

A Survey Study of Participation of Scheduled Caste in Business Activities

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<<< Abstract

The author of present research paper is a research scholar of C C S University, Meerut and who has submitted his research study in the university last year. His research work belongs to the study of economic status of scheduled caste in district Meerut and district Saharanpur. In his research work he examined the economic progress made by the people of scheduled caste community of the Area of the study with regard to their education, employment, opportunities in business sector etc. The author of the present paper, who belongs to a scheduled caste family, made an effort to analyse the reasons of non-acceptance of scheduled caste people by the business community of India. For the purpose he interviewed 1000 families of scheduled castes of district Meerut and district Saharanpur and found that 2369 people of these families were engaged in different economic activities. The results of the study are presented in the present research paper in a interactive manner.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our country has realized the significance of the development of scheduled castes people of the nation since Independence. Consequently, planned efforts have been made for their social and economic development by the government, but after the 64 years of independence the economic status of scheduled caste people of the country does not seem satisfactory, even it presents a confusing picture. The government and media reports depict a fast growing economic development of this section of society but a person who is really in touch with these people may observe that the most of the people of scheduled caste society still depressed, uneducated and deprived from the economic progress of the country.

Among all the vulnerable sections of society, scheduled caste may be put on the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. The term 'scheduled caste' first appeared in the Government of India Act, 1935. In April 1936, the British Government had issued the Gov-ernment of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936 specifying certain castes, races, and tribes as Scheduled Castes in the then provinces of Assam, Bombay, Bengal, Bihar, Central Provinces and Bihar, Madras, Orissa, Punjab and United Provinces. After getting independence in 1947, when Government of India framed its constitution various social, economic as well as political provisions were made to safeguard the interests of scheduled caste and to uplift them to join the mainstream of society. A brief review of important provisions of the constitution of India in fovour of scheduled caste of the country is as under-

a. Provisions for Social Security

- Equality before the law (Article 14)
- Special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes including SCs (Article 15(4))
- Throwing open by law of Hindu religious institutions of public character to all classes and sections of Hindus (Article 25(b))
- Removal of any disability, liability, restriction or conditions with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public resort maintained wholly or partially out of State funds or dedicated to the use of general public (Article 15(2))
- Forbidding of any denial of admission to educational institutions maintained by the state or receiving grants out of state funds (Article 29(2))
- Special provision for administration and control of scheduled and tribal areas (Article 244 and Fifth and Sixth Schedules)
- Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour (Article 23)
- Abolition of "Untouchability" and its practice (Article 17)
- To specify the castes deemed to be SCs (Article 341).

b. Provisions for Economic Upliftment

- To promote with special case the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections and in particular of SCs and protect them from any social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- Reservation in the appointments of government services (Article 335).

c. Provisions for Political Empowerment

- Reservation of seats for SCs in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States. (Article 330)
- The Impact of various developmental places, policies and programmes has brought forth a perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of SCs.

Besides, making all these provisions Government of India developed Special Component Plan (SCP) for the scheduled caste of the nation to

improve their overall status in the country. The scheme for assistance to the state-level Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (SCDCs) was introduced in 1978-79 to uplift the SCs/STs population living below poverty line. Although all these efforts remained successful to meet out its objectives to a greater extent but the problem of scheduled caste of the country is much more crucial than it seems. This section of society is suppressed too much by the upper castes of society for a long period so it has lost its self-confidence, enthusiasm and feeling of self pride from the root level. It needs entire mental revolution to solve the problem. Continuous economic as well as political efforts are essential for the purpose.

