



# Poverty and Condition of Employment among Social Groups in India

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## ABSTRACT

Poverty is primarily a social problem in India which has its historical root in social structure. Poverty among socially marginalised groups is proportionately very high which is inferred from their high engagement in the primary sector, casual works and unorganised sectors with low wages. Development induced displacement and land acquisition have left them with depeasantization and casual works. Constitutionally provided affirmative action and other government steps towards poverty alleviation and employment generation have partially solved their concerns. This paper examines the current situation of poverty and employment condition among socially marginalised groups, specifically among schedule caste and schedule tribes. It focuses on the causes of their deprivation and marginalisation. It also reflects the impact of government programmes and policies under inclusive development.

**Keywords:** Affirmative action, depeasantization, development, displacement, poverty

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Poverty is one of the cores and prior challenge in the development process of the nation. High poverty levels reflect poor quality of life, deprivation, malnutrition, illiteracy and low human development. These all characteristics attach to the marginalised and vulnerable social groups. In other words, poverty in India is a social problem. Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST), which constitute about a quarter of the population, have a disproportionate rate of the poverty level.

This is a historical phenomenon, emerge since the inception of the Hindu caste system, although the magnitude of deprivation and marginalisation are diminishing among them but with the slower and unequal rate. Scheduled castes are a constitutionally declared collection of castes, which has suffered from the practice of untouchability. Schedule tribes are identified on the basis of certain criteria such as primitive traits,

distinctive culture, geographical isolation and general backwardness. However, the terms 'scheduled caste' and 'scheduled tribe' are nowhere defined in the constitution of India. They include more than four hundred castes and tribes respectively, with a great cultural heterogeneity (Singh 1993). The former "untouchables" were considered to be at the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy and were not part of the "Varna system" quadruple with Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The tribal people known as "Adivasis" meaning people of the earth are not social in the context of the Hindu hierarchy. Schedule caste historically suffered from social stigma due to untouchability and was therefore excluded from society, although physically, they have always been a part of society. Tribes on the other side were physically or geographically excluded, but not against any social stigma and are not socially excluded. This historically developed different form

of exclusion has very important implications for the present nature and causes of poverty in these groups (Mutatkar 2005, p. 3).

The tribal population in India, though a numerically small minority, represents an enormous diversity of groups. They vary among themselves in respect of language and linguistic traits, ecological settings in which they live, physical features, size of the population, the extent of acculturation, dominant modes of making a livelihood, level of development and social stratification. They are present in almost each and every part of the country. The tribal population of the country, as per the 2011 census, constitute 8.6% of the total. A majority of tribal groups work in the primary sector and are heavily dependent on agriculture either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers.

At the same time, a number of scheduled tribes no longer follow their traditional occupations and work as labourers on plantations or in mines and factories. Displacement and enforced migration have also led to an increasing number of scheduled tribes working as contract labourers in the construction industry and as domestic workers in major cities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs report 2014, p. 36). The main objective of the development plan was economic growth with equity and justice since after independence. The government has been trying to provide entitlements and productive endowments among the poor, in general, and among the socially marginalised and economically disadvantaged sections of the society (SCs/STs) in particular through an integrated approach. The thrust of rural development programmes was to make a direct attack on poverty by implementing wage employment and self-employment programmes and providing education, health care services, rural housing, drinking water, sanitation, etc., so that these groups come out from the vicious cycle of poverty. The available information and data show that the recent economic growth has not been trickled down properly which has resulted in mass poverty, low income, and deprivation (Biradar 2012, p. 1).

