

Problems and Prospects of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes at present Situations in India

Dr.Rajendra Prasad.N.L
 Asst Professor
 Dept of Sociology
 Vijayanagar Sri Krishnadevaraya University
 Ballari

Abstracts:

Today Various Problems Faced by Scheduled Castes – The Varna System which existed during the Vedic period, in course of time degenerated into the caste system. Since then, the Scheduled Castes who are known as ‘Untouchables’ have been suffering from various social, religious, legal, political, economic, educational, and other disabilities.

Tribal communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes. Thus for example, the Bagdis or, the Bouris are scheduled castes and the Lapchas or, the Bhutias are scheduled tribes in West Bengal.

Key words; Untouchability, Harijans, caste system, Discrimination, Demography

Introduction: The term ‘scheduled caste’ was coined by the Simon commission (1927). The expressions, ‘depressed class,’ ‘exterior caste’ and ‘untouchables’ were commonly used for the scheduled castes during the colonial period. Ganhiji called them ‘harijans’ the better known scheduled castes include Chamar and Bhangi, (UP, BIHAR, PUNJAB), Adi Karnataka, Madiga, Harijan (Karnataka) Mala and Madiga (Andhra), there are numerous other groups. In India there are a number of socially and economically deprived ethnic groups which are now recognised as scheduled tribes. They belong to different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups and have some unique social and economic characteristics. These tribal communities mostly live in hilly and forested areas which are generally not suitable for settled agriculture. Their mode of life is very much linked with environmental conditions of these areas.

Methodology:

Comparison of Population of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe

Type	S.C	S.T	Percentage
Male	10.3	5.2	15.7%
Female	9.8	5.1	14.9%
All India	20.1	10.3	30.4%

Source: census 2011

Country	Scheduled Caste population 2011			Scheduled Tribe population 2011		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
INDIA	103,535,165	97,842,921	201,378,086	93,819,162	10,461,872	104,281,034

Source: *Statistical Profile Of Scheduled Tribes In India 2013*

(A) The Social Restrictions and Disabilities of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes:

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes suffered for centuries from a number of social disabilities among which the following may be noted.

1. Lowest Status in the Hierarchy:

In the Caste hierarchy the Scheduled Castes are ascribed the lowest status. They are considered to be 'unholy', 'inferior' and 'low' and are looked down upon by the other castes. They have been suffering from the stigma of 'untouchability'. Their very touch is considered to be polluting for the higher caste people.

Hence they have been treated as the servants of the other caste people. The Scheduled Castes have always served the other castes, but the attitude of other castes is of total indifference and contempt. They were kept at a distance from other caste people.

2. Education Disabilities:

These SC/STs were forbidden from taking up to education during the early days. Sanskrit education was denied for them. Public schools and other educational institutions were closed for them. Even today majority of them are illiterate and ignorant.

3. Civic Disabilities:

Prevention from the use of Public Places. For a long time the untouchable castes were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities such as—village wells, ponds, temples, hostels, hotels, schools, hospitals, lecture halls, dharamshalas, choultries, etc.

They were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. Even today they are segregated from others spatially. In South India, restrictions were imposed on the mode of construction of their houses, types of dresses and patterns of their ornamentation.

They were prohibited from covering the upper part of their body. The services of barbers, washermen and tailors were refused to them.

(b) Religious Disabilities:

These SC/STs also suffer from religious disabilities even today. They are not allowed to enter temples in many places. The Brahmins who offer their priestly services to some lower castes, are not prepared to officiate in the ceremonies of the 'untouchable' castes. They do not even bow down to the duties of these 'untouchable' castes.

The Vedic mantras which are considered to be more pure could not be listened to and chanted by the Harijans because of the taboos. They were only permitted to make use of the upanishadic mantras which are considered to be less pure. Burial grounds were also denied for them in many places.

(c) Economic Disabilities: These were economically backward and have been suffering from various economic disabilities also.

1. No Right of Property Ownership: For centuries these were not allowed to have land and business of their own. It is only recently their ownership to the property has become recognized. The propertied people are comparatively less in them. Majority of them depend upon agriculture but only a few of them own land.

