Occupational Pattern of Scheduled Castes of Saran District, Bihar

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ABSTRACT

The classification of Indian society based on Castes is unique. In India caste determines the interaction between the different social classes. A Hindu belongs to the caste of his or her parents where they remain and it becomes very difficult for anyone to change their caste status. Andre Beteille defines caste as "a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system."i A particular group consisting of a number of different castes, known by different names like untouchables, the depressed classes, the backward classes or the Scheduled Castes, has suffered from numerous disabilities due to religious beliefs and practices since time immemorial leading to their wretched condition in the present time. Some of the common features among them are untouchability, segregation, Mass illiteracy, poverty, poor housing conditions, poor quality of life and low level of social mobility.

Keywords - Demography, Scheduled Castes, Saran District, Livelihood patterns, Bihar.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term Scheduled Caste, an expression standardized in the Constitution of India, was coined by Simon Commission in course of its study of the cases of those castes or groups , and was embodied in Section 309 of the Government of India Act, 1935. The Constitution of India adopted the term Scheduled Castes as coined by Simon Commission to designate them as dalits or depressed classes.

But the constitution does not contain a definition of the term Scheduled Castes. It, simply, empowers the President that, after consulting the head of the particular State, he or she may notify by an order "the castes, races or tribes which for the purpose of the constitution, be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that state". But the same article in the later part empowers the Parliament to exclude from and include in the list notified by the President any caste, race or tribe or parts of the group within any caste, race or tribe" (Article 341 of the Constitution of India). Therefore, Scheduled Castes may be simply defined as those groups which figure in the Scheduled Castes order enforced for the time being.

Scheduled Castes Order, 1950 (the Constitution of India) lists 1108 castes across 25 states as scheduled castes in India. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes (together) constituted about 60 percent of the India's population. They were given the provision of reservation. Reservation Policy has now become an integral part of the constitution. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have in the Republican Constitution been provided with special privilege in the matter of recruitment to services and also with special representation in the legislative bodies.

OBJECTIVES

Scheduled Castes constitute an important segment of human society in India. Geographers may help in the improvement in the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Scheduled Castes. Scheduled Castes are the most oppressed and depressed lot of the society. Most of them are found engaged in agriculture as landless labourers especially in the rural areas like Saran District. The overall development of the area depends heavily on the improvement of Scheduled Castes and on raising their status equal to other castes of the society. Mass illiteracy, poor living and housing conditions and poor quality of life are common problems among this neglected class. This paper studies the Scheduled Castes, relating them to their Livelihood patterns, which may give valuable suggestions for their development. The present study may provide good suggestions for the well-being of this neglected class of the society and bringing them at par with the other castes.

At present as per the census reports, 23 castes of Bihar are included in the Scheduled Castes list of which Chamars, Dushadhs, Mushars, Chaupals, Dhobis and Doms are important in both the status and the numerical strength in the state.

METHODOLOGY :

In the present study systematic approach has been employed though at places ecological approach has also been considered. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The present study is based on data available in the Census of India,2011 ,Bihar.Series II, DCH,Saran District, 2011.

STUDY AREA

The district of Saran is situated between 25°30'N and 26°13' North latitude and 84°24'E and 85°15' East latitude in the southern part, of the Saran Division of North Bihar. The Ganges constitutes the Southern boundary of the district beyond which lie the districts of Bhojpur and Patna. To the north lie the districts of Siwan and Gopalganj. The Gandak forms the dividing line with Vaishali and Muzaffarpur districts in the east. To the west of Saran lies part of Siwan District and the District of Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, the Ghaghra constituting a natural boundary between Saran and Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, Saran District is divided into three Sub-Divisions viz., Chapra Sadar, Marhoura and Sonepur with headquarters at Chapra , Chapra is also the principal town of the district. There are 15 Anchals and 20 Community Development Blocks namely : Chapra, Manjhi, Dighwara, Rivilganj, Parsa, Baniapur, Amnaur, Taraiya, Sonpur, Garkha, Ekma, Dariyapur, Jalalpur, Marhaura, Mashrakh, Maker, Nagra, Panapur, Eisuapur, Lahladpur. There are 1570 inhabited villages and 194 uninhabited villages,

totalling 1764 villages in the district. There are a total of 6 towns ,5 statutory towns namely Mahaura, Revelganj, Chapra, Dighwara and Sonepur.The sixth town is Sanhra ,a Census town.

As per the Census Report 2011, Saran district has an area of 2641 square Kilometres with a total population of 39, 51,862. 3,598,660 i.e. 91.06 percent of the total population of the study area lives in rural areas and 353,202 i.e. 8.94 in urban centres. The scheduled castes population is 474,066 and its proportion to total population works out to 12.00 percent.

