

RURAL NON-FARM EMPLOYMENT OF THE SCHEDULED CASTES IN INDIA

Dr. Satyen Sarkar*

Abstract

The study analyzes the rural non-farm employment in India and examines the participation of SCs in the rural non-farm sector, given the inadequate access of the SCs to agricultural land and capital assets. It also tries to evaluate the trends in the magnitude of rural non-farm employment from the 1980s to the late 2000s. The participation rates are examined on the parameters of age, economic activity, employment and unemployment rates and wages. The paper accentuates the relative situation of the SCs by undertaking a comparative analysis with the other social groups in India and in that regards encapsulates the changes. We hope that the study could help policymakers and others to formulate appropriate policies for an improvement in human capital in the SCs workers in India. The paper concludes by evaluating the implications of the results obtained from the analysis for the promotion of non-farm employment in the rural areas among the SCs.

Keywords:

Rural economic activity;
Non-farm employment;
Scheduled Castes People;
Human capital;

*** Assistant Professor in Economics, A.C.College of Commerce, D.B.C.Road, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Composition of the Scheduled Caste Population

According to the Census 2011, the SC population in India (excluding the population of subdivisions of Senapati district of Manipur) stood at 201378372 persons, which constituted 16.64 percent of the total population. Of the total SC population in 2001, 79.8 percent resided in the rural areas and conversely, the rest 20.2 percent in the urban areas. Further, the sex ratio of the SCs stood at 936 females per thousand males and slightly higher than the national average of 933. The largest proportion of the SC population to the total population, in the order of ranking, was found for the states of Punjab (28.9 percent) followed by Himachal Pradesh (24.7 percent), and West Bengal (23 percent) respectively. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry, the proportion of the SC and the ST population to the total population was an exact equal of the national average of 16.2 percent. The lowest concentration of the SCs was found in the north-eastern region, seemingly so due to a high concentration of the tribal population in the region. States such as Mizoram (with negligible or 272 persons) followed by Meghalaya (0.5 percent) and Arunachal Pradesh (0.6 percent) had negligible SC population. The highest percentages of SC population to total population were reported for the states of Uttar Pradesh (21.1 percent) followed by West Bengal (11.1 percent), Bihar (7.8 percent), Andhra Pradesh (7.4 percent) and Tamil Nadu (7.1 percent) respectively. In fact, almost 55 percent of the total SC population resides in these five states. **Table 1**, provides the percentages of the SC population in India since the 1961 Census.

Census Year	Total Population (in millions)	SC Population (in millions)	Percentage of the SC Population to the Total Population
1961	439.20	64.40	14.70
1971	547.90	80.00	14.60
1981*	665.30	104.80	15.70
1991**	838.60	138.20	16.50
2001***	1028.60	166.60	16.20
2011****	1210.20	195.00	16.64

Note: *Excludes Assam in 1981, **excludes Jammu and Kashmir in 1991, and ***excludes the Mao-Maran, Paomata, and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district in Manipur.

Source: Primary Census Abstract, Office of the Registrar General, New Delhi, India, 2001 & 2011.

The scheduled castes (SCs) constitute a little less than one fifth of the total population of India. However, about seventy percent of them reside in the rural areas. The incomes of the SC workers in the rural areas are determined by the access to sources of income such as agricultural land, capital, and employment. In the late 1990s, less than three-fourths of SC rural households/ persons were engaged in agriculture (as self-employed cultivators and agricultural wage labourers) and about one-fourths of the rural households / persons in non –farm activities in the form of self-employment or wage employment. Although, the alleviation in the economic condition of the SCs is critically incumbent upon their diversification into the rural non-farm sector, their participation in the rural non-farm sector has been marginal in comparison to the other social groups in the rural society. Given the inadequate access of the SCs to agricultural land and capital in the rural areas, the improvements in their employment levels are closely dependent on their access to rural non-farm employment. This paper highlights the patterns of rural non-farm employment and its policy implications and also examines the trends in the magnitude of non-farm employment among the SCs in the rural areas from the early 1980s to the late 1990s. It also examines their participation in non-farm employment on the following parameters – age, economic activity, employment / unemployment rate and wage. The main focus of this paper is to analyze the situation of the SCs with respect to non-farm employment and also to capture the relative changes. The analysis is based on the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data the Employment and Unemployment Survey the Consumption Expenditure Survey and the Rural Labour Enquiry Reports of the years 1983-1984, 1987-1988, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000.

