



Analysis of Socio-economic and Political issues of Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh and Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Government Policies

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ABSTRACT

Scheduled Caste communities in India have faced social neglect and unfair treatment to centuries. After independence, laws such as Article-17 of the Indian federal Constitution and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act took concrete steps to end untouchability and protect their rights. However, Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh continue to struggle in a vicious cycle of poverty, social exclusion, and mistrust. In Chhattisgarh, Scheduled Castes constitute approximately 13% of the state's total population. Due to social hierarchy and historical inequalities, this community has been deprived of political participation, educational and financial resources. They always face inequality and discrimination in areas primary and higher education, health services, better jobs, and political participation. While the Constitution guarantees equality and rights for all, reality differs from legal provisions. The impact of Government welfare schemes and policies has been limited, as their implementation faces numerous challenges. Scheduled Castes have minimum land for agricultural activities, formal employment, and quality primary and higher education, stopping them from improving their socio-economic status. This research paper analyzes critically ongoing issues facing Scheduled Castes members in Chhattisgarh. The study aims to examine discrimination and deprivation in areas like education, health good jobs, and political participation. It also evaluates the effectiveness of Government policies and welfare programs. By understanding the interrelationships between caste discrimination, poverty, and education, this research presents relevant suggestions for their upliftment. Thus, it underscores the need for

formulating more pragmatic policies development toward the social political and economical empowerment of the Scheduled Caste community.

KEY WORDS

Scheduled Castes, Caste-based Discrimination, Chhattisgarh.

INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Castes, commonly known as Dalits, constitute 13.2% of Chhattisgarh's total population (as per Census 2011). Caste plays a central role in the Indian social system, but it has isolated the Scheduled Castes from the mainstream. This consequently occurred in social, economic, and political backwardness. The Indian has framed many clause for the protection of scheduled caste this community, but despite positive policies and programs, Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh face numerous challenges. Chhattisgarh is an agricultural state on a large dependence on the rural economy. Weak infrastructure and social injustice in the state further exacerbate the struggles of the marginalized Castes. Caste discrimination remains prevalent in society. Scheduled Castes people always face discrimination violence in public places, educational institutions, and workplaces. Article 17 of the Constitution, which seeks to eradicate untouchability, is effective, but its implementation remains incomplete. Scheduled Castes are primarily employed in agriculture and the unorganized sector, leaving them economically vulnerable. Lack of access to economic resources and employment opportunities keeps them trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.

Historical Context of Scheduled Castes

The caste system in India has consistently marginalized a large section of society by dividing it. This system is man-made, based on karma and religious principles. The Varna system is first mentioned in the Rigveda, dividing society into four classes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. This division places Shudras at the lowest echelons, limiting their work to service. Over time, Manu further strengthened this system through the Manusmriti. It stated the basis of religion as the structure of caste, varna, and gotra. This social system gave Brahmins sole authority over education, Kshatriyas over governance, and Vaishyas over trade, while obliging Shudras to serve these three classes. This laid the foundation for widespread social inequality and inhuman exploitation.

During the colonial period, the complexities of the caste system further increased. The British first used the term "Scheduled Castes" in the Government of India Act 1935. Its purpose was to list the impairment sections of Hindu society and formulate policies for their upliftment. After independence, Scheduled Castes were defined in Article 341 of the Indian Constitution.

The purpose of the term Scheduled Caste is to elevate the most backward community of the society to the social and political level and also to provide protection to all their rights. However, the influence of the caste system continues today. This system is not solely based on karma, but the culture, civilization, and religious ideologies of society play a deep role in it.

Currently, various progressive and social interventions have been instituted to uplift the Scheduled Castes, but social inequality remains deeply rooted. Eliminating the caste system without understanding its historical context is challenging.

