

Policies for SC/ST Education in India

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The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are various officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged indigenous people in India. The terms are recognised in the Constitution of India and the various groups are designated in one or other of the categories. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. The percentage of people in scheduled castes is essentially the percentage of people in the lower part of Indian society. In modern literature, the Scheduled Castes are sometimes referred to as *adi dravida* or Dalits. Scheduled Tribes is used as an official term for Adivasis.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 census). The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 29 states in its First Schedule, and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule. Since independence, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were given Reservation status, guaranteeing political representation. The Constitution lays down the general principles of affirmative action for SCs and STs. Since the 1850s these communities were loosely referred to as Depressed Classes, with the Scheduled Tribes also being known as Adivasi ("original inhabitants"). The early 20th century saw a flurry of activity in the Raj assessing the feasibility of responsible self-government for India. The Morley–Minto Reforms Report, Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms Report and the Simon Commission were several initiatives in this context. A highly contested issue in the proposed reforms was the reservation of seats for representation of the Depressed Classes in provincial and central legislatures. In 1935, Parliament passed the Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. The reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act, which came into force in 1937. The Act introduced the term "Scheduled Castes", defining the group as "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes', as His Majesty in Council may prefer". This discretionary definition was clarified in The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936, which contained a list (or Schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces.

After independence the Constituent Assembly continued the prevailing definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, giving (via articles 341 and 342) the president of India and governors of the states a mandate to compile a full listing of castes and tribes (with the power to edit it later, as required). The complete list of castes and tribes was made via two orders: The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, respectively.

I. RELIGIOUS POPULATION OF SCS/STS

According to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders (Amendment) Act, 1990, Scheduled Castes can only belong to Hindu or Sikh or Buddhist religions. There is no religion bar in case of Scheduled Tribes. The Sachar Committee report of 2006 revealed that scheduled castes and tribes of India are not limited to the religion of Hinduism. The 61st round Survey of the NSSO found that 90% of the Buddhists, one-third of the Sikhs, and one-third of the Christians in India belonged to the notified scheduled castes or tribes of the Constitution.

Distribution of each religion by caste category 2004/05	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	Other Backward Classes	Others	Total
Hinduism	22.2	9.1	42.8	26.0	100
Muslim	0.8	0.5	39.2	59.5	100
Christians	9.0	32.8	24.8	33.3	100
Sikhs	30.7	0.9	22.4	46.1	100
Jains	0.0	2.6	3.0	94.3	100
Buddhists	89.5	7.4	0.4	2.7	100
Zoroastrians	0.0	15.9	13.7	70.4	100
Others	2.6	82.5	6.2	8.7	100
Total	19.5	8.7	41.1	30.8	100

II. STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF SC AND ST

The Constitution provides a three-pronged strategy to improve the situation of SCs and STs:

Protective arrangements: Such measures as are required to enforce equality, to provide punitive measures for transgressions, to eliminate established practices that perpetuate inequities, etc. A number of laws were enacted to implement the provisions in the Constitution. Examples of such laws include The Untouchability Practices Act, 1955, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, etc.

Affirmative action: Provide positive treatment in allotment of jobs and access to higher education as a means to accelerate the integration of the SCs and STs with mainstream society. Affirmative action is popularly known as reservation.

Development: Provide resources and benefits to bridge the socioeconomic gap between the SCs and STs and other communities. Major part played by the Hidayatullah National Law University. Dadu Rocks National commissions To effectively implement the various safeguards built into the Constitution and other legislation, the Constitution under Articles 338 and 338A provides for two statutory commissions: the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. The chairpersons of both commissions sit ex officio on the National Human Rights Commission.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

In the original Constitution, Article 338 provided for a special officer (the Commissioner for SCs and STs) responsible for monitoring the implementation of constitutional and legislative safeguards for SCs and STs and reporting to the president. Seventeen regional offices of the Commissioner were established throughout the country. There was an initiative to replace the Commissioner with a committee in the 48th Amendment to the Constitution, changing Article 338. While the amendment was being debated, the Ministry of Welfare established the first committee for SCs and STs (with the functions of the Commissioner) in August 1978. These functions were modified in September 1987 to include advising the government on broad policy issues and the development levels of SCs and STs. Now it is included in Article 342.

