



AN ANALYSIS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC PHENOMENA OF SCHEDULED CASTE IN INDIA

Mahendra Dodamani¹, Dr. Subaschandra C Natikar²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

²Associate Professor Department of Sociology, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

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ABSTRACT

The socio-economic empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India has been a persistent concern, rooted in historical marginalization and discrimination. This analysis delves into the complex interplay of socio-economic phenomena that shape the lives of the SC community. While progress has been made towards addressing overt discrimination, disparities in education, healthcare, employment, and economic resources persist. This study examines the intricate intersection of socio-economic factors and caste dynamics, influencing wealth distribution, access to services, and political representation. Through historical contexts, policy interventions, and contemporary challenges, patterns that shape the socio-economic trajectory of SCs are discerned. One promising avenue for empowerment is land ownership, symbolizing economic stability and social status. Historically, SCs faced land deprivation, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Initiatives like the "Empowering SCs through Land Ownership Scheme" strive to rectify this by providing access to land ownership. The analysis underscores the importance of education as a vehicle for upward mobility and highlights the need for accessible healthcare services. It explores the challenges SCs face in securing better job opportunities and emphasizes the role of self-help groups in improving livelihoods. Ultimately, this study contributes to a nuanced discourse on social equity, policy impact, and the journey towards an inclusive society. It calls for comprehensive efforts to eliminate educational disparities, raise awareness of available facilities, and empower SCs to improve their socio-economic conditions. Through a holistic approach, India can aspire to uplift the socio-economic status of SCs and foster a more just and equitable society for all its citizens.

KEY WORDS: SCs, Population, Literacy, Health, Economic

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, the issue of social and economic empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs), historically marginalized communities, has been a pressing concern for decades. One of the key strategies employed to uplift the socio-economic status of SCs has been through land ownership schemes. Land, often regarded as a symbol of economic stability and social status, plays a pivotal role in fostering self-sufficiency, breaking the cycle of poverty, and promoting inclusive development.

The socio-economic landscape of India is marked by a complex interplay of historical legacies, cultural norms, and institutional structures. Within this intricate tapestry, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) hold a distinctive position, characterized by a history of marginalization, discrimination, and efforts towards empowerment. This analysis aims to delve into the socio-economic phenomena that shape the lives of the SC community in India. The Scheduled Castes, historically known as "Dalits," have been subjected to systemic discrimination and exclusion for centuries. This discrimination is rooted in the caste system, an age-old social hierarchy that categorized individuals into rigid occupational roles and determined their social standing from birth. Despite strides towards social justice and equality, remnants of this hierarchical system persist in modern Indian society.

While significant strides have been made in addressing some of the most overt forms of discrimination, such as untouchability, the socio-economic disparities that SCs face remain a poignant concern. Access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and economic resources has often been uneven, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage for this community. This analysis seeks to unravel these multifaceted dimensions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic realities of SCs in India.

The intersection of socio-economic factors with caste dynamics has far-reaching implications. It influences the distribution of wealth, access to essential services, and political representation. Through this analysis, we endeavour to shed light on the intricacies of how these factors intertwine and impact the day-to-day lives of SCs. By examining historical contexts, policy interventions, and contemporary challenges, we aim to discern patterns and trends that have shaped the socio-economic trajectory of SCs. In essence, this analysis is a quest to comprehend the evolution of SCs' socio-economic circumstances in the broader context of a transforming India. By examining disparities, advancements, and persistent challenges, we hope to contribute to a nuanced discourse on social equity, the role of policy, and the imperative of fostering



an inclusive society that ensures equal opportunities and dignified lives for all its citizens, irrespective of their caste identity.

The issue of social and economic inequality has long been a challenge in India, with certain marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs), facing historical disadvantages and discrimination. In the pursuit of addressing these disparities and fostering inclusive growth, various affirmative action policies and schemes have been implemented by the Indian government. One such initiative that holds significant promise is the "Empowering Scheduled Castes through Land Ownership Scheme." Land ownership has been a pivotal factor in determining social status, economic stability, and political empowerment in India. Historically, SCs have been proportionately deprived of land rights, which has perpetuated cycles of poverty and limited their access to opportunities. Recognizing the importance of rectifying this historical injustice, the government has designed and implemented schemes aimed at providing SCs with access to land ownership. These initiatives not only strive to uplift the socio-economic conditions of SC communities but also aim to facilitate their integration into the mainstream of society.

The empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India has been a pressing issue for decades. The government has implemented various policies and schemes to uplift the socio-economic status of SCs and provide them with equal opportunities. One such scheme is the Land Ownership Scheme, which aims to empower SCs through land distribution and cultivation. This article delves into the key aspects of the scheme, including its objectives, implementation process, benefits, challenges, and the overall impact on SC empowerment.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Apparaya (2015) an assessment of the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburgi district was conducted, involving interviews with 450 respondents to collect primary data. The findings of the study underscore the prevalence of deprivation across multiple social and economic dimensions within this community. The study unveiled a concerning trend in terms of income, revealing that a significant portion of scheduled castes subsisted on meagre monthly earnings, often falling below the poverty line. Moreover, the investigation shed light on their employment patterns, indicating that a considerable majority remained engaged in unorganized or caste-based occupations. These revelations underline the urgent necessity for governmental intervention to uplift the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburgi district. By addressing the identified challenges, policy measures can play a crucial role in facilitating improved living standards and broader opportunities for this marginalized community.

Singh (2014) made an attempt to study the socioeconomic status of scheduled caste people of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. According to him, the socio-economic status of some respondent was not good. Due to poor socio-economic conditions, it was difficult for them to provide good quality education to their children. The study found that most of the family income depended on daily wages. The study also states

that majority of respondents were under debt because of education, health and other needs. The study also shows that social and economic status of some of the scheduled castes people were improved as compare to earlier time due to the improvement in education and also due to the reservation of scheduled caste people in various sector.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To understand status of SCs from the historical perspective in India.
- To examine the socio-economic background of SCs in India.

4. METHODOLOGY

Present study is based on secondary source data, Secondary data was collected from published and unpublished documents of government departments and private agencies such as census report, and In addition, secondary data was collected from monographs, research reports, research papers, journals, books and internet. Secondary data were ratified during field data collection.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- **To understand status of SCs from the historical perspective in India**

Ancient Period: The caste system, rooted in Hindu society, categorized people into distinct social groups based on birth. The SCs, formerly known as "untouchables" or "Dalits," occupied the lowest rung of this hierarchy. They were subjected to severe social and religious restrictions, and their occupations were often considered "polluting" by higher castes.

Medieval Period: The social discrimination against SCs continued during the medieval period. Islamic rulers introduced their own forms of social stratification, but the overall position of SCs remained marginalized. They were excluded from many socio-religious activities and faced economic hardships due to limited access to resources.

Colonial Period: The arrival of the British colonial rule brought some changes to the social landscape. While the British did not eradicate caste-based discrimination, they initiated certain measures aimed at uplifting marginalized communities. The census operations and administrative reforms highlighted the plight of SCs, leading to some efforts to improve their conditions. However, these measures were often limited and inconsistent.

Social and Reform Movements: The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the emergence of social reform movements led by figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule, and B.R. Ambedkar. These reformers advocated for the rights and dignity of SCs, aiming to eliminate caste-based discrimination. B.R. Ambedkar played a crucial role in drafting the Indian Constitution, which provided a framework for addressing the concerns of SCs.

Post-Independence Period: The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, included provisions to uplift SCs through affirmative action policies, commonly known as "reservation."



These policies aimed to provide SCs with representation in educational institutions, government jobs, and political positions. This marked a significant shift in the status of SCs, granting them legal protection and opportunities for advancement.

Challenges and Progress: While affirmative action policies have led to some improvement in the socio-economic conditions of SCs, challenges persist. Caste-based discrimination continues to exist in various forms, impacting access to education, employment, housing, and social integration. Economic disparities and unequal distribution of resources are also prevalent.

Political Representation: Over the years, SCs have gained representation in various legislative bodies at both national and state levels. This political empowerment has led to increased awareness of their issues and the formulation of policies targeting their development.

Contemporary Dynamics: Despite advancements, SCs continue to face social stigma and prejudice. Efforts are ongoing to combat discrimination, promote education, provide economic opportunities, and raise awareness about their rights. Civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and government initiatives play a role in driving change.

The historical perspective of SCs in India has been marked by centuries of caste-based discrimination and marginalization. While there have been significant legal and policy interventions aimed at uplifting them, the challenge of eradicating deeply entrenched social attitudes and disparities remains. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach involving legal reforms, social awareness, education, economic development, and consistent efforts to ensure the dignity and rights of SCs.

➤ **To understand socio-economic background of SCs in India.**

Table 5.1 indicate that 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 5. 1 compares the percentage of people who belong to a Scheduled Caste to the overall population.

