



## OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION BY CASTE IN PRESENT INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The caste based discrimination does not only affect the spheres of education, work and employment but also the wide Horizons of life, which can be detrimental for the country's future. This paper concentrates on the detailed analysis of occupational segregation or should we say the discrimination and lower footing of the scheduled castes in employment. The paper in its analysis focuses not only on the SCs but also the Other Backward castes, because both of these groups have been subjected to centuries' long discrimination. Therefore it is imperative that the paper dwells on lower caste discrimination in a holistic manner. There is ample use of graphical, literary and explanatory techniques, the paper provides a widely spanning depiction of the situation, right from the 1992-93 to the 2014. Various aspects have been portrayed of caste based segregation in the sphere of employment in the modern India, there are significant numbers of posts which have been allocated for these communities, which are yet to be filled, which raises questions on the effective implementation of numerous recommendations over the years. Apart from this the paper also dwells upon the issue of the 'new' segregation present in urban India. Still, upper castes continue to disproportionately occupy the more prestigious Class I services, while SCs/STs/OBCs have been downgraded to jobs lower in the hierarchy.

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### INTRODUCTION

Castes or Jatis are actually the hereditary grouping of people defining their social status. A complicated caste system in India influences life to a great extent. Generally, caste system is associated with Hindu religion. As per Rig Veda (early Hindu text) there were four categories known as "varnas". Varnas consist of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Today's caste system is based on these varnas. According to Sujit Kumar Choudhry, The Indian social system suffers from the inflexibilities of a rigid caste system. For centuries, caste had been a determining factor in education, work and employment. (Sujit Kumar Choudhry Mainstream, 2007) The caste based discrimination does not only affect the spheres of education, work and employment but also the wide Horizons of life, which can be detrimental for the country's future. Even after so many years of Independence, caste-based demarcation is still there; though with time, it is changing. In urban areas, this separation is not that obvious but the difference between various castes becomes obvious in rural

areas. Sometimes the caste-based gap takes a violent turn and leads to clashes between various groups segregated on the basis of their castes. Moreover anti-social elements use the caste system to promote their vested interest.

### Caste based segregation

The caste of a person in India used to define his or her occupation and till death the person had to stick to that occupation. People from upper caste were not allowed to mingle and marry a person from any other caste. Thereby, castes in India were exactly demarcating the society. Also there was the fifth category that was even inferior to shudras and that was of "untouchables" or Dalits. These were the persons who used to perform tasks of removing feces or dead animals. They were not allowed to enter into temples, drink from the same water source, etc. Untouchability is the most common form of discrimination that is based on the caste system in India. The government had come up with a list of 400 groups that were regarded as untouchables. Later on these groups were known as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes. In 1970s, the untouchables started to be called Dalits. Many theories have been put forward regarding the origin of caste system, apart from the traditional, religious theories; there is an occupational theory also:

**Occupational theory:** Nesfield originally gave the name occupational theory, according to which castes in India developed as per the occupation of a person. Concept of superior and inferior caste also came with this as some persons were doing superior jobs and some were into lower kinds of jobs. All those people who were doing the task of purohits were superior and they were the ones who used to do specialization. Superior caste with time grouped into Brahmins. Similarly, other groups were also formed leading to different castes in India.

**Occupational segregation by caste in present India**

More than 165 million people in India continue to be subject to discrimination, exploitation and violence simply because of their caste. Caste-based divisions continue to dominate in housing, marriage, employment and general social interaction—divisions that are reinforced through economic boycotts and physical violence.

**Work force Participation Rate**

In the age group of 15 to 59, there are more participants in the scheduled caste population compared with the general population. 63% of the SC population works while only 54% of General population participates in work. Also, SCs have higher share of both male and female workers than general. 86% males and 39% females work, while only 24% of females of general category take part. The WPR in rural areas is more than the urban areas, both for SC and general population.

When looking at the disparity between SCs and general population in terms of WPR in (15 - 59) age group, there is negative disparity in total, male, female workers of both rural and urban areas as well as total. Disparity is the least in “total female” category (-0.25) and highest in “urban male” category (-0.02).

