

## **Economic Status Of Scheduled Castes In Haryana**

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### **Abstract**

*Indian society is a heterogeneous, wherein people belonging to various castes and communities reside. Caste system is based on Varna System where the Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Kshatriyas, Vysyas, and Sudras. Those people who are outside the varna system are known as Avarnas or Antajas or Panchamas of Chandalas. They are external in the sense that they were required to stay outside the village settlement. The concept of pollution attached to them was responsible for treating or categorizing them as scheduled castes. The section of Indian population categorised as 'Scheduled Castes' form the lowest segment of the Hindu caste society. In the past different terms were used for them, examples being Chandala, Patila, Achhut, Shudra, Outcaste, untouchable and so on. They were called the 'depressed classes' in census reports and in common political parlance till 1921. In 1931 census this was replaced by yet another connotation, the 'exterior castes', while in 1936, these people became to be called as scheduled castes (SCs.) as a result of the Government of India Scheduled Castes Order, 1936. As a consequence, these castes have remained socially, economically educationally, politically and culturally backward for several centuries. This paper deals with the economic status of scheduled castes such as occupational structure, land ownership, unemployment rate, poverty and participation in MGNREGS in the state of Haryana. The study is non-empirical in nature and it is purely based on secondary data.*

**Keywords:** *Scheduled Castes, Caste system, Untouchables, Backward, Depressed Classes.*

### **Introduction**

Indian society is most diverse society of the world, wherein people belonging to various castes and communities reside. The people of Indian society are divided on the basis of castes. Caste system is based on Varna System where the Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Kshatriyas, Vysyas and Sudras. Those people who are outside the varna system are known as Avarnas or Antajas or Panchamas of Chandalas. They are external in the sense that they were required to stay outside the village settlement. The concept of pollution attached to them was responsible for treating or categorizing them as scheduled castes. The caste system is characterized by a status hierarchy, the scheduled castes or the so-called untouchables are at the base, in fact, at the lowest of the social and ritual status. These sections had, on account of their low social and ritual status, been subjected to a variety of disabilities under the traditional caste system. All through the ages, the scheduled castes had suffered from social injustice and exploitation. They were denied all privileges and benefits as had been enjoyed by the upper castes. Their entries into temples of upper castes, public places, educational institutions, etc. were restricted. On account of their being on the lowest rung of the social ladder, they were forced to take up unclean and menial occupations and jobs, which yielded low incomes. They were associated with a variety of specialized traditional occupations such as scavenging, cobbling, disposal of carcass, basketry, etc. As a consequence, these castes have

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remained socially, economically, educationally, politically and culturally backward for several centuries (Apparya, 2015).

Therefore, all the sections of the Indian society did not get an equal opportunity to develop because opportunities remained confined to some sections as well as people. The important reason for the skewed distribution of opportunities appears to be the lack of social justice that lay in the very nature of the caste system which derived its sustenance in social inequalities perpetrated by birth. In India, a person got a low or high status more because of his birth than of his work (Malhotra, 2002).

The section of Indian population categorised as 'Scheduled Castes' form the lowest segment of the Hindu caste society. In the past different terms were used for them, examples being Chandala, Patila, Achhut, Shudra, Outcaste, untouchable and so on. They were called the 'depressed classes' in census reports and in common political parlance till 1921. In 1931 census this was replaced by yet another connotation, the 'exterior castes', while in 1936, these people became to be called as scheduled castes (SCs.) as a result of the Government of India Scheduled Castes Order, 1936 (based upon the Government of India Act, 1935). Accordingly, a list of those communities was prepared which by reason of their specific position in Hindu social milieu suffered certain serious disadvantages. The Indian Constitution in its article 341, empowers the President of India to notify, after consulting the head of the concerned state, by an order the castes, tribes or races or part of or group within castes, tribes or races, to be deemed as scheduled castes in relation to that State (Sharma, 1984).

The area of this study is confined to Haryana state. There are 29 states in Indian union and Haryana is one of them. It falls in the north of India. The capital of Haryana is Chandigarh, which is also the capital of Punjab. The state of Haryana came into existence on November 1, 1966 as a result of re-organization of the old Punjab state. It was formed as a linguistic state, on the pattern of other states in India (Ranga, 1994). The population of Haryana, was 2,53,53,081, out of this 51,13,615 (20.17 percent) persons belonged to scheduled castes. The scheduled caste population in Haryana constituted 2.5 percent of country's total scheduled caste population. This scheduled caste population is contributed by 37 scheduled castes notified by the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 (Census of India, 2011).

The paper evaluates the economic status of scheduled castes such as occupational structure, land ownership, unemployment rate, poverty and participation in MGNREGS in the state of Haryana.