The discussion is initiated at the level of non-farm employment (total, by age groups, and economic activities) of the SCs and the Non SC/STs. Thus, the patterns with respect to employment and wage rates of the SC workers engaged in the rural non-farm sector are

examined. The paper concludes by evaluating the implications of the results obtained from the analysis for the promotion of non-farm employment in the rural areas among the SCs.

Magnitude of Rural Non-farm Employment- Total and by Age Groups

This paper at the outset analysis the differences in the levels of non-farm employment among the SCs and Non SC/STs. **Table 2**, gives the percentages of workers in non-farm employment vis-à-vis the total rural employment for the years 1983, 1987, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000 based on the Usual Principal Statures (UPS), the Usual Principal and Subsidiary Statures (UPSS), the Currently Weekly Status (CWS), and the Current Daily Statures (CDS) for the SCs and the Non SC/STs.

In 1999-2000, based on the UPS, about 24.30 percent of the workers among the SCs were engaged in the rural non-farm sector. The ratio was slightly higher under the CDS (26.18 percent), followed by the CWS (24.04 percent), and the UPSS (22.74 percent). This clearly elucidates that the participation of the SCs, as well as, the Non SC/ST (28.68 percent) under the CDS was somewhat higher in comparison to the UPS, the UPSS and the CWS. The employment pattern in the non-farm sector seems to help in educing the underemployment of the usually occupied workers.

However, as compared to the Non SC/STs, the participation of the SC workers in non-farm employment was lower under all the statuses in 1999-2000. The gaps among the SCs and the Non SC/STs, however, were not particularly large in 1999-2000, as well as, during other years (the differences being in the range of two to three percentage points only).

There were no significant differences among the SCs and the Non SC/STs in the non-farm employment across the three statuses in 1999-2000, as well as, in the other years. **Table 3**, presents the percentage of the non-farm workers by age groups and highlights the participation labels in the non-farm employment for various age groups, including, child labour in the age groups of 05-09 and 10-14, both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs.

Status	1983			187-1988			1993-1994			1999-2000		
	SC	Non SC/ST	DI	SC	Non SC/ST	DI	SC	Non SC/ST	DI	SC	Non SC/ST	DI
UPS	18.49	21.41	0.07	20.95	24.12	0.07	20.13	25.13	0.1	24.3	27.51	0.06
UPSS	17.38	19.85	0.06	19.51	22.49	0.07	19.26	23.71	0.1	22.74	25.71	0.06
CWS	21.3	22.95	0.04	NA	NA	NA	22.36	25.58	0.07	24.04	26.4	0.05
CDS	22.76	23.84	0.02	NA	NA	NA	23.18	25.63	0.05	26.18	28.68	0.05

Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status

Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, 1983, 1987-1988, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000

S T A T E M E N T S	Y E A R	5-9		10-14		15-29		30-44		45-59		> 60	
		SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST
U P S	1983	7.65	7.98	12.49	13.75	17.82	21.9	20.49	24.3	18.85	20.48	18.8	17.56
	1987-1988	16.67	0	15.92	17.65	21.82	25.4	22.08	29.2	19.83	22.46	16.87	16.5
	1993-1994	9.07	25	16.13	22.22	21.43	26.7	21.95	27.99	19.66	22.24	15.58	15.17
	1999-2000	0	0	18.52	22.49	25.61	28.8	25.67	29.72	24.4	29.31	16.75	15.69
U P S	1983	7.2	7.86	11.03	12.29	16.96	20.25	17.27	22.67	17.83	19.08	18.14	16.66
	1987-1988	4.55	0	13.4	15.06	20.32	22.11	20.91	25.67	19.19	21.47	16.23	15.95

