

Scheduled Tribe Status and Competition for Public Sector Jobs: A Study in Kalimpong Area in Darjeeling

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***Abstract:** Government job plays an important role in empowering different communities particularly the Scheduled Tribe communities in their socio-economic fields. The Constitution of India through its various provisions [Article 15(A), 16(A) etc.] has reserved jobs for Scheduled Tribe Communities in various Central and State government institutions and concerns. Members of Scheduled Tribe communities are open to avail of the opportunities created by reservation in the job market. But it has been observed that even after more than six decades of the policy of reservation being in force all communities under ST category are not equally availing of the benefits of reservation because of their differential social and economic standing. The socio-economic background, outlook, educational status, location of residence, religious faiths etc. restrict different ST communities from attaining the Constitutional provisions uniformly. The already better off sections among the ST communities are in advantageous position as they attain more benefits compared to the ST communities that are economically and educationally worse off. The growth of population and inclusion of new communities under ST category have intensified the competition and widened inequality. The present paper attempts to find the status of major ST communities of Darjeeling in availing the public sector jobs. The empowerment of women among the different ST communities in specific and in proportion to the total female employees has also been investigated. Religion is seen to play an important role in attainment of education and therefore jobs. The present paper attempts to investigate the relation between education and employment among the different ST groups of the region.*

Keywords: Indian Constitution, Scheduled Tribe, reservation, government service, empowerment.

Introduction

Diversity - economic, social, cultural - is the essence of Indian union. The Constitution of India not only protects the innumerable communities that constitute India but also provides opportunities and safeguards for the weaker and downtrodden section of the society. The founders of Indian Constitution were aware of the historical injustice done on the backward classes and communities and introduced provisions of safeguard in the line of the policy of protective discrimination. Most of the tribes or *adivasis* have been categorized as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Constitution. Different tribal groups largely depend on nature for their livelihood. They are way behind the other communities in terms of education and control of productive resources. They are also subjected to various forms of exploitation and mal-treatment by the dominant and powerful sections of the society. The Constitution has used a two-fold strategy for the empowerment of the ST communities: firstly, provision of legal safeguards against discrimination and secondly, pro-active measures in the form of reservation both in the fields of education, job and representation in formal institutions of governance. The basic purpose of these measures is to guarantee proportional participation of members of tribal communities in public domain and decision making bodies. The Constitution also has made provisions to ensure that reservation policies are properly maintained and executed by the Centre, State governments and all allied bodies. It has been seen that more than 90 percent of the tribal workforce is employed in the private-informal sector, which is outside the jurisdiction of the constitutional provisions and where they have to compete with job seekers representing other categories.

Although the pro-active measures have brought some relief to the tribal youth in certain areas the benefits are not spread out equally among the members of all the tribes. The already better off sections of the tribes have cornered the fruits of reservation at the cost of the most backward sections among the tribes. The constitutional provisions therefore have failed to fulfill the aspirations of the needy. Even after more than six decades of independence there is wide-spread disparity among the tribal communities in terms of access to benefits offered under the policy of protective discrimination. The socio-economic background, approach to life, educational status, religious faith etc. restrict the different ST communities from availing of the Constitutional provisions uniformly. There is intense intra ST competition in government jobs. The growth of population and inclusion of many new communities under the ST category have made the competition even more intense.

Constitutional provisions

Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Indian Constitution enabled both the State and Central Governments to reserve seats in public services for the members of the SC and ST communities, with a view to ensure equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Other articles also provide measures for the protection of the SC/ST communities.

Article 15(4) says: 'Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class or citizens, which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.'

Article 16(4 A) states: 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provisions for reservation in the matter of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of SCs and STs which in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented under the State' (Constitutional 77th Amendment Act, 1995).

Article 16 (4 B) states: 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty percent reservation on total number of vacancies of that year' (Constitutional 81st Amendment Act, 2000).

Article 46 says: 'The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the SC and ST, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.'

Beside the above Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination of any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, etc.; untouchability (Article 17); and forced labour (Article 23). It provides for specific representation through reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in the Parliament (Article 330) and in the State Legislative Assemblies (Article 332), as well as, in Government and public sector jobs, in both the federal and state Governments (Articles 16(4), 330(4) and 335).

