Indian universities and in one of the top universities in Austria?
iii) What are the adopted policies that make the education system achieve expected output in accordance with the global standards?

Research Methodology

The author has adopted a mixed research methodology involving qualitative and quantitative research methods for this paper. To collect data from the field, the author has used participant observation, formal and informal discussions with the student union members at Alpen Adria University (AAU), Austria and three key universities in India namely Jawaharlal Nehru University (henceforth, JNU) New Delhi, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (henceforth, TISS) Mumbai and the University of Hyderabad (henceforth, HCU). Moreover, the author has used interviews and political speeches of the student union leaders from the above-mentioned Indian universities. Apart from this, the author also held discussions with the individual students on education policies,

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[1]   https://indianexpress.com/article/education/reservation-candidates-are-under-represented-in-govts-upper-rungs-5540310/ Last accessed on 20/02/2019

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government approach towards education and the nature of treatment that students receive in the educational institutes. The researcher has spent more than four months at AAU, Austria, for a semester-long joint study program. Besides attending classes over four months the author focused on pursuing research enquiry at the heart of this paper. In India the author has spent considerable time at the above-mentioned Indian universities, primarily to collect data. Apart from this, he has been a part of the student politics at TISS, Mumbai, where he also conducted interviews with the student leaders.

Indian Higher Education System

The history of Indian Universities takes us to the Nalanda and Takshashila universities first established mainly for Buddhist studies. Those universities faced opposition from the oppressive dominant ideologies of that time and were burnt down. In the recent recorded history, the Chaturvarna based oppressive and hierarchical social order has led to a restricted and exclusionary education system in India. This system was first challenged by Jyotirao Phule, who along with his wife Savitribai Phule, started the first schools for girls in Bhide Wada, Pune. His legacy was continued by Chatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj, the king of Kolhapur province in colonial India, by introducing reservations for backward castes in education in 1902 (Bala, 2013). The British East India Company also established key universities in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). To ensure social and economic justice Dr. B. R. Ambedkar fought against exclusionary practices that had plagued the societies in the Indian subcontinent for centuries. As the chairperson of the drafting committee of the Indian constitution he emphasised that basic rights, including the right to getting an education, were made mandatory as part of the directives included in the Indian Constitution. Along with providing fundamental rights and directive principles to the citizens, Dr. Ambedkar ensured that every individual gets an education without any kind of discrimination. The reservation policy as envisioned by him became an important tool to get access to education for the SCs, STs, and later on also by the OBC communities in India. The union government came up with the University Grants Commission (UGC) act 1956 under which the University system was introduced and managed across India. UGC is a statutory body set up by the Government of India; it manages the higher education system in India and works under the Ministry of Education previously known as the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD).

	Table No. 1 – Typology of Universities in India		
Sr. No.	**Type of University / Institution**	**Number of Universities**	**Number of Universities eligible for Central 12(B) of the UGC Act, 1956 Assistance under Section**
1	Central Universities	51	Separate Budget from Parliament
2	State Universities	397	228
3	State Private Universities	334	7
4	Institutions established through State Legislation	3	Respective Ministries
5	Institutions deemed to be Universities	126	39
	Total	**911**	**274**

Source**:** UGC Annual Report 2018-19[2]

As per the UGC report 2018-19, there are a total of 911 universities in India; among those 397 are state universities, 126 deemed universities, 51 central universities and 334 private universities. There are a total of 41,935 colleges and institutions affiliated to various universities; among those 22 percent are government-aided, 13 percent are private aided and 65 percent are private unaided institutions (UGC, 2019: 26). The funding for these universities comes from different sources. The

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[2] https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/3060779_UGC-ANNUAL-REPORT--ENGLISH--2018-19.pdf Last visited on 28/10/2020

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central universities have been funded by the central government through the parliamentary budget provision. The government unaided (private) colleges and institutes are a serious concern for the marginalised caste groups. Such colleges generate revenue from various sources. The donation from students and fees have been the key sources of their revenue, in fact, such institutions are a big business for the trustees and managing boards who take lakhs of rupees as donations and fees from the students, especially for medical and engineering courses. Due to unaffordable fees, economically backward students cannot possibly access education in such institutions. Thus, privatisation of education has become a key source of exclusion for students from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds.