### **Objectives**

*The central theme of the study is to evaluate the economic status of scheduled castes in Haryana. Following are the main objectives of the study;*

- Ø To analyse occupational structure, land ownership among scheduled castes in Haryana.*
- Ø To evaluate rate of unemployment and extent of poverty among scheduled castes in Haryana*
- Ø To examine the participation of scheduled castes in MGNREGS in Haryana.*

### **Data Source**

*The present study is non-empirical in nature and it is based on secondary data which has been collected from different published sources like Census reports, NSSO Reports, Human development reports, Statistical abstract of Haryana, Journals, Books and Newspapers etc.*

### **Economic Status of Various Social Groups**

Occupational structure of workers from 1971 to 2011 in Haryana has been presented in the table 1.1.

The table shows that percentage share of cultivators among scheduled castes was lower as compared to all groups from 1981 to 2011. On the other hand percentage share of agricultural labourers was higher among scheduled castes as compared to all groups. The percentage share of cultivators was 17.75 percent among scheduled castes in 1981 whereas it was 44.68 percent for all groups. The percentage share of cultivators has decreased for all groups as well as for scheduled castes because in 2011 that was 27.80 percentage and 5.7 percent for all groups and scheduled castes respectively. But scheduled castes are most deprived in the case of land as compared to other groups. The percentage share of agricultural labourers among scheduled castes was higher as compared to all groups from 1981 to 2011. It is clear that mostly scheduled castes are landless and they are working as agricultural labourers. Landlessness is main factor behind the economic exploitation they are facing in agriculture sector because land owners hire them on meager wages. Except 2011, the percentage share of household industry workers among scheduled castes was lower as compared to all groups in Haryana. It is clear from the table that average size of landholding has decreased among all groups due to establishment of industries and houses at large scale consequently percentage share of cultivators among all groups has decreased from 1981 to 2011 in Haryana.

**Table 1: Occupational Structure of Workers in Haryana (1971-2011)**

(in percent)

Census Years	All Groups				Scheduled Castes			
	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry Workers	Other Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry Workers	Other Workers
1971	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1981	44.68	16.11	2.81	36.40	17.75	41.01	1.65	39.59
1991	38.77	19.00	1.53	40.70	12.45	42.53	1.41	43.61
2001	36.02	15.26	2.56	46.16	10.19	42.15	2.32	45.34
2011	27.80	17.10	2.90	52.10	5.50	40.90	2.90	51.60

Source: Census of India, Various Issues

But percentage share of cultivators among scheduled castes has decreased at increasing rate as compared to all groups. Scheduled castes are suffering from poverty and due to poverty their educational status is very low and they are not skilled to work in industries, consequently they are not hired by industries.

Land is the fundamental means of production in an agrarian society without which no agricultural production can take place (Rawal, 2008). Land possessed by different social groups in Haryana has been presented in table 2. The distribution of land possessed shows that the percentage share of households having land between 0.005 to 0.40 hectare was highest among scheduled castes (79.9) followed by scheduled tribes, (74.4), other backward castes (57.3) whereas it was lowest among other castes (25.6). Whereas, land between 2.01 hectares to 4.00 hectare was possessed by 5.5, 1.0, 7.4 and 23.3 percent households among scheduled tribe, scheduled caste, other backward classes and others respectively. The table clearly indicates that as the size of land holding increases the percentage of scheduled caste households having land decreases. This analysis clearly points out that scheduled caste households are more deprived in the ownership of productive assets mainly land in

Haryana because about 94 percent of them has land less than 0.40 hectares. Due to this reason, majority of them are dependent on wage work for their livelihood which is responsible for their exploitation as well as socio-economic backwardness in the society.

**Table 2: Land possessed by different Social Groups in Haryana**

(in percent)

Size of land possessed (hectare)	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes	Other Backward Classes	Others*
Less than 0.001	4.2	1.5	3.4	14.2
0.001-0.004	0	12.1	5.5	4.2
0.005-0.40	74.4	79.9	57.3	25.6
0.41-1.00	5.5	3.0	11.7	9.7
1.01-2.00	6.5	2.4	11.5	14.2
2.01-4.00	5.5	1.0	7.4	23.3
4.01 and above	3.9	0	3.1	8.7
All classes	100	100	100	100

Source: 68<sup>th</sup> Round of NSSO on "Employment and Unemployment Situation among Social Groups in India", July 2011-June 2012.  
Others\* Non-SC/ST/OBCs

The unemployment rate according to current daily status approach among different social groups in Haryana has been presented in table 3. Unemployment rate among scheduled castes in Haryana was 7.7 percent which was higher than other social groups. It clearly indicates that scheduled castes were more unemployed than other social groups. Their condition in the rural areas was more vulnerable as unemployment rate stood at 8.0 percent whereas it was 6.3 percent in the urban areas. In urban areas, the unemployment rate was lower both for males and females among scheduled castes than their counterparts in the rural areas.