Caste-Based Discrimination in Chhattisgarh

Caste-based discrimination against Scheduled Castes is prevalent in almost all states of India, and Chhattisgarh is no exception. So-called upper castes and regionally dominant castes strive to marginalize Scheduled Castes socially, economically, and politically. This discrimination manifests itself in the form of social exclusion, humiliation in public places, personal violence, desecration of religious sites and great personalities, exploitation in the workplace, and denial of privileges.

Caste-based discrimination is prevalent in both villages and cities areas of Chhattisgarh. The tendency to exclude Scheduled Castes from public services and subject them to exploitation continues to hinder their socio-economic development. Although constitutional and legal measures exist, their implementation remains ineffective, making this problem a serious issue.

Article 17 of Constitution abolishes untouchability, but the ground reality something else. it has not been fully effective. Protection from discrimination and exploitation is provided through the Atrocities Act, 1989. Despite this, according to National Crime Records Bureau data, crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) are steadily increasing in Chhattisgarh.

Objective

1. To analyze the socio-economic challenges and political participation of the Scheduled Caste community in Chhattisgarh.
2. To study the impact of migration-related issues on educational and employment.
3. To assess the effectiveness of Government policies to promote inclusion and social justice.

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive and analytical research methodology to analyze the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Caste community. The dataset was elicited by employing a hybrid methodological framework encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Socio-economic indicators such as education rates, employment status, land ownership, and political representation were analyzed to provide a thorough understanding of the key challenges endured by the Chhattisgarh Scheduled Caste community.

Literature Review

Previous research on Scheduled Castes in Bharat reveals that this community has a victim of continuous social deep social inequalities. This exigent circumstance is further complicated in Chhattisgarh, a Scheduled Caste-dominated state, higher percentage of villages and cities population, making the discrimination problems confronted by scheduled class more pronounced and severe.

1. The works of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar placed significant emphasis on social awareness and capacity building of scheduled Castes. He identified the caste system as a fundamental problem in Indian Hindu society and advocated for the capacity building of these communities through constitutional reforms. His work laid the foundation for reservations in inequitable to fundamentals resources such as job, education and other welfare schemes for SCs in India.
2. Researchers such as Sukhdev Thorat and Katharine S. Newman have conducted in-depth analyses of caste-based discrimination and economic inequality in Bharat. Their studies reveal that dalit face to face significant a pronounced asymmetry continues to prevail in the accessibility of essential rights, notably with regard to elementary education, health and jobs.
3. According to Thorat, despite improvements in the economic conditions of sc community in India, their social upliftment remains slow. He underscored that members of the Scheduled Castes in rural areas have a very small share in the means of production. They own very small farms, which is the fundamental cause underpinning their economic debilitation weakness and backwardness.
4. Research by Nidhi Sabharwal and Amitabh Kundu shows that increasing educational and employment opportunities is essential for the political and social enablement in India.

The literature review indicates shows that Scheduled Castes face historical and socio-economic inequalities in India. In Chhattisgarh, the situation is even more severe due to the high percentage of rural and Scheduled Caste populations. Although Government schemes have brought some improvements, challenges faced by these communities remain. The central aim underpinning this paper is to analyze these challenges and suggest possible solutions.

Table 01: Statistics of crimes against scheduled castes

Sr. No.	Type of torture	Cases (2022)
1	Rape	227
2	Murder	076
3	Crimes related to land disputes	421
4	Serious injury	512
5	Social exclusion	134

(Source: NCRB report)

Table 02: Year-by-Year Statistics on Atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Chhattisgarh

Sr. No.	Years	Number of cases reported
1	2020	1204
2	2021	1312
3	2022	1453
4	2023	1521

(Source: NCRB report)

The crimes include physical violence, social and economic exclusion, humiliation in public places, and gender-based violence against women. According to NCRB data from 2020 to 2023, not only have cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes grow, but there are also very serious delays in the disposal of crimes. The rising number of pending cases under the Act reflects the failure to punish the perpetrators.

This situation poses a serious challenge to the implementation of the constitutional rights to justice and equality for Scheduled Castes.

