



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

## **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dalits in India: A Contemporary Exploration**

Karmakar, Asim K. and Jana, Sebak Kumar

Netaji Subhas Open University, Vidyasagar University

1 March 2017

Online at <https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/122507/>  
MPRA Paper No. 122507, posted 09 Nov 2024 09:05 UTC

# **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dalits in India: A Contemporary Exploration**

**Asim K. Karmakar, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor in Economics

Department of Economics

School of Professional Studies

Netaji Subhas Open University,

Kalyani. West Bengal, India, PIN-741 235

**Sebak Kumar Jana, Ph.D.**

Professor of Economics

Department of Economics

Vidyasagar University

Midnapore, West Bengal, India, PIN: 721102

# Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dalits in India: A Contemporary Exploration

## Abstract

*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (April 14, 1891—Dec. 6, 1956) was a leader, scholar and activist of the depressed classes known as untouchables, or Dalits (meaning the 'oppressed' or 'crushed'). He appeared on the Indian socio-political scene in the early 1920s and remained in the forefront of all social, economic, political and religious efforts for uplift of the lowest stratum of the Indian society. He organized, united and inspired the Dalits in India to effectively political means towards their goal and social equality. Amartya Sen himself voices forth that 'Ambedkar is a true celebrated champion of the underprivileged. He deserves more than what he has achieved today. However, he was highly controversial figure in his home country, though it was not the reality. His contribution in the field of economics is marvellous and will be remembered forever...!' His economic philosophy aims at giving life to those who are disowned, elevated those who are suppressed, kicked, pooh-pooed and neglected, enabling those who are downtrodden, and generating liberty, equality and greater to all irrespective of caste. In the above background, the present paper focuses a broad overview of the status of Dalits in India--poorest and weakest sections of our society and Ambedkar's endeavour to uplift their lot.*

**Keywords:** B.R. Ambedkar, Dalits, Discrimination, Social Equality, Globalisation

**JEL Code:** B30

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indian economy is, at present, a queer blend of two glaring diversities. At one hand, it has embraced Fund–Bank-directed reforms approach grounded on neo-liberal market-driven corporate–led higher growth rate strategies, with all its adverse effects on development issues; on the other, it has endeavoured to have a holistic 'Faster and Inclusive Growth and Development' through 'reforms with a human face' including promotion of wide-ranging decentralized growth that alone could sufficient to accelerate access by the poor and vulnerable social groups to employment, food, nutrition and health, and quality education and putting in place social and legal safety nets to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and the poorest — thus exhibiting a clear amalgam of strongly correlated economic development and human development at the same time. In his Foreword to the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012) document, the then Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh articulates this quite

sharply and even identifies specific social groups that need special attention for building an inclusive society: “Rapid growth is essential... However, it is not by itself sufficient. We also need to ensure that growth is widely spread so that its benefits, in terms of income and employment, are adequately shared by the poor and weaker sections of the society, especially the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Minorities” (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis as notified by the Government of India under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act 1992, constituting of 18.42 per cent of total population). For this to happen, the growth must be inclusive in the broadest sense.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent out a hard-hitting message during his recent first visit to Telangana, calling for the protection of Dalits. He asked people to stop politics over Dalits, asking people to protect Dalits and other exploited sections. "If you have a problem, if you feel like attacking someone, attack me, not my Dalit brothers. If you want to shoot anyone, shoot me, not my Dalit brothers," he declared. "What is the reason we torture our Dalit brothers? What right do you have? The section which has suffered for centuries, will you force them to suffer more?" he further said. Those two statements remind us the comments and struggles made for the Dalits by B.R. Ambedkar at his time. Why this is so? Why does those remember Him? And who was Ambedkar?

To know him we have to go back into the past. The fact of the matter is that B. R. Ambedkar (April 14, 1891—Dec. 6, 1956) was a leader, scholar and activist of the depressed classes known as untouchables, or Dalits (meaning the ‘oppressed’ or ‘crushed’). He appeared on the Indian socio-political scene in the early 1920s and remained in the forefront of all social, economic, political and religious efforts for uplift of the lowest stratum of the Indian society. He organized, united and inspired the Dalits in India to effectively political means towards their goal and social equality. In him mingled a great scholar, an economist, a sociologist, a legal luminary, an educationist, journalist, parliamentarian and above all social reformer and champion of human rights as well as a dynamic thinker, heralding a new thinking in the direction of bringing about an egalitarian society based on equality and social justice. The relevance of his views was primarily due to the process of continuing wave of equality, sweeping the country for which he was vigorous spokesman in Modern India. He organized, united and inspired the untouchables in India to effectively political means towards their goal and social equality.

He was an economist by his basic training. Two distinct phases can be distinguished in his career: the first one up to 1926 as a professional economist contributing scholarly books and innovative comments— [ for example, when India was passing through a distinct the Nationalist Phase (1905-1939) and when G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas, even Mahatma Gandhi recommended a reversion to the pre-War parity of Re 1=16 shilling going against the Hilton-Young Committee recommendation of a new parity of Re 1= 18 shilling, it was only Babasaheb Ambedkar, who displaying considerable moral courage, opposed the nationalist position on grounds that it would favour domestic business classes and hit the working classes and agricultural labourers, owing to the inflationary potential of the weaker rupee advocated by the nationalists ( *Ambedkar 1926*); for this he must be credited for a remarkably innovative insight viz., the distributional consequences of devaluation ( *Nachane, 2011*) and the second one as a political leader thereafter until his demise in 1956, during which he made path- breaking contributions as a champion of human rights for the untouchables. Amartya Sen himself voices forth that ‘Ambedkar is a true celebrated champion of the underprivileged. He deserves more than what he has achieved today. However he was highly controversial figure in his home country, though it was not the reality. His contribution in the field of economics is marvelous and will be remembered forever..!’ His economic philosophy is best captured in his own phrase: Bahujan Hitaya Bahujan Sukhay (there is greatest good to the largest number of people).The philosophy aims at giving life to those who are disowned, elevated those who are suppressed, kicked , pooh-pooed and neglected, enabling those who are downtrodden.

In the above background, the present paper focuses a broad overview of the status of Dalits in India— poorest and weakest sections of our society— and Ambedkar’s endeavour to uplift their lot.

## **2. B.R. AMBEDKAR’S MULTIFACETED CONTRIBUTIONS**

As a member of Bombay Legislative Assembly (since 1926), he gave effective expression to the grievances of the rural poor through his mass movements. His successful struggle against the then prevailing land tenure system— called khoti system that prevailed in the Konkan region of Maharashtra where all farmers and their families coming under the system being treated by khots as bonded labour generation after generations—liberated a vast majority of rural poor from an extreme form of economic exploitation. Nay, he was one of the first legislators in India to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the slavery of agricultural tenants.

His successful agitation against the Mahar Vatan emancipated a large section of rural poor from virtual serfdom. He presented a bill in the State Assembly to protect the poor from the malpractices of moneylenders. On the industrial front, Dr. Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936. While the prevailing trade unions fought for the rights of workers, they were indifferent to the human rights of untouchable workers. The new political party took up their cause. Subsequently, as Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council from 1942 to 1947, he was instrumental in bringing about several labour reforms including the establishment of employment exchanges, generally laying the foundations of industrial relations in independent India. His Ministry also included irrigation, power and other public works. He played a central role in shaping the irrigation policy, especially Damodar Valley Project.

A distinctive feature of Ambedkar's scholarly contribution was his perceptive analysis of the economic dimension of social maladies such as the caste system and untouchability apart from the central elements of his economic ideas which essentially include:

i) A social framework with Parliamentary democracy with emphasis on agriculture and basic and key industries; ii) Efficient and productive working of public sector undertakings; iii) Planned economic development; iv) A strong participation and active role of the government in economic governance; v) Emphasis on industrialization; vi) Capital investment in agricultural sector; vii) Focus on the planning on the labour, poor and social down-trodden; and viii) General belief in the scientific development and modern technology and ix) Provision of protest against the economic and social discrimination in the forms of reservation policy in favour of Dalits.