Figure.1 Saran District
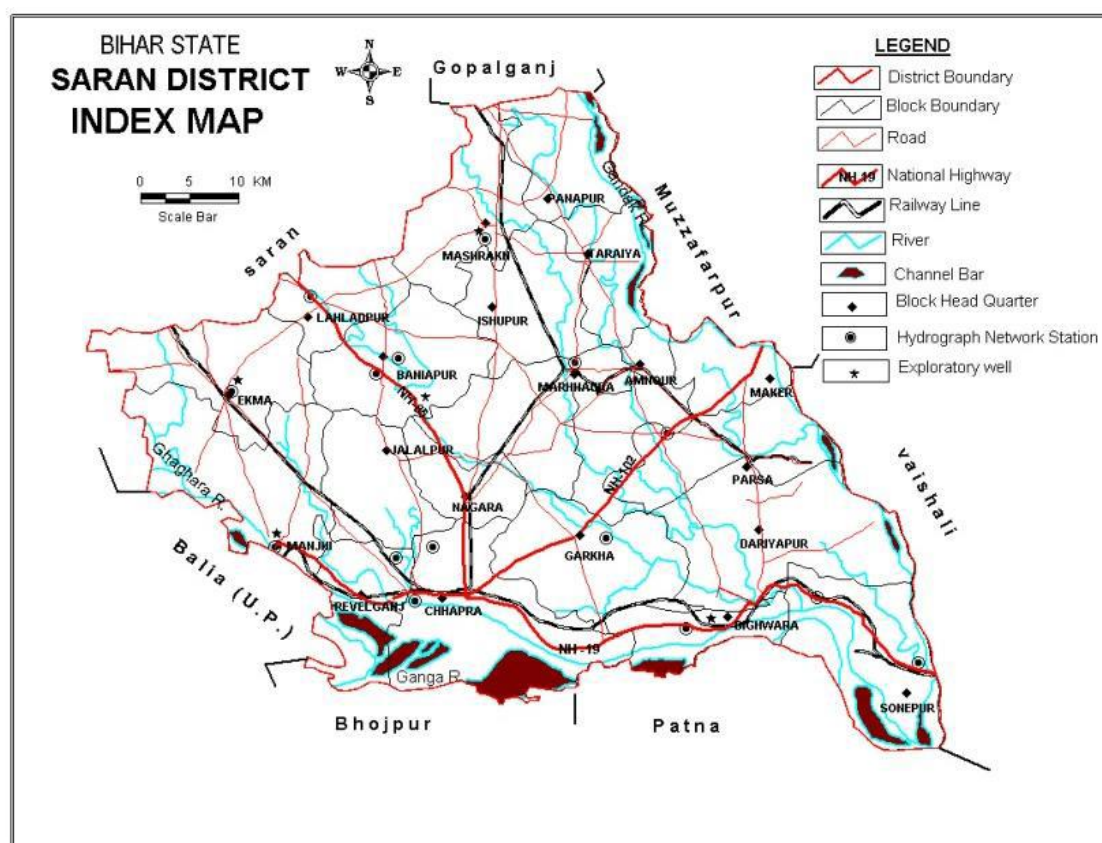
Table - 1

Saran District: Population & Work Participation of Scheduled Castes, 2011

Sr.Nos.	C.D Blocks	Total SC Population	Total Workers
1	Mashrakh	23,181	7397
2	Panapur	12735	3383
3	Taraiya	17900	5446
4	Ishupur	15358	4240
5	Baniapur	29006	8611
6	Lahladpur	10466	2579
7	Ekma	26359	6400
8	Manjhi	29740	8599
9	Jalalpur	26507	8063

10	Revelganj	15349	3821
11	Chapra	49318	13486
12	Nagra	15142	4251
13	Marhaura	29065	8803
14	Amnour	24797	7608
15	Maker	11806	4234
16	Parsa	20435	6370
17	Dariapur	33852	9367
18	Garkha	38729	11384
19	Dighwara	16763	4766
20	Sonepur	27558	7888
	Saran	474066	136696

Source:DCH,Saran, 2011, Bihar, Series II

LIVELIHOOD PATTERN:

Livelihood pattern reflects the process of earning sustenance. Man for his sustenance works in a number of activities right from digging mineral from the bowel of earth to making manned flight in space. All these activities are included in the occupational structure of man. As per Table-1, only 28.8 percent of the Scheduled Caste population of the Saran District can be categorized as workers and 71.2 percent as non-workers. A work is an economically gainful activity and a man working even for a day in the reporting year is called a worker. Non-workers, on the other hand are dependent upon the workers. They include the persons below 14 years of age and the olds.

