

Affirmative Action Strategies In Education: A Critique In The Context Of Indian Subcontinent

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Abstract

The work analyzes the affirmative action in education in the context of Indian subcontinent in general. There is ample evidence for the positive effects of affirmative action to uplift the backward classes of society in Indian context. The analysis also upholds the rationale to continue the affirmative policy in the near future in India. The pitfalls of a vague or erroneous affirmative policy in the sub context of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are also discussed. In addition, the issues in the affirmative action policy in Indian system are also discussed. The study advocates a more comprehensive approach towards an equal and just society, where affirmative action in education is one of the most important aspects to achieve the same.

Keywords: Affirmative action; reservation; education; backward class; backward caste; economically backward.

1. Introduction

Affirmative action strategies (AAS) evoke a very extreme response in any society, where more often the benefitted class firmly advocates for it and the others would argue the supposedly adverse effects of the essence of AAS on the society in general. The argument against the AAS is also augmented with the prevailing inherent loopholes in the policy and in its implementation due to flux in demographic dynamics. However, AAS holds its ground in many countries and their states in different levels of hierarchy, which establishes the importance of the same [Sowell, 2004]. Still, a critical review to understand the AAS in various societies would always be mandated by the changing time line, as the range and effects of policies are dynamic and ever changing with the changing social realities. AAS exist in many different countries across the globe ranging from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, United States, South Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, Israel, China, Soviet Union, Brazil, Fiji, Canada, New Zealand, Australia to name a few. Most of the times, the AAS are based on the historical and traditional context, where the authorities enact the laws to help the marginalized sections of the society through various schemes and initiatives. Nonetheless, in numerous cases, AAS are also made to benefit the majority and already well-off/ dominant communities [Sowell, 2004].

In the Indian subcontinent, the historical caste system (based on groups traditional occupation and family lineage) is one of the rationale behind governments move to enact a policy for upliftment of the backward classes and scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST), as mentioned in the clause 4 (cl.4) article 15, in the constitution of India. The cl (4) was an exception to cl (1) article 15, which prohibits the Indian state from discriminating against any Indian citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them. Nonetheless, Indian parliament has also enacted laws to give the preferential reservation to citizens belonging to difficult or unapproachable terrain and other such places like border areas, under the provisions of cl (4) article 15. Further, article 15 cl (3) permits the

Indian state to make special provision for women and children, irrespective of the cl (1) of article 15 of the Indian constitution [2]. Article 15 cl. (5) further enables the Indian parliament to enact the laws to give special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions. More often than not, the Indian government would have to prove the legitimacy of the legislature on AAS for any group in the Indian courts of law. So effectively, the AAS or reservation policies in India have a double check procedure before getting converted into a law. Many other countries which implement the provision of AAS have a similar rationale and procedure to uplift the weaker sections of their societies. Analyzing affirmative action as whole would encompass many books as the scope of AAS may cover education, jobs, legislature, sports etc. Therefore, this study would be limiting in its review of the rationale behind the reservation policies in Indian subcontinent in general and AAS in education in particular.

The AAS in general is not unique phenomenon for any country as it is implemented by many countries across the globe, but its framework and implementation would make it inherently unique owing to the difference in the place, religion, race, ethnicity, languages, customs, traditions etc. Not surprisingly, the benefitted groups may belong to minorities or majorities, less advantaged or even the more fortunate ones. In this work, AAS would be referred as the policies which are envisaged for the disadvantaged groups. The policies under AAS are named differently in different countries such as: Malaysia and Indonesia calls the program as "sons of the soil", Nigeria calls it "reflecting the federal character of the country", Sri Lanka calls it "standardization", "affirmative action" in United States, "reservation" in India and Nepal, "qouta" in Bangladesh, and "positive discrimination" in Britain [1].

