

Economic Reforms of Scheduled Castes in India

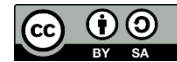
Subhash Singh

Assistant Professor in Economics
GC Krishan Nagar



Published In IJIRMPS (E-ISSN: 2349-7300), Volume 3, Issue 6, (November-December 2015)

License: [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)



Abstract

India with its billion plus population, once known as a land of snake charmers and elephants is today riding high on the path of growth and development day after day, infusing more and more rationalism, liberalism and egalitarianism in the minds of its people. It is reflected with unimaginable kind of diversity, be it cultural, geographical, lingual or religious but still as an intact nation showing to the world unprecedented unity among diversity. It's a country that was founded on the ideals of socialism, fraternity, universal brotherhood, peace and harmony.

Introduction

A country that obliges to follow and implement all international human rights laws and conventions honestly. In spite of all such above said positively this land of saints is suffering from a contagious disease referred as casteism. The particular, word 'casteism' is a stain and scar as well as on face of India as a nation. The caste system is uniformly distributed in every nooks and corners of India badly affecting people those are at the bottom of hierarchical order of society. To protect the interests of those at the punishing end of caste system architects of Indian constitution declared them as "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes" so as development scheme could be directed to mitigate their disempowerment and finally they also could become part of India's mainstream population.

As per census 2001 number of people living as Scheduled caste in India is 16.66 Crores comprising 16.20% of the total population of country. Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Tamilnadu and Uttar Pradesh are the eight states that together constitute more than 75% of total Scheduled Caste's population in Union of India. Most of them reside in villages and few close to 14% inhabits urban pockets. They have been living in every nooks and corner of India with majority residing at the outskirts of villages or cities in pitiable conditions. As a matter of fact larger section of Scheduled Castes population is substantially involved in agricultural activities as a labourer or marginal farmer, low grade employment being plasticized in inhuman conditions, bond labourers with landlords and many other cheap work. India's leather industry's work force is dominated by Scheduled Castes peoples. Country's eastern part fishermen population constitute major chunk of Scheduled Caste's population. Weavers of western India affiliates to Scheduled Castes too, in larger proportion. Civic sanitation workers, rickshaw pullers, unorganized labour in urban area is repleted with person from such castes. They suffer from extreme humiliation, embarrassment, deprivation and looked down in society. The practice of unsociability is an ultimate case reflecting oppression and depression of people have been given status of Scheduled Castes. Fundamental human rights have been denied to them for being associated with stigma of Scheduled Castes. They are poorest among the poverty groups or if

compared with other communities. The population of bonded labour that has been found in country includes 2/3 of Scheduled Castes due to its underdevelopment; ignorance and disempowerment contribute existing social and economical problems being faced by India. Problems exist everywhere but unfortunately their concentration is more specified with reference to Scheduled Castes as majority of them suffers from material and educational backwardness which catalyze their abysmal neglect and deprivation. To raise overall status of Scheduled Castes people could be considered as a milestone towards modernization and rationalization of Indian society but alas! This present status reflects a very dim picture and more appropriately shows the dominance of deep rooted irrational and barbaric ideologies prevalent in mass of its population. Endeavoring to accelerate growth of Scheduled Caste would not only serve the cause of humanity but also increase the pace of ongoing economic development in the country. This would surely pacify the soul of those visionary architects of Indian Constitution which is believed to be uniquely structured in whole world but undoubtedly such efforts requires serious contemplation and commitments of those in powers.

Taking into consideration the social and economical changes among Scheduled Castes with special regard to historical, notion of economic progress in India.

The subject matter of present study is specific to Punjab which despite of its being geographically small constitute an important place in the Union of India. It comprises small part of North-Western region of India including Himachal Pradesh in east front, Jamu & Kashmir in the north, Haryana and Rajasthan in the south and in the west sharing a considerably large border with Pakistan. It extends from the latitude 29.30° north to 32.32° north and longitude 73.55° east to 76.50° east. The State possesses an area of 50,362 km² which is 1.54% of total geographic area of the country. As said in Census 2001 larger number of people living as villagers with a population of 2.43 crores of which 66.08% is very much rural inhabitants whereas remaining living as urbanities. The given population comprises all Scheduled Castes homes of Punjab having their own population of 70.28 Lakh which make up for 28.85% of total population of Punjab state. As a whole 75.70% of scheduled Caste dwelling in rural whereas mainly 62.5% of latter caste concentrated in the districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Sangrur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and Patiala. Multistage sampling method is adopted for extracting a sample from it.