Scheduled Caste workers vary between 35.9 per cent in Maker C.D.Block and 24.3 per cent in Ekma C.D Block of Saran district (Table .2).

MAIN AND MARGINAL WORKERS

The total SC workers of the study area may be divided into the Main workers and the Marginal workers depending upon the period of works. A worker who has worked for more than 180 days in a year preceding the date of enumeration is called Main worker. The Marginal workers, on the other hand, include those workers who had worked for less than 180 days in the reporting year.

MAIN WORKERS : The main SC workers of the Saran District accounts for 42.2 per cent of the total SC workers of the region. The maximum percentage of Main SC workers is found in Chapra Block (56.4%) while the minimum in Parsa Block (26%) as per Table 2.

Table - 2

Saran District: Work Participation of SC Population in percentage, 2011

Sr.Nos	C.D Blocks	Type of Workers		
		Total Workers (% to total SC Population)	Main Workers (% to total SC workers)	Marginal Workers (% to total SC workers)
1	Mashrakh	31.9	44.5	55.5
2	Panapur	26.6	42.5	57.5
3	Taraiya	30.4	46.7	53.3
4	Ishupur	27.6	51	49
5	Baniapur	29.7	49.2	50.8
6	Lahladpur	24.6	32.5	67.5
7	Ekma	24.3	26.3	73.7
8	Manjhi	28.9	43.3	56.7
9	Jalalpur	30.4	26.6	73.4
10	Revelganj	24.9	47.2	52.8
11	Chapra	27.3	56.4	43.6
12	Nagra	28.1	41.3	58.7
13	Marhaura	30.3	42.9	57.1
14	Amnour	30.7	40.7	59.3
15	Maker	35.9	43.8	56.2
16	Parsa	31.2	26	74
17	Dariapur	27.7	46.5	53.5
18	Garkha	29.4	32.5	67.5
19	Dighwara	28.4	38.9	61.1
20	Sonepur	28.6	56.1	43.9
	Saran	28.8	42.2	57.8

Source:DCH,Saran, 2011, Bihar, Series II

MARGINAL WORKERS : Marginal SC workers account for 57.8 per cent of the total SC workers of the Saran District. The maximum percentage of Marginal SC workers is found in Parsa Block (74%) while the minimum is in Chapra Block (43.6%).

Both, the Main and Marginal SC workers of the Saran plain may be divided into two major categories namely - (i) The Farm Workers and (ii) the Non-Farm Workers depending upon the nature of work they perform.

FARM WORKERS:

Farm workers are those who work in agricultural activities either as cultivators or agricultural labourers. Farm workers accounting for 66 per cent of the main and 83 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers assume

lion's share in the total scheduled caste workers of the Saran District. The percentage of scheduled caste farm workers is high in all the Blocks of the region which shows the dominance of agriculture over non-agricultural activities in the region. However, there is some minor variations in the strength of SC farm workers from one CD Block to the other. The percentage of main SC farm workers varies from 36 in Chapra CD Block to 84.5 in Panapur CD Block. The share of marginal farm workers in the total SC marginal workers is higher in comparison to main SC farm workers. It ranges from 61.3 per cent in Revelgang CD Block to 93.2 per cent in Parsa CD Block.

CULTIVATORS:

As stated above cultivators and agricultural labourers together constitute the farm worker. Both, cultivators and agricultural labourers are attached to agricultural activities but their relation with land varies from one another. The former are land owners and do work in their own farm with the help of their family members or by employing agricultural labourers on wages. The latter, on the other hand, are landless labourers and work in another person's land on wages in cash, kind or both.

Among scheduled caste workers of the study area, the proportion of cultivators is extremely low. They account for only 10 per cent of the main and 4 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers of the region. The maximum percentage of main SC cultivators is found in Lahladpur Block while the minimum is in Chapra Block (3.8). On the other hand, maximum percentage of marginal SC cultivators is found in Ishupur Block (6.6) while the minimum in Ekma Block (0.9) (Table 3)