According to a ministry of tribal affairs report, almost sixty per cent of the forest cover of the country is found in tribal areas. Three states namely Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand alone account for 70% of India's coal

reserves, 80% of its high-grade iron ore, 60% of its bauxite and almost 100% of its chromite reserves. Many of the districts from these states have large forest coverage. But unfortunately, much of this forest land has been diverted for mining purposes resulting in environmental degradation, loss of livelihood, and displacement of tribal communities. Many of these mineral-bearing areas are also affected by the on-going conflict between the maoists and the state. Dams have been another source of displacement for tribes since Independence, with India being one of the largest dam-building nations in the world. Given that the Scheduled Tribes constitute about eight per cent of the country's population, they are clearly disproportionately represented in the number of displaced persons (Ministry of Tribal Affairs report 2014, p. 49). It is paradoxical to say that mineral rich areas, dominated by tribals, is the poorest and deprive in almost all the indicators.

### **Poverty and Deprivation**

The poor economic condition of socially marginalised groups namely SC and ST has its historical root in the social exclusion where SC was excluded and discriminated from the caste system while ST was physically excluded. Inequality has been commonly seen since a long time. After the adoption of draconian new economic policies which open and liberalise the market for the capitalists, inequality further perpetuated to flourish in India. Between the periods 2000 and 2014, the percentage share of the top decile in total household wealth increased from 65.9 to 74%.

The share of the top 1% in the total wealth of households was even more drastic which has increased from 36.80% in 2000 to 49% in 2014 (Patnaik 2014). Land acquisition and displacement have been proved to be a major cause of poverty among the tribal in the country. The indigenous people have a special relationship with the land and for them; it is not only a means of production but also a symbolic and emotional meaning as the repository for ancestral remains, clan origin sites and other sacred features important to their religious system. Land acquisition for the purpose of starting a commercial project in tribal areas has been a difficult nut to crack right from the very beginning (Hauser

2005). Displacement of these indigenous groups has been taking place in the form of the mining industry and urbanisation. A large area of agricultural land belonging to indigenous people is being laid waste because of haphazard mining. After the land acquisition and displacement, compensation and rehabilitation policy adopted by the government are unjust and inequitable. Such model of development is that the local communities became passive beneficiaries of the state's development policy instead of being active partners. There is no perception of improvement on the part of the local communities (Prakash 2010).

Social, political and cultural dispossessions have compelled them to remain vulnerable. Owing to new forces in terms of unjust industrial policies and dominance of ruling class, after economic disruption, the social condition of the indigenous societies is also breaking down. They are losing their traditional social controls and social tension is increasing among them. They are feeling the deprivation of their sense of personal worth and a devaluation of their social identity. In the political sphere, their traditional political institutions are destroyed. They are incorporated into the state and they have to conform to and become integrated with the political institution of the dominant society. The process of disintegration of their traditional cultures is further accelerated by deliberate programmes of integration and assimilation followed by the state to bring the indigenous people to the so called national mainstream.

**Table 1:** Poverty in India (Rural + Urban) (In Per cent)

Social groups	Share in Population in 2011-12	2004-05	2011-12
ST	8.9	60.0	43.0
SC	19.0	50.9	29.4
OBC	44.1	37.8	20.7
FC	28.0	23.0	12.5
ALL	100	37.7	22.0

Source: Arvind Panagariya and Vishal More: 2013

There is a non declared polity to suppress the language of the indigenous people and to impose on them the dominant language of the area. Proletarianisation of indigenous people are taking place through the

process of disassociation of the indigenous people from their subsistent and self-sufficient economy which have destroyed and turned them into free workers, independent from and deprived of the material means of their own reproduction. The conversion of self-sufficient farmers into cheap wage labourers resulted in the spread of capitalist relations of production (Areeparampil 2010, p. 161-166).

### Poverty among Disadvantage Groups

In the Indian context, poverty is largely a social question arises from caste conflict and further caused by politics played by certain interest groups. In order to hold power, assets and resources some upper sections of society influence the government policies and programmes in such a way which keep the people of lower caste vulnerable. The social groups (SCs and STs) suffer from unfair social exclusion and unfair inclusion with discriminated access to rights and entitlements, which resulted in the denial of equal rights and opportunities and induce more poverty among them. Unfair exclusion means complete denial of certain groups from the access to their rights and entitlements while unfair inclusion means to involve them in providing access to rights and entitlements but with unequal terms and condition or different treatment. Such discriminations take place due to two factors: Market institution and non market institution. Market institution discriminates in forms of landlessness or marginal landholder, lack of access to credit, factor inputs like the higher price paid to fertilisers and irrigation and labour market discrimination like low wages, denial of jobs. In the context of non market institutions, discrimination takes place in access to education, public and private health services, access to CPRs (common property resources in the village), access to basic amenities and access to participation in the village panchayat (Thorat 2010).

