

History of Dalits Development in India – An Assessment

Dr.G. Yoganandham ^{a*}

^{a*} Associate Professor of Economics, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkkadu, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

Indian society is depicted by an extensive level of structural inequality, stratification and hierarchy related to caste, ethnicity, religion, class, identities of other group and organizations of social omission. It has been a historical belief that the caste system started with the Aryans coming to India around 1500 BC. Out of the several cultures, which have abundantly grown in India, the literary records belonging to the Indo-Aryan culture are not the first. Caste has a part to play at all stages of an Indian's financial life, in school, university, the labour market, and finally as he becomes older. The substantial proof shows that there has been convergence in education, line of work, revenue, and availing of public resources across the caste groups in the decades just after independence was attained. A significant proportion of India's Dalit women encounter verbal abuse, physical violence, sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence and rape. They also do not have access to proper education and employment. The constant denial of their basic human rights leads to a deficiency in education, food, healthcare, and economic possibilities, thus strapping the Dalits in eternal slavery to the upper castes. Therefore, this research paper gives more importance to assess the historical development of Dalits in India and Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Indian Society, Structural Inequality, Stratification and Hierarchy, Indo-Aryan Culture, Labour Market, Domestic Violence, Education and Employment, Basic Human Rights, Economic Opportunity, Upper Castes and Historical Development of Dalits.

Introduction

Indian society is depicted by an extensive level of structural inequality, stratification and hierarchy related to caste, ethnicity, religion, class, identities of other group and organizations of social omission. The intrinsic structure and operation of these organizations results in omissions, which in turn results in negligence, impoverishment and discrimination of a major segment of the Indian population in numerous fields.

Dalits have undergone exploitation and torture for several thousands of years. They are now regarded to be the socially downtrodden members of the community. This is proven from the news seen in daily news about the cruelty they have to experience. Several attempts have been made to improve their status and position in the society. However, those are typically aimed towards isolating them from the society instead of getting them into the mainstream society.

Dalits are not a part of the castes' pyramid and hence are called as outcastes. They are considered untouchable. A Dalit does not form a part of human society, rather, is regarded something lesser than a human being. The Dalits usually carry out the most lowly and downtrodden jobs. Caste rules state that the presence of Dalits contaminate the people of higher caste. When a higher caste Hindu touches an untouchable or even the shadow of a Dalit, they should go through a stringent set of cleansing rituals. Truly, Dalits are a group of weak humans. It is acknowledged by all that the reality of their subjugation continues not just from the material poverty they are made to undergo in the deficit of resources of economic, educational and political power.

History of Dalits

It has been a historical belief that the caste system started with the Aryans coming to India around 1500 BC. Out of the several cultures, which have abundantly grown in India, the literary records belonging to the Indo-Aryan culture are not the first. But they have mentioned the earliest and a series of history on the factors making up the caste system. The Aryans arrived from southern Europe and northern Asia with fair skin, which is a contrast with the aboriginal native people living in India. On their arrival, they had their primary contact with the Dravidians. The Dravidians are the sole other culture whose records are trustworthy about the start of the caste system, but when the artifacts of the culture were given, already it had a massive influence from the Indo-Aryan culture. Regrettably, the Aryans entirely neglected their local cultures and started to conquer the areas all over north India. Simultaneously, the local people were moved to south across the jungles of mountains situated in north India.

To protect their status, the Aryans set social and religious regulations that mentioned that only they were permitted to act as priests, soldiers, and businessmen of the community.

Brahmans are extremely concerned about cleanliness, and earlier, it was the belief of the people that diseases could spread not just through physical contact but also through the air. This is one among the reasons on Dalits being not permitted to touch the high caste people and were made to stand a particular distance away from the higher castes.

Due to these scenarios, not just were there changes in occupations, but the exact social conditions between the castes also had an impact. The three supportive blocks of the caste system, which are hereditary specialization, the sacred hierarchy, and mutual repulsion were fundamentally faced a direct undermining by the British administration.

Statement of Problem

The name Dalit implies "oppressed" and details the abuse and discrimination faced by 250 million untouchables in India constantly. Even though the Indian Constitution ensures fundamental rights and freedom to every Indian, Dalits experience systematic discrimination. Dalits are poor, neglected and socially backward. Their fundamental needs of food, shelter, and safety are not met. They also do not have access to the minimal education and employment. The systematic neglect of their fundamental human rights leads to a deficit of education, food, healthcare, and economic possibility, thereby Dalits encountering perpetual slavery to the upper castes.