One of the curious aspects of all the AASs is the clear mention about its limited time frame at the time of inception. Some may argue that the limited time frame was proposed in order to prevent political conflict and community clashes among the proponents and opponents of AAS. Nonetheless, the rationale behind the time frame is also there to justify the assumed effectiveness of the programs and policies under AAS, otherwise the critics would ask the very rational behind the AAS measures if it would take forever to achieve the targets. Another aspect of the AASs are the premise that the preferential policies would encompass the limited realms and are not supposed to be ubiquitous. However, there is ample evidence to the contrary such that the time frames for AAS are extended continuously and even the scope of its ambit is inflated repeatedly. This practice of extending the time frame seriously questions the effectiveness of the AAS in general and its various aspects of content, target groups, procedure and implementations, in particular. The repeated extensions also create a controversy and frustration among the non-beneficiary groups, who are kept out of the domain of AAS. Here it is imperative to mention that the only exception in recent time where an AAS is promised to be curtailed to some effect is of Bangladesh, where a popular uprising resulted in the government promise of downsizing of "Qouta Policy", which was inherently faulted to begin with [3]. This work therefore studies the rationale behind the repeated extensions of the reservation policy in India in general and reservations in education sector in particular. The study has become ever so more relevant after the announcement of 10 per cent quota for economically backward in general category (GC) which would further increase the ambit of AAS in Indian context [4].

2. Educational reservation rational

In development studies, education is one of the most vital aspects for the progress of any individual or community. Increases in educational attainment is reported to be the cause behind 17.2% of economic growth in Africa and 11.1% in Asia between the 1950s & 1960s in general, while in particular, the 10% increase in primary education is supposed to be the

reason behind a decrease in the inequality index of 5%. [5]. Education improves the individual awareness about the various opportunities available and various sources of income. Education is also supposed to improve the efficiency of an individual, as he/she implements the acquired knowledge through education. Therefore, education is supposed to provide better job or business scenario which would then lead to a better economic status for an individual. An elevated economic class would then lead to superior social standing for the individual. Coupled with his/her education, an increased social standing would then empower an individual from the socially and economically disadvantaged group to seek political reforms. Reformed political system would then allow more people from disadvantaged groups to join the political hierarchy and make AAS for further development of the marginalized groups. This is exactly the route taken by one of the founders of Indian Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. Apart from the social progress, education would also lead to an upgraded quality of natural life and increased average life expectancy for an individual. [6]. After understanding the significance of the education as an enabler for the progress of depressed castes (SC and ST) in India, Dr. Ambedkar established the People's Education Society (PES) in 1945. The vision of Dr. Ambedkar was to provide education to weaker sections so that they would comprehend their potential and then would seek to progress in every field. The progressive wisdom is then supposed to bring political power and therefore would end their subjugation from the dominant groups [7]. Another prominent backward caste leader to realize the importance of education for the progress of SC and ST community was Jotirao Govindrao Phule, an Indian social activist, a thinker, anti-caste social reformer and writer from Maharashtra. Almost 70 years before the foundation of PES by Dr. Ambedkar, Jotirao formed the Satyasodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers Society) in 1873, to get identical rights for people from backward castes. Jotirao and his wife, Savitribai Phule, are known as the first resident Indians to open a school for girls in India in 1848 [8]. Their efforts to educate women and backward caste people establish the couple as one of the most visionary people from British India, who understood the significance of education in overall progress of backward castes and weaker sections of Indian society.

Since last 100 years, education is available to the general masses in India. However, this was not always the case as evidenced from the data of literacy and participation of depressed castes in school of India, Provinces (1931) [9]. While the percentage of literacy in general population was about 9.5 % in India and 9.9% in Provinces, the numbers were only 1.9% and 1.6%, respectively for the depressed and exterior castes. Even after the education was formally allowed for all communities in the 1850's, there were many historical reasons for the depressed castes and class to lag behind in achieving their proportion and potential in academics. Chronic poverty, lower social status, illiterate home environment, lack of motivation, lack of awareness, logistic problems etc. were the main hindrance in the backward caste children getting admissions in the schools. Therefore, it was recognized that the equality of opportunities would not be sufficient to bring the equality in Indian society. So, equity is the more preferred choice of goal which needs to be achieved vis-a-vis education of marginalized sections of society in India. In other words, AAS is needed for the marginalized communities to bring them to such a status where they could compete with others at equal pedestal. This was necessary to remedy the disadvantages felt by weaker sections due to the historical injustice and lack of opportunities in the past [10].

