



# INEQUALITY TO INCLUSION OF THE SCHEDULE CASTES IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD IN ODISHA

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**Abstract:** The atrocities, discrimination and oppression of the Schedule Caste of Odisha are not a new phenomenon. Hence, for the capacity building of the SC and to enable them to come out of the poverty trap, apart from livelihood sustaining measures, in an era of globalisation, strengthening of public health care facilities for SC needs foremost attention. The hypothesis question addressed is if the society and government join hands to educate schedule castes and make them self-dependent then the present challenges of 'Roti, Kapada and Makaan' can be overcome by good education, good health, regular income and improved quality of life. The Universe of study was 9 villages selected by random sampling from a list of the predominantly schedule caste populated villages in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar. This study was designed to examine the socio-economic status of the sample villages with the objective of developing a deeper understanding of the key social uses and dynamics in the project area. A pilot study was conducted in the districts before going to the field with interview schedules. The aim of the exercise was to let the communities know that they are an integral part of the journey of development. Focus Group Discussions were also held in these dwelling places to gather information orally as they are an excellent way to investigate illiterate population that might be excluded from regular survey analysis. From the Primary data collection process, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected after it was cross checked for authentication. The major findings of the study are quite revealing. The human development indicators shows that since the time of independence positive improvements were quite visible but there are many milestones yet to be achieved. The study concludes empowerment of the schedule caste, through various developing programmes particularly in line with the Four E's education employment, employability and entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** *sustainability, livelihood, gender inequality, women's empowerment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi, the maker of our country observed that, "supposing if a person has come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry he must know that all that wealth does not belong to him, what belongs to him is the right to an honorable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of the wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community." [1] Such were the thoughts of great men who led our country to freedom though we are still bound by the great divide in our society which is splitting our nation into petty groups believing in different ideologies. Societal growth and economic growth are intertwined and must develop simultaneously. The Directive Principles of State Policy in our Republican Constitution has even considered it to be the aims and objects of the state and attenuation of it should be in view of

'ideal of socio-economic justice'. The concept now encompasses "concerns that go well beyond improvements in growth, income and include improvement in health and nutrition, education environmentally safe living conditions, and reduction in gender and income inequalities." [2] In the recent years, the Inclusive growth approach is the thrust area of the United Nations, the *World Bank* and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). On the basis of eight Millennium Development Goals, the ADB has worked out strategies for the inclusive growth of developing Asian countries [3]. Today there seems to be a universal consensus that the ultimate objective of rural development is to improve the quality of life of rural people. This makes it essential to go beyond the income-related factors such as prices, production, and productivity to a range of non-income factors that influence quality of life and hence inclusiveness. If this growth is sustainable and broad based then the country would be on the path of the Inclusive development. Acknowledging this, the Bruntland Report (1987) defines the three pillars of sustainable development as economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance. Thus, "Inclusive growth" is the crucial mantra in the context of rising inequality currently. The Government's economic survey 2014-15, mentions about regional, social and general disparities in development. It further mentions that all regions of the state have not received the fruits of development in an equitable manner. Several studies and concurrent evaluations conducted in the past to evaluate the impact of various govt programmes have revealed that they have not yielded satisfactory outcome in meeting the programmes objectives. In spite of the concerted efforts made by both the Central and State Governments, the pace of development in different states of the country and among the different districts in the State has remained skewed and non-uniform, further widening the regional disparity and imbalance.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

This study was conducted with the aims and objectives of developing a deeper understanding of the key social issues and dynamics in the project area especially in respect of the micro-dynamics of poverty and social exclusion, livelihood, institutions, the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), gender and poverty eradication. It identifies critical achievements as well as significant failings in the aforesaid areas. It points out some of the lessons learnt in the last 51 years of the working of the Constitution and highlights factors that have constrained the pace of Odisha's socio-economic progress. The paper finally raises some key issues and identifies critical areas for action that may help the state realise and fulfill its constitutional commitments. Even within the state, caste and region-wide differences in the living conditions are observed.