In fact, Gandhi had defended the Caste System on the basis of division of labour, Ambedkar came out with a hard-hitting critique in his book 'Annihilation of Castes' (1936), pointing out that what was implicit in the caste system was not mainly division of labour but also a division of workers. His attack on the caste system was not mainly aimed at challenging the hegemony of the upper castes but had broader connotation of economic growth and development. He argued that the caste system had reduced the mobility of labour and capital which, in turn, impeded economic growth and development of India. Besides, during the Independence movements, Ambedkar and Gandhi disagreed over the best approach to gaining rights for lower castes. Gandhi preferred to keep the depressed classes within the Hindu fold, to reform Hinduism from behind and to avoid special rights for depressed classes. In contrast,

Ambedkar wanted to ensure rights and representation for lower castes. He fearlessly argued against the tyrannies of Hindu's caste system insisting that you 'must give a new doctrinal basis to your religion — basis that will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, in short, with Democracy' (*Ambedkar, "The Annihilation of Caste, 1936, p.100*). Ambedkar had grown increasingly critical of the mainstream Indian political parties for their perceived lack of emphasis on the elimination of the caste system. At a Depressed Classes Conference on August 8, 1930, Ambedkar outlined his political vision, insisting that the safety of the depressed classes hinged on their being independent of the government and the Congress both. He further warned that "Don't call Gandhi a saint. He is a seasoned politician. When everything fails, Gandhi will resort to intrigue." He further warned, "Don't fall under Gandhi's spell, he's not God... Mahatmas have come and Mahatmas have gone but untouchables have remained untouchables. In short, Ambedkar's concept of justice and equality is firmly rooted in the synthesis of social equality, involving freedom and liberty with economic equality that is Buddhism. For Him, the priority was not making Hinduism or Hindu society, but building a new equal, free, open non-hierarchical modern India.

In his memorandum submitted to the British Govt. titled, 'States & Minorities' in 1947, he laid down a strategy for India's economic development. The strategy placed an obligation on the State to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to private enterprise and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth.

After Independence, Dr. Ambedkar became the first Law Minister of India. Even while drafting the Indian Constitution (as Chairman, Drafting Committee) in 1948-49, the economist in him was very much alive. He strongly recommended democracy as the 'governing principle of human relationship' but emphasized that the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity, which are the cornerstone of democracy, should not be interpreted narrowly in terms of political rights alone. He highlighted the social and economic dimensions of democracy and warned that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy. He gave expression to the objective of economic democracy by incorporating the Directives, Principles of State Policy in the Indian constitution.

As Law Minister, he fought vigorously for the passage of the Hindu Code Bill, the most significant reform for women's rights in respect of marriage and inheritance. One subject that deeply interested Nehru was the reform of Hindu Law, particularly with respect to the rights of Hindu women and he found an able supporter in Dr. Ambedkar in this work. Afraid of arousing the opposition of Hindu society, the British had been content to codify rather than substantially amend Hindu Law. The Indian Government now continued the same cautious attitude with respect to Muslim Law: it did not want to be accused of tempting with the law of minority. Therefore, a specific effort was made to modernize Hindu law one. Critics pointed out that this was incompatible with the idea of secular state which ought to have a civil law applicable to all citizens, regardless of their creed. But the incongruity of a secular Government sponsoring a reform Hindu law was still preferable to doing nothing at all and giving in to conservative Hindu opinion which was hesitate to any reform. Unreformed Hindu law reflected the structure of a patriarchal agrarian society. A man could marry several wives. This was often done when no son was born. On the other hand, the wife had no right to ask for a divorce. Daughters received a dowry but were excluded from any right of inheritance. Consequently, women were always kept dependent on men and had no rights of their own. Patel supported the conservative opposition to the reform of the Hindu law and Dr. Ambedkar was finally so frustrated that he resigned. Nehru himself did not give up and completed this reform and was obliged to introduce piecemeal legislation, dealing with divorce right to property and inheritance, etc., separately. He later stated that he considered this to be his greatest achievement in politics. He resigned in September 1951, when the Bill was not passed by Parliament. Following Ambedkar's failure to gain passage of the Hindu Code Bill in 1951, or to be elected to Parliament in 1952, he turned to Buddhism as a solution to untouchability. To him Hinduism intentionally incorporated caste discrimination and oppressions thereof. So answer to oppression from Hinduism and Brahmins was to find out a Guru, a spiritual entrepreneur, who created a dissident religious movement. You find that the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE offered India so many a flowering of spiritual entrepreneurs who rebelled against the then existing system of Brahminic-Vedic dominance and its rigidly elitist conception of caste. As Arvind Sharma (2004) notes, "Almost every major Hindu religious figure of modern Hinduism turned his attention to the conditions of lower castes and attacked untouchability." Aside from the Buddha, there was Vardhaman Mahavira of Jainism, which is still a remarkably popular religion in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Other yoga sects also emerged within Hinduism. Over time the most important of these were egalitarian bhakti sects, another powerful source of internal opposition to caste discrimination, like Vaisnavism, for example, which enjoyed an important



revival in medieval and colonial times, and are still popular today. Buddha was, no doubt, the most famous. However, Dr. Ambedkar, the chief framer of the Indian Constitution, once struggled when he advocated reservations for Dalits, for this would uphold the '*rule of life*' against his attachment to the Constitution's ideal of equal treatment for all ,i.e., the '*rule of law*', urged India's untouchables to abandon Hinduism and ultimately become Buddhists. He realized that it was impossible to change the rigidity of the caste system from within the Hindu religious framework. In 1955, he himself converted to Buddhism. In 1956, several millions of untouchables, many of them members of his Mahar Caste, who followed his example to the letter were called neo-Buddhists. By becoming Buddhists, they sacrificed their legal benefits as members of the SCs. They and other members of SCs and STs called themselves Dalits (who fall at the lowest end of the caste hierarchy), a Marathi term for "broken for pieces or ground-down, or oppressed", preferring this too many demeaning alternatives such as 'untouchables', 'backward castes', or even Gandhi's term 'harijan' (Children of God). Though some radical political outfits tend to use the term 'dalits' to include virtually all marginalized groups/communities of India, including the tribal populations and religious minorities, there is a legal designation called SCs ( officially classified category), to identify this group.

### **3. THE IDENTIFICATION OF DALITS**

Following Ambedkar's failure to gain passage of the Hindu Code Bill in 1951, or to be elected to Parliament in 1952, he turned to Buddhism as a solution to untouchability. To him Hinduism intentionally incorporated caste discrimination and oppressions thereof. So answer to oppression from Hinduism and Brahmins was to find out a Guru, a spiritual entrepreneur, who created a dissident religious movement. You find that the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE offered India so many a flowering of spiritual entrepreneurs who rebelled against the then existing system of Brahminic-Vedic dominance and its rigidly elitist conception of caste. As Arvind Sharma (2004) notes," Almost every major Hindu religious figure of modern Hinduism turned his attention to the conditions of lower castes and attacked untouchability." Aside from the Buddha, there was Vardhaman Mahavira of Jainism, which is still a remarkably popular religion in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Other yoga sects also emerged within Hinduism. Over time the most important of these were egalitarian bhakti sects, another powerful source of internal opposition to caste discrimination, like Vaisnavism, for example, which enjoyed an important revival in medieval and colonial times, and are still popular today. Buddha was, no doubt, the most famous. However, Dr. Ambedkar, the chief framer of the Indian Constitution, once struggled when he advocated reservations for Dalits, for this would uphold the '*rule of life*'

against his attachment to the Constitution's ideal of equal treatment for all ,i.e., the 'rule of law', urged India's untouchables to abandon Hinduism and ultimately become Buddhists. He realized that it was impossible to change the rigidity of the caste system from within the Hindu religious framework. In 1955, he himself converted to Buddhism. In 1956, several millions of untouchables, many of them members of his Mahar Caste, who followed his example to the letter, were called neo-Buddhists. By becoming Buddhists, they sacrificed their legal benefits as members of the SCs. They and other members of SCs and STs called themselves Dalits (who fall at the lowest end of the caste hierarchy)--a Marathi term for "broken for pieces or ground-down, or oppressed", preferring this too many demeaning alternatives such as 'untouchables', 'backward castes', or even Gandhi's term 'harijan' (Children of God). Though some radical political outfits ( Dalit Panthers) gives a class definition of dalits and tend to use the term 'dalits' to include virtually all marginalized groups/communities of India, including the tribal populations and religious minorities, there is a legal designation called SCs ( officially classified category), to identify this group.