Status of STs in all India job market

The ST communities are spread differently across the states and UTs in India and the proportion of their engagement in different sectors is also not uniform. The North Eastern states taken together and in each state in this region the proportion of households with members having salaried job is more than any other region or state within the Indian union. Twenty one out of thirty six states and UTs have households with salaried jobs that account for more than the national average of 10.97%. The highest share of this category of households is in Mizoram (98.79%) followed by Lakshadweep (96.59%), Nagaland (93.91%) and Meghalaya (90.36%). One can find a greater concentration of tribal communities in the North Eastern states and the work participation rate in this region is much higher than the all-India average. In West Bengal only 7.21 percent households have members with salaried job which is significantly less than the all India average. The proportion of ST households with members having government jobs in West Bengal is 0.26% which is also much less than the national average of 0.48%.

Study area and methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from Kalimpong-I, one of the subdivisions of Darjeeling districts of West Bengal which is also one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-community districts of the state. The northern part of the district is hilly while the southern part, known as Tarai and Dooars, are the foothills and are mostly plain land covered with dense forest or tea plantation. Darjeeling district shares international borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Bangladesh as well as national boundary with Purnea district of Bihar, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur districts of West Bengal. This location has its special importance in having different central and state government offices in the district. As per 2011 census, the total population of Darjeeling district is 1846823 which accounts for 2.02 percent of the state population. The literacy rate of the district is 79.6 percent compared to the state's 76.3 percent.

No sector-wise detailed information on the employment in state and central government offices is available for the district of Darjeeling but one can use other sources to give some idea about occupational distribution of population of Darjeeling after independence. In spite of some irregularities and difficulties there is a trend of shift of occupation from primary to both secondary and tertiary sectors in Darjeeling. The negligible contribution of secondary sector in the district economy is a matter of great concern but

one can notice a significant shift of employment from primary to tertiary sector.

CD block-wise distribution of working population of Darjeeling district shows the comparative study of working population across the different types of working classes in 2001. CD block wise comparison of working population reveals that the majority of the workers in all the blocks particularly in Kalimpong I and II and Garubathan are linked with agriculture. The percentage of working population to total population of Kalimpong CD block I is 39.42 and the percentage of other workers to total workers is 28.75. In Kalimpong II, 39.97 percent of population is working population but the proportion engaged in other works is 23.33 percent. For Garubathan, 42.07 percent of population is working but their engagement in other works is 35.68 percent.

With the declaration of Tamang and Limbu as ST on 19.9.2003 the total number of notified Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal has increased from thirty eight to forty. Among them, the major tribes in the district of Darjeeling are: Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yalmo, Lepcha, Limbu (Subba) and Tamang. Numerically dominant among the tribes are Bhutia, Sherpa, Tibetan, and Yalmo. Most of the Tibetans and Bhutias use the same surname Bhutia and their naming style is also same. So we can club these two tribes into one category and thus we have six major tribes in Darjeeling district namely Lepcha, Limbu, (Subba), Tamang, Sherpa, Bhutia, and Yalmo.

In Darjeeling Hills the Tamangs are the largest among the ST communities followed by the Bhutia, Limbu and Lepcha. Thus after the inclusion of Tamangs and Limbus in the ST category the proportionate share for the other ST communities in the salaried job has changed. It is noteworthy that the literacy rate among all the ST communities of Darjeeling is higher (more than 70%) than the state average of 50.30%. The literacy rate has its direct impact on the job market. The proportions of main worker to total worker for all the tribes - Bhutia (73.74%), Tamang (72.52%) and Limbu (64.58%) and Lepcha (59.54%) - are more than state average of 57.86%. Among the main workers, the largest proportion are agricultural labourers (49.39%) followed by other workers (33.49%), cultivators (15.53%) and household industry (01.76%). But the nature of work participation among other tribes of Darjeeling is not same as that of the state. While Bhutia (75.95%), Limbu (68.08%) and Tamang (83.08%) participate more in other works the Lepcha work more as cultivator (42.52%). Availability of cultivable land might have helped the Lepcha to engage in farming;

engagement of Limbu (21.96%), Bhutia (15.94%) and Tamang (10.51%) are less in agriculture oriented activities.

We chose Kalimpong-I CD Block of Darjeeling district, West Bengal, as our study area. Kalimpong is primarily a rural hilly sub-division where except a few handicraft industries no other industries have ever developed. Unlike other parts of Darjeeling district even the tea and cinchona plantation have never been tried out in Kalimpong hills. May be, because of late addition of Kalimpong to Darjeeling district, tea planters took little interest in acquiring land for tea plantation; few tea estates are found in the south-eastern part of the sub-division in Garubathan block. Only a small part of Kalimpong-1 has been used for cinchona plantation but no factory for the production of final good out of cinchona has been developed in the block. The economy of the subdivision is primarily agriculture based. A large part of Kalimpong sub-division is covered with forest which is legally out of bound for the common people. Forest contributes a negligibly part of the economy also some local youth are employed as forest guards. Forest occupies a considerable proportion of total landed area of the sub-division where the total number of employees is 298 which is the highest among all the other sectors of the study area. It is 17.97 per cent of total employment in State Government services and 10.64 percent of total employment of Kalimpong-1.

