

## CASTE AND POVERTY: CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATION

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**Abstract:** The general observation is that in most of the states in India 36.8 percent of the population in rural areas and 39.9 percent of the SC population in urban area is still below poverty line during the year 2004-05. This percentage is comparatively high because people below poverty line belonging to others category (excluding SC and OBC population) is only 16.1 percent and 16 percent in rural and urban areas respectively. The average monthly Per Capita expenditure of SC households in rural and urban areas is also much less than the average monthly per capita expenditure incurred by others in rural and urban areas. It shows a higher incidence of poverty among SC as compared to others population. The poverty ratio for SC in rural area in eastern states like Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal is comparatively high as compared to northern states like Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. Since it is highest in Bihar and lowest in Punjab, it suggests that the level of economic advancement of states has a direct bearing on the poverty ratio of SCs. The poverty ratio has changed since the mid of sixth five year plan to the mid of ninth five year plan when it came down from 80 to 60 in Bihar and from 36 to 19 in Haryana. It shows the impact of a higher rate of economic development in India after the policy of new economic reforms.

**Key Words:** Occupational Pattern; Study of Poverty; Land Distribution and Land Holding; Literacy Rate among Scheduled Castes; Incentive Schemes of Government to Eradicate Poverty

### INTRODUCTION

This research paper is divided in six parts. First part explains about the research question and methodology used in the paper and a brief introduction of this paper. While second part explains about a briefing of various studies of the poverty. Third parts explains relations about the occupational pattern and poverty while the part Four explains about the relation about the literacy and poverty among scheduled castes. Part Five explains about various incentive schemes introduced and implemented to reduce poverty while Part Six concludes the various findings of the paper.

### STUDY OF POVERTY

Indian society is stratified with a number of inequalities among different social groups. The caste system in India has created and sustained an unequal opportunity structure. It has intensified and perpetuated the sufferings

of scheduled castes by reducing their access to development benefits in comparison to higher caste groups (Mungekar 1999). A number of studies and research surveys have been carried out by various academic institutions and research scholars, which depict the socio-economic condition of scheduled castes in India in general and in different states in particular. Most of these studies are at a macro level but there is paucity of empirical data and of literature and studies which can be utilized for the analysis at a micro level. In this research study an attempt has been made to examine the ground realities with the help of primary data collected through a random survey and to come out with observations and conclusions.

Bhadra (1991) in his study of Assam, has analyzed the structure and process of social stratification of the state. Athaparia et. al (2001) also concluded that scheduled castes have insufficient land holding in Assam where agriculture is their main occupation. Mishra (2005)

concluded in his study that the extent of poverty is very high among backward communities in the rural areas of Assam. When these results are compared to the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Haryana then in this state also the social structure has a number of castes. Land holding with scheduled caste people is also insufficient. Their main occupation is also agriculture. However, the extent of poverty in Haryana is not as high as concluded by Mishra (2005). Population below poverty line was 27.7 percent for scheduled castes in rural and 19.7 percent for rural and urban combined population in 2004-05 while for Haryana, it was 26.8 and 14 percent as per the statistics published by planning commission of India.

Chetty (1991) in his study on Scheduled Castes and Development Programs in India concluded that the failure of big industries strategy compelled the Indian planners in 1980s to switch over to growth with social justice strategy in order to reduce poverty among scheduled castes. Singh (1995) in his paper on Reservation Policy concluded that scheduled castes in Uttar Pradesh still suffer from alienation, inferiority and socio-economic status. Despite the policy of reservation, majority of scheduled castes still belong to a very low income group as compared to higher caste.