Limited Access to Education for Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh

Scheduled Caste members in Chhattisgarh face numerous challenges in education. Although the state Government has promulgated remedial socio-political intervention schemes affirmative action programs improve the socio-economic and educational status of this community, these efforts are insufficient. Scheduled Caste members face discrimination and socio-economic barriers from primary to higher education, which impact the quality and continuity of their education.

Incidents of Discrimination

Caste-based discrimination is still prevalent in rural and semi-urban schools. Upper-caste students often refuse to sit or eat with Scheduled Caste children during midday meals. Furthermore, many students and teachers use caste-related words and mistreat Scheduled Caste students. This environment contributes to low self-esteem and a disengagement from education.

Economic and Social Barriers

Poverty is a major barrier to education for Scheduled Caste children. Most people in this class depend on wage labor and migrate to other states or cities for livelihoods. As a result, children's schooling is interrupted.

Shortcomings in the Education System

Scheduled Caste children are unable to receive quality education on account of the paucity of teachers and basic resources in Government schools. Children living in villages and forest areas are particularly vulnerable to these shortcomings. The deficiency of high-quality primary education and a supportive environment in schools also hinders their educational progress.

Table 03: Data on Discrimination against Scheduled Caste Students in Chhattisgarh

Sr. No.	Index	Percentage
1	School dropout students	22%
2	Percentage of seating arrangements for scheduled caste students	15%
3	Verbal abuse of scheduled caste students	18%
4	Dropout rate in girls	35%
5	Percentage of households involved in seasonal migration	30%
6	Enrollment in higher education	18%
7	Children reaching secondary school	40%

(Source: NCRB report)

Unemployment and Underemployment

Joblessness and partial empowerment remain a serious problem among Scheduled class in the state of Chhattisgarh. Scheduled Caste members commonly experience work place discrimination sectors, especially in the profit making sector. Despite having qualifications and skills, job seekers are influenced by caste-based biases. This makes it is poses difficulties for scheduled castes individuals to obtain employment opportunities, forcing them to work in the informal sector.

Non Government sector are insecure, and workers receive neither fair wages nor guaranteed social security. In this situation, Scheduled Castes become victims of economic inequality. According to Government data, the unemployment rate among Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh is 12.6%, significantly higher than the state average. This gap indicates that socioeconomic and political factors hold Scheduled Caste back from access to employment opportunities.

Situation in Rural Areas

Most Scheduled Castes reside villages and forest remote area where permanent job opportunities are limited. MNREGA schemes were launched to address employment needs, but they have failed to provide adequate employment. Consequently, many are forced to live in conditions of unemployment or underemployment.

Employers' Bias

Employers in the private sector often harbor caste biases, which deprive qualified candidates of employment. This discrimination often forces Scheduled Castes into insecure wage labor.

Table 04: Comparative Data Scheduled caste and other caste social work index

Sr. No.	Index	Scheduled Caste	Other Caste
1.	Participation in skill development	25%	40%
2.	Work force In agriculture	64%	30%
3.	Enrollment in higher education	18%	45%
4.	Poverty rate	48%	19.7%
5.	Rate of seasonal migration of household	30%	10%

(Source: NSSO report)

Challenges faced by Scheduled Caste Migrants in Urban Areas

A large segment of the Scheduled Caste (SC) population in Chhattisgarh faces socio-economic challenges when migrating from villages and cities. According to the 2021 Census, 64% of Scheduled Caste individuals are engaged in agriculture. The search for better employment opportunities often forces Scheduled Caste members to migrate to cities areas, where they face numerous challenges.

