

Scheduled Caste and Contemporary issues

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the current issues of Castes in India. has the differentiation among them decreased, or has been drastic than in the last decade? Does lower caste have led a normal life like other major castes? this is a scorching question of the twenty-first century India, where India is ready to send crewed missions to space. at the same time, in the Fourth Estate we get to see the news of violence and discrimination against Scheduled Castes. today also we still have many examples of violence and discrimination accessible, which Took hundreds of lives. This increasing violence has made us think, are we establishing a sublime and inclusive society, where every dye has got equal rights and are lives with dignity. these days, in this epoch of modernity, we think that the roots of the caste system are very weak, old orthodox ideas has disappeared. nevertheless, just like the mirage does not enjoin us to have any inkling of the truth, likewise in the identic way, the cover of the existing society does not let us perceive even a little bit of hidden stratified inequality and discrimination in it.

Keywords- Discrimination, inequality, scheduled castes, caste system.

INTRODUCTION

Existing forms of socio-economic inequality in worldwide are often linked with much older systems of stratification. In the United States, many descendants of enslaved Africans continue to suffer social and economic impairment. In Europe, the Roma and other semi-nomadic groups that call it a pre-modern nation, find themselves distrusted and socially ostracized. In modern-day Japan and South Korea, descendants of some families who historically held "unclean" occupations remain a defamed group. India and neighboring countries have an ancient system of caste inequality; Their modern expressions severely hamper the lives and opportunities of lower caste citizens (Thorat, 2007). The German sociologist, Max Weber, provided a view on social stratification, emphasizing the enduring importance of status groups within capitalist societies: communities that enjoy distinct social respect. Status groups may include racial, ethnic or religious groups, but also social classes such as "educated classes", or castes. Communities forming status groups share a certain style

of life and maintain their solidarity through shared tastes and social activities on the one hand, and impose social restrictions on others, reducing their intercourse with social conflicts (Roth, 1968). An important element in Weber's theory is that status groups want to monopolize valuable economic opportunities. In 2007, Sukhdev thorat and Paul explained, how in private companies of India are not appointed Scheduled Castes and Minorities despite having the desired qualifications in the higher posts, especially in managerial posts (Thorat, 2007). Some jobs come from sign cash and social monopolies; Their high income reflects the type of people who occupy them rather than objective skills. Residential segregation of status groups on the basis of education and income, with differences in child rearing practices and family cultural capital, creates better schooling opportunities and differential access to elite universities, which span these generational generations (Lareau, 2003). "The outcaste is a bye-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system." - DR. B.R. Ambedkar

As said by Dr Ambedkar caste base discrimination is a byproduct of caste system. varna system was originally a feature of ancient Indian society. where some castes were called inferior castes in the rigid casteist system. These castes were commonly known as the downtrodden class. Nowadays which are predominantly known as scheduled caste. the term Scheduled Castes was first used in the Government of India Act of 1935. Subsequently, the British Government passed the Government of India Order (Scheduled Castes) in 1936 and identified some castes as Scheduled Castes. Previously they were commonly called 'oppressed classes. The systematic study of the oppressed class was first done in the year 1931 by the then Census Commissioner Hunton. The list of Scheduled Castes after independence in the year 1950 was the revised list of this list. In the Constitution, the President has been empowered under Article 341(1), which is a quasi-legislative power of the president. that he can include or exclude any caste, races and groups or part of groups within the territory as Scheduled Castes, Tribes, by a notification (B. Narayan and Oths. Vs Government of A.P, 1997).

Scheduled caste in India

The caste system, which was a salient feature of oriental Indian society, was acquired in ancient times on the basis of occupation and was not rigid, meaning a person could go from one occupation to another. But over the time, it became very distorted, harsh, inhumane and painful. There is a long history of harassment and discrimination against Scheduled Castes. With the caste system becoming rigid in the varna system, there was a gradual rise against inhuman behavior, discrimination and with them the Scheduled Castes, which exist even after so many