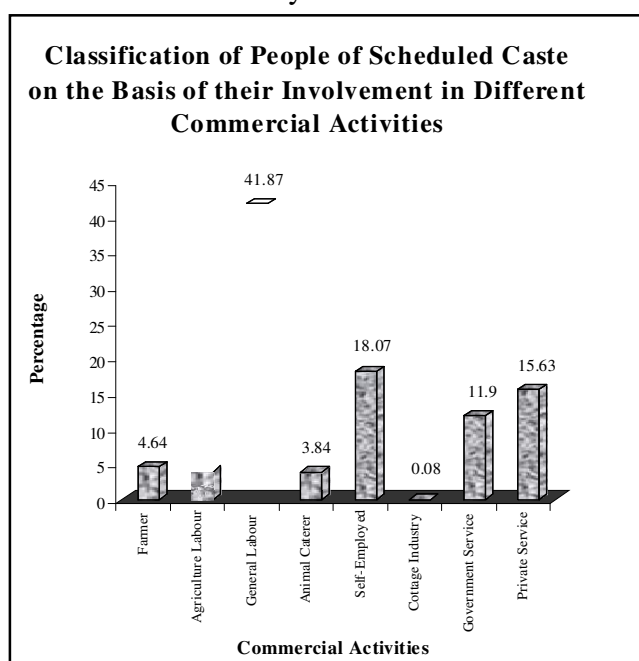
The prime objective of present research work is to evaluate the economic status of scheduled caste in the area of study and to analyse their participation in various fields of economic activities. When researcher started survey work, a question was often raised by the people that "Commercial activities belong to entrepreneurship and no one interrupts to people of scheduled caste to enter in any area of commercial activity. It is the result of their low economic and mental status only that these people are not successful in business activities."

The question was straight but the answer was not so simple. In our country the roots of caste system are so deep that the conservative mind setup of upper caste people doesn't accept the entrance of scheduled caste people in the economic activities otherwise prescribed for them. It is experienced by those who come from the bottom line of caste hierarchy and have tried to step into different areas of economic activities that have been, hitherto, closed to them for various social and historical reasons. Before, going further with the discussion, it would be better to take a look at survey results of research study belonging to the participation of scheduled caste people in different areas of commercial activities. The following table and chart no. 1 present the figures related with the classification of people of scheduled caste on the basis of their involvement in different commercial

Table 1:
Classification of People of Scheduled Caste on the basis of their Involvement in Different Commercial Activities

Different Commercial Activities	No. of Selected Families	No. of Members of Families engaged in Particular Commercial Activity	Per Cent	No. of Selected Families	No. of Members of Families engaged in Particular Commercial Activity	Per Cent	No. of Selected Families	No. of Members of Families engaged in Particular Commercial Activity	Per Cent
Farmer	1000	110	4.64	500	0	0.00	500	110	8.79
Agriculture Labour		94	3.97		0	0.00		94	7.51
General Labour		992	41.87		386	34.56		606	48.40
Animal Caterer		91	3.84		17	1.52		74	5.91
Self-Employed		428	18.07		282	25.25		146	11.66
Cottage Industry		2	0.08		2	0.18		0	0.00
Government Service		282	11.90		226	20.23		56	4.47
Private Service		370	15.63		204	18.26		166	13.26
Total		2369	100		1117	100.00		1252	100.00

Source: Personal Survey



activities. It is clear from the study of table and graph no. 1 that only 4.64% people of scheduled caste of the area of study holding lands and are associated with the respected job of farming. It is noticed during survey work that the size of their land holding is comparatively much small than the farmers of other caste.

The maximum number of scheduled caste people (49.69) was found linked with labour class job such as agriculture labour, construction labour, animal caterer etc. it shows their present economic status in the society.

Besides, all the noise of reservation, only 11.90 % people of scheduled caste families could acquire government jobs. 15.62% working people of the scheduled caste were found engaged in private jobs but generally in a position of class III and IV employees.

As per the question of entrepreneurship raised, less than 1% people of scheduled caste were found owner of home based tiny cottage industries specially associated with shoe making job. The number of self employed people of scheduled caste

of area of study remained 18.07% only. Further classification of self employed people of scheduled caste may be made with the help of following table no. 2. It is clear from the study of table no. 2 that most of the self-employed people of scheduled caste

Table 2:
Classification of Self Employed People of Scheduled Caste on the basis of their Nature of Jobs

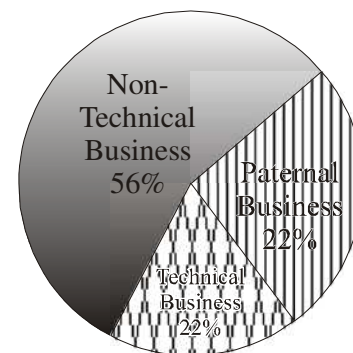
Nature of Jobs	No. of Selected Families	No. of Self Employed Members in the Families	Per Cent	No. of Selected Families	No. of Self Employed Members in the Families	Per Cent	No. of Selected Families	No. of Self Employed Members in the Families	Per Cent
	Total Selected Families			Families Belonging to Urban Area			Families Belonging to Rural Area		
Paternal Business	1000	96	22.43	500	29	10.47	500	67	44.37
Technical Business		92	21.50		76	27.44		16	10.60
Non Tech. Business		240	56.07		172	62.09		68	45.03
Total		428	100.00		277	100.00		151	100.00

