

# Socio-Economic Disabilities of Scheduled Castes in India

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## Abstract

Nowadays, 'Dalit' is the new terminology being practiced 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 derogatory, 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.

## Introduction

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 enchantments 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.

Untouchable were kept aside from the Hindu caste socially. Around the country more specifically in south Scheduled Castes could easily seen living of the outskirts of city and villages. They are prevented from participating in temple ceremonies, walking on the road, moving on horse etc. in states like in

Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and from some other states where incidents comes in national dailies from time to time. In Maratha Provincial area, the rulers of Peshawa's time, the Mahars who were the most untouchable scheduled caste of Maharashtra were made to carry earthen pots, being hanged through necks, into which they had to spit so that their spitting on the road would not pollute the one who affiliated to upper castes. In Maharashtra as well as Gujarat another incident of utmost barbarism come into forth where untouchable were made to drag a thorny bush as they walked around. This was done to wipe out or remove the footprints of untouchable from soil lest it should pollute the feels of higher caste people. There were other impositions too like not wearing ornaments, clean dress. Restrictions were also imposed on dwelling and food of these people.

Untouchables were so deprived at the end of Nineteenth century that they were stripped of their membership of Hindu society by Savarna Hindu. They were living in unprecedented deplorable shabby conditions. Socially they were denounced from the Hindu society. The suppression and oppression being faced by the members of Scheduled Caste make them think to idea of shifting their religion. This finally led to conversion process from Hindu to Christianity, Budhism or Islam of various members of Scheduled Castes. Uncountable number of untouchables felt peace and harmony, fraternity of generous Catholic and brotherhood of Islam.

Untouchables were living their life in ritual based society which always worked against them as a cheap service providing class and labourers possessing no land. Apart from living their life as a landless labourers they involved themselves in others many embarrassing employments that could be stripping of skin of dead animals, cleaning and sweeping, scavenging etc. All these jobs were quite disgusting and distasteful to the sense of cleanliness of Hindu Castes. At the same time they associated themselves with work comprising leather processing (including chamar caste), Foddy tapping (North India Posi Caste, Shanar and Thiya of South India. Dom caste worked as Basket maker whereas Kori caste of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh employed as weavers. Although they may have shown their mental and creative acumen in other areas but were denied and prohibited to participate in other employment activities that could have added to substantial financial and social status increment in these castes. Neat and clean, fair occupation were the monopoly of upper castes only.

All above mentioned things are surely having an element of truth in the context of Scheduled Castes of Indian Society. The hierarchical order of caste system in our country not only made these people socially admonished but also politically and economically disadvantaged section of society as basic amenities for acquiring quality and higher education is more within the access of upper castes Indians. In term of ownership and average economic holding scheduled caste people are miles away behind than non-scheduled castes. Their resource allocation is still abysmally low if compared with other non-scheduled castes. In agriculture sector majority of them work as labourers with no ownership and that also include temporary work for seasons.

Notwithstanding their (Scheduled Castes) low socially and economically disadvantageness the process of economic growth did nothing for these people. Unfortunately it play negative role to some extent. In the process of economic development those castes were endowed with bequeathed property were put to more advantage and grown at much faster pace than people of Scheduled Castes which carry no large ancestral resources. For generations, Scheduled Castes have been denied assets which includes physical as well as human assets. The pace of accumulating more and more resources whether financial or human

resource has been a blessing for the people of non-scheduled castes only and has been a curse for the people affiliated to Scheduled castes. It seems as if doing business and becoming a part of industry has become a monopoly of upper castes. Scheduled castes participation in Semi-Government and Government job has been too low. All such developments breed disparity and not equality that further the cause of hierarchical order or society and not the integration of society.

In nutshell what can be concluded that more prominently there are three reasons those can be held responsible for the cornering and disabilities of Scheduled Castes are: (1) lack of opportunity, (2) motivational locking in economic perspective, (3) nurturing and flourishing their abilities is less or absent altogether. On account of extreme poverty, resource-lacking, living traditional thinking environment and big void of torch bearers, scheduled castes people have more tendencies for hankering after less troubled, simple and non-ambitious aims. Aspiration level among scheduled caste is quite low. Even today at the time of liberalization, globalization and privatization they would prefer to go for service sector or simply a service provider. Entrepreneurship and business skills are lacking or sometimes suppressed in people belonging to Scheduled Caste. It's not because of that they have something wrong with their hereditary and geneticity but overall environment where they reside plays a dominant role for such non-visionary thinking. As they lack quality education, therefore also lack abilities and capabilities where education has an important role to play. The conditions present in the market always play havoc even if some get some skill and professionalism through their hard work. They are partially inclined more towards members of society belonging to upper castes in Hindu system. Due to their being brandished as untouchables, impure and unclean, consumers dissuade from bargaining with these people which can frustrate even the best marketing men present in the market among these people. Many times lack of access plays a substantial role in deciding availability of employment even if some person of scheduled caste has equal competence with a person from non-scheduled caste. Surely, level of hopes and aspiration needs special attention to alter the motivational aspect of Scheduled Caste's people and deprivations concerning education, equipments, skills etc. being eliminated. Indeed all three factors as explained above may modify each other when combined together which occurs very often. If we need to reach these castes to the level of others then certainly serious consideration is required. The notion of purity and untouchability have to be renounced and abstained to remove the market aberrations concerning people belonging to scheduled castes.

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