The central idea for taking the State of Punjab as a subject of research is for the reason that the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes of India is living in the state of Punjab.

The present chapter deals with origin of Scheduled Caste, their economic and social backwardness, endeavors being exercised for bringing them up in society, constitutional provisions, policies being adopted for the wellbeing of Scheduled Castes.

Emergence of Scheduled Castes

The historical perspective regarding the coming into being of Scheduled Caste or what had been they traditionally referred as shudras/untouchable is quite old concept. Out of Hindu epics which comprises Dharmashastras and smirits, the Rigveda is the oldest scripture which narrates four division of Hindu society called Varnas i.e. Shudras, Kshtriya, Vaishya, Brahmin respectively in the increasing order of status of each. All four are believed to be originated from the four different parts of Almighty. As per Rigveda the Brahmins are believed to be born from the mouth, Kshtriya from the arms, Vaishya from chest and finally shudra owe their origin to feet of Almighty. Gita proclaims that the origin is done by

the creator himself on the basis of karma (action) and Guna (quality) of respective individuals. These extracts from Gita and Rigveda brings the probability of origin of untouchability and caste system in the scripture itself, in the context of traditional varna and caste system. Without any suspicion it can be stated that untouchability and castism has its some roots in scripture or epics of Hindu religion and untouchability can be considered as by product of Hindu caste system. As stated by Manu, anybody who were born out of Pratiloma marriage were subscribed to lowest strata in the hierarchy of Varna.

India's history very clearly reflects the organized and well propagated caste system which is supported by the evidence, published by Archaeological and literary sources now available is more of circumstantial. As a result, scholars are indulging themselves in deep apprehensions as they strive to resynthesis the years long history of caste system in India.

Ghurye explained that the time when Indo-Aryan made their incoming to India and work out their social organization they lead to the formation of four types of division. The aboriginals were denied from religious, social and cultural context of social organization. They were endowed with the lowermost status, named shudras in the order of hierarchy. Ghurye further divided shudras in two groups, (i) Clean shudras (2) (ii)Unclean shudras. Shudras those were unclean later on were known as untouchables and were made to work on every type of disgraceful and disrespecting task like to strip skin of dead animals, cleaning and sweeping, scavenging, sewage maintenance and many belittling works. They would eat pork, beef and other things of such kind. In the words of Majumdar untouchable includes those humans which have been fully devoid of political and social rights for being a human and member of society. Many of them as traditionally imparted and forced socially by higher castes. Similar views were expressed by Hutton.

India was for the first time was politically united under the one rule and head at the of Maurya dynasty (i.e. from 322-184 BC), that further leads to more integration of culture of the time. Kautilya who was a Brahmin minister of Shudra ruler Chandergupta Maurya made some efforts to do away with innumerable hurdles prescribed by Brahmin for shudra by proclaiming that Royal law would have more superiority than the law of Dharma. Maurya period having passed, new wave of energy was given to revitalize the Brahminical order and promotion of caste system. In the time of Shutra-Smritis they were declared untouchables. The Gupta period was the period of positive Hindu rejuvenation and revolution. Shudras were allowed to indulge themselves in agricultural, trading, artistic and other activities which had earlier been practised by upper caste only. Unfortunately untouchability still was present in this period, more or less.

Afterwards, Shudra were classified as two sections. First section included those who were allowed to touch the utensils and had been permitted to enter their house. The second section of Shudras included those who were restricted from performing above explained acts but they were treated as inferior. Later on they had been classified as fifth group or were named as discarded castes. People generally referred them as untouchables. British administrators named them as inferior castes. Famous Round Table Conference organized in 1931 emphasized that these were distinct from Hindu caste and on account of this could not be put under the purview of Hindu Castes. Consequently they were assigned separate distinction from Hindu Castes. In 1932 Mahatma Gandhi agitated for this and went on strike till the decision of giving them special distinction from Hindu Caste system was finally reverted. As a result a compromise formula was drawn and untouchables were declared as part of Hindu Castes system. When

compromise having implemented fully Gandhi called for changing the old mindset and giving special considerations to untouchables and started calling them as 'Harijans', The childrens of God. The educated class among so called Harijans did raise protest and even had not taken it lightly as they apprehended that instead removing the real cause of inequality the new attempt was being made to make their conditions rather tolerable then destroying the system itself that produce disparity.

