



## **Schemes for Educational Development of Scheduled Castes in India-An Overview.**

Dr.V Vasavi

Lecturer in Commerce

Government Degree College, Puttur

### **ABSTRACT**

Indian society was characterised by an age old rigid hierarchical caste system which was formed on the basis of occupation. Therefore, the position of a caste in the social hierarchy was determined mainly by its traditional occupation. On the basis of this categorization, those castes which engaged in unclean occupations or perform unclean tasks are placed at the lower levels of social hierarchy and regarded those castes as Lower castes and often leading to social exclusion and discrimination. These unclean occupations are associated with some specific communities, particularly Dalits, who were considered as untouchables earlier.

The constitution of India abolished the Untouchability and provided several special safeguards for the scheduled castes to enable them on par with other social groups. Department of Social Justice and empowerment of Government of India which is entrusted with the responsibility of development and empowerment of the scheduled castes and other deprived communities, implements various schemes for the educational, economic and social empowerment of the target groups. In this paper an attempt has been made to identify the various governmental schemes meant for the educational development of scheduled castes in India.

Key Words: Hierarchy ,Occupation, Untouchables, Scheduled Castes, Social Empowerment.

### **Introduction**

Indian society consists of age-old rigid occupation-based hierarchical caste system, where the position of a caste in the social hierarchy was determined mainly by its traditional occupation. In other words, those castes which perform unclean tasks are placed at the lower levels of social hierarchy and regarded those castes as Low castes and also as untouchables. The practice of untouchability and discrimination in every respect caused a great injustice to the so-called lower castes and their right to own any productive asset and basic rights like education and equality have also been denied. Over a period of time these discrimination lead to the perpetuation of their extreme socio-economic deprivation.



For the first time in India, 1931 census systematically categorized certain castes as depressed classes. Thereafter, the Government of India Act, 1935, for the first time, provided for notification of socially disadvantaged castes as Scheduled Castes'. Accordingly, a list of such castes got notified in the Govt. of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936.

The constitution of India which came into force from 26-01-1950, abolished 'Untouchability' and provided several special safeguards for the scheduled castes, so as to enable them to attain equality with the other social groups. The ministry of social Justice and empowerment is the nodal agency to oversee the development and empowerment of the scheduled castes.

The holistic empowerment of all sections of the society is necessary for the development of a country. Social empowerment is a means to build a society as a just society. Indian government has adopted various measures with full commitment to provide social justice and empowerment to the poor, underprivileged and marginalized sections of the society including Scheduled castes. Several plans and programmes are being implemented for assisting the marginalized sections of the society in enhancing their skills and capabilities and so that ensuring their economic development and integration into the national mainstream. The reservation system i.e reserving 15% of seats in educational institutions and government jobs for S.C population has become the most visible aspect of constitutional protection to Scheduled Castes in India. The reservation system and hand holding support of the government has enabled lakhs of Scheduled caste people to access opportunities that would have been impossible without the intervention of the government. As per 2011 census, total Scheduled caste population in India is 20,13,78,372 out of the total Indian population of 121,08,54,977, consisting of 16.63 percent. The following table shows the SC population in India and relative percentage in total population.

Geographical unit	Total population	SC population	% of SC Population
India	121,08,54,977	20,13,78,372	16.63

Source: Census of India, 2011

**Objective of the study:** To list out the Various Schemes being implemented by the Government of India for the Educational Development of Scheduled Castes.

**Methodology:** This study is purely a descriptive study based on the secondary data collected from various journals, articles and websites.

### **Empowerment through Education:**

Education can be considered as the prime weapon which has the power to transform the lives of the down trodden people. Education can exercise a profound influence on the socio-economic development and therefore considered as a key indicator to judge the level of human development



and progress. Article 46, a Directive Principle of State Policy of Indian Constitution suggests that the state should focus on promoting the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections of the society. Department of Social Justice and Empowerment implements various schemes for the educational, economical and social empowerment of the target groups. The schemes relating to educational empowerment of the SCs can be broadly categorized into (1) Scholarship Schemes (2) Schemes relating to the coaching of the students (3) Schemes relating to construction of hostels.

Various scholarships are provided to the students belonging to the scheduled castes to ensure that they are not deprived of education because of the poor financial conditions of their families.

**(1)Pre- Matric Scholarships Scheme for Scheduled Castes & Others:**Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes & Others is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and implemented through State Governments and UT administrations. The Objectives of the scheme are:

- To support the parents of Schedules Caste and other disadvantaged categories, whose wards are studying at the Pre-matric stage.
- To reduce or minimize the incidence of drop-out from elementary to the secondary stage.
- To improve the performance of the students at pre-matric level and to increase the chance of progression to the Post-matric stage of education.

This scheme consists of two components. And they are:

**Component 1: Pre Matric Scholarship for SC students**

- i. The students should be studying in class IX and X on a full-time basis.
- ii. Students should belong to Scheduled Caste.
- iii. Their Parent/Guardian's income should not exceed Rs. 2.50 lakh per annum.