The United Nations organisation predicted that India will be the youngest country in the world by 2026[3]. India's youth is facing several development challenges including inadequate access to education and gainful employment, gender inequality, and poor health facilities[4]. If we compare the statistics of the last nine years with regard to enrolment in the universities it provides a window into the present government's performance as far as facilitating educational advancement is concerned. As per the UGC report, there were 373,993,88 total students enrolled until the financial year 2018-19 (UGC, 2019). In which 298,290,75 (79.76) for graduation, 40,425,22 (10.81 percent) for post-graduation, 1,69,170 (0.45 percent) for PhD and remaining for MPhil (0.08 Percent). Additionally, there were figures of enrolment available on the post-graduate diplomas (0.60 percent), diploma courses (7.22 percent), certificate courses (0.44 percent), and integrated programs (0.64 percent). A breakdown of these aggregate numbers over the past decade can be seen in the table below:

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[3]   https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-has-worlds-largest-youth-population-un-report/articleshow/45190294.cms?from=mdr Last visited on 28/10/2020

[4]   https://india.unfpa.org/en/topics/young-people-12

Table No. 2 - All-India Growth of Students Enrolment (2010-11 to 2018-19)			
Year	**Total Enrolment**	**Increase over the proceeding year**	**Percentage increase**
2010-11	27499749		
2011-12	29184331	1684582	6.13%
2012-13	30152417	968086	3.32%
2013-14	32336234	2183817	7.24%
2014-15	34211637	1875403	5.80%
2015-16	34584781	373144	1.09%
2016-17	35705905	1121124	3.24%
2017-18	36642378	936473	2.62%
2018-19	37399388	757010	2.07%

Source: UGC Annual Report 2018-19

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The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in May 2014 just before the start of the academic year 2014-15. The negligence towards education by the NDA government has clearly reflected in the data presented in table no 2. The enrollment increment was 7.24 percent in 2013-14 and 5.80 percent in 2014-15, which was reduced to 1.09 percent during 2015-16. The fund cuts, political interference in universities, favouritism in recruitment and radicalisation of student politics through the introduction of violence to suppress the marginalised voices were some of the reasons that have impacted universities and their functioning. Prof. Sukhdev Thorat, the former chairman of UGC, had brought in a set of new policies and reforms during his tenure (2006-2011) as the UGC chairman that attracted students towards higher education. He introduced new fellowships for MPhil and PhD students and also increased the number of fellowships along with a strict policy against ragging.

However, over the past decade, privatisation of education has become one of the serious concerns in the Indian education system with the rise of excessive fees structure of private and partially funded colleges and institutions. The nationwide movement in this context has invited a well-informed debate on the rising cost of getting an education in India that has not only impacted the socially marginalised castes but also lower-middle-class students across castes.

The overflowing number of students in the limited university spaces with poor infrastructure has led to poor quality delivery in educational spaces in India. The movements initiated against scarcity of funds by the students in various universities have diverted students from their focus on educational activities and has pushed them towards engaging more and more in student politics. This has also allowed political parties to enter these spaces and utilise students' energies for their political agenda.

Perspectives from a European University

The author spent four months studying one semester at Alpen Adria University (AAU) Klagenfurt, Austria as part of an exchange program. He got an opportunity to study with students from nearly 40 countries, mostly from the developed world. For his study, he took 34 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits with 7 subjects, mostly related to his ongoing research at TISS. He studied papers titled i) Publication, ii) Thesis Writing, iii) Sociology Seminar for Doctoral Research Scholars, iv) Inequality, v) Smart City, vi) Nonprofit and Public Management and vii) and German Language. This was his first-ever long-term educational tour in a European university. From the first day onwards, data in the form of observations about the place and university culture were recorded. Through these everyday experiences and their systematic recording, a comparative analysis between the Indian and Austrian education system was developed.