However, Indian educational reservation system is supportive at the entry level only, where the relaxation of merit is only for the admissions in educational institutes and not for passing or grading, which is at the exit level. This represents the vision of Dr. Ambedkar, where he wanted the weaker sections to get reservations to realize their potential and then would aspire to progress on their own, while competing with the others at equal pedestal. A provision of grace marks is there in Indian educational system to help out the below average students, but

that is not specific to the students from backward castes [11]. But there are exceptions in case of other countries too, where the AAS support is there at entry and exit level [12]. There were cases reported not only from Malaysia, but also from United States, where affirmative grading was used to prevent excessive failure rates of students from marginalized sections [13, 14]. Some countries even launch a relatively easier course under AAS for marginalized students, that gives easy grades and help students achieve the minimum credits requirement to pass the certain academic level. Although, the end results and employability of such candidates in the job markets are open to queries and may be the topic of further research, nonetheless, the almost universal implementation of educational AAS in various forms in different parts of the world firmly establishes it as one of the most important aspect in global development policies.

3. Educational affirmative action in Indian subcontinent

The present work reviews the AAS implemented in the 5 major countries in Indian subcontinent, which includes Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. To get a better oversight, we first reviewed the overall AAS in the respective countries and then we analyzed the education specific AAS in the same. There are remarkable differences in the AAS policies between the 5 nations and their analysis brings out certain important points regarding the success and failures of AAS in Indian subcontinent.

3.1. AAS in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh government civil services recruitment system has 56 percent of government job entry positions reserved for specific "entitled" classes: 30 per cent for children/grandchildren of 1971 "freedom fighters," 10 per cent for women, 10 per cent is for districts based on population, 5 per cent for ethnic minorities, and 1 per cent for people with disabilities [15]. As a result, only 44 percent of the job candidates are able to secure positions on the basis of merit, causing discontent among a large section of general students who say that they are deprived despite scoring higher than candidates who fall under any quota. Lack of big scale private sector and youths' dependence on the public sector and government departments to provide the employment opportunities has led to the quota war in Bangladesh. There were only about 1,061,089 posts available in government departments and various autonomous/corporation bodies in 2001 in Bangladesh, whereas the employable youth population is around 4.4 million. [15]. The year of 2013 and 2008 had already seen the "quota war" in Bangladesh, but failed to bring change in government quota policy. In July 2018, protests and counter-violence erupted at various Bangladeshi universities, particularly the University of Rajshahi (RU), over the 'quota reform movement,' which sought to change the quota system. However, after initially conceding to the demands of anti-quota protestors, the government of Bangladesh has reaffirmed its commitment to continue the quota for the dependents of freedom fighters. As of today, there is ambiguity over the present reservation system in Bangladesh [16]. However, Bangladesh government has no AAS for educational upliftment of historically weaker sections or minorities. So, there is no assistance to students at the schools and college entry level which would eventually leave out the students from weaker sections behind. They would be at the disadvantage to compete at equal level with the other well off peers. Therefore, the job quota in Bangladesh caters to the needs of already well off students and the AAS in Bangladesh is effectively a policy catering to the needs of majority and wealthy groups and individuals, who are already more wealthy and well off than average citizen of Bangladesh.

