

Empowering Equality: An Analysis of Government Schemes and Benefits for SC/ST Communities

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to thoroughly assess government schemes and benefits provided to help India's Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) people. Three main goals of the study are to: 1) comprehend the relevance of these programmes; 2) conduct a thorough analysis of the variety of schemes and advantages; and 3) conduct a SWOT analysis to evaluate their efficacy. The study placed a strong emphasis on the usage of targeted keywords and appropriate search engines to accomplish these goals. For a thorough search, pertinent keywords like "SC/ST," "government schemes," "benefits," "empowerment," "social justice," and "economic development" were fed. A SWOT analysis of the schemes was made possible by the data analysis's use of appropriate qualitative approaches. The results highlight the crucial role that government programmes for SC/ST communities play in correcting past injustices, promoting social fairness, and encouraging inclusive growth. The overall objective of social justice and inclusive development in India-where all citizens have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to the advancement of their country-can be significantly advanced by adopting the recommended measures, such as robust monitoring, increased funding, equitable distribution, and technology utilisation.

KEYWORDS: Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), SWOT analysis, Government Schemes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tribal belt has several serious problems, many of which have been made worse by local activities, including poverty, unemployment, pollution, declining biodiversity, and the effects of climate change. The Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY), Pop Scavenger Scheme, and Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), among other development programmes, were launched by the government to solve these problems [1]. The Constitution of India refers to the indigenous ethnic groupings as "Scheduled Tribes (ST)," a term first used by the British to refer to about 255 such tribes [2]. The majority of educated Indians, who can trace their ancestry to the Aryan and Dravidian conquerors of the subcontinent, are aware of this notion [3]. The scheduled tribes, who are the country's oldest occupants and are economically and socially marginalised, are seen by the majority of Indians as a separate cultural and social entity since they live in discrete and isolated groupings [4].

The Directorate of Social Welfare was founded by the state government with the goal of developing and implementing unique initiatives to advance the social and economic advancement of SC/ST. The SC/ST population has benefited from a variety of projects that this department has carefully carried out, building a solid basis for their welfare and progress. These initiatives include financial support, careful preparation, political backing, and priceless social aid. According to studies, Karnataka's development strategy closely reflects human ideals and constitutional ambitions. The benefits of constitutional protections, reservation provisions, and many welfare possibilities are enjoyed by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Due to the caste system and the practise of untouchability, they were traditionally denied access to certain rights and benefits. The Social Welfare Department of the Government of Karnataka has developed a number of programmes and plans since 1956 that are intended to elevate the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, with a heavy emphasis on their integrated development [5].

The main goals of this study are threefold: first, to fully comprehend the significance of government programmes and benefits designed for the welfare of SC/ST communities; second, to examine these programmes and benefits in great detail; and third, to meticulously conduct a SWOT analysis that takes into account these programmes' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order to determine their efficacy and impact.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It's essential to use precise keywords and the right search engines to undertake an in-depth analysis of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the related programmes and perks. To cover a variety of topics, keywords such "SC/ST," "government schemes," "benefits," "empowerment," "social justice," and "economic development" should be used. To access a wide range of academic publications, reports, and resources, one should use search engines like Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, government portals, academic databases, NGO websites, and library catalogues. A complete and pertinent investigation of the topic matter for your assessment will be ensured by the use of Boolean operators, keyword combinations, and search engines.