#### **4. THE PRESENT WITH A LITTLE BIT OF PAST**

##### **4.1 Untouchability after India's Independence:**

Mahatma Gandhi along with leaders of post-Independent India vehemently condemned caste and untouchability. With a modernist eye, Jawaharlal Nehru articulated that caste — based value system would a serious bar on development and progress of the country:

“In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive, and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy... Between these two conceptions conflict is inherent and only one of them can survive” (*Nehru, 1992[1946]:257*).

Under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar, the Constitution in which he became the Chairman of the Drafting Committee for India', initiated a policy of '*affirmative*' action referred to as 'protective discrimination.' And the framer of the Constitution of India guaranteed affirmative action or positive discrimination in favour of the Dalits: “The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the SCs and STs, and shall protect them from social justice and all forms of exploitation”(Article 46). And, in fact, at Independence, Nehru's Congress Government consciously chose to target untouchability in particular rather than caste in general. Thus the

Indian Constitution, adopted in 1949, abolishes untouchability but merely prohibits state discrimination on the basis of caste and assures equality before the law and non-discriminating access to public goods.

Apart from this, two sets of policy measures can be identified that the Indian states evolved to deal with the Dalits situation: (a) enabling or empowering measures; and (b) representational measures.

#### **4.2 Anti- Discriminatory and Protective Measures for the Dalits**

The Article 17 of the Indian Constitution declared that untouchability was abolished and any disability arising out from untouchability was an offense ‘punishable in accordance with law’. Article 15(2) guaranteed to all castes (including SCs) access to public restaurants, wells, tanks, bathing ghats, and roads and places dedicated to the use of the general public. Article 15(4) declared that the state could make ‘special provision’ for the advancement of SCs and tribes. In the succeeding decades, the Indian federal government, and many State governments as well, have enacted and sought to implement this increasingly aggressive programmes called “affirmative action”. These programmes were established on behalf of former untouchables — (who typically today self-identify as Dalits — and ‘tribal’ peoples who were similarly outside the traditional caste system), who together make up a quarter of India’s population. In recognition of the fact that crimes against *Adivasis* and Dalits have been common in India, and history has witnessed many grotesque acts against these groups, the Government of India also enacted several legislations to protect Dalits from violence of different kinds. The 1955 Untouchability Practices Act, amended and revamped as the 1976 Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCRA), and the 1989 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities (POA) Act, which brought into force in January 30,1990, provides the framework for a comprehensive system of not just protection but affirmative action, including reserved school places and public jobs. Besides these, several provincial/state governments also enacted legislations focusing on ‘removal of civil disabilities’. Implementation has been uneven, and crimes against Dalits are still common National Crime Records Bureau 2008 show that, in 2007-08, the incidence of crimes reported against Dalits increased by almost 12 per cent.

The Government of India also developed an administrative structure to oversee the working of various safeguards provided to the SCs and STs. Article 338 of the Indian Constitution provided for appointment of a Special Officer, designated as Commissioner of SCs and STs, his function is to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for SCs and

STs and to report directly to the President of India about working of these safeguards. In 2004, the Government of India decided to bifurcate this Commission into two separate Commissions dealing respectively with SCs and STs.

Such measures certainly have reduced a level of suffering of many of those at the bottom of the Indian Social Hierarchy and created historically unprecedented opportunities for upward mobility. For example, there has been changes in the lifestyles and occupations of the Dalits over the last two and a half decades. Economic changes, including better opportunities and increased urbanization, have played a part in breaking down old caste norms and allowing Dalits a new space for action. Nay, the affirmative action policies have helped Dalits claim political space, In this, they have been more successful than other excluded groups. But, this happy mirror soon fades out when one finds both official and unofficial discrimination against Dalits, especially in some relatively backward rural areas of Orissa, West Bengal , and Bihar, endowed with higher concentration of Dalits. In Bihar state, in particular, Dalit peasants and rural proletariat are regularly victimized both by corrupt officials and police and by land-owner supported militias and gangs. And many Indians, both inside and outside the Dalit community, have attributed such persisting discrimination to Hinduism. Caste continues to be mobilized by the privileged to perpetuate their privileged Hindutva has become a powerful support for discrimination and communal conflict .

The total number of conversion of Dalits to Buddhism was half a million. At the end of 2001, there was a similar mass conversion of about 50 thousand and smaller mass conversions occur regularly since then. And over the past 125 years, so many Dalits have converted to Christians that today the majority of Christian population of India is Dalits and churches are giving special priority to Dalits in some of their institutions of formal education as well as developing job-oriented projects to enhance skill development.

Concludes Manoranjan Mohanty, the political scientist: ‘The intensity of violence against the Dalits has increased even though in some years, there may have been a decline in the number of reported atrocities.’ (*Mohanty, 2007*). Even the officially collected data and government sponsored reports seemed to acknowledge this fact that the caste related crimes against Dalits were mainly atrocities followed by hurt and rape (Table 1). A large number of caste related crimes continue to be reported against Dalits nowadays. For example, on September 5, at Kaundampatti in Dindigul district in Tamilnadu, a Dalit agricultural worker was forced to drink urine for having lodged with police a complaint of trespass against a caste

Hindu ( *Frontline*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2002, p.39). Recent World Bank ( 2012 ) study shows that in the village of Gokal in Uttar Pradesh, untouchability is common, and the higher caste Thakurs as a group do not allow the lower SC Chamars or Harijans to touch them or drink water from their wells. Panchayat is dominated by Thakurs. All development work that comes to the village including the establishment of an Anganwadi center, is focused in and around hamlets composed of Thakur families.” There is no freedom , Sir,” observed a 45-year-old SC man. Only the Thakurs are free. Neither can we do work, drink water, nor can we do anything else.”

**Table1: Comparative Incident of Crime against Scheduled Castes**

Sl. No.	Crime Head	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2008
1	Murder	763	739	581	654	669	1000
2	Rape	1316	1331	1089	1157	1172	1400
3	Kidnapping and Abduction	400	319	232	253	258	350
4	Dacoity	41	29	24	26	26	40
5	Robbery	133	105	70	72	80	101
6	Arson	354	322	204	211	210	259
7	Hurt	4547	4491	3969	3824	3847	4500
8	Protection of Civil Rights Act	633	1018	634	364	291	331
9	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act	13113	10770	8048	8891	8497	1020
10	Others	12201	14383	11351	11435	11077	12500

Source: *Crime in India-2005, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs*

Despite constitutional safeguards, legislation, modernization, and now the era of globalization, services revolution and ‘saffronisation’ of Dalits, the continued existence of the practice of the untouchability or the denial of right to life, even to a lesser degree in the sense that still in several Indian villages walking in the main road or drawing water from public wells for them is being halted, and rather frequent reports of increasing atrocities against Dalits in the form of denial of their access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, to be routinely abused , even killed at the hands of upper-caste Hindus and police or to remain completely segregated in thousands of villages in a kind of barbaric apartheid thus violating the protective discrimination principle clearly points to the persistence of their marginal position in the larger economy and social structure of the Indian society. This in one way and other implies that the ghost of untouchability will continue to haunt the country for many years to come

So far as their economic position is concerned, we find that a large number of them continue to live in poverty and deprivation. This is particularly so with those living in rural

areas. Most of the Dalits live in rural areas than other categories of Indian population. The caste system prevented them from owning and cultivating agricultural land.