	1993-1994	8.33	20	14.47	19.33	19.9	24.79	20.56	26.15	18.64	21.4	15.37	14.53
	1999-2000	0	12.06	18.75	21.69	24	25.77	24.18	27.79	23.11	21.04	16.4	15.25
C W S	1983	9.39	9.88	13.11	15.28	21.03	23.67	23.61	26.23	21.47	21.64	21.81	18.24
	1987-1988	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	1993-1994	7.69	22.22	16.54	21.57	23.6	26.86	23.97	28.25	21.06	23.02	16.82	15.8
	1999-2000	0	0	19.32	21.86	25.75	28.55	26.06	29.06	24.3	28.66	17.26	15.2
C D S	1983	9.18	8.98	13	15.54	22.88	24.74	25.39	27.13	22.8	22.29	22.42	18.47
	1987-1988	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	1993-1994	9.09	9.09	16.52	22.22	24.15	27.23	24.86	28.66	21.92	23.51	15.9	15.35
	1999-2000	0	0	21.05	23.98	28.22	30.61	27.93	31.09	27.06	30.6	18.91	16.03
Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status													
Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, Various Years.													

In 1999-2000, based on the UPS, the participation of the SC workers in non-farm activities was almost negligible for children in the age groups of 05-09. The participation, however, increased to about 25 percent for the workers in the three age groups, namely, 15-29, 30-44, and 45-59. Interestingly, this ratio was higher in comparison to the workers in age groups of 10-14 and 60 and above (about 17 to 18 percent). Thus, the participation of the SCs workers in the non-farm activities was relatively higher in the age groups between 15-29 to 45-59 in comparison to

those in the age groups of 10-14 and 60 and above. Again, among these three productive age groups, the percentage was the highest for those in the age groups of 15-29 and 30-44.

The pattern of non-farm employment based on the UPSS, the CWS, and the CDS was not significantly different from the one based on the UPS.

This paper will investigate into the comparison of the SCs and the Non SC/STs by age groups. The UPS based participation rate of the Non SC/STs was generally higher in comparison to the SCs for all the age groups (th only exception was the age group of 60 and above, wherein, the participation rate of the SC workers in the non-farm sector was higher). Among these four age groups (that is, 10-14, 15-29, 30-44 and 44-59), the disparity levels for the workers in the age groups of 10-14 and 30-44 under the UPS, 10-14, 30-44 and 45-59 under the UPSS, 10-14 for the CWS and 10-14 and 45-59 under the CDS was relatively high. It may be mentioned that the disparity between the SCs and the Non SC/STs in their participation in the rural non-farm sector was generally low for the age group 15-29 under all statuses under consideration (See Table 4).

Table 4. Disparity Index - Percentage of Workers in Non-farm Employment to Total Employment in the Rural Areas by Age Groups

		5-9	10-14	15-29	30-44	45-59	> 60
UPS	1983	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.08	0.04	-0.03
	1987-1988		0.05	0.07	0.14	0.06	-0.01
	1993-1994	0.48	0.15	0.11	0.12	0.07	-0.01
	1999-2000		0.09	0.06	0.07	0.01	-0.03
UPSS	1983	0.04	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.02	-0.04
	1987-1988		0.05	0.04	0.1	0.07	-0.01
	1993-1994	0.41	0.14	0.11	0.12	0.06	-0.03
	1999-2000	1	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.07	-0.03
CWS	1983	0.02	0.07	0.06	0.05	0	-0.09

	1987-1988						
	1993-1994	0.49	0.13	0.06	0.08	0.04	-0.03
	1999-2000		0.06	0.05	0.05	0	-0.06
CDS	1983	-0.01	0.08	0.04	0.03	-0.01	-0.09
	1987-1988						
	1993-1994	42	0.14	0.06	0.07	0.03	-0.02
	1999-2000		0.06	0.04	0.05	0.06	-0.08
Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status							
Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, Various Years.							

After having assessed the level of non-farm employment at an aggregate level and by age groups for the SCs and the Non SC/STs, this paper will now ascertain the share of each age group in the total non-farm employment in the country. In 1999-2000, under the UPS, the maximum concentration of the SC non-farm workers was in the age group of 15-29 and 30-44 (**See Table 5**). Together, these two age groups accounted for about 77 percent of the total SC non-farm workers in the country. In the case of the Non SC/STs, too, these two groups accounted about 77 percent of the total non-farm workers. The situation was similar in the case of the CWS and the CDS for the age groups of 15-29 and 30-44. the percentage share, however, differed among the SCs and the Non SC/STs, and in that regards, the ration were generally higher for the SCs. The children in age group of 10-14 accounted for about 2 percent of the total SC non-farm workers in 1999-2000 for all age groups respectively.