### **Land Distribution and Land Holding**

Thorat (1999) examined the report of the Commission for Scheduled Castes in India 1995-96. According to the Report, a total of 52.13 lakh acres of land was distributed at all India level, of these 18.08 lakh acres of land was distributed to scheduled castes. A total of 51.21 lakh people were beneficiaries of which 18.49 lakh were scheduled castes which accounted for 36.1 percent of the total distributed land. Coming to Haryana, the area distributed was 87,259 acres which was 1.67 percent of the total area of land distributed in India. The area distributed to scheduled castes in Haryana was 37,623 acres, which was 43.1 percent. The percent share of scheduled castes out of total beneficiaries was 42.9. Average area distributed was 3.2 acres. On the basis of these statistics, it can be observed that the process of land reforms has not benefited much the scheduled castes in Haryana as the percentage share of land as well as

beneficiaries was less than two percent and among them the scheduled castes beneficiaries were even less than 50 percent (Thorat 1999).

Thorat (1999) also examined the survey/ reports of NSS on land holding in 1982 and 1992. In this survey, it was observed that the percent of landless scheduled castes households was 12.62 at all-India level while, it was 10.09 for Haryana. At all-India level, 47.97 percent of the rural households held less than half-an-acre of land while it was 87.50 percent for Haryana. Similarly, the percent of scheduled castes households having between half and one acre of land was 9.13 for India and only 0.97 for Haryana. These statistics also reveal that the economic condition of rural scheduled castes households in Haryana was deplorable because a majority of them were landless or near landless household. However, Thorat could not visualised that a land holding of less than half-an-acre land, which is un-economic holding, would be retained by the scheduled caste population or not. This aspect of the problem is to be examined in the present research work.

Thorat (1999) concluded that 87.50 percent of rural households in Haryana had less than half an acre of land. The results of present study are significantly different. The percentage of rural household belonging to scheduled castes and holding land less than one acre is 11.67 percent while agricultural land less than one acre with non-scheduled caste people is 70.50 percent, between 1 and 2 acre is 25 percent and more than 2 acre is 57.50 percent. This unequal distribution of land between scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes is a significant result of present study, moreover, the percent of landless scheduled caste people increased from 12.5 percent, as shown by the study of Thorat (1999) to 88.33 percent in the present study. This change over the last 20 years, shows that scheduled caste people, owing to their poverty, were compelled to sell their small size of holdings to non-scheduled castes.

### **Nature of Employment**

Throat (1999) also examined the percentage of self-employment among scheduled castes in India and Haryana. The percentage of self-employed scheduled castes in agriculture in rural area was 18.9 percent and in non-agriculture sector, it was 11 percent in 1987-88 while

for Haryana, it was 5.88 percent and 17.40 percent for the same period. The figure change to 19.12 percent and 13.89 percent for India during year 1993-94 and 18.64 percent and 15.20 percent for Haryana which shows that in Haryana, self-employed scheduled castes in non-agriculture sector in rural population is more than the self-employed scheduled castes in agriculture sector. Moreover, the percent is on the increase for both the sectors. However, the percentage of self-employed scheduled castes is more in the urban area as compared to rural area because, it is 31.1 percent for both the year 1993-94. This reveals the better status of urbanite-scheduled castes as compared to the rural households. Scheduled castes are also known as 'Dalits' and a number of studies with the turn off century were undertaken for these dalits or scheduled castes. Caste and poverty status go hand in hand. They (Meenakshi *et al.* 2000) were of the view that literature on poverty is rich but the estimates of poverty among scheduled castes for different states of India are rare. The purpose of their paper was to explore the factors associated with high rate of poverty in general and poverty among scheduled castes in particular. They used official poverty line as the measure of poverty. The head-count ratio method was used to estimate poverty among scheduled castes.

Thorat (1999) made a study of only self-employment while the nature of employment includes private, government and manual laborer along with self-employment. The result of his study shows that self

employed scheduled castes to non-agriculture sector in rural areas in Haryana was more than the self-employed scheduled castes in agriculture sector and this percentage was on the increase for both the sectors.