## METHODOLOGY:

In this research Need Assessments, Case Studies, Impact Assessment Studies related to projects / programmes and Focus Group Discussions exclusively with women groups on gender issues have been undertaken at Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats and Blocks / ULB levels, primarily for the assessment of needs, prioritization of activities and to measure the impact of various sectors and flagship programmes. The strength of this research lays in the detailed intersectoral analysis and the development of methodological tools as part of this poverty of the Schedule Caste at the state and local level, as well as policy and operational research work. I have tried to highlight emerging issues related to constraints therein. This study was conducted with the objectives of developing a deeper understanding of the key social issues and dynamics in the project area especially in respect of the micro-dynamics of poverty and social exclusion, livelihood, institutions, the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), gender and poverty eradication. Even within the state, caste and region-wide differences in the living conditions are observed. About eighty per cent of the rural families were leading a painful life in the state. The purpose behind choosing the villages near Bhubaneswar was to know the plight and problems of the respondents who are residing in the close proximity of the state capital. Firstly, a list of the predominantly schedule caste populated villages in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar was made. The villages selected were:

- 1.(Benupur, Jankoti, Beruhan, Korkor, Salijanga) belonging to Jankoti, Patsara Gram Panchayat. Tehsil- Jagatsinghpur, District -Jagatsinghpur.
- 2.(Chakradharpur ,Jenapur, Endalba) Gram Panchayat - Dharmasala .Tehsil-District – Jajpur.
- 3.(Purunakatak,Saradhapur,Tileswar,Tukulunda) Gram Panchayat Purunakatak,Saradhapur,Tileswar, Tukulunda . Tehsil - Harabhanga, District –Boudh.
- 4.(Bhitarandhari,Muhan,Nuagaon),GramPanchayat - Bhitarandhari,Muhan Nuagaon .Tehsil -Ersama , District – Jagatsingpur.
5. The other villages selected were Narsinghpur in the Sadar subdivision of Cuttack district and Nuapatna in the Bhubaneswar subdivision of Puri district.
6. In Puri, the village Khondia Bondha and Sarbapada village was selected.

The method adopted was observation and informal questioning. This has been studied within a framework of the functioning of selected social and related supportive sectors at the state and District levels (viz. health, drinking water supply, education, sanitation, irrigation, transportation and communication), to support income generating activities

etc. Out of this list, nine villages were selected by random sampling basis to avoid bias. A total of one hundred families were interviewed and the spokesman of each family was interviewed. The result so obtained was analyzed by means of simple statistical methods. The methods and strategies adopted in the field investigation were necessarily exploratory. The methods of study are:

- (a) Analysis of documentary data – The availability, quality, and sources of data were unknown at the outset, and a certain amount of iteration was required between the initial research questions and what could realistically be achieved within the time available.
- (b) Collection of field data through unstructured interview and observation. Limited information was available from secondary sources (particularly village studies) for certain; discrete aspects of the research for e.g. land fragmentation, tenancy, or encroachment on commons. The villages studied were selected on the basis of a poverty profile of each of the districts.
- (c) Social status of the people defined according to the concentrations of scheduled castes. These studies facilitated the identification of the most deprived sections of society for poverty alleviation intervention, focusing on the gaps in state provided services. <sup>[4]</sup> For example, villages (identified with an inadequate number of schools or inadequate sources of drinking water would require prioritization for resource allocation. Other areas of high deprivation would require income generating programs to enhance incomes. Areas with a high concentration of schedule castes would warrant a higher resource allocation. The facilities and services were evaluated on the basis of their availability, accessibility and adequacy in absolute numbers for the target population. It is important to be clear about the limitations of this pilot study. It was not considered desirable to administer a formal structured questionnaire within a statistically rigorous sampling frame. Rather semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual informants and focus groups, based on a checklist of research questions. Participatory diagramming methods were also used on occasion. The data reported are considered to be trustworthy as it was cross-checked from diverse informants and research methods. Such ‘triangulation’ is one of the principal means of assuring data quality when using participatory learning methods. The Principal limitation of the methodology adopted is that, owing to the short time available it was not always possible to probe variations as systematically as, one would have liked, with the attendant risk that an impression of greater uniformity is conveyed than is in fact the case.