S T A T E S	Y E A R	5-9		10-14		15-29		30-44		45-59		> 60		Total SC	Total (Non SC/S T)
		SC	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T	S C	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T		
UP S	1983	0.29	0.23	4.45	3.8	35.18	36.85	33.85	19.74	18.51	18.51	6.49	6.05	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	0.17	0	3.53	2.95	38.4	38.01	33.99	18.88	19.08	19.08	4.99	5.17	100.00	100.00
	1993-1994	0.16	0.28	2.69	2.56	37.4	38.5	35.99	18.78	14.73	14.73	5.34	5.16	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	0	0	2.02	1.8	38.36	36.71	38.77	16.05	17.24	17.24	4.8	4.79	100.00	100.00
UP SS	1983	0.34	0.3	4.7	4.19	35.88	37.48	33.26	19.32	18.1	18.1	6.5	6.07	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	0.16	0	3.77	3.29	38.4	37.82	33.45	18.76	18.42	18.42	5.02	5.13	100.00	100.00
	1993-1994	0.15	0.25	2.9	2.65	37.42	37.35	35.73	18.41	18.1	18.1	5.38	4.85	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	0	0.07	2.33	2.03	38.4	35.07	38.49	15.89	18.97	18.97	4.89	4.83	100.00	100.00
C W S	1983	0.36	0.29	4.29	4.11	35.68	37.15	34.09	19.31	18.01	18.01	6.26	5.77	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		
	1993-	0.1	0.25	2.69	2.55	37	37.09	36.	18.28	18.	18.15	5.16	4.93		

	1994	5				.4 5		28		15				100.0 0	100.00
	1999- 2000	0	0	2.27	1.98	38	36.6	39. 17	15.8	17. 14	17.14	4.76	4.61	100.0 0	100.00
C DS	1983	0.3 6	0.27	4.14	4.07	35 .8 2	37.37	34. 36	19.12	18. 03	18.03	6.2	5.71	100.0 0	100.00
	1987- 1988	NA	NA	NA	NA	N A	NA	NA	NA	N A	NA	NA	NA		
	1993- 1994	0.1 6	0.27	2.54	2.5	36 .8 7	36.67	36. 47	18.79	18. 49	18.49	5.16	4.81	100.0 0	100.00
	1999- 2000	0	0	2.27	1.98	38	36.6	39. 17	15.8	17. 14	17.14	4.76	4.61	100.0 0	100.00
Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, Various Years.															

Pattern of Economic Activity – Total and by Age Groups.

After having examined the differences in the participation rates, in the non-farm employment (total and by age Groups) among the SCs and the Non SC/STS, this paper will now take a look at the type of the economic activities in which the two social groups participate. **Table 6**, indicates the percentage shares of the rural non-farm workers engaged in self –employment, regular/ salaried, and casual wage labour in the total rural non-farm employment for the SCs and the Non SC/STs.

According to the UPS, in 1999-2000 of the total SC rural non-farm workers about 42.11 percent were engaged in self –employment, 22.11 percent in regular salaried, and 35.79 percent in casual labour. More or less. Similar patterns were observed on the basis of the UPSS, the CWS, and the CDS. Herein, some important differences among the SCs and Non SC/STs could be observed. As compared to the SCs, among the Non SC/STs, the percentage of those engaged in self – employment and in regular salaried jobs was higher by a fair margin. But in the case of wage labourers, the opposite was true, the percentage share of casual labourers for the Non SC/STS was lower by a substantial margin. For instance, based on the UPS the percentage share of the Non SC/ST workers engaged in the self- employed activities, regular salaried and casual

labour were 50.98, 27.18 and 21.84 percentage points respectively. The ratio of the SCs to the Non SC/STs was less than one that is 0.83 for the self –employed and 0.81 for the regular/salaried, but was more than one, that is, 1.64 in the case of the casual labourers. A lower share of the SC workers in self- employment activities in the rural non-farm sector indicates their poor access to capital, an essential component in initiating business. On the other hand, a higher share in the regular salaried job was also an indication of the better human capabilities and capacities among the Non SC/STs. Conversely, the higher dependence of the SCs on the casual labour was a reflection of the low quality of their human capabilities and capacities.