### OCUPATIONAL PATTERN

Occupational patterns can also explain the position of SCs who own their land and hence, are self-employed in agricultural and who do not own any land but self-employed in non-agricultural sectors or working as agricultural or non-agricultural labor. These patterns for SCs can be compared with others for the rural and urban areas.

Social groups have been divided into two parts namely, those who belong to SC category and others belonging to non-SC/ST category. The occupational pattern has been divided into three parts, namely, people who are self-employed, who are working as labourers and who are salaried persons. The table shows that self-employed people in rural areas are employed either in the agricultural sector or non-agricultural sector. The table shows that there were 18.9 percent SCs who were self-employed in agriculture in the year 1987-88 and the percentage changed to 20.2 in 2004-05.

Similarly, the percentage for SC in the non-agricultural self-employed category was 11.0 percent which increased to 14.1 percent. Thus, 29.9 per cent of SCs were self – employed in 1987-88 and this increased to 34.2 percent

**Table 1**  
**Occupational pattern for SC and others (in percentage) - (Rural)**

<i>Social groups</i>	<i>Self-employed in</i>				<i>Labour</i>			<i>Others</i>
	<i>Year</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Non-Agriculture</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>	
<b>SC</b>	2004-2005	20.2	14.1	34.2	40.5	15.4	56.0	9.8
	1999-2000	16.4	12.0	28.4	51.4	10.0	61.4	10.2
	1993-94	20.1	10.7	30.8	49.3	10.2	59.5	9.7
	1987-88	18.9	11.0	29.9	51.7	11.4	63.1	6.9
<b>Others</b>	2004-2005	43.3	18.1	61.4	15.6	7.7	23.3	15.3
	1999-2000	41.1	14.8	55.9	19.0	6.3	25.3	18.7
	1993-94	43.3	14.4	57.7	23.2	6.9	30.2	12.1
	1987-88	43.3	13.8	57.1	23.2	7.9	31.1	11.5

*Source:* Employment/ Unemployment situation among social groups in India, 43rd, 50<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> round survey NSSO.

in 2004-05. When SCs are compared to others in the self-employed category then in the agricultural sector their percentage remains unchanged at 43.3 while non-agricultural self-employed increased from 13.8 to 18.1 percent and the total value for others as self-employed increased from 57.1 to 61.4 percent. On the basis of these statistical values, the following implications can be drawn:

1. For the self-employed in agriculture in rural areas, in per cent terms SCs are much less than the others. It means others have more land to cultivate than the SCs.
2. The percentage of self-employed SCs in agriculture is less than one-half of the percentage of self-employed in agriculture for others.
3. The total percentage of people belonging to others category as self-employed is also very high as compared to the total self-employed SCs in rural areas.
4. Self-employed total percentage for others is almost double as compared to self-employed SCs in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors in rural areas.
5. It shows that self-employed SCs in rural areas have poor economic status as compared to self-employed others in rural areas.

Occupational pattern for labor category for scheduled castes shows a decline from 51.7 percent in 1987-88 to 40.5 percent in 2004-05 in the agricultural sector. However, there has been an increase of labor force belonging to SCs employed in non-agriculture sector from 11.4 to 15.4. The same is the case for salaried SCs whose percentage increased from 6.9 to 9.8. When these statistical facts for SCs are compared to others then the percentage of agriculture labor decline from 23.2 to 15.6, the percentage of non-agriculture labour from 7.9 to 7.7 and total percentage from 31.1 to 23.3 percent. In case of salaried persons, the occupational pattern for others again shows an increase from 11.5 percent to 15.3 percent in rural areas. The following implications can be derived from these statistical changes also-

1. The percentage of agricultural laborers for SCs and others is on the decline which shows less

demand for agriculture labor due to mechanization and less future prospects for laborers in the agricultural sector.