In 1990, Article 338 was amended for the National Commission for SCs and STs with the Constitution (Sixty fifth Amendment) Bill, 1990. The first commission under the 65th Amendment was constituted in March 1992, replacing the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the commission established by the Ministry of Welfare's Resolution of 1989. In 2003, the Constitution was again amended to divide the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two commissions: the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. Due to the spread of Christianity and Islam among schedule caste/Tribe community converted are not protected as castes under Indian Reservation policy. Hence, these societies usually forge their community certificate as Hindus and practice Christianity or Islam afraid for their loss of reservation

IV. SCHEDULED CASTES SUB-PLAN

The Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) of 1979 mandated a planning process for the social, economic and educational development of Scheduled Castes and improvement in their working and living conditions. It was an umbrella strategy, ensuring the flow of targeted financial and physical benefits from the general sector of development to the Scheduled Castes. It entailed a targeted flow of funds and associated benefits from the annual plan of states and Union Territories (UTs) in at least a proportion to the national SC population. Twenty-seven states and UTs with sizable SC populations are implementing the plan. Although the Scheduled Castes population according to the 2001 Census was 16.66 crores (16.23 percent of the total population), the allocations made through SCSP have been lower than the proportional population. A strange factor has emerged of extremely lowered fertility of scheduled castes in Kerala, due to land reform, migrating Kerala Gulf diaspora and democratization of education.

V. EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES & SCHEDULED TRIBES Navodaya Vidyalaya (NVs)

Reservation of seats in favour of children belonging to SCs and STs is provided in proportion to their population in the concerned district provided that no such reservation will be less than the national average of 22.5 per cent (15 per cent for SCs and 7.50 per cent for STs) and a maximum of 50 per cent for both the categories (SCs & STs) taken together. These reservations are interchangeable and over and above the students selected under open merit.

VI. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OPEN SCHOOLING (NIOS)

The SC/ST students are given concession in admission fees to the extent of Rs.450/- for Secondary Courses and Rs.525/- for Senior Secondary Courses. Under the Scheme of strengthening of Boarding and Hostel Facilities for Girls Students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools cent percent financial assistance is given to Voluntary Organisations to improve enrolment of adolescent girls belonging to rural areas and weaker sections. Preference is given to educationally backward districts particularly those predominately inhabited by SCs/STs and educationally backward minorities. Out of 43,000 scholarships at the secondary stage for talented children from rural areas 13,000 scholarships are awarded to SC/ST students subject to fulfillment of criteria laid down

VII. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING (NCERT)

NCERT focuses on the development of textbooks, teacher guides, supplementary reading materials, evaluation of textbooks, vocational education, educational technology, examination reforms, support to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), education of educationally disadvantaged groups. NCERT (External website that opens in a new window) operates the National Talent Search Scheme for pursuing courses in science and social science up to doctoral level and in professional courses like medicine and engineering up to second-degree level subject to fulfillment of the conditions. Out of 1000 scholarships, 150 scholarships are reserved for SC students and 75 scholarships for ST students.

VIII. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION (NIEPA)

Educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is an area of major concern of NIEPA (External website that opens in a new window). It carries out a number of studies relating to educational programmes and schemes for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It has also been generating material relating to educational institutions and development of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students.

IX. UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

Provides financial assistance to universities/deemed universities for the establishment of SC/ST cells in Universities to ensure effective implementation of reservation policy for SCs and STs. The UGC has established SC/ST Cells in 113 Universities including Central Universities to ensure proper implementation of the reservation policy. The Standing Committee on SCs/STs monitors and reviews the work undertaken by the universities/colleges.

As per the reservation policy, UGC has earmarked 15 per cent and 7.50 per cent reservation for SCs and STs respectively in appointments, both in teaching and non-teaching posts, admissions, hostel accommodation, etc., in universities/ colleges, professional and technical educational institutions administered by the Central Government. State universities follow reservation policy as prescribed by respective state governments. The commission has been issuing guidelines/directives/instructions from time to time for implementing reservation policy of the Government of India. Apart from reservation, there is also relaxation in the minimum qualifying marks for admission for SC/ST candidates. UGC has been implementing the programme of Career Orientation to education (vocationalisation of education) to ensure that the graduates have knowledge, skills and attitudes for gainful employment in the wage sector in general, and self-employment in particular for all including SCs/STs. It also provides financial assistance for Remedial Coaching to SC/ST students. It provides financial assistance to the existing coaching centres to prepare SC/ST candidates for the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by UGC/CSIR. The Commission provides financial assistance for extension activities. Under the scheme, all groups of the society are covered including SCs/STs. .