Table 6. Rural Non-farm Employment by Economic Categories (in percentage point)

Status	Year	Self employed in Non-agriculture		Regular Salaried		Casual Laborers		Total SC	Total (Non SC/ST)
		SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST		
UPS	1983	46.78	53.21	24.18	29.05	29.04	17.74	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	45.24	51.69	21.43	28.09	33.33	20.22	100.00	100.00
	1993-1994	43.37	53.19	21.69	27.66	34.94	19.15	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	42.11	50.98	22.11	27.18	35.79	21.84	100.00	100.00
UPS	1983	48.89	54.69	22.81	27.45	28.3	17.86	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	46.59	52.13	20.45	27.66	32.95	20.21	100.00	100.00
	1993-1994	45.45	54.46	20.45	25.74	34.09	19.8	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	42.86	51.92	21.43	26.36	35.71	21.72	100.00	100.00
CW	1983	45.53	52.11	22.87	28.38	31.6	19.51	100.00	100.00
	1987-	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		

	1988								
	1993-1994	42.86	53	19.78	26	37.36	21	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	42.55	50.94	21.28	26.22	36.17	22.83	100.00	100.00
CDS	1983	45.72	51.48	22.86	28.85	31.42	19.67	100.00	100.00
	1987-1988	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		
	1993-1994	43.37	53.85	21.69	27.47	34.94	18.68	100.00	100.00
	1999-2000	43.82	51.82	22.47	27.14	33.71	21.04	100.00	100.00
Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status									
Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, Various Years.									

Trends in Rural Non-farm Employment – Total and by Economic Activities:

Table 6 presents the changes in the absolute numbers of the non – farm workers. The percentage changes (in terms of annual compound growth rates) have been worked out for the periods, namely, 1983 to 1987-1988, 1987-1988 to 1993-1994 and 1993-1994 to 1999-2000 respectively.

Taking the overall period it was observed that the numbers of the rural non-farm workers (based on the UPS) had increased both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs. The rate of increase was however higher for the SCs (6.62 percent) as compared to the Non SC/STs (4.57 percent). It may be mentioned that the rate of increase in the numbers of rural non-farm workers was higher as compared to the total rural employment as well as agricultural employment both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs.

During the period, 1983 to 1987-1988 the growth in the numbers of the rural non-farm workers was higher than the growth in total rural employment as well as agricultural

employment both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs. For instance the rural non-farm employment for the SCs and the Non Sc/STs under the UPS grow at a rate of 4.08 and 3.09 percentage points per annum respectively (**See Table 7**). A similar trend was discernible in the growth rate of the rural non-farm employment according to the UPSS as well.

Table 7. Change in Numbers of Non-farm Workers (Annual Compound Growth Rate)										
	1983 to 1987-1988		1987-1988 to 1993-1994		1993-1994 to 1999-2000		1983 to 1993-1994		1987-1988 to 1999-2000	
Stat us	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST
Total Rural Employment										
UP S	1.52	0.67	1.82	1.02	3.13	1.71	1.85	0.95	2.47	1.37
UP SS	1.27	0.37	2.05	1.12	2.56	1.17	1.86	0.85	2.3	1.14
CW S	-	-	-	-	2.87	1.32	2.83	1.79	1.79	
CD S	-	-	-	-	2.68	1.27	-	-	-	-
Agricultural Employment										
UP S	0.9	-0.04	1.87	0.8	2.33	1.16	1.57	0.46	2.1	0.98
UP SS	0.74	-0.3	2.1	0.85	1.81	0.72	1.63	0.36	1.95	0.79
CW S					2.5	1.86	2.7	1.43	-	-
CD S	-	-	-	-	2	0.57	-	-	-	-
Non-Agricultural Employment										
UP S	4.08	3.09	1.62	1.72	2.92	3.25	3.01	2.58	3.75	2.48
UP SS	3.64	2.9	1.82	2.01	5.49	2.54	2.91	2.66	3.61	2.28
CW	-	-	-	-	4.12	1.14	3.33	2.9	-	-

S										
CD	-	-	-	-	4.77	3.18	-	-	-	-
S										

Note: UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status

Source: Special Report on Employment, Unemployment for the Social Groups, National Sample Survey, Various Years.