## Education and literacy

Education is a tripolar process which revolves around the students, the teachers and the environment in our society to create awareness among the people. Preparation to placing a monitor to effectively measure the ingress of education in a given society, one must reckon with the degree of educational achievements of disadvantaged section and the factors influencing it. Parents in the rural areas aspire for a better life for their children and are demanding education for them. They recognize the importance of education for both boys and girls. It is this demand from the people and the requirement of overall development that is putting the pressure on government for an overhauling of the education system to ensure accessibility and efficiency. The number of beneficiaries covered from the Central Assistance under Pre – matric scholarship for Scheduled Caste students studying in class IX and X during 2014-15 to 2017-18 for the state of Odisha shows that in Odisha in the year 2015-16 the capital amount released was Rs 5440.43 Cr. Out of this 2,30,920 were beneficiaries. In the year 2016-17 the capital amount released was 3140.88 crores and the number of beneficiaries was 1,39,595. Education is generally determined by the amount of time, money, and resources that are necessary to obtain certain results. Hence, raising the quality and scale of innovations in education will positively affect the whole society. Education not only needs new ideas and inventions that shatter the performance expectations of today's status quo, these new solutions must also 'scale' that is grow large enough, to serve millions of students and teachers. The literacy rate of the SC, State wise and Sex wise rural data of 2011 shows that SC Male literacy in Odisha is 78.5 % while female literacy is 57.6 %. The data proves that the Scheduled Caste literacy in Odisha is above Bihar and Jharkhand but it is below West Bengal and Kerala. It is noticed that the drop out rates of the students in Odisha were on the higher side. Hence enrolment rates do not give the true picture of the existing situation. The retention rates are a reliable indicator of the situation thus rendering enrolment rates worthless. Two-third of children who are admitted to the First Standard does not survive beyond the Eighth Standard. But the midday-meal subsequently introduced by the Government seems to have curbed the drop out number to a certain extent in primary schools. Literacy should not only have a wide base at lower levels of education but should extend its base at higher levels of education. Only then will the value additions to human resource make for effective empowerment. What is interesting here is that while we are still undecided as to what to do with our struggling schools and universities and how to integrate them, other states are already benefiting from innovations and have in a short time successfully built world-class education systems. Lack of electricity at primary and secondary schools creates considerable obstacles towards escaping poverty, and correlates with many factors

that contribute directly towards it. No wonder electrified schools have better staff retention, outperform non-electrified schools on key educational indicators, and can in some case enable broader social and economic development of communities.

## Status of women

The study also critically examines the existing status of the Schedule Caste women in Odisha as they are very poor and impoverished and have very limited livelihood opportunities making them highly vulnerable. Due to unemployment and under-employment, large number of members of Scheduled Castes as also people of other communities migrate to distant places in the country (sometimes within the State itself) in search of employment. According to Dube (1996, 1997) and Chakraborty (2003) women's subordination and vulnerability in India is grounded in Hindu Caste practices and Patriarchal kinship practices which put women in a highly disadvantaged position in their everyday lives.<sup>[5]</sup> In times of disaster this subordinate position increases the likelihood of women's vulnerability to environmental hazards (Emerson, 1998; Cannon, 2002)<sup>[6]</sup>.

The process of migration has a differential impact on women- whether they are left behind in the village in case their husbands migrate or in case they too migrate along with the males. In case of the former, the women-headed households are dominated by their 'triple role' burden (productive, reproductive and community work) and constitute the poorest of the poor in those households where the mother is the sole adult income-earner supporting many dependent children (Moser, 1993; Panda, 1997). They are faced with the multiple tasks of not only running the household but also looking after the family, children and the aged. Exploitation of the women by the money lenders and other powerful and dominant persons lead to a situation where the women are most vulnerable. Due to low skill set, working as a casual labour and pursuing primitive agriculture on marginal landholdings, single source of income for them is never sufficient to bail them out of poverty. It is important to instill confidence, provide training based on local resources and tap the inner potential of these women. Skill building is therefore a key focus area for national development. Involvement by governments, employers in public and private enterprises, trade unions from the sector as well as the education and training system – including its teachers, trainers and instructors – are required to make vocational education and training provision more effective. Effective social dialogue, offers a great opportunity to address the challenges of employment growth; changing demographic profiles within the workplace; sustainable practice; skills development; and decent work for the rural people. The government must nurture an eco system

where the economy is primed for growth; and growth promotes all round development; where development is employment generating; and employment is enabled by skills; where skills are synced with production; and production is benchmarked to quality.