3.2. AAS in Pakistan:

The Civil Service of Pakistan selects only 7.5% of the applicants by merit, education, qualification and experience [17], while the 92.5% are selected by using quota system. The allocation of posts to merit and provincial / regional quotas is made according to government's policy of: - Merit 7.5 %, Punjab (Including Federal Area of Islamabad) 50 %, Sindh (Including Karachi) 19%. The Share of Sindh will be further sub-allocated in the following ratio: Urban Areas, namely Karachi, Hyderabad & Sukkur 7.6%. Rural Areas i.e. rest of Sindh (Excluding Karachi, Hyderabad & Sukkur, 11.4%). The remaining reservation in Pakistan civil services is further allocated to NWFP 11.5 %, Balochistan 6 %, Northern Areas and Federally Administrated Tribal Areas 4 %, Azad Kashmir 2%, while 10% Women quota will be observed / calculated from the share of each province / region in terms of establishment divisions. This form of reservation system was born out of the conditions prevailing in late 1940s, and at that time the decision made common sense. There was no middle class in Pakistan's provinces other than Punjab and Sindh, the literacy was appallingly low, and the 'central' bureaucracy was from Punjab and the Urdu-speaking community. Equal opportunity through merit based selections would have given an undue advantage to the affluent groups and therefore, a quota system for "backward areas" was introduced as a temporary measure to have more people from those 'backward areas' in government jobs. However, the failure of the policy is apparent as there are still hardly any representation of people from FATA, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan in federal jobs. A critic of the said policy would be its being inherently biased in favor of wealthy and dominant groups, communities or individuals in the different provinces of Pakistan. Therefore, in present day Pakistan, this reservation policy has effectively become an AAS for the majority and dominant groups and individuals.

There is also an ambiguous educational quota for admission in University and colleges of Pakistan; for example, University of Karachi claims to have an AAS for students coming from rural Sindh [18]. However, there is no written rule or guidelines available for the same and any further documents or proofs available in public domain. This comes as no surprise since Pakistan has a dismal democracy record and the army, Supreme Court and landed gentry have a nexus to uphold each other interest. Therefore, any clear cut AAS for the marginalized sections of Pakistan society is a distant dream at present. For example, the land reforms in Pakistan are at the same level as they were in 1947, where any act of Land Reforms is challenged in Pakistan courts as being unconstitutional and against Islamic injunctions. In such a country, any hope of genuine AAS would be almost impossible to think of, and Pakistan in effect has no clear cut genuine affirmative policy in education to help its poor and downtrodden.

3.3. AAS in Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka could be the case of one of the worst example of wrongly implemented AAS when it had all the prerequisites to become a model democracy [19]. Universal adult franchise had been introduced in the 1931 in Sri Lanka, while democratic institutions and traditions had been in place and political violence was not an issue. Moreover, by the 1950s literacy in Sri Lanka was on the rise and there were no serious indicators of economic or social catastrophes of the years to come. So, the guiding principle of AAS in Sri Lanka was a policy implemented by the Sri Lankan government to remedy the discrepancy created in university enrollment in Sri Lanka under Colonial rule (of Britain up to 1948) [20]. The AAS in Sri Lanka was named "standardization" and was proposed in 1971 to end the domination of English speaking Tamils (from north and eastern Sri Lanka) and Sinhalese from urban centers like Colombo, particularly in professional courses such as medicine and engineering. In 1969,

the Northern Province, which was largely populated by Tamils and comprised 7% of the population of the country, provided 27.5 percent of the entrants to science-based courses in Sri Lankan universities [21]. After standardization, this was reduced to 7% in 1974 [20]. However, the hardest hit population groups were the urban Tamils and Sinhalese in the Western Province, which contained 26% of the island's population. In 1969, the Western Province provided 67.5 percent of admissions to science-based courses. This reduced to 27% in 1974, after the standardization law came into effect. The majority of the share enjoyed by Jaffna Tamils was distributed among Tamils in other areas (Eastern province, Hill country and Muslims). Majority of the share enjoyed by Colombo was distributed among rest of the Sinhalese. In 1972, the government added a district quota as a parameter within each language. The standardization of marks resulted in lower qualifying marks for Sinhalese students, and Tamil students felt marginalized. This caused enormous harm to ethnic relations in Sri Lanka among Tamils and Sinhalese. By 1977, the AAS in education and resulting frustration among Tamil students became a focal point of the conflict between the government and Tamil leaders. Many Tamil leaders started believing in the idea of a separate Tamil state of Eelam, to escape the injustice brought on by AAS. Therefore, Sri Lanka became the model case study of ill effects of wrongly implemented AAS in education.