Poverty in India clearly reflects the economic inequality which is attached to social inequality. A small minority section of social group holds the abundance of economic power while a majority section, discriminated and deprived of innumerable factors, live in poverty and difficulties. In table 1, the poverty rate is shown by social groups. Forward caste (FC) or upper caste, who

has been enjoying all the social, economic and political privileges since long ago constitutes only 28% of the total population but poverty rate among them is the lowest (12.5%). In the last one decade, the poverty rate has declined faster among this group from 23% to 12.5%. Other backward class (OBC), another social group, stay in the middle of FC and schedule caste (SC) and schedule tribe (ST). They are neither so deprived like SC and ST nor so affluent like FC. The poverty rate among SC and ST, which constitutes about 19 and 8.9% of the total population respectively, is 29.4 and 43% respectively. The reduction in the poverty rate, which has to be the fastest, is also the slowest among this group.

**Table 2:** Poverty in Rural areas (In per cent)

Social groups	Share in Population in 2011-12	2004-05	2011-12
ST	11.1	62.3	45.3
SC	20.8	53.5	31.5
OBC	45.0	39.8	22.7
FC	23.0	27.1	15.5
ALL	100	41.8	25.4

Source: Arvind Panagariya and Vishal More: 2013

As poverty is a social problem or a common phenomenon in India, hence wherever these groups reside, whether, in rural or urban or any state, poverty level will also be high. The population of SC and ST largely reside in rural areas hence poverty level is also higher in rural areas. Poverty level among such social groups in rural areas is shown in table 2. The poverty rate among ST is 45.3% in the year 2011-12 while among SC it is 31.5%. The overall poverty rate is also higher in rural areas. Such a pitiable situation of rural areas, particularly of SC and ST, can be illustrated with the negligence and dominance feudal elites. Firstly, the fruit of economic growth has not reached to rural areas in a proportionate way due to the negligence of agriculture sector and dominance on the service sector, which contribute a large chunk of national income. Secondly, even if the rural area is focused, the dominance of landlords and feudal elites, primarily belong to the upper caste, use a large part of the facilities provided for the development. Finally, in order to protect the interest of the weaker section of

the society, the government takes several measures to protect and promote their interest through affirmative action and inclusive development, only some section or sub group within these groups get benefits which further create inequality within the group. Most of the population from these groups are involve in agriculture labour and cultivate small agricultural land with barely any infrastructure, irrigation, and technological facilities. Such a vicious cycle of poverty resulted into distress push migration into cities where a majority of them have to work as an unskilled casual labour or wage labour which hardly pull out them from poverty.

**Table 3:** Poverty in Urban areas (In Per cent)

Social groups	Share in Population in 2011-12	2004-05	2011-12
ST	3.5	35.5	24.1
SC	14.6	40.6	21.7
OBC	41.6	30.6	15.4
FC	40.3	16.1	8.1
ALL	100	25.7	13.7

Source: Arvind Panagariya and Vishal More: 2013

Table 3 shows the poverty level among social groups in urban areas. Urban poverty has its background in rural poverty which forces to migrate people in urban areas in search of works. Most of the people from SC and ST group are force to migrate into urban areas where they have to work as casual labour. Urban poverty rate stands at 13.7% while among FC it is only 8.1%. Poverty among the ST is the highest with 24.1% and SC has 21.7% of the poverty rate.