Austria figures somewhere around the top in the list of the highest per capita income countries. On the other hand, India is a developing country with the world's second-largest population; thus, it

has seemed difficult for the author to compare these countries[5]. Given such varying socio-economic contexts, the author collected data using mixed methods and put it through a comparative analysis as explained in the methodology section above.

Financial investment in AAU

Since its foundation as an educational institute in 1970, the University of Klagenfurt (AAU) has established itself as a leading educational institution in the canon of Austrian universities and is known as one of the top universities among 150 young universities worldwide[6]. As per the statistics provided on the AAU website, more than 11,600 students study and research at the AAU, around 2,000 of whom come from abroad. In spite of the New Management System (NMS) the university has 1,500 employees striving for top-quality performance in teaching, research and university management. The important point to note is that in order to make the institution sustain and thrive, adequate financial support plays a significant role. On the other hand, Indian universities are facing a heavy financial crunch for the last few years. It was told by one of the senior professors at AAU that for the academic year 2018-2019 the university received a 62-million-euro grant (Rs. 4,99,76,39,339.44)[7]. If we see the financial allocation to the Alpen Adria University and the number of students it can be deduced that the per capita expenditure on the student is much higher than any Indian university. This financial investment in education by the state comes across as one of the reasons why such educational spaces score high on parameters such as infrastructure and human resources.

The noticeable development of Austria on various indicators should invite the attention of the developing countries to understand its development model. Vienna, the capital city of Austria, had been securing a top rank in the list of smart cities globally for 7 years until 2018[8]. Austria has also had a dark and painful history due to its experiences in the first and second world wars. However, the state has been able to overcome the issues those wars led to and has done exceptional work to protect the interests and rights of the citizens with liberty, equality, dignity and security. Some of the Austrian welfare policies provide an understanding of how the state is doing extremely well to protect the basic rights of its citizens. The policies of affordable education, sufficient pension to old age people, unemployed citizens, free housing, an efficient elderly care system, social security, child care fund, special policies for refugees and various other policies are key examples of how the state is functioning in Austria. Such state initiatives not only provide common citizens with a comfortable life but also help young students in focusing on their studies, spend their time in the library rather than agitating against the state.

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[5] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

[6] https://www.aau.at/universitaet/

[7] Amount as per the Euro rate in INR on 03/03/2019

[8] https://smartcity.wien.gv.at/site/en/the-initiative/awards-studies-and-rankings/ Last accessed on 20/02/2019

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How has Austria been able to do this? This is one of the important questions and there is no simple answer to this. As compared to India, amongst various factors that have helped Austria reach the current state following two factors have played significant roles i) the controlled population ii) the tax system. The total population of the nation was a total of 8,917,205 people in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). Even though Austria is a very small country, it has been using its resources in a planned way to achieve the goals it has set for itself. Secondly, there is a considerable difference in the taxation system in Austria and India. In Austria, if the income of an individual is between 11000 to 18000 euro per-annum then they have to pay 25% of their income as tax; the tax rises to 35% if the income is anywhere between 18000 to 31000 euro per annum; for the range 31000 to 60000 it amounts to 42% of the total income; for 60000 to 90000 it increases to 48%, for 90000 to 100000 it is 50% and if the income goes above 100000 then the tax amount to a total 55% of the total income[9]. Even though the tax levied seems exorbitant it has helped the country in maintaining wealth equality amongst its people. Whereas, in India, the tax system has too many benefits for the high-income groups when compared with Austria. Before the Goods and Service Tax (GST) was introduced by the government, people were caught into paying multiple forms of taxes, which was definitely a complicated process. However, with the adoption of the Goods and Service Tax things have still not been resolved. Instead, GST has only impacted small scale industries and the informal sector, both of which are considered the backbone of the Indian economy. As per the tax system of India an individual has to pay 5% of tax on the income more than Rs 2,50,000 to Rs. 5,00,000. This gets incised with the income as between Rs.5,00,001 – Rs. 7,50,000 -15%, between Rs.10,00,001 – Rs.12,50,000 – 20%, between Rs.12,50,001 – Rs.15,00,000 – 25% and above Rs. 15,00,000 – 30%[10]. In this tax system, the middle class carry more burden of taxes than the upper classes.

