

Educational Attainment and Change among Scheduled Castes

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Scheduled castes have been deprived the equal opportunities to get education in caste-based Indian society as a result of problem of untouchability and caste discrimination. Education is regarded the most powerful instrument for emancipation and empowerment of lower sections of society like Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes. Education also decides the quality and mode of living of the individuals and groups along with introducing a lot of social potentialities in them. It is true that Scheduled Castes are still comparatively illiterates and less educated than general category, still they have made remarkable advances in educational attainment leading to wide spread changes in their life. This paper analyzes some features of social change associated with the advance of education among the scheduled castes. This has been based on the responses of four selected SCs over a period of three generations. It has been shown that the influence of education in social mobility and changing status identities among the Scheduled Castes, specially their rise in social hierarchy and social position mobilization as well as engagement in secular occupations as a result of growing modern education is clearly evident.

[**Keywords** : Educational attainment, Change, Scheduled Castes, Caste system, Empowerment of Dalits]

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1. Introduction

From the ancient period of the Aryan Society, In India the Scheduled Castes have been the last on the Hierarchical ladder of the society's structure. They have suffered from distinct social, economic and educational disabilities. It was mainly due to the caste system which has a unique position in Hindu Society. It influences people's selection of a profession and many other aspects of life in India. A man's dignity as a human being is also related to the caste of which he belongs. The British regime also favored the socially advanced classes which got the advantage of education and employment opportunities. But gradually, times changed and awakening came. And hence, after the attainment of Independence in the year 1947 the Constituent Assemble provided statutory safeguards in the Constitution for the people of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and other depressed classes by defining them as socially and educationally backward classes.

Education is regarded the most powerful instrument for emancipation and empowerment of *Dalits* or for the matter, any class of people lagging behind in the social hierarchy. This was realized as far back as the process of *Dalit* advancement featured on the list of agenda of the reforms and leaders in the social and political spheres of life. Various social reformers as also the British Government stressed upon spread of education among the weaker sections of the society in the early part of nineteenth century. Their efforts resulted in many schools being established in *Dalit* areas. Hostels were also set up to accommodate the students. Due emphasis was provided to the education of girls as well. What hindered the growth of education in those days were the crunch of resource as well as shortage of teachers who would devote the selves to educating *Dalits*.

A part from being socially and economically backward, *Dalits* were denied access to education as well, in the past. This led to their decline more than anything else. Being uneducated is as bad as being blind to the world realities. And being unaware led to unabated discrimination with no stout resistance coming from those being discriminated. Therefore, in modern time the need arose to make the *Dalits* aware of their rights and fights to get them. For this education became the highest priority. Without being educated it was unlikely that they will become conscious of their rights.

Education which decides the quality and mode of living of an individual along with introducing a lot of social potentialities in him. Modern education among the Scheduled Castes has been an effective source of modify their attitude, habits, manners and their mode of social living by introducing rational attitude, secular outlook, sophisticated ideas and polished manners of expression and behaviour in the wider circle of society. These changes in manners and attitudes influence the style of life to a large extent. As a consequence, the rudimentary and superstitious patterns of living are replaced by modern materialistic mode of living among them. Changes in occupation and status lead to modify their living arrangements and patterns in the direction of modernization. The general impression derived from the empirical inference is that the Scheduled Castes perceive and realize that the emergence of new style of life embedded on democratic values is one of the major impacts of modern education.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study has following two-fold objectives :

1. To find out the extent of education among Scheduled Castes and changes over three generations and
2. Investigate the impact of education on economic- life patterns of Scheduled Castes.

3. Operational Definitions of the Terms/Concepts

1. **Education** : Education is relatively an important correlated of socio-economic status. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.
2. **Scheduled Castes** : In 1935 the British passed The Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. Reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act,

which came into force in 1937. The Act brought the term "Scheduled Castes" into use, and defined the group as including "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes', as His Majesty in Council may prefer". This discretionary definition was clarified in The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936 which contained a list, or Schedule, of castes throughout the British administered provinces. The reason why they are called Scheduled is because they are now included in one of the Schedules of the Constitution of India.