**Table 4:** Percentage distribution of number of operational holdings (Group Wise)

Category	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Large
All	67.10	17.91	10.04	4.25	0.70
SC	77.47	14.41	5.88	1.93	0.31
ST	53.90	23.97	14.88	6.33	0.92

Source: Agricultural Census 2010-11

Land is not only considered as an epicentre of production but also a symbol of social status in rural areas. In table

4, inequality in the operational holding of land among social groups is shown. Schedule tribe has always been holding land for a long period. Land and forest are their dwellers and God. So, they still hold proportionately a large part of land compared to other groups. They have a low proportion of marginal cultivators and a high proportion of large cultivators. The actual disparity is with the SC. About 77% of total cultivators are marginal while 14% are small cultivators or about 92% of SC cultivators are marginal or small. This simply implies that their income from the farm is also very low. Only 0.31% of total cultivators from SC households have large operation compared to 0.70% from all other groups.

Table 5 shows the distribution of households by size class of land possessed among social groups. ST which has historically been holding land still holds relatively large part of the land. Land holding size (less than 2 hectares) is higher among ST than FC. Among SC, it is also as high as FC. After this size of land holding (more than 2 hectares), a number of people hold land among FC is higher than SC and ST. In the land size class (2.01-4.00 hectare), others, primarily consist of the upper caste, 87 per 1000 person holds land while among ST and SC it is 82 and 22 people only and this further declines in the next land size class (4.01 hectare and above). Only 18 and 8 person per 1000 from ST and SC group respectively holds land while among others, it is 43 per 1000.

**Table 5:** Distribution of households by size class of land possessed among social groups (Rural)

Size class of land possessed (Hectares)	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Less than 0.001	49	35	27	37	34
0.001-0.004	122	149	108	87	113
0.005-0.40	357	596	479	467	487
0.41-1.00	210	128	171	163	165
1.01-2.00	162	62	117	114	110
2.01-4.00	82	22	67	87	64
4.01 & Above	18	8	32	43	28
All	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Source: NSS Report No.563, 68<sup>th</sup> Round, 2011-12

Over 80% of scheduled tribes work in the primary sector against 53% of the general population, primarily

as cultivators. However, the number of STs who were cultivators declined from over 68% to 45% in 2001 whereas the number of tribal agricultural labourers increased from about 20% to 37%, demonstrating increasing landlessness among tribal. This trend has intensified, as can be seen in data from the 2011 Census. It is further estimated that, in the last decade, about 3.5 million tribal people are leaving agriculture and agriculture-related activities to enter the informal labour market (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2014: 36).

### Housing and Household Amenities

Housing or shelter is one of the basic necessities of human development which also determine the quality of life. The government policies have failed to accommodate the gradually rising up of the population in particularly in urban areas. In the rural areas, the number of homeless households has remained virtually stagnant in spite of several interventions made by the state to enhance access to housing through some of the projects like Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) or the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana (PMGAY). There are basically three problems. First, there are millions of household who do not have shelter and have to live under the open sky. Secondly, those who have shelter but the condition and quality of households are poor and pathetic and finally, even if those have *pucca* or durable house, do not have proper household amenities like safe drinking water, toilet facilities, and electricity (Sinha 2014).

In table 6 and 7, household amenities and access to infrastructure are shown. It clearly shows the poor and dilapidate condition of housing and household amenities among SC and ST. Only about 22 and 10% of SC and ST households respectively have access to the house with concrete roof compared to about 30% among the non SC/ST households. There is not a large difference between the others and SC households in terms of access to tap water facility and house connected to drainage but quite high with the ST households mainly because of their isolated inhabitant and proper drinking water facility has failed to establish in those areas. Only 17 and 9% of SC and ST households respectively have LPG or PNG facility or it means a large chunk of SC/ST households depend on firewood for cooking which has gradually

been depleting due to deforestation and encroachment by the outsiders or commercial traders. High incidence of poverty among the SC/ST is also reflected in less access to other assets like telephone, mobile, television, car etc. There is a high incidence of financial exclusion among STs while it is relatively less among SCs. About half of the SC and 55% of the ST households are unable to avail banking facilities which also hinder them from the access to formal financial institutions (Bhagat 2013).