An important question arises as to why the wrongly implemented AAS could lead to internal civil war in a highly literate country like Sri Lanka, whereas biased AAS implementation in Pakistan creates no flutter among its weaker sections? A reasonable factor could be the difference in literacy level in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, where a literate minority like Tamils would be more assertive about its educational rights in Sri Lanka, than a mostly illiterate and backward community like Balochs in Pakistan. Another important factor could be the political system prevailing in the country, where Tamils had a stake in political system of Sri Lanka and when they felt marginalized by new AAS, they resorted to violence. Pakistan's democracy has a poor record as no Prime Minister of Pakistan has completed his/her 5 year term since Pakistan's inception and therefore Pakistan's political space is not yet ripe for discussing an effective AAS for its weaker sections and hence the lack of any strife regarding that in Pakistan political spectrum.

This brings up the important point of uniqueness of AAS in different countries and its unique fall outs. During the years of 1970s, compared to other ethnic and religious groups in the Sri Lanka, Tamils have had strong cultural norms which valued education, influenced by the American missionary activities. Further, there was no other available option to northern Tamils for employment due to limited capacity of Agricultural produce from their lands. Therefore, Tamil youth was over-reliable and hence over-represented in the administration and higher education than their Sinhalese counterparts. Their higher status was also due to the divide and rule policy of British, where the British would rely more on a minority community's loyalty than favoring the majority population. Therefore, when the AAS in education came in the guise of standardization policy of 1970's in Sri Lanka, the Tamil psyche not only thought of it as a strike on its job opportunities, but also as a policy to subjugate the elite Tamil community under the rule of majority Sinhalese. This frustration on both fronts felt by Tamils would eventually lead to the 26-year military campaign by Sri Lankan military, culminating in the defeat of the Tamil militancy in May 2009. [22]. Nonetheless, the Sri Lankan civil war makes up an informative case study of wrongly implemented AAS in education and its dire consequences for the various communities and the respective nation.

3.4. AAS in Nepal:

In Nepal, even though caste based discrimination was declared illegal in the Civil Code in 1963, it was not made punishable until the 1990 constitution of Nepal. The 1990 constitution

declared that ‘No person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against as untouchable, be denied access to any public places or be deprived of the use of public utilities. Any contravention to this provision shall be punishable by law’ (Article 11(4)) [23]. The AAS in Nepal has provided reservation for Federal Civil Servants Bill in eight clusters: women (33 per cent) Adiwasi/Janajati (24 per cent), Madhesi (20 per cent), Dalit (9 per cent), Tharu (4 per cent), Muslim (3 per cent), differently-abled people (3 per cent) and backward area (4 per cent). In civil service, out of 100 per cent, 45 per cent is allocated for inclusive and 55 per cent is allocated for open competition [24]. Since the mid-1990s, social inclusion has become an increasingly important agenda for development. The Ninth Plan (1996–2002) was the first national development plan to address the issue, and included sections on the ‘Downtrodden and Oppressed Community’ in the chapter on Social Security. It was the first plan in Nepal to address Dalits and Janjatis by name. Nepal’s Tenth Plan (2002–07), which is also the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), recognizes the importance of inclusive development. In Nepal the Education Act (7th Amendment 2001) provides for free primary education. Apart from the right to education guaranteed by the Constitution, the Education Act mentions the provisions below [23]:

- Section 16 includes provision for free primary education and no admission charges to community schools.
- The provision of sub-section 2 mentions free education to the under-privileged communities like Dalits, indigenous groups and women in the secondary level.
- The Act prohibits imposing fees for new admissions in the name of the school under subsection 3.

