

## Schedule caste: A study of Uttri village of Jammu and Kashmir

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### Abstract

Caste system in India is one kind of stratification based on inequality among human beings in matters of social interaction. Inequality in general leads to discrimination. Caste plays a dominant role in all walks of life. It has been observed that the lower position of a caste in the social hierarchy, the extent of social exploitation is more. This study aims to find out the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes in a village of Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is revealed from the study that despite of good economic conditions they still face discrimination on the social grounds.

**KEYWORDS** :- scheduled caste, socio-economic conditions, discrimination, Jammu and Kashmir

### Introduction

This Paper is an attempt to examine multidimensional issues with regard to Scheduled caste in a village of Jammu and Kashmir. It emphasizes on their socio-economic status. The total population of the village under study (i.e. Uttri) is 700. Population belonging to scheduled caste is 150 which include chamar, Megh, Mahasha.

The term 'scheduled caste', literally means the caste or communities included in the schedule for the purpose of special consideration. The scheduled castes are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and have low social status with little or no ritual status. Even among the scheduled castes, there is innumerable caste and sub-castes which enjoy deferral status (Parvathamma, 1989).

It is a Political legal concept. It was first used in Government of India Act 1935 (Benjamin, 1989). As per the Practice of the village under study, Lowest castes were normally referred to by particular caste names, such as chamar, kumhars, Megh, Mahsya.

The term 'Harijan' is used for untouchables or scheduled caste. This term was first used by Mahatma Gandhi which means 'children of God', who were free from traditional association. However in some parts of country, such as Maharashtra, this term has been criticized on the ground that it has another and derogatory meaning "Illegitimate children", while some other felt that the name Harijan was a mark of Pity and not the grant of equality (Rao, 1981). Dr. Ambedkar had earlier opposed the word "Harijan" Ambedkar demanded inter-alia a change of nomenclature. He proposed the words 'Protestant Hindus or Non Conformist Hindus', but finally as recommended by Simon commission, the term scheduled caste was adapted by the Govt. (Khan, 1980).

After independence, the constituent Assembly used the word 'scheduled caste' while drafting the constitution. The term scheduled caste has not been defined in the constitution. Article 341, of the constitution reads as follows, "Scheduled caste means such castes races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be scheduled caste for the purpose of constitution (Benjamin, 1989).

To sum up, it may be said that all the depressed classes are Harijans. All the Harijans are scheduled caste. All the untouchables are depressed classes. Harijans or scheduled caste are untouchables (khan. 1980).

The scheduled castes wherever they live, are faced many diverse problems which are of social, economic, political and educational is nature. They suffer from times 789-968 memorial for no fault of their. These problems have aggravated the situation over years and pushed the unfortunate scheduled caste masses to total subjugation and exploitation.

Scheduled castes are exploited, depressed and dominated during the last few centuries. It is said that in some parts of India they were not allowed to enter city walls at times when sun was at its highest and the shadow stretched to the maximum, in the fear that shadows could fall on Brahmins and thus defile him. There were social, economic and political disabilities (Poddar, 2001).

One thing is certain, that in a caste ridden society like ours, social and economic status are the necessary pre-requisite for any individual to progress. Any analysis of Indian society without taking caste into consideration is not complete. Almost all activities-economic, political, educational and socio-cultural resolve around the notions of caste (Parvathamma, 1984)

Special census conducted by the register general of India 1987, out of 77.19 lakhs total populations of the state, the schedule castes are about 6.41 lakhs constituting about 8.30% of the total population in the state. The scheduled castes are mainly concentrated in Jammu division. Majority of them are in Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua District.

In Jammu and Kashmir, There are 13 castes notified under state constitution. There are Barwala, Basith, Chamar or Ramdasia, Batwal, Chura, Dhyar, Doom or Mahasha, Gardi, Jolaha, Megh or Kabirpanthi, Rotal, Saryara, Watal.

### **Objectives**

Aims and objectives are very important as they provide those lines of activities which are to be followed. Without them the researcher would be like a sailor in a rudderless boat and he may be caught in the wilderness. The present field work aimed at: to study the socio-economic condition of scheduled caste in a Dogra village in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is 4 Kms. Away from the National Highway and known as Uttri.

### **Methodology**

Looking at the nature of the topic, quantitative methods of data collection has been employed. Among the different quantitative methods, interview schedule is most appropriate tool to collect data. After, randomly selecting the Uttri village of Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir state, 22 respondents were selected randomly.

### **Results and Discussion**

The term social and economic profile covers age group, sex, caste, education, occupation, family type, family size, income, etc. In this, a detailed analysis of social and economic aspects of SC has been undertaken in village Uttri.

#### **AGE**

Age of an individual determines attitudinal and behavioral changes toward social aspects. It is a definite and highly visible physiological factor which is not static but always changing .Age is a significant variable. Almost every society is stratified on the basis of age.