Table 1: Related works on Government scheme for SC/STs

Sl. No.	Area	Contribution	Authors
1	Conditions of SC/ST	Based on statistics from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, families belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have seen changes in their economic and living situations over the recent period of increased economic growth. Although there has been significant improvement in the health of SCs and STs over the past ten years, the gap between these groups and the general population has grown.	Bhagat, R. B. (2013) [6]
2	SC/ST Student community	The results of the study show that in the Purulia area, kids from the SC and ST populations have a modest degree of motivation for academic success. Additionally, there is a notable connection between Academic Achievement Motivation and the academic success of SC and ST community kids in the same district. In Purulia, it is noteworthy that statistical data suggests that SC students tend to have a somewhat higher degree of academic achievement motivation than ST students, as seen by the mean score of SC students being higher than that of ST students.	Mahato, A., & Barman, P. (2019) [7]
3	MGNREGA	The situation of women's and SC/ST community engagement in the MGNREGA programme was examined in this report on a state-by-state basis. A minimum of 33 percent female involvement is required under this employment strategy, however there are significant differences in how well each state is doing in achieving this goal. Kerala had the greatest percentage of female engagement during the fiscal year 2012–13, at an amazing 94 percent, while Uttar Pradesh fell behind with just 19 percent. Involvement in the SC/ST community varies greatly throughout the country as well. The study also examines the relationship between the number of MGNREGA person-days given by women and SC/ST individuals and variables including poverty levels, population growth, sex ratios, and literacy rates.	Malhotra, N., & Kour, N. (2023) [8]
4	SC/ST Women	In this essay, they investigated the connection between casteism and surgical sterilisations that may be performed on lower caste women in India under duress. After giving a brief overview of casteism in India, I'll go into detail on the prejudice that lower caste members face, India's population control measures, and any possible abuse of coerced reproductive suppression among lower caste women under the guise of eugenics. Then, in order to comprehend the connection between caste-based discrimination and surgical sterilisations among SC/ST women in India, I will create a conceptual framework by synthesising the available material.	Smith, S. (2023) [9]

5	Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes	Many commissions and organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, work to solve the problems encountered by underrepresented minorities. Initiated to defend their rights, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was eventually split into two independent Commissions due to varying requirements. The purpose of this study was to determine how knowledgeable SC/ST respondents were about grievance committees and other constitutional provisions.	Bhartiya, A. K., Khan, A., & Pratap, A. (2022) [10]
6	PMMY- Mudra scheme	According to the report, the government should make sure that all categories and regions of India receive an equitable allocation of programmes. Additionally, it proposes aggressively boosting women's engagement in entrepreneurship and raising public awareness of these programmes.	Sumathy, M., & Jisha, T. P. (2020) [11]
7	SC ST Development Co-Operatives	In this article, the Kerala State Federation of SC ST Development Co-Operatives, Kerala's top cooperative federation for primary co-operative societies among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, was evaluated for its function in the community. On July 22, 1981, it was established and registered under the Kerala State Cooperative Societies Act of 1969, and on October 5, 1981, it started operating. The federation collaborates with the national and state governments to carry out plan schemes, serves as an implementing agency for different development programmes targeted at the SC/ST sector, and is essential to the advancement of socioeconomic development efforts. The federation has also engaged in a number of business ventures and is dedicated to improving its services for the benefit of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the country.	Mn, M., & Ratheesh, R. (2021) [12]

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the relevance of schemes and benefits for SC/ST communities.
- To study the various schemes and benefits provided to SC/ST communities.
- To conduct a SWOT analysis of schemes and benefits provided to SC/ST communities.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study technique included a thorough literature assessment to find relevant sources in order to meet the research goals connected to SC/ST communities and initiatives utilising secondary data. After then, secondary data on SC/ST communities and related programmes was gathered from government reports, academic research, policy papers, and publications through Google Scholar and other print/online platforms. A SWOT analysis of the schemes was made possible by the data analysis's use of appropriate qualitative approaches. The results were condensed into a thorough study report, and suggestions for improving policy and opening up new research directions were produced, with dissemination through presentations and reports to pertinent stakeholders.

5. RELEVANCE OF SCHEMES AND BENEFITS FOR SC/ST COMMUNITIES

In India, the SC/ST (Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe) groups' programmes and benefits are extremely important for correcting past injustices, advancing social justice, and supporting inclusive development. Here are some crucial elements of their applicability:

- First, social justice These programmes are crucial for overcoming the historical prejudice and persecution that SC/ST communities have endured for many years. They want to improve these underserved neighbourhoods and provide them equal opportunity to contribute to the advancement of the country [13].
- Secondly, economic empowerment Many of these programmes have a strong emphasis on economic empowerment through cash aid, skill development, and encouragement for entrepreneurship. By doing this, they help people from SC/ST backgrounds become financially independent and support the expansion of the national economy [14].

