

Present Status of Scheduled Castes in India

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Abstract: This study attempts to chart the evolution of the status of India's scheduled castes from antiquity to the present day. Traditional caste hierarchy and the functionalism that goes with it are steadfastly maintained in modern Indian society. However, untouchability has largely been eradicated from Indian society, although horrific cases of caste discrimination still occur. Indian caste systems are tenacious because of the country's political, economic, and social welfare systems' integration with them. That's why studying how the social standing of scheduled castes has changed in terms of employment, education and social standards becomes essential. Urbanization has made it possible for the scheduled caste community to benefit from the educational system, allowing them to shed their social stigma and climb the economic ladder. In spite of this, it's worth noting that a sizable portion of the scheduled caste population is employed in low-wage, menial work and is homeless. Indian culture has largely abandoned traditional caste-based discrimination, yet the norm of endogamy plays a critical role in maintaining the status quo. An attempt has been made to assess the changes in the status of scheduled castes and society's view on them using seminal work by various social scientists.

Keywords: Health, literacy, population, status, gender, Scheduled Castes

Introduction:

In Indian society, the Scheduled Castes (SC) are those living at the very bottom of the socioeconomic scale. They make up the bulk of society's downtrodden. Scheduled Caste is a term used to describe persons who are no longer considered part of the traditional caste structure. The upper castes have discriminated against these castes for a long time, and the majority of individuals in the upper caste never accepted them socially. They're all over the place in India. After doing an empirical research on caste inequality and development in India, the results showed that about one-third of the disparity in average annual earnings was attributable to unequal treatment of the lower caste, especially SC/STs [1]. According to Sundaram and Tendulker's research, SCs make up the largest segment of the poor population. Despite numerous efforts to make them equal to the rest of society, their low social standing persists today. As a result of this, the population of Scheduled Castes has been rising. The population was 48 million in 1941 and climbed to 201 million in 2011 according to the Census Report. In other words, that's about 16.6% of the country's overall population. Agricultural employment, leatherwork, and other low-wage industries are the mainstays of their income. 71% of Scheduled Caste farmers work as agricultural labourers for salaries on land that they do not own, according to the USDA. Other groups have substantially lower percentages: Scheduled Tribe farmers have 47%, while non-SC/ST farmers have 41%. Share-croppers and subsistence farmers make up the vast majority of Scheduled Castes' agricultural workforce. Others stick with their old professions because they can't take advantage of the new job chances. Scheduled Castes make up the vast majority of bonded labourers. Only 66.1% of the population is literate, compared to 73.3% of Indians overall. Only 56.5% of these women are literate, compared to 64.6% of Indian women overall (Census Report, 2011) [5]. Despite their difficult working conditions, they are critical to the country's manufacturing system's survival and expansion.

Agricultural labourers, tenants, and marginal farmers make up the bulk of the SC rural population's income [9]. There are also many leather workers, weavers, fishermen, toddy-tappers, basket/rope makers and washermen among them, in addition to the majority of agricultural labourers. There are also many artisans, fruit and vegetable sellers and shoemakers among them, as well as drummers, carpenters and iron smiths. India's economic progress has so far failed to address the needs of the country's poor majority in terms of both income and the human development index. The Indian development scenario hides the suppressed voices and deplorable poverty of one-third of its Dalit population, who remain bypassed in asserting their rights for a normal human life behind the glaring statistics of economic growth in India in recent years, such as increased FDI, foreign exchange and profitability of companies or for that matter soaring BSE index after economic liberalization [6]. Every 15 minutes, someone commits a crime against a Dalit. Every day, six Dalit women are raped. Crimes against Dalits have increased by 66% in the recent decade (2007–2017). Furthermore, according to the NCRB, the number of Dalit women who have been raped has increased in the last decade. Scheduled Castes are a socially disadvantaged group in India who fall behind the rest of the population when it comes to reaching the desired level of human development [2].

Objectives of the Study:

The article critically establishes the following goals in light of the aforementioned observations:

1. Scheduled Castes population and literacy status in India will be studied
2. The efficiency of various health programmes will be compared, with an eye toward how they affect the Scheduled Castes. The goal of this research is to determine the human development status of the Scheduled Caste people based on the aforementioned objectives. We'll talk about the facts that go along with this information in more detail later.
3. In order to learn more about the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes, we will take as an example the data on Udhampur, India and draw conclusions from that.