Expenditure on managing its border and defence issues are some of the primary concerns for India given the fact that it has been facing long going conflicts with the neighbouring countries. Many small countries in the European Union, including Austria, do not have such emphasis on army or defence forces. However, it is compulsory for every adult student to give their two years of time for army training and they would be called for delivering their services if a war-like situation arises.

Issues and Students Engagement

The theory of social action says that when the system fails to meet the needs of the citizens, people get mobilised for social action. Students in India and multiple other less developed and developing countries are always in the middle of that social action. The conflict between state and students is not a new phenomenon. Every now and then there are some or the other political issues that keep arising in different universities of India. Dr. B. R. Ambedakar was of the opinion that students

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[9] https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/taxes/income-taxes-abroad/austria/index_en.htm
[10] This is the recent tax system for the financial year 2001-2022. Government changes this almost every financial year. In 2019, this was different from now.

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should focus on their education, but in India, there is no such option for the students belonging to marginalised communities. In order to secure their basic rights, students from marginalised communities have to struggle against the university administration, government and other dominant caste group students and faculty members.

Fighting and struggling is the only way to access justice in any society and especially in societies that are built on highly hierarchical systems like India. Due to the unequal relation of caste and class, student politics has become an essential part of academic life in Indian universities. Instead of spending their time in the classroom and library for education, they have to give their quality time engaging with the political struggles. In such an overtly political atmosphere, multiple student groups/organisations with direct or indirect affiliation to national-level parties engage students in campus-level politics through aggressive recruitment methods. Sometimes such political involvement has helped a few students to build their dynamic leadership qualities and has helped in strengthening the larger democratic system but through such involvement majority of the participating students end up losing their quality study time.

In AAU, student organisations work with students in multiple productive ways. The elected student body with a structured system works with the administration for the students. At the national level, all the universities in Austria have Österreichische Hochschülerinnen (OH) organisation[11] with national presidents and other members elected through the university representatives. The university Students' Union (SU) works under the central body. The SU members do their best to support students in many ways. The SU members maintain a high level of professionalism. It was found that the students from the opposition parties never made unnecessary interference in the work of SU. During discussions with some of the members in the SU it was observed that there are heated discussions in the meetings with the school representatives and other SU members but after final discussions, nobody carries it out of the meeting room.

It was observed that students from Austria never discuss politics on open platforms, especially in informal spaces. Most of the time students put their best efforts into attending classes, working in libraries and also on recreational activities like partying with their friends. They would celebrate their achievements in the evening even when they submit a small assignment. They do not indulge excessively in political matters of the university and otherwise because the life they live is relatively comfortable and their everyday issues do not concern them the way they do students in India. The experience of discussion on the social and political issues in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi was very different from the kind of silence that was observed in Austria. The multiple rounds of discussion with different student activists and leaders make such (JNU) spaces alive as well as politically vibrant, however, at what cost is also an important question. The

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[11] The Österreichische Hochschülerinnen - und Hochschülerschaft, abbreviated ÖH, is the Austrian Students´ Union and is the general students' government body in Austria by federal law. It represents the interests of the Austrian students on a faculty, university, national and international level.

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state can keep away the students from issues such as expensive education, discrimination in the university spaces, poor infrastructure by fulfilling these concerns.