- Education and skill-building: The education and skill gap among SC/ST groups must be closed via programmes that support education and skill development. These programmes aid people in obtaining the knowledge and abilities needed to succeed in the employment market [15].
- Representation: Efforts to prepare SC/ST applicants for government jobs and competitive exams result in more members of these groups holding positions of authority and making decisions. For their interests to be appropriately reflected in policymaking, this representation is essential [16].
- Poverty Reduction: SC/ST communities have been disproportionately impacted by poverty. Poverty alleviation programmes offer money, resources, and subsidies to help these communities escape poverty and enhance their general standard of living [17].
- Culture Preservation: A few programmes also put a strong emphasis on protecting and advancing the cultural legacy of SC/ST groups. This is essential for maintaining India's rich cultural diversity and making sure that no community's identity is lost or marginalised [18].
- Continuity: These programmes' dedication to diversity makes them relevant. They work to build a more egalitarian society in which everyone, regardless of caste or tribe, has the chance to prosper and advance the country [19].

6. SCHEMES AND BENEFITS PROVIDED TO SC/ST COMMUNITIES

6.1 Benefits for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

1. **A Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) Cell** is maintained by the Department and is in charge of defending the service interests of SC/ST workers. This cell assists the liaison officer in making sure that the department takes into account the concerns of the SC/ST, OBCs, and Persons with Disabilities.
2. **The National Health Mission (NHM)**, an important finance and support vehicle for building public health systems, includes facilities for SC/ST populations. The National Health Mission (NHM), which includes the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), has been given a budget of Rs.21,940.70 crores for 2017–18 (BE), of which a part is designated exclusively for SC and ST components.
3. All beneficiaries, including indigenous communities, are eligible for free diagnosis and treatment under the **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP)**, which also provides free medications. With a total budget allocation of Rs.1,84,000 Lakhs for FY 2017–18, including specific allocations of Rs. 6559.71 Lakhs for SCs and Rs.7806.74 Lakhs for STs, about 40,000 tribal patients have been identified and treated under the RNTCP since 2015.
4. **The National Leprosy Eradication Programme** gathers state-by-state data on tribal populations every month, and in 2016–17, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes accounted for 18.80% and 18.78%, respectively, of all new leprosy cases. With funding provided to NGOs working in tribal regions, leprosy services are open to everyone, regardless of caste or religion, with a focus on information, education, and communication (IEC), deformity prevention, and case follow-up.
5. **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)** Services for the prevention and control of different diseases are offered to all community sections without prejudice under the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP).
6. Since its inception in 1976, the **National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI)** has worked to lessen the prevalence of blindness. According to surveys carried out under NPCB&VI, the prevalence of blindness decreased from 1.1% in 2001-2002 to 1% in 2006-2007. These initiatives guarantee that facilities are open to all communities, including SC/ST people, without prejudice [20].

6.2 Initiatives:

Scholarships for Scheduled Castes (SCs): Providing Access to Education

- **Pre-Matric Scholarships:** This program's main objective is to assist parents of SC children to lower dropout rates at this young age [21].
- **Pre-Matric Scholarship for SC Students:** Like the previous programme, this one provides financial assistance to SC students [21].
- **Pre-Matric Scholarship to the Children of those engaged in occupations involving cleaning and prone to health hazards:** This federally funded programme, which is carried out by State Governments and Union Territories, fully funds the education of families with children who work in hazardous jobs.
- **Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students (PMS-SC)** is the greatest government-sponsored initiative to provide education-based empowerment for SC students. States and UTs get central help to pay expenditures exceeding their agreed responsibility [22].

- **Top Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students:** This programme encourages high-quality education for SC students by offering complete financial assistance for post-secondary courses, particularly in prestigious institutions like IITs, NITs, IIMs, and medical and law schools [23].
- **National Fellowship for SC Students:** Financial support is made available to SC students pursuing M.Phil., Ph.D., and comparable research degrees.
- **National Overseas Scholarship:** This programme provides funding for Master's and Ph.D. programmes at foreign universities for SCs, de-notified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes.
- **Free Coaching for SC and OBC Students:** Through this programme, SC and OBC applicants from economically disadvantaged backgrounds will receive top-notch coaching as they get ready for competitive examinations in the public and commercial sectors.
- **Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY):** Under Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna (PM-AJAY), this sub-scheme constructs hostels for SC students, enabling those from rural and remote areas to access quality education.
- **Educational Loans from National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation:** Financial support is provided for full-time Professional/Technical courses.
- **Educational Loans from National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC):** This scheme extends education loans to Safai Karamcharis, Manual Scavengers, and their dependents to pursue higher education [24].