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

Sources: (census 2011)

In 2011, the Scheduled Castes (SC) population in India constituted 16.6% of the total population, as reported by the census. This demographic group is concentrated predominantly in a few states, with Uttar Pradesh leading percent at 20.5 of the total SC population, followed by West Bengal percent at 10.7, Bihar percent at 8.2, and Tamil Nadu percent at 7.2. The SC population in India totalled around 201.4 million individuals, compared to 166.6 million in 2001. This growth rate of 20.8 for Dalits over the past decade exceeded percent of the 17.7 general population growth rate.

However, despite this increase in numbers, legislative protections for Dalits' interests are lacking in several states. Many Dalits remain landless, and attempts to empower them through land distribution have not been successful. Notably, Punjab stands out with a significant number of SC industrialists, while this phenomenon is largely absent in other states. Urban SC population increased by percent 40 since 2001, yet rural areas still constitute over three-fourths of the total SC population. Dalits in rural regions face significant challenges, including limited access to basic resources, land, essential services, and the justice system. Many SC labourers lack property ownership, which forces them into undesirable jobs like street sweeping and waste collection for meagre wages. Caste-based discrimination persists, preventing lower-caste individuals from using the same wells as higher-caste members. Landlords maintain control in rural agricultural areas, allowing them to perpetuate caste and gender-based abuses. Dalits seeking to assert their rights often experience physical, verbal, and sexual violence from these landlords.

To address these issues, a more equitable approach is needed. State budgets should allocate funds for Dalit asset-building based on their demographic representation. Instead of merely distributing free benefits, state governments could set aside a proportion of the budget specifically for the Dalit population. This would help prevent Dalits from being denied the funds they are entitled to. States with substantial Dalit populations should consider implementing legislation similar to Andhra Pradesh's SC/ST Sub Plan Act, which focuses on targeted development for these marginalized groups.

Therefore, the socio-economic challenges faced by the Scheduled Castes in India are rooted in historical discrimination and disparities. While the Dalit population is growing, meaningful legislative protections and targeted development initiatives are essential to address their specific needs and promote social inclusion and equality.



Literacy Status of Scheduled Castes

Table 5. 2 indicated that the literacy rate serves as a crucial gauge of a society's advancement in terms of human development, as it reflects the quality of education accessible to its populace. Inextricably linked to a nation's progress, education quality is particularly significant for marginalized groups, such as Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST), as underscored by Article 46 of the Constitution of India. This article mandates that the State must prioritize support for the educational and economic interests of these groups, safeguarding them against various forms of social injustice and exploitation. Unfortunately, the reality is far from ideal, as Scheduled Castes often encounter barriers to higher education due to their disadvantaged socioeconomic status. The presence of educational materials within Dalit communities is met with resistance, often accompanied by violence against those seeking to benefit from them. Regrettably, the government frequently falls short in addressing the infrastructure and resource needs of Dalit communities, failing to allocate the necessary funding to ensure equitable access.

Consequently, limited educational prospects contribute to increased vulnerability and resource scarcity for Scheduled Caste women. The literacy rate data from the 2011 census underscores this issue. While the literacy rate for Scheduled Castes has improved from percent 54.7 in 2001 to 66.1 in 2011, it remains below the national average percent of 73.0 in 2011. Interestingly, urban areas exhibit higher SC literacy rates than their rural counterparts. This pattern persists in both rural and urban SC communities. In essence, the intricate relationship between education, caste, and socioeconomic factors underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by Scheduled Castes in India. While literacy rates have risen, systemic inequalities persist, necessitating comprehensive efforts to not only enhance access to education but also to address the broader issues of poverty, land ownership, and economic empowerment that continue to affect the lives of Dalit individuals and communities.

Table 5. 2 Compares the percentage of Literacy rate by SCs in India

Indicator	2001		2011	
	SCs	Overall	SCs	Overall
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

Sources: (census 2011)

Health Status of Scheduled Castes

Figure 5.1 Utilizing data from the National Family Health Survey 2016, a comparison was drawn between the health status of Scheduled Castes (SC) and the general population. In the context of health metrics, India lags behind its neighbouring countries and economic counterparts. Arundhati Roy, in her Lancet lecture, emphasizes that addressing the caste system is crucial to improving the nation's health status. Achieving equality, opportunities, and investing in health and education are vital endeavours. This resonates well, as the caste system is no longer tenable in modern Indian society.

antenatal care utilization between SCs and the general population were quantified. Notably, women identifying as SCs exhibit different antenatal care visit patterns. Social group membership significantly influences antenatal care usage, with SC/ST women being much less likely to utilize these services.