2. Selection of Occupations Limited: The Caste system imposes restrictions on the occupational choice of the members. The occupational choice was very much limited for the Sc/Sts. They were not allowed to take up to occupations which were reserved for the upper caste people. They were forced to stick on to the traditional inferior occupations such as—curing hides, removing the human wastes, sweeping, scavenging, oil grinding, tanning, shoemaking, leather works, carrying the dead animals, etc. These occupations were regarded as 'degraded' and 'inferior'.

3. Landless Labourers: Majority of these Communities were today forking as landless labourers. More than 90.1% of the agricultural labourers in India belong to the depressed classes which include the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. More than 77.1% of the Sc/Sts were workers in rural areas are agricultural labourers.

A large number of Sc/Sts families are in debts. About 64.1% of the agricultural labour households of the Scheduled Castes were indebted during 1956-57 as against 45.1% in 1950-51. The average accumulated debt per household increased from Rs. 47 in 1950-51 to Rs. 88 in 1956-57. Their indebtedness is increasing day by day. The Harijans/Tribes are economically exploited by the upper caste people. Even today they are the lowest paid workers; some of them continue to suffer as bonded labourers at the hands of the higher caste people.

(d) Political Disabilities: The untouchables hardly participated in the political matters. They were not given any place in the politics, administration and the general governance of India, they were not allowed to hold any public post.

Political rights and representation were denied for them. Under the British rule, they were given the right to vote for the first time. After independence equal political opportunities and rights have been provided for the Harijans/Tribes also. Politically, these Communities are yet to become an organized force.

(A) The Social Restrictions and Disabilities of the Scheduled tribes: The History Of land alienation among the tribes began during British colonialism in India when the British interfered in the tribal region for the purpose of

exploiting natural resources. Coupled with this tribal lands were occupied by moneylenders, zaminadar and traders by advancing them loans etc.

Welfare of Scheduled castes (SC), Scheduled tribes (ST)

In terms of Articles 341 and 342 of the constitution, the President in consultation with the Governor of a state specifies the castes or, tribes to include in the schedule, or tribes. People belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes together constitutes over **24 percent of the total population of India**. It is an irony, that despite social and economic success, India has such a large number of historically disadvantaged people.

1. Discrimination; Article 13 forbids discrimination against any citizen on grounds of race, religion, caste etc, but constitutionalists special provisions made by the state for the advancement of socially or educationally backward classes i.e. the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In other words special benefits on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes cannot be struck down by the courts as being violative of the right to equality.

2. Article 16 of the Indian constitution confer on citizens' equal right in matters of employment under the state. But the state is fully within its rights to make special provisions for the employment of persons belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

3. Article 29 guarantee that all citizens have **equal rights** of admission in state or, state-aided educational institutions. But this does not prevent the state from making special provisions for the admissions of students belonging to the backward classes, i.e. the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Reservation: In central-government funded higher education institutions, 22.5% of available seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students (**7.5% for STs, 15% for SCs**). This **reservation** percentage has been raised to 49.5% by including an additional 27% **reservation** for OBCs.

Article 335:- provides that consistent with the efficiency of the services, members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be appointed in the services of the union and the state governments. Indeed seats are often kept reserved for such candidates.

The President is empowered to appoint a special officer to keep vigil over the interests of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The central government has the power to issue directives to the states for the execution of schemes beneficial to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The constitution of India further enjoins that the ministers of certain specific states must have a minister in charges of welfare of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Again though every Indian may move freely and acquire property anywhere in India, restrictions may be imposed by the state to prevent alienation of tribal property. In a bid to 'abolish untouchability', Hindu religious establishments have been thrown open to all Hindus.

Laws: The Government of India has enacted several laws for welfare of backward classes:

- The Untouchability Practices Act, 1955,
- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Commissions: The following commissions were formed for the welfare of backward classes:

- National Commission for Scheduled Castes
- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Conclusion: Thus, the constitution of India grants elaborate privileges to the backward classes such as Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes. But such privileges cause much political tension. Evidently such privileges cannot be the permanent feature of a polity. A time must come when India will be a society without privileges.

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