If we compare the fee structures of the universities in the two countries, one finds education much cheaper in Austria. The local student just pays 19 euro as Student Union fees and gets admission to the university (AAU) for any course they wish to study. They don't have to pay anything other than that. The university does not provide a hostel facility but the students get access to cheap accommodation near the universities so that they are able to manage on their own. Students from undergraduate and postgraduate levels get opportunities to work in the university and earn sufficient money to manage their educational needs and other daily expenses. Most of the students, after 18 years of age, choose to live separately from their parents, either in private hostels or apartments. This gives them the opportunity to take care of themselves and manage their expenses. In some cases, they also take financial help from their parents, however, the majority of them work and pay for their expenses. The above-mentioned factors help students live very focused lives in Austria.

The concept of open discussion and engaging constructively outside the classroom was missing in Austria. On the other hand, in India students form multiple small groups and engage in formal and informal discussions and small-time political activities. To look at it from another perspective, the everyday problems in Indian universities as rooted in the social structure not only keep students engaged in issues that have nothing to do with their educational requirements and thus consume a large amount of their quality time. In particular, students from the social sciences cannot ignore social issues and concentrate only on study. The intensity of the issues become so deep that they push students to get involved in these everyday battles against one another and against the university system in general.

For instance, during the author's M.A. in Social Work at TISS, students had to undertake compulsory fieldwork. Every week, for two days, students would work in the field to observe the social problems first hand and try to learn how to work on solving those problems as professional social workers. For the first fieldwork, the author was placed in 'The New Observation Home'[12] to work with juveniles. The place accommodated kids under 18 years. The ideal purpose of such a home was to provide care and protection but exactly the opposite was happening there; no proper infrastructure, no basic facility, and no proper food was being provided to the residents. In such a pathetic situation it was expected from students to learn and work with these children. How is it possible to concentrate on learning in such an environment? Each problem observed has multiple related issues. The author along with his colleagues raised those issues before supervisors but there was no satisfactory response. Students who come from rural, poor socio-economic and even

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[12] https://www.casmumbai.in/cas-mumbai-branches/the-new-observation-home-mankhurd.html#:~:text=The%20Home%20has%20facilities%20for,functions%20like%20an%20open%20institution

vernacular backgrounds find it overwhelming when they encounter such issues even in the university set up; they are not able to do much and fall into the trap of giving more importance to working on such issues rather than devoting that time to study. Education for such students is the weapon to fight against injustices but that becomes a secondary focus. During the author's internship in the National Campaign on Dalit and Human Rights, New Delhi, he ended up working as an activist rather than as a student who had joined the place to learn. The intensity of the issues at hand is such that one tends to assume the role of an activist even when one doesn't intend to.

Ever since the current government came to power, the university spaces have been buzzing with student agitations on a variety of issues. Some of the recent examples of student agitations can be cited from Hyderabad Central University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Banaras Hindu University, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, among others. The movement at Hyderabad Central University was followed by the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula prior to which the MHRD (Ministry of Human Resources and Development) minister had written five letters to the university head asking to take action on the students including Rohith. This shows the involvement of the regime in the suicide of bright students. Secondly, the agitation in JNU was followed by the sedition cases on the students and high highhandedness by the university administration. The student agitation at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) was met with the highest police brutality against students. Police lathi-charged on protesters, most of them women students sitting on a dharna against the alleged inaction and victim-blaming of a fine arts student who was molested on the campus. Several students, journalists covering the protest and policemen were injured in the incident. (The Hindu, 2017)[13] Similarly, there were agitations carried out by students in Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai (February 2018) to reinstate the student aid and scholarship of the SC, ST and OBC students provided by the university previously. These are some of the many instances of the way student agitation and their face-off with the university administration and system has become a regular feature of the Indian universities.