**Table 6:** Household Living Conditions by SC and ST Status, India

Amenities	Total	SC	ST
Electricity as source of lighting	67.2	59.0	51.7
House with concrete roof	29.6	21.9	10.1
Connected to drainage	51.1	46.6	22.7
Tap water	43.5	41.2	24.4
Latrine facility within premises	46.9	33.8	22.6
With bathroom	42.0	27.7	17.2
LPG/PNG	28.5	16.9	9.2

Source: Census of India 2011

**Table 7:** Household Assets among SC and ST Households, India

Assets	Total	SC	ST
Availing banking services	58.7	50.9	44.9
Telephone	4.0	3.0	1.9
Mobile	53.2	47.5	31.1
Television	76.7	39.1	21.8
Computer /laptop	9.4	6.4	5.2
Scooter /motorcycle/moped	21.0	12.0	8.9
Car/van/jeep	4.7	1.8	1.6
None of the assets including radio/transistor/cycle	17.8	22.6	37.3

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 8 shows the economic deprivation among social groups on various indicators. More than half (54.67%) of the households from SC earn their income from manual casual labour. Other, comprise of upper caste and OBC, have access to irrigation facility hence a large part of having irrigated land (28.93), while among SC and ST it is only 17.47 and 18.10% respectively. They have to mainly depend on the rainfall for irrigation. There is less than 5% household with a monthly income of more than

10000 rupees among SC and ST compared to about 10%. There is also a difference in households with salaried government and private jobs among SC and ST and other social groups which create an income gap and further economic inequality.

**Table 8:** Economic deprivation among different social groups (in per cent)

Deprivation indicators	SC	ST	Others
Landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour	54.67	35.62	34.39
Households with Destitute/living on alms	0.40	0.23	0.39
Total households owning irrigated land	17.47	18.10	28.93
Households owning mechanized three/four wheeler agricultural equipments	1.95	1.61	5.07
Household without any phone	31.67	57.37	22.38
Monthly income of highest earning household member is > 10000	4.69	4.48	9.82
Households with salaried job in government	3.96	4.38	5.73
Households with salaried job in Private	2.42	1.48	4.19

Source: Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011

**Table 9:** Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) in Social Groups in Rupees (2011-12)

Regions	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Rural	1122	1252	1439	1719	1430
Urban	2193	2028	2275	3242	2630

Source: NSSO, 68<sup>th</sup> Round 2011-12

In table 9, monthly per capita expenditure in both rural and urban areas of different social groups is shown. MPCE is very much reflecting the income status and economic well being of the households. MPCE of SC and ST in both rural and urban areas is below the national average (₹ 1430 and 2630). MPCE of ST in the rural area is the lowest while SC in the urban area. Such a low expenditure also reflects their inaccessibility to basic necessities to improve their living standard.

### Employment Status among Social Groups

Table 10 shows the distribution of households of different social groups by household type in rural areas. It shows that very few households from SC (85 per 1000)

**Table 10:** Per 1000 distribution of households of different social groups by household type (In rural)

Social groups	Self-employed			Regular wage/ Salaries	Casual labour			Other	Total
	Agriculture	Non agriculture	Sub total		Agriculture	Non agriculture	Sub total		
ST	414	81	495	63	245	139	383	59	1000
SC	195	142	337	85	314	213	526	51	1000
OBC	366	163	529	90	196	126	321	59	1000
Others	398	186	584	133	128	83	210	73	1000
All	343	155	498	96	210	135	345	61	1000

Source: NSSO Report No.563, 2011-12

and ST (63 per 1000) hold regular salary jobs compared to 133 per 1000 among other groups. Self employment in both agriculture and non agriculture among socially marginalised group except ST is lower than other groups. In casual labour group in both agriculture and non agriculture, the number of SC and ST per 1000 is higher than aggregate average and much higher than the other group. It simply reflects the deterioration and poor working condition of these groups. Many of the casual labour in agriculture sector from such groups still work as a bonded labour under semi feudal regime. Agrarian relation of these marginalised groups is bounded by the rigid semi feudal system, although have been breaking down in current time but still dominate in rural areas.

