

# UNHEARD VOICES

14 JULY 2022 | Year 2 | Vol. 4



## Bottom to Head

*Draupadi Murmu signifies bottom.  
Now, bottom will be at head to head the State.*



**18th July**  
Annabhau Sathe  
Death Anniversary

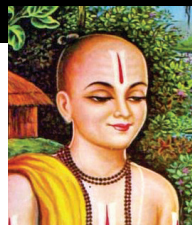
**1st August** Birth Anniversary



**20th July**  
Sarada Devi  
Death Anniversary



**26th July**  
Bhagat Namdev  
Death Anniversary



**4th August**  
Goswami Tulsidas  
Birth Anniversary



**9th August**  
World Indigenous  
Day



**13th August**  
Punyashlok  
Ahilyadevi Holkar  
Death Anniversary



# Bright and Dark

India will soon have a new President. With the election of Draupadi Murmu, which is considered as certain in view of the numerical strength of ruling party in the electorate college, India is expected to enter a new era. It should not be merely a formal replacement of one individual but ought to bring about qualitative change in the political and social life. Given her modest, humble and moderate background, Murmu is expected to be instrumental in bridging the gap between deprived class and privileged class.

Murmu's expected position is significant on three counts. Firstly, she is a woman, secondly, she is from a backward region and lastly and importantly, she is from a tribal community. All three factors are interlinked to each other. Her nomination can be interpreted as a major deviation from the established rules of politics, which affected political and social discourse. This is the second positive signal this year. India has seen diminishing influence of caste factor, earlier this year in Assembly elections.

Notwithstanding these signals, we have tried to have a reality check for the deprived people in the current issue. This exercise comprises all walks of life including politics, economics, social, education, movies, entrepreneurship and literature. The feedback underlines that India, as a nation, still has a long way to go. We published a story in the last issue, which was a first-person account of a Dalit youth, focusing on how he was denied purchase a piece of land. The denial was based on his caste. This is a reality on one hand while we are also experiencing signs of hopes from all the spheres of national life.

Various studies have shown that deprived people are now in better condition as compared to past few decades. This can be attributed to awakening among the deprived people and awakening is the result of education. By opening the doors of formal and informal education, we are not merely trying to pull them out from the current pathetic conditions but also opening new gates to New India, which will have equality and a feeling of brotherhood.

We must note a visible change among the deprived people. They have given up traditional occupations and have become embraced about new occupations. Earlier, majority of the occupations had them slaves of the traditional system. The eagerness to explore new options, brushing aside traditional occupation, itself leads us to new life.

Change in occupation is sure to make them more independent at financial level, which will help to emancipate deprived people from the chains of slavery. However, study and observations show that SCs and STs, particularly in rural areas, are still lagging behind mainly because of orthodox attitude. Traditional mindset continues to make a decisive impact on all the social transactions in rural areas. The need of the hour is to focus on rural areas, where social organizations have a lot of scope to carry out their activities.

Situation in urban pockets is comparatively better where inter-caste marriage is no more a big deal. Urbanization has thrashed the traditional social system. This could happen because people, irrespective of castes, explored new opportunities and occupations. Situation can be further improved if the process of urbanization is decentralized.

However, the core point of the problem is change in attitude and mindset. The problem would be solved if people are taught to have faith and belief in human values by way of formal and informal education since childhood.

The nature of caste is complex as it is basically a socio-economic phenomenon. The problem could be solved by finding out solutions at both levels. Social ills and poverty can be eradicated if an integrated approach is adopted. India is celebrating 75th Independence Day next month. We gained freedom after a long struggle. But the process to gain independence is still unfinished. Equality is the soul of liberty. Liberty is meaningless if equality is missing. The fact, however, remains that both equality and liberty cannot be achieved without the feeling of fraternity. Let's try to put your soul into it.

For feedback please click the below link : <https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>

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## Response

  
I have found The magazine a learned one with articles of high academic order. I cannot check myself to mark that the Editorial on the issue of 'Caste Census' is an excellent one. To say in one word it is 'Gagan mein sagar' and covers all aspects precisely.

- **Ravindra Kumar Verma**  
Retired Associate Professor of Political Science, B.R. Ambedkar Bihar University

Congratulations very nice and relevant issues-  
- **Ekta Raman**, Shivaji College

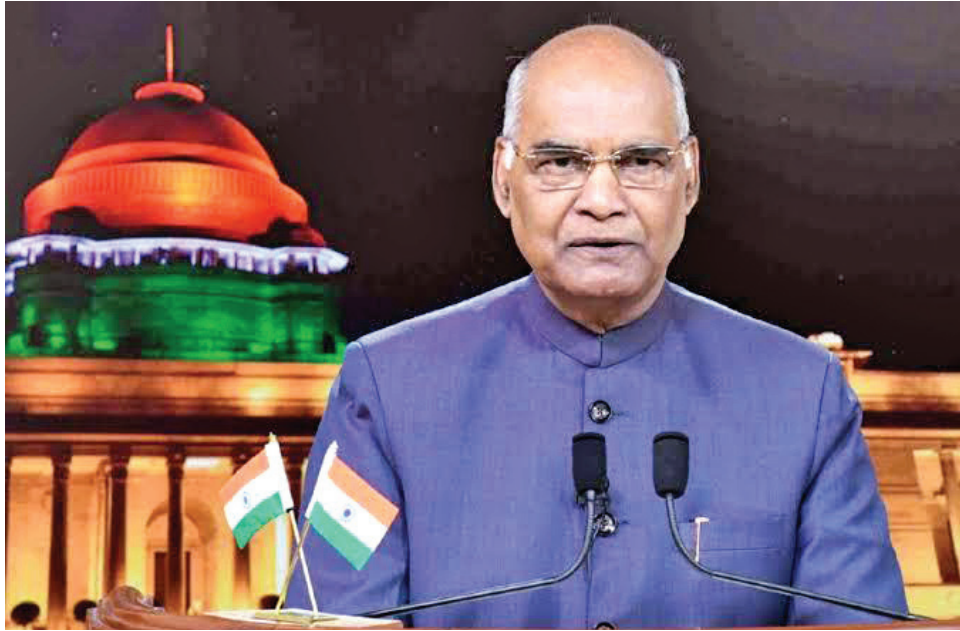
Thanks for sharing.Very relevant theme.  
- **Dr. Sutapa Das**, Associate Professor  
Department of History FSS BHU Varanasi.

  
Dear Friend, Thanks for sharing the new issue of Unheard Voices. I congratulate the entire team of this magazine for choosing the topic of the caste census for the cover story and taking the firm position. It is very relevant, pertinent and informative as well. Thanks again.

- **Dinbandhu Vats**

Thanks for the mail and Year 2 Issue 3 subject of the issue seems to be very significant.

- **Pralhad Kachare**, Pune



# A moment of pride

## Bringing deprived in mainstream

Vijendra



Election to the post of President of India will be held this month. Ruling BJP has nominated Draupadi Murmu, belonging to Santhal tribal community, opposition parties have fielded Yashvant Sinha. Murmu's victory is considered certain in view of the electoral strength of BJP and its friends. The most outstanding feature of the election for the highest constitutional post is - that the ruling party has fielded a woman candidate from a backward region and from a backward community. This signals a major qualitative change in the socio-political scenario of the country. Earlier, PA Sangma also fought the Presidential election but could not win. But this is not for the first time that a citizen from a backward community will be holding the post of President. Earlier, K R Narayanan and Ramnath Kovind also occupied the post of President. Let's have a look at three personalities.



**Draupadi Murmu**

The choice of Draupadi Murmu was not unexpected as her name was being discussed in BJP circles seriously. Considering BJP strategy for the past few years, it was presumed that the ruling party would choose her considering her background and also push its accommodative agenda. Notwithstanding political calculations and equations of the ruling party, Indians have to admit that it is for the second consecutive time that an individual from depressed class is occupying the highest constitutional post.



Draupadi Murmu's victory is a formality considering the electoral strength of BJP and its partners.

Draupadi Murmu stands as a symbol of changing aspirations of the deprived class. Her choice for the highest constitutional post, followed by Ramnath Kovind, who belongs to Dalit community, can be described as a well thought mindful move to bring deprived class in the mainstream. Draupadi Murmu belongs to Santhal tribe. Santhal is the third largest tribe in India after Gond and Bhill. They have a strong presence in eastern states like Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam and West Bengal.

In Odisha, Santhal tribe is mainly situated in the districts of Balasore, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj. Draupadi Murmu belongs to Mayurbhanj district. She was born in Uparbeda village of Mayurbhanj district. Santhal community is mainly engaged with agriculture, industrial labour, mining and quarrying.

The Santals are known for building beautiful multi-roomed houses of definite artistic design having spacious compounds and courtyards. They paint the walls with different colours, mainly red and black. They observe all the traditional festivals like other parts of India. Of course, their festivals are mainly concentrated around nature.

Santhal literally means "calm". Draupadi Murmu not only looks calm but she has demonstrated her calmness with determination in her personal and social life as well. She began her political career in 1997 when she was elected as counselor of Rairangpur district in Odisha. She rose to the top of the political ladder in politics. But her personal life was full of struggle. She swallowed the tragic deaths of her three family members in a short period. She lost her two sons – one in 2009 and another in 2013. This was followed by her husband's death in 2014. But she continued her social and political work. She had once said, "I have witnessed many ups and downs in life. I have lost my two sons and husband. I was completely devastated. But God has given me the strength to continue to serve the people".

Draupadi Murmu resigned her government job to continue politics. She later became MLA and was also minister in Navin Patnaik's government when BJP was part of the government. Later she was appointed as Governor of Jharkhand. Draupadi Murmu looks modest. One of her photographs became viral after she was nominated as Presidential candidate. The photo shows how she was cleaning a temple. However, she never forgets her commitment to deprived people and shows her determination for them.

This was seen when she took some courageous decisions when she was governor of Jharkhand. In 2017, she had refused to give assent to a bill, approved by Jharkhand Assembly, seeking amendments to the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act and Santhal Pargana Act. The bill has sought to give rights to tribals to make commercial use of their land, while ensuring that

the ownership of the land does not change. Being Governor and constitutional head of the state, she sought all the explanations on the bill.

Draupadi Murmu will not be the first woman President of India. Previously Pratibha Patil occupied this highest constitutional post. The major difference is that Murmu belongs to the tribal community. Second significant part is that Murmu is from tribal dominated and backward state Odisha unlike Maharashtra, from where Patil hails. Murmu, thus, will be the first woman president from a backward state and also deprived community. Her nomination is expected to bring tribals in the mainstream as they feel alienated because of their deprived lives.

### **Dr. K. R. Narayanan**

President Dr. Kocheril Raman Narayanan was born in a Dalit family, on the October 27, 1920, in Perumthanum, Uzhavoor in the Kottayam district of



Kerala. Narayanan's early education was completed at the Government Lower Primary School, Kurichithanam (1927), Our Lady of the Lorde's Upper Primary School, Uzhavoor (1931-35), St. John's High School, Koothattukulam (1935-36) and St. Mary's High

School, Kuravilangad (1936-37) from where he matriculated.

A brilliant scholar, Narayanan was awarded the Travancore State Scholarship to complete his intermediate from C.M.S. College, Kottayam (1938-40). He then went on to complete his B.A. (Hons.) and M.A. in English Literature from the University of Travancore (1940-43), standing first in the University. From 1944-45, he started working as a journalist associated with The Hindu and The Times of India. In 1944, President Narayanan was awarded the prestigious Tata Scholarship to study at the London School of Economics, where he was awarded Bachelor of Science (Hons.) in Economics with specialization in Political Science. At the London School of Economics, he was taught by renowned scholars like Harold Laski and Karl Popper. While studying in London, President Narayanan was involved with the Indian League and was also the London correspondent for the Social Welfare Weekly published by K. M. Munshi.

Narayanan returned to India in 1948 and upon the insistence of Harold Laski met Jawaharlal Nehru who requested him to join the Indian Foreign Service. From 1949 onwards, Narayanan served in various diplomatic positions culminating in his superannuation, in 1978, as the Indian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

Simultaneous to his diplomatic career, President Narayanan also taught for a year, in 1954, at the

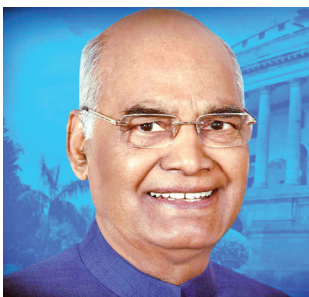


Delhi School of Economics and was also the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow from 1970-72. From 1979-80, President Narayanan served as the Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, an experience he later described as laying the foundation of his public life. In 1984, Narayanan was recalled from retirement and appointed as the Indian Ambassador to the United States of America. In 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi inducted Narayanan into active politics. He was a Member of Parliament from the Ottapalam constituency for three successive tenures (1984, 1989 and 1991). In 1985, President Narayanan was appointed as the Minister for State (Planning, External Affairs and Science and Technology) in the Rajiv Gandhi government. In 1992, President Narayanan was elected as the Vice-President of India and subsequently in 1997, he was elected to the highest office of the President of India. Narayanan was the first Dalit to hold the high office of the President of India.

Upon his demise on November 9, 2005. The Centre seeks its inspiration and direction from the following lines of a speech delivered by the late President on January 25, 2000, on the eve of the Republic Day: 'Fifty years into our life in the Republic we find that justice – social, economic and political – remains an unrealized dream for millions of our fellow citizens... The growth in our economy has not been uniform. It has been accompanied by great regional and social inequalities. Many social upheavals can be traced to the neglect of the lowest tier of society. Dalits and tribals are the worst affected by all this.'

### **Ram Nath Kovind**

Shri Ram Nath Kovind was sworn in as the 14th President of India on July 25, 2017. A lawyer



by profession, he had been the Governor of the State of Bihar before he took over the highest constitutional office. Shri Kovind brings to the office a rich experience of working across the spectrum of the republic, from the grassroots to the apex court and parliament. He has been an ardent champion of equality in society and integrity in public life.

Shri Kovind was born on October 1, 1945 at village Paraunkh in Kanpur district of the State of Uttar Pradesh. Coming from a family of modest means, his beginning was humble. He attended school and college in Kanpur. He first studied commerce for Bachelors and then attained his Law degree from Kanpur University.

Shri Kovind enrolled as an advocate with the Bar Council of Delhi in 1971. He served as Counsel of the Union Government in the Delhi High Court from 1977 to 1979. In 1978, he rose to become an Advocate-

on-Record with the Supreme Court of India. From 1980 to 1993, he was Standing Counsel for the Union Government in the Supreme Court. Under the Free Legal Aid Society of New Delhi, he also provided pro-bono aid to weaker sections of society, especially women and the poor.

Shri Kovind was elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament, from Uttar Pradesh effective from April 1994. He served two consecutive terms of six years each till March 2006. Serving on numerous Parliamentary Committees, he gathered in-depth experience in governance. He addressed the United Nations General Assembly on October 22, 2003 as a member of the Indian delegation.

Shri Kovind is an ardent advocate of education as a tool for social empowerment. He actively supports greater participation of women in nation-building and has been consistently calling for the society to create more opportunities for the deprived sections, especially the disabled and the orphans. He served as a Member on the Board of Management of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Lucknow, and also as a Member on the Board of Governors of the Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata. President Kovind's vision is to contribute towards creating that optimal partnership between citizens and their representatives in the Government.

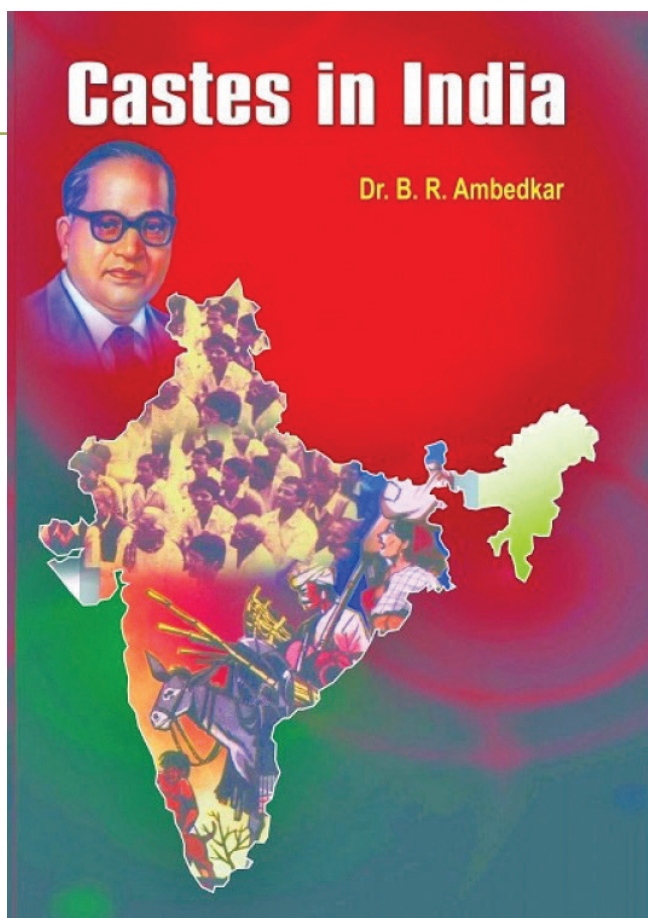
Shri Kovind was appointed Governor of the State of Bihar on August 8, 2015. His term as Governor received all-round appreciation for upholding the values of the Constitution. He, in his capacity as Chancellor, introduced several reforms and modern technology in the working of State Universities and brought transparency in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. He earned respect from leaders of all political parties for his statesmanship, sagacity and adhering to democratic ethos.