years of independence. While all the resources were available in abundance for some castes, which are called upper castes, on the other hand, the scheduled castes could not even meet the basic needs of life. Since the members of the Scheduled Castes were prohibited from collecting money, receiving education, doing business in ancient Indian society, Deferent restrictions on shudras are written in vedas and brahmanas According to the Kathaka Samhita (xxxi.2) and the Maitrayani -Samhita(iv.1.3;i.8.3) “A shudra should not be allowed to milk the cow whose milk is used for Agnihotra” The Satapatha Brahmana (xiv.1.31) and the Kathaka Samhita (xi.10) further provide that “The Shudra must not be admitted to Soma drink” The Satapatha Brahmana (iii.1.1.10), the Maitrayani Samhita (vii.i.1.6) and also the Panchavimsa Brahmana (vi.1.11) –“The Shudra must not be spoken to when performing a sacrifice and a Shudra must not be present when a sacrifice is being performed” The Aitareya Brahmana (vii.29.4) and the Panchavisha Brahmana (vi.1.11) reached the culminating point when they say- ”Shudra is a servant of another (and cannot be anything else).” (Vol-7, Writing and speeches of Dr. B.R Ambedkar) Ministry of external affair, Govt. of India) as a result of restrictions, these castes are still backward in socially, economically, commercially and educationally from dominant castes (upper castes). Backwardness of these castes also inherent Because the transfer of wealth and knowledge which happens from generation to generation cannot happen due to social restrictions in these (scheduled castes). Lack of education and awareness forced the Scheduled Castes to work as daily laborers and many of these castes have been working in unclean occupations overs the generations.

According to the 2011 census data, the scheduled caste population in India is 16,66,35,700, which is 16.63 percent of the total population of the country and the sex ratio average (number of females per one thousand males) is 945 which is more than the national average. Scheduled Castes are predominantly in rural areas. 76% of the total population of Scheduled Castes live in rural areas while 23.6% of Abadi are in urban areas. Those who mainly live as landless laborers, daily laborers and laborers.

Education in Scheduled Caste

If we address about education, SC literacy rate at the national level is 66.1 percent, out of which it is 75.2 percent among men, while it is 56.5 percent among women, also among SC men in rural areas. This is 72 percent while 52% of women in rural areas are educated. The gross enrollment rates of Scheduled Castes in educational institutions, primary school, high school, upper secondary and boys in higher education are at least 20.1, 9.4, 6.3 and 4.2 per

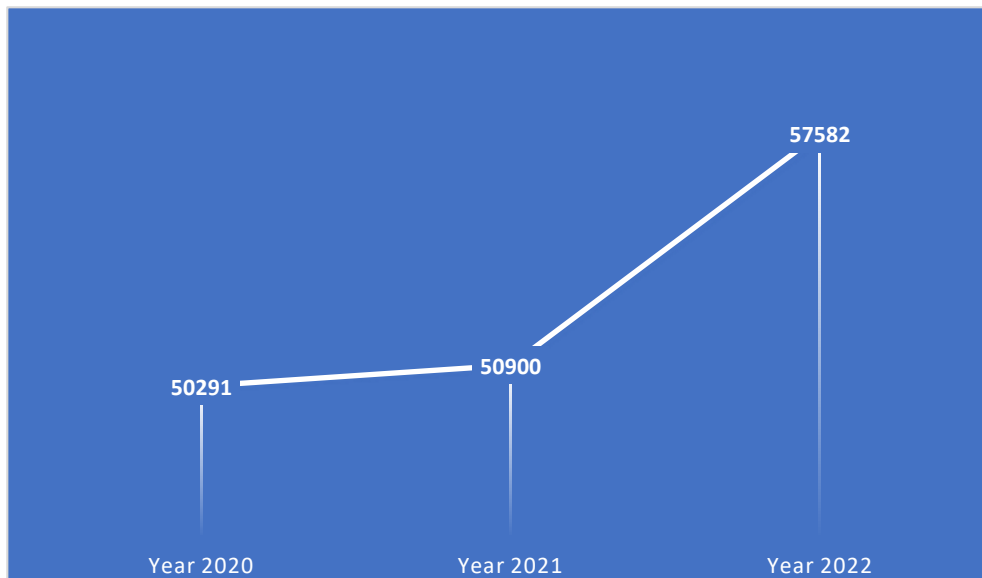
cent, while it is higher in primary school, high school, upper secondary and girls. Education is at least 16.5, 6, 4 and 2 percent, much lower than the national average. In addition, the dropout rate at all levels of education among scheduled castes at the national level is 51 percent, which is universal. (Censes of India 2011)

Crime against Scheduled caste-

As a result of casteist system for many centuries, the Scheduled Castes were forced to live in an endless agony, inhuman behavior, extreme poverty. Which, even after independence, has not been completely eliminated from our society. In the year 2014 survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research and University of Maryland (United States of America), about one-third of the people in Indian society accepted that they practice untouchability, this practice of untouchability in so called upper castes, has 52 percent. According to the states, it is 53 percent in Madhya Pradesh, 50 percent in Himachal Pradesh, 48 percent in Chhattisgarh, 47 percent in Bihar, 43 percent in Uttar Pradesh and 40 percent in Uttarakhand. While untouchability was abolished by Article 17 of the Indian Constitution in the year 1950, and in the year 1955 by the Civil Rights Act and Criminal Procedure Act 1971 Strict punishment has been imposed to prohibiting it completely. (Vol.-2, Crime of India 2022, National Crime recode Bureau of India)