Attempts were made perhaps by Rishley in 1901 to define the Scheduled Castes, the census commissioner of India at that time. He classified Hindu Castes into Seven groups or categories. After this another attempt was made in 1911 to validity as to which of the tribes and castes were facing partiality on the basis of religions and their position in social hierarchy. The castes, those were subjected to partiality and discrimination were referred as "Depressed Classes" back in 1921. "Exterior Castes" was the terminology used by Superintend in 1931 as a supplementary to "Depressed Castes". Social and political changes that had been sought to introduce in 1935, the number of castes those were facing social admonition and depression were marked as Schedule and from the very that time they were started to be named as Scheduled Caste. The term was neutral in its connotation. Scheduled Castes in itself is not a single but collective term encompassing groups of people had been facing social denial and depression for centuries and were branded as 'untouchable' by others. After the time India got its independence and Indian Constitution was enacted back in 1950, the numbers of Scheduled Castes were declared by the Honorable President of India under the article 341. The Scheduled Castes are declared in the Constitution of India as groups, communities, collection of castes are being suffered from the age old traditional approach of inhuman branding named 'untouchability.' Provisions provided in article 341 of Indian Constitution calls for specifying Scheduled Castes separately in reference to each respective states and union territories.

Now a days 'Dalit' is the new terminology being practised instead of the old one i.e. 'untouchables'. For years innumerable number of terms and names have been in use to identify the untouchables. For example 'Atshudra', 'Panchama', 'Antyaja', 'Depressed classes', Scheduled Caste and many more with local vernacular accent. All these term have been constructed and invented by the high class people, this is the notion among untouchables. At the same time are denogatory, belittling, Abashing, humiliating, laying the foundation stone for the Suppression and depression for these people which further helps in propagating the paternalism and domination. The word 'Dalit' can be taken as an improvement in the context of old terminology as the word was designed by the Dalits themselves but its not free from the embarrassing relations and derogation. Undoubtedly it indicates a kind of revolt for all these associations which are always down grading.

Socio-economic Deprivation and Disadvantaged of Scheduled Castes

As a matter of fact Hindu society is repleted with a very strong system of hierarchical order where the ritual cleaning and polarity pollution including much prevalent social and cultural inequalities which raises the susceptibility of low castes being subjected to oppression, cruelties, abuses and some other kinds of inhuman treatment by the upper strata of society (so called upper castes). Despite being Hindu deities idolized and worshipped in Scheduled Castes abode, they are being constantly and intentionally prevented from entering the worship institutions of Hindu called temples. Reach have denied to Scheduled Castes to Hindu temple, are barred from performing yagna or participating and performing any acts that involves Hindu rituals. Function, ceremonies performed at the residing place of Scheduled Castes people are rejected and suppressed by Brahmin of superior castes. They refuse to recite

enchancements and mantras on some religious occasion if they were being organized at Scheduled Castes people's homes. Few times ceremonies are officiated by their own men or by other inferior Brahmin. To prevent people from lower castes to enter into temple is staunch example of denial of social rights for temple is not only a place of worship but also a place for social congregation. This particular case of deprivation can be taken as ultimate reason behind the social disabilities among the Dalits and was the dominant cause of other downgrading treatment propagated against the untouchables for centuries.

References

- [1] Ahuja, Ram, 1993, "Indian Social System", Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, pp. 271-275.
- [2] Bhanu, Partap, 1990, "The Socio-economic Status of SC's in India – A Case Study of Ghazipur District (U.P.)" in B.P. Chaurasia (ed.): Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India.
- [3] Bhowmick, P.K., 1968, "Occupational Changes in Two Villages in Bengal", *Man in India*, Vol. 48, No.1, pp. 46-54.
- [4] Bose, A.B., 1970, "Educational Development Among Scheduled Castes", *Man in India*, Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 222.
- [5] Bose, N.K. "Competing Productive Systems", *Man in India*, Vol. 48, No.1, Jan-March 1968, p. 15.
- [6] Carwin, L.A., 1991, "Caste and Class in Rural Town", *Man in India*, Vol. 55, No.2, 1975. Quoted from P. Sivaram & S. Bhaskar, "Occupational Mobility Among the Mangallers (barbers)", *Man in India*, Vol. 71 No. 2 & 3, pp. 439-449.
- [7] Chandidas, R., 1969, "How Close to Equality is Scheduled Castes", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 4, No. 24, pp. 975-999.