During the second period, i.e., 1987-1988 to 1993-1994, the trend in the growth of the numbers of the rural non-farm workers, differed in some respects from the earlier period, especially, for the SC rural workers. Firstly, the annual rate of increase in the numbers of the rural non-farm workers was much lower, both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs. In the case of the SCs, there was an increase in the non-farm workers by a per annum rate of 1.62 percent for the non-farm workers and 1.87 percent for the farm workers. However, in the case of the Non SC/STs the rate of increase for the non-farm worker (1.72 percent) was much higher as compared to the farm workers (0.8 percent). This means that there was a substantial movement of workers from the farm to the non-farm categories in the case of Non SC/STs. However, in the case for the SCs workers, the numbers in both, the farm and the non-farm categories increased. In fact the rate of increase for the SCs in the case of the farm workers was slightly higher (1.87 percent) as compared to the non-farm workers (1.62 percent). This means that although, there was an increase in the absolute numbers of the SCs workers in the rural non-farm sector, it was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in their absolute numbers in the farm sector. Therefore, there is sufficient reason to believe that during the aforesaid period, there may have been some reverse shifting of the SC workers from the non-farm to the farm sector primarily due to the movement of the SC workers from the non-farm to the farm sectors. This is corroborated by the negligible per annum increase (0.8 percent in the case of the UPS) in the numbers of agricultural workers for the Non SC/STs. The reverse shift towards agricultural employment in the case of SCs was also accentuated in the case of employment figures based on the UPSS.

During the last sub-period, i.e., 1993-1994 to 1999-2000 there was a substantial acceleration in the growth rates in the non-farm employment, both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs. Among them the growth in the numbers of the rural non-farm workers (5.92 percent) as compared to the

Non SC/ST (3.25 percent). It may be mentioned that there was also a significant growth in the numbers of workers based on the CWS and the CDS for the SCs, which was comparatively higher than the non SC/STs. This inference holds true to establish that there was some improvement in the under – employment situation of both the groups, but more so, in the case of the SCs.

Unemployment and Wage Rates of the Non-farm Workers:

Since more than 60 percent of the SC workers in the rural areas and more than 30 percent in the urban areas depend mainly on wage employment their earnings are obviously determined by the levels of employment and wage rates. The SC workers therefore seem to suffer from possible discrimination in the employment market and in receiving wages.

Unemployment Rate. :

Table 8, shows the unemployment rates of the SC vis-à-vis the Non SC/ST workers for the time periods 1977-1978, 1983, 1987-1988, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000. some important features regarding the unemployment situation of the SCs and the Non SC/STs are clearly accentuated from the data. In the case of the UPS there were no significant differences in the unemployment rates of the SCs and the Non SC/STs either in the rural or the urban areas. This was not surprising considering a person is supposed to be usually employed if she/h works for more than 180 days in a year. Since the SC workers have limited alternative sources of income other than wage employment their employment days in an annual year are likely to be higher than their Non SC/STs counterparts. However considering the unemployment rate based on the CWS and the CDS the picture changes dramatically.

Table 8. Unemployment Rate in the Rural Areas All India (5 year and above)													
Status	Illiterate		Literate Upto Primary		Literate Upto Middle		Literate Upto Secondary & High Secondary		Literate Upto Graduate & Above		Total		
	S	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/S T	SC	Non SC/ST	SC	Non SC/ST	S	Non SC/S T	
UPS													
Percentage of	0.	0.74	-	-1.1	0.1	-1.3	1.81	1.44	-0.1	2.54	-	-0.3	