**WPR with Educational Level**

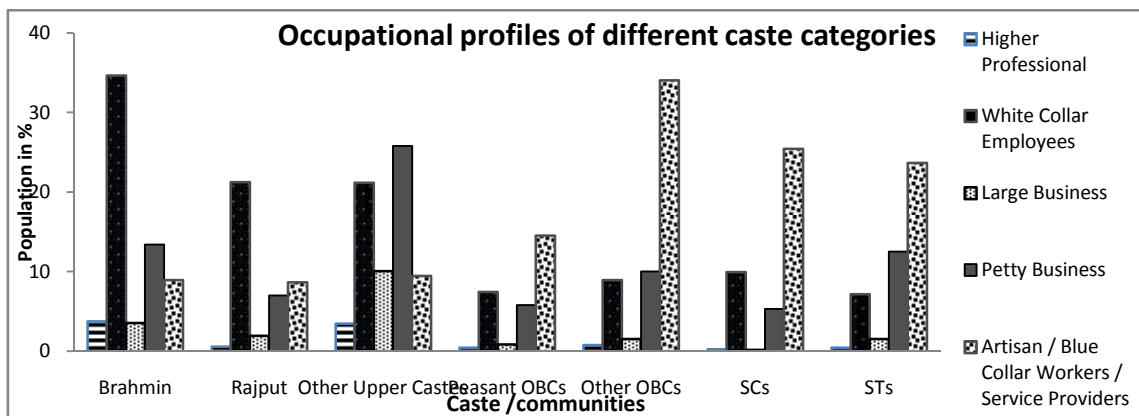
The real tie breaker comes in the form of educational level and skills. Almost, 40% SC workers are illiterate, around 27% have studied up to primary and the percentage share of workers who are technical or non-technical graduates in lower than 5%. While, the general population has more workers that are skilled and have studied well, that’s why they get better jobs than the SCs and the SCs have a higher WPR but are doing lower-level jobs because of their lack of skills and knowledge.

**Employment status**

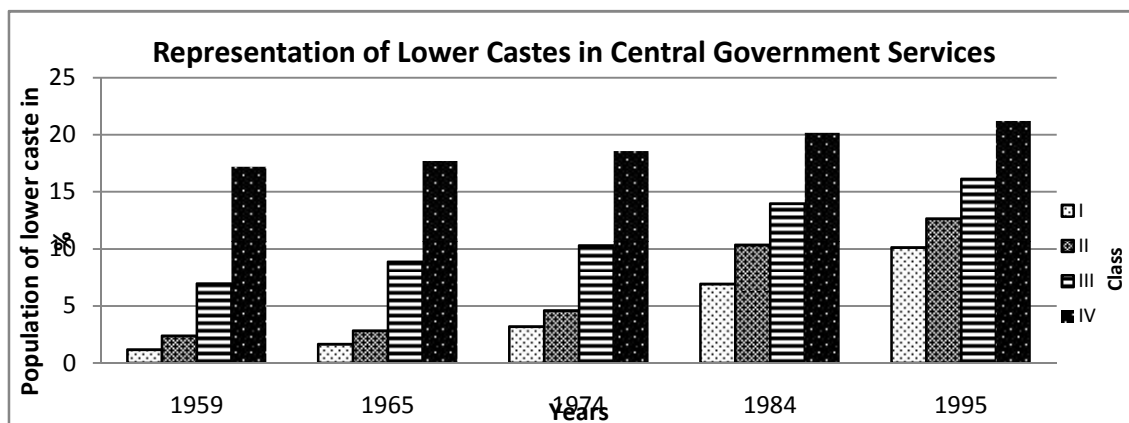
It states in the above paragraph, that the Scheduled Castes have lower-level jobs. Well, 53% of them are casual laborers and only 14% are regularly salaried, while in the general population category only 18% of them are casual laborers. Casual laborers are more in rural areas (58%) while, regular salaried (41%) are more in urban areas. In SC population, around 50% of Casual laborers are illiterate, while, around 35% of the regular salaried workers have studied up to secondary. When compared with the general population, they have higher education qualifications.

**Occupational profiles of different caste categories**

The graph below illustrates the continuing reality of occupational segregation within Indian society and the



Source: UNDP.org



Source: National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Seventh Report, April 1984 - March 1985, p.5; National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Sixteenth Report, 1966-1967, p.15; National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Fourth Report, 1996-1997 and 1997-1998, Volume 1, p.14

prevalence of caste system in the bureaucracy, judiciary and educational institutions. Even after better opportunities and reservation etc. caste based segregation continues to be a part of Indian society. In the diagram below, the greater concentration of lower-caste employees in low-paying jobs and higher castes occupying top-most jobs and positions indicates the grace discrimination and keeping of the Lower-castes restricted to petty businesses and laborers. A situation like this is never going to pave the way for their upliftment.