Shri Kovind's achievements as a Governor burnished his credentials as a candidate for the Presidency in 2017. After his election to the highest constitutional office, he has discharged his duties as the first citizen of India with foresight and humility. He has paid State Visits to 33 countries till June 2022 enhancing India's global outreach and footprint. On these State Visits, President Kovind conveyed India's timeless message of peace, progress and harmony. As the President of India, he has received the highest State honours from six countries, namely Madagascar, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Croatia, Bolivia and Republic of Guinea.

As the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of India, in May 2018 President Kovind made a historic visit to the troops deployed at 'Kumar Post' in Siachen, the highest battlefield in the world. He is an avid reader and has keen interest in books on politics and social change, law, history and spirituality. Shri Kovind married Shrimati Savita Kovind in May 1974. They have a son and a daughter.

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# Contemporary problems of SCs and STs in India



Although SC and ST communities have made considerable progress in many human development indicators, they still lag behind the rest of society. Social exclusion, poverty, landlessness, health and education are serious concerns for these marginalized sections. This module gives an outline of the status of SCs and STs in India.

## Dr. Sanjeevarayappa

Scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) are among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India. They have been facing problems since colonial India to the present times. Scheduled castes, who are also known as 'Dalits,' have been suffering from social, religious, legal, political, economic, educational, and other problems. Scheduled tribes live in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas and are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. Problems of tribes are mainly related to forest rights, land alienation, exploitation by money lenders, mining and displacement in tribal areas. Development projects, such as industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new

cities, displace the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes from their homes resulting in destitution and unemployment.

Although SC and ST communities have made considerable progress in many human development indicators, they still lag behind the rest of society. Social exclusion, poverty, landlessness, health and education are serious concerns for these marginalized sections. This module gives an outline of the status of SCs and STs in India.

The word 'Dalits' comes from the Sanskrit root dal which means "broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed." Those previously known as untouchables, depressed classes, and Harijans are today increasingly adopting the term "Dalit" as a name for themselves. "Dalit" refers to one's caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial castes who have borne the stigma of "untouchability" because of the extreme impurity



and pollution connected with their traditional occupations. SCs are called by different names in different parts of the country. These names were given by the caste Hindus as expressions of contempt. They include: shudra, harijans, das, chaandal, malezhha, dasyasa, rakshasa, asura, avarna, panchanama, chandala, dalits and untouchables. Within the Dalit community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. Chamar, Dusadh, Dom, Pasi, Mehtar, Mahar, Balai, Adi-dravid are numerically dominant scheduled castes.

The term 'Adivasi' comes from 'Adi', which means 'from earliest time', and 'vasi, which means 'resident of', The term literally means indigenous people or original inhabitants.' In India, Adivasis are called by different name such as 'scheduled tribes,' 'tribes', 'janajati', 'girijan', 'vanvasi', 'vanyajati', 'hill tribe', 'aboriginal', and 'native'.

According to the 2011 census the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprise about 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively, of India's population. Scheduled castes are notified in 31 states and union territories (UT) of India and scheduled tribes in 30 states.

Scheduled Tribes - Scheduled Castes were never an integral part of mainstream society. They were outside the caste system and at the bottom in the caste system. But they have their own culture, social organization. Dependent on the dominant castes. In many ways, their way of life is characterized by homogeneity, distinctiveness, self-sufficiency and

The scheduled castes from the very ancient times have been an integral part of the Hindu caste hierarchy, and have continued to exist as a part of the Hindu Jajmani system. Though they enjoyed important functional roles, they were considered ritually impure by the high caste Hindus.

they maintain symbiotic relationships with nature. Tribal art, dance and craft still have an intrinsic value. Although both polygamy and monogamy are prevalent among tribes, some tribals, such as Todas and Khasas of Juansar-Bawar, practice polyandry. Many tribal societies are patrilineal, but matriliney is also prevalent among a few tribes like Khasi, Jaintia and Garo.

On the other hand, scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. The scheduled castes are scattered on the agricultural plains. Demographically, while the scheduled tribes are concentrated in certain regions of the state (though there are certain scattered pockets also) and are in majority in the respective areas, the scheduled castes are largely

scattered in the high caste dominated villages all over the country. Most tribals are dependent on land and forest for their livelihood and are masters of their respective habitats, but in case of scheduled castes, by and large, they are landless and, in some cases, service castes, and all of them are dependent on the high castes for earning their livelihood. Tribal people have their own socio-political system called traditional panchayat system for exercising social and political control, and whenever there have been intolerable interferences from outside, they have reacted adversely and, in several cases, even violently.

The scheduled castes from the very ancient times have been an integral part of the Hindu caste hierarchy, and have continued to exist as a part of the Hindu Jajmani system. Though they enjoyed important functional roles, they were considered ritually impure by the high caste Hindus. These have led to different types of social inequality and disability even today. Scheduled castes were the lowest castes in the caste hierarchy of the Hindu social system. The scheduled tribes were the tribes that had not confirmed Hinduism and followed animistic lifestyles. Besides, there was no proper mobility for these people in the society. The problems of the SCs and STs emerged during the British regime and grew in independent India because the British method of administration continued even after independence. Although British colonialism added to the abnormal poverty and exploitation of Indian masses by plundering resources, the caste system and the untouchability and inhuman treatment that is meted out to the SCs is not a British invention. The Indian caste system and untouchability are the creation of Brahminical ideological forces.

Scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. Usually, these castes used to perform unclean occupations, so they were treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made them untouchables. Members of the scheduled castes faced many problems almost at every level - from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. Let us discuss some of the major problems faced by scheduled castes.

#### **Problems of untouchability**

Within the scheduled castes community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. Scheduled castes had to perform unclean occupations such as: carrying human waste, sweeping, scavenging, oil grinding, spinning, tanning, shoemaking, leather works and carrying dead animals. These were regarded as degraded and inferior. On account of the practice of untouchability, the SCs had to suffer from the disabilities like (i) They were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities such as village wells, ponds, temples, hotels, schools, hospitals, dharma shalas and choultries. (ii) They





were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. Nowadays also they are segregated from others spatially. (iii) They were allowed to work as labourers during construction or repair, storing grains etc. but later the houses were purified by sprinkling cow urine or cow dung. (iv) They were not allowed to carry umbrellas, wear shoes or golden ornaments or to milk cows. (v) They were denied the services of barber, washermen and tailors. (vi) They were not only kept at a distance but also denied various civic facilities. They were not allowed to enter the houses of members of the upper caste.

### Poverty

The most important reason for the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes was poverty and untouchability. The SCs were deprived of economic rights. Being at the lowest rung of caste hierarchy, they were severely oppressed and had no means of production. So, they remained poor and dependent upon others. As they could not afford proper food and adequate shelter, they suffered ill-health. Most of the members were below the poverty line. The problems associated with the poverty of SCs are:

- **Material deprivation** : They were deprived of material possessions. They were not allowed to have land, house and animals. In case of natural calamities, such as drought, famine and floods, they were the first to suffer. During famine they did not get any work and had to suffer from starvation.

- **Indebtedness and Bonded labour** : Most of them did not own land for the purpose of residence and agriculture. They lived in huts erected on the land of the master and worked as agricultural labour. Even today majority of the Scheduled Caste members are working as landless labourers. They are lowest paid workers; some of them continue to suffer as bonded labourers. They are exploited in the payment of wages so they have to take loans to survive. Banks do not give them loans because they have no property documents so they have to take from moneylenders and employers at a high rate of interest, so they end up becoming bonded labourers.

- **Educational Backwardness** : Illiteracy is responsible for their backwardness. Due to deprivation and poor socio - economic conditions, SCs did not attend school and remained educationally weak. As most of the SCs are illiterates they are not aware of the importance of education, and the safeguards and protection that are provided by the Constitution to ensure social justice. Most young ones discontinue their education before completion of their primary education. After independence schools have been opened for them but it has not been possible to enrol all children of SCs in schools. Nowadays the Scheduled Castes are getting educated due to various programmes such as Vayaskara shikshana samithi, Saksharatha andolana, Akshara dasoha, Mid-day meals to the schools.

- **Employment and Government Service**: After independence reservation in education and employment and other constitutional benefits helped a lot of members of scheduled castes to move forward to get higher education. Some of them have received higher education and are well placed. But they did not get proper guidance from anyone or at home, and this has adversely affected their academic achievements and attitude towards life and society.

- **Agrarian Society** : India is an agrarian society, where 60% of the population depend upon agriculture directly. Employment opportunities, either in agricultural farms or those industries depending upon agricultural products, depend upon a perfect monsoon. Their employment is therefore seasonal and unpredictable.



- **Health and Nutrition** : Most of the scheduled castes population suffer from malnutrition and protein and energy deficiency. Many of them live in unhygienic conditions due to poverty. They are often victims of various health problems because they lack proper housing, drinking water, and other basic amenities.

- **Political Disabilities** : The Scheduled Castes hardly participated in political matters for centuries. Before British rule, they had no say in politics, administration and general governance of the country. They were not allowed to hold any public post and political rights and representation were denied to them. After British rule, they were given the right to vote, due to the struggle of Dr. Ambedkar. After the independence through the constitution, political opportunities and rights have been provided for Scheduled Castes, but politically they are yet to become a decisive force.

- **Atrocities** : The scheduled castes are subjected to atrocities when they resist and demand their social, economic or political rights. The atrocities they face are many; their houses are burnt; their



domesticated animals are snatched away and women are subjected to humiliation. They are beaten mercilessly. They are also murdered and lynched.

### **The Problems of Scheduled Tribes**

Tribal communities are vulnerable today because of their inability to cope with the consequences of their integration with the mainstream economy, society, cultural and political systems from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. They suffer from so many disabilities, such as: indebtedness, land alienation, poverty, migration, industrialization and urbanization, exploitation by non-tribals, cultural difference, lack of awareness, lack of proper representation, linguistic disability, development projects and displacement, problem of identity, lack of communication, migration, geographic separation, economic disabilities, cultural disabilities, social disabilities and educational disabilities.

#### **Nature of problem**

**Economic problem :** Tribal people are economically the poorest people in India, most of them living below the poverty line. The tribal economy is based on forest and agriculture. Most of the tribals are landless. The tribals who are engaged in cultivation practice shifting and settled cultivation. The tribals possess uneconomic holdings because of which their crop yield is very

The illiterate parents do not consider their primary responsibility to give education to their children. The medium of instruction is another hindrance to promote education among the tribes. Most of the tribal languages do not have a script of their own.

small. Shifting cultivation, which is not ecologically sound, is still being practised by the tribals living on the higher slopes of hilly areas of the country. As estimated, more than six lakh tribal families in the North-Eastern states, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh practise shifting cultivation. This shifting cultivation is integrally linked to the tribal economy in the areas where it is practiced. The social and economic activities and rituals of tribals are centred around shifting agriculture. The problem of shifting cultivation is a very complex one, involving economic, social and psychological aspects of the tribal communities. Although shifting cultivation is one of the prime sources of living for the tribals, the same has been severely restricted.

**Tribal land alienation :** Land is not only the most important productive resource for the tribals, but also occupies an important place in their psyche as the mainstay of their social and religious practices.

The innocence, illiteracy and helplessness of the tribals are exploited by the zamindars, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors, through fraudulent transfers, forcible eviction, mortgages, leases and encroachments. Right from the British days, the tribal lands have been acquired for development projects and for public purposes. In this way, land alienation has resulted in landlessness among tribals. Various states enforced tenancy laws to protect landlessness of the tribals. But even these laws have not been able to prohibit the incidence of land alienation in tribal areas of Chotanagpur, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. As per the information available with the Ministry of Rural Development, as many as 4.65 lakh cases of alienation of tribal land covering an area of 9.17 lakh acres were registered in the various states of India. Against this, only two lakh cases were disposed of in favour of 1.56 lakh tribal families covering an area of 5.31 lakh acres. The states affected by large scale tribal land alienation include Andhra Pradesh (2.79 lakh acres), Madhya Pradesh (1.58 lakh acres), Karnataka (1.30 lakh acres), and Gujarat (1.16 lakh acres).

The problem of land alienation among tribals is perpetuated because of the lack of political and administrative will as reflected in the reluctance to amend legal provisions and plug the existing loopholes and swift administrative action to identify alienated land, and restore it to the tribals with delivery of possession.

**Indebtedness and Bonded labour :** The problem of indebtedness among tribals is not only an indication of their poverty but also reflects the wider economic malaise, lack of education, low purchasing/bargaining power and lack of resources for engaging in gainful activity and meeting emergent expenditure. Therefore, the problem continues to persist with increasing menace as the indebtedness pushes the tribals further into extreme conditions of poverty and forces them to dispense with their meagre resources, including the small bits and pieces of land to pay off the loans at exorbitant rates of interest. The initiation of commercial vending of liquor in tribal areas has started impoverishing the tribal population, making them victims of indebtedness and exploitation. As labourers, they do not get work around the year and the payment is neither regular nor proper. As a result, most of the tribals are in trouble and they have to take loans from money-lenders at a high rate of interest. When they are unable to return, they are made to repay it by working as bonded labour at nominal wage. Lack of a sound policy to support consumption credit to tribals has tended to make them dependent on usurious money-lenders, resulting in debt-bondage. The problem of tribal indebtedness often gets aggravated and compounded with the government subsidy-cum loan schemes which further lead the tribals into deep indebtedness.



**Educational Backwardness :** For tribals bread is more important than education. Many tribal families have to struggle hard to maintain their existence. Along with studies many tribal children have to work in their houses and fields. As a result, many tribal children drop out from the schools. Although, there has been a substantial increase in the literacy rates of STs during the last three developmental decades, the gap between the literacy rates of STs and those of the general population is not only persisting, but also found to be widening. Many of them are not aware about education, schools, colleges, universities, and degrees. The illiterate parents do not consider their primary responsibility to give education to their children. The medium of instruction is another hindrance to promote education among the tribes. Most of the tribal languages do not have a script of their own. Even in tribal areas the numbers of tribal teachers are very less. Communication problems always arise between the students and the teachers. The pace of progress of enrolment of both ST boys and girls at the middle level between 1990-91 and 1999-2000 has been quite impressive, as compared to that of the total population. The drop-out rate, which is another crucial indicator in the field of educational development, also shows that there has been a steady decline in respect of both general and ST categories. Literacy and education are higher in converted tribals than non-converted ones. Among the tribals female illiteracy is more acute.

**Conclusion**

Though scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes share the elements of poverty and exploitation, their demographic profile is different. Scheduled tribes are those communities which are outside the caste system of our society. On the other hand, scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are faced with many problems, which are of social, economic, political and educational in nature. Scheduled castes traditionally performed unclean occupations. So, they are treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made them untouchables. As a member of the lowest rank of Indian society, scheduled castes faced many problems at almost every level from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. For a long time, the Scheduled Castes were treated as untouchables and they were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities. They were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. The most important reason for the backwardness of the scheduled caste is poverty. The SCs were deprived of economic rights. So, they remained poor and dependent upon others. The problems associated with the poverty of SCs are material deprivation, indebtedness and bonded labour, educational backwardness, employment and

government service, health and nutrition, political disabilities, and the problem of atrocities.

Tribal communities continue to be vulnerable even today, not because they are poor, assetless and illiterate compared to the general population, but often their distinct vulnerability arises from their inability to negotiate and cope with the consequences of their integration with the mainstream economy, society, cultural and political systems from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. They are suffering from so many problems such as,

|       | Proportion of SCs |      | Proportion of STs |      |
|-------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
|       | 2001              | 2011 | 2001              | 2011 |
| Total | 16.2              | 16.6 | 8.2               | 8.6  |
| Rural | 17.9              | 18.5 | 10.4              | 11.3 |
| Urban | 11.8              | 12.6 | 2.4               | 2.8  |

indebtedness, land alienation, agriculture, poverty, migration, industrialization and urbanization, exploitation of non-tribals, cultural difference, lack of awareness, lack of proper representation, linguistic disability, displacement, mining, problem of identity, restrictions on forest resources, lack of communication, migration, geographic separation, problems of health and education, socio-economic and cultural problems, etc.

To overcome the historical discrimination and the problems of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, India has taken several steps to prohibit the practice of untouchability and to eradicate poverty. Despite the constitutional provisions and modern democracy, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India are still struggling hard for survival and for social justice. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are still facing problems due to policies under liberalization, privatization and globalization. Although the Constitution of India includes certain articles specific to the safeguards of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, their development still remains deficient. Many problems remain unresolved in tribal areas due to ineffective implementation of PESA and other development policies. These problems are displacement, mining, indebtedness, land alienation, deprivation of forest rights, Inadequate and inaccessible health services.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the concerned departments to make effective implementation of policies and programs for the development of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

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When it comes to Bengal, literature holds a huge place in our culture. The people in the land of Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyay and Satyajit Ray surely have a penchant for books and plays- but is the underlying fact visible yet? All the three literary geniuses I named belonged to wealthy or upper caste families.

# Bangaali Bhodrolok : Gaali Hain Kya?

## Debarati



Do you ever think about whether one lazy summer afternoon can alter your perspective about the dynamics of a place where you've lived all your life? At least that was the case with me when I stumbled upon an Anurag Verma podcast on Spotify where Dilip Mondal, an author at The Print, made me question my state's behaviour towards her lower caste sons and daughters.

Never really being a history-lover, I seldom dwelled on the details of post partition conditions of the people who had to relocate from East Pakistan to West Bengal after the midnight of 15th August, 1947. The podcast introduced me to the world of Namashudras- the lower caste people, who had to leave their all in the "Opaar Bangla" or the other side of Bengal, which was by then a Muslim dominated region.