SENA in RNFE	8		0.4		4							0.2	
Percentage of RS in RNFE	4.7	-1.2	0.65	-0.7	-3.3	-0.8	-1.3	-2.6	-1.2	-1.08		0.22	-0.5
Percentage of CL in RNFE	1.42	-0.3	1.54	3.42	3.7	4.81	1.34	8.64	0	10.8		1.26	2.06
UPSS													
Percentage of SENA in RNFE	0.37	0.59	-0.8	-1.1	-0.1	-1.4	0.79	0.75	-0.4	2.69		-0.6	-0.5
Percentage of RS in RNFE	-4	-0.6	1.07	-0.7	-3.1	-0.6	-1.2	-2.8	-1.5	-1.02		0.68	-0.2
Percentage of CL in RNFE	1.61	-0.1	1.7	3.48	3.94	4.89	1.92	8.51	0	37.2		1.47	2.19
Note: SENA: Self-Employed in Non-agriculture, RS: Regular Salaried, CL: Casual Labour, RNFE: Rural Non-Farm Employment, UPS: Usual Principal Status, UPSS: Principal and Subsidiary Status.													
Source:													

The unemployment rates for the SCs were found to be higher than that of the Non SC/STs. In 1993-1994, the unemployment rate based on the CDS among the SC males (4.30 percent) were found to be higher than the Non SC/STs (2.70 percent). Similarly in 1977-1978 and 1983 the unemployment rates based on the CDS for the SC male workers were 6.73 and 7.16 percentage points respectively. Conversely these rates were significantly higher than the ones posited for the Non SC/STs (3.90 and 4.03 percentage points respectively).

A similar gap was found to exist for the female labourers as well. The unemployment rates based on the CDS for SC females were 2 percent in 1993-1994, 4 percent in 1977-1978, and 2.23 percent in 1983 which were again higher than 1.11 percent 0.97 percent and 1.72 percent respectively for the Non SC/ST females. The higher unemployment rates based on the CWS and

the CDS clearly elucidate that under – employment among the SC worker was much higher as compared to the Non SC/STs workers.

The disparities in the unemployment rates based on the CDS and the CWS observed at India levels emerged quite clearly in a majority of the states. In 1993-1994 in all the seventeen states the unemployment rates based on the CDS were higher among the SCs households. Similarly in 1977 -1978 and 1983, in fourteen out of the seventeen major states, the unemployment rates for the SC male workers were higher as compared to the Non SC/STs. The unemployment rates were also found to be higher for the females in fourteen to fifteen states in 1977-1978.

Further some disparities were also observed with regards to the wage earnings by the SCs and the Non SC/ST labourers in the rural areas. The wage rates received by the SC and the Non SC/ST workers are delineated in **Table 9**.

Stat us	1977 - 1978				1983				1993 - 1994				1999 - 2000			
	SC		Non SC/ST		SC		Non SC/ST		SC		Non SC/ST		SC		Non SC/ST	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
UPS	63.8	33.2 8	60.9 8	24.9 8	62.2 4	32.6 5	60.2 1	25.0 9	54. 9	25. 5	54. 4	21. 2	52.4 2	25. 2	50. 9	15. 5
UPS S	NA	NA	NA	NA	64.1 5	44.2 9	62.5 6	35.7 5	56 6	35. 6	55. 6	30	53.1 5	32. 5	52	22. 3
CW S	60.0 4	30.2 7	59.4 6	23.9 8	58.4 5	28.9 9	58.7 8	23.3 2	54. 5	29. 1	54. 3	25. 3	50.5 0.	27	50. 1	19. 1
CDS	54.5 8	24.4 4	56.2 8	20.1 2	53.0 9	24.1 6	55.7 5	20.4 2	52. 9	24. 1	53. 1	21. 2	46.2 2	21. 2	47. 6	14. 9

Note: M: Male, F: Female, UPS: usual principal status, UPSS: usual principal and subsidiary status, CWS: current weekly status, CDS: current daily status.

Source: National Sample Survey on Employment and Unemployment, 1977-78, 1983, 1983-94 and 1999-2000.

In the case of the wage rates for the rural labour in the non-agricultural sector, in 1993-1994 the wages received by the SC male labourers were however lower than the average wages received by all. As against the national average of India Rupees 32.48 the daily wages received by the SC

labourers were India Rupees 30.62 Similarly, in 1974-1975 the wages received by the SCs were Indian Rupees 13.53 as against 14.21 for all non-agricultural labourers. It is pertinent to mention here that the gaps in the wages received by the SC wage labourers and the national average were less because the latter category was inclusive of the SCs and the STs. Indeed, if the wages received by the Non SC/STs are to be compared to the SC wage labourers, the gap may be than be considerable.