We collected information from 162 offices and institutions covering 2801 employees during the period April 2013 and May 2014 in Kalimpong block-1. There are 5321 casual workers under GTA in Darjeeling district who are demanding for permanent status since 2007 and in 2011 they are brought under Pay Band category. We do not include employees under Pay Band category or casual workers in our study. We studied 11 central government employees, 37 state government employees, 87 primary school teachers, 17 High and Higher Secondary school teachers, 2 colleges teachers and 8 bank-insurance employees. We used a simple questionnaire and all information have been gathered from the high officials of the concerned office/school/college/bank and so on.

Distribution of employees according to tribal identity

We have divided the employees in six categories: state government employees, central government employees, state government sponsored primary school employees, state government sponsored secondary and higher secondary school employees, state government sponsored college

employees and bank and insurance employees in Kalimpong-1 block. We have chosen six ST communities in our study: Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang, Sherpa, Bhutia Yalmo and others. It has been seen that as high as 95.60% employees belong to these six ST communities and only 4.4 % represent other STs of the state of West Bengal. Out of 2801 employees in the study area the proportion of STs to the total employees is 30.85, which is four times higher than their entitlement under reservation. Within the STs all the six tribes do not have equal share of government and semi-government jobs.

In Kalimpong block-1 we have seen that Tamangs have the largest representation (34.38%) in government jobs followed by the Lepcha (24.07%), Bhutia (13.89%), Limbu (11.81%), Sherpa (10.53%) and Yalmo (0.93%). The proportion of employees corresponding to the total employee of the Block is also not uniform. The share of STs to the total employees is the highest for the Tamang (10.60%) followed by the Lepcha (7.43%), Bhutia (4.28%), Limbu (3.64%), Sherpa (3.25%) and Yalmo (0.29%). All STs together constitute 30.85% of total employees of the study area but individually only the Tamangs fulfill the reserved quota of 7.5%. The condition of the Yalmo tribe is pathetic as its members have not even one percent of total employment in the study area. Tamangs are the most advanced tribe in the study area but it may be noted that most of their members got the jobs much before they were included in the ST list in 2003. The representation of the Lepchas is close to the ST quota but all other tribes are far behind the quota. The proportion of population, level of education and training, economic base, living condition, educational standard of the parents, proximity to the educational institution etc. may be considered some of the causes behind uneven distribution of employees among the different ST population in Kalimpong-1.

The distribution of employees is also not equal across the different sectors in the study area. Tamang are the most advanced among the tribes have a share of 37.01% of state government jobs, 36.45% of the teaching jobs in state government sponsored primary schools and 31.25% of the teaching jobs in state government sponsored colleges. The representation of the Lepchas is the highest 33.33% in Central government jobs and 36.44% of teaching jobs in state government sponsored High and HS Schools. The share of the Bhutias is high in Bank and Insurance services (35.59). In all the sectors the presence of the Yalmo tribe is very negligible and their representation hovers around one percent. Beside the Tamangs, who have the largest representation (37.01%), in the state government jobs the other

tribes have an unequal share; the Lepchas (19.49%), Sherpa (13.78%), Limbu (12.40%), Bhutia (12.20%), other tribes (4.13%) and Yalmo (0.98%). The pattern of distribution of Central government employees is like this: Lepcha (33.93%), Tamang (23.21%), Bhutia (14.29%), Sherpa (12.50%), Limbu (8.93%), other tribes (3.57%), Yalmo (3.57%).

Among the employees in state government sponsored primary schools, the tribes have the following representation pattern: Tamang (36.45%), Lepcha (31.78%), Limbu (14.02%), Bhutia (12.15%), Sherpa (2.80%), and other tribes (2.80%). There is no representation of Yalmo tribe in the primary school service, college or bank and insurance sectors in the block. In the state government sponsored High and H/S Schools, the distribution of employees is like this: Lepcha (36.44%), Tamang (32.20%), Bhutia (11.86%), other tribes (9.32%), and Limbu (8.47%). Employees in state government sponsored colleges are limited within Tamang (31.25%), Lepcha (25.00%), Limbu (25.00%), Bhutia (12.50%), and other tribes (6.25%). In the bank and insurance sector we have found Bhutia (35.59%), Tamang (23.73%), Sherpa (12.95%), Lepcha (15.25%), and Limbu (8.47%). Both the Yalmo and other tribes remain unrepresented in this sector. The tribes are thus evidently unequally placed in terms of access to government and semi-government sectors of employment and one can also notice an uneven contest for jobs among the hill tribes in Kalimpong-1. We have also found that there are 20 different categories of employment where there is absolutely no entry of the jobseekers representing the tribes.