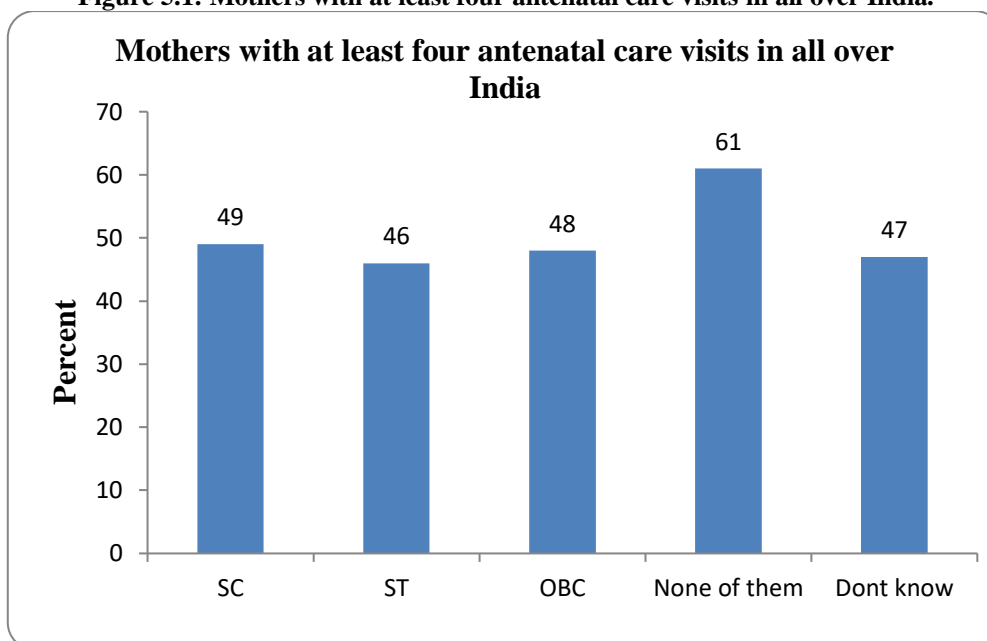
In addition to providing essential resources, health programs targeting SC/ST communities must also address both perceived and actual stigma and discrimination. Strategies to surmount these challenges involve sensitizing healthcare personnel, focused health education and outreach, and culturally relevant community initiatives. Adequate medical attention during pregnancy is critical for both maternal health and fetal development, as it promotes health-conscious behaviours and effective parenting abilities. The provision of proper antenatal care (ANC) increases the likelihood of utilizing skilled birth attendants and fosters lifelong good health for women. Sadly, Scheduled Caste women often suffer from being denied access to essential amenities, including maternal health services. A study by Navsarjan Trust (2013) highlighted that a concerning percent 54.8 of pregnant women and new mothers from the Valmiki sub-caste, traditionally associated with manual scavenging, did not receive the legally required prenatal or postnatal care. Utilizing National Family Health Survey data from 2015-2016, the factors contributing to the disparity in

The disparity in antenatal care utilization is further exacerbated by factors such as education level, household economic position, residential location, and the mother's age at childbirth. Institutional delivery, which occurs in medical facilities under the supervision of qualified health professionals, is essential for saving both mother and child's lives. However, Scheduled Castes remain one of India's most marginalized groups, concentrated in remote and hard-to-access areas. Scheduled Castes face reduced odds of opting for institutional delivery, likely due to deep-seated social and cultural reasons. Saroha, Altarac, and Sibley's research in 2008 established that lower caste women often opt for home deliveries due to fears of stigma and discrimination, particularly since maternal care involves contact with healthcare providers from different castes.

Addressing such challenges might necessitate targeted health promotion initiatives. The 2015-2016 National Family Health Survey reveals a rising percentage of institutional births in India, with Scheduled Castes accounting for percent 78, Scheduled Tribes for percent 68, and Other Backward Classes for percent 80 of such births. Disparities in the utilization of institutional birth services can be exacerbated by educational discrepancies, household economic status, residence, and maternal age at childbirth. Additionally, it was found that rural

women often cited higher costs as a primary reason for not opting for hospital births.

Figure 5.1: Mothers with at least four antenatal care visits in all over India.