**Table 3: Unemployment Rate among Different Social Groups in Haryana in 2011-12**  
(in percent)

Social Groups	Rural Areas			Urban Areas			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Scheduled Castes	8.4	6.5	8.0	5.7	10.7	6.3	7.8	7.0	7.7
Scheduled Tribes	-	-	-	1.8	58.2	14.2	0.6	15.2	4.6
Other Backward Classes	5.8	12.4	6.5	2.4	9.5	3.2	5.0	11.7	5.7
General	5.0	10.1	5.6	4.2	13.6	5.5	4.7	11.5	5.6
Total	6.4	8.5	6.7	4.1	12.8	5.3	5.7	9.6	6.3

Source: Report on Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011-12, Labour Bureau Chandigarh

The overall unemployment rate in Haryana was 6.3 percent whereas it was 7.7 percent for the scheduled castes. The unemployment rate of scheduled castes is higher than other social groups except scheduled tribes because of their higher concentration in the rural areas and lack of employment opportunities in the rural areas. Even those who have migrated to urban areas have been unable to get jobs in industries due to low level of literacy, poor skills and lack of technical education.

Poverty incidence among the different social groups in Haryana is given in the table 4. This table reveals that the poverty incidence among all groups and scheduled castes was 36.0 and 58.8 percent in 1993-94 respectively whereas it has declined to 19.9 and 37.8 percent in 2009-10 and further it declined to 11.2 and 24.1 percent in 2011-12 respectively.

The poverty incidence was higher among the rural households as compared to the urban households for all groups except for year 2009-10. Poverty incidence among scheduled caste was higher in the rural areas till year 2004-05 after that this trend reversed and poverty incidence for scheduled caste in the urban areas became higher as compared to the rural areas. The table further shows that over the period of time poverty ratio was higher among scheduled castes. Therefore, scheduled castes are worst sufferer among all groups in the case of poverty. They have been unable to break this vicious circle of poverty. Poverty affects their education, health as well as personality development. It further affects their income because due to lack of skills, they are not able to get gainful employment in the various sectors of the economy.

**Table 4: Extent of Poverty among Different Social Groups in Haryana (1993-1994 to 2011-12) (in percent)**

Years	Rural Areas		Urban Areas		Total	
	All groups	Scheduled castes	All groups	Scheduled castes	All groups	Scheduled castes
1993-94	40.2	62.7	24.2	41.8	36.0	58.8
2004-05	24.8	47.5	22.4	46.9	24.2	47.4
2009-10	18.6	33.6		23.0	19.9	37.8
2011-12	11.6	23.6	10.3	25.9	11.2	24.1

Arvind Panagariya. Poverty by Social, Religious and Economic groups in India and its largest states 1993-94 to 2011-12. working paper no. 2013-02.

To provide 100 days wage employment to every rural household in a year to enhance livelihood security in rural areas, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was implemented in the Haryana w.e.f. 1st April, 2008. One third of the jobs are reserved for the women. Minimum wages of Rs. 251 per person day were being paid to the workers engaged under the scheme w.e.f. 1st April, 2015, which was the highest in the country. This programme was converged with schemes of other line departments like forests, Agriculture, Irrigation, School Education, Women & Child, Development & Panchayats, Fisheries, Public Health and Engineering, Marketing Board and PWD etc. to ensure creation of meaningful assets in the villages (Government of Haryana, 2016).

Table 5 deals with the total person-days generated for different social groups under

MGNREGS in Haryana during 2012-13 to 2015-2016. This table reveals that in 2012-13, total person days generated were 128.87 lakh in the financial year 2012-13 which decreased to 117.88 lakh in 2013-14. In 2014-15 and 2015-16 the person days generated further decreased to 61.65 lakh and 48.48 lakh respectively. The percentage of person days generated to scheduled castes to total person days was 50.71 percent in 2012-13 but it decreased to 43.8 percent in 2014-15 and further it increased to 49.66 percent in 2015-16. In 2012-13, average days of employment provided per household was 43.81 but it decreased to 36.28 in 2013-14 and further decreased to 28.76 in 2015-16. Average person days generated for scheduled caste households in MGNREGS was estimated 42.49 in 2012-13 and decreased to 26.73 and in 2014-15 and 26.46 in 2015-16. The percentage of scheduled castes worked in MGNREGS was estimated 53.08 in 2012-13 and it decreased to 46.6 percent in 2014-15 but it rose to 52.62 in 2015-16. In the recent times, overall person days generated has decreased due to various reasons mainly delayed payments of wages.