Now, the term Scheduled Castes is defined under Article-336 (clause-24) read with Article-341 of the constitution. The Article 366 states : "Scheduled Castes mean such castes, races or tribes or parts or groups with in such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under Article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of this constitution". The definition of the term Scheduled Castes given under clause-24 of the Article-366 is not self-contained definition. It provides for the deeming clause as only such castes, races or tribes or part or a groups with in such castes, races of tribes as are deemed under Article-341 to be Scheduled Caste.

4. Theoretical Context

To observe historical and educational background of Scheduled Castes, historical approach has been used. To analyze the consequences or impact of education and social change among Scheduled Castes and sub-castes, structural-functional approach has been more helpful as compared to other theoretical approaches. Thus, the study has been make use of structural-functional approach to observe the background and impact of education and social change among Scheduled Castes of sub-castes in terms of educational, occupational, economic and social and educational aspects of Scheduled Castes over a period of three generations. The rural urban continuum perspective has also been used in the study as it covers both the village and town. As all these aspects have been studied in a rural and in an urban (Town) areas, this study makes use of comparative approach as well.

5. The Methodology

The Wair village and Dankaur town are two different settings, from where a number of Scheduled Castes have shown social change among Scheduled Castes. Thus, at the first stage, some castes are identified who have shown educational, occupational, economic, social and educational change. Specific intensive field work has been undertaken in two settings village and the urban (town) area, about 100 families. Empirical data have been collected with the help of specific research technique like observation, interview, personal records and secondary records. Secondary records have been consulted from the local, Block and District head quarters and other government's records. Quasi participant observation and case study methods have been used for the collection of first hand data.

6. An Overview of Literature

Chitinis (1974 : 80) states that "The education is expected to contribute to the socialization of the younger generation by inculcating the values, attitudes and norms of behaviour accepted in the society to which they belong as by passing on specific forms of knowledge, skills or occupational techniques".

Paswan and Jaidev (2002 : 15-45) consider that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes wherever they live, are faced with many and diverse problems, which are of social, economic, political and educational in nature. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout the country occupy the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy. In a hierarchy of unequal relationship the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at large, are landless agricultural and casual labourers. They are mostly engaged in menial jobs which add to lower their social and ritual status further.

There have been many studies on Scheduled Castes and their educational history. For example, Singh (1992 : 103-113) says that as early as 1850, he (a saint) opened first ever school for the depressed classes. He observed that the Mahars, Mang and the Chamars were sunk deep in ignorance and misery. The girls were even more backward in education. The attempts for the education of the depressed classes and the girls met with tremendous opposition from his community. Jyotiba was a determined person and restarted the school at the house of one of his friends. In 1851, he opened another school for Harijan girls.

Ambedkar realized the importance of education for the depressed classes. It was through education and exposure to outside influences that they could become aware of their exploitation. He believed that so long as the conscience of a slave does not burn with hatred for the slavery. In 1924 he founded the Bahiskrit Hitkarni Sabha to promote education among the depressed classes by opening hostels or by employing such other means as may seem necessary or desirable to promote the spread of culture among them by opening libraries, social centers and classes or study circles, advanced and improve their economic conditions by starting industrial and agricultural school and representing their grievances for redressal the more would be the chance for progress and the greater would be the opportunities for the betterment for of the people. He believed that the higher education should be within the reach of the poor. He founded the Peoples Education Society in 1945. In 1916 he started the Siddharth College at Bombay. In course of time a separate Siddharth College for Art, Science, Commerce and Law came to be established. He also established the Milind College in Aurangabad. He gave his residence named "Rajgarh" in Bombay for a college hostel and left his valuable library to a college.

Mishra (2001 : 48-56) observed that the Harijan Children, nearly one out of every three Harijan Children was out of school due to lack of financial support and educational material. Articulate parents gave a brief account of how their children were ill-treated, harassed and discriminated against. Parents' majority complained about the incidence of beating. A Harijan child was beaten up by the teachers for various reasons; may be a simply because the child not fulfil their demands of fee; 'Pass Karahi'; Donations (Chanda) etc. Harijan Children sit away from other students. They were not permitted to touch the black board, chalk, or a book handed by teacher and Harijan children dropout of school because of its distance and location of school which made its accessibility less easy and also because of its dilapidated physical structure. So Harijan parents and child lack of interests in studies.