Sources: (Ministry of Welfare, 2017)

Table 5. 3 shows that the data on percentage of landless households suggests that landlessness is more pronounced among Scheduled Castes, percentage 54 of SC households lacking land, while Scheduled Tribes and the rest of the population have relatively lower percentages of landless households at 36 and 35 respectively. Casual labour data, unfortunately, is not provided for further analysis. The provided data underscores the socio-economic disparities present in land ownership and highlights the need for targeted policies to address landlessness, particularly within marginalized groups like SCs and STs.

Relatively equal distribution of percent of salaried government jobs among SCs, STs, and OBC categories households. This could reflect efforts to promote social equity and inclusivity through affirmative action policies and reservations in government employment. However, the small sample size limits the extent to which broader conclusions can be drawn from this data alone.

Households have private sector salaried jobs among different population categories. While OBC households have the highest

representation percent of at 4, SCs and STs have comparatively lower representation percent at 2 and 1 respectively. This highlights potential disparities and challenges faced by marginalized groups in accessing private sector employment opportunities.

Attempt to ensure equal access to Kisan Credit Cards among SCs and STs Households both represented at 2, while OBC households show relatively better representation at 4. Overall, the data underscores efforts to provide marginalized groups with access to financial tools that can support their agricultural activities and contribute to their economic well-being.

Varying degrees of access to irrigated land among different household categories. While OBC households show a relatively higher representation percent at 29, SCs and STs have slightly lower percentages percent at 17 and 18 respectively. The overall household representation percent of 26 underscores the importance of irrigated land for agricultural activities and highlights the need for equitable distribution to promote inclusive and sustainable agriculture.

Table 3: Compares the percentage of Economics status by Social groups

Categories	Landless households and casual labour	HHs salaried job in government	HHs salaried job in Private	No of HHs kisan credit card	No HHs irrigated land
SCs	54	4	2	2	17
STs	36	4	1	2	18
Others	35	5	4	4	29
All India Total	38	5	4	4	26

Sources: Socio - Economic and caste census 2011.



6. FINDINGS

- Educational attainment among SCs varies widely. While there has been progress in improving access to education, there are still disparities. SCs continue to face challenges such as low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, and limited access to quality education, particularly in rural areas.
- Land ownership remains a significant challenge for SCs, with a notable proportion of them being landless or having limited access to agricultural land. This hampers their economic stability and opportunities for agricultural livelihoods.
- Access to quality healthcare and basic services varies. SCs, particularly in rural areas, might face barriers to accessing healthcare facilities and services due to factors such as location and economic constraints.
- SCs are often overrepresented in low-skilled and manual labour jobs, which tend to be associated with lower wages and limited job security. There's a need for better job opportunities, skill development programs, and affirmative action in employment to uplift their economic status.

7. SUGGESTIONS

There are several suggestions that can be made by reviewing the whole study-

- The concerned authorities will have to take effective steps to eliminate educational backwardness.
- Various types of voluntary organizations can come forward to make the students who are being deprived of education for poverty on the way of higher education.
- They also have to understand by the people of their own community of the facilities provided to them to improve their socio-economic condition.
- The unemployed people of SCs community can form self-help group and continue to earn a few earnings that will provide benefits to improve their livelihood.

8. CONCLUSION

In India, the Scheduled Castes represent the most economically disadvantaged and marginalized segment of society. Evidenced by indicators of human development, such as access to healthcare, it's evident that SCs face significant disparities. They grapple with profound social challenges, placing them among the most vulnerable in society. These disparities manifest across economic, social, and psychological dimensions, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation. Recognizing this, the Indian government has undertaken a range of affirmative actions and constitutional provisions aimed at lifting the impoverished from the depths of poverty. These initiatives have yielded positive outcomes, leading to improved living conditions for this historically disadvantaged population. However, there's a caveat to consider: these provisions can sometimes become misconstrued, creating barriers that hinder their effective utilization. Factors such as lack of awareness or deeply ingrained social biases based on race or caste can obstruct individuals from benefiting from these provisions. To drive meaningful progress in uplifting the human development status of Scheduled Castes, advocates of social equality in India need to adopt a multifaceted approach. This entails exploring

diverse initiatives across various levels. The journey toward rectifying historical injustices demands ongoing efforts, as the complexities of socio-economic disparities cannot be resolved through a singular approach. In essence, addressing the systemic inequities faced by Scheduled Castes requires sustained commitment. While positive changes have emerged from governmental measures, there remains a necessity to combat misconceptions, ignorance, and social barriers that impede progress. By fostering a multi-pronged strategy and continually adapting to the evolving needs of the marginalized, groups dedicated to social equality can strive to create a more just and inclusive society in India.

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