**Table 1**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their age**

Age Group (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage%
11-20	2	9.09
21-30	4	18.18
31-40	3	13.64
41-50	8	36.36
51-60	4	18.18
61-70	1	4.55
Total	22	100

The distribution of data reveals that majority of respondents (36.36 per cent, see table 1) are in the age group of 41-50, while 18.18 percent of respondents fall in the age group of 21-30 and 51-60. Only 4.55 per cent of respondents fall in the age group of 61-70 yrs. So, most of respondents are of working age.

**Sex**

Sex from the sociological point of view, refers to the elaboration of the biological division of function of male and female into two groups on which the behavior is differentiated in all societies. The methods and sources of sexual gratification, the meaning attached to sexual relationship and the essential significance of sex are determined by the individual from the customs and definition of his culture or sub-culture and his unique social experience (George and Achilled, 1969).

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of the respondents according to their sex**

Sex	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	16	72.72
Female	6	27.27
Total	22	99.99

Distribution of data shows that majority of the respondents (72.72 percent, table 2) are male, on the other hand, female constitute only 27.27 percent of the total respondents under study.

**Education**

There are no two opinions regarding the fact that education is third eye of man/women. Education is important not only for economic activity but it also enables a person to develop better understanding of him as well as society.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of Respondents by their level of Education**

Education of respondents	Number	Percent (%)
Illiterate	2	9.09
Primary	4	18.18
Middle	3	13.63
Matric	6	27.27
Above matric	7	31.81
Total	22	99.99

The data pertaining to educational level reveals that, majority (31.81 per cent, table 3) of the respondents have education above matric (i.e 12<sup>th</sup> and graduation)

followed by respondents with metric (27.27 percent).further, 18.18 percent of respondents studied up to primary level which is followed by respondents (13.63 percent) who studied up to middle .Only 9.09 percent of respondents are illiterate.

### **Income**

To understand the socio-economic status of any group, the level of income is very essential because income is the most decisive factor in defining one's status in society . Income doesn't provide prestige which caste does but still, it determines the class.

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their income**

Income (in Rs.) per month	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 1000	1	4.55
1000-1999	2	9.09
2000-2999	2	9.09
3000 and above	17	77.27
Total	22	100

Data in this regard shows that majority of the respondents (77.27 percent, table 4 ) have a monthly earning of Rs.3000 and above. Those who have a monthly incoming of more than Rs. 1000 but less than 1999 constitute 9.09 percent of the total respondents. Likewise similar percentage of the respondents has a monthly earning between Rs.2000-2999. Only 4.55 percent of the respondents earn below Rs.1000 per month.

### **Occupation**

Occupation stands as one of the important criteria to analyze profile of the respondents under any study being conducted for socio-economic analysis. Data reveals that the majority of the respondents (45.45 percent, table 5) are in government service, which is followed by 27.72 percent of respondents who are agricultural laborers.

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of the respondents according to their occupation**

Occupation	No. of Family Members	Percent (%)
Juice Shop	1	4.55
Agricultural Laborers	5	27.72
Driver	2	9.09
Govt. Service	10	45.45
Non-Agricultural Laborers	4	18.18
Total	22	99.99

Further, 18 percent of respondents are non agricultural laborers, 9.09 percent of respondents are drivers and only 4.55 percent of respondents earn their livelihood by running juice shops.

### **CASTE**

Caste is a group in which membership is based on birth and it is an important variable to understand Indian social reality. Caste is one of the major determinants of one's status in the society. One of the features of the caste system, is the hierarchy of groups (Ghurye, 1969).

**Table 6**  
**Distribution of Respondents according to their caste**

<b>Caste</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Chamar	8	36.36
Megh	1	4.55
Kumhars	13	59.09
Total	22	100

Distribution of data shows that majority (59.09 per cent, Table 6) of respondents are Kamhars, followed by 36.36 percent of respondents who are Chamars. Whereas only 4.55 percent of respondents are Megh by their caste.

#### **Marital status**

The discussion of the marital status of the respondents is inclusive of four categories 1) married, 2) unmarried, 3) divorcee, 4) widow /widower .

The data pertaining to the marital status (table7) reveals that the majority of the respondents are married (81.81 percent).

**Table 7**  
**Distribution of the respondents according to their marital status**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>No. of the respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Married	18	81.81
Unmarried	1	4.55
Divorcee	2	9.09
Widow/widower	1	4.55
Total	22	100

Only 4.55 percent of the total respondents are unmarried. Those who are divorcee, they constitute 9.09 percent of the total respondents. There are few respondents who are widow /widower (4.55 percent).

#### **FAMILY TYPE**

Family is a universal institution through which social norms and values are transmitted from one generation to another. That is why family is called an agent of socialization.

“The family is the only social institution charged with transforming a biological organism into a human being. By the time other institutions being to shape the individual in important ways, his family have already accomplished much of this transformation having taught him to speak and to play out many social roles”. (Goode,1967).