**Table 11:** Per thousand distribution of households of different social groups by household type (In urban)

Social groups	Self-employed	Regular wage/salary	Casual labour	Other	All
ST	195	465	180	160	1000
SC	268	440	205	86	1000
OBC	378	376	143	104	1000
Others	369	445	59	126	1000
All	353	417	118	112	1000

Source: NSSO Report No.563, 2011-12

Table 11 shows the pattern of work in urban areas among social groups. It shows that casual work is very high among SC and ST (205 and 180 per 1000). Other social group is higher in self employed activity (369 per 1000) while it is one of the lowest among SC and ST. People with regular salary work are very low among

SC and ST although it shows high in aggregate due to a large number of wage worker from these groups.

The relation between caste and traditional occupation is closely related. The historical background of caste system itself attaches to the occupation. At present, the scene of some particular occupations attaches to a specific caste which is still visible. According to Jodhka, it was both an institution as well as an ideology. Institutionally, "caste" provided a framework for arranging and organizing social groups in terms of their statuses and positions in the social and economic system. As an ideology, caste was a system of values and ideas that legitimized and reinforced the existing structures of social inequality (Jodhka 2010).

Worker population ratio among social groups is shown in table 12. It shows the pattern of workforce among male and female in both rural and urban areas. The workforce ratio in India is very low (386 per 1000) compared to other developing countries. Among ST, total workforce (both rural and urban) is higher among both male and female than the national average. In the rural areas, it is higher than others while in urban, it is lower. Female workforce ratio among these social groups is higher in both rural and urban than other social groups. The high workforce participation rate among SC and ST shows that they need more hands to earn so women also work from these groups to support their family.

Table 13 shows the unemployment rate among social groups. It shows that unemployment rate is the highest among other groups (4.2%) and the lowest in ST (2.1%). The unemployment rate among SC and OBC is 3.1 and 3.4% respectively. The high rate of unemployment rate

**Table 12:** Worker Population Ratios (WPRs) of Various Social Groups on Usual Status (PS+SS)

Social Groups	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
ST	557	364	463	520	192	366	553	346	452
SC	539	262	404	545	172	364	540	242	395
OBC	538	239	391	546	151	356	540	216	382
OTHERS	552	201	382	549	129	349	551	171	368
ALL	543	248	399	546	147	355	544	219	386

Source: NSS Report No.563: 68<sup>th</sup> round, 2015

among others and low among SC and ST do not mean a good sign for deprived section. It can be articulated that they are so much of depriving that cannot remain without any work. So, they get involved in any kind of work which resulted in the low rate of unemployment but a high rate of underemployment.

**Table 13:** The Unemployment Rate (UR) for different social groups based on UPSS approach

Group	SC	ST	OBC	Other
Unemployment Rate	3.1	2.1	3.4	4.2

Source: Labour Bureau, 2015

**Table 14:** Distribution of workers available for 12 months under different social groups based UPSS approach

Social groups	Worked for 12 months	Worked for 6-11 months	Worked for 1-5 months	Did not get any work
SC	52.5	42.9	1.2	3.4
ST	48.2	47.4	2.0	2.4
OBC	60.0	35.2	1.1	3.7
OTHER	70.3	24.6	0.8	4.3

Source: Labour Bureau, 2015

It is obvious that those who are already living with comfortable life or have some means of subsistence, they prefer for a good and standard work otherwise wait for some other work. Those who do not have any means of livelihood, they would not stay leisure rather get involved in any kind of work irrespective of nature of wages and works. Table 14 shows the distribution of workers available for 12 months under different social

groups. In this table, only 3.4 and 2.4% of the total worker from SC and ST group respectively did not get any work in the last 12 months compared to 4.3% among other groups. Percentage of workers from SC and ST social groups are higher than other groups in case of those who work less than 11 months in a year. This trend oppositely shifts in case of those working for 12 months in a year. 70.3% of workers from other groups get work throughout the year while among SC and ST, it stands at 52.5 and 48.2% respectively.