In order to contribute towards social equity and socio economic mobility of the under privileged sections of the society, UGC has introduced remedial coaching scheme at UG/PG level. The main objectives of the scheme are:

- 1.To improve the academic skills and linguistic proficiency of the students in various subjects.
- 2.To raise the level of comprehension of basic subjects so as to provide a strong foundation for further academic work.
- 3.To strengthen their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the subjects where quantitative and qualitative techniques and laboratory work are involved
- 4..To improve the overall performance of these students in the examination.

The Commission has created a Central Pool Database of eligible SC/ST candidates and recommends their candidature for teaching positions in order to fulfill the prescribed reservation quota in universities and colleges.

Periodic meetings of Registrars of Central Universities are organised to review the implementation of reservation policy in the Central Universities. A Special Monitoring Committee reviews the functioning of existing Cells.

X. SOME OF OTHER POLICIES FOR SC/ST ARE

1. Mahila Samakhya (MS)

2. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level(NPEGEL)
3. Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)
4. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas
5. Jan Shiksha Sansthan(JSS)
6. Mid day Meal Scheme
7. Central Institute of Indian Languages(CIIL)
8. Kendriya Vidyalaya (KVs)

XI. COMMUNITY POLYTECHNICS

The scheme of polytechnic under take rural /community development activities through application of science and technology in proximity. It provides platforms for transfer of appropriate technologies to rural masses local communities. Preference is given in training to rural youths, SCs, STs, women, school dropouts and other disadvantaged groups and helps them to obtain need based gainful employment. The scheme of Community Polytechnics has been in operation in selected diploma level institutions since 1978-79.It applies science and technology through skill oriented non-formal training technology transfer and technical support services.

XII. ENGINEERING COLLEGES

The higher educational institutions administered by the Central Government including IITs, IIMs, National Institutes of Technology etc., provide reservation to the extent of 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent for SC and ST students respectively. Apart from reservation, there is also relaxation in the minimum qualifying marks for admission for SC/ST students . Seats are also reserved in hostels. However , in institutions run by the State Governments , the reservation percentage varies as per the State Government's policy.

XIII. SCP & TSP

From the allotted budgets of the Departments of Elementary Education and Literacy and Secondary and Higher Education 16.20 and 8 per cent are allocated under the Special Component Plan (SCP) and the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. The Departments of Secondary and Higher Education has earmarked notionally Rs.333.75 crore and 166.88 crore for SCP and TSP respectively out of the plan outlay of Rs.2225 crore for Annual Plan 2004-05. Departments of Elementary Education and Literacy has earmarked notionally Rs. 900 crore and 450 crore for SCP and TSP respectively out of the plan outlay of Rs. 6000 crore for Annual Plan 2004-05.

XIV. LITERACY RATES

Adult Literacy Schemes of the National Literacy Mission have been implemented in nearly all the districts of the country. Special measures have been initiated to improve female literacy in low female literacy districts(45) through focused interventions by Zilla Saksharata Samitis, Non-government Organisations , women volunteer teachers and Panchayati Raj functionaries. Emphasis is also being laid on provision of life-long learning opportunities, imparting vocational skills, and improving income generation of neo-literates through the Continuing Education Programme , which is being implemented in 272 districts.

The achievements made in the literacy rates of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are also significant compared to those in the 1991 Census i.e. 37.41 per cent and 29.41 per cent respectively. Besides the growth in female literacy amongst the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is also at a faster rate as compared to male literacy figures.

XV. NATIONAL SCHEME OF INCENTIVES TO GIRLS FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

To promote enrolment of girl child in the age groups of 14-18 at secondary stage , especially those who passed Class VIII and to encourage the secondary education of such girls, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme. National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education was launched in May,2008.

The Scheme covers:

1. All SC/ST girls who pass class VIII and
2. Girls who pass class VIII examination from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas(irrespective of whether they belong to Scheduled Castes or Tribes) and enroll for class IX in State / UT Government, Government-aided or local body schools.
3. Girls Should be below 16 years of age (as on 31st March) on joining class IX
4. Married girls, girls studying in private un-aided schools and enrolled in schools run by Central Government like KVS,NVS, and CBS affiliated Schools are excluded.

A sum of Rs. 3000 /- is deposited in the name of eligible girls as fixed deposit. The girls are entitled to withdraw the sum along with interest thereon reaching 18 years of age on passing 10th class examination. The proposal / list of beneficiaries for the academic year 2015-16 is required to be submitted/ uploaded on-line over National Scholarship

Portal(NSP). Apart from above centrally sponsored schemes, which are administered in collaboration with state governments various states have also framed their own policies for promoting education of SC/ST in India.

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