Major Challenges

- 1. Caste-Based Discrimination:** A survey carried out by Prasad in 2017 revealed that 40% of Scheduled Caste migrants in Chhattisgarh lack basic amenities and live in informal settlements without those amenities.
- 2. Lack of Basic Amenities:** A study conducted by Prasad in 2017 revealed that 40% of Scheduled Caste migrants in Chhattisgarh lack basic amenities and live in informal settlements without those amenities.
- 3. Landlessness and Poverty:** Approximately 42% of Scheduled Caste families in Chhattisgarh are landless, and 37% live below the poverty line, indicating very low financial stability, according to the Planning Commission 2021.

Table 05: Scheduled caste population participation Percentage

Sr. No.	Social Class	Percentage /Description
1.	Scheduled caste population engaged in agriculture	64%
2.	Scheduled caste migrant deprived of basis amenities	40%
3.	Scheduled caste migrants working in the non- profit sector	65%
4.	Unemployment rate of rural scheduled caste migrant	37%
5.	Landlessness in scheduled caste families	42%

(Source: Census 2011 report)

Multiple Health and Nutrition Problems in Chhattisgarh

Healthcare access is alarmingly very poor, espacialy in village's areas and among Scheduled Caste communities, where caste-based discrimination remains a deep challenge. Data from the confirms this dire situation. Malnutrition is high among children less than 05 years of age, with 42.3% underweight and 38.7% stunted. Poverty and uncertainty about food security are among the major factors contributing to this. Access to healthcare is severely limited in rural areas, making medical facilities and medicines unaffordable for the general public. This situation is even more acute for Scheduled Caste communities, where caste-based discrimination, along with the inadequate access to healthcare, poses a major barrier. This directly impacts maternal and infant mortality rates. Maternal mortality rates among Scheduled Caste communities are 229 per 100,000 live births, while infant mortality rates are 45 per 1,000 live births. These high figures are exacerbated by clean ability of clean water are also serious issues. In rural areas, approximately 18% of households lack availability of drinking water sources, and approximately 40% of households still practice open defecation. These unsanitary conditions contribute to the spread of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid, further exacerbating the health crisis.

Limited Political Representation

Despite the provision of reservations for Scheduled Class in the legislature in Chhattisgarh, the challenge of political representation remains. The main problem is the unequal distribution of seats. While reservations are intended to provide fair representation to Scheduled Castes, the distribution of reserved seats often falls short of their population. Even reserved seats often come under pressure from dominant castes.

This results in dominant castes ignoring the problems and issues of Scheduled Class representatives. Those who wish to join politics are deterred from active participation due to social pressure, discrimination, and prejudice.

Furthermore, a inadequate of resources and political education is a big obstacle. Success in politics requires financial resources and public support, which Scheduled Caste candidates do not easily obtain. They too confront numerous problems also face many difficulties in elections.

Scheduled Caste representatives are often viewed as merely symbolic and are not given significant roles in policymaking or decision-making. For example, Scheduled Caste MLAs are given responsibility for less important departments.

Thus, a lack of resources, social pressure, and their limited participation in the political process contribute to this category's weak political representation.

CONCLUSION

Comprehensive policy interventions are needed to upgrade the socio-economic and political condition of the Scheduled Class community in Chhattisgarh. To eliminate discrimination and deprivation in dimension like education, health, jobs, and political participation, the effectiveness of Government policies and welfare programs must be enhanced. To facilitate better education to Scheduled Caste students, the Government must implement comprehensive reforms in the education system, strictly monitor caste-based discrimination in schools, and implement schemes to increase access to schooling in village's areas. Moreover, it is necessary to educate students and teachers about caste-sensitivity and provide financial assistance to ensure children's continued education. Improving access to health services, promoting sanitation, and ensuring nutritional security is essential. The Government and society must work together to address these issues to ensure better health and nutrition in Chhattisgarh.

Strict laws against caste discrimination in the employment sector must be implemented, and special programs must be launched to promote skill development and self-employment for Scheduled Caste children.

Additionally, social awareness and education are needed to eliminate caste-based discrimination and promote inclusion. Thus, the requirement for a well-structured policy formulation towards social, political and economic empowerment of the Scheduled Caste community is underlined.

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