Economic Empowerment: Through the provision of skill development, funding of income-generating activities, and promotion of entrepreneurship, these government initiatives seek to uplift and empower marginalised populations. They support a number of initiatives, including as skill development, credit availability, rehabilitation of manual scavengers, and financial support to stimulate economic development among the Scheduled Castes, eventually promoting socioeconomic development and job creation [24].

- Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana
- National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC)
- National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)
- Scheme of Assistance to Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (SCDCs)
- Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)
- Credit Enhancement Guarantee Scheme for Scheduled Castes:
- Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP)

Social Empowerment: In India, untouchability, discrimination, and atrocities against marginalised people are prohibited under the Protection of Civil Rights Act of 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, respectively, and their corresponding laws. These rules offer formal means of reprimanding the untouchable custom and guarding against atrocities committed against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. States and union territories are given financial support for carrying out these laws, which include helping victims, encouraging inter-caste unions, creating awareness, and setting up special tribunals. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which is a crucial step in addressing this pervasive problem, also focuses on eliminating manual scavenging, identifying and rehabilitating manual scavengers, and outlawing hazardous manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks [24].

- The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995
- The 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013' (MS Act, 2013)

6.3 Schemes:

- A comprehensive programme known as the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana unites the Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY), the Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP), and the Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas (BJRCY). Its main objective is to reduce poverty in communities of Scheduled Caste (SC) people by developing more job possibilities via skill development, income-generating enterprises, and other activities.
- The Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna (PM-AJAY) is the umbrella organisation under which one of its components, the Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY), functions. PMAGY aims to pull the target people out of poverty by raising their income through income-generating projects, skill development, and infrastructural upgrades.
- The Dr. Ambedkar National Memorial, located at 26, Alipur Road, Delhi, serves as a tribute to Dr. Ambedkar and is open to the public from 10:00 A.M to 07:00 P.M., except for Mondays when it is closed for maintenance.

- The Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, formerly known as the Dr. Ambedkar National Public Library, is situated at Janpath, New Delhi, spanning 3.25 acres.
- The Babu Jagjivan Ram National Foundation, established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in 2008, strives to propagate the ideals of Babu Jagjivan Ram. It focuses on his social reform principles and his vision of creating a casteless and classless society [25].

6.4 Subsidy Schemes for SC/ST:

- Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUYY)
- Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (SCLCSS) for MSEs under National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Hub Scheme-reg
- Bharat Ratna Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Udyog Uday Yojna for SC/ST Entrepreneurs of MSME
- Capital Investment subsidy and Assistance for Interest subsidy
- Assistance for quality certification
- Financial support to MSMEs in ZED certification
- Assistance in implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Term loans are available from the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) for projects or units costing up to Rs 50.00 lakhs. On the premise that State Channelizing Agencies (SCAs) contribute their designated assistance share, provide required subsidies, and secure financial resources from other accessible sources, NSFDC offers term loans up to 95% of the project cost. Furthermore, the "Swachhta Udyami Yojana-Swachhta Se Sampannta Ki Aur" seeks to offer financial assistance for the development, management, and upkeep of Pay and Use Community Toilets in Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode, as well as the purchase and use of sanitation-related vehicles.

Another important programme supports SC/ST-owned Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) by offering financial subsidies for the purchase of equipment without regard to industry or technology, with an investment maximum of Rs. 1 crore. This programme aims to encourage current businesses in growing their operations so they may take part in public procurement while also promoting new businesses. Numerous more programmes, such as those for quality certification, technology acquisition, financial aid, and infrastructure development are also available to assist MSMEs. By offering different types of financial aid and support for their expansion and market competitiveness, these programmes aim to strengthen the MSME sector, particularly those owned by SC/ST persons [26].