Table- 3
Saran District: Distribution of SC Farm Workers, 2011

SI. No.	Districts	Main Workers (% to total Main SC Workers)			Marginal Workers (% to total Marginal SC Workers)		
		Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Total	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Mashrakh	9.2	71.5	80.7	3.6	84.1	87.7
2	Panapur	21.9	62.6	84.5	5.6	81.4	87
3	Taraiya	12.3	64.6	76.9	2.5	76.2	78.7
4	Ishupur	16.1	60.6	76.7	6.6	77.4	84
5	Baniapur	10.5	69.5	80	2.6	88.6	91.2
6	Lahladpur	29	42.7	71.7	1.8	86.2	88
7	Ekma	23.5	33.3	56.8	0.9	91.6	92.5
8	Manjhi	6.3	54.4	60.7	6.1	70.8	76.9
9	Jalalpur	10.3	53.6	63.9	5.4	71.8	77.2
10	Revelganj	7.4	51	58.4	2.7	58.6	61.3
11	Chapra	3.8	32.2	36	3.7	61.5	65.2

12	Nagra	7.4	61.7	69.1	3.8	74.1	77.9
13	Marhaura	8.5	66.2	74.7	4.6	82.3	86.9
14	Amnour	15	58.8	73.8	3.3	85.5	88.8
15	Maker	11.7	68.9	80.6	3.9	88.9	92.8
16	Parsa	11.2	55.8	67	3.4	89.8	93.2
17	Dariapur	10	64.3	74.3	4.2	83.5	87.7
18	Garkha	8.3	59.8	68.1	5.6	81.5	87.1
19	Dighwara	10.1	44.6	54.7	4.2	72.5	76.7
20	Sonepur	7.5	45.1	52.6	3.7	72.4	76.1
	Saran	10	56	66	4	79	83

Source: DCH, Saran, 2011, Bihar, Series II

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS:

Agricultural Labourers constitute the most important type of farm workers among scheduled caste population of the Saran District. They account for 56 per cent of the main and 79 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers. The maximum percentage of SC agricultural labourers among main workers is found in Mashrak Block (71.5) while the minimum in Chapra Block (32.2). On the other hand, maximum percentage of marginal SC Agricultural Labourer is found in Ekma Block (91.6) while the minimum in Revelganj Block (58.6) (Table 3)

NON-FARM WORKERS:

Household Industrial workers and Other Workers together constitute the non-farm workers. Low percentage of non-farm SC workers reflects poor performance of non-agricultural activities in the Saran District. Non-farm workers account for only 19.2 per cent of the main and 17 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers in the study area.

Table- 4
Saran District: Distribution of SC Non-Farm Workers, 2011

SI. No.	Districts	Main Workers (% to total Main SC Workers)			Marginal Workers (% to total Marginal SC Workers)		
		Household Industrial Workers	Other Workers	Total	Household Industrial workers	Others Workers	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Mashrakh	2.6	16.6	19.2	2.2	10.1	12.3
2	Panapur	1.2	14.2	15.4	2.2	10.9	13.1
3	Taraiya	0.34	19.7	20.04	4.3	17	21.3
4	Ishupur	5.7	17.6	23.3	5.3	10.7	16
5	Baniapur	1.6	18.4	20	0.7	8	8.7
6	Lahladpur	3	25.3	28.3	1.6	10.4	12
7	Ekma	5.4	37.8	43.2	1.4	6.1	7.5

8	Manjhi	3.9	35.4	39.3	2.7	20.3	23
9	Jalalpur	2.3	33.8	36.1	5.3	17.6	22.9
10	Revelganj	4.9	36.7	41.6	7.8	31	38.8
11	Chapra	4.6	55.3	59.9	4.7	30.1	34.8
12	Nagra	2.3	28.6	30.9	1.5	20.6	22.1
13	Marhaura	3.2	22.1	25.3	2	11.1	13.1
14	Amnour	4.2	22	26.2	2	9.2	11.2
15	Maker	3.3	16.1	19.4	1.8	5.3	7.1
16	Parsa	3.7	29.4	33.1	1.3	5.6	6.9
17	Dariapur	3.7	22	25.7	1.8	10.4	12.2
18	Garkha	3	28.9	31.9	1.2	11.7	12.9
19	Dighwara	9.1	36.2	45.3	5.2	18.1	23.3
20	Sonepur	6.8	40.7	47.5	3.8	20.2	24
	Saran	2.6	16.6	19.2	2.8	14.2	17

Source: DCH, Saran, 2011, Bihar, Series II

HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY:

Household industry includes the unregistered small scale industries operated by the head of the household with the help of their family members in their own houses in the rural areas and in the precinct of the household in towns. SC workers working in such industries account for only 2.8 per cent of the main and 2.6 per cent of marginal SC workers. The highest concentration of SC household industrial workers is found in Dighwara Block (9.1%) while the minimum in Panapur Block (1.2 %).