**Wage gaps: discriminatory or merit based**

The international pieces of evidence have very clearly indicates that the social identity of workers does matter in determining their labour market outcomes. In the Indian context, Bharracharjee (1985) tries to assess caste discrimination, over and above “instrumental factors” such as unequal access to education and industrial training, and finds evidence of discrimination in the form of unequal pay for equal work in the modern urban labour market.

**Table 15:** Educated unemployment among disadvantage groups

Level	SC	ST	OBC	General	All
Illiterate	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Primary	1.4	1.3	1.8	2.0	1.7
Secondary	4.9	4.6	3.9	7.7	5.4
Higher Secondary	8.4	7.5	7.1	7.5	7.3
Graduate	11.3	9.3	9.5	9.0	9.4
PG	12.7	2.5	10.5	9.7	10.0
All	3.2	2.7	3.2	5.4	3.8

Source: Labour Bureau



It could be argued that human capital characteristics like education could explain earning differences and that the discrimination against schedule caste begins earlier in unequal access to education. This is so called 'pre-market discrimination' which is almost universally acknowledged. But what is really powerful is the finding of 'in-market discrimination' (Deshpande, 2014, p. 183).

In table 15, which states that unemployment rises with education level to 10% among graduates, and higher still for backward castes. It is interpreted that the illiterate are the poorest, and the poorest simply can't afford to be unemployed, so they do some work, even if they are under-employed. The correlation between low education and low unemployment also explains that socially disadvantaged groups like SCs and have lower unemployment than others, social groups. At the aggregate level, unemployment among SCs is 3.2%, for STs, it is 2.7% and for other it is 5.4%. Among SCs and STs, graduate unemployment is 11.3% and 9.3% respectively while post-graduate unemployment is 12.7% among SCs, while for others; the corresponding figures are 9% and 9.7%. It also shows that at the higher level, their unemployment rate is higher than others.

### Constitutional and Government steps

The reservation of affirmative action has been taken by the constitution to uplift the condition of the weaker section of the society and to establish equality. Article 16 (1) mentions that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. Article 16 (3) says, nothing in this article shall prevent parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office under the Government of, or any local or other authority within, a state or union territory, any requirement as to residence within that state or Union territory prior to such employment or appointment.

Besides fundamental right, there are also some provision provided under directive principle of state policy like article forty six which provides that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

There are many steps, which have been taken by the government to ameliorate their woeful condition since the beginning of five year plan. The first step was taken in the form of community development programme (CDP) in 1952 and since then it started proceeding towards *garibi hatao*, integrated rural development programme (IRDP), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA) programme and Prime Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). These all programmes have not been proved to reduce poverty and providing employment opportunities in an effective and sustainable way, although improved marginally. Owing to lack of political willingness and the lobbies played by a minority group, which includes feudals and elite people, land reform failed to be implemented effectively throughout the country. Social sector expenditure has been declining in recent years which make these groups suffer the most. In the year 2010-11, the total government subsidy was 3.4% of the total GDP including subsidy on food which has to 2.6% in the current year (2015-16). In Budget 2015-16, Dalits have been allocated only ₹ 30,850 crore, while the allocation for Adivasis is only ₹ 19,980 crore. However, according to the SCSP/TSP Guidelines, the SCs should have been allocated 16.6% of the Plan Outlay, which amounts to ₹ 77,236 crore towards the SCSP and the STs should have been allocated 8.6% of the Plan Outlay, which amounts to ₹ 40,014 crore towards the TSP. So, as per this allocation, Dalits have been denied a total of 61% under the SCSP, and Adivasis have been denied a total of 53% under the TSP. The total percentage denied to both SC/STs is a 57% (Divakar 2015).