Rajagopalan (1978 :109) considers that the reason as distance of school and both these groups had the problem of ill-treatment from high caste Hindus teachers. In older days Scheduled Castes were not admitted there. High Caste teachers were also not prepared to teach

them. There is no school within walking distance and sending children by bus costs money and bothersome. Sometimes it is also difficult to feed the children at the lunch time as parents would have locked the house and been away at work. But mainly the difficulties are financial.

Mishra (2001 : 14-15) considers that modern education among the Scheduled Castes has been an effective source of modify their attitude, habits manners and their mode of social living by introducing rational attitude, secular outlook, sophisticated ideas and polished manners of expression and behaviour in the wider circle of society. These small changes in manners and attitude in influences the style of life to a large extent.

Khan (1980 : 276) finds that the Scheduled Castes faced several forms of disabilities in the past. The government policies and programmes for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes since independence these programmes help in achieving high economic and educational status in society and their relation with other castes also gradually improving.

Ram (1988 : 105-185) finds that the socio-economic status levels of Scheduled Castes boys and girls almost the same and among the Scheduled Castes of Sub-Castes categories there are vast disparities. Very few castes reach education level of university education while majority of the Sub-Castes do not reach up to senior secondary class. The ratio of rural Scheduled Castes students decreases more sharply than the ratio of on students as the move up the educational ladder. The socio-economic status levels of urban Scheduled Castes students are higher than socio-economic status level of the rural Scheduled Castes students.

Only the Scheduled Castes students with higher levels of socio economic status reach, the higher level of education. The Scheduled Castes students studying in private school performed better as SSC levels than Scheduled Castes student studying in government and Zila Parishad schools.

Ramaswamy (1969 : 1153-1158) finds that the Scheduled Castes have left behind their traditional occupations, whether it be scavenging, Leather work, agriculture labour, their entry into salaried occupations, particularly government service, and their exploitation of educational opportunities. The Scheduled Castes

continue over while mainly in their traditional occupations in rural areas. Even in the urban areas only a fraction of the posts in the administration which are reserved for them are actually filled. Similarly, they are still steeped in illiteracy and only a small proportion of the population of school going age actually attends school completion of formal education even up to the secondary level in negligible.

Pandey (1988 : 198-250) finds that the influence of education in social mobility and changing status identities among the Scheduled Castes, specially their rise in social hierarchy and social position mobilization and engagement in secular occupation as a result of growing modern education.

Prasad (1997 : 165-185) finds that education is relatively an important correlate of socio-economic status. Education a prerequisite for their mobility through both occupation and income. Educational requirements are the prerequisites entry into higher prestige for jobs and into higher income categories. The government of India grants them liberal concessions in the field of education because education will play the most important role in the advancement of the Scheduled Castes people, as it will be through education alone that other two disabilities social and economic will resolve themselves.

An overview of studies amply demonstrates that access to education has increased remarkably among the Scheduled Castes due to the policy of protective discrimination implemented by the Government of India after independence. Combined efforts of central and state governments have yielded the desired results. Undoubtedly, it has been proved that education is highly significant in bringing change not only in socio-economic status, but also in their other aspects of their life. It is in this context, that the present study on "Educational attainment and change among Scheduled Castes" was planned.

7. Results and Discussion

Table-1 and 2 provides data on the educational attainment and change in variables in terms of - educational attainment of present and changes over three generation and equality of educational opportunity among male-female of Scheduled Castes consisting of four selected four sub-castes.

Table-1 : Educational change in I, II and III Generations of the Scheduled Castes Respondents.