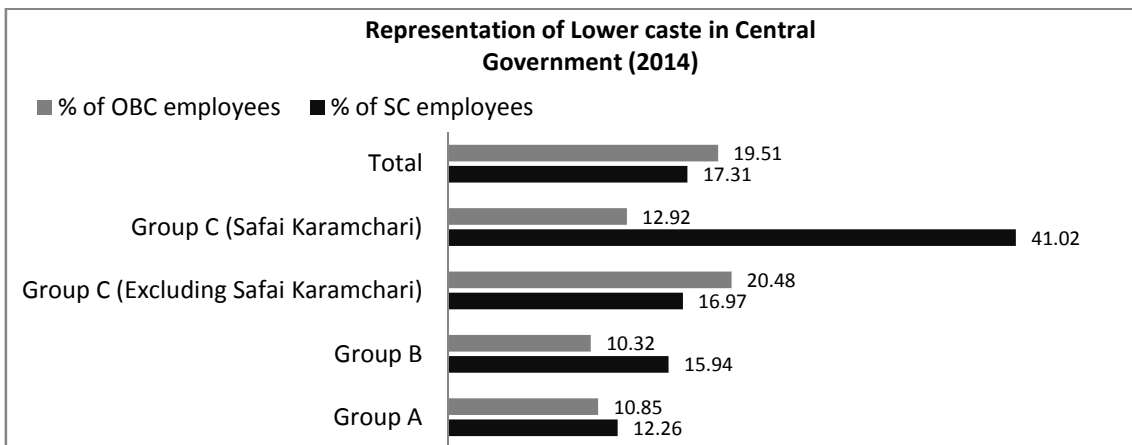
**Representation of Lower Castes in Central Government Services**

While reservations cannot take the place of comprehensive societal changes, but it can be very important and necessary step in the process of compensating for centuries of (and ongoing) discrimination. As the graph above shows that in central government services, reservations for SCs and STs have been working for a few decades, and this has resulted in a rise in SC representation in all four categories of central services over the years. But the diagram clearly shows the major concentration of lower-castes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class of workers. The increase in representation that is visible here is progress for sure but not adequate, which will be proved in the next graphical work presenting the data for the present times.

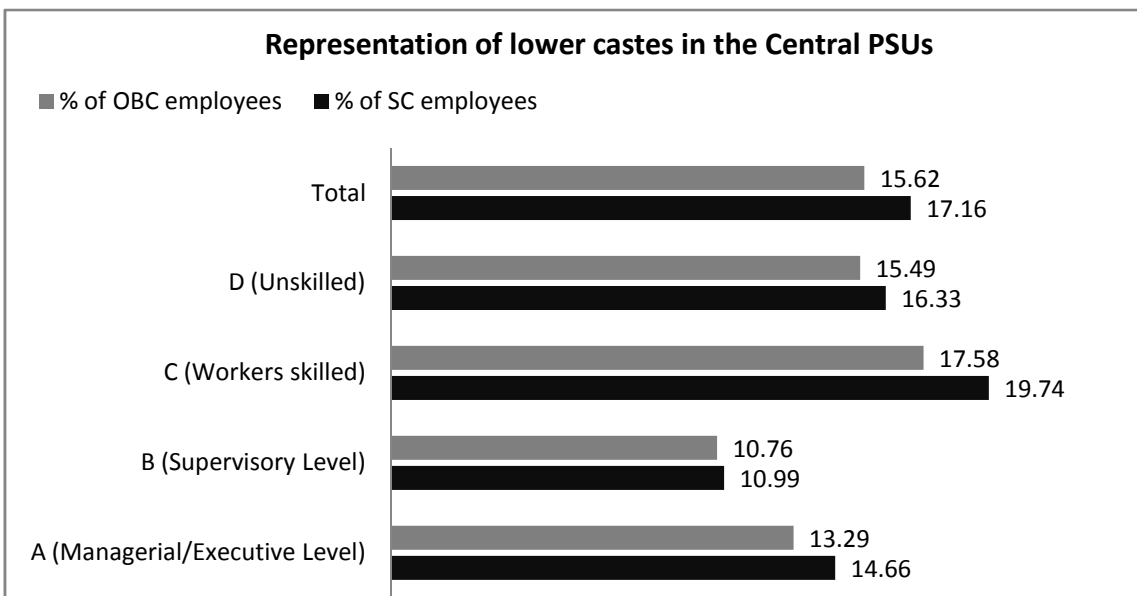
The above diagram is not a comparison between OBCs and SCs, rather an attempt to present them both in the same picture frame. It was observed that the SC & OBC employees have not reached the prescribed percentage of 15 per cent and 27 per cent respectively in the Group A posts despite a number of efforts by the government. The percentage of OBCs employees is very low in the Group B and C also. Therefore, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has recommended that Special Recruitment Drives may be conducted to fill up all backlog posts in the Government of India. The sharp peak of SC representation in Group C Safai karamcharis is the mere shame their presence in that group is disproportionately high, shows exactly how stuck the society still is with the status-quo, the SCs used to do menial jobs before and still doing them shows that our society hasn't really come a long way yet. And the government efforts are nowhere near the right direction.