Findings

A comparative analysis based on the NSSO data from 1983-1984 through 1999-2000 regarding the magnitude of the rural non-farm employment (total by age groups economic activities and by educational backgrounds) and changes therein for the SCs and the Non SC/STs bring to the fore some interesting results which highlight the nature of diversification in favour of the rural non-farm sector.

- a) The analysis findings that in 1999-2000 about one- fourths of the SC workers in the rural areas were engaged in the rural non-farm sector and that this ration was lower when posited against the one for the non SC/STs although the differences were marginal.
- b) The participation of the SC non-farm workers was relatively high in the age groups of 15-29, 30-44 and 45-59 respectively as compared to the age groups 10-14 and 60 and above. The analysis also highlighted that the participation under all age groups for the SCs was lower as compared to the participation under all age groups for the SCs was lower as compared to the Non SC/STs but in the case of the age group 60 and above the ratio was higher among the SCs. Further for all age groups the share of the self –employed among the Sc workers was higher than regular salaried and casual labourers, the only exception being the age group 15-29. This meant that the most productive age group of the SCs workers was employed as casual labourers. This is no so in the case of the Non Sc/STs workers, a majority of whom were self – employed. Also the low percentage of the SC workers employed as casual labourers according to the CDS indicated that the SC workers in the age group 15-29 were marginalized as well as under – employed a dismal situation indeed.
- c) The participation rate of the SC non-farm worker was highest in the economic categories of self – employment and casual labour and conversely the lowest in the case of regular salaried workers.

- d) As compared to the SCs the percentage share of the regular salaried and self-employed workers was high among the Non SC/STs. But their share was lower in the case of casual labors. In other works the Non SC/ST workers participated in better quality non-farm activities.
- e) The analysis further established that during the overall period i.e. 1983-1999 there was an increase in the percentage share of the rural non-farm workers both for the SCs and the non SC/STs primarily due to an increase in the proportion of casual labourers as against a decline in the numbers of the self – employed regular salaried workers. Similarly it was found that the numbers of the non-farm workers had also increased both for the SCs and the Non SC/STs but the rate of increase was higher for the SCs.
- f) The data further substantiated that the participation rates of the SCs with secondary and higher secondary education were higher in the economic category of casual labour. For instance in 1999-2000 about 8 percent of the SC workers who were graduates and above were engaged as casual labourers as against only 1.58 percent for the Non SC/STs. Clearly the SC skilled graduates face some form of discrimination in the regular employment due to which they are left with non option but to work for daily wages in unskilled jobs. This also indicates the importance of some form of affirmative action for the SCs in the regular employment of the rural non-farm sector as 8 percent of the graduates were not employed to their potential.

Conclusion

In conclusion, lack of human resource development in terms of education and skill as also lack of access to financial capital induces the SC workers towards casual unskilled jobs and low-income self employment business. Moreover it is revealed that the Government policy of promoting self –employment through providing cheap credit has achieved limited success as not only is the percentage of self-employed SC workers lower than that of the Non SC/ST workers, but it also has declined since the early 1980's. Along with easy access to financial capital an improvement in human capital, an equally necessary in order to enable the SC workers to take up better quality of self- employed activities/businesses. It is imperative to implement a policy of enhancing education through skill and training, which will enable the SC workers to participate in better quality of employment both in the form of self-employment activities as well as in regular salaried jobs.

References

- [1] Thorat, S.K., “Land Ownership Structure and Non-Farm Employment of Rural Households in India, *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol.36, No.3, 1993.
- [2] Thorat, S.K. and Sabharwal, N.S., “Rural Non-Farm Employment of the Scheduled Castes-A Comparative Study”, *Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Working Paper Series*, Vol.1, No.05, 2006.
- [3] Thorat, S.K. and Deshpande, R. S., “*Caste and Labour Market Discrimination*”, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp.841-854, 1999.
- [4] Chadha, G.K., “Non-Farm Employment for Rural Households in India-Evidence and Prognosis”, *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol.36, No.3, 1993.