2. Despite a decline in the percentage of agricultural labourers, scheduled castes as agricultural labourers still are 2.5 times more than others. It shows the economic backwardness of SCs in rural areas.
3. The movement of SC labour from agriculture to non-agriculture sector shows that non-agriculture sector is more attractive for SC labourers due to its flexibility, regularity and remunerative nature.
4. There has been marginal increase in the percentage of scheduled castes working as salaried people, both, in private and public sectors. In this case also the percentage of others is much more than the percentage of SCs. It shows that despite reservation in public sector, the percentage of SCs as salaried persons is much less than the others salaried people in the rural areas. Therefore, there is a need of higher education for scheduled castes so that their employability may increase. Moreover, reservation policy should be extended to private sector also and should be implemented more effectively.

Occupational pattern for SCs and others in urban areas is not much different as compared to rural areas. The trend for self-employed SCs in urban areas is also increase along with the percentage of salaried SC workers. The position of SCs can be compared to the position of others under the occupational pattern for urban areas as shown in the following table 2:

The percentage of self-employed SCs in 1987-88 was 26 percent which increased to 29.4 percent in 2004-05 while the percentage of others who were self-employed was 35.2 percent which increased to 38.6 in 2004-05. The percentage of salaried workers for SCs is 39.4 in 1987-88 which increased to 41.1 percent in 2004-05. The percent of SCs as casual laborers was as high as self-employed in 1987-88; however, it shows a decline from 26 percent to 21.8 percent after erratic trends. Similarly, the percentage

of other SC workers also reveals a declining trend while for non-SC category the percentage for other occupation is on the increase. The percentage of casual labor for SCs when compared to others is very high. Moreover, the decline in the percentage of casual laborers for others is steep while for SCs it is slow. The most striking feature is that the percentage of SCs as casual laborers is 3.5 times more as compared to the percentage of casual laborers belonging to others category.

**Table 2**  
**Occupational pattern for SC and others**  
**(in per cent) (Urban)**

<i>Social groups</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Self-employed</i>	<i>Regular wage/ Salaried work</i>	<i>Casual labour</i>	<i>others</i>
SC	2004- 2005	29.4	41.1	21.8	7.7
	1999- 2000	27.3	37.6	26.5	8.5
	1993- 94	24.9	39.2	27.6	8.3
	1987- 88	26.0	39.4	26.0	8.5
Others	2004- 2005	38.6	44.8	6.2	10.3
	1999- 2000	35.5	46.5	7.4	10.5
	1993- 94	35.5	43.9	10.8	9.8
	1987- 88	35.2	45.0	10.3	9.2

*Source:* Employment/ Unemployment situation among social groups in India, 43rd, 50<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> round survey NSSO.

On the basis of all these statistical information, following implications can be derived:

1. The percentage of self-employed SCs has increased slowly but it is still less than the percentage self-employed workers belonging to others category. It means that there is a need to promote self-employment schemes and programs which are especially oriented for scheduled castes.
2. The salaried SC workers are on the increase while there is a little decline in the percentage of salaried workers belonging to others category. It means people belonging to others category either not getting jobs due to reservation or they are not interested in salaried work. It will have favorable effect on the salaried workers belonging to SC category.

3. The most striking feature is a high percentage of SC as casual labors. It was 21.8 percent for SCs but only 6.2 percent for others. It means that socio-economic condition of scheduled castes in urban areas has not improved much as compared to others category. In this respect, efforts should be made by the government to provide educational facilities through specialized institutions so that SCs may get jobs in other fields and may not remain as casual laborers.
4. Occupational pattern in the form of others include workers who are neither self-employed, nor salaried nor casual laborers. It includes labor force engaged in various services. The trend of SCs in this category is on the decline from 8.5 percent to 7.7 percent while for others, the trend is to increase from 9.2 percent to 10.3 percent in 2004-05. This trend for SCs is also not favorable because services are more remunerative as compared to casual laborers.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the social economic condition of SCs on the basis of occupational pattern is not better than the condition of people belonging to others category. Although, the conditions have improved for SCs but the rate of change is slow and hence, there is a need on the part of government to implement the goal of inclusive growth more rapidly.