Anticipating a warm welcome from their Hindu brethren, the Dalits of East Bengal were severely disappointed when they realised, that even in this new homeland, they would constantly be reminded of their "lower status" by upper caste Bengalis, popularly referred to as the 'Bhodrolok'. Not just the upper-class elites, but also the then ruling Congress government betrayed them with their controversial rehabilitation policy. The Namashudra peasants were shipped off en-masse to Dandakaranya and the Andamans, under the farce of a resource crunch of the State for proper refugee rehabilitation. Interestingly, upper caste refugees successfully established squatter colonies in the heart of Kolkata, by deploying their political connections and leveraging their networks. In a couple of decades, the colonies developed into thriving neighbourhoods in South Kolkata.

The caste problem in Bengal had been very much present even when eminent personalities like Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar



fought for social justice. Ishaan Mukherjee, a PhD scholar from Trinity College, wrote in his article for the Caravan about their biased approach towards the Hindu bhodrolok. Raja Ram Mohan's work in his later years often mentioned "Muslim tyranny" and how colonialization helped in curbing the problem. Ironically, it was Akbar Shah II who had given Ram Mohan the title of "Raja". Vidyasagar, one of the most revered figures in the history of Indian Academia, founded the Sanskrit College for Brahmin, Kayastha and Vaidya students but never encouraged lower castes to get admission in fear of disturbing the orthodox Bhodrolok of the college.

"Bhodrolok", the Bengali term, roughly translates to "polite men". Dwaipayan Sen also calls them the "gentle-folk" of Bengal. In Baangla, when we say a person is "Bhodro", we mean they are considerate, polite and empathetic men who are also morally upright. My 19-year-old, Rabinrasangeet and sweetmeat loving, fiercely Baangali soul was crushed when I got to know about the not-so-glorious truth about the Bhodrolok. I realized that the truth I believed in for so many years of Bengal being a casteless state and working towards the class equality of people under the left regime was, in reality, a blanketed lie which hid the well-oiled machinery encouraging caste-based segregation and biased empowerment of the Upper castes.

When it comes to Bengal, literature holds a huge place in our culture. The people in the land of Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyay and Satyajit Ray surely have a penchant for books and plays- but is the underlying fact visible yet? All the three literary geniuses I named belonged to wealthy or upper caste families. Even if they were able to highlight the perils of the minorities, we never really came across Dalit or Muslim writers and received first-hand information about these communities even though Muslims make up to 25% of the states' population.

The yesteryears bore testimony to the act of the CPI(M) using the Namashudras to win against Congress by promising them homes, and once the elections were done, showering police brutality and sexual harassment on the people who opposed the State's Government's plan of action (of sending them to the nearby states) concerning their own selves. In 2019-20, these were the same people who were asked for proof of not being illegal Bangladeshi immigrants by today's government. In the wake of the Bengal elections of this year, coming across the well-hidden caste-based atrocities of the ever-glorified and world's longest democratically elected left-rule government was surely a shock for me. Being an upper caste woman in the metropolitan and belonging to an educated middle-class family, I was spared from facing the gory truths of life that the lower castes still have to face. Yes, still. Naveen Bharti's study for Harvard, using 2011 census data of 800 people brought into limelight the segregation

carried out among people under the banner of development and urbanisation. The study was carried out in Kolkata and it was found that there are several colonies in the metropolitan city where only upper caste Bengali Hindus live and no Dalits are allowed.

My bubble of privilege with a calculated pinch of ignorance cooked up a perfect recipe for the shock. I watched a podcast that posed two very simple questions: who makes the intelligentsia of Bengal and the higher echelons of the state administration? How many Muslim or Dalit chief ministers has the state elected since 1947? It is discussed as to how the Bhodrolok have usurped the administration, the media houses and even the cultural industry that Bengalis hold so close to their heart. The great Indian Coffee House is home to Bengal's intellectuals who make and break the opinions of the people around them. Surprisingly (not so much at this point), they are all upper caste men, they are our beloved Bhodrolok. The veil of intellectuality is a mere prop to hide the spine-chilling facts. The mother to numerous patriots and literati of the nation never allowed the voices of the minorities rise, thus maintaining the "Sujalang-Sufalang" picture to the world.

To explain this phenomenon of Bengal being called a casteless state, I feel that the voice of the Dalits and the minorities were never allowed to rise. Their faulty representation in the popular media subjugated their will to come together and stand as a collective against the cause. In fact, it is so deeply entrenched among the people of Bengal that even the lower castes have spent their lives believing that there is no hierarchy at play. We are often all states like Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu or Uttar Pradesh casteist. What we don't realise is that we were able to vigil the wrongs against the lower castes because we heard their voice and saw their assertion. Media till date provides a top-bottom approach and provides material allowing us to say that the Dalits have no education or proper health or even proper sanitation at their disposal. What is really required is the Bottom-top approach which was adopted by Joan P. Mencher. Unlike Dalit Studies, the upper castes have seldom been brought under the microscope. We need to study the upper castes and find the roots of the problems and not just the solutions.

Living in Kolkata I have been hearing the term "bhodro-lok" and "bhodro-mohila" all my life. Four months back if someone had said to me that the word is almost equivalent to a slur, I would have laughed it off. But today, after the discovery and realisation of the hidden facts, I will surely be offended if someone calls me this in my city from now on. I, in my own small way, have tried to call them out. If you still have difficulty in believing me, I would urge you to look up the names of any five Bengalis who have excelled in their field and view it through the caste spectrum.

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# Educational status of SC women in Bihar

Literacy levels and educational opportunities for women in Bihar have improved in recent decades, but there is a vast difference between urban and rural women. India also successively disappoints in terms of its ranking on international education and empowerment measures for women. On the World Economic Forum’s global gender gap index, India ranked 112th out of 153 countries in 2020 and 140th out of 153 countries in 2021.

## Ekta



Since ancient times, Bihar has been the epicentre of education having a large network of universities like Nalanda, Sompura, Vikramshila which were built by different local rulers in different times and attracted students from all over the world. But the current situation of education in Bihar is very dismal where the overall literacy rate is lowest among the states of the country and have only 61.8 % literate people. It goes without saying that since time immemorial education has been regarded as a key variable determining power and influencing the level of wellbeing and prosperity.

We are familiar with the structural restrictions imposed on castes regarding access to education. The concern with disempowerment and empowerment since the beginning of 20th century has been related

powerfully to education. The call given by Swami Vivekananda for man- making education, the primacy of basic education for all emphasised by Gandhi, and stirring slogan of Dr. Ambedkar “educate, unite and agitate” for Scheduled Castes, demonstrate how keenly they felt the need for universalising the education to build a strong egalitarian country and a nation. Dr. Ambedkar knew that education and emancipation of the marginalized people in India go hand in hand.

After independence, the first governmental act to organise the education system was the setting up of the University Education Commission, headed by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan to suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit the requirements of the country. The report of the Commission on the issue of women’s education stated that: “Women’s present education is entirely irrelevant to the life they have to lead. It is not only



a waste but often a definite disability. The present system of women's education, based as it is upon men's needs, does not in any way make them fit for coping with the problems of daily life. The modern educated Indian women are neither happy nor contented nor socially useful. She is a misfit in life. She is highly suppressed, and needs opportunities for self-expression".

A National Committee on Women's Education was appointed by the government in 1958 to find out the difficulties that hindered the progress of girl's education and to make recommendations in order to bring girls education on par with the boys. However, India has done well in literacy from 12 % in independence to 73 % according to latest census data but we have not filled up the gap between men and women literacy. And this gap in Bihar is a whopping 24.8% with female literacy at 46.40%. And when we talk about scheduled castes women, literacy becomes worse because of various socio-cultural reasons. The female literacy rate in Bihar is the second-lowest in the country.

Literacy levels and educational opportunities for women in Bihar have improved in recent decades, but there is a vast difference between urban and rural women. India also successively disappoints in terms of its ranking on international education and empowerment measures for women. On the World Economic Forum's global gender gap index, India ranked 112th out of 153 countries in 2020 and 140th out of 153 countries in 2021.

The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation. Despite various efforts by governments on the educational Status of women in Bihar, 53.60 % women are still illiterate. There are fundamental obstacles in this regard. They include; poor school environment, low enrolment ratio, lack of female and SCs teachers, early / child marriage and most importantly caste discrimination, which is still prevalent in rural areas. The school environment for girls in rural Bihar is not particularly stimulating and the major problem is the lack of clean and separate toilets facilities in schools, which majorly impact the increase of the school drop out of girls as compared to boys.

Girls from rural areas may be enrolled at the beginning of the year but they do not always remain in schools. Girls are often taken out of schools to share family responsibilities and early marriage. Most child marriage involve underage women, many of whom are in poor socio-economic conditions. Bihar is amongst the highest child marriage rates in India. There is a high correlation between female literacy and early female marriages. Most often, families with lower literacy rates get their children, especially girls, married off early due to societal compulsions to marry their daughters as early as possible. The prevalence of child marriage in India is the highest amongst Scheduled Tribe girls (15 %) followed by Scheduled

Castes (13%), according to a report released by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). As India is a gender-segregated society, lack of female teachers is a very important factor contributing to the low literacy rate of women. It is one of the barriers to girls' education. Girls are more likely to attend schools and have higher academic achievements if they have female teachers to look up to as role models.

It is evident that the discrimination of lower castes has resulted in high dropout rates and low enrolment rates. The circumstances of a girl child situated at the intersection of the underprivileged sex, from a rural background, belonging to a Dalit or tribal family, makes it very difficult for her to access education despite the initiatives taken by our government to make Universal Elementary Education possible for all. In pan India context school dropout ratio for scheduled castes female for class 1-5, class 6-8 and class 9-12 is 35%, 58% and 73% respectively, However in Bihar this is humongous where school dropout ratio for scheduled castes female for class 1-5, class 6-8 and class 9-12 is 55%, 80% and 92%, which mean only 8% female reach to the next level class in secondary level

**The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992 provided constitutional sanctity to panchayats and enlarged their space for women's representation and their agency in matters of governance and moved decisions making closer to them. The Act particularly sought to correct the prolonged marginalization of scheduled castes women.**

and 20% in middle school however 45% in primary level. The reason for this high rate of school dropout among SC females is discussed above and by working on those issues the situation of educational status of women in school has been improved with the help of the government.

Working on the upliftment of women in education there should be emphasis on the eradication of illiteracy, universal primary education and introduction of job-orientation and there should be efforts directed towards higher enrolment and retention of girls in schools, increase in the number of women teachers especially in the rural areas, expansion of functional literacy programmes especially in areas having low female literacy, increasing separate women's polytechnics for imparting training in arts, crafts etc. Co-educational institutions would be encouraged as far as possible. By doing these all initiatives the gender parity can



be established in education which will definitely deliver gender justice even in marginalized sections of the society.

Education has played an important role in determining the level of socio-economic empowerment of SC women in Bihar. Due to low levels of education, SC women are engaged in menial jobs in the unorganized sector. This has resulted in less income, poor living quality and lower level of social empowerment. Social Empowerment plays an important role in the advancement of society. More socially developed the country is, the more socially empowered their women are. It gives the capacity to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals and help others to maximize the quality of their lives.



Education is the single most important means for individuals to improve personal endowment, build capability levels to be employed in white collared jobs, overcome constraints, be empowered and improve quality of life. Despite India's substantial investments in primary schooling, gaps in schooling persist across gender and caste—with scheduled castes girls being particularly disadvantaged. The representation of SC women in state legislatures may help to mitigate this disadvantage. Specifically, because of her intersecting gender and caste identities, a SC woman legislator might maintain a strong sense of solidarity especially with SC girls and women and support legislative policies benefiting them. In a study of Boston University, it is found that the representation of SC/ST women in state legislatures was positively associated with SC/ST

girls' grade completion and reduced gender-caste gaps in primary-school attainment in India.

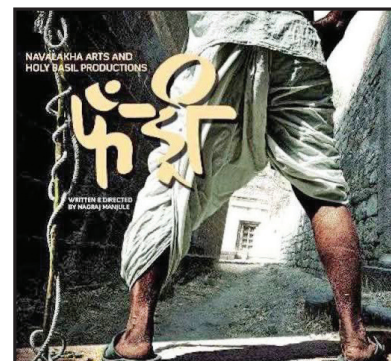
SC Women's representation in the parliament and local governments is a critical measure of their political empowerment. And Political Empowerment involves participation of women in the political field and in various decision-making bodies. Empowerment in the real sense includes higher literacy levels, development of education, better health care, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities, improved standard of living. The level of political awareness in SC women in Bihar is very poor due to low literacy rate and awareness. Dalit women participation in active political arena has been dismally low.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992 provided constitutional sanctity to panchayats and enlarged their space for women's representation and their agency in matters of governance and moved decisions making closer to them. The Act particularly sought to correct the prolonged marginalization of scheduled castes women. This Act along with the ensuing State Acts on Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) provided for mandatory provisions of (a) reservation of seats and (b) the obligatory Gramsabha meetings have given SCs in villages an opportunity to participate in the political decision-making. But it is seen that those elected women in the post of Mukhiya, panchayat members only have de jure positions because the defector power is exercised by their male counterparts. Therefore, without actual participation of women in politics and governance will merely be a mirage to gain gender equality within the caste and the society. The active participation of SC women and incorporation of their perspectives in all levels of decision making was essential to meet the goals of equality, justice and development.

Level of education among Dalit Women must be raised. That will open up any gainful job opportunities for them. Increased number of Dalit women getting into employment sector can reduce prevailing gender discrimination and subordination of women in future. For the accelerated socio-economic development of any community, the active participation of women is essential. The need of the hour therefore is not to sympathize with the subordination of Dalit women in our society, but to equip them with enough knowledge, support and resources so that they stand up for themselves. There is a dire need of all these to uplift the whole scheduled castes society and women can play their active role on this and without an empowered woman, there will be no equity in the society. The gap between gender and caste is also filled-up by the educated, socially and politically empowered women.

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# Indian cinema and idea of equality

After shunning the Dalit life for a long time, Indian cinema is now awakening to the arrival of the Dalit hero, opines Dr. Harish Wankhede, a teacher from Jawaharlal Nehru University, visiting scholar at Stanford University, and a leading commentator and scholar of Indian films. Excerpts from his speech delivered in Delhi in April this year.

## Dr. Harish



The interest in cinema has taken a centre stage in the academic discussion especially in History and Sociological discourses. Within the political studies such interest is peripheral. Though the political science discipline, especially the nationalist thought is often engaged with the ideas of inclusion and participation, diversity and representation, it appears that these values are not utilized to examine the non-political spheres, like the cinema industry. For example, the idea of Social Harmony is one of major theme within the Hindu political thoughts, however we find very few incidents when this idea is applicable to examine the cultural institutions like theatre art and cinema.

Cinema is crucial cultural institution. Because we often know that this space is being used not only to entertain the audience but it also allows us to develop a reflexive capacity to understand the

social and class order. There is a popular notion about Hindi/Bollywood cinema that it is mostly about the popular songs and dances (what we call the 'Item Numbers') illogical fight sequences, melodrama or some kind of banal 'masala' elements that appears on the screen. It bewitches us and allows us to escape from the actual social conditions. It creates a fictional world distanced from the social realities and force us to examine cinema as passive recipient of illogical entertainment. It is not something great to relish or cherish about, especially within the intellectual world. But we also acknowledge that cinema has a deep impact in constructing national symbols, influence our social and cultural behaviour and represent the idea of good society.

I want you to think about cinema as a medium that is overtly distanced from India's social realities, mainly the question of caste, since its inception. Like as we have discussed earlier, that Indian society represents the idea of Social Harmony, under which distinct caste and social groups find their legitimate space



and duties. It is the participation of various groups that make our society equitable and harmonious. However, in cinema we see that the idea of caste is completely absent and narratives are woven mainly around the identities of the social elites.

When the cinema represents the entertainment value, claiming that it is an wholesome entertainment of all, does it represent the demands and interests of different caste groups? Where is the representation of Dalits, Adivasis or OBCs on silver screen? Even if sporadically it manages to appear, what happens to our minds and social consciousness. Do we welcome the Dalit characters wholeheartedly?

In Hollywood cinema, the need to diversify the characters on screen is now an acceptable norm. In the recent Oscar Awards presentations (2022), we have witnessed rich diversity in films, characters and

Though the idea of entertainment was mostly associated with the servile/ lower castes, earlier we can witness that cinema has changed this value. Now, cinema art is blended with the values of cultural nationalism and produced to serve the class and social interest of the upper caste elites. The new entertainment business is thus governed by the social elites, disallowing the conventional class of entertainers to play important role in new business.

artists. Films like 'Coda' winning the best film award is about physically challenged character. Steven Spielberg's 'West Side Story', is basically the story about the migrants, or the 'Power of the Dog' is about gay people. Interestingly, the Indian entry, 'Khabar Lehariyan' is about the struggles of Dalit women reporters. The Oscar's this time, presented social and racial diversity meaningfully. Do you think that Hindi cinema has the capacity or courage to do that? And why am I asking this question? Because for a very long time, cinema was seen as a part of the cultural values represented by the social elites which visibly relegates the issues and concerns of the Adivasi, Dalit, and OBC groups from the cinema screen.

My argument about this absence goes like this: I would like to ponder- before the arrival of the modern entertainment industry, what were the forms of entertainment? Who used to entertain us? What was the logic of entertainment before the arrival of the modern entertainment industry like cinema or theatre? The traditional entertainers like singers, dancers or the artists playing various musical instruments or puppeteers or people presenting

shows displaying physical skills, controllers of animals etc. had a distinct social and class location with the society. Artists would entertain the people, we call them the 'Yajman' (patrons). Most of the artist in the domain of the entertainment would surely fall into the category of service class.

There is a need to understand the social and class status of the entertainers. For example, we believe that 'Apsaras' (Courtesans) were the entertainers, that dance and sing for the kings and Gods. These dancing women were set apart from the dignified and chaste women of the household. Though they were also been called 'apsaras' and 'divine bodies' -engaged in spiritual objectives, the purpose of such distinctions was often to retain the hierarchies between ruling elites, common people and the service classes. On the conventional scale of dignity, women artists were incomparable to the virtuous wives and daughters of the social elite families.