Source: Personal Survey

families i.e. 56.07% were found engaged in non-technical as well as low paid business activities. 22.43% were carrying out their paternal business. Only 21.50% self employed people of selected segment of society were found associated with technical business activities. It is also noticed during survey work that the most of the people, who were engaged in technical business activities, were not held any significant technical qualification but got trained by on job practice since their childhood.

Now it is clear that economic status of scheduled caste in the society is still in a state of question mark. Government of India is making its full efforts. As a result of these efforts the percentage of scheduled caste in government services has been increased significantly. But the government jobs are limited and a major part of population of country can

Classification of Self Employed People of Scheduled Caste on the Basis of their Nature of Jobs



not be economically lifted only on the basis of government jobs only. This is the field of self employment which may feed them well with dignity.

Caste appeared to matter in business in many different ways, directly and not so directly. While some respondents mention their experience of having been treated with prejudice of a general kind, others referred to more concrete problems which emanated primarily from their context of being not acceptable to the larger business community. There is no denying the fact that caste influenced their businesses negatively. The locally dominant communities, who have traditionally dominated the business scene, do not like scheduled caste getting into business. Some shop-keepers who have their businesses in prime localities reported that they often find it difficult to receive the customers from upper caste because of their scheduled caste background.

The maximum purchasing power in India is in the hand of upper caste and the people of upper caste generally make their purchases having influenced by the caste system. For example, restaurant owned by a scheduled caste entrepreneur is neglected by the people of high purchasing power i.e. upper caste people and such restaurant has to depend upon the people of lower communities for its survival. These communities do not carry much purchasing power. Hence, such restaurant has to struggle hard for its survival. Although some affirmative changes in the thinking of society may be noticed in respect of caste system but these are too slow to leave any positive impact in the economic development of scheduled caste people.

2. CONCLUSION

At last it may be said that still the scheduled caste people of the country encounter different types of problems when they enter in the arena of business activities. Nearly all of them face hardships because of lack of financial resources and the prevalent caste prejudice. For the rapid economic progress of scheduled caste of the country, Government of India may further enhanced their activities in the development of this deprived section of society through adopting the following remedial measures-

- Funds at least in proportion to the SC/ST population of the national, state district, block and village should be earmarked out of the total respective plan outlay at all levels.

- There should be separate budget for SCP and it should be monitored and evaluated separately to fulfill the constitutional obligation towards SC/ST population.
- Details of Schemes meant for SCs/STs should be mandatorily displayed in each Block/Taluka, other means of dissemination of information.
- There is a need to distribute agricultural surplus land to SCs/STs on priority basis.
- The participation of SC/ST in the trade, commerce and industry is negligible due to lack of finance advances by the state and national financial institutions and the banks. Therefore, it is imperative to reserve a certain quota of total loan advanced for SC/ST community for their economic development and participation in all the above activities. All round efforts are needed to ensure to make SC/ST small entrepreneurs. The debt-equity ratio and collateral guarantee conditions should be relaxed for SC/ST.
- Besides, to ensure the financial support to the scheduled caste at the time of need, there should be an urgent need to set up a National Bank for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes.
- There should be certain reservation for scheduled caste in all licenses, permits, agencies, dealerships and contracts issued by the government. Conditions like advance Security deposit should be relaxed to employ them in all these activities.
- Reservation should also be extended in allotment of commercial plots being sold by state or central government agency.
- Government should set up a National Equity Corporation and Foundation to help SC/ST to participate in the share capital of various companies to increase the share of scheduled caste in private capital of the country.

On the way of his research study, researcher found that no doubt, a positive change in the economic status of scheduled caste on various socio-economic parameters has been recorded but, that change has touched merely less than one third

of their population which is named by the media channels 'Creamy Layer'. Further, the gap between the socio-economic status of general caste and scheduled caste population still persists significantly in our traditional society. Therefore, there is an

urgent need to reorient and focus the strategy in order to support the lesser privileged scheduled caste people by providing them qualitative education and direct financial support to bring these downtrodden into the national mainstream.

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