One aspect of occupational pattern is the percentage of SCs as salaried workers. This aspect is significant because before independence, there were no reservations for SCs and hence, their percentage in government services was negligible, especially in the officers category which is known as group A. the percentage in this group remained less than 3 percent up to 1990, i.e. even after four decades of independence. The percentage in group B and C for scheduled castes also remained very low as depicted in table 3.

According to table 20, the percentage of scheduled castes employed in government jobs in group A and Group B categories is comparatively low while in Group C and Group D categories, it is high. It means less percentage of SC on higher category jobs and more in the lower grade jobs. It is due to poor literacy rate among scheduled castes, defective government policies,

**Table 3**  
**Percentage of Scheduled Castes in government Jobs**

Group (excluding sweepers)	Percentage of Scheduled Castes		
	1990	2000	2004
A	2.62	6.52	8.45
B	3.49	5.27	8.37
C	63.15	59.21	59.74
D	30.75	28.30	23.44

*Source:* Public Enterprises Survey, Annual Report, Volume I, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India, New Delhi (1990-91-93 to 2004-05).

corruption, poor implementation of government policies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the situation in this respect is not going to improve till there are better educational facilities for SCs.

#### LITERACY RATE AND POVERTY

It is interesting to compare literacy rate among scheduled castes with total literacy rate in different states in India. On the basis of statistical information regarding literacy rate, the scheduled caste population has either almost equal or less literacy rate as compared to the total literacy rate in all the states in India. The poorer states like Bihar, Jharkhand have very low literacy rate among scheduled castes as compared to total literacy rates in these states. More developed states like Gujarat and Maharashtra have higher literacy rate among scheduled castes. This relationship reveals that economic prosperity of a state has direct relation with the literacy rate of the scheduled castes.

**Table 4**  
**Literacy Rate among Scheduled Castes by States for year 2000**

State/UT	Total	SC
1. Uttar Pradesh	56.3	46.3
2. Maharashtra	76.9	71.9
3. Bihar	47.0	28.5
4. West Bengal	68.6	59.0
5. Andhra Pradesh	60.5	53.5
6. Tamil Nadu	73.5	63.2

*contd. table 4*

State/UT	Total	SC
7. Madhya Pradesh	63.7	58.6
8. Rajasthan	60.1	52.2
9. Karnataka	66.6	52.9
10. Gujarat	69.1	70.5
11. Orissa	63.1	55.5
12. Kerala	90.9	82.7
13. Jharkhand	53.6	37.6
14. Assam	63.3	66.8
15. Punjab	69.7	56.2
16. Haryana	57.9	55.4
17. Chhattisgarh	64.7	64.0
18. Delhi	81.7	70.8
19. J&K	55.5	59.0
20. Uttarakhand	71.6	63.4
21. Himachal Pradesh	76.5	70.3
22. Tripura	73.2	74.7
23. Manipur	70.5	72.3
24. Meghalaya	62.5	56.3
25. Nagaland	66.6	NA
26. Goa	82.0	71.9
27. Arunachal Pradesh	54.3	67.6
28. Puducherry	81.2	69.1
29. Mizoram	88.8	89.2
30. Chandigarh	81.9	67.7
31. Sikkim	68.8	63.0
32. A & N Islands	81.3	NA
33. D & Nagar Haveli	57.6	78.2
34. Daman & Diu	78.2	85.1
35. Lakshadweep	86.7	NA
Total	64.8	54.7

*Source:* Census of India - 2001

This result is not applicable to the states of Punjab and Haryana which are comparatively developed, but the Literacy rate among scheduled castes is 56.2 and 55.4 percent respectively which is comparatively low as compared to total literacy rate in India. It is primarily due to poor implementation of welfare policies and programs for scheduled castes announced by these state governments.