There has no reduction in crimes with referred to scheduled castes. On the contrary, from 2015 onwards, the crimes against Scheduled Castes are increasing steadily. While criminal incidents occurred of the year 2015 with 21 percent of the total population in scheduled caste, it increased to 23.8 percent in 2019. According to the states, there has been a huge increase in Rajasthan, which is 21 percent. when it comes to the crimes against scheduled castes, every year more than ten thousand scheduled caste people are harassed in Uttar Pradesh, which is one fourth of the incidents in the entire country. in entire country Between 2015 and 2019, criminal incidents have occurred with an average of 174654 scheduled caste people every year. (Vol.-2, Crime of India 2022, National Crime recode Bureau of India) in the year of 2020, 50291 scheduled caste people had harassed in all over in India. in 2021 50900 people had suffered from atrocity which is one percent increase of the last year. in 2022, 57582 people had suffered with atrocity all over the country which is thirteen percent huge increase in crime against scheduled caste (see graph 1)

Graph-1
Annual increase in crimes against scheduled castes (in population)



Source- Crime in India 2022

“Thousands of Dalit girls are forced into prostitution every year. The link between caste and forced prostitution is evident in Devadasi and Jogini systems in India. The Devadasi and Jogini system are a form of religiously accepted sexual abuse in India. Originally a sacred, religious practice for girls in temples, Devadasi Bhakti has turned into a systematic abuse for young girls serving as prostitutes for members of the dominant caste. Most girls and women in India's urban brothels come from Dalit, low-caste, tribal or minority communities” In 2007 Anti-Slavery International published research. (Anti-slavery report , 2007)

Safeguard for Scheduled caste

safeguards aim to uplift Scheduled Castes and protect them from discrimination, ensuring social and economic justice. Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India are provided with various legal safeguards under the Constitution and other laws to protect them from discrimination, exploitation, and atrocities. Here are some key legal safeguards for Scheduled Castes:

1. Constitutional Safeguards

a) Fundamental Rights (Part III)

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

Article 17: Abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form.

Article 19: Guarantees freedom of speech, movement, residence, and association.

Article 21: Right to life and personal liberty, ensuring dignity and equality.

b) Special Provisions for SCs (Part XVI)

Article 46: State to promote educational and economic interests of SCs and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.

Article 330 & 332: Reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies.

Article 335: Relaxation in qualifications for jobs to enable SCs to enter government services.

Article 338: Establishes the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) to safeguard their rights.

Article 341: President, in consultation with the Governor, has the power to specify Scheduled Castes.

2. Legal and Statutory Safeguards

a) Protection Against Atrocities

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

Protects SCs from violence, discrimination, and humiliation.

Special courts for speedy trials.

Strict punishments for offenses like social boycotts, denial of access to public places, and bonded labor.

b) Reservation in Education & Employment

Article 15(4) & 15(5): Allows reservations for SCs in educational institutions.

Article 16(4): Provides reservation in government jobs.

Article 243D & 243T: Reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities.

c) Land and Economic Safeguards

Land reforms laws to prevent alienation of SC land and provide land rights.

SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act also protects SCs from being dispossessed of land.

d) Social Justice and Empowerment Schemes

Scholarships and free education programs for SC students.

SC Sub-Plan (Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan - SCSP) for socio-economic development.

Reservation in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and promotions.

Conclusion

There has been a vast change in the social and economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes after independence. Now the members of the Scheduled Castes have become educated and empowered in greater numbers. Their representation in government posts has increased. And they are no longer tied to their traditional occupations, due to which their economic condition has improved. The government's education policy provides scholarships and hostel facilities to the children of the Scheduled Castes, which has increased the level of education among the children of the Scheduled Castes, although the rate of school dropouts among them is still higher than other classes.

Despite all this, even today the Scheduled Castes are backward compared to the main castes. In the year 2018, the Standing Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes of the Lok Sabha, in its report laid in Parliament, admitted that there is no coordination between the States, Policy Commission and the Central Government Ministry for the schemes / programs being run for the welfare of Scheduled Castes. The reason why policy was not implemented properly and many schemes are only on paper. For the complete upliftment of the Scheduled Castes, the internal relations of the society will have to be strengthened and the discrimination mentality will have to be eradicated from its roots. All this is not possible in the absence of social awareness and political will; hence we need to make efforts at both the level of society and the state.

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