**Representation of lower castes in the Central PSUs**

The annual report does show that the percentage of SC employees in Managerial level (Group-A) and Supervisor Level (Group-B) are below the prescribed percentage and similarly, percentage of OBC in all cadre posts are less than the prescribed percentage. The Commission in its review of the safeguards extended by various CPSUs has recommended



Source: Annual Report of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes for the year 2015-16. p 211



Source: Annual Report of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes for the year 2015-16. p 212

that special efforts be made to fill up the backlog vacancies and the percentage of SCs & OBCs be brought at par with the prescribed percentage in all levels especially senior managerial levels.

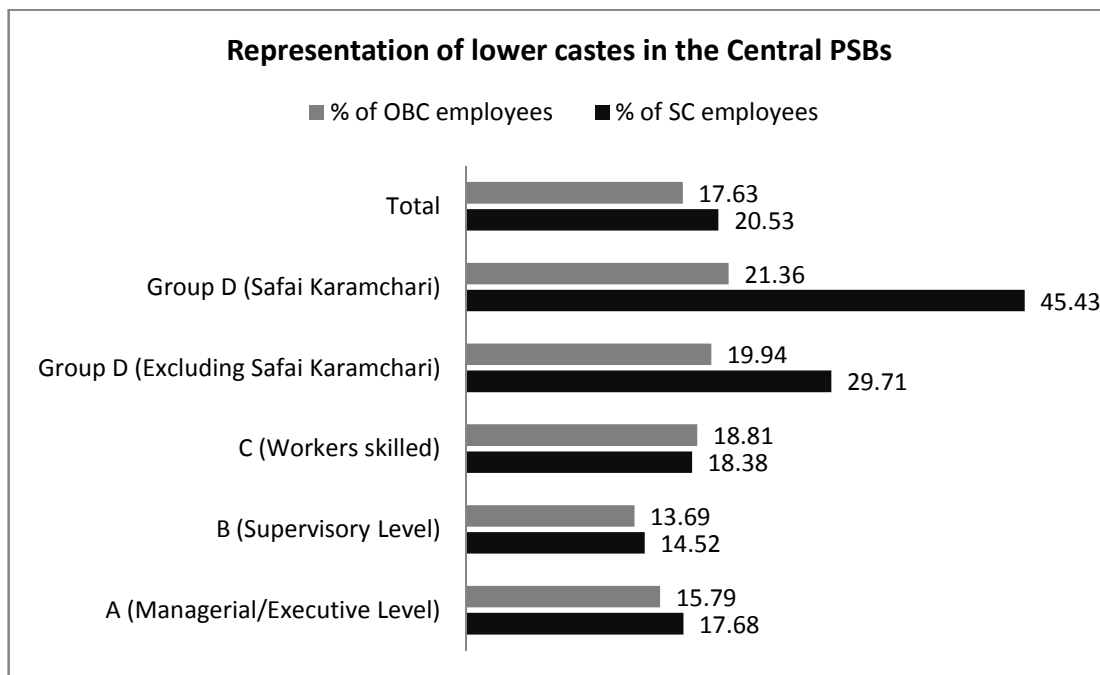
**Representation of lower castes in the Central PSBs**

The graph above repeats the same patterns as seen before, it says that 45 % of Safai karamcharis are Scheduled caste people. Now that tells us clearly that the society as well as the government is far from changing the age-old status of Dalits, their fate still lies in the ‘cleaning’ jobs. Group A and Group B are still a dream out-of-reach for SCs and OBCs, as their representation is not in tune with their population share in the country and the reservation quota.