Many believe that this division between the 'Yajmans' (patrons) and those who entertained them was the division between the lowly professions and the master class- the division of service class and the ruling elites. And this division prevailed for a long time. As a result, we believe the artists job is to serve. He/She has some kind of skill, some kind of ability to entertain, or the possibility to quench the quest for pleasure. That was the kind of relationship between the audience and the performer, between the actor and the audience. It was the relationship between the Master and the Service Class.

Modernity introduced tremendous changes into the conventional forms of entertainment and disturbed the traditional power relationships. It can be substantiated by taking the example of India's first film, Dadasaheb Phalke's 'Raja Harishchandra'. When Phalke was making this film, he wanted to cast a female actor in the role of Tarabai and he face extreme difficulties to find a woman actor. Why? Because women of the 'good household' thought that coming on stage, dancing and be in public domain is a lowly attribute. Stage or Cinema is not the professions for a chaste woman or a profession of honour or dignity for that matter. The woman, mainly belonged to the upper caste strata decided not to participate in that film. Phalke himself had to impersonate the woman's character and act as a woman. This kind of conservative values were present in the entertainment business. But it has surely changed.

The change in the structural values of popular entertainment art has emerge because of the political context. The social elites of that time imagined that the instrument of art and cinema can become a handy tool to create some sense of cultural nationalism. Cinema can be an important tool to reinvent cultural values as the stories of national past can be showcased to connect the general mass. The mythological stories, folklores became rich cultural assets to define nationalism. The nationalist elites



recognized that a national signifiers can be crafted by using the tool of cinema. Second, it was also thought that Cinema is a profitable industry. It is also capital-intensive business, in which only the rich can invest. The producers and film directors overtly belonged to the social elite groups. Importantly, people who were traditionally entertaining the masses or the 'Yajmans' (patrons) were now side lined and those taking care of cinema as new model of entertainment were mainly coming from social elite background. The upper caste and the rich capitalist elites became the dominant masters of the cinema business, whereas the conventional artist (often belonged to service castes) found almost no participation and recognition into the new show business. They were compulsorily out of the films or entertainment business.

Though the idea of entertainment was mostly associated with the servile/lower castes, earlier we can witness that cinema has changed this value. Now, cinema art is blended with the values of cultural nationalism and produced to serve the class and social interest of the upper caste elites. The new entertainment business is thus governed by the social elites, disallowing the conventional class of entertainers to play important role in new business. There were entertainers who use to narrate their local or everyday stories, myths and folklores of which the Dalit-Bahujan people use to play a crucial part. The participation of social elites, I believe, has not only

Bahujan and Adivasis.

In the long history of Hindi cinema, it is only on occasion that the issues and characters related to untouchability, caste discrimination and atrocities are presented on screen. For example till 1960s, very few films (two exceptions like 'Achhut Kanya', or later on, after independence, 'Sujata') discussed the caste question. Apart from these two or three films, you will find that there is no mentioning of lower caste identities or untouchability on screen. That was the exclusion of the people who used to entertain the people before the arrival of cinema. In the 1970s, there was some change in the entertainment business, especially with the arrival of films that are associated with the idea of meaningful-intellectual cinema, often called as Art-house/Parallel Cinema. Films like 'Manthan', 'Nishant', 'Paar', 'Sadgati', 'Samar' etc., offered the audience a new cinematic experience showcasing them the brutal realities of feudal-caste order and the exploitative power relationships.

But, while reflecting on these points, I would like to argue that cinema industry was indulged in some sort of politics that forcefully avoided and neglected the Dalit-Bahujan questions. For example, the initial years of Cinema making (the 1940s and 50s) was also the period when Dr. Ambedkar was making a significant impact in Mumbai's socio-political life. He was the biggest leader of the Untouchable castes and was making the claims for substantive social justice policies for the marginalized communities. Importantly, by late 1940s, he emerged as a significant political leader at the national level and contributed immensely in drafting the constitution of new India. However, his contribution and heroic personality found no takers in the Bombay film industry. You will find no reflection on that particular persona in cinema. He was in Mumbai, he was the biggest leader, and he was a dominant figure in the political circles. But when it comes to cinema, he has no presence. Similarly, in the 70s when sensitive and serious films like 'Bazaar', 'Ankush', 'Ardhsatya', 'Manthan' etc. were made, you will find that the Panthers Movement was a significant radical movement in Maharashtra. In Mumbai, other social organisations were also coming protesting against cases of atrocity issues and were mobilising people for bringing political change. One can witness the arrival of robust Dalit political class in the public sphere, however in cinematic narratives such heroic presence of the young political Dalits was overtly neglected. Instead, in parallel cinema a stereotypical Dalit image id presented, showcasing them as wretched, precarious and powerless being.

In the 90s there was a small change again. Films like 'Aarakshan', 'Guddu Rangeea', 'Masaan', 'Newton', 'Sonchiriyaa', 'Manjhi' and a series of films somewhere suggested that now the Dalit character, with some kind of a middle-class location, is arriving on the screen. But we can see again that these films are mostly about the growing middle-class tendencies amongst the Dalits. (On page 22)



the changed the class character of entertainment but also the values representation in the narratives. In the new model of film-based entertainment, we see no participation of the marginalized communities in the film-making process. Importantly, on screen too, there is a dominant presence of the social elite characters and representation of their socio-cultural values, whereas there is overt neglect or absence of the characters and stories related to the Dalit-

# Changed status of SC communities in Delhi



As per the 2011 census, the total population of NCT of Delhi was 167.88 lakhs, out of which the SC population is 28.12 lakh which comes to 16.75%. Due to the fast process of urbanization, the population in the urban areas has been increasing rapidly as 97.08% of the total population of the SCs resides in urban areas and only 2.92 % in rural areas. Out of the total urban population of 163.69 lakh, the SC population is 27.30 lakh and of the total rural population of 4.19 lakh, the SC rural population is 0.82 lakh. This shows that the SC population is predominantly residing in urban areas.

## Sanjana

In its 75 years of independence, India has several achievements to its credit. It has built a modern economy (second fastest growing economy), remained a democracy, lifted millions out of poverty and whatnot. India has taken its steps towards becoming one of the largest democracies in the world, overcoming a plethora of challenges to earn global recognition. India has come a long way since Independence, leaving behind a string of landmarks that define its journey from the agony of Partition to a strong, powerful and developing nation.

Scheduled castes are those castes/races in the country that suffer from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of age-old practice of untouchability and certain others on account of lack of infrastructure facilities and geographical isolation and who need special consideration for safeguarding their interests and for their accelerated socio- economic development.

These communities were notified as Scheduled Castes as per provisions contained in Clause 1 of Article 341 of the Constitution.

However, multiple socio economic and political factors are behind the changes that have come after India's independence. But, the most significant changes have occurred after 1991. The unexpected changes that have come in the last three decades are different in many ways than before. The market-driven new economy, rise of caste identity, access to quality education, and empowerment schemes have made the change possible. The changing facets of the Indian caste system, factors of change, and its impact on Indian socio-political life in contemporary India are what defines India's Growth.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the process of change about social customs and practices became apparent. The main reason for this change was the introduction of modern education and new forms of communication. The most influential leader of modern India's anti- caste movement was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who brought the discourse into the



political domain and ultimately to its logical end by ensuring positive discrimination (reservation) policy as a constitutional provision. His voluminous writings on upper caste power and prejudice in Hindu society are a valuable reference. To realize his vision, Dr. Ambedkar gave the call "Educate, Organize and Agitate". After independence, Indian govt paid much importance to Dr. Ambedkar's vision and formalized policies to empower Dalit community and lower castes and tribes making reservation policy in legislature, jobs and education a constitutional provision and declared all forms including caste-based discrimination illegal, thus a punishable offence.

**Scheduled Castes Population :** As per the 2011 census, the total population of NCT of Delhi was 167.88 lakhs, out of which the SC population is 28.12 lakh which comes to 16.75%. Due to the fast process of urbanization, the population in the urban areas has been increasing rapidly as 97.08% of the total population of the SCs resides in urban areas and only 2.92 % in rural areas. Out of the total urban population of 163.69 lakh, the SC population is 27.30 lakh and of the total rural population of 4.19 lakh, the SC rural population is 0.82 lakh. This shows that the SC population is predominantly residing in urban areas.

The SC literacy rate in 1991 was below Delhi's literacy rate of 75.29%, it remains above the national literacy rate of 52.11%. In Delhi, 31.64% of the population is employed; of the SC population of 17.95 lakh, 29% is waged.

#### **EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

Various scholarships are provided to the students belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) to ensure that education is not denied due to the poor financial condition of their families. Moreover, various educational schemes have been introduced for the benefit of SC students in Delhi. 2900 students were benefited under various scholarship schemes in 1998-99. About 40,000 school students were provided free books and stationery and 406 medical and engineering students studying in professional colleges benefited through the Book Bank Scheme in 1998-99. Tuition fees were reimbursed to about 1,700 polytechnic students. Hostel facilities were also given to 100 boys and 36 girls during 1998-99.

The Directorate of training and technical education-initiated schemes to provide facilities to SC category students so that they can be motivated to pursue their studies without financial burden or dependence on their parents. The Delhi School of Engineering and Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology provides coaching classes for SC students. All this leads to the Academic Development of SC Students.

#### **ECONOMIC UPLIFTMENT PROGRAMMES**

The unwaged SC population of Delhi has been taken into consideration by The Delhi Scheduled Castes Financial and Development Corporation (DSCFDC) which has been set up to promote self-

employment opportunities for the SC population. In 1998-99, about 1,798 SC people were provided financial assistance in the form of margin money loans at 4% interest per annum. Unemployed SC youths are being given three months training in various ITIs as gas welders, plumbers and scooter mechanics to help them to start their own ventures. A computerized footwear design centre, established in collaboration with UNDP, provides assistance to leather artisans. Reimbursement of fees paid by SC students admitted in coaching institutions for combined entrance examinations. The New Delhi Municipal Council gives incentive as scholarship for promotion of education among SC students from class 1 to 5th which lead to the promotion of education and curtail the drop-out rate of students.

#### **REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES**

The Delhi School of Social Work conducted a survey in 1997 and analysed that there are about 1.39 lakh dry latrines in Delhi with 7,961 scavengers engaged in the profession. In 1998- 99, under the Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers scheme, 203 scavengers were rehabilitated through training and 1,786 scavengers were given financial assistance for self- employment.

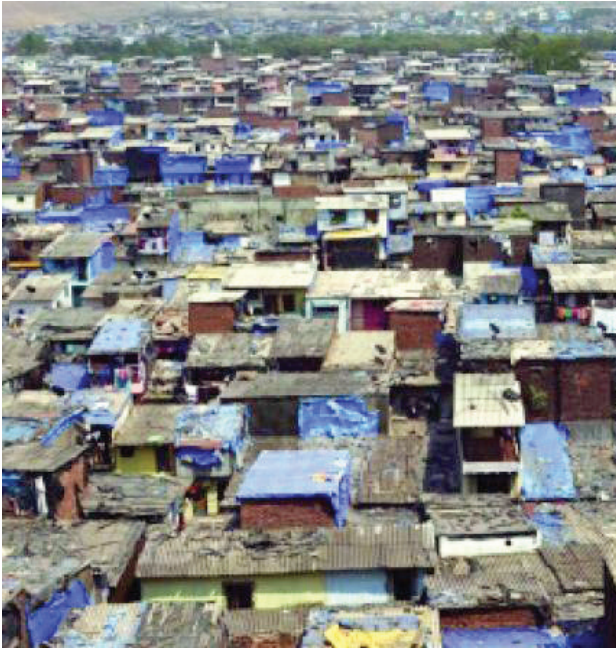
The Scheduled Castes Development (SCD) Bureau of the Ministry aims to promote the welfare of Scheduled Castes through their educational, economic and social empowerment. Efforts made by State Governments and Central Ministries for protecting and promoting the interests of Scheduled Castes are also monitored.

#### **GENERAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES**

There are several other schemes for the benefit of the SC population. Widows are given a financial grant of Rs. 5,000 for their daughter's marriage. Dhobi ghats are being developed through the MCD and NDMC. Financial assistance is given to orphaned girls for their marriage, to economically poor SC parents on the birth of a daughter and to OBCs for their upliftment through DSCFDC. In addition, SCs in rural and urban areas receive housing subsidies.

Apart from these, the Delhi government grants for land improvement, supply of production inputs and agriculture implements, training to SC candidates in modern poultry farming. In the cooperation sector, a credit to SC members of co-operative societies helps SC members financially.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the nodal Ministry to oversee the interests of the Scheduled Castes. The primary responsibility for



promotion of interests of the Scheduled Castes rests with all the Central Ministries in the area of their operations and the State Governments, the Ministry complements their efforts by way of interventions in critical sectors through specifically tailored schemes. The Scheduled Castes Development (SCD)

Bureau of the Ministry aims to promote the welfare of Scheduled Castes through their educational, economic and social empowerment. Efforts made by State Governments and Central Ministries for protecting and promoting the interests of Scheduled Castes are also monitored. The fundamental objectives and the basic operative principles of the Special Central Assistance Scheme are:

(a) economic development of the SC target groups by way of employment or self-employment (b) special emphasis on training and skill development with forward linkages for employment and occupational diversification It has been the endeavour of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to serve the larger cause of the target group by guiding the State Governments in directing their efforts and initiatives from time to time. As a further initiative, the ministry has drawn a new road map for the empowerment of the SC target groups in tune with the opportunities offered by the modern era of globalization and liberalization. In this exercise the most important component is quality and excellence, both in professional education and training which have a direct linkage with high end employment.

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# Indian cinema

**(From page 19)** These are mainly post-globalisation films. The agenda of these films was to showcase that the Dalit problem is a sporadic individual concern and not a systemic-structural problem. Importantly, the political change that emerged due to the powerful arrival of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh was neglected by the filmmakers. Also in states like Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Telangana and Punjab we can see the powerful Dalit social and cultural movements, however cinema decided not to recognize this political development and stay away from the caste question.

The big change in the Dalit representation in cinema has come up in Tamil and Marathi film industry. If you see certain directors (especially belonged to Dalit castes) and their films you can witness an alternative approach to deal with cinematic art- For example: Pa. Ranjith's 'Madras', 'Kabali', 'Kala', 'Sarpatta Parambarai'- these films created what you call the arrival of Dalit hero. In these films the Dalit character is not just depicted as degraded, a victimized body but he is imagined as powerful man, with capacity and the courage to torment and challenge the larger hierarchical power and the social relationship. In Mari Selvaraj's films like

'Asuran' and 'Karnan', or in Marathi, Nagraj Manjule's films like 'Fandry', 'Sairat', 'Pistulya' or very recently 'Jhund', you will find the arrival of Dalit characters that are conscious, heroic and desperate to bring social change. Or recently, Shailesh Narawade's Marathi film named 'Jayanti', which also won the Marathi Filmfare Award this time, or earlier Niraj Ghaiwan's 'Masaan', are making a different impact, suggesting that cinema requires new ideological orientation to free it from the cultural hegemony of the social elites. This is a welcoming change.

The proponents of nationalist culture though valorise the idea of Social Harmony it is mostly unavailable in the sphere of popular culture, especially the cinema making enterprise. It is needed that the cinema business, narratives and representation of characters on screen shall be critically examined to understand if the cinema industry is respecting the value of social harmony or not. There is an urgent need to democratise the institutions of popular art and culture, allowing the Dalit-Adivasi-Bahujan groups to play a crucial role.

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# Punjab, where partition changed demography



Punjab had seen Congress, Akali Dal and BJP-Akali Dal governments for the past three decades. But Dalits continued to be marginalized. This mainly happened because Dalits continued to be divided. Dalit leaders from all the parties, failed to prove themselves. Dalit Deras are not aware of political reality and lack any intellectual inputs. They also have strong traditional caste bias. Parties like BSP, led by Mayawati failed to perform despite having favourable conditions because of clear and restricted political aims. The educated class among Dalits, is also confused.

## Ramesh Chander



Dalits of Punjab, under the leadership of Gadri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, founding father of AD-dharam Mandal, launched in 1926, fought for independence but were equally concerned about the social status of depressed classes. Dalits of Punjab, in cooperation with Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Gopal Singh Khalsa, Seth Kishan Dass extended support to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his relentless struggle to get a due and rightful space for the depressed classes. Punjab Dalits stood by Dr. Ambedkar pleading the case of Dalits in the Round Table Conferences in London which resulted in PM Ramsey MacDonald's 'Communal Award' accepting Dalits as a separate entity and not as Hindus. The rest is history as to how Dr. Ambedkar was made to sign the 'Poona Pact' in 1932 to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi and retain the depressed classes in the Hindu fold with special provisions of reservation.

Dalits in Punjab not merely fought for social space

but also political space along with Dr. Ambedkar. This was certainly aimed at equal partnership. Dalits contested elections of 1937 under the banner of the Unionist Party of Punjab and also All India Scheduled Castes Federation, floated by Babasaheb Ambedkar and left their mark on the political map of the country. This is significant to note that Punjabi leather businessmen Seth Kishan Dass, Baba Budh Singh played a major role to ensure entry of Dr. Ambedkar in constituent Assembly in 1946 when Congress and other parties closed the doors for him. It is because of their efforts that Dr. Ambedkar entered the Bengal constituent Assembly. The role of Joginder Nath Mandal is also noteworthy in this direction. Joginder Nath later became the first law minister of Pakistan and later came back to India. But that is a different story. This indicates that Punjab Dalits were at the forefront with other fellows in the country with great amount of confidence.