Nepal has provision for free education at the primary level, although parents still bear indirect costs for education, so to lower the indirect costs of schooling, the Nepal government provides free textbooks. Section 28 (1) Gha mentions the provision of scholarships to students of backward and marginalized communities. Scholarship rule 2003: The state has enacted the rule for providing scholarships to the poor and marginalized. The Ministry of Education and Sports distributes scholarships to these groups as well as providing quota based scholarships to lower secondary level girl students in 75 districts. Under Rule 10 there is a provision for open contest for the selection of appropriate candidates, while under Sub-rule 3, there are 10% quotas for women, Dalits and indigenous groups for higher technical courses. In order to qualify, under Rule 12 he/she who has obtained 60% shall be eligible to get a scholarship. But the rule states that for Dalits, indigenous groups and women, 50% shall be the criterion for candidacy. The Nepal Education for All (NEFA) 2004–09 primary education program has set aside additional funds to provide scholarships for all dalit children, and the Budget speech for the fiscal year 2006–07 spelled out the provision of scholarships at the rate of Rs. 350 for 50 per cent of primary level girl-students belonging to economically weak and deprived communities as well as to all students of the Dalit community studying at the primary school level. Private schools have also been encouraged to provide places for disadvantaged students. For 2006/07, arrangements were made to require private schools to enroll with scholarships at the rate of one student per 50 students from among the children of Dalits, conflict victims and martyrs. Cooking oil for girl students as well as school meals has been tried in Nepal for poor communities to provide nutrition as well as an incentive for attendance. Establishment of School Management Committees, that includes representation from the community served by each school, is now mandatory in Nepal. However, published reports found that only 65% of Dalit students attending primary school received scholarships. The government funds and procedures were found to be lacking and no uniform criteria for scholarship award to dalit students, which jeopardizes the AAS in education in Nepal [23].

This reflects in the data for high school enrolment percentage among various groups in Nepal during 2007-08 as shown in figure 1 [25].

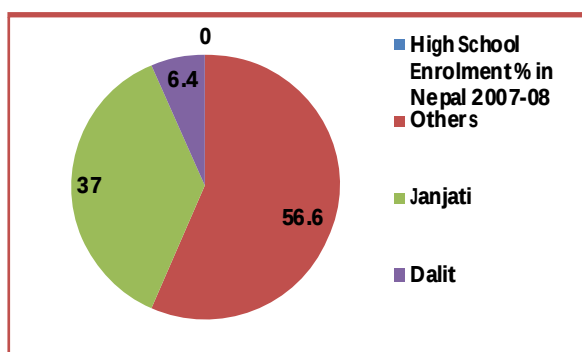


Figure 1. High School Enrolment percentage among various communities in Nepal 2007-08 [25].

Nonetheless, the literacy rate is increasing for all the caste groups in Nepal as shown in Table 1 for the Year 2011 [26]. In comparison, Nepal had only 54.1 % total literacy in 2001, in which the dalit literacy rate was a meager 34%. So, even with all the discrepancy and inefficiency in procedure and fund availability for AAS in education in Nepal, the overall picture looks quite promising. So, Nepal can be categorized in the list of countries where AAS in education is a successful endeavor in spite of Nepal's late entry into AAS club and being a nascent democracy with a turbulent past and uncertain future.

Table 1. Literacy rate by ethnic/caste groups, 2011 Census [26]

Category	Total	Male	Female	GC	Dalit	GC Male	GC Females	Dalit Male	Dalit Female
Nepal (2011)	65.9	75	57	76.6	52.4	85.81	68.26	60.57	45.00

3.5. AAS in India:

Reservations, as the AAS in India is known as, are mostly a success story. India has a reservation policy for SC and ST, backward class, residents of order areas, economically backwards (recently introduced) and many others categories, in jobs, legislature and also in education [27]. As shown in Table 2, since year 1961, there is a steady rise in the literacy rate of Indian populace along with the dalit literacy rate. While the total literacy rate increased by 264% from year 1961 to 2011, the dalit literacy rate with the support of AAS in education made a jump of 643% in the same period. India could claim to be a fit case of mostly successful implementation of AAS in various fields, owing to the safeguard of double check by parliament and Supreme Court of India before enactment of any law regarding the same. Notwithstanding the successful record of reservation in Indian context, there are often quoted issues regarding AAS in the public and legal discourses.

Table 2. Literacy rate in India (Source-NSSO, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India.)