It can be observed from the following table that literacy rate among scheduled castes is related to

educational policies of the states as well as economic prosperity. It is not only the lower literacy rate but also a higher drop-out rate which can be observed among scheduled castes population in India as compared to the total population.

**Table 5**  
**Drop-out Rate among Scheduled Caste and All Categories (in percentage)**

Classes	Total		SC			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
I-V	28.5	21.5	25.4	33.6	34.0	33.7
I-VIII	48.4	45.9	48.7	53.7	57.2	55.2
I-X	60.0	63.5	61.5	68.1	73.7	70.5

*Source:* Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics - 2005-2006, Dept. of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, March 2008

It is clear from this (table 5) that the dropout rate up to the primary education among scheduled castes is 33.7 percent which is higher than the total dropout rate of 25.2 percent. At this level, the dropout rate both for boys and girls for scheduled castes is higher than non-scheduled castes boys and girls. The rate at this level for scheduled caste girls is much higher than non-scheduled castes girls. It is clear that scheduled castes families are not in a position to support their children, especially girls, even up to primary level of education.

Coming up to the 8<sup>th</sup> standard the drop-out rate for scheduled castes goes as up as 55.2 percent as compared to 48.7 percent for total population. The dropout rate both for boys and girls of scheduled castes is higher than boys and girls of total population. This dropout rate continues to rise up to 70 percent for scheduled castes children up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard which is higher than the total dropout rate of 61.5 percent. The dropout rate for boys and girls of scheduled castes continues to remain high as compared to total boys and girls in India while dropout rate for girls of scheduled castes families is even higher to the total dropout rate of scheduled castes at this level of education. Hence, it can be observed that scheduled castes failed to provide even primary education to their children. Poverty remained the main reason, since, they prefer to put their children in as casual labourers so that they may support their family. Other factors include lack

of interest of children in going school, capital punishment by teachers, sickness and responsibility on children when both of the parents go out for jobs. Moreover, a very high drop-out rate for girls of scheduled castes is a matter of concern because it will have an adverse cumulative effect on the socio-economic prosperity of scheduled castes.

### **INCENTIVE SCHEMES OF GOVERNMENT TO ERADICATE POVERTY**

Government of India also introduced a number of incentive schemes to encourage the scheduled caste students to schools and to ensure access and equality. These incentives were tangible or intangible, financial or non-financial, direct or indirect. All these incentives can be categorized in four parts namely, financial incentives, provision of mid-day meals, social welfare intervention and additional incentives. Financial incentives included cash transfers directly to a family or in a bank as well as scholarships and stipends to the students along with provision of text books, uniforms, stationary, transport assistance, etc. Similarly, free meals were distributed along with vaccination and immunization, hygiene amenities and condition of water. The following table shows the number of schools who provided incentive schemes to the scheduled caste students:

**Table 6**  
**All India Beneficiaries in Primary Schools**

Scheme	No. of Schools	SC Boys	SC Girls
Mid-day meals	79374	397642	342135
Free Uniforms	166899	393433	483316
Free Text Books	311263	1066569	898619

*Source:* Estimated number of schools with incentive schemes (NCERT 1998).

Table 6 shows that maximum number of schools is interested to provide free text books to scheduled caste boys and girls while more than 1.6 lakh schools provide free uniforms also. Due to the incentive schemes, the demand for primary education has increased. It helps not only in the educational development of the children but also helps in reducing the cost of sending them to the schools. Moreover, awareness is also built up with parents

about the significance of sending their kids to schools. The national program of Nutritional support to primary education, commonly known as mid-day meal scheme was launched in August 1995 at the all India level. This scheme does not target only the scheduled caste students but definitely attracts them to attend the schools. Hence, this incentive has improved the level of primary education in most of the states in India.