It is noteworthy that socio-political and socio-spiritual considerations were equally crucial in shaping the role of Punjab Dalits. Caste sentiments



were not intensified in Punjab, compared to other parts of India. Muslim influence was equally important factor as undivided Punjab was a Muslim dominated province. Sufi tradition and Sikh approach of equality were also important to determine the mindset of Dalits. Arya Samaj had a major contribution in bringing Dalits in the main fold also with Jatpaat Todak Mandal, founded by Sant Ram B A.

Despite this background, Punjab Dalits were marginalized in pre and post-independence periods. Harish Puri, political analyst, had observed that Jinnah had proposed to divide the Kamins population equally between India and Pakistan. He had argued that Kamins was considered neither Hindu nor Muslim and community was engaged in conservancy work. It was proposed that both India and Pakistan need their services. Dr. Ambedkar and Nehru intervened when Dalits in Pakistan were prohibited from leaving Pakistan. In India, on another hand, Dalits were not allowed to live in refugee camps by caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar intervened in the situation, talked to Nehru, sent his emissary to ensure that Dalits are

**Dalit Deras also came up during the same period. Kanshi Ram appeared on the scene in mid-seventies with BAMCEF, DS4 and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and successfully shaped the Dalit psyche and converted into a force.**

rehabilitated properly. Partition resulted into major demographic change in Punjab, which also awakened Dalits in Punjab at political level. Several Dalit leaders decided to side with Congress to counter influence of All India Scheduled Case Federation, Shiromani Akali Dal and Adi Dharma. Some of them found ministerial berths. All these incidents were shaping Dalit mindset in Punjab, resulting several under currents. Dr. Ambedkar visited Punjab in 1951 and toured the entire state. To counter possible fall out of Dr. Ambedkar's visit, Akali Dal projected Master Tara Singh while Congress propped up Prithvi Singh Azad (Ravidassia), Yashwant Rai (Balmiki), Chaudhary Sunder Singh (Ravidassia), Master Gurbanta Singh and Master Sadhu Ram. Jan Sangh took steps in this direction but could not do much. All these leaders tried to create their influence in their respective sects.

Language was another factor. A large number of Punjab Dalits opted to record their language as Hindi when Punjabi was equally dominant language. Dalits started moving to foreign countries in the sixties, particularly to England and later to the Middle east. This was, of course, for economic uplifting. This process further accelerated political awakening among Dalits. Their political aspirations arose. The Republican Party was a dominant political entity during this period. However, the party was divided.

One faction even joined hands with Akali Dal. The faction also joined the Akali Dal government in 1966. But Dalits got divided in the process as all the political parties were trying to bring them under influence.

Dalits in Punjab got a boost when they embraced various Deras like Satsang Beas, Nirankaris and outfits of Gurmit Ram Rahim Singh. Dalit Deras also came up during the same period. They mainly included Sachkhand Ballan in Jalandhar and Swami Gurdip Giri Dera in Pathankot. Kanshi Ram appeared on the scene in mid-seventies with BAMCEF, DS4 and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and successfully shaped the Dalit psyche and converted into a force. With 34 reserved seats in Assembly and four in Lok Sabha, Dalit vote bank became much stronger.

Punjab had seen Congress, Akali Dal and BJP-Akali Dal governments for the past three decades. But Dalits continued to be marginalized. This mainly happened because Dalits continued to be divided. Dalit leaders from all the parties, failed to prove themselves. Dalit Deras are not aware of political reality and lack any intellectual inputs. They also have strong traditional caste bias. Parties like BSP, led by Mayawati failed to perform despite having favourable conditions because of clear and restricted political aims. The educated class among Dalits, is also confused.

The solution to this deadlock can be found none other than by Dalits. They need to get their space in politics, society, economics and all spheres of life as they constitute 35%. Some signs are seen among youths. For example, Congress picked up Charanjit Singh Channi for the post of chief minister. It was not successful only because of infighting in Congress but also due to strong under current caste factors. BJP made Vijay Sampla minister of state. Akali Dal also tried to woo Dalits because of increasing political awareness among Dalits. Akali Dal even joined hands with BSP. Another significant factor, all political parties have managed to win Dalit votes. This included even new entrants like AAP. But fragmentation of Dalit votes was seen at every level.

AAP won Punjab Assembly election and came to power. Out of 92 seats bagged by AAP, 28 are reserved. Unfortunately, AAP did not choose a single Dalit leader for a single Rajya Sabha seat when elections were held for seven seats.

Punjab stands as a case for the well-established fact that democracy should never be restricted to the political arena. It has to accommodate all walks of life. Dalits are politically aware and awakened on one hand, but their situation has not improved on another hand. This is the time for deep introspection. Why Dalits did not support Charanjit Singh Channi? Dalits did not support the Akali Dal-BSP alliance, Congress or BJP either. Is it because of caste considerations? This is the political scenario when Dalit population is 35% in Punjab.

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# Evolution of SCs in Jammu & Kashmir since 1947



To overcome the problems of credit facilities and risk of the business/ market, to avoid the collapse of the Business unit of first-generation entrepreneurs, the State Government of J&K came up with an Institute called JKEDI (Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute) to promote and implement entrepreneurship programmes.

## Sushma



The scheduled castes are officially designated groups of people and among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India. For much of the period of British Rule in the Indian sub-continent they were known as depressed classes. The Dalits officially designated Scheduled castes; constitute one-sixth of the Indian Population. However, for centuries they were forced to live as second-class citizens and many were not considered to be a part of the Indian Varna system of social hierarchy.

Scheduled Castes distribution in India by state and Union Territory according to the 2011 census, Punjab had the highest percentage of its population as scheduled castes (32%). The scheduled castes comprise about 16.6% of India's population, according to the 2011 census. The Government of India 1935 Act was promulgated on the basis of the 1931 census that was conducted by the then British rule. The reservation for the depressed classes was

incorporated into the Act, which came into force in 1937.

### Evolution of Scheduled Castes with special reference to Jammu Kashmir union territory

Since the Independence of India, the scheduled castes were given reservation status, guaranteeing political representation and the constitution laid down the general principles of positive discrimination for Scheduled Castes as :

#### PART-I

1.1 Definition of Scheduled Castes Article 341- (1)

1.2. Reservations in services, / Posts Article 46, Article 335

1.3. List of scheduled castes The Constitution (Scheduled castes) order 1950, modified order 1956

#### PART-II

Special Representation in service orders, relaxations, and concessions available in confirmation, departmental promotions, training of class- 1 officers' promotions and many more.

Jammu and Kashmir was the princely state ruled by Dogra. Under their rule the marginalized sections of



the state were very depressed and the only elite class yielded the advantage of that regime of Dogras. The condition of these subaltern groups was very pathetic in the state as they were treated as untouchables in other parts of the country (Sooden 1999). The person related to the community of scheduled castes had to work for the upper class (Kelkar 1999). It's reported from the study (Sooden 1999) that the persons of high caste mostly avoided contact with the lower castes and if they happened to touch them, it was obligatory for them to take bath to purify themselves.

These lower caste people were not allowed in the temples and public places which were used by higher castes. The overall condition of scheduled castes was pathetic in the post-independence period in the state of J&K. Maharaja Hari Singh during his period, took initiative to open temples for these depressed classes when the power transfer took place from Dogra to the Sheikh Abdullah's government. The changes made by the new government were mind blowing. One amongst them was the Land Distribution Act, 1950 under which land was transferred to these groups. It is reported from the studies the advantage of this programme Land to Tiller was taken by the scheduled castes community as they used to work on their fields. J&K Government's programme was not enough to address the problems of SCs and they were exploited for decades.

#### **Jammu and Kashmir Scheduled Castes order 1956**

In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of article 341 of the Constitution of India. The President after consultation with Sadar-i- Riyasat of Jammu and Kashmir specified 13 castes in the schedule of the order as under:

1. Barwala 2. Basith 3. Batwal 4. Chamar or Ramdasia
5. Chure, Bhangji, Balmiks, Mehtor 6. Dhyar 7. Doom or Mahasha Dumna 8. Gardi 9. Jolaha 10. Megh or Kabir Panthi 11. Ratal 12. Saryara 13. Watal

Scheduled castes communities and their population according to 2001 census of India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

|                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| Barwala             | 24,683   |
| Basith              | 1,896    |
| Batwal              | 93,501   |
| Chamar/Ramdasiya    | 4,57,458 |
| Balmiki             | 3,855    |
| Dhyar               | 7,566    |
| Mahasha/Doom/Mirasi | 15,908   |
| Gardi               | 3,268    |
| Jolaha              | 467      |
| Megh/Kabir Panthi   | 3,00,980 |
| Ratal               | 1,913    |
| Saryara             | 13,327   |
| Watal               | 169      |

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>9,24,994</b> |
|--------------|-----------------|

The reservation percentage for SCs in JK is 8%. The Principal bodies which worked for the welfare of SC's in JK are:

**State Advisory Board of Development of SC :** This Board guides the state government concerning the concerns of SC's of the state. Re-evaluate the carrying out of different well-being schemes for SC and advocate the beneficial measures for the betterment of this community. This Board also works to propose productive measures for the eradication of social stigma among this community.

**J&K SC ST BC Development Corporation :** This corporation was set up in 1986, comes under the Ministry of social welfare of J&K. The crucial task in the act was to accelerate the socio- economic and educational position among the weaker sections and provide the avenues of self- employment for these communities of Jammu and Kashmir.

The corporation also gives subsidy with the loans, bank loan/ support under Bank tie-up schemes and at concessional rate of interest under direct financing schemes in partnership with National Level finance and Development Corporation Government of India.

**Social Safeguard for the SCs in the state constitution:** The Constitution of J&K grants the safeguards for the development of these constitutional Provisions:

Section 49 Part IV: For proper representation of SCs state subjects, by granting them reservations in the Legislative Assembly of the state.

Section B of the J&K state constitution grants states shall establish a social order of society for the development of the people.

Section 19 Clause (9) The J&K state constitution shall make active steps for safeguarding all its state subjects for both genders Section.

Art 46 - The state shall promote special cases with the educational and economic interests of the weaker section and in particular of the scheduled castes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations.

Art 335 The claim of the members of the SC shall be taken into consideration consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in making appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

#### **Welfare Measures for SCs in J&K**

##### **Educational schemes:**

I) Reservation in Professional Institutions According to the SRO(Self-Regulatory Organisation) 294 of J& K state 8% shall be reserved for scheduled castes of the state in each course of Professional Institution.

II) Pre-Matric scholarship for SC students studying in IX and X.

III) Post Matric scholarship for SC students.

IV) National Fellowship for SC students.

V) National Overseas Scholarship for SC students.

VI) Free coaching for SC from Ministry of Social



Justice & empowerment.

VII) Up gradation of Merit: Remedial and special coaching schemes of Top-class Educations for SC students

VIII) SCs and Employment in J&K.

As per SRO - 294 of 2005 of J&K state has 8% reservation in the appointment by direct recruitment in the job advertised by the Government Provision of Reservation Promotion Inter- District Recruitment Policy of state Government.

Sher-E- Kashmir Employment and welfare programme for the Youth. It includes DECC & District Employment and counselling entries, NREGA, National Rural Employment Committee Act -women welfare, JKEDI and SEED CAPITAL EDPS.

#### **Financial provision in JKEDI**

To overcome the problems of credit facilities and risk of the business/ market, to avoid the collapse of the Business unit of first-generation entrepreneurs, the State Government of J&K came up with an Institute called JKEDI (Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute) to promote and implement entrepreneurship programmes. The primary and vital goal of JKEDI is to channelize the power of educated, skilled, unemployed youths by mending their minds by means of encouragement to take entrepreneurship as a career option: instead of waiting for Government jobs. JKEDI gives the realization to young blood that instead of becoming job seekers, they should opt for entrepreneurship and become a job provider.

The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act 2004 was applicable before the revocation of Article 370 and Article 35 -A of the Constitution of India. This Act was introduced to provide job reservation in JK to SC/ STs and other socially and educationally Backward classes. After Article 370 was repealed, the J&K Reservation Act, 2004 was made applicable

with certain amendments to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh and is mentioned in the Jammu and Kashmir Re-Organization Act As the central laws were not applicable in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir till 2019, it is now after scrapping of Article 370 central laws can be made applicable and people of this region avail the benefits of reservation.

Valmiki, who had come to Jammu on the 'invitation' of the then chief minister Bakshi Gulam Mohammad to work as sanitary workers in Jammu are in high spirits after abrogation of article 370. Valmiki samaj despite owning land in Jammu and having lived there for all their lives, were deprived of other rights, including the right to vote, right to higher education, right to get state scholarship, right to state jobs.

The first domicile certificate in the community was given to 71-year-old Deepo Devi of valmiki samaj Basti by tehsildar. Ms. Devi ,who retired as a sanitation worker from Jammu Municipal Corporation(JMC) said , "The community members will now get a right to life , right to vote, right to Govt. jobs, right to professional colleges and reservation." Eklavya, who had done Ph.D. from Jammu University, feels that they can lead a dignified life now that they have been granted a domicile certificate. "All these years we were treated like slaves and denied basic constitutional and fundamental rights."

The Jammu and Kashmir administration is working to speed up the process of distributing domicile certificates among people belonging to different sections who had been living in the Union Territory for close to seven decades but were deprived of their citizenship rights.

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# SCs in Uttarakhand continue to face hardships

A couple of years back, the landlords, even from bigger cities like Rishikesh and Dehradun, did not use to rent out rooms to the Dalits due to orthodox mentality. However, there is a perceptible change in their mentality today which is depicted by allowing rooms to the Dalits.

**Pankaj Lal**



Scheduled Castes/races are those cast in our respected country who have been suffering from the social discrimination such as extreme social, educational, and economic backwardness arising out of old age practice for a long-time practice of untouchability and certain another lacuna of resources and isolation, and those people need to special treatment for safeguarding and protecting their interests as well as their improved social-economic development.

‘Scheduled Caste’ is a legal term or designation that was adopted in 1935, during the time the Britisher had listed and notified according to ranking, this is lower class or caste in Hindu, the goal to safeguard and other benefits engaged a schedule in the Act of the government of India according to Dushkin, L.

## Definition of Scheduled Castes and government policy

The Government in India has played a vital role,

as well as deemed wide-ranging responsibility in the context of the welfare of the scheduled castes, which is well known. The Government implemented affirmative action in which, seats are reserved in proportion to the population in the state and union legislature. To provide different reservations for direct recruitment, often equal to the proportion of the population, gave concession in promotion of the Government services some posts. Reservations are also provided in many higher educational institutions, and in education, granted financial assistance under a variety of programs. As per the five-year plan is spent approximate half expenditure on education and accordingly on housing as per Dushkin, L.

## Observation

From last five decades If we look here in our respected country, the literacy rate has gradually increased since 1961 (10.27%), 1971 (14.67%), 1981 (21.38%), 1991 (37.41%), 2001(54.7%) and 2011 (66.1%).

In Uttarakhand state out of a total population of 69.77%, there are 18.76% Scheduled Castes (SCs) (As per census India, 2011) as per as the literacy rate of



Scheduled Castes is eleventh ranks of Uttarakhand state, whereas person 74.41%, male 84.34% and female 64.05% in 2011 (<http://ignited.in>), however literacy rate person 63.40%, male 77.26% and female 48.74% in 2001 according to (<https://niti.gov.in> > sectors > Literacy of SCs, STs).

There are 14 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the Legislative Assembly for Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), one seat for Member of Parliament (MP), and presently two ministers in the legislative assembly. The numbers of candidates have increased in the government sector and some in the private sector, but the maximum numbers of people are involved in labour, agricultural work, and Grantirojgar Yojna or MGNREGA.

### **Economic and educational status of Scheduled Castes**

Singh et al. 2018 carried out the study was in four high-altitude villages in the Chopta-Tungnath area in the Rudraprayag district a border district and there were recorded 10-12% Scheduled Castes householders had access the basic facilities like toilet, safe drinking water, LPG, Stoves, TV, and Phone. There were 50% of people had bank loans and private loans in which, while 30% of households were not able to repay loans.

Another study, Salgotra & Roma 2017, was conducted in 15 development blocks in the Pauri Garhwal, there had taken 360 samples, there was reported literacy rate of Scheduled Castes is low in comparison to others. There is also an observed highly illiterate rate in Scheduled Castes females in the hilly region. The hilly region has seen 30.66% of students drop out their school before and after gaining their primary education. The study showed that leaving rate from educational school has increased. This has happened due to the BPLs rate being high among the Scheduled Castes. The study reflects the fact low literacy rate among BPLs, due to poor socio-economic status.

According to Prabhakar, A 2021 study at 9 tehsils and 15 developmental blocks. Pauri, Lansdowne, Kotdwar, Thelishen, Dhumakot, Srinagar, Satpuli and Chobbattakhal are the tehsils of Pauri. And Kot, Kaljikkhal, Pauri, Pabo, Thelishen, Birokahl, Dvirikkhal, Dhugdanda, Jaharikkhal, Rikhikkhal, Nanidanda, Pokhra and Khirsu are the developmental blocks of Pauri. The study revealed that the Majority of Scheduled Castes have been migrated from high school and Higher Secondary School level of education because of poor socio-economic status (Kumar et al.2020). The majority of Scheduled Castes are farming families as well as BPLs holders and observed the pathetic economic situation.

### **Result**

#### **Social discrimination**

Finding of the above study showed positive changes in the society to be reduced social discrimination such as Doladandi (the bride was not allowed to sit in Palanquin) but today do not

see such an issue, even some temples opened for everyone, but not all temples, same in drinking water context somewhere you can take or fill water directly from well and pipe but many places at the grassroots level, where you cannot take directly the water. If see the changes, especially in public places like markets, hotels, shops etc. anybody can go or directly enter, but maximum places on the grass root level, are having some sort of restriction now a day's too.

A couple of years back, the landlords, even from bigger cities like Rishikesh and Dehradun, did not use to rent out rooms to the Dalits due to orthodox mentality. However, there is a perceptible change in their mentality today which is depicted by allowing rooms to the Dalits.