Comparison of Scheduled Caste Population with Overall Population:

A total of 31 states and union territories in India are home to the country's Scheduled Castes. However, since Christian and Muslim Dalits are not recognised as "Scheduled Castes," the total number of Scheduled Castes in the country is very certainly significantly greater than the 200 million SCs in India. There are no so-called reserves for them in the educational system, government employment, or any of the other fundamental protections. Because of the growing number of SC citizens in India, a Dalit researcher believes that the government of India needs to reevaluate several of its policies to ensure that SCs have an equal opportunity to succeed. This includes increasing the number of reservations in education, the workforce and other sectors right away.

Table 1 compares the percentage of people who belong to a Scheduled Caste to the overall population. The number of Scheduled Castes population in India was 16.6 % of the overall population in 2011, according to the census. Nearly half of India's Scheduled Caste population lives in just four states. The state of Uttar Pradesh leads with 20.5% of the total population of Scheduled Castes (SC), followed by West Bengal with 10.7%, Bihar with 8.2%, and Tamil Nadu with 7.2%.

Scheduled Castes made up almost 201.4 million persons in the country, according to the 2011 Census. It was estimated that there were 166.6 million people living there in 2001. While India's population rose by 17.7% over the last decade, the Dalit population grew by 20.8%. Despite the fact that the number of Dalits in the country is rising, several states with sizable populations of Dalits lack legislative safeguards to safeguard the community's interests. Many states have inadequate Dalit empowerment; many Dalits are landless; and

attempts to empower them by giving them free land have failed. In contrast to Punjab, which has a significant number of Scheduled Caste industrialists, other states have virtually no such individuals. The number of SCs in urban areas has increased by 40% since the 2001 census, yet the rural SC population still make up more than three-fourths of India's total SC population. While the urban population in India is currently approaching 50 million, the rural population remains over 150 million. People from Scheduled Castes in rural areas confront a number of major obstacles, such as a lack of access to basic resources, land, basic services, and the legal system. For the most part, Scheduled Caste labourers in India do not own property, thus they are compelled to perform disagreeable tasks like street sweeping and picking up human garbage and dead animals for poor compensation. Lower-caste members cannot often utilise the same wells as high-caste members. For as long as landlords have a foothold in rural agricultural areas, they can continue to inflict caste and gender abuse on the residents. While attempting to claim their economic and sexual integrity rights, Dalits face physical, verbal and sexual violence from landlords [7]. The state budget should distribute cash for Dalit asset building based on their demographic share. Rather than handing out freebies, state governments may designate a share of the total budget for the Dalit population. Dalits are frequently cheated out of money that should have gone to them. States with significant Dalit populations must enact legislation along the lines of Andhra Pradesh's SC/ST Sub Plan Act, which was just passed.

Indicator	Absolute				Percentage	
	2001		2011		2001	2011
	SCs	Overall	SCs	Overall		
Total	166,635,700	1,028,610,328	201,378,086	1,210,569,573	16.2/100	16.6/100
Rural	133,010,878	742,302,537	153,850,562	833,463,448	17.9/100	18.5/100
Urban	33,624,822	286,307,791	47,527,524	377,106,125	11.7/100	12.6/100

Table 1: Scheduled Caste Population in Comparison to Overall Population (2011 Census)

Literacy Status of Scheduled Castes

The literacy rate is a key metric for measuring a society's progress toward human development. Any country's development is tied to the quality of education provided to its citizens. The State shall support with special attention education and economic interests of weaker groups of people such as Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) and protect them from social injustice and social exploitation in all its forms (Article 46, Constitution of India). In reality, Scheduled Castes are denied access to higher education because of their low socioeconomic status [8]. When educational materials are found in Dalit communities, people who want to use them face violence. The government too frequently ignores Dalit communities' need for infrastructure and resources, failing to provide the required funding to enable equal access to those resources. Due to limited educational opportunities, Scheduled Caste women face increased insecurity and lack of other resources.

According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate for Scheduled Castes is shown in Table 2. The literacy rate has increased from 54.7 percent in 2001 to 66.1 percent in 2011, although it is still below the national literacy rate of 73.0 percent in 2011. Again, the literary rate of Scheduled Castes is higher in urban areas than in rural population as suggested in the table below. According to the 2011 census, the top five states for SC literacy are Daman and Diu (92.6 percent); Mizoram (92.4 percent); Tripura (89.4 percent); Dadra and Nagar Haveli (89.4 percent); and Kerala (88.7 percent). The bottom five states for SC literacy are Bihar (48.5 percent); Jharkhand (55.9 percent); Rajasthan (59.7 percent); Uttar Pradesh (60.9 percent); and Andhra Pradesh (62.3 percent). Across the country, literacy rates have risen significantly since the early 1990s. Gender and social inequalities have narrowed as school enrollment has risen. Scheduled Caste members still have the highest poverty levels, lack land, and are reliant on the dominant caste for jobs, income, and loans, notwithstanding an increase in literacy. According to a study conducted by the IndiaGoverns Research Institute, approximately half of primary school dropouts are Dalits. According to statistics, 138,000 Dalit