Sub-Caste	Educational Change in I Generation					
	Illiterate	Primary to Eighth	Ninth to Twelfth	U.G./ P.G. + Prof. Course	No. of Respondents	Change
Jatav	22	05	00	00	27	-17
Dhobi	24	01	00	00	25	-23
Valmiki	26	00	00	00	26	-26
Kori	22	00	00	00	22	-22
Total	94	06	00	00	100	

Sub-Caste	Educational Change in II Generation					
	Illiterate	Primary to Eighth	Ninth to Twelfth	U.G./ P.G. + Prof. Course	No. of Respondents	Change
Jatav	10	07	06	04	27	+7
Dhobi	13	07	05	00	25	-1
Valmiki	17	09	00	00	-26	-8
Kori	14	08	00	00	22	-6
Total	54	31	11	04	100	

Sub-Caste	Educational Change in III Generation					
	Illiterate	Primary to Eighth	Ninth to Twelfth	U.G./ P.G. + Prof. Course	No. of Respondents	Change
Jatav	03	05	07	12	27	+21
Dhobi	05	08	10	02	25	+15
Valmiki	10	11	03	01	26	+5
Kori	07	11	02	02	22	+18
Total	25	35	22	17	100	

Table-2 : Scheduled Castes Respondents Feel of Male-Female Education

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Equality of Male Female Education			No. of Respondents
		Equal	No	Somewhat	
1.	Jatav	18	05	04	27
2.	Dhobi	12	08	05	25
3.	Valmiki	06	16	03	26
4.	Kori	04	13	05	22
	Total	40	42	17	100

The findings on educational attainment and change among the selected Scheduled Castes respondents show the following facts :

1. The majority of the illiterate respondents (26 out of 26) in first generation belong to the Valmiki Caste. Only one respondent literate up to primary to eighth class in first generation belongs to the Dhobi Caste and nobody is literate in Valmiki Caste as well as Kori Caste.
2. The largest number of the respondents (17 out of 26) are illiterate in second generation who belong to the Valmiki Caste and small number (4 out of 27) are highly educated belong to the Jatav Caste.
3. The majority of the respondents (i.e. 12 out of 27) in highly educated class belong to the Jatav Caste and very small section only one respondent is highly educated in Valmiki Caste.
4. In all three generation, we find out that 94 out of 100 respondents were illiterate in first generation. Only 6 out of 100 were literate in this generation. 54 out of 100 are illiterate in second generation, 46 out of 100 are literate in second generation. 25 out of 100 are illiterate in third generation and 75 out of 100 are educated in third generation. The education level has increased day by day in all sub-castes of the Scheduled Caste people.
5. The largest number of the respondents (18 out of 27) who feel in equal opportunity to male-female education belong to the Jatav Caste and very small number (3 out 26) belong to the Valmiki Caste. But in the present time people give equal opportunity to male-female education of this community people.

Now let us take up the issue on change in economic life patterns of Scheduled Castes. It may be mentioned that the economic status of the Scheduled Castes was very low in past time. There was no source of regular income for the most of the people, as the economy was subsistence nature. Only a few of the Scheduled Castes were engaged in other work like Agriculture labour Pvt. Job, business etc. The large numbers of the Scheduled Castes were engaged in manual occupation (traditional occupation). But now in the present time, their traditional work has changed through education.

The data were collected on the variables of changes in economic life patterns in terms of - occupational change first, to second and second to third generation, level of living standard and economic level of Scheduled Castes consisting of sub-castes.

The relevant data on these variables are presented in the following table-3, 4 and 5.

Table-3 : Occupational Change in I, II, III Generations of the Scheduled Castes Respondents.

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Occupational Change in I Generation			
		Traditional	Non-Traditional	No. of Respondents	Change
1.	Jatav	00	27	27	+27
2.	Dhobi	23	02	25	-21
3.	Valmiki	26	00	26	-26
4.	Kori	22	00	22	-22
	Total	71	29	100	

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Occupational Change in II Generation			
		Traditional	Non-Traditional	No. of Respondents	Change
1.	Jatav	00	27	27	+27
2.	Dhobi	16	09	25	-7
3.	Valmiki	26	00	26	-26
4.	Kori	15	07	22	-8
	Total	57	43	100	

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Occupational Change in III Generation			
		Traditional	Non-Traditional	No. of Respondents	Change
1.	Jatav	00	27	27	+27
2.	Dhobi	10	15	25	+5
3.	Valmiki	25	01	26	-24
4.	Kori	02	20	22	+18
	Total	37	63	100	