**Table 8**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their Family type**

<b>Type</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Nuclear	10	45.45
Joint	12	54.54
Total	22	100

The data pertaining to family type reveals that majority of respondents (54.54 percent, table 8) are having joint family system and 45.45 percent are having nuclear family.

#### **FAMILY SIZE**

As stated, nuclear families are comparatively less in number than the joint ones. So family size ought to be large. the discussion on family size is inclusive of four categories i.e. (I) up to 3 members ,(II) 4-6 members,(III) 7-9 members and (IV) above 9 members.

Distribution of data shows that majority of respondents (45.45 percent, table 9) have a family consisting 7-9 members which is followed by the respondents (27.27percent) .

**Table 9**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their family size**

Size of Family	Numbers of Respondents	Percent (%)
Up to 3	4	18.18
4-6	6	27.27
7-9	10	45.45
Above 9	2	9.09
Total	22	99.99

who have a family consisting of 4-6 members . further, 18 percent respondents have families of up to 3 members.

#### **NATURE OF HOUSE**

The living standard of an individual is governed by the level and extent at which income is available to him to avail and procure basic necessities required for living. The need to have accommodation is basic need of a human being. A man's economic ground can be easily judged from the condition of his house.

Bains and Chand (1996) states that in a civilized society provision of shelter is indispensable for human beings paradoxically, even birds have the nests, but the human beings are without house. Schedule Caste in this study has accommodation but it is not sufficient.

**Table 10**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their Nature of House**

Nature of House	Number of Respondents	Percent (%)
Kacha	1	4.55
Pacca	13	59.09
Semi-Pacca	8	36.36
Total	22	100

In relation to nature of House, we find that majority (59.09 percent, table 10) of respondents are having pacca house, whereas, 36.36 percent of the total respondents possess semi-pacca house and only 4.55 percent of the total respondents have Kacha house.

**Table 11**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their possession of vehicles**

Vehicles	Number of Respondents	Percent (%)
Cycles	8	36.36
Motorcycle	9	40.90

Auto-Rickshaw	1	4.55
Nothing	4	18.18
Total	22	99.99

From the table we come to know about the kind of Vehicle they possess. This table shows that majority (40.90 percent, table 11) possess Motorcycles, 36.36 percent of the total respondents have cycle. Further, 18.18 percent of the total respondents don't possess any vehicle, only 4.55 percent possess Auto-Rickshaw

**Table 12**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their Possession of Technical Skill/Vocation Training**

Possession of technical skill/Vocational training	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
Yes	15	68.18
No	7	31.81
Total	22	99.99

Regarding possession of technical skill/vocational training, above table shows that majority (68.18 percent, table 12) possess technical skill/vocational training, whereas, 31.81 percent of the total respondents do not possess any kind of skill.

**Table 13**  
**Behavior of upper caste people towards scheduled caste Families**

Behavior	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
Satisfactory	10	45.45
Not Satisfactory	12	54.54
Total	22	99.99

Talking about the behavior of Upper Caste people towards scheduled caste's families. Distribution of data shows that majority (54.54 percent, table 13) of the respondents are agree that behavior of upper caste people is not satisfactory whereas 45.45 percent of the total respondents respond that the behavior of upper caste peoples is satisfactory.

**Table 14**  
**Discrimination by Higher Caste People in Living Area or at Job**

Discrimination	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
Yes	12	54.54
No	9	40.90
Sometimes	1	4.55
Total	22	99.99

Above Given table shows that 54.54 percent (table 14) of the total respondents face discrimination in living area or at job, whereas, 40.90 percent of the total respondents don't face any discrimination and only 4.55 percent says they do face discrimination but sometimes.

### **Conclusion**

The institution of caste has been one of the exclusive characteristic of Indian society since ages. In spite of the great changes in the history of India, caste system has



continued to bear important feature of Indian social life. Members of different castes are, up to a point, expected to behave differently and to have different values and ideas. Since caste is determined by the birth an individual's socialization is largely influenced by caste values.

Earlier, low caste people were considered untouchables. Their every touch can pollute the higher caste it was perceived. They were not allowed to enter in the village, there were separate cremation grounds, and they were also not allowed to use water from common water tank in a village. There were no inter-caste relations and interactions between upper caste and lower caste people.

This study reveals that majority of the respondents lie in the age group of 41-50 and most of them are men. An overwhelming majority of the respondents are married and having joint families with large family size. Majority of the respondent's qualification is above matric followed by who have studied up to matric. So it is clear that they have a good educational level and majority of them working under government sector and earning Rs.3000 and above per month. Most of the respondents are kumhar by their caste. Majority of the respondents have pacca house to live, possess motorcycles as mean of transportation and most of them also have technical skills. The living standard of scheduled caste people is rising. They are now economically independent, educated. Their standard of living is rising day by day, even living standard of some lower caste families are better than some of the upper caste families, But still they are not allowed to enter in the temples, Cremation ground is also not shared between all caste groups in the village . Despite of good economic conditions, they still face discrimination on the social ground

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