As it is evident from **Table 2**, nearly 75% of Dalits in India are either landless or near landless. In states of Bihar, Haryana, Punjab and Kerala, the proportion of such households is above 90 per cent. The obvious implication is that they can find employment only in low paying jobs. (*Thorat, 2009: 253*).

Another manifestation of the politicization of caste has been an increase in caste violence since the 1990s. The most notorious examples have occurred in parts of Bihar, where higher caste landowners and SC landless labourers are virtually at war.

**Table 2: Percentage of Landless and Near-Landless Households according to Land Possessed for SC Households ( 2009)**

State	Landless	Near-Landless	Landless Plus Near-Landless
Andhra Pradesh	6.9	64.7	71.6
Bihar	23.8	67.1	90.9
Haryana	5.7	86.1	91.8
Himachal Pradesh	0.9	68.4	69.3
Kerala	4.2	89.6	93.8
Madhya Pradesh	13.7	33.9	47.6
Maharashtra	16.7	54.8	71.5
Orissa	1.4	67.1	68.5
Punjab	12.2	82.5	94.7
Rajasthan	3	37.3	40.3
Tamil Nadu	15.1	73.6	88.7
Uttar Pradesh	5.3	66.5	71.8
West Bengal	6	76.2	82.2
India	10	65	75

Source: *Thorat (2009:251)*

### **4.3 Developmental or Empowering Measures for the Dalits**

Apart from declaring the practice of untouchability as a legal offence, the GoI instituted several developmental measures to create level playing field for socially deprived Dalits (SCs/STs), by introducing the quota system, that is, political reservation of seats in the Parliament ( Lok Sabha) and the State Assemblies (State Legislatures), Urban and rural Local Bodies and reservation in government-run institutions, and for employment in government or state sector jobs—central and state services public sectors, banking and insurance sectors, and reservation of seats in admission and related facilities in educational institutions as well as enabling them with different kinds of scholarships for Dalit candidates, special credits, and

employment schemes as well as welfare scheme for them run and monitored by various state governments for their development. Some of these programmes have produced discernable results. In the light of the above, it is interesting to note that till date except for political reservation, the central and state governments have never filled the allotted quota of jobs for the Dalits under Article 335 of the Constitution. What does it mean? It means a gross violation of constitutional provision meant to uplift and bring the vast population into the mainstream of the society.

Article 335 reserved state and central government jobs for members of the SCs and STs. To address the guarantees in Article 16 of equal rights for all India citizens, the Constitution stipulated that these reservations of legislative seats and government jobs for SCs and STs would end up after ten years. Over subsequent decades, Parliament periodically amended the Constitution to extend the SC and ST reservations for another ten years. In 1976, the GoI replaced its 1960 all-India list with an amended state-by-state list of 841 SCs and 501 STs. According to the published lists, SCs formed about 16.23% of India's population and STs about 9.5% for a total of 22.5%.

As per the Census 2001, the total SCs' population in India was 166,635,700, making for 16.23 per cent of the total population of the country spread all over the country, with 80 per cent of them living in rural areas, where the tribal population of India who comes under the category of STs were of 84.33 million, the latter comprising 8.2 per cent of the total population, scattered over all states except Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and UTs of PuduCherry and Chandigarh. There are certain Articles 244, 244(A), 275(1), 334,335,338(A),339 ( I ) and 342, and the Fifth and the Sixth Schedules are devoted to the cause of the STs. Besides these, several laws have been enacted by the Central Government like the 1955 Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCRA), and the 1989 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities (POA) Act, the 1996 Provisions of the Panchayats (Extention to Scheduled Areas ) Act, the 2006 Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers ( Recognition of Forest Rights) Act as well as by the State governments ( relating to the prevention of alienation and restoration of tribal land, reservations and so on).In the interest of theTribal people, the Centre has been the authority of giving directions to the State governments. The government of India identifies 533 tribes as STs, of which 62 are located in the state of Orissa. On the other hand, the Northern state of Uttar Pradesh had the largest SC population followed by West Bengal and Bihar. In proportional terms, Punjab was at the top with 29 per cent of SC population. It is worth mentioning that SCs and STs are distinct social categories. As Andre Beteille writes (1998,

p187): “Even the best ethnographers (in India) habitually confused tribe with caste, which, on any reasonable assumption, is a different kind of social category.” The major difference between SCs and STs is that, while the former were subject to historical, ritualistic discrimination, STs were excluded from the national context because of their physical isolation. From another standpoint, using the term “relational roots of deprivation”, Amartya Sen (2000) argues that membership in a particular socially excluded groups (*for example, lower castes like Dalits*) limits the “functionings” of individuals to acquire or use their capabilities. And ultimately social exclusion gives birth to unequal access to the full exercise and protection of rights and liberties, including the denial of basic human rights, of which the Dalits are today enjoying. Near similar to Sen’s argument, we may recall Room’s (*Room et al 199 p 27*) where social exclusion is defined as multi-dimensional disadvantage which is of substantial duration and which involves dissociation from the major social and occupational milieu of society.

#### **4.4 Representational Measures**

Article 330 and 331 reserved seats in the national Parliament and the state assemblies and other representational institutions for members of the SCs and Scheduled Tribes as per their proportions in the total population. From Panchayats to Parliament, Dalit presence in the elected bodies has become ubiquitous. These measures have played an important role in a marginal improvement in the percentage of overall SC representation in the Group A, B, and C categories of services for more than decade and a half since 1994, with substantial decline in the Group D category services. Nonetheless, these measures have also produced a new political class among the Dalits. The rise and success of the SCs’ Bahujan Samaj Party (Party of the Majority Community) in Uttar Pradesh bears testimony to this fact, while the Article 325 declared that all voters — not just SCs and STs — could participate in the election of candidates for the SCs and STs reserved seats.

#### **4.5 Globalization, Social Exclusion and the Dalits—A Precarious Trend**

The theoretical basis of the neo-liberal policy with respect to the provision of social services is tenuous and rests basically on the foundation of sand. There is element of truth of this statement because, at first, several links in the globalization—growth—poverty reduction nexus can be postulated in theory, yet the reality is far more complicated. Small amount of globalization or fragmented globalization hurts the poor. Even in theory, not all links need be unidirectional, in some links, globalization influences growth positively but the character of growth increases poverty, this being the case of India. Secondly, as the Indian economy opened



up, a certain type of new Dualism occurred: A 'Shinning India' ( consisting of 41 per cent of the people totaling around 368 million) alongside with the 'Suffering India' consisting of 69 per cent of the total population or 820 millions people. This happened at that point of time, when the waves of globalization destroyed the country's industry, while the shrinking of the public sector led primarily to benefit the capital in the private corporate sector and eventually to a fall in the provision of public goods and services, job opportunities in different government and private sectors as well, increasing poverty, social inequity, and misery not only for the general masses but for the Dalits as well. The failure of the economic policy regime of state-led growth during the Hindu Growth Rate Period and after along with lacunas in constitutional measures and legislations and market-fundamentalist liberalization enamoured with stabilization policies and structural adjustment Programme ( SAP) have caused more harm and pain than any tangible benefits to the Dalits, altogether forgetting the truth that their situation warrants a different approach—they should not be treated simply as any other poor. The policies and programmes have increased more of the rate of unemployment, deteriorated income levels, undermined the provision of social services, promoted inflation, and exacerbated income inequalities. Besides, the whole focus of LPG has to expand the space of unhindered and collaborated operations of the resource-rich and powerful business classes, at the cost of the small, the informal and the rural poor, including the socially marginalized discriminated Dalits. Whatsoever do remain-- remains in the garb or promise of different safety nets, and palliatives in the form of employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes. Can this regime empower them right to life so that they can participate as full-blooded citizens on account of their own rights, bereft of mercy from others and humanitarian considerations in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres? According to World Bank, the number of poor below \$1.25 a day has increased from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005 and almost 80 per cent of all Indians subsist on less than half a dollar a day. India's growing prosperity after 1991 was accompanied by growing economic inequality. Deregulation, privatization and inequality in India have exacerbated the already inequitable distribution of health and educational services. Besides, India's high-tech sector, the principle beneficiary of economic liberalization is largely urban, employs relatively few workers and specializes in frugal innovation, while agrarian India was left behind with perhaps no more than one-tenth of the population controlling one-third of the country's income (*Kiswar, 2006*). Additionally, the Dalits ( along with some tribal groups) in India continue to live in grinding poverty and suffer discrimination in education and jobs and healthcare (*Wax, 2007*). Owing to inequality, hunger still remains a serious problem among the Dalits. In fact, one of the great