Several leaders have objected against the exploitation of the Dalits by the upper caste. Jyotiba Phule, E.K. Nayar, B.R. Ambedkar, M.K. Gandhi, Mangoo Ram etc. were especially noteworthy for their travails for the Dalits. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule was the first leader to have gained attention, who attempted towards the progress of the Dalits and strived for their rights. In the pages of Indian politics, some independent Dalit movements and parties can be witnessed.

Ambedkar always encouraged the deprived caste to raise questions on the conventional social order, since according to him, it was important to develop a fair and equalitarian society. But, a desirable solution arrived in the year 1932 through Poona Pact and adopting Gandhi's suggestion, classical social equilibrium stayed as it is and that guaranteed the social cohesiveness of Hindu society.

Dalits Empowerment: Conceptual and Historical Parameters

Caste dominates the lives of people from the time they are born till they die in India. The interpretation of the caste system controlling and managing the social, economic, political and religious life in India is very much necessary when trying to understand the practicality in India. It is real that social and racial differences in any form or the other is prevalent in other regions in the world, however the type of system seen in India is manifested more by its particular distinct characteristics such as the complicatedness, amplification and severity compared to by such features sharing the with caste structures in any other place.

Considering the background of societal change, it is the belief of few people that the caste system is slowly getting out, but few others consider that despite the extrinsic characteristic, the caste has still got many of its primary functions. Several social reformers, political and social experts have voiced their fear on the rising effect of caste on politics and several other fields of social life. But, there is no necessity to into a elaborate analysis about how the caste system originated and the various theories introduced by the scholars about it. The various theories, given above, reveal that just one or two factors cannot be specified to have a possible contribution to the evolution and growth of the caste system in India. To summarize, the caste system is a segmental split of society into endogamous, hereditary descent groups. These groups make up a hierarchy in which the Brahmins take up the topmost position and the Dalits at the bottom.

Dalits were discriminated in every sense. Therefore, for many decades, Dalits have got a bottom-most position at the of the inflexible caste society in India. People from the rest of the castes, who regarded themselves ^{to} be higher, considered that by birth, Dalits are impure and that their contact or mere presence could be contaminating and therefore, they are presumed to be untouchable. The reality is that Dalits earlier were not able to avail education. The path to knowledge was never open to them. Consequently, these castes stayed backward in every sphere, be it social, economical and educational.

The higher castes of society have always considered the Dalits inferior. They were given the tag of untouchables due to their omission totally. Therefore, for decades, the Dalits have undergone the social prejudices and cruelty which was aimed at preventing them from moving above the social status decided for them. Consequently, it is evident that Dalits have gone through discrimination by the upper castes for many decides; their economic condition stayed low, they were denied education and they did not have political skills to fight for themselves against the upper caste power of the nation. In short, the low rank of the Dalits was due to the aggregated inequalities in economic, political and cultural system.

Scheduled Castes and Ambedkar's Leadership

In accordance with the provisions of the Communal Award of 1932, instructions were given, in July 1934, for scheduling a list of the persons empowered for prejudiced treatment in the facets of special electoral representation and appointment in the Central Government employment. The term scheduled castes still existed even after the independence for Reservation purposes. It is being utilized for the lower class of society, who could not take advantage from the fresh chances in the fields of education, jobs and economic progress.

The appearance of Dr. Ambedkar on the political vista gained the leadership and inspiration to the untouchable campaign. It was only via political strength that untouchables were to discover their solution, not through acknowledgement from the Hindus. Other important leaders of untouchables including Mahatma Phule, Ambedkar or Gopal Ganesh were fiercely commented. They made the lower castes understand the strength of unity and consider eradicating the caste system to be their primary objective since it involved them to take part in unwanted labor or offensive jobs, laid several limitations on them and averted them from getting to the society's mainstream.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this research paper is to explain the historical aspects of Dalits Development in India and Tamil Nadu. The specific of objectives are,

- To talk about the decadal change of literates and literacy rate in India.
- To describe the Gross Enrolment of Scheduled Caste in India.