### **Whether reduce social discrimination or not?**

This is the biggest achievement for us, especially in society some level of equality, we have gained this has happened due to the contribution of our Government (taken or taking affirmative action for Scheduled Castes in many aspects through the Constitution), politicians, social workers, honest officers, Judiciary and honest news reporters and many social organizations, which are playing a vital role in the society.

Today, many people got success in the Government sector and Political field; few people achieved higher education from a different premium institute in our country, therefore increasing the socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes. This has resulted into a decrease in the level of discrimination.

### **Economic, education and law order**

From time to time the Government has brought many schemes to improve the social/economic status of the Dalits. Social Welfare department was established to help poor people in many aspects, and Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship provide to Scheduled Castes students for higher education, providing that these are policies will be continued in the future as well as which authority appointed for this work, they will do their work in honestly, if these policies will be implemented perfectly at the grassroots level and law and order will be honestly followed, then we will get the complete level of equality in coming future.

### **Conclusion**

In the Uttarakhand state, the Scheduled Castes person literacy rate has increased approximately 9-10% within the 10 years, in same context if we look literacy rate in our respected country approximate gained 56% or 57% within the 50 years. It means changing the status of Scheduled Castes people; they play a vital role in many fields like Academic, Administration, Political etc.

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# Entrepreneurship among SCs in India : An appraisal

The nature of one's occupation has a direct reference to one's status. The scheduled castes were known for their long association with so-called impure, unclean, degrading socially looked down and least preferred occupations. Many untouchables followed the hereditary occupations such as scavenging, carcass recovery and flaying and hide tanning, leatherwork, drum beating and grave digging. These occupations which were associated with the untouchables, barred social communication between them and higher caste Hindus, in the framework of traditional society.

Dr. GOPI

Caste is the very complex social institution deeply entrenched in Indian society from the immemorial past. The tendency of people to differentiate among themselves according to specific criteria results in human societies that are differentiated into a number of layers or segments. Manu divided the society into four varnas – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Untouchability is a by-product of the caste system in India. The untouchables were the poorest section of Indian society. The concept of entrepreneurship was first established in the 1700s and the meaning has evolved ever since.

Many simply equate it with starting one's own business. In addition to measures of Scheduled Castes Entrepreneurs, there are significant differences in firm characteristics across caste categories. Enterprises owned by the members of SCs and STs tend to be smaller, are less likely to employ labour from outside the family, and more likely to belong to the informal or unorganized sector.





### Occupational disparities :

The nature of one's occupation has a direct reference to one's status. The scheduled castes were known for their long association with so-called impure, unclean, degrading socially looked down and least preferred occupations. Many untouchables followed the hereditary occupations such as scavenging, carcass recovery and flaying and hide tanning, leatherwork, drum beating and grave digging. These occupations which were associated with the untouchables with permanent ritual pollution, barred social communication between them and higher caste Hindus, in the framework of traditional Indian society. Besides these traditional occupations, they are also involved in 'clean' occupations with a majority of them being agricultural labourers.

One of the important factors that are associated with the occupation is economic conditions. Because of their lowly placed occupation, scheduled castes had depressed economic conditions. The scheduled castes were virtually denied the right to own land for cultivation, were paid low wages as manual workers and always were in debts beyond their capacities to repay. Although outside the rigid varna system the scheduled castes constituted a vital segment of population and performed mostly unskilled and manual labour and unclean occupations without which the smooth running of traditional system would have been impossible. Their earnings were meagre and were primarily indebted and were forced to work as bonded labour to the upper caste on low wages. Scheduled castes were also under obligation to perform forced labour.

The English word "Caste" rather corresponds more or less closely to what is locally referred to as 'Jati' or 'Kulam'. Besides Jati or Kulam, everyone is familiar with the concept of Varna, which refers to one of the four main categories into which the Hindu society is traditionally divided; Jati refers generally to a much smaller group. The English word caste is used to denote both, not only by foreigners but also by others who are familiar with English.

'Caste' and 'Sub Caste' are the other terms, which refer to primary division and sub division. This is not altogether satisfactory because the caste system is characterized by segmentation of several orders. The expression 'Scheduled Castes' was first coined by Simon Commission and was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. The 'Scheduled' of scheduled castes refers to official lists of caste names, schedules attached to legislation. These lists were drawn up in order to establish entitlements to benefits. Each state of the Indian union has a list, containing on average fifty to sixty names. Each in principle represents a group the membership of which is hereditary and exclusive; no one can belong to more than one. The term was introduced by the Government of India Act, 1935 establishing a scheme for the reservation of seats in legislatures. It remains the official legal category, and it has become

an integral part of the set of terms through which identities are allocated and claimed and the structure of contemporary Indian society is understood.

To claim benefits – of special legal protection, under welfare schemes specifically for scheduled castes, of reserved seats in higher education and in representative assemblies, of reserved jobs in government employment, and special financial assistance for enterprise/entrepreneur – a person must obtain official certification as belonging to a group listed a scheduled to the relevant legislation.

Later the term 'scheduled castes' was adopted while drafting the Constitution. But the term Scheduled Castes was not defined anywhere in the Constitution. Article 366 (2) (24) reads, "Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under Article 341, to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of Constitution of India". Article 341 (1)

**Dalit caste categories are more pronounced in urban areas compared to rural areas, suggesting that these results cannot be attributed purely to social discrimination which we might expect to be higher in rural areas. Overall, our results highlight that SC and ST entrepreneurs face significant obstacles in entering entrepreneurship, and in expanding the scale of their enterprises.**

of the Constitution reads, the President of India may with respect to any State (or Union territories), and where it is a state after consultation with government thereof, by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall, for the purpose of this constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that state (or union territory) or as the case may be". Article 341 (2) reads 'Parliament may by law include or exclude from the list of Scheduled Castes specified in notification issued under clause (1), any caste, race, or tribe or part of or group within any caste, race or tribe".

Of the late the term 'Dalit' has gained popularity and is generally used, more often than not, to refer to the scheduled castes. The term Dalit is inclusive of all the oppressed and exploited sections of the society. Etymologically the term is inclusive of meanings such as; downtrodden, disadvantaged, underprivileged, dispossessed, deprived, handicapped, abused, humble, prostrate, etc. It does not, however, confine merely to exploitation in terms of appropriation of surplus but also relates to suppression of culture – ways of life and value system – and more importantly the denial of dignity. Generally, the term 'Dalit' includes, what is called in administrative parlance; scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other



backward castes.

**Concept of entrepreneurship :**

The concept of entrepreneurship was first established in the 1700s, and the meaning has evolved ever since. Many simply equate it with starting one’s own business. Most economists believe it is more than that. To some economists, the entrepreneur is one who is willing to bear the risk of a new venture if there is a significant chance for profit. Others emphasize the entrepreneur’s role as an innovator who markets his innovation. Still other economists say that entrepreneurs develop new goods or processes that the market demands and are not currently being supplied. In the 20th century, economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) focused on how the entrepreneur’s drive for innovation and improvement creates upheaval and change. Schumpeter viewed entrepreneurship as a force of “creative destruction.” The entrepreneur carries out “new combinations,” thereby helping render old industries obsolete. Established ways of doing business are destroyed by the creation of new and better ways to do them.

One of the famous business experts Peter Drucker (1909-2005) took this idea further, describing the entrepreneur as someone who actually searches for change, responds to it and exploits change as an opportunity. A quick look at changes in communications—from typewriters to personal computers to the Internet—illustrates these ideas. Most economists today agree that entrepreneurship is a necessary ingredient for stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies. In the developing world, successful small businesses are the primary engines of job creation, income growth, and poverty reduction. Therefore, government support for entrepreneurship is a crucial strategy for economic development.

**Entrepreneurship of Scheduled Castes :**

In addition to measures of Scheduled Castes Entrepreneurs, there are significant differences in firm characteristics across caste categories. Enterprises owned by members of SCs and STs tend to be smaller, are less likely to employ labour from

outside the family, and more likely to belong to the informal or unorganized sector. All these differences across Dalit caste categories are more pronounced in urban areas compared to rural areas, suggesting that these results cannot be attributed purely to social discrimination which we might expect to be higher in rural areas. Overall, our results highlight that SC and ST entrepreneurs face significant obstacles in entering entrepreneurship, and in expanding the scale of their enterprises.

**Prerequisite of Scheduled Castes entrepreneurship :**

The employment gives economic status to scheduled castes. Economic status paves the way of social status. Gone are the days when upper caste people could boast of being capable of feeding the whole family. Scheduled castes constitute almost 30 percent of Indian population. In the rural sector 57% of the upper caste people and 26% of the untouchables were in the labour force. About 56% of the scheduled castes population in the rural sector are idle and unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. But now the scenario is changing fast with modernization, urbanization and development of education and business, untouchables are now seeking gainful employment in several fields in increasing numbers with the spread of education and new awareness scheduled caste entrepreneurs are spreading their wings to higher levels of three entrepreneurs namely engineering, electronics and energy. So today, no field is unapproachable to trained and determined modern Indian Dalit. But still it cannot be said that the scheduled castes entrepreneurship movement has taken off the ground and it is felt that the movement is still in a transition period. Scheduled castes entrepreneurs can be planned and developed and the need for providing appropriate awareness and environment to promote entrepreneurship is vital importance.

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# Where is Dalit Panther after 50 years ?

A young Dalit activist Sanvidhan from Nashik remembers vibrant days of Dalit Panther, when it was formed in 1972. While Sanvidhan points out at some weaknesses of the movement, which made it defunct, he continues to draw inspiration from the movement.



## Sanvidhan



Mallika Amar Sheikh-Dhasal concludes in her book *Dalit Panther: A Struggle* - by saying,

"Namdev has been very quarrelsome with me - he has treated me inadequately. That time I complained to J. V. Pawar. He then literally scolded Namdev. Why did you behave like that with her? Does it suit you? This is not right Namya, etc. Namdev also listened to it quietly. I felt very nice. At the same time, I felt very assured and safe, as they sided with me understanding my grief. She mentions that when she made a similar complaint to Raja Dhale, he admonished Namdev Dhasal. The implication is that while all these people were involved in ideological-political differences, their emotional ties and brotherhood were immense. So if the Dalit Panther was drawn based on their

relationship and struggle along these lines, I think it would still be inspiring.

It is well known that Dalit Panther was formed considering the background of Bawada case in Indapur taluka, Eliya Perumal Committee report etc. But in spite of the controversy over the establishment and the different roles played by its founders, I think it's birth should have taken into account the needs of the time. The reason for this is that Ambedkarite movement was under severe distress after the Mahaparinirvana of Dr. Ambedkar. It was because of Dalit Panther, that movement formed the foundation of more matured, fundamental ideas with literary flavour.

Although the Dalit Panther was born inspired by the Black Panther, they do not feel the same confusion as felt by the Left and other movements.



They were well conscious of their social roots of social status, order and exploitation. Every movement has to identify its exploitative or ideological enemy. From the same point of view, the role of the Dalit Panther seems to be aimed in one direction. The revolutionary movement started by Namdev Dhasal, Raja Dhale and J. V. Pawar became short-lived due to ideological or personal differences. According to Namdev Dhasal, the difference began when socialist leader Dr. Baba Adhav described the Dalit Panther manifesto as Marxist. Personal differences began when Raja Dhale's name was printed as the founder on a handbill. This resulted in massive controversy and leaders started distancing themselves from each



other. Everyone started blaming others. But despite the past, it continues to inspire me.

#### **But what went wrong?**

Explaining the relationship between Dhale and Dhasal in his Post-Ambedkar Ambedkarite Movement: Volume 4 J. V. Pawar says, "On the contrary, Dhale was a lover of Namdev's poems. Baburao Bagul asked Dhasal to remove his poem \_Manasane\_ while Dhale supported the poem. It was also printed on the cover of the second edition of the \_Vidrohi\_. From this, the reader will be able to comprehend the need to review their unity during the Dalit Panther period.

Similarly, J. V. Pawar, the first reader of Namdev Dhasal's poems in the early period, is seen with him even as he felt that Dhasal was not practical and unruly because of his poetic talent. In the same way, their friendship and compassion for each other were immense. An example of their relationship could be seen when Dhasal was recognized as a talented poet and suggested to J. V. Pawar that Dhasal would be the main speaker at his farewell meeting. He did not find anyone more suitable for this role than Pawar. And in the same way J. V. Pawar also proudly said to his friend, "Namdev, you become so big that if I put a hat on my head and start looking at you, my hat would fall".

Overall, the early friendship between the Dalit Panther leaders and the future rift in the Dalit Panther was not only caused by the differences between them. Otherwise, they would not have felt the need to show brotherhood towards Malika Sheikh-Dhasal! The Ambedkarite movement became so rapid that it was frequently subjected to repression, impeachment, impunity, and general confusion. The same thing happened with Dalit Panther! Media reports caused much fuel to disharmony among the leaders. Suspicions were raised about Dhasal as he was quoted saying – 'I am a hardcore Communist' – with the help of a newspaper report. Some news reports were cited and most of them were out of context.

Dalit Panther period is still considered a golden age of the Ambedkarite movement. It was a storm that shook established politics and the Brahmanical literary tradition. Its main foundations were democracy, equality and social justice. For that, they fought against the system within a short period. The Ambedkarite movement was the most vocal on the issues at that time. The leaders of Dalit Panther were like a necklace of pearls. Once the necklace disintegrated all the pearls got scattered. But the leaders continued to be symbols of social consciousness and gratitude for Dr. Ambedkar.

Many contemporary issues figured in the first rally of Dalit Panther. They included Worli riots, Reply given to Durgabai Bhagwat, Black Independence Day, Bhasme Commission, throwing sandals at Shankaracharya, and burning of the Bhagvat Gita serves as directions for our generation. All these issues are still directly or indirectly discussed in the Ambedkarite movement. J. V. Pawar is the only surviving founder of Dalit Panther. Although ageing, the activist in him is still not silent.

Currently, the modern generation is reviewing this past. But many veterans of the movement are still involved in the blame game. This has disintegrated Dalit Panther. But the word – Dalit Panther – continues to inspire many. Today is the time to understand the struggle of keeping aside individuality.

Only J. V. Pawar, Namdev Dhasal and Raja Dhale have the right to write the history of Dalit Panther, says J. V. Pawar. However, today is the time for us to understand their struggle, sacrifice, aggression and creativity.

The inspiration has to be used for a good purpose. The Ambedkarite movement needs to be built on the same sacrifices and aggression but these arguments should not turn into hatred and jealousy. For this, from the point of view of Dalit Panther, if analysts put forth a trio of Pawar, Dhasal and Dhale like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, it will still inspire many. All the Panthers (at least J. V. Pawar) will no doubt welcome it.

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# Rajagriha : City of the Kings

Buddha spent many years of his life at Rajagriha which was the chief centre of propagation in the early years of his spiritual administration. Many were the places here associated with his life. The Buddhist literature tells us that Rajagriha was Buddha's one of the most favourite places. He had spent many of the rain retreats there.

**Dr. Manjiri Bhalerao**



Rajagriha or modern Rajgir (District Nalanda, Bihar), is located 62 miles south-east of Patna. It still preserves the old name Rajagriha, the ancient capital of Magadha (South Bihar), one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas that came into existence before the birth of Buddha. The place was variously known as Vasumati, Brihadrathapura, Kushagrapura and Girivraja (meaning enclosure of hills). The last is the most appropriate descriptive name of this city. Its location is very strategic as it is placed in an extensive valley surrounded by hills on all sides with narrow passes in between. In fact, it was an ideal location for a capital in ancient days. It appears that the ancient habitation at this place started from around 1000 B.C. The archaeological remains found here indicate this date. The strong, long cyclopean wall or the old fortification wall is one of the most noteworthy features of this city. In fact, this is one of the oldest examples of the cyclopean walls in the world. However, the literary references start appearing

from the Mahabharata, indicating it as already being associated with king Jarasandha.

Later on, it was the capital of king Bimbisara, the illustrious ruler of Haryank dynasty. He was contemporary to both Bhagavan Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. He finds mention in the literature of both the religious traditions. During the days of the Buddha, the kingdom of Magadha was fast rising to power and prosperity under its rulers Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatru. Its capital attained great importance as a political and religious centre during this period. Bimbisara was greatly influenced and was quite close to Buddha. It is believed that he was killed by Ajatashatru. But Ajatashatru, too, came under the influence of Buddha later on.

Buddha spent many years of his life at Rajagriha which was the chief centre of propagation in the early years of his spiritual administration. Many were the places here associated with his life. The Buddhist literature tells us that Rajagriha was Buddha's one of the most favourite places. He had spent many of the rain retreats there. The Saptaparni cave, the Gridhrakuta (Vulture's peak) hill etc were the most visited spots by

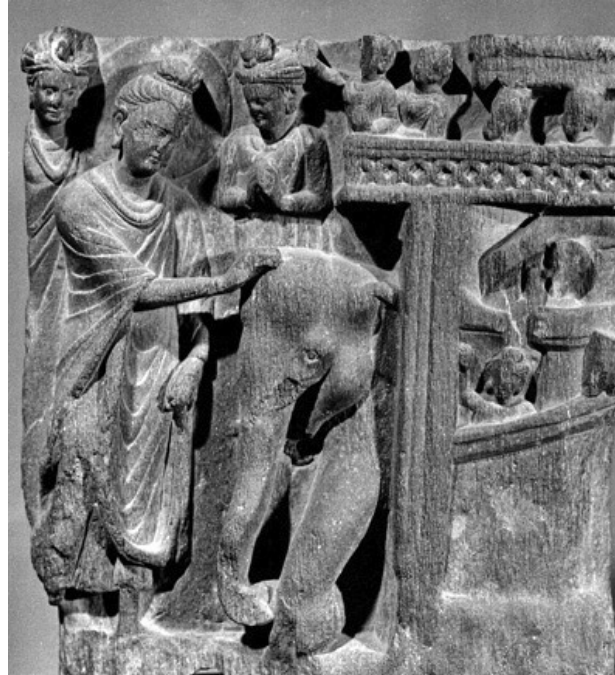


the Buddha. After every meal he would go for a walk, generally known as the Chankama. Then he would give his lecture to the disciples.