The output of these agitations suggests that the government forces push students towards resorting to such measures. At the most, these instances provided some food for the media and some of the student leaders got fame but the problems that led to these incidents and agitations have not been solved. This may have led to a few individuals getting space in mainstream politics, however, the marginalized community lost a research scholar, a large number of students invested their time and energy in agitating against the administration and the state and facing police cases but justice is yet to be delivered.

Political parties have an increasingly important role to play in deciding the course of action within university campuses. Instead of providing helpful solutions, political parties capitalize on the

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[13] https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/bhu-students-recall-police-brutality/article19747770.ece

energies of the students for their own benefit. Political parties that partake in agitations with students as proxies never solve the same issues when they are in power. In university student politics, the Students' Union election get charged by such issues. The students get divided based on the ideology, political issues, group loyalties and party politics in the university. Some of the students involve themselves in campus politics as if it is their full-time job. They also work towards bringing more students into the fold of the organizations they are a part of. A lot of such students from marginalized communities come from poor backgrounds and their families have hopes from them that after completing their education they will provide them with some earnings to make the family economically better in the near future. But such a political atmosphere in the university spaces puts them in a state of dilemma whether they should focus on education or participate in the political activities that dominate the university campuses. Even such a state of dilemma is looked down upon by the dominant groups and such students are stigmatised and even abused by the group members for their stand. In this entire process, the majority of the students go through tremendous stress, humiliation, and abuse by the individuals from within the system as well as from their peer group, which also impacts their confidence levels among other things.

Thus, it is necessary for the students, especially those coming from socially and economically marginalized families, to try and go for higher education abroad. Their families need their economic support and they have to pay back to society in a concrete way. Rather than wasting their energies in such spaces they need to study in a more empowering and peaceful environment where they can develop their skills and personality.

It is also important to question findings, writings and analysis of oppression. How long will students from marginalized communities face the same things and write about them? How long will they write about the agitation, fight both within and outside the universities? How many generations will have to fight against this injustice? Why can't students be treated as students and it is made sure that they have their full focus on studies rather than fighting for basic rights.

Conclusion

The comparison of educational practices in India and Austria (Europe) might sound strange but it becomes important to analyse and look at India from a comparative perspective given the towering claims of it being one of the fastest-growing economies with a robust military force as well as of being the youngest country in the world. In that respect, it should also keep itself in the race to improve its education system and learn from countries that are able to provide an educational atmosphere that contributes towards their overall growth and productivity.

The key findings of the paper suggest that the European education system is effective in terms of treating all students equally with quality infrastructure. This creates a peaceful educational environment for the students to study without bothering about issues such as the worry to pay for educational expenses as well as other concerns emerging from the deep social inequality prevalent

in Indian society. The rapid privatisation of education in India has become one of the serious concerns that exclude students from accessing quality education in India.

On the other hand, there is a need on the part of universities to make education accessible, affordable and student-friendly which is lacking so far in most Indian universities. This could be done by working towards improving the infrastructure with new public management systems. However, most of the public-funded Indian universities are lagging behind on significant parameters that determine the overall well-being of an educational institution. The state of libraries is such that they cannot accommodate the number of students, especially during its peak days and hours.

Thus, the issues that are plaguing the Indian education system can be summed up as: i) a weak public education system ii) the volatile state of the political atmosphere at Indian universities iii) privatisation of education iv) lack of adequate educational infrastructure to fulfil the educational needs of students v) lack of financial, human and other basic resources vi) lack of adequate representation in Indian universities of students from various caste groups that constitute the societies in India.

Drawing from the comparative analysis presented in the above paper has argued that the idea of education should be to develop students and make them skilled, knowledgeable and professionally capable to deliver their respective roles in society when they have completed their formal education. The purpose of education should be to make an individual informed and a responsible citizen endowed with constitutional values rather than to push them to leave the classroom and library and partake in agitations. A responsible educated citizen can only be made when the state plays its role in resolving issues faced by citizens, including students, and work towards growth and development.

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