myths of the opening up of the Indian economy since 1991 is that economic liberalization has resulted in a massively expanded homogeneous mass of wealthy, Indian middle classes (socially advantaged groups) who have been the principle beneficiaries of liberalization, profiting immensely from the new opportunities for education, jobs and consumerism (*Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase, 2009*), while the marginalized social groups in the access to fixed capital assets, literacy and educational level, employment in regular salaried class, and diversification in employment towards non-farm activities suffer utmost. Even if there is improvement, it is at best marginal.

#### **4.6 Pattern of Employment among the Dalits**

Poverty drives the labour force participation of Dalits because they seldom have the luxury of staying out of the labour force. Dalits did not own land and historically been workers in the field of landed castes. The landless status of Dalits excludes them from the large employment category of regular salaried work and farm-based self-employment. Therefore, finding no other alternatives, the SCs and STs, the most poor, were forced to work as casual wage labourers, constituting about 22 per cent of the total households and their MPCE (monthly per capita expenditure) is now the lowest and poverty is highest. And, within casual labour, they are farmworkers during the 20 years beginning in 1983, in the aggregate, suffering most as the growth in MPCE and the elasticity of poverty reduction with respect to MPCE was also the lowest. These casual workers are the worst hit by the absence of social security benefits. Dalit men are still mainly restricted to menial, low-paying, and, often, socially stigmatized occupations, while upper caste groups are concentrated in preferred occupations. In this way, Dalits still lag behind STs/ OBCs and Muslims. They have had experienced a lowest decline in poverty, as compared with the rest. Using usual principal status from the NSS, one finds that, in 2004-05, over 41 per cent of Dalit men and 20 per cent of Dalit women were engaged in casual labour as opposed to 19 per cent of non-SC/ST men and 8 per cent of non-SC/ST women. One finds also that the male of the SCs are the maximum sufferers on employment, both in rural and urban areas. As far as females in the SCs are concerned, they are comparatively better off in an urban area, vis-à-vis the total female labour force in urban areas (in terms of level of the unemployment) but still the SC/ST women are in a specially vulnerable position when they seek entry in regular wage jobs in the unorganized or even in the private organized sector, in urban areas. Among STs, the comparatively lower unemployment rates are mainly based on doing very low paid jobs., which are defined as employment.

Therefore, the overall employment policy of SC/ST communities must be approached from the angles of poverty and deprivation. Special priority should be on the SCs suffering from the high incidence of poverty, have genuine problems of getting jobs, especially among the males. Further, it is of importance to note that the small scale industries sector is dominated primarily by management of the backward class entrepreneurs. Therefore, in any policy to reduce poverty, the inequality of income and employment between social groups, the healthy growth of this small enterprise and informal sector should be given high priority. The focus on the small producers and businesses will make the growth more pro-poor and inclusive.

There is no change in unemployment rates between 1999-2000 and 2004-05 for SCs; but for others, the unemployment rate has declined slightly. On the other hand, during the same periods, the unemployment rate for females in rural areas has declined for SCs, and for others it has increased by 0.8 percentage point. In urban areas, the unemployment rate for males in both categories, namely SCs and others has declined, but for females it has increased.

The unemployment rate by current daily status (CDS) across social groups in India presented in Table 3. shows that the rate by CDS was much higher for SCs and STs in both rural and urban areas. Further, the unemployment rate for STs increased in both rural and urban areas. In fact, in urban areas the unemployment rate increased only for STs. However, for all other social groups it declined, thereby causing an overall decline in unemployment rate in urban India during this period.

**Table 3: Unemployment Rate (CDS) across Social Groups (per cent)**

Social Group	Rural			Urban		
	2004-05	2007-08	2009-10	2004-05	2007-08	2009-10
Scheduled Caste	12.0	12.0	9.4	11.4	10.1	7.0
Scheduled Tribes	6.5	7.5	6.3	7.5	10.0	7.8
Other Backward Classes	7.7	7.9	6.5	8.5	7.7	6.2
Others	6.6	6.4	5.3	7.1	6.0	4.6
All	8.2	8.4	6.8	8.3	7.4	5.8

Source: India Human Development Report, 2011, Adapted from Mahore (2013)

#### **Access of SCs to Land and Non-Land Assets**

The access of SCs to land and non-land assets is still very limited — reflected in the low proportion of self-employed cultivators and businesses and exceptionally high incidence of wage labour. Of the total SC households, about 28 per cent of households so far have acquired access to land and non-land assets. And majority of the landowning wage labour households are those who own tiny pieces of land. So far as the STs are concerned, 90 per cent of the tribal

population own some land, but since more than half of them are marginal holdings, eventually their capacity to pursue cultivation as an independent and viable economic activity is extremely limited. Only 35 per cent of them are engaged in cultivating. Compared with non-SCs/STs the unemployment of rate among SCs /STs is also high. The education development of SCs/STs in terms of literacy and educational level is equally poor. All this contribute to the high incidence of poverty among them.

Table 4 reveals that the ST community possess much less assets compared to all households taken together.

**Table 4: Assets possessed by the Households among Scheduled Tribes and all Social Groups in 2011**

Social Groups	ST	All
Radio/Transistor	13.96	19.79
TV	21.51	45.31
Computer/Laptop With internet	0.82	2.8
Computer/Laptop Without internet	4.35	6.21
Telephone Landline only	1.96	3.93
Mobile only	30.81	52.45
Telephone and Mobile	3.76	5.59
Bicycle	82.17	44.51
Scooter/Motor cycle/Moped	8.93	19.84
Car/Jeep/Van	1.46	4.08
TV, Computer/ Laptop, Telephone/ Mobile & Scooter/ Car	1.21	4.12
None of the Assets	37.42	18.55

GOI (2014)

#### 4.7 Poverty and the Dalits

Why is poverty still so high among the Dalits? Why do disparities still persist? To answer this question at one stroke, we can say that the cumulative impact of the following factors--inflation, lack of regular employment, lack of inputs for agriculture, loans and debts for consumption purposes and denial of minimum wages in comparison to Non-SCs and STs (constraining their occupational mobility), lack of access to social services (like education, health and housing, and in political participation)--is reflected badly on the Dalits, which drive them to the high levels of poverty and extreme misery, though during 1983-2000, the incidence of rural poverty at the all India level declined both for the SCs/STs and the others--among the SCs declined from 58 per cent in 1983-84 to 48.11 per cent in 1993-94, further down to 36.80 per cent in 2000-05 (as compared to only 28.30 per cent for Non-SCs/STs)—the decline being lower in comparison to the non-SCs/STs population. So in 2004-05, 36.80 per cent of the population of SC were BPL in rural areas. On the other hand, the decline in urban poverty followed more or less the same trend during the same period—only 39.20 per cent of SC households were BPL compared to 25.70 per cent among the other households. The incidence of poor among the SC urban household declined by about 2.4 per cent per annum during 1984-2000(*Thorat,2006*). But the incidence of poverty among SC/ST poor and marginally poor taken together in rural areas which was 64.5 per cent in 1993-94 came down to 55.4 per cent in 2004-05 and then to 48.4 per cent in 2009-10, while in urban areas, it was 60.5 per cent in 1993-94, which eventually came down to 52.6 per cent and 32.6 per cent in 2004-05 and 2009-10 respectfully.