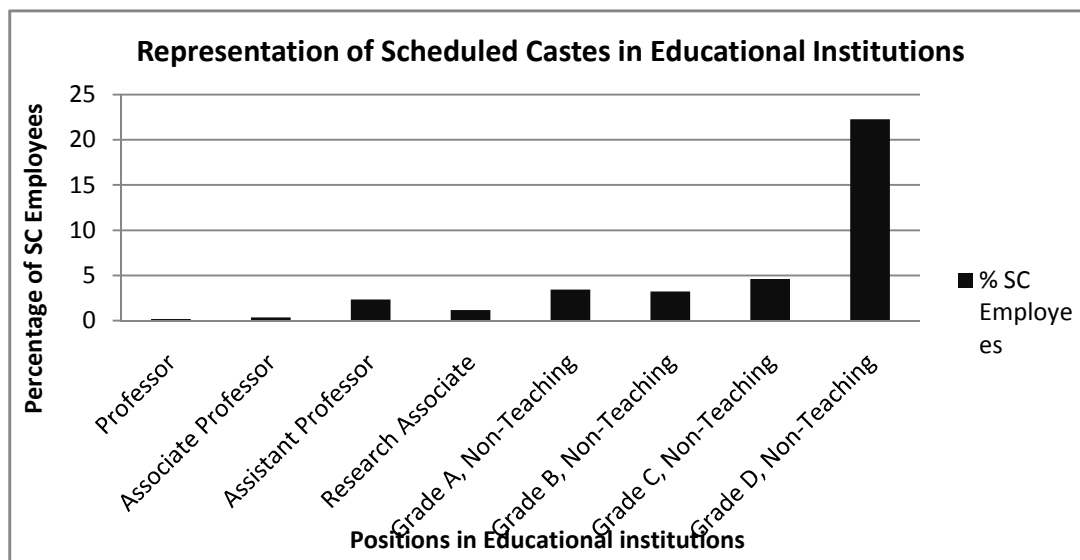
barely visible (being of the position of Professor) and the tallest (sadly, being of the Non-teaching grade). It only showcases that SCs are on ‘cleaning’ duty even in educational institutions. It is clearly evident that SC professors constitute only 0.17% of total professors. In another grim picture, SCs constitute more than 22% of Grade-D non-teaching employees. It proves that SCs are still given lower jobs and not fulfilling the reservation quota.

**The ‘new’ segregation in India**

Modernization and urbanization in India have led to a decline in the outward display of caste exclusiveness, so that issues of caste may never emerge directly in the workplace. Entire castes have changed their status, claiming higher positions as



Source: Annual Report of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes for the year 2015-16. p 213



Source: National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Annual Report: 1993-94, p. 103(Excludes Indira Gandhi National Open University, for which figures were not available)

**Representation of Scheduled Castes in Educational Institutions**

The graph below shows the percentage share of SC employees in the educational institutes. There are two columns, one

they shed their traditional occupations or accumulate money and power. In many villages, however, the segregation of castes by neighborhood and through daily behavior still exists. In the cities, segregation takes more subtle forms, emerging directly at times of marriage and existing more often as an

undercurrent of discrimination in educational opportunities, hiring, and promotion.

### What is government's fault

One of the major issues is being reluctant to acknowledge the crisis in hand, for example, In early September 2001, world television news viewers saw an unusual sight. A delegation from India had come to the United Nations Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, not to join in condemnations of Western countries but to condemn India and its treatment of its Dalits (oppressed), as Indians better known abroad as "untouchables" call themselves. The Chairman of India's official but independent National Human Rights Commission thought the plight of one-sixth of India's population was worthy of inclusion in the conference agenda, but the Indian government did not agree. India's Minister of State for External Affairs stated that raising the issue would equate "casteism with racism, which makes India a racist country, which we are not." (Indian Groups Raise Caste Question, 2002) Another concern is the lack of transparency and keeping information away from public, for instances 40 ministries, including social justice and 48 departments held back the information sought by activists under the Right to Information Act. Among the departments that have not provided any information is ministry of human resources, which is a major employer of group A employees like professors in IITs and other central educational institutions. (20 years after Mandal, 2015) Most importantly, there are significant numbers of posts which have been allocated for these communities, which are yet to be filled, which raises questions on the effective implementation of numerous recommendations.

### Conclusion

While reservations cannot take the place of comprehensive societal changes, they constitute a very important and necessary step in the process of compensating for centuries of

(and ongoing) discrimination. In central government services, reservations for SCs and STs have been in use for a few decades, and this has definitely resulted in an increase in SC representation in all four categories of central services. Still, upper castes continue to disproportionately occupy the more prestigious Class I services, while SCs/STs/OBCs have been downgraded to jobs lower in the hierarchy. Furthermore, the cumulative percentage share of SC/ST employees in Central government services continues to be below their percentage share in the general population. During this phase of demographic dividend, a country like India needs to put its human resources to optimum use, society plays an important role in that. The caste based discrimination does not only affect the spheres of education, work and employment but also the wide Horizons of life, which can be detrimental for the country's future.

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