Although, the present incentive helped in improving the primary level education of scheduled caste children, but there are problems like poverty and low nutritional level of these people which result in the weak development of the brain and mental faculties of these children. Hence, macro level policies are required for the elimination of poverty and for the provision of improved nutritional level so that the children born may be with developed mental faculties and brains so that they may pick up studies at the primary school level itself.

National Family Health Survey data also reveal a wide gap between scheduled castes and other castes in health status and access to public services. This is reflected in the following table:

**Table 7**  
**Health Indicators for Women and Children**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>Others</i>
Infant Mortality (per thousand)	83.0	62.0
Under-five mortality (per thousand)	119.0	82.0
Women with anemia (%)	56.0	48.0
Home delivered birth (%)	72.1	59.0

*Source:* National Family Health Survey, 1998-99 (Central Statistical Office, New Delhi).

Table 7 shows that infant mortality is much higher in Scheduled Castes households than in others. The extent of undernourishment and among children of Scheduled Castes is also much high than among children of other castes. Government of India has been positive and practical in addressing the problems and undertaking policies to foster social and economic empowerment among Scheduled Castes. Due to all these limitations the process of socio-economic uplift of the scheduled castes has remained slow in India, hence there is a need for research to develop inclusive policies so that the

aggravating poverty among scheduled castes may be eliminated, their educational and health status may be improved, their access to assets may be increased and their active participation to political policies and decisions may be strengthened in India.

## CONCLUSIONS

All states and union territories, except three, have scheduled castes population in India. The intensity varies from 0.3 percent population in Mizoram to 28.85 percent population of scheduled castes in Punjab. The level of poverty also varies from state to state wherein 64 percent scheduled caste population in rural area and 67.2 percent population in urban area is below poverty line during the year 2004-05. On the other hand, there are no scheduled castes below poverty line in rural areas in Delhi while only 5.6 percent scheduled caste population in urban areas of Himachal Pradesh. The regional disparities in different states in India regarding the percentage of SC population in different states are a matter of research.

It can also be observed that household size and poverty rate are inter-related. Therefore, a lower household size can be recommended for reduction of poverty amongst SCs. On the other hand, literacy rate and poverty rate are inversely related. Hence, any effort to educate SC population will help in the reduction of poverty in scheduled castes. The occupational distribution and poverty among SC have also direct bearing. The poverty rate among SC is low if they are in private or in government jobs and high if they are self-employed or working as agricultural and non-agricultural laborers. Since, private or government jobs can be available only if they are highly educated and trained. Hence, efforts should be made for special training facilities for SCs so that they may become more competitive and employable.

The poverty among SC in rural area is very acute since most of the SC households are either landless laborers or farmers belonging to the category of marginal and small farmers who have less than 2 acres of land. It is due to this small landholding that most of the SC farmers are poor. Hence there is need of the re-orientation of the distribution of landholdings in India in favor of SCs. It is distressing to note that the percentage of SC cultivators from 1961 to 1991 is on the decline



while the percentage of SC agriculture laborers is on the increase. It is due to the declining share of land owned by SC farmers as compared to other caste farmers and consequently, the SC cultivators turned into agriculture laborer. Such a tendency is against the spirit of anti-poverty programs for scheduled castes. This tendency can be checked only through legal procedure which empowers SCs to buy land and discourage them to sell it.

The percentage of SCs in high grade government jobs is also low which reflects that suitable efforts have not been made to encourage SC population for officer grade government jobs. It may also be due to low rate of literacy among SC because literacy rate is only 28.5 in Bihar and 37.6 percent in Jharkhand which is much below the literacy rate for India. Similarly, the drop-out rate of SC student, especially for girls is also high as compared to the drop-out rate for others. It shows the lack of incentive schemes to be introduced in all the states for SC students.

On the basis of all these statistical investigations, it can be observed that the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes over the last sixty years have changed but not at the desired rate. Consequently, poverty still exists. Their situation is worse than others. There is continuing discrimination and historically given poverty among scheduled castes.

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