students left school within two years of enrolling, compared to Karnataka's total of 290,000 dropouts. In other words, Dalit communities account for 48% of dropouts. It's been suggested that the greater dropout rate among Dalits is due in part to the backwardness of north Karnataka's region, poverty, and migration for work. Men 'involved in economic activities' are more likely to drop out of school than women 'engaged in domestic activities.' These findings hold true for students in rural and urban SCs.

Indicator	Effective Literacy Rate			
	2001		2011	
	SCs	Overall Population	SCs	Overall Population
Total	54.7	64.8	66.1	73.0
Rural	51.2	58.7	62.8	67.8
Urban	68.1	79.9	76.2	84.1

Table 2: Literacy Rates of Scheduled Castes (2011 Census)

Health Status of Scheduled Castes

National Family Health Survey 2016 data were used to compare the health status of SCs with that of the general population. To be sure, India's health metrics trail those of its neighbours and economic rivals. According to Arundhati Roy's Lancet lecture, policymakers must address the caste system in order to enhance the health status of the nation. Equality, opportunity, and investment in health and education are all things they must strive for. Roy's point is well-made. In Indian society, caste is no longer acceptable. In addition to providing necessary resources, health programmes that target SC/ST may also have to address perceived and actual stigma and discrimination. Among the strategies to overcome these obstacles are sensitization of healthcare staff, focused health education and outreach, and culturally relevant community activities [3].

During pregnancy, women should receive adequate medical attention. In terms of the mother's health and the unborn child's development, it's critical [4]. Health-promoting behaviours and parenting abilities can be promoted most effectively during pregnancy. It enhances the likelihood that a skilled birth attendant will be used and leads to good health throughout the woman's life cycle when good ANC is provided. Being denied access to fundamental amenities, including maternity health services, is one of the many unnecessary sufferings that Scheduled Caste women has to endure. To find out how many Dalit women did not obtain legally necessary prenatal and postpartum consultations, Navsarjan Trust (2013) looked into it. It got worse when we discovered that 54.8% of pregnant women and new mothers in the traditionally manual scavenging Valmiki sub-caste said they never had prenatal or postnatal care. For the purpose of quantifying the factors that contribute to the average antenatal care service gap between SCs and the general population, the National Family Health Survey data collected between 2015 and 2016 was utilised.

As seen in Figure 1, women who identify as SCs use antenatal care visits differently than those who do not. On the basis of Figure 1, it can be shown that among mothers who have had at least four antenatal care visits, 49% are from the Scheduled Caste and 46% are from the Scheduled Tribes, as well as 48% from the Other Backward Classes and 61% from the General Population. Based on the study's findings, it appears that social group membership has an important impact on the use of antenatal care visit services. Women from the SC/ST population are much less likely than women from the general population to use these services. Education level, household economic position, and residence location, as well as the age of the mother at the time of the child's birth all contribute to a widening of the difference in antenatal care visit utilisation.

Institutional delivery occurs when a child is born in a medical facility under the supervision of qualified and competent health professionals, where there are more facilities available to handle the situation and save the mother and kid's lives. Scheduled Castes continue to be one of India's most economically disadvantaged and socially oppressed groups. Most of them are located in outlying areas that are dispersed and difficult to access. There were reduced odds of institutional delivery for SC/ST. This shows that low adoption of services

may have deeper social and cultural roots. In their research into the relationship between caste and the use of maternal health services, Saroha, Altarac, and Sibley (2008) found that lower caste women often choose home deliveries with TBA from their community out of fear of being stigmatised and discriminated against because maternal care involves physical contact with health service providers who often belong to general or other castes. To improve the use of maternal health care, such a finding could point to a need for targeted health promotion. We do this by using information from the 2015–2016 National Family Health Survey.

According to the National Family Health Survey, the percentage of institutional births in India has increased over the last five years, with Scheduled Castes accounting for 78% of institutional births, Scheduled Tribes accounting for 68%, and Other Backward Classes accounting for 80% of institutional births. Educational disparity, household economic position, and residence, as well as the woman's age at child's delivery in a population may exacerbate the gap in the usage of institutional birth services. Furthermore, it was discovered that more rural women cited higher costs as the primary reason they chose not to give birth in a hospital.