Poverty level was the highest among the SCs casual workers /STs agricultural workers, close to 60 per cent, followed by self-employed in non-farm self activities and self employed cultivating households (45 per cent) and regular wage and salaried workers( 25 per cent) during 1993-94 and 1999-2000.Among the STs, in urban areas the incidence of poverty is particularly intense among the casual labour ( 64 per cent)followed by self –employed and regular wage and salaried workers.

Here follows the pattern of incidence of poverty among the Dalits during almost the last two decades of economic reforms starting since 1993-94. The incidence of poverty among poor and vulnerable groups in rural areas which was 91.7 per cent in 1993-94 dropped down marginally to 91.5 per cent in 1990-00 and then to 89.3 per cent in 2004-05 and eventually came down to 86.0 per cent in 2009-10, while in urban areas, it was 87.1 per cent in 1993-94 which eventually came down to 81.3 per cent and 65.5 per cent in 2004-05 and 2009-10 respectfully

( Kannan. 2012). In what follows is the slow progress in terms of poverty reduction as well as vulnerability and the government’s neglect of rural India as compared to urban India., as the pace of reduction of poverty in rural India is much slower than in urban India. And this has been much pronounced during the last five years In what follows there has been marginal improvement in the level of living of SCs/STs, in rural and urban areas, measured in terms of the level of poverty. But the rate of decline in poverty level has not been adequate enough to reduce the gap between them and other sections of the Indian society and the high degree of deprivation of SCs/STs with reference to Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Illiteracy Rate, Health Status and Nutritional Status, apart from Poverty Ratio (Head Count Ratio) continues to be of a high order. And the growth has been less inclusive for them. In other words, the development paradigm has emphasized much more on exclusive growth , instead of inclusive growth that demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility.

Estimates on incidence of Poverty (URP and MRP) across social groups are presented in Table 5. The incidence of poverty is found much more pronounced among the SCs and STs though it declined in 2004-05 as compared to 1993-94. It was much higher than the national average.

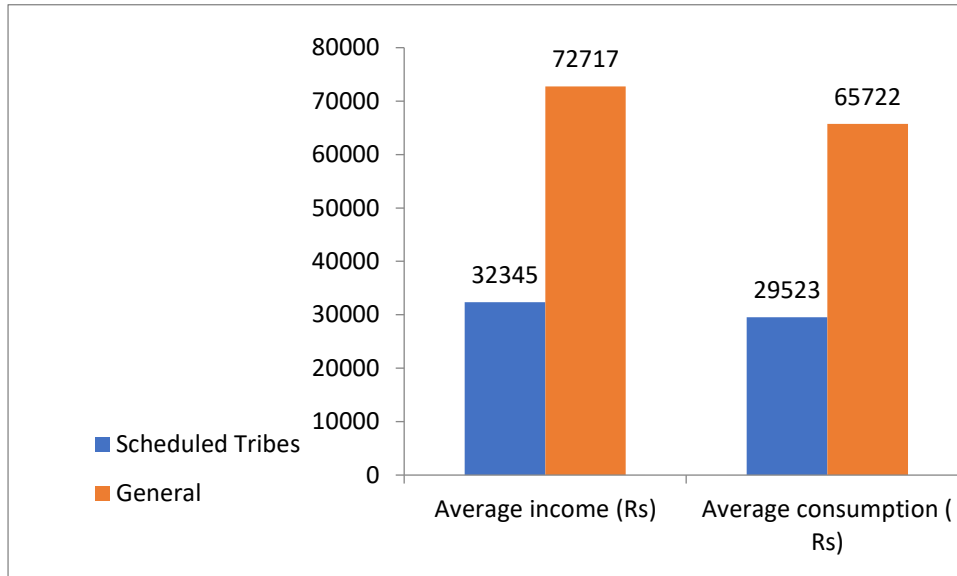
**Table 5: Incidence of Poverty across Social Groups (per cent)**

Social Group	Rural			Urban		
	SCs	STs	All	SCs	STs	All
1993-94 (URP)	48.3	52.0	37.3	48.8	40.1	32.4
2004-05 (URP)	36.8	47.7	28.3	39.4	33.9	25.7
2007-08 (MRP)	20.6	25.3	14.9	22.8	20.6	14.5

Source: NSSO, 50<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> Round Data. Adapted from Mahore (2013)

Fig 1 reveals that in spite of changes in access to education and affirmative action, social groups that were traditionally at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy are still economically worse off.

**Fig1: Household income and consumption among Scheduled Tribes and All**



Source: IHDS, 2004-05, Adopted from GOI (2014)

#### **4.8 Nutritional Status and the Dalits**

SCs/STs also lag far too behind the other section of population in term of other indicators. With respect to some critical health indicators such as life expectancy, mortality, and morbidity, SCs are too far behind. The poor nutritional status, higher undernourishment, and higher incidence of anaemia among children and women culminated in the higher incidence of mortality among the SC children, which is one of the important indicators of the health status.

The STs also perform very badly with respect to health indicators. The life expectancy is low for both SCs and STs (only 58 years) compared with non-SCs/STs (65 years). The IMR (the most sensitive and important indicator of health of a population), child mortality, and under five mortality were 84, 86.3 and 126 respectively among the STs were high compared to others. Both neonatal and post-neonatal mortality are also highest among the STs as compared to others. About 65 per cent of ST women suffered from anaemia, much high compared to only 47.6 per cent among others. Nearly 78 per cent of ST children suffer from anaemia.

Given its impact on health, education and productivity, persistent undernutrition is a major obstacle to human development and economic growth in the country, especially among the poor and the vulnerable, where the prevalence of malnutrition is highest. The progress in reducing the proportion of undernourished children in India has been mixed but generally slower than what has been achieved in other countries with comparable socio-economic indicators. While aggregate levels of under-nutrition are shockingly high, the picture is further

exacerbated by the significant inequalities: regionally (gender differences tend to be more extreme in northern India); across states (with different histories and social trajectories); socio-economic groups; and caste. The most vulnerable are:

- Girls;
- Rural populations;
- The poorest and scheduled tribes and castes.

Evidence published in 2005 concludes that some of these inequalities may even be increasing. In India, child malnutrition is mostly the result of high levels of exposure to infection and inappropriate infant and young child feeding and caring practices, and has its origins almost entirely during the first 2-3 years of life. However, the commonly held assumption is that food insecurity is the primary or even sole cause of malnutrition. Consequently, the existing response to malnutrition in India has been skewed towards food-based interventions and has placed little emphasis on schemes addressing the other determinants of malnutrition.

Disaggregation of underweight statistics by socio-economic and demographic characteristics reveals which groups are most at risk of malnutrition. Underweight prevalence is higher in rural areas (50 per cent) than in urban areas (38 per cent); higher among girls (48.9 per cent) than among boys (45.5 per cent); higher among scheduled castes (53.2 per cent) and scheduled tribes (56.2 per cent) than among other castes (44.1 per cent); and, although underweight is pervasive throughout the wealth distribution, the prevalence of underweight reaches as high as 60 per cent in the lowest wealth quintile. Moreover, during the 1990s and the 2000s decade, urban-rural, inter-caste, male-female and inter-quintile inequalities in nutritional status widened.

There is also a large inter-state variation in the patterns and trends in underweight. In six states, at least one in two children are underweight, namely Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. The four latter states account for more than 43 per cent of all underweight children in India. Moreover, the prevalence of underweight is falling more slowly in the high-prevalence states. Finally, the demographic and socio-economic patterns at the state level do not necessarily mirror those at the national level (e.g. in some states, inequalities in underweight are narrowing and not widening, and in some states boys are



more likely to be underweight than girls), and nutrition policy should take cognizance of these variations.

Economic growth alone is unlikely to be sufficient to lower the prevalence of malnutrition substantially — certainly not sufficiently to meet the nutritional goals of MDG of halving the prevalence of underweight children between 1990 and 2015. It is only with a rapid scaling-up of health, nutrition, education and infrastructure interventions that this MDG can be met. Additional and more effective investments are especially needed in the poorest states.