**Component 2: Pre Matric Scholarships to the children of those engaged in occupations involving cleaning and prone to Health Hazards:**

This centrally sponsored Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship to children of those engaged in 'unclean' occupations was started in the F.Year 1977-78. Under this scheme financial assistance is provided for Pre-metric education, to the children of (i) Manual Scavengers as defined under section 2(1) (g) of Manual Scavengers Act 2013 (ii) Tanners & Flayers (iii) Waste pickers and (iv) Persons engaged in hazardous cleaning as defined in Section 2(1) (d) of Manual Scavengers Act 2013. Initially this scheme covered only hostellers and subsequently in the year 1991, Day scholars were also brought into the purview of the scheme. The students studying in classes I to X on a full-

time basis are eligible to receive the financial assistance under this scheme, without any ceiling on family income.

**Table 1-Number of Beneficiaries and Central Assistance (CA) Under Pre-Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students**

Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Central Assistance (Rs. In Lakhs)
2019-20	31,37,329	35,289
2020-21	31,22,697	56,903
2021-22	32,38,399	57,018
2022-23	12,34,117	20,793
2023-24	22,38,192	44,665

Source: Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

## (2) Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students (PMS-SC):

The Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students (PMS-SC) is a centrally sponsored scheme meant for educational empowerment of scheduled caste students. This scheme has been in operation since the year 1944 and provides financial assistance to SC Students to pursue their post matric education.

**Objective:** Objective of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to the Scheduled Castes students studying at post matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them complete their education.

### Salient features of the scheme:

- It is one of the oldest welfare schemes of the country.
- It is flagship scheme and core of the core schemes of the Government of India.
- The scheme is open-ended as regards beneficiaries, institutions, courses and reimbursement of fees.

From a humble beginning in 1944-45 with an expenditure of Rs 0.48 lakhs to support 144 beneficiaries, the scheme has considerably improved its ambit. The scheme touched 1 lakh beneficiaries in 1967-68, 10 lakh beneficiaries in 1990- 91 and approximately 50 lakh beneficiaries in 2013-14.

**Table 2- Central Assistance (CA) and Number of Beneficiaries covered under Post Matric Scholarship for S.C students**

Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Central Assistance (Rs. in Lakhs)
2019-20	54,27,402	2,71,130
2020-21	50,16,082	4,00,860
2021-22	39,39,486	1,93,038
2022-23	41,05,625	4,38,832
2023-24	46,10,591	5,47,542

Source: Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

**(3)National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes (SC) Students:** This scheme is meant to provide financial assistance to Schedule caste students for pursuing research studies leading to M.Phil, Ph.D and equivalent research degrees. This central sector Scheme envisages to meet the requirements of the Scheduled Caste students who are pursuing a research degree in universities, research institutions, and scientific institutions. The scheme equips SC students to effectively take advantage of the growing opportunities at the national and international level in the context of the new economic order. The fellowship is categorized into two parts, namely the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and Senior Research Fellowship (SRF). University Grants Commission is the nodal agency for implementing this scheme and 2000 research fellowships per year are awarded to S.C students.

**(4)National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes:**This scholarship is meant to provide assistance to meritorious scheduled caste students with low income to pursue higher studies of Master level course and Ph,D programmes abroad. This scholarship is available to pursue studies in specified fields of study such as engineering and management, pure science and applied science, agricultural science, medicine, international commerce, accounting & finance and humanities &social sciences. Only two children of the same parents are eligible to get benefit under the scheme. The total number of awards to be given each year is 125 out of which 115 slots are reserved for S.C students. And 30 percent of awards are earmarked for women candidates. This scheme provides financial assistance for a maximum period of 4 years to the Ph.D students and three years for Masters programme.

**Table 3- Physical and Financial achievements of National Overseas Scholarship for S.Cs**

Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Budget (Rs. in Crores)	Expenditure (Rs. In Crores)
2019-20	100	20	28.56
2020-21	100	20	32.92
2021-22	125	30	49.07
2022-23	125	36	86.59
2023-24	125	50	88.56

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

**(5)Free Coaching Scheme for SC Students:** Indian government has undertaken various activities and introduced different schemes for the upliftment of the marginalized sections. One among the such government schemes is Coaching and allied Assistance for Scheduled Castes. It was introduced in September 2001. This Centrally sponsored scheme was revamped and renamed as the Central Sector Scheme of “Free Coaching for SC and OBC Students” with effect from April 2007.

The Objective of this scheme is to provide quality coaching for economically disadvantaged Schedule caste candidates to enable them to appear for competitive exams. Coaching is provided for various competitive exams conducted by different recruiting agencies and for Group ‘A’ and ‘B’ examinations conducted by the UPSC. Coaching is also provided to face premier entrance examinations with a view to assist the S.C students in getting admission in Engineering, medical and other professional courses. This scheme is implemented through the reputed coaching centers run by the state governments/ U.T. administrations, Universities and the registered private institutions.