### Caste and Occupation

The caste as a system of social stratification is essential to understand Indian society. The link between castes and occupations is an important feature. The connection between the caste status and job status could historically be traced, as many castes have traditionally been associated with occupations. The upper caste particularly Brahmin used to perform the role of a priest

while the lowest ranked caste Dalits used to perform the menial tasks. The continued occupational linkage with caste has sustained the caste system (Rahul 2015). Srinivas defines caste, “as a hereditary endogamous localized group having a traditional association with an occupation and is graded in the hierarchy depending on the occupation though agriculture is common (in villages) to all castes from Brahmins to untouchables”. Karve reviews that, association between caste and occupational structure closest by identifying some of the groups of occupational specialists and some caste designations indicating their occupations (Karade, 2009, p. 15). Such stigmatised occupation with particular caste and communities are declining. The recent case of Uttar Pradesh shows that people from OBCs and upper caste are working as *safai karamchari*. Economic considerations, shrinking government jobs, flexible labour laws, and employment crisis in the state have overshadowed the traditional caste hierarchy at work. Because of them, upper castes and OBCs are forced to involve in menial jobs that are traditionally meant to be performed by SCs. They are facing discrimination from the member of their own community after accepting such works (Tripathi 2015).

**Table 16:** Group-wise and Total Representation (in percentage) of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Central Government Service

Group	SCs			STs		
	1970	1990	2011	1970	1990	2011
A	2.36	8.64	11.5	0.4	2.58	4.8
B	3.84	11.29	14.9	0.37	2.39	6.0
C	9.27	15.19	16.4	1.47	4.83	7.7
D	18.09	21.98	23.0	3.59	6.73	6.8

Sources: Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT).

In table 16, it shows the caste hierarchy in central government jobs. In all central government employees, about 18% of them were SC while about 8% were ST. This appears to be fulfilling the mandated norms of 15% SC and 7.5% ST. But there is a hierarchy in rooted in the central government jobs. Among Group A officers, only 11.5% were SC and 4.8% ST. In Group B, the shares were 14.9 and 6%, respectively. In group C, there were

16.4% SC and 7.7% ST. And in Group D, there were 23 SC% and 6.8% ST. Affirmative action has been taken by the government but still it has not been fulfilled equally in each group. The reservation policy in employment has clearly shown a positive impact over the period of time but showing the caste identity associated with stigmatised occupation as well. The composition of SC and ST in each group has been increasing which one hand shows a positive sign because they are getting a government job which provides them sustainability in livelihood and relatively better economic condition while on the other hand it also shows that in lowest group jobs D, about one third of the workforce is alone constituted by the SC and ST compared to merely 16% in group A in the year 2011. In the year 1970, about twenty two per cent of SC/ST were working under group D which has continuously been increasing. This high proportion of SC in Group D is because nearly forty per cent of “*safai karamcharies*” are SC.

## CONCLUSION

Poverty and underemployment are the major constraints in the path of development. Informalisation of work further deteriorates the working condition of SC and ST. Agricultural labour and casual labour in rural and urban areas respectively are largely contributed by the people from schedule caste and schedule tribe, who are left with meagre wage, uncertain works and without social security. Affirmative action has promoted them to get government jobs but in an unfair way, means, they mostly work in lower grade, unlike upper caste who are involved in executive, managerial and top decision making level. These groups are deprived of basic facilities like access to safe drinking water, electricity, housing and other housing amenities. Most of the people from SC groups are either landless or hold marginal and small land in rural areas which is not enough to survive with minimum standard level. Such deprivations force them to remain multi dimensionally poor. It cannot be denied from the available data and information that poverty among these groups is not reducing but the main argument is, even if it is declining, but at the slower rate. Most of the output of the recent economic growth have been utilised by the upper section of the

society, mainly consist of forward caste. There is a need to focus more and more on these groups on the priority basis with the help of effective and inclusive approach to reduce the development deficit and to redistribute the share of economic growth with equity and justice.

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