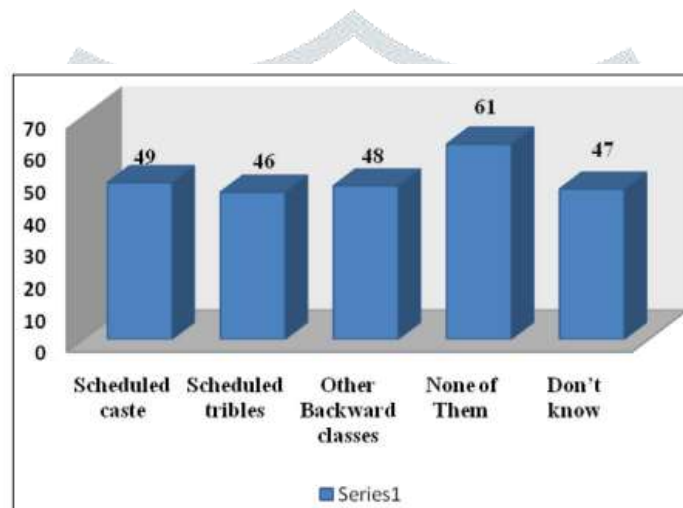


Figure 1: Mothers with at least four antenatal care visits (Ministry of Welfare, 2017)

Economic Status of the Scheduled Castes:

Research Methodology:

Primary and secondary data were used to examine the socio-economic circumstances of scheduled castes in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir. The first four villages with the highest concentration of scheduled caste were selected using census data from 2011. Four villages, including Lehair, Panjar, Ladda, and Sownather, each had about 40, 30, 20, and 10 respondents. As a result, to gather primary data, a random sample of 100 households was used. The socio-economic status of scheduled castes in the Udhampur district were examined using a straightforward percentage method.

- Primary Occupation of the Scheduled Caste Households

People's occupations used to be determined only by their caste. Even with reservations in school and government jobs, very few tend to use those opportunities. TABLE 3 shows the principal occupations of the scheduled caste sample households in the research area.

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Agriculture	40	40
Daily wage	51	51
Government Job	5	5
Private Job	1	1
Self employed	3	3
Total	100	100

Table 3: Scheduled Caste Households by Primary Occupation (Survey data)

According to the findings, 51% of households earn a daily salary as their principal activity, while 40% work in agriculture, followed by 5% in government jobs, 3% in self-employment, and 1% in the private sector.

- Annual Income level of Scheduled Caste Households:

Income is a critical indicator of a household's financial well-being and ability to influence the economy. Table no. 4 shows the annual household income. This information is shown below.

Table 4. Annual income level of scheduled caste households in the study area

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Less than 50,000	43	43
50,001-1,00,000	42	42
1,00,001-150,000	8	8
1,50,001-2,00,000	2	2
2,00,001-3,00,000	3	3
Above 3,00,000	2	2
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

In Udhampur district, 43% of households earn less than Rs 50,000 yearly, while 42% earn between Rs 50,001 and 1,00,000 annually, according to the data. The income ranged from Rs. 1,00,001 to 1,50,000 for about 8% of households; for the other 2%, the range was Rs. 1,51,000 to 2,00,000. That barely 5% of Udhampur district households earn more than 2,00,000 a year was depressing.

- Living Conditions of Scheduled Caste Households:

The standard of living of the households is also a significant indicator of their economic well-being. The living conditions of scheduled caste homes are shown by a number of indicators such as the kind of household, sanitary facility, separate kitchen, and water supply.

- Separate Toilet Facility:

Having access to a bathroom facility is critical for women's dignity and security. In addition to the lack of bathroom facilities, the scheduled castes in the research area also had to contend with discrimination. One-seventh of scheduled caste homes have separate toilet facilities, while the other nine-thirds do not. According to the findings of the study, Clearly, the majority of the scheduled caste households in the study went to natural sites for natural call.

Conclusion:

In India, the Scheduled Castes are the poorest and most marginalised members of society. Human development indicators like access to health facilities have shown that SCs lag behind. Social factors such as health and education rank them near the bottom in society, which means they are exploited on all three levels: economically, socially and mentally. Knowing this, the Indian government has taken a variety of affirmative action measures and constitutional provisions to help elevate the poor out of poverty. There have been beneficial outcomes from the many policies and measures implemented, and this disadvantaged population now lives in a better environment. However, these provisions can become myths, making it harder for people to take use of them owing to ignorance or social barriers like race or caste. If considerable progress in raising the human development status of Scheduled Castes is to be made, then groups working on social equality in India must continue to look at different initiatives at different levels.

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