**Table 4- Physical and Financial achievements of Free coaching scheme for S.C &OBC students**

Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Budget (Rs. in Crores)	Expenditure (Rs. In Crores)
2019-20	1345	30.0	13.26
2020-21	2112	30.0	11.96
2021-22	1761	50.0	14.98
2022-23	558	47.0	18.40
2023-24	223	47.0	7.76

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

**(6)Upgradation of Merit of S.C students:** Some times, the S.C students are unable to take advantage of the various avenues, which have become available through reservation system.

Consequently, the quota reserved for them in technical and professional courses remain under utilized. To overcome this, Indian Govt. came up with this scheme. The objective of this scheme is to upgrade the merit of S.C students studying in classes from IX to XII and to facilitate their entry into professional courses. Under this scheme 100 percent Central assistance to states/UT s is provided for arranging remedial and special coaching for S.C and S.T students of the above mentioned classes. Maximum 2050 students are covered under this scheme annually.

**(7)Scholarship Scheme of Top Class Education for S.C students:** The objective of this scheme is to promote qualitative education amongst S.C students by providing full financial support for pursuing studies beyond 12<sup>th</sup> class in the institutions with excellence such as IITs, IIMs, reputed medical / law institutes, Commercial Pilot License training institutes etc.,The scholarship covers full Tution fee and other non-refundable charges(limited to ceiling of Rs.2,00,000, living expenses @2,200 per month, books & stationery @Rs. 3000 per anum and a latest computer with accessories.

**Table 5- Physical and Financial achievements of Top class Education scheme for S.C students**

Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Budget (in Crores)	Expenditure (in Crores)
2019-20	1375	40.5	39.7
2020-21	3118	52.0	52.0
2021-22	4544	70.0	84.0
2022-23	4171	108.0	85.67
2023-24	3969	100.0	83.84

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

**(8)Scheme for Residential Education for studies in High schools in Targeted areas (SHRESHTA):** The SHRESHTA scheme is being implemented with the objective of providing access to high quality education to the S.C. students. Implementation of this scheme is carried out in two modes. In mode-I around 3000 meritorious S.C students from all over India are selected by National Testing Agency through the National Entrance Test for SHRESHTA (NETS) and they will be provided admission in best private residential schools. In mode-II financial assistance is provided to the NGOs to run schools/hostels and thereby to provide residential educational facilities to S.C students.

**(9)Babu Jagajivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY):** The main objective of this scheme is to provide hostel facilities to S.C. Boys and Girls studying in middle school, higher secondary schools, colleges and universities. This scheme aims at encouraging and enabling the S.C students hailing from remote and rural areas to obtain quality education by providing the hostel facilities and to reduce the drop out rate. Scheme of Construction of hostels for SC Girls was started during



the Third Five year Plan period (1961-66) and the same for boys was started with effect from the year 1989-90.

**Outcomes of providing Educational Scholarships/ Support:** It is clearly evident from the above furnished information that the Government of India has been spending many crores of rupees every year for the educational development of Scheduled castes. Scheduled caste people living in India through the length and breadth of the country are enjoying the fruits of financial support for education. The various outcomes that have been manifested over this long journey are:

- Increased access to education for Scheduled caste people.
- Increased enrollment and participation.
- Improved Academic performance.
- Increased access to higher education and to research activities.
- Improvement in employability skills and thus increased earning potentiality etc.,.

**Shortcomings in the system:** In spite of spending crores of rupees by Government through scholarships to promote education among SC communities, government intentions have not been fully realized. Some of the lapses or short comings in the system are:

- Lack of awareness among some SC people about the various schemes available for their educational empowerment.
- In some instances, actually deprived people or the people for whom the schemes are really intended are not getting the access to these benefits.
- In many cases, only a few persons, those who have the awareness of all the available schemes are getting the benefit in multiple ways.
- Complexities in application process.
- Delay in scholarship disbursements etc.,.

Above mentioned factors are diluting the noble purpose of providing support for educational empowerment of Scheduled castes. All the above short comings can be corrected to a large extent just by creating awareness among the SC communities. Awareness about the schemes has to be created among the students as well as the parents. Government has to organize the awareness campaigns among the illiterate and poorest of the poor sections of Scheduled castes about the availability of scholarship schemes at every level of education for SCs.



### **Conclusion:**

Due to the intervention of the government through various scholarship schemes and formidable support, there has been a considerable improvement in GER (Gross Enrollment Ratio) of SC students in higher education from 16 in 2012-13 to 21.8 in 2017-18. However, this GER of 21.8 is considerably lower when compared with the Country's general GER of 25.8.

However, the transformation in the lives of the Scheduled Castes over the period of seven decades after Independence can be considered as remarkable achievement. From a position of complete exclusion to occupying prominent positions in every field like academia, business, arts, public service and on political front demonstrates the power and success of systematic and sustained policy intervention.

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