- To portray the representation of SCs in Central Government Services.
- To discuss the percentage of Scheduled Caste since 1931 to 2011 in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology

This study is based on descriptive and diagnostic analysis. The present study is purely based on secondary data. The methodological strength of this research is based on the organized method of Data collection and analysis. The goals presented in this work had forced the researcher to search for the data. It is an analytical work and therefore collecting data was necessary since it primarily relied on secondary data. The calculations were performed manually, and the results were maintained stringently and they were comprehended rightly, considering the goals decided in the study, this research paper was penned down in lucid language and easy understanding.

Importance of Dalits Development in Tamil Nadu and India

The term Dalit is coined from the Hindi word *dalan*, implying degraded or broken. Caste has a part to play in all the stages of an Indian, be it his financial life, in school, university, the labor market, and as he grows older. The collective proof shows that convergence has been witnessed in education, job, income, and availing public resources across caste groups in the years after getting independence.

As an alternative, or legally, or like the Government of India is now calling them, Dalit is fundamentally a caste mentioned in Constitution under Article 341, referred to be the Scheduled Castes. The historical caste system of India, resulting in the social and economic suppression of the Dalits, still plays a prominent role in India. The Dalits, also called as the scheduled caste or untouchables, have faced constant refusal to avail education since the 1850s. Based on this background this research paper is highly relevant to the modern context and need of the hour.

Educational Development

Education is instrumental towards socializing. It is regarded to be a strong catalyst for bringing a change in the society and a key aspect for socio-economic growth. Understanding the significance of education, the makers of the Constitution have added in the Directive Principles of State Policy, facilities for free and mandatory education for every children up to the age of 14 years and for encouragement with special care also the educational and financial inclinations of the poorer sections of the people and especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and safeguarding from social fairness and all kinds of exploitation. Article 15 (4) facilitates the state to specially provide for the progress of any socially and educationally backward group of citizen or for the SCs and STs.

Keeping these these Constitutional provisions in mind, a set of measures have been undertaken both by the Central Government and the state government to achieve widespread education and literacy among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes such that the other two drawbacks, social and economic, may get a remedy via educational progress. Nearly 16.6 per cent Scheduled Caste population was stated to be educated against 66.0 per cent literacy rate for the common population. The details of change of Literates and Literacy Rate in a decade in India, 2001-2011 are provided below in the table – 1.

Table 1: Decadal change of Literates and Literacy Rate in India, 2001-2011

Indicator	Literates (in numbers)		Effective Literacy Rate (in percent)	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
General Total Population	56,06,87,797	76,34,98,517	64.8	73.0
Rural	36,17,36,601	48,26,53,540	58.7	67.8
Urban	19,89,51,196	28,08,44,977	79.9	84.1
SCs total Population	7,53,18,285	11,37,59,907	54.7	66.1
Rural	5,58,06,266	8,20,20,232	51.2	62.8
Urban	1,95,12,019	3,17,39,675	68.1	76.2

Source: *Primary Census Abstract for Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes – 2011, Census of India, Government of India, New Delhi.*

The proofs found from the table-1 shows that the educational advancement of Scheduled Caste populations is excellent. The overall literacy rate for Scheduled Caste all through India is reported as 54.7 percent in 2001. This

has seen a rise to 66.1 per cent in 2011. During 2001 to 2011 the rise of literacy rate for Scheduled Caste is reported as 11.4 percent. These are quite more than the total literacy growth rate of 8.2 percent for the entire population of India. In the same way, the overall Female literacy rate for Scheduled Castes during the period from 2001 to 2011 has seen a rise from 41.9 per cent to 56.5 per cent. Hence, the literacy rate, rose by 14.6 per cent among the Female Scheduled Caste population in comparison with a total change of 10.9 per cent in the nation.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment of Scheduled Caste in India, 2011-15 (in percent)

Particulars (Levels/Years)	General			Scheduled Castes		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2012-13						
I – V class (6-11 years)	99.3	102.2	100.7	114.6	116.7	115.6
VI – VIII class (11-14 years)	82.3	86.9	84.5	91.2	95.9	93.5
2013-14						
I – V class (6-11 years)	98.1	100.6	99.3	110.8	112.2	111.5
VI – VIII class (11-14 years)	84.9	90.3	87.4	93.2	96.5	94.8
2014-15						
I – V class (6-11 years)	98.9	101.4	100.1	110.7	113.2	111.9
VI – VIII class (11-14 years)	87.7	95.3	91.2	97.2	105.5	101.0

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2016.