Year	India Combined Literacy	Dalit Literacy %
1961	28.3	10.27
1971	34.45	14.67
1981	43.57	21.38
1991	52.21	37.41
2001	64.83	54.70
2011	74.04	66.10

Recently, government of India took the decision of including the economically backward class from general castes (non beneficiaries of earlier AAS) into AAS pie by providing 10% jobs and educational seats to the group [28]. This puts an end to one of the big critique of Indian reservation policy which till now was against any AAS for general castes. Another critique of Indian AAS is regarding the absence of any creamy layer policy in SC and ST AAS quota, which leads to advantage of wealthy among the SC and ST community. Creamy layer policy mandates an upper income limit (Annual family income of 0.8 million INR) for availing the reservation benefits in the other backward caste (OBC) and general castes (GC) categories. However, its non implementation in SC and ST categories is rationalized by looking at the still vacant job positions in the two respective categories. There are other issues of dominant rural based castes with in OBCs, which take away the major share in the jobs and university admissions, while dominating over the not so well caste groups within OBCs. Therefore, some states have already implemented the "Quota within Quota" for OBCs and BCs reservation, while some other states are planning to implement it in near future. Nonetheless, the issue of AAS is (and will be) open to critique and amendments in Indian context. A robust democracy like India is supposed to come up with the best possible solution as and when the requirement arises with the passage of time.

A brief comparison of the literacy level of five countries is given in table 3. The literacy data is procured from a neutral site of www.worldatlas.com (updated on September 18'2018) [29]. The literacy rate can be seen in comparison to the effective AAS inception in the respective countries. Although one may not directly correlate the overall literacy rate with the effectiveness of AAS in respective countries, but an effective AAS would surely raise the overall literacy rate.

Table 3. Literacy rate in Indian Subcontinent and years since launch of AAS

Country	Overall Literacy rate	Formal Launch of AAP	Years since AAP inception
Bangladesh	60%	1972	47
India	69%	1950	69
Nepal	60%	1997	22
Pakistan	55%	1948	71
Sri Lanka	91%	1971	48

The reasoning could be supported by the fact that the downgrading of overall literacy rate is more often due to the lower literacy of the depressed castes or community of the country. Therefore, as a successful AAS would raise the level of literacy of depressed community, the overall literacy rate would also rise. This should be clearer for the countries which has a long history of AAS. Therefore, it could be argued that, if the AAS is a successful venture in a country, longer the time period since its launch, higher should be the overall literacy rate for that country. Sri Lanka would be an exception to this rule as its overall literacy was already quite high even before the launch of AAS in 1971. Further, unfortunate effects of AAS in Sri Lanka would far outnumber the gains in short term of last 48 years. Pakistan shows a failed and ambiguous AAS policy as mentioned earlier, where even after 71 years since its launch, Pakistan overall literacy rate is lowest among the mentioned five countries. Bangladesh AAS policy could be considered a slight success, although its rationalization is being questioned repeatedly by its youth. Indian AAS policy could be considered a success looking at the overall literacy rate from table 3 and increased dalit literacy rate from table 2. Nepal may be the best case to show the effectiveness of AAS where it has shown a rapid increase in dalit literacy rate within a short span of about 22 years since inception of AAS.

4. Conclusions

AAS has a valid argument in its favor in context of human society and when implemented in its true spirits it also shows progressively positive effects on a country's overall development, as shown in the case of Nepal, India and Bangladesh. However, at the same time an ambiguous AAS would lead to no progress of the depressed communities and would eventually create hindrances in the overall development of the country as is visible in the case of Pakistan. Nonetheless, AAS may also have the disastrous effects on a developed country, if the implementation or the spirit of AAS is found lacking in one way or other. Incidentally, Sri Lanka is not the only country to suffer from the negative fallouts of a failed AAS policy [1]. Therefore, the respective governments should be very careful and understanding not only during planning of AAS, but also during the implementation part. Nonetheless, a well thought out AAS is the necessity of human society in general and must be consistently reviewed according to the changing scenarios of demography and relevant considerations.

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