It was at Rajgir that the famous miracle of Rajagriha took place. It has been told that Devadatta was a cousin of Buddha who was a part of the monastic order. In fact, he also belonged to the Shakya community. He used to think that he was as equal as Gautam Buddha. Hence, he was eligible to become the head of the monastic order. But he was also aware that as long as Gautama was alive, he had no chance of reaching that level. Therefore, he decided to kill Gautama. He made an elephant named Nalagiri drink a lot of liquor. When the elephant lost his control, it started killing people on its way to Gautama. As soon as it approached Gautama, it realised the greatness of the Tathagata and came to his senses. This event is considered as a miracle in the Buddhist tradition and hence is known as the Miracle of Rajagriha. This is an important event in the history of Buddhism as this shows that the popularity of the Buddha was increasing day by day and there were some people who were jealous of his popularity among his near and dear ones. This event suggests the difficulties that were posed in front of him while spreading his religion. But with a lot of tactfulness, he eradicated all the problems in his early days and established himself as the Great Teacher.

Rajagriha has always been an important political, religious and economic centre. The strategic Location of this city was responsible for making it one of the most important urban centres in ancient India. During the life of Buddha and even after his death, the status of the city did not change. One finds that after the death of the Buddha, when the time came to organize the First Buddhist Council (Sangiti), it was organised at Rajagriha by the Magadha Emperor Ajatashatru. After this conference the Buddhavachanas were edited and divided into Vinaya Pitaka (code of conduct for the monks and nuns) and Sutta Pitaka (Discourses of the Buddha). Mahakashyapa, Aanand and Upali were present during this event. It is believed that went on for seven months. The whole gathering of the Buddhist scholars was organised by king Ajatashatru. On the northern scarp of the Vaibhara hill there is a group of natural caves, identified with Saptaparni, in front of which, in a hall constructed by Ajatashatru, was held the First Buddhist Council, attended by five hundred monks.

Rajagriha was equally sacred to the Jains. Not only was it regarded as the birth-place of Muni Suvrata, the twentieth Tirthankara, but it was in this city and its suburbs that Mahavira, the last Tirthankara and contemporary of Buddha, spent many a rainy season. There still are some Jaina sculptures seen in the cave locally known as Son Bhandar. Not much is known about the subsequent history of Buddhism at Rajagriha. When the Chinese travellers Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang visited the place in the fifth and seventh centuries respectively, they did not find the



religion in a flourishing condition. The latter found many Digambaras on the Vipula (modern Vaibhara) hill, where formerly there had been Buddhist edifices including a stupa. But that the faith had its adherents till the beginning of the Muslim occupation of the land is proved not only by the discovery of a few sculptures, votive stupas and inscribed terracotta plaques of the tenth-eleventh century A.D., but by the testimony of the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin, who, during his stay at Rajagriha in A. D. 1235, studied many doctrines with the Mahapandita Yasomitra. When Dharmasvamin visited the Gridhrakuta, it was surrounded by forests infested with carnivorous animals and contained on its peak a brick stupa with terraced steps and the ruins of a building of large bricks. The valley and its neighbourhood are studded with ancient remains, which are but natural, as the place not only had direct associations with lives of Buddha and Mahavira, but was once the capital of Magadha. Exposed Buddhist monuments are rather scanty, partly due to gradual decay and denudation and mostly on account of inadequate excavation. Most of the sites mentioned in the Buddhist texts have been located with the help of the directions and distances given by Chinese pilgrims, but the identifications are not always beyond doubt.

The ancient Buddhist University of Nalanda was constructed not far from this place. Today the district is known by its name and Rajgir is a part of this district. This place is a popular tourist destination for the tourists from all over the world and the devotees of Buddhism and Jainism. The ropeway facility to go to the mountain has become very popular. The modern Vishwa Shanti stupa is also a favourite spot of the international and local tourists. Thus, the City of the Kings still lures people across the world, even though the kings no longer live here. The sacredness of the spot is enough for them.

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# Dr. Prakasa Rao : A doyen of Avadhani

Though a substantial number of the Avadhanis are Brahmins, a good number of Avadhanis come from other castes including BC, SC and STs - like Aitagoni Venkateswarlu, Amudala Murali, Avusula Bhanu Prakash, Banavat Nitin Nayak (ST), Borelli Harsha (SC), Gangula Dharma Raju, Kandi Shankaraiah, Mallela Naga Raju, Mulugu Anjaiah, and Om Prakash Bochkar.

## U Atreya Sarma



Padma Shri. Dr. Asavadi Prakasa Rao, whose name is inseparable from the unique feat of Avadhana, lived only for 100 days after receiving the fourth highest civilian honour Padma Shri - from the government of India. The imprint of this noble soul (Aug 2, 1944 – Feb 17, 2022) on the Telugu literary field remains indelible for many a century to come. He was the only Avadhani from the SC community in the entire country. Let's, however, be clear that he didn't receive the Padma Shri just for his Avadhana for there are many Avadhanis superior to him in that literary art. His recognition was for his ennobling versatility – for an ideal combination of his contribution to the field of education; literature (especially classical) with a healthy blend of tradition and modernity, and its promotion among the interested by offering moral and even financial assistance; social service aimed at harmony; and devotional and spiritual groundwork.

Ever resonating with positive feelings and views, an exemplar of 'simple living and high thinking', and a believer in the country's ancient and time-tested Indic values aimed at universal peace and harmony, Dr. Asavadi strove for social concord devoid of any trace of bitterness, animosity or rebelliousness. He was grateful to everyone in his life's journey, and his dedication of his collection of Avadhana poems *Saamayikam* (published by Sri Katragadda Abhimana Prachurana, 2020) to me, reinforces this fact.

Born in a remote village in Anantapur district of the backward Rayalaseema region, Andhra Pradesh in

the Madiga community, and inculcating a psyche of austerity and humility, he relentlessly persevered to overcome the inherent disadvantages of being born in a subaltern community and realised his dream of blossoming as a writer of competence and sublimity with a social purpose. Asavadi began his poetic innings as a teenager and he was feted as Bala-Kavi (teenage poet), by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the then President of India, at the All-India Veera Shaiva Mahasabha, Srisaillam in 1963. Ever since he received hundreds of awards/felicitations from diverse quarters. Passionate about literature, he conducted unique literary plays like Bhuvana Vijayam, a distinct and interactive poetic feat inspired by Sri Krishnadeva Raya, the Vijayanagara emperor cum patron of literature and culture. His literary oeuvre comprises 61 books across various genres – Poetry, extempore poetry, collection of literary essays, translations, monographs, collection of reviews covering 126 books, biographies, emendations, commentaries, anthologies, collection of forewords, miscellaneous. He has penned forewords to as many as 126 books of other writers.

Asavadi's varied life and work has influenced many literati who authored and published 13 books and over 60 articles on him, including a doctoral thesis. There are many types of Avadhana based on language and literature, mathematics, music, dance, painting, ocular gesticulations etc. but here let's confine it to the literary Avadhana.

Asavadi's most outstanding literary contribution was his performance of literary Avadhana – a uniquely creative, intricate and formidable classical poetic



acrobatics. It involves impromptu composition by the Avadhani (the performer of Avadhana) with a team of literary questioners throwing him spontaneous challenges coupled with restrictions and detractors. This amazing art demands a wide and deep learning of Telugu and Sanskrit literatures; up-to-date knowledge of current affairs; photographic memory; stupendous retentivity; multi-focus; keen wit and repartee; and infallible reciting skills. He performed as many as 171 Avadhanas in the Telugu states as well as in Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. His prowess in Avadhana brought him many a laurel like – the Avadhana Shiromani Award (by the Lok Nayak Foundation, Visakhapatnam) (2007); the Maha-Avadhani Puraskar (by the World Telugu Conference, Tirupati) (2012); and the Kopparapu Brothers Avadhana Award (2019). He also received rare traditional honours that are ceremonially accorded to literary legends, by being feted with a Ganda Penderam (a golden anklet) at Penukonda (2008); Kanaka-Abhishekam (sprinkling with golden flowers) by the Ksheera Sagara Sahiti Samiti, Hyderabad (2014).

Dr. Asavadi Prakasa Rao learnt the techniques and nuances of Avadhana from three prominent gurus – Dr. Nanduri Rama Krishnamacharya, Dr. C. V. Subbanna Shata-Avadhani, and Gadepalli Kukkuteswara Rao – who all treated him as their own son. *Praatah Smaraneeya Guru-Trayam* (The Matutinally Adorable Guru-Triumvirate) was the last book he penned. It was his grateful tribute to this trinity and it came out posthumously in May 2022, with one of the forewords written by me. In the same spirit, Dr. Asavadi remains in the adorable memory of his large number of disciples across the caste spectrum including those from the “upper” castes, at least a score of them being highly accomplished. Not content with improvising metrical poems in his Avadhanas, he recorded many of them by way of eight books.

When Dr. Asavadi passed away, Manda Krishna Madiga, President of MRPS (Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti, an organisation fighting for proportional Reservations to Madigas within the SC community by sub-categorisation), visited the spot, and while paying homage to the dead soul, he pledged to strive for promotion of the art of Avadhana among the SCs. Let’s hope that the proclamation is soon put on a path to its realisation.

#### **About Avadhana**

The ancient art of Avadhana unique to the Telugus was revived in the 19th century by the highly creative Tirupati-Venkata Kavis – Divakarla Tirupati Sastry (1871–1919) and Chellapilla Venkata Sastry (1870–1950) and the super-fast Kopparapu Brothers – Venkata Subba Raya Kavi (1885–1932) and Venkata Ramana Kavi (1887–1942). Subsequently it has been kept alive by literary giants like C V Subbanna (1929–2017), Gandluri Dattatreya Sarma, Asavadi Prakasa Rao (1944–2022), Narala Rama Reddy, Kadimilla Vara Prasad, Medasani Mohan, Madugula Naga Phani Sarma, Garikipati Narasimha Rao and Vaddiparti

Padmakar. The number of Avadhanis has gone up very well during the current times right from teenagers to youth to veterans, and across castes.

#### **Avadhanis from BC/SC/ST communities**

Though a substantial number of the Avadhanis are Brahmins, a good number of Avadhanis come from other castes including BC, SC and STs – like Aitagani Venkateswarlu, Amudala Murali, Avusula Bhanu Prakash, Banavat Nitin Nayak (ST), Borelli Harsha (SC), Gangula Dharma Raju, Kandi Shankaraiah, Mallela Naga Raju, Mulugu Anjaiah, and Om Prakash Bochkar.

Avadhana is a mind-boggling literary feat demanding extemporisation of metrical poetry, undivided multi-sided simultaneous focus, photographic memory facilitating recitation of all the extemporized verses in the same order they had been asked – with no aid of notes or pen or a mobile phone. But the interrogators are free to use these aids. This art presupposes a great deal of varied knowledge, lexical authority, command of prosody, wit and humour. The Avadhani is surrounded by Prichchakas (Questioners, interrogators, interlocutors or challengers) and the number of the Prichchakas depends upon the magnitude of the Avadhana. In the case of Ashta-Avadhana, the number of the interrogators is eight; in the case of the Shata-Avadhana, they are one hundred; and in the case of the Sahasra-Avadhana, it is one thousand. There is also Dvi-Shasra-Avadhana with two thousand literary challengers. And it can go up even higher depending upon the number of challengers an Avadhani can handle.

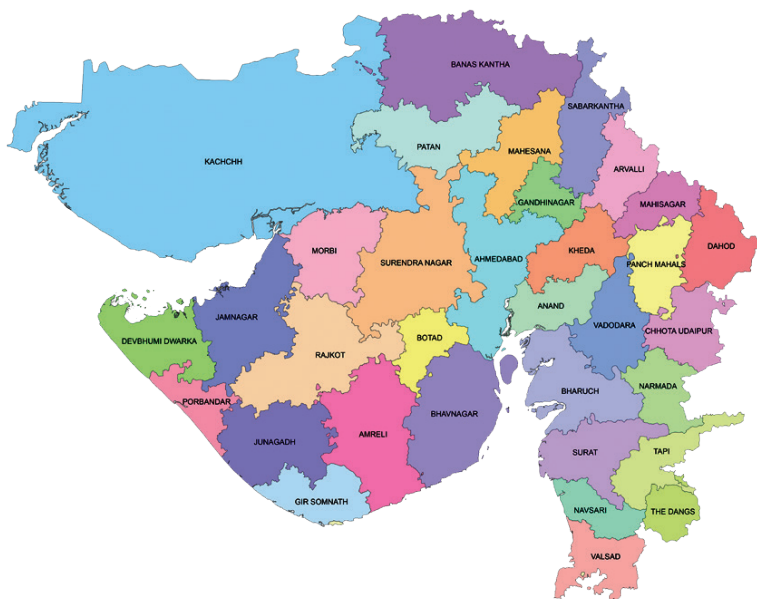
In this article, let’s limit ourselves to the Ashta-Avadhana where the interlocutors are eight. Each of them in a particular order asks the Avadhani to improvise a metrical poem subject to the restrictions they impose. And the Avadhani has to extemporise the first line of the poem and recite it, before the next interlocutor challenges him with his own stipulation. The Avadhani spontaneously weaves the first line of the poem; and it goes on in a cycle until all the poems have been completed in a similar fashion. Once all the rounds are finished, the Avadhani has to recite all the poems in full in the same order they were extemporised.

While the Avadhani is all the time mentally engaged in reflecting and weaving a line of the poem, he is subjected to distractive tactics. The Avadhani has to negotiate them with ease and in an engaging manner and without losing his focus on the original challenges. Thus, the Avadhani is like a human computer and like a player of blindfold simultaneous chess. An Avadhana sharpens one’s literary intellect and entertains, stimulates and edifies not only the erudite and the aesthetically minded but also the average audience since the performer deals with the mundane, current and popular topics as well.

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# Gujarat : Dynamics of development, a perspective



**Dr. Naresh**



The story of Gujarat can discuss clearly after separation from Mumbai state. In the year of 1961 Gujarat divided from the Mumbai state. The state of Gujarat today is consider as one of the leading states in the process of modernization of overall India. Hence the changes occurred in socio- economic front are probably observed in this progressive state in beginning. Historically it is proven that process of changes and modernization starts in some leading states and spread out in entire nation. Gujarat also considers one of the castes sensitive societies. Various studies show that it is highly castes discrimination prone state. This article deals the changes occurred in major dimensions of scheduled castes society in state of Gujarat. It starts from the demographic change in for scheduled castes population and shows that the population of scheduled castes decline in proportion of total population after the census of 1991. Social, Cultural and economic changes have been discussed in the middle part of this article. Finally paper concludes to discuss how these changes leads to develop a harmonious society.

## **Demographic changes for scheduled castes in Gujarat :**

With castes perspective the graph above shows that in the year of 1951(Just after independent) Gujarat population consist 6.39% of scheduled castes population. Hence Gujarat was the part of

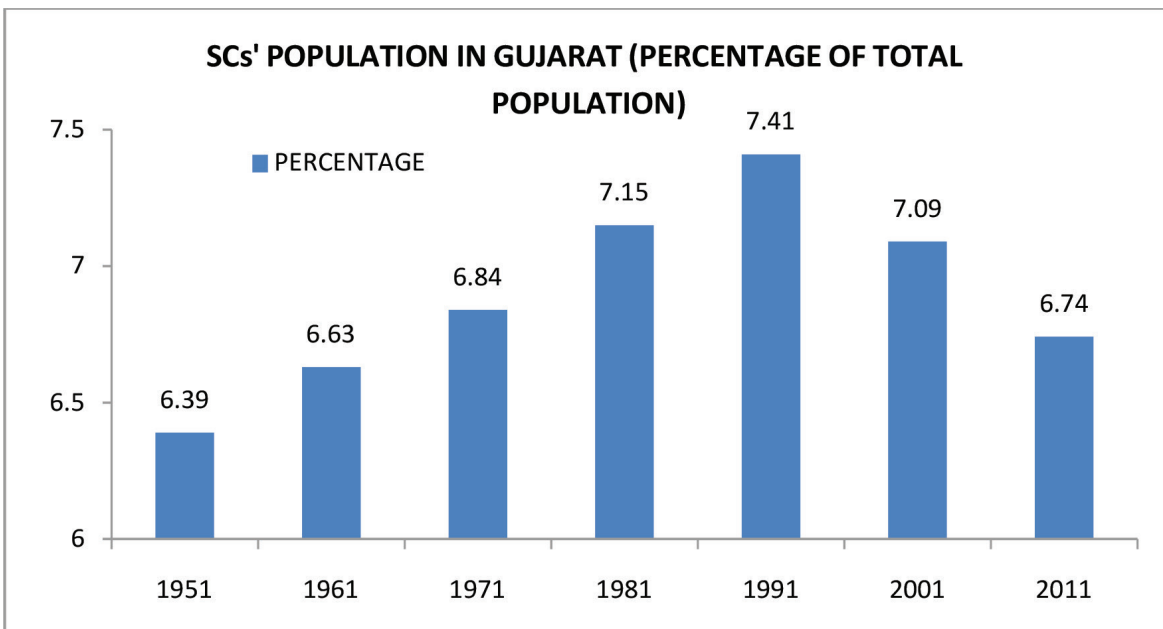
Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar appeal to scheduled castes society to leave villages and go to cities, hence the reason was lack of resources and extreme poverty under the umbrella of social exclusion. After the independence of India scheduled castes tried to go outside the native village. Reservation policy also helps to provide better alternatives.