The above data shows that during the period 2012-13, registration rates among scheduled castes were recorded to be 114.6 per cent among males, 116.7 per cent among females and 111.9 per cent among the individuals for classes I – V (6-11 years). For classes VI – VIII (11-14 years), registration rates were recorded at 91.2 per cent among males, 95.9 per cent among females and 93.5 per cent among all. Primarily, the registration rates among scheduled caste population are less for class VI – VIII when dropout rates were recorded to be more than the common population. Even the registration of scheduled castes students in higher education is quite less in comparison with the registration rate of common population.

Employment Pattern

At the time of independence, scheduled castes were generally involved in work, which were regarded to be lowly for the other castes to perform. They were primarily working as agricultural workers, tanners, flayers and similar in the lower strata of the society. From then, with the aid of the different programmes, the SC's have been empowered to achieve slow but steady advancement economically, even though it not at par with the rest of the population. The information about SCs Representation in Central Government Services are given in table-3.

Table 3: Representation of SCs in Central Government Services, 2014-15

Group	Total	SC	percent	OBCs	percent	Others	percent
A	66142	7923	11.98	5589	8.45	49278	74.50
B	142413	22316	15.67	14876	10.45	97543	68.49
C	2531762	430996	17.02	447564	17.68	1435851	56.71
Total	2740317	461235	16.83	468029	17.08	1582672	57.76

Source: Annual Report, 2015-16, Ministry of Personal, Government of India, New Delhi.

From the data given in table- 3, it is evident that during 2014-15, SC's comprised for about 11.98 per cent of Group A category in Central government jobs, 15.67 percent took up Group B category jobs and 17.02 percent of them held Group C category jobs in Central Government Services correspondingly. Their occupation in this group of services has dramatically changed from the past decade.

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is one of the impoverished states in India. Therefore, the SCs are the poorest of all the poor compared to the rest of the population. In Tamil Nadu, the highest percentage of the Scheduled Castes live in South India. They either have very less land or no land at all. Close to 75 per cent of the SCs mainly rely on agriculture for their living. The Scheduled Castes constitute 20 percent of the overall population of the state.

Table 4: Percentage of Scheduled Caste since 1931 to 2011 in Tamil Nadu

Year	Description of State	Terminology used to describe the Scheduled Caste	Composition (i.e. Percentage of the Scheduled
1931	Madras Presidency including Ganjan etc.,	Depressed Classes	15.5
1941	Madras Presidency after Ganjan etc. went away to Orissa,	Scheduled Classes	16.4
1951	Madras before partitioning to Andhra	Scheduled Classes	15.0
1961	Madras after the States Reorganisation	Scheduled Classes	18.0
1971	Tamil Nadu	Scheduled Classes	17.76
1981	Tamil Nadu	Scheduled Classes	18.35
1991	Tamil Nadu	Scheduled Classes	-
2001	Tamil Nadu	Scheduled Classes	19.00
2011	Tamil Nadu	Scheduled Classes	20.00

Source: Statistical Hand book of Tamil Nadu 2014

The table - 4 refer the percentage of the Scheduled Castes of the total population in Tamil Nadu State is higher than the corresponding figure for India. Actually, among all the states in India, Tamil Nadu Stands fifth in the percentage of Scheduled Castes, the first three places being held by Punjab (31.9), Himachal Pradesh (25.2), West Bengal (23.5), Haryana (20.2), and Tamil Nadu (20.00).

Conclusion

In the concluding one can say that among the different SCs groups there is a need to relater their cultural practices to the ideology and political of Ambedkar. SCs struggle have been fighting for their own liberation on one side, which low far they been helpful or conclusive to Social changes.

Added to the religious and social regulations enforced on the SCs against formal education the poverty among the SCs is the primary hurdle for them to avail formal education. Also, no knowledge about the purpose of education considering that education is not helpful, worse economic situations, absence of educational provisions, deficit of knowledge and conventional prejudice towards education, home environment were other cause behind the educational backwardness among the SCs is the primary hurdle for them to enroll for formal education.

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