Table-4 : Level of Living Standard of the Scheduled Castes Respondents

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Level of Living Standard			No. of Respondents
		Increase	Decrease	No Change	
1.	Jatav	20	01	06	27
2.	Dhobi	09	03	13	25
3.	Valmiki	03	02	21	26
4.	Kori	03	03	16	22
	Total	35	09	55	100

Table-5 : Economic Level of the Scheduled Castes Respondents

S. No.	Sub-Caste	Economic Level			No. of Respondents
		Increase	Decrease	No Change	
1.	Jatav	18	02	07	27
2.	Dhobi	10	03	12	25
3.	Valmiki	06	05	14	26
4.	Kori	05	01	16	22
	Total	40	11	49	100

The findings on economic life patterns of Scheduled castes respondents show the following facts :

1. The Jatav Caste are not engaged in their traditional occupation in first generation, but Valmiki and Kori Caste continue to do their traditional occupation in this generation.

2. The Jatav Caste are not engaged in their traditional occupation in second generation, Valmikies continue to do their traditional occupation in this generation.
3. All the respondents (27 out of 27) are engaged in non-traditional occupation in third generation belong to the Jatav Caste and very small only one respondent is engaged in non-traditional occupation belong to the Valmiki Caste.
4. In all three generations, it was revealed out that 71 out of 100 respondents were engaged in traditional occupation in first generation, 29 out of 100 were engaged in non-traditional occupation. 57 out of 100 are engaged in traditional occupation in second generation, 43 out of 100 are engaged in non-traditional occupation in second generation. 37 out of 100 are engaged in traditional occupation in third generation, 63 out of 100 engaged in non-traditional occupation. So traditional occupation has been decreasing day by day from first to third generation.
5. The majority of the respondents (18 out of 27) belong to the Jatav Caste who say that their economic level has increased in comparison to past time and only one respondent belongs to the Kori Caste says that economic level has decreased in present time.
6. The largest number of the respondents (21 out of 27) belong to the Valmiki Caste who say that no change in their level of living standard and only one respondent belongs to the Jatav Caste says that level of living standard has decreased in this time.

Comparison of educational attainment and change in two settings show the following facts :

1. Both areas indicate the Valmiki Caste people's were illiterate in first generation and second generation.
2. As both areas have shown, the Jatav Caste people are highly educated in third generation compared with other Scheduled Castes peoples.
3. Both areas indicate that in all three generation, mostly Scheduled Castes people were illiterate in first generation and second generation, educational level has increased slowly in both generation, and in third generation mostly peoples of Scheduled Castes has been educated Comparison to the past time.

4. In both areas the Jatav Caste people feel in equal opportunity to male female education. So Jatav as have shown social change in their life compare other Scheduled Castes peoples.

Comparison of economic life patterns in two settings show the following facts :

1. In Wair village, the Jatav peoples were not engaged in their traditional occupation and Valmiki Caste continue to do their traditional occupation as well as Kori Caste. In Dankaur town Jatav Caste also not engaged in their traditional occupation but Valmiki Caste people were engaged in their traditional occupation in first generation.
2. In both areas the Jatav Caste is not engaged in their traditional occupation but Valmikies continue to do their traditional occupation in second and third generation. So traditional occupation of three Scheduled Caste of Sub-Castes have changed through education.
3. In both areas, the Jatav Caste's peoples economic level has more increased in comparison to past time while other Scheduled Castes' economic level has few increased compared to past time.
4. In the Wair Village the Valmiki Caste has shown no change in their level of living standard while in Dankaur Jatav Caste people's has shown that their level of living standard has increased in comparison to the past time.

8. Conclusion

The Scheduled Castes have been currently much more conscious toward education and social status and the government providing necessary steps to improve their educational and social standards. But despite the reckless facilities given to them, there remain some major educational and social problems and difficulties. Scheduled Castes have left behind their traditional occupations, whether it be scavenging, Leather work, agriculture labour, their entry into salaried occupations, particularly government service, and their exploitation of educational opportunities. The Scheduled Castes continue over while mainly in their traditional occupations in rural areas. Even in the urban areas only a fraction of the posts in the administration which are reserved for them are actually filled. But influence of education in social mobility and changing status

identities among the Scheduled Castes, specially their rise in social hierarchy and social position mobilization and engagement in secular occupation as a result of growing modern education.

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