6.5 Schemes for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Students by UGC:

- The programme "Remedial Coaching at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Level for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Students and Students Belonging to Minority Communities" seeks to improve students' linguistic proficiency and academic skills in a variety of subjects at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The following goals are sought to be attained through this initiative:
 - ✓ Help pupils become more proficient in both academic language and other topics.
 - ✓ Deepen their comprehension of foundational concepts to build a better academic base.
 - ✓ Enhance their understanding, abilities, and attitudes in areas requiring the use of quantitative, qualitative, and lab-based methods. The goal of this extensive advising and training programme is to provide students the tools they need to pursue higher education effectively.
- Similar to this, the "Coaching Scheme for Entry in Services for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Students and Minority Community Students" concentrates on getting students from SC/ST backgrounds and educationally underprivileged minority groups ready for competitive exams. The end objective is to provide them with possibilities to get productive work in a variety of government services, including group "B," "C," and "A" posts in All India Services and State/Provincial services [27].

SWOT ANALYSIS OF SCHEMES AND BENEFITS FOR SC/ST COMMUNITIES

Strengths of Government Schemes for SC/ST	Weaknesses of Government Schemes for SC/ST
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First, social inclusion by addressing past prejudice and raising the socioeconomic standing of SC/ST populations, these programmes encourage social inclusion. 2. Education and Skill Development: Many programmes put an emphasis on these areas, giving people the tools they need to find better work prospects and support economic growth. 3. Financial Support: Financial support gives SC/ST people the resources to launch enterprises or seek higher education while also assisting in the reduction of poverty. 4. Representation: Programmes that help SC/ST applicants prepare for competitive examinations boost their participation in government employment, promoting a more inclusive and varied workforce. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation Challenges: Some programmes have trouble being implemented effectively because of red tape, fraud, and beneficiary ignorance. 2. Insufficient funding These programmes may have a smaller impact if they don't have enough funds to reach all eligible participants or offer appropriate assistance. 3. Regional Inequalities: The advantages of these programmes could not be disseminated equally across areas, resulting in unequal access to opportunities and resources. 4. Continuity: In some situations, relying on government programmes continuously might breed dependency and impede entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency.
Opportunities for SC/ST Government Schemes	Threats to Government Schemes for SC/ST
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital Inclusion: By utilising technology, these programmes may be made more effective and efficient, giving rural and underprivileged areas better access. 2. Public-Private Partnerships: Working together with private organisations can provide more resources and knowledge to increase the effectiveness of these initiatives. 3. Inclusive Economic Growth: To guarantee that SC/ST communities benefit from overall economic growth, the programmes can be aligned with larger economic development initiatives. 4. Innovation in Education: There are opportunities to improve the accessibility and customization of high-quality education to meet the requirements of SC/ST students. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political Interference: Plans may be influenced politically, which might result in inconsistent policies and possible resource waste. 2. Reservations made based on caste: While reservations are an important aspect, placing too much focus on them may cause opposition from other communities and jeopardise societal harmony. 3. The Socioeconomic Environment is Changing: Effectively targeting and reaching SC/ST groups may be difficult due to rapid urbanisation and shifting economic realities. 4. Cultural opposition: In some circumstances, community opposition to change or unwillingness to accept new practises might hinder the achievement of plans aimed at cultural growth and preservation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing a strong monitoring and evaluation framework, securing increased funding, focusing on underserved areas for equitable distribution, investing in capacity building, leveraging technology for simplified access, conducting public awareness campaigns, fostering collaborations with NGOs and the private sector, maintaining a balanced approach to reservations, encouraging entrepreneurship, and preserving culture are all recommended in order to maximise government programmes for SC/ST community. The combined goal of these initiatives is to increase the efficacy, transparency, and impact of these programmes, promoting social justice and inclusive development for India's marginalised populations.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, rectifying past injustices and advancing social fairness in India depend greatly on the government programmes created for SC/ST groups. These programmes are crucial steps towards creating a diverse and equitable society because they place a strong emphasis on education, economic empowerment, representation, and cultural preservation. To ensure that these programmes achieve their full potential, problems including implementation concerns, insufficient finance, and geographical inequities must be addressed. We can improve the effectiveness of these programmes and advance the larger objective of social justice and inclusive development, where all citizens have equal opportunities to prosper and advance their country, by putting into practise the suggested measures, which include rigorous monitoring, increased funding, equitable distribution, and leveraging technology.

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