#### **4.9 Education and the Dalits**

Education level among the Dalits is still very low—they continue to lag far behind upper caste Hindus, though the Central government through its multi-pronged approach has introduced several scholarship schemes under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The crux of the problem of SCs /STs in the sphere of education relates to low literacy rate, high dropout rate at school, low quality education and discrimination and exclusion in educational institutions including admissions. The 11th FYP indicates that about 74 per cent of Dalit boys and 71 per cent of Dalit girls drop out of school between grade 1 and 10 (*GoI,2008*).Recent ethnographic evidence also points out to the isolation of Dalits in the classroom. Dalits are particularly excluded in situations involving the sharing of food and prayers. As a result, the quality of human resources is inferior, affecting mobility of the Dalits to non-farm sector employment. One important dimension of discrimination is the wide gap between the SCs and the rest of the population with respect to the availability of basic civic amenities such as *pucca* houses, electricity, water supply etc.

#### **5. THE FUTURE OF DALITS: IS IT FUTURELESS?**

One cannot predict the future but one can have hope. Our hope is that, over the *longue duree*, their existence with acute poverty and deprivation amidst booming India would remain morally unacceptable

The future for the upheaval of Dalits demands prudent changes in public policies, particularly social group specific inclusive policies of human development (with due attention to sources of ‘bad inequalities’ like social exclusion, discrimination, restrictions on migration, constrains on human development, lack of access to finance and insurance, corruption) that limits the prospect for economic advancement among them and their implementations.

A number of policy instruments have been developed, no doubt, and yet they have failed to bring significant changes in the situation of these marginalized social groups. Therefore, there is a need to make necessary modifications in the policies to accelerate the agricultural growth to be made pro-poor, that is, pro-poor small and marginal farmers and pro-poor farm wage labourers from all social groups, but more particularly from Dalits, and others whose poverty level is still very high and reduced very slowly. And to improve the ownership of income earning capital assets (agricultural land, and non-land), employment, human resource and health situation, and also to prevent discrimination to ensure fair participation of these marginalized community in the private and the public sectors, a growth –enhancing and poverty-reducing potential of a well- designed and well-executed rural works programme is of utmost necessary.

There is a need to bring changes in the institutional framework in the policy of land distribution to SCs/STs/ landless families. In all these, care should be taken to ensure preferential/ joint ownership by women. The legal and administrative constraints in enforcement are so immense that large tracts of land have been locked up in litigation and the SCs/STs have not been able even to take physical possession of the allocated land. It is suggested that by setting a Commission on Land Reforms, the government should take the responsibility of removing all obstacles in the acquisition of land under ceiling and other public land in order to free the SCs/STs from legal and other administrative problems,. The government should also clear cultivable wasteland and other lands, including land under ceiling, and develop these large tracts of land through employment programmes and thus, by creating a ‘common pool of State land’ free from litigation by private parties, redistribute it to the SCs and others. A special organization at the Centre and in the states should be set up for the purpose of acquiring, developing, and distributing government land and land under ceiling. The government should also take special initiatives to provide the possession of customary land to the SCs. For example, there are large tracts of customary lands whose rights were given to SCs but were encroached by the high caste landlords.

There is a need to review, recast and strengthen the government of India’s new edition, the MGNREGA—(An Act of the people, for the people and by the people)-- both in rural and urban areas because as of now, the coverage of this scheme is too low and the number of 100 guaranteed employment days is much short of the required guaranteed employment in a year. The market-driven development paradigm alone would not be able to provide even employment and income security to a vast majority of workers, including the Dalits.

Meanwhile, a powerful unholy nexus, consisting of economic rationalists, market liberals, members of the corporate class is placing forcefully the rights and freedom of corporations well ahead of the rights and freedom of the AAM ADMI. In such a scenario, what justice and social protection, be it be Unorganized Sectors Workers' Social Security Acts, 2008, or the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Acts, await the Dalits, who bereft of basic elements of dignity, including rights, social protection and voice, are not only engaged in informal employment but are also under-employed. So to be out from this quagmire, along with high growth trajectory, inclusive growth and formalization of employment are prerequisites. Further, rural infrastructure and other productive capital assets can be generated through large-scale employment. This will serve the dual purpose of reducing poverty and ensuring economic growth through improvement in the stock of capital assets and infrastructure.

Due to privatization, the subsequent withdrawal of the State, and the decline in government and public employment, the employment of SCs/STs under reservation has declined significantly. There is a need to have some kind of reservation policy for private sector employment and other markets also.

The following line is necessary to ensure fair access to the discriminated groups:

- The implementation of the PCR Act,1955 and SC and ST( POA ) Act,1989 has to be enforced in letter and spirit to bring about speedy justice to the aggrieved
- The government should enact the 'Equal Opportunity Act' of which 'Equal Employment Opportunity Act', should be a part. Legislation should be passed by the central government for reservation both for the private and public sector, to ensure fair access to the discriminated groups like SCs and STs in private employment. The private sector will have to play a proactive role in providing sufficient job opportunities to the specially marginalized and discriminated sections of the Indian society.
- An 'Affirmative Action Policy' of some sort should be envisaged for multinational companies in the framework of the UN provisions.

There is a need to develop an affordable, uniform, and better quality public educational system up to the university level for the Dalits. The public education system needs to be further strengthened. The promotion of private education systems that create inequality and hierarchy should be discouraged.

From time immemorial, the public health system in the rural as well as, to some extent, in urban areas has been by and large neglected. Therefore, the primary health system for rural areas and public health system in urban areas must be revived and more funds should be allocated for the same. Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Mid-day Meal schemes introduced so far does not equally work in favour of Dalit female and male groups, as opposed to others, as a number of studies have pointed out, the PDS should also be revamped and strengthened.

A meaningful intervention on priority basis by the government by strictly enforcing PCRA and POA to mitigate the sufferings of Dalits due to the practice of untouchability and atrocities inflicted upon them, is urgently called for. Law by itself cannot do all that. But social reform process should continue with the government and social activists. Alongside, a positive change in the attitude and behaviour of the upper caste Hindus does help to remove this social disorder in the process.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

A close look to the 66<sup>th</sup> Round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) data pertaining to the year 2009-10 reveals that nearly 77 per cent of the people fall in the category of poor and vulnerable (the socially vulnerable groups, the Dalits in the caste system specially the SCs/STs), and Muslims, with an average expenditure of not more than Rs.20 per day per capita in 2004-05. What is also significant is the fact that the average expenditure of the Marginally Poor corresponds to the international extreme poverty line of 1.25 PPP dollars per capita per day, which showed that 41 per cent of the Indian population is below this international poverty line. Moreover, the average expenditure for the vulnerable group is a little more than 2 PPP dollars per capita per day. This is the picture at the point of time, when the country is moving towards an accelerated GDP growth rate from 6 per cent per annum to well over 8 per cent per annum. This pinpoints to the fact that neo-liberal strategy is only on the lookout for maximizing the aggregate economic growth and the government and the policy makers' much talked about "Inclusive Growth" with a human face in terms of progress in social and financial inclusion is in jeopardy. And accordingly, have not been directed the government's policies so far towards economic and social uplift of the Dalits and other poorer segments to an agreeable extent so as to reap the benefits of growth and bring these marginalized sections of the society into the mainstream. So looms large "A broken people" in 'Booming India' and there is little hope of a rosy future for a broken people. The recent political trends even do not encourage optimism

on this point. Instead, what we see is a new grass-roots political class, entangled in often petty and sometimes violent conflicts. The above plight very often reminds us B. R Ambedkar who was capable of awakening of the conscience of the nation and whose vision about moulding and building the society, economy and its people was not taken into account afterwards by our policy makers in the upcoming years in a meaningful way. For example, more than 65 years since the inception of the Constitution of India, government debt and borrowing programmes for the central as well as state governments in India, were managed without any explicit targets or rules except for the constitutional provisions under Articles 292 and 293. Dr. Ambedkar himself highlighted the importance of parliamentary legislation during the Constituent Assembly debates on Articles 292 and 293 when he expressed the hope that ‘parliament will take this matter seriously and keep on enacting laws so as to limit the borrowing authority of the Union.’ He referred to the need for an ‘Annual Debt Act’. In terms of the current parlance, the term ‘annual debt’ can be considered to mean fiscal deficit or borrowing in a given year. The term fiscal deficit was not part of the budgetary parlance until the late 1980s.