Mumbai state. The Mumbai state was the only state constricted on the dual language basis. It was considered as the only 'Dwibhashi rajya' mean dual speaking state of independent India. Marathi and Gujarati speaking population were together lived in that Mumbai state. It is separated on the language based in to two states as Marathi speaking region divided in Maharashtra state and Gujarati speaking divided in to Gujarat state.

The data on SC population in Gujarat is presented in graph above shows increase in population of SC population as a percentage of total population in Gujarat has been increased since 1981 and after 1991 the decline trend reported. In the final census of 2011 Gujarat state reported 6.74% of scheduled castes population. The state has registered 17.4 percentage decadal growth of SC population in 1991-2001. There are thirty (30) notified Scheduled Castes, and all have been enumerated at 2001 Census.

## **Trend of Rural Urban population portion in scheduled castes:**

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar appeal to scheduled castes society to leave villages and go to cities, hence the reason was lack of resources and extreme poverty under the umbrella of social exclusion. After independent of India scheduled castes tried to go outside the native village. Reservation policy also helps to provide better alternatives. Though huge numbers of scheduled castes populations migrant as skilled and unskilled laborer, the industrialization of the nation provided opportunity to be better



life. Today we can observe higher proportion of scheduled castes population in urban areas than that of rural areas in most of the region. The graph below depicted comparison of some basic parameters regarding urban versus rural disparities occurred in the state of the Gujarat in recent decade.

**Recent (2001-11 Censuses) Populations in Gujarat State at a glance:**

Total number of households in Gujarat has increased from 96,91,362 in 2001 to 1,22,48,428 which shows an increase by 26.4 percentages in a decade. The number of households in Urban Gujarat has increased by 46 percent while the number of households in Rural Gujarat has increased by 14 percent. Total population of the state of Gujarat has increased from 5,06,71,017 in the year 2001 to 6,04,39,692 in the year 2011, which shows increase of 19.3 percentages in a decade. During the same period rural and urban population has increased by 9.3 and 3.6 percentages respectively.

The population of scheduled castes (SC) has increased from 35,92,715 in the year 2001 to 40,74,447 in the year 2011 which represents increase by 13.14 percent over a period. The percentage of SC population in rural areas has increased by 4.6 percent while in urban areas it increased by 26.9 percent during the same period.

**Education Scenario for Scheduled castes in Gujarat :**

In the graph data regarding Literate population in the state of Gujarat has increased from 2,98,27,750 in the year 2001 to 4,10,93,358 during 2011 which shows increase of 37.8 percentages over the last decade. During the same period literate population in rural areas has increased by 31.1 percentages while the literate population in urban areas has increased by 45.8 percent. The faster rate of spreading education benefits to scheduled castes population also living

in urban area.

The education improvement in almost all the spectrum of educational stream can be seen throughout the entire scheduled castes segments of the society during the entire journey of the developmental process of the society. Various policies, schemes and programs are providing platform to scheduled castes society for development. Literacy is considered as the fundamental condition for development. The data depicted in the graph above present that, literacy among male and female shows wide difference, as the population of literate male has increased by 31.6 percent while that of female by 46.9 percentages. Literate male population in rural areas has increased by 23.3 percentages while female literate populations in rural areas have increased by 43.9 percentages. Similarly literate male population in urban areas has increased by 42.6 percentages while that of female by 50.1 percentage. Female literacy increased faster than that of the male. Similar scenario occurred in case of scheduled castes as the literacy among the scheduled castes increased faster than that of the non-scheduled castes group. Encouragement programs, schemes and policies for scheduled castes and female in education promote the education faster in that particular group.

**Improvement in economic status of scheduled castes in Gujarat :**

The state of Gujarat is one of the leading states to economic development. Hence the scheduled castes groups living in the state also performing accordingly with general society of Gujarat to improve living standard. At the time of independent the majority of the population suffers from poverty. During the slower economic development process Indian society experience scandalous poverty up to 1990. Majority of this burden experienced by the weaker segment of the society. Scheduled castes in Gujarat





are major component of weaker section of the state. Data shows that population below poverty line for scheduled castes in Gujarat was 32.2% which is third lowest in country. The lowest figure was belonging by Punjab following by Andhra Pradesh. After the economic reform in Indian economy in 1991 Indian economy became globalized. The growth process became smoother and faster. The growth rate once again became un-predictable and slower in the first decade of the 21st century under the shadow of giant corruptions and policy paralysis. Economic experts say that growth rate would have been higher as there were favorable environment in Indian market at that time. We loss the opportunities for faster growth once again and remained India poor. The scheduled castes populations are the worst victim of this policy paralysis in state of Gujarat. Gujarat had burden of both on the one hand it has burden of policy paralysis and the second-hand Gujarat government facing political conflict with the union government.

**Percentage of Population below poverty line by state-1993-94 (As per the official method of government) :**

The comparisons of poverty may not give us the reality, Because of different in methods of poverty measurement. In absence of unique method wise time series data, we cannot discuss the changing poverty scenario for scheduled castes population in India. We mention some state wise BPL data for scheduled castes population just for interstate comparisons. Though the data belonging year 1993-94, the comparative picture still remain more or less the same. The major changes occurred is about Gujarat state where scheduled castes populations make faster progress than that of the other states in

recent years. Faster industrialization creates better job opportunities. Productive job with higher income has made scheduled castes better off along with the others in the state.

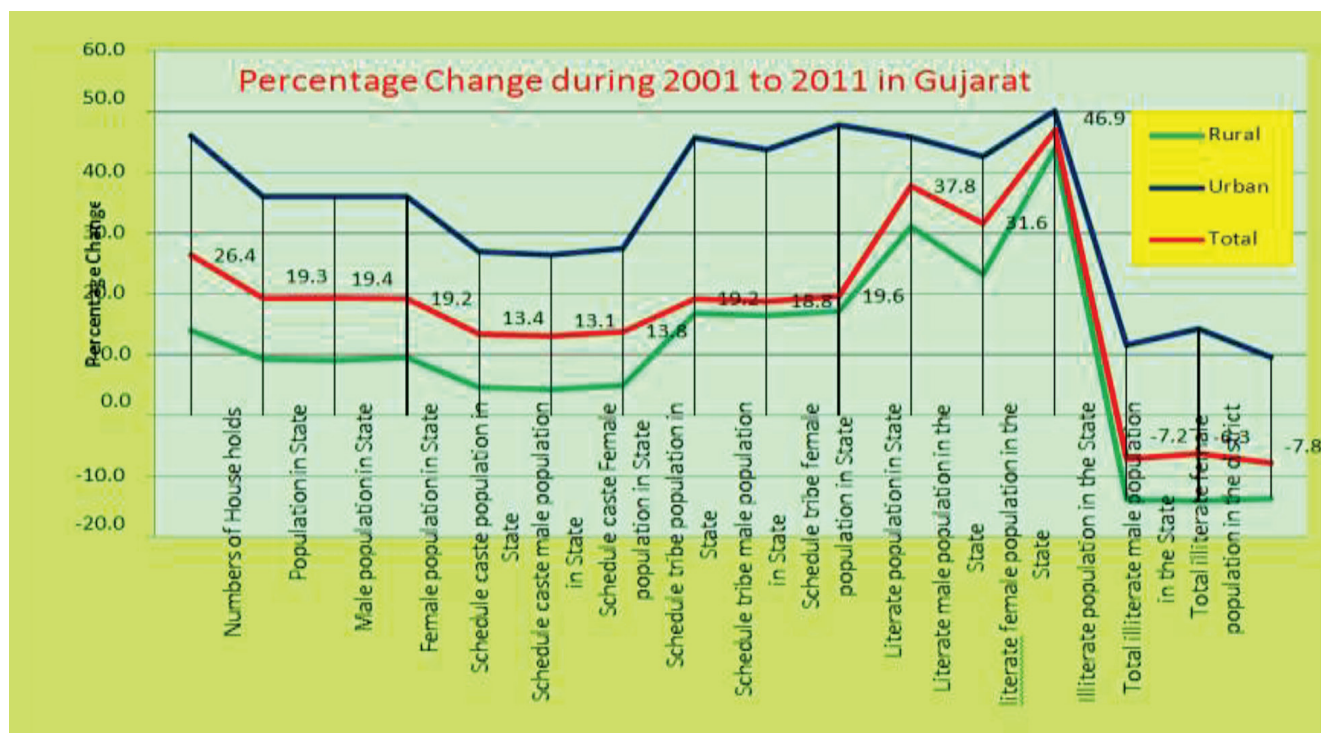
**Political awaking in scheduled caste:**

There are lots of evidences proved that weaker section in India is not so aware of power of their votes. In past Gujarat state also experienced that Scheduled castes population also cast their votes in favor of their immediate benefits. Step by step scheduled castes population awakened in last two decade and now time has come that scheduled castes population also consider their long-term development goals and cast their votes accordingly.

**Conclusion:**

After getting independence Indian economy misguided by some vested interest groups established inside and outside of India. Gradually economy cannot perform as per its potential. Slow rate of economic growth became our identity. World addressed slow rate of growth as 'Hindu rate of growth', as one of the industrial state Gujarat had also suffered a lot. The economic slowdown can harm weaker section worst. Scheduled castes also suffered in the beginning of the development process in Gujarat. Now the dark time ends and train of development is on a right track. Faster development creates lots of opportunities to scheduled castes in Gujarat. thus, the fruits of development reach to at the end of the society. With the help of development, we can make society where all would be the equal no one consider as beginners vis a vis person at the end.

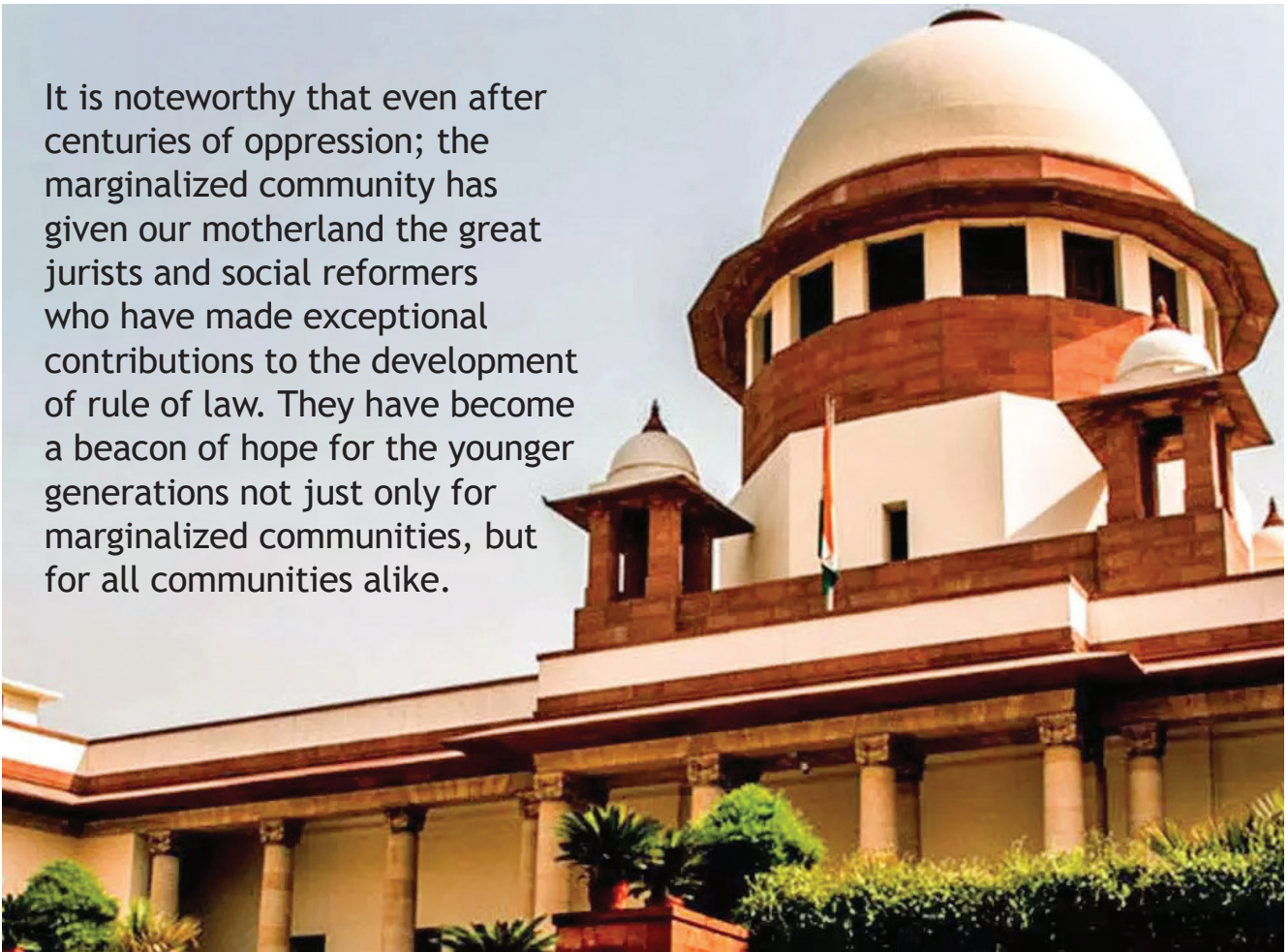
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# Legal luminaries from deprived class

It is noteworthy that even after centuries of oppression; the marginalized community has given our motherland the great jurists and social reformers who have made exceptional contributions to the development of rule of law. They have become a beacon of hope for the younger generations not just only for marginalized communities, but for all communities alike.



## Priyamvada



India is the land of diverse cultures and societies. It's one of the oldest civilizations in the world and has been the world's greatest center of learning in terms of socio-cultural advancements and development.

It all sounds mellifluous and utopian, almost a paradise where everyone is walking hand in hand, but along the line, a few were left behind, pushed back to the very edges of existence and survival because of our weaknesses and foreign aggression as well.

What happened with the marginalized section of the society comprising the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, is common knowledge and going

over it would be reiterating what is pellucid and ostensible to all.

However, what is noteworthy is that even after centuries of oppression; the marginalized community has given our motherland the great jurists and social reformers who have made exceptional contributions to the development of rule of law. They have become a beacon of hope for the younger generations not just only for marginalized communities, but for all communities alike.

### Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar

He is the father of our constitution and the avant-garde of annihilating caste-based discrimination in India. Dr. Ambedkar, the first law minister of free India was born on April 14, 1891, in the Mahar



community which was considered the lowest of the low. Despite having faced caste humiliation as a young boy living in an orthodox society, he spectacularly earned a Doctorate in Economics from Columbia University in 1917. He completed 8 years of studies in just 2 years 3 months at the London

School of Economics. He is the first and only person in the world to receive a valuable doctorate named "Doctor All Science" from the London School of Economics.

He is known as one of the most radical thinkers of the country who fought Brahmanical patriarchy and changed the socio-political



fabric by challenging the status quo. His words "Educate, Agitate and Organise ..." addressed to the Dalits, hold immense importance even today. He emphasized that education is a prerequisite for building an egalitarian society, and believed that Dalits need access to education more than an entry into a temple. He strongly advocated for not just caste equality just gender equality as well. He has immensely contributed to the development of law in India. He had codified the Hindu Code Bills that ensured gender equality in terms of property inheritance, but this bill couldn't pass and thus he resigned from the Nehru Cabinet. As a Labour Minister in the Viceroy executive council between 1942 and 1946, Dr. Ambedkar brought the Mines Maternity Benefit Bill for women. He also advocated for equal pay for equal work regardless of gender. Not only this, he was the one who introduced the concept of the Universal Adult Franchise. He was a man of foresight and vision, who suggested interlinking all major southern rivers in the country and was instrumental in laying down many Multi-purpose River Valley Projects that formed the base of our economy.

### Justice A. Varadarajan

He was the first Dalit to be appointed as a judge in the Supreme Court of India and thus is sometimes called the torch bearer of breaking stereotypes. He was born to a Dalit family on August 17, 1920 at Jolarpettai, Vellore, Madras. Unlike most of the judges during that time in the Supreme Court, he didn't belong to a prosperous family, instead, he was the first member of his family to have even graduated. During his



tenure, he passed many remarkable judgements that helped in shaping and understanding the domestic laws of the country.

### Konakuppakatil Gopinathan Balakrishnan



Justice K.G. Balakrishnan became the first ever Dalit Chief Justice of India. This was a symbolic yet very significant stride towards the empowerment of the marginalized and dispossessed section of the country. He served as the chief justice for a tenure of three and a half years which has been the longest in the Supreme

Court of India. As the Chief Justice of India, he authored many notable judgements, including the Mandal Commission Case. Other notable cases that he had decided on are, Sanjay Dutt vs The state of Maharashtra and the Bellary Mining Case.

### Justice H.K. Sema

Justice H. K. Sema is known to be the only Supreme



Court judge belonging to the scheduled tribes and has worked to ensure that the marginalized Naga community is woven into the legal fabric of the country and reaps the benefits of the same. He was born on June 1, 1943, in Nagaland. The former Justice while recently addressing the district court complex in

Zunheboto, expressed his thoughts on Nagaland having its own High Court and encouraged the gathering to "be the voice of the voiceless, to be the speech of the speechless."

He advocated that as per article 214 of the Constitution every state may have a high court, and thus so should Nagaland instead of continuing with the Kohima Bench of Gauhati High Court.

It is pertinent to note that, regardless of the caste discrepancies in this country, there are people out there who have overcome all impediments and have written their names in history. After looking at all these notable personalities a sense of placidity comes over that after so many years of independence we have somewhere ensured and attained a semblance of equality, and hopes for the future with Justice C.T. Sivakumar and Justice B. R. Gavai currently serving in the Supreme Court.

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