Author Jane Hodges Aeberhard, pointed out that Affirmative Action programmes and policies are designed to provide access and equal opportunity to women and minorities in academics and labour <sup>[7]</sup>. Women and youth are the potential change makers in addressing the vicious cycle of poverty. Hence there is an immediate need to create a conscious group of youths to connect through networking to contribute in bringing together marginalized community and train them to take responsibilities of their own communities. The women needs to be motivated to organize themselves into Self Help Group and with small savings and support, start some income generating programmes like bag making, soft toys, basket making, incense making, phenyl making etc. The sheer expansion in the number of WSHGs necessitates that decentralization takes place. It is necessary that intermediate levels are created and supported to carry out such a task. Such levels can be at the Govt. level - each district could have a trained and designated officer to look at the WSHG activities. Convergence of the WSHGs and elected PRI members in the village level has to be worked out for mutually benefiting situation .When a WSHG is graded and found not in the growth trajectory, a partnership with a CSO/ NGO is needed so that the WSHG can be strengthened. The sheer expansion in the number of WSHGs necessitates that decentralization takes place. It is necessary that intermediate levels are created and supported to carry out such a task. Such levels can be at the Govt. level - each district could have a trained and designated officer to look at the WSHG activities. Convergence of the WSHGs and elected PRI members in the village level has to be worked out for mutually benefiting situation. Since 2001 the Government of Odisha has embarked on a campaign named Mission Shakti to integrate all WSHGs in the State. It aims to provide uniform guidelines, training of personnel, training materials, disseminate best practices. Mission Shakti also aims on strengthening all WSHGs by giving them capacity building support, credit linkage and by federating them. WSHGs are usually informal groups whose members i.e. the women have a common perception of the need and importance towards collective action. These groups promote savings among themselves and use the pooled resources to meet the urgent needs. They rotate this common pooled resource within the members with a very small rate of interest. The number of members in a WSHG normally ranges from 10 to 20. Certain entrepreneurial opportunities like setting up Agarbatti manufacturing unit with hand holding support will bring transformational change in the rural society. The Status of the Schedule Caste women in Odisha are largely poor labourers and small holders, hence market accessibility for their products, circumventing intermediate levels of exploitation, are a necessary condition for

providing requisite and efficient outlet of goods produced by the large masses of primary producers in these poorer communities . Odisha has no dearth of receiving funds from the government for the welfare of the rural poor. It is heartening to know that the sector wise allocation of Annual plan of Department of Social Justice and Empowerment during the year 2015-16 for the Scheduled Castes is Rs 5,562 .58 crore as against the total allocation of Rs 7,750.00 crores. The Sector wise Allocation of Annual Plan 2015-16 shows that the target group of Schedule Caste has a plan sanction of Rs 5128 .50 Cr which is 79 .30 % . Out of this the maximum amount has been sanctioned for the educational development of the SC which is around 2830.88 Crores, which is 60.9 % followed by by Economic Development, Social Empowerment, Rehabilitation and Manpower Development.

Target Group	Edu. Devt	Eco. Devt	Social Empowerment	Rehab & Manpower Devt	Others	Total in Cr
SC	2830.88	1677.68	149.75	470.19	0.00	5128.50
	60.9 %	27.8 %	3.3 %	7.6 %	0.4 %	

The target group wise distribution of plan outlay of Dept of social justice and empowerment for the Scheduled caste for the year 2018-19 shows that Rs 5562.58 crores has been sanctioned which is around 71.78%.

TARGET GROUP - WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PLAN OUTLAY OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT FOR THE FY 2018-19 (Rs. in Cr)

TARGET GROUP - WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PLAN			
Sl. No.	Target Group	Plan	% to total
1	SC	5562.58	71.78

Source: Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Vincent Ostrom pointed out that ‘self-government’ is the key to ending the painful gap between the wealthy and the poor. Buckminster Fuller who is an architect, writer, and a futurist, said. “To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” Thus if we’re going to have any hope of building a world where poverty is reduced and hundreds of millions of people can have an opportunity for a better life, we have to do more than just fight the existing system. We have to do more than just take money from successful people and hand it to the poor. And we have to do more than *just* help people in poverty through existing models of charity or ministry. We can only defeat the coercive state by building a new model that is so desirable and so successful that people around the world will clamor for it.



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