OTHER WORKERS:

Other workers category includes the persons engaged in a host of non-agricultural activity such as grazing of animal, mining, quarrying service and transport and communication. In other words, workers working in the activities other than agricultural and household industries are called other workers. Other workers together constitute 16.6 per cent of the main and 14.2 per cent of the marginal SC workers of the study area. The maximum percentage of main SC other workers is found in Chapra Block (55.3) and the minimum is found in Panapur block (14.2). The marginal other workers of scheduled caste has highest concentration in Revelganj Block (31%) and the lowest in Maker Block (5.1%) (Table 4).

Blocks containing towns such Chapra, Revelganj,Dighwara and Sonpur blocks than has higher percentage of marginal other SC workers.

Conclusion & Suggestions :

The Scheduled Caste population is one of the most disadvantaged groups in India. Both the Central and State Governments of India and Bihar have undertaken several schemes to improve the conditions of scheduled castes of the country and state respectively. Several welfare schemes have been launched. But unfortunately those programmes and schemes have failed to bring the desired results. Mass illiteracy, poverty, poor housing conditions and poor quality of life are the common features among scheduled castes of Saran District. Most of them are found engaged in agriculture as landless labourers especially in the rural areas like Saran Division. The Saran District has a total geographical area of 2641 square Kilometres with a total population of 39, 51,862.

3,598,660 i.e. 91.06 percent of the total population of the study area lives in rural areas and 353,202 i.e. 8.94 in urban centres. The scheduled castes population is 474,066 and its proportion to total population works out to 12.00 percent.

Only 28.8 percent of the Scheduled Caste population of the Saran District can be categorized as workers which is comparatively less. The main SC workers of the Saran District accounts for 42.2 per cent of the total SC workers of the region. The maximum percentage of Main SC workers is found in Chapra Block (56.4%) while the minimum in Parsa Block (26%) as per Table 2. Marginal SC workers account for 57.8 per cent of the total SC workers of the Saran District. The maximum percentage of Marginal SC workers is found in Parsa Block (74%) while the minimum is in Chapra Block (43.6%). The percentage of main SC farm workers varies from 36 in Chapra CD Block to 84.5 in Panapur CD Block. The share of marginal farm workers in the total SC marginal workers is higher in comparison to main SC farm workers. It ranges from 61.3 per cent in Revelgang CD Block to 93.2 per cent in Parsa CD Block. Among scheduled caste workers of the study area, the proportion of cultivators is extremely low. They account for only 10 per cent of the main and 4 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers of the region. The maximum percentage of main SC cultivators is found in Lahladpur Block while the minimum is in Chapra Block (3.8). On the other hand, maximum percentage of marginal SC cultivators is found in Ishupur Block (6.6) while the minimum in Ekma Block (0.9) (Table 3) They account for 56 per cent of the main and 79 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers. The maximum percentage of SC agricultural labourers among main workers is found in Mashrak Block (71.5) while the minimum in Chapra Block (32.2). On the other hand, maximum percentage of marginal SC Agricultural Labourer is found in Ekma Block (91.6) while the minimum in Revelganj Block (58.6) (Table 3) .Non-farm workers account for only 19.2 per cent of the main and 17 per cent of the marginal scheduled caste workers in the study area.SC workers working in such industries account for only 2.8 per cent of the main and 2.6 per cent of marginal SC workers. The highest concentration of SC household industrial workers is found in Dighwara Block (9.1%) while the minimum in Panapur Block (1.2 %). Other workers together constitute 16.6 per cent of the main and 14.2 per cent of the marginal SC workers of the study area. The maximum percentage of main SC other workers is found in Chapra Block (55.3) and the minimum is found in Panapur block (14.2). The marginal other workers of scheduled caste has highest concentration in Revelganj Block (31%) and the lowest in Maker Block (5.1%) (Table 4).

The major means of livelihood for the SC population in the region is as agricultural labourers as well a small portion is also involved in agriculture as cultivators. The SC population involved in the non farm activities like household industries and other works is very less. To improve their conditions the policy makers can concentrate on improving the literacy levels of both the males as well as the females among the Scheduled Castes as well as train them in using the implements and machines used ,so that they can adapt to modern farming techniques and they can have a sustainable fair income. Agricultural is seasonal ,so they can be trained, motivated and mentored to take up non farm activities like starting small household industries . Additionally new employment opportunities can be generated by increasing the non farm sectors like manufacturing and services sector in the region.Increased literacy levels coupled with additional job opportunities will increase the workers participitation and increase their income levels thereby improving the quality of life.

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