**Table: 5: Participation of Different Social Groups in MGNREGS in Haryana**

Financial Years	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total person days (in lakhs)	128.87	117.88	61.65	48.48
Scheduled castes person days % as of total person days	50.71	48.48	43.8	49.66
Average days of employment provided per household	43.81	36.28	28.29	28.73
Average person days for scheduled caste households	42.29	36.64	26.73	26.47
% of scheduled caste worked	53.08	48.95	46.6	52.62

Source: [www.mgnrega.nic.in](http://www.mgnrega.nic.in)

The performance of MGNREGS depends on its implementation and employment demanded by people. The scheduled caste participation in MGNREGS has decreased due to poor implementation and delayed payment of wages in Haryana. Delayed payment of wage under MGNREGS is matter of debate at national and state level. Because majority of scheduled castes are casual workers and they don't have permanent source of income. Therefore, they are moving to other works where they are being paid instantly.

### **Summary and Results**

The findings show that percentage share of cultivators among scheduled castes was lower as compared to all groups from 1981 to 2011. On the other hand percentage share of agricultural labourers was higher among scheduled castes as compared to all groups. It is clear from analysis that scheduled castes are most deprived in the case of land as compared to other groups so percentage share of cultivators is higher among other groups. The percentage share of cultivators has decreased in Haryana due to establishment of industries and buildings at large scale and size of landholding has

decreased consequently. But the percentage share of agricultural labourers among scheduled castes was higher as compared to all groups from 1981 to 2011. Landlessness is main factor behind the economic exploitation they are facing in agriculture sector because land owners hire them on meager wages. Except 2011, the percentage share of household industry workers among scheduled castes was lower as compared to all groups in Haryana. Scheduled castes are suffering from poverty and due to poverty their educational status is very low and they are not skilled to work in industries, consequently they not hired by industries.

The analysis clearly indicates that as the size of land holding increases the percentage share of scheduled caste households having land decreases. This shows scheduled caste households are most deprived in the ownership of productive assets mainly land in Haryana because about 94 percent of them has land less than 0.40 hectares. Thus majority of them are dependent on wage work for their livelihood which is responsible for their exploitation because they are lonely paid by landowners employees.

The overall unemployment rate in Haryana was 6.3 percent whereas it was 7.7 percent for the scheduled castes in 2011-12. The unemployment rate of scheduled castes is higher than other social groups except scheduled tribes. The higher concentration of scheduled castes in the rural areas and lack of employment opportunities in the rural areas are factors behind the high unemployment rate among scheduled castes. Even those who have migrated to urban areas have been unable to get jobs in industries due to low level of literacy, poor skills and lack of technical education.

In the case of poverty, the incidence of poverty among scheduled caste was higher in rural areas till year 2004-05 after that this trend reversed and poverty incidence for scheduled caste in the urban areas became higher as compared to the rural areas. The study reveals that poverty among scheduled castes has been higher than other sections of the society in Haryana. They have been unable to break this vicious circle of poverty. Poverty affects their education, health facilities as well as personality development. It further affects their income because due to lack of skills, they are unable to get gainful employment.

The performance of MGNREGS depends on its implementation and employment demanded by people. The scheduled caste participation in MGNREGS has decreased due to poor implementation and delayed payment of wages in Haryana. Delayed payment of wage under MGNREGS is a matter of debate at national as well as at state level. Because majority of scheduled castes are casual workers and they don't have permanent source of income. Therefore, they are moving to other works where they are being paid instantly.

### **Policy Recommendations**

*On the basis of the results of the present study, following measures may be suggested for improving the economic status of scheduled castes in Haryana:*

*As per findings, a large proportion of scheduled caste people are agriculture labourers. The proportion of cultivators is also low among scheduled castes due to higher incidence of landlessness. Thus, government should implement land reforms strictly in favour these marginalized people on the one hand and special financial assistance should be given for starting self-employment activities and by developing subsidiary occupations like piggery, Fishery, dairying and poultry on the other end.*

*The study further reveals that poverty is higher among scheduled castes than other sections of the society in Haryana. They have been unable to break this vicious circle of poverty. Poverty affects their education, health as well as personality development. It further affects their income because due to lack of skills, they are not able to get gainful employment. Thus, anti-poverty*

programmers mainly MGNREGS should be implemented properly for generating gainful employment in general and special component plan for scheduled castes should be implemented with true spirit in particular.

In the case of MGNREGS, scheduled castes participation has been decreasing in the recent times. Delayed payment of wages is the main factor working behind decreasing person days. Delaying payment of wages is a matter of debate at national as well as at state level. Distressed workers are moving towards other jobs because most of scheduled castes are casual workers and they don't have permanent source of income. Direct benefit transfer is a good initiative to transfer payments to real workers directly but mere transfer is not important, it is the timely transfer of wages which is much required in present scenario.

The welfare schemes initiated by government for the scheduled castes need to be implemented in their true spirit with enthusiasm. Increase in the plan allocation and enlarging the scope of rural specific schemes to cover large proportion of scheduled caste population can go a long way in improving the social and economic conditions of scheduled castes in Haryana.

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