Nay, his economic ideas other than improving the lot of the Dalits on the vital economic issues, for example the problem of agriculture and of industry, of labour or the issue of the problems of currency was suppressed under the shadow of his image as architects of the Indian Constitution and the Champion of the downtrodden. But we can say with certainty that he has shown a great scholarship and put a great dimension in finding some practical answers to the questions of some of the vital problems of country by his innovative insight in visualizing the future in the shadow of the present.

## REFERENCES

- Ambedkar, B.R. (2002). “Caste in India”, in Ghanshyam Shah (ed.), *Caste and Democratic Politics in India*, Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Ambedkar, B.R (1926). *Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance*.
- Ambedkar, B.R. (1945). *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Thaker and Co. Bombay.
- Amin, Samir (2008). “Globalization and Agrarian Question: Peasants’ Conflicts in Africa and Asia” in Ghosh, B.N. and Halil M. Guven (eds.), *Globalization and the Third World: A Study of Negative Consequences*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Beteille, Andre (1998). “The Idea of Indigenous People,” *Current Anthropology*, 39 (2): 187-191.
- Beteille, Andre (2000). “The Schedule Castes: An Inter-regional Perspective”, *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, I(3-4):367-80.

- Chappel,Zsuzsanna (2012). *Deliberative Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, UK.
- Christensen, Karen and David Levinson (eds.), (2003), *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, Vol 1, Sage Publication, London, New Delhi.
- Das, Guracharan (2012). *India Grows at Night: A Liberal Case for a Strong State*, Allen Lane by Penguin Books in India.
- Das, K.C.(2007). *Global Encyclopaedia of the North Indian Dalits Ethnography*, Vol.I, Global Vision Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Deliege, Robert (1999). *The Untouchables of India*, Berg Publishers, UK.
- Galanter, Marc (1984). *Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes of India*, Berkely: University of California Press.
- Ganguly-Scrase, Ruchira and Timoty J. Scrase (2009). *Globalization and the Middle Classes in India: Social and Cultural Impact of Neo-liberal Reforms*, Oxford: Routledge.
- Gomango,Giridhar (1992). *Constitutional Provisions for the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes*, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai.
- Government of India (2008). *Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-12, Inclusive Growth, Vol.I*, Planning Commission, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Government of India (2014). *Report of the High Level Committee on Socioeconomic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India*, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Government of India May, 2014.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (2004). “Access to Health Services and Health States — Social Group Analysis 2004”, Working Paper, Delhi.
- Jodhka, Surinder S. (2008). “Dalits and Development” in *India: Social Development Report 2010: The Land Question and the Marginalized*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Mcleod, John (2006). *The History of India*, Greenwood Press, Connecticut.
- Kannan, K.P. (2012). ‘How Inclusive is Inclusive Growth in India?’” *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol 55, Number1, January- March.
- Kapoor, A.N. and V.P.Gupta and Mohini Gupta (2008). *A Dictionary of Scheduled Tribes in India*, Radha Publications, New Delhi.
- Karmakar, Asim K. (2012). “Employment Pattern in India Over the Two Decades of Reforms Among Vulnerable Social Groups,” *The Indian Economic Journal*, Special Issue, December 2012, pp383-392.
- Karmakar, Asim K. (2012). B.R. Ambedkar’s Economic Thoughts and Philosophy — Their Relevance Today. *The Indian Economic Journal*, Special Issue, December 2013,pp. 91-99.
- Khan, Mumtaz Ali (1995). *Human Rights and the Dalits*, Delhi: Uppal Publishers.
- Kiswar, Madhu Purnima (2006). *Deepening Democracy: Challenges of Governance and Globalization in India*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kumar,Vivek (2003). “Dalits” in *Alternative Economic Survey 2002-2003: Liberalization sans Social Justice*, Rainbow Publishers Ltd., UP, India.

- Kumar, Vivek (2012). "Dalit Diaspora: Invisible Existence," in S.K. Jain (ed.), *Indian Diaspora in the Era of Globalisation*, Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi.
- Kundu, Amitabh (2003). "Measuring Inequality in Education", in J.B.G. Tilak (ed.), *Education Society and Development—National and International Perspective*, A.P.H. Publishing. Corporation.
- Louis, Prakash (2007). "The Scheduled Tribes" in *Alternative Economic Survey, India 2005-2006: Disempowering Masses*, Daanish Books, Delhi, India.
- Mahanti, Manoranjan (2007). "Kilvenmani, Karamchedu to Khairlanji: Why Atrocities on Dalits Persist?", Available at [www.boel-india.org](http://www.boel-india.org).
- Mahore M. R. (2013), Educational Thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and their Relevance in the Present Times, *The Indian Economic Journal*, Special Issue, December, 2013.
- Nachane, Dilip M. (2011). "Indian Economics in Disarray: Tragedy of a Forsaken Legacy" in R S Deshpande, Raju et al. *Development Windows: Essays in Honour of Prof. V.M. Rao*, Academic Foundations, New Delhi.
- Narwani, G.S.(2011). *Atrocities Against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur 4.
- National Sample Survey (NSS). *38<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Rounds: Employment and Unemployment Situation among Social Groups in India*, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal (1992) [1946]. *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, Amartya (2000). 'Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny', *Working Report*, Asian Development Bank.
- Sharma, Arvind (2004). *Hinduism and Human Rights: A Conceptual Approach*, New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Srinivasan, T.N. (2008). "Globalization and Poverty" in Dinopoulos, Elias, Pravin Krishna, Arvind Panagariya and Kar-yiu wong (eds.), *Trade, Globalization and Poverty*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Srivastava, D.K. (2010). "Fiscal Policy Rules in India: Impact and Reassessment" in Pulin B. Nayak, et al. (Eds.) *India's Economy and Growth*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
- Sundaram, R. and S. Tendulkar (2002). "Poverty among Social and Economic Groups in India in the Nineties", *Working Paper No.118*, Centre for Development Economics, Delhi.
- Thorat, Sukhdeo (1999). "Social Security in Unorganised Sector, How Secure are the Scheduled Caste?," *Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Special Issue*, September.
- Thorat, Sukhdeo (1999). "Dalits After India's Independence: Where Do they Stand?," *International News Letter*, Waterford (USA), October.
- Thorat, Sukhdeo (2002). "Oppression and Denial: Dalit Discrimination in 1990s," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February.
- Thorat, Sukhdeo (2003). "Caste, Exclusion/Discrimination and Deprivation: the Situation of Dalits in India", *Concept Paper for DFID*, Delhi, May.

- Thorat, Sukhadeo (2004). “Persistence of Poverty: Why Do Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Stay Chronically Poor?” Paper presented in London, Centre for Studies on Chronic Poverty.
- Thorat, Sukhadeo (2006). “Empowering Marginalized Groups: Policies and Change”, in *India: Social Sector Development*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
- Thorat, Sukhadeo (2009). *Dalits in India: Search for a Common Destiny*, Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi
- Tripathy, R.B. (1994). *Dalits: A Sub-Human Society*, Delhi: Ashish.
- Wax, Emily (2007). “A broken people’ in Booming India”, *The Washington Post*, July, 21, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.
- Webster, John C.B. (2001). “The Dalit Situation in India Today”, *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 18:1 Spring 2001.
- Wolpert, Stanley (2004). *A New History of India*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank (2011). *Poverty and Social Exclusion in India*, Washington D.C., Oxford University Press.