Intra-tribe distribution of employees according to gender

Taking the tribes separately we can see huge gender disparity in terms of participation in government and semi-government jobs. The male-female ratio is the highest among the Yalmo (1000:142) followed by Sherpa (1000:300), Limbu (1000:333), Tamang (1000:421), other tribes (1000:520), Lepcha (1000:540) and Bhutia (1000:622). The proportionate distribution of male among the total male employees in the study area is more among the Tamang (35.07%), Lepcha (22.65%), Limbu (12.75%), Bhutia (12.42%), Sherpa (11.74%), other tribes (4.19%) and Yalmo (1.17%). Almost same trend is found among the female employees: Tamang (32.84%), Lepcha (27.24%), Bhutia (17.16%), Limbu (9.70%), Sherpa (7.84%), other tribes (4.85%), and Yalmo (0.37%).

Among the women state government employees, 40.37% are Tamang followed by Lepcha (22.02%), Bhutia (15.60%), Sherpa (11.93%), Limbu

(7.43%) and other tribes (2.75%). But the picture is different in case of Central government employees where the Bhutia women constitute 33.33%, followed by the Lepcha (25.00%); all other tribes have almost equal share. Lepcha women with 41.46% representation dominate in Primary School service followed by Tamang (26.83%), Limbu (14.63%), Bhutia (12.12%) and other tribes (4.88%). In case of High School service the Tamang women have the largest representation with 35.94%, followed by the Lepcha (31.25%), Bhutia (14.06%), Limbu (9.38%) and other tribes (0.38%). The Lepcha and Tamang have equal share (30.00%) of the employees in the college followed by Limbu (20.00%), Bhutia and other tribes (10.00% each). In Bank and Insurance sector the Bhutia women dominate with a share of 31.25% of the total employment, followed by the Sherpa (21.88%), Lepcha and Tamang (both 18.75%), and Limbu (9.38%). It is seen that Lepcha women prefer school (teaching) jobs while the Bhutia women prefer jobs in the bank and insurance sector. There are at least nine different categories of employment which have no representation from the female members of any tribe.

Distribution of ST employees across the sectors

The ST employees constitute 30.85 percent of total employees of Kalimpong 1 which is nearly four times higher than their combined quota under reservation. The proportionate share remains around the mean value in case of state government (30.69%), Central government (27.32%) and High School (30.47%) but it is much less in case of college (19.51%) and much more in case of bank and insurance (40.14%). We have found that 58.80% of total ST employees are in the state government jobs followed by high school (13.66%), primary school (12.38%), bank and insurance (6.83%), central government (6.48%) and college service (1.85%). Clubbing all the state government and semi-state government sectors together the share of the six ST groups is 86.69% of the total employment in these sectors. Their representation in central government jobs is 6.48% and in bank and insurance is 6.83% as these sectors are dominated by the employees from the non-reserved categories.

Considering the percentage share of each tribe to total ST employees of Kalimpong block-1 we have seen that the Tamangs have the largest share of the total jobs occupied by the six ST communities with 34.38%, followed by the Lepcha (24.07%), Bhutia (13.89%), Limbu (11.81%), Sherpa (10.53%), other tribes (4.40%) and Yalmo (0.93%). It is seen that excepting the Tamangs, which have a share of 10.60% of the total jobs in the block,

no other tribe exceeds the reserved quota (for the STs) of 7.5% in government jobs. The Lepchas have a share of 7.43% while the Bhutias have 4.28%, followed by Limbu (3.64%), Sherpa (3.25%), other tribes and Yalmo (0.29%). Thus, the Tamangs are ahead of other ST communities while the 'other tribes' and the Yalmo have a very marginal presence in government and semi-government jobs. The Lepcha and Bhutia communities figure in the middle in terms of their access to jobs.

Looking at tribe-wise distribution pattern of employees we see that among the Lepchas 47.60% have jobs in the state government offices, 20.67% in high and HS schools, 16.35% in primary schools, 9.23% in central government offices, 4.33% in bank and insurance and only 1.92% in colleges. Among the Limbus the distribution pattern of employees is like this: state government (61.76%), primary school (14.71%), high school (9.80%), bank and insurance (4.90%), central government (4.90%), and college (3.92%). Tamang employees are absorbed mostly in the state government job (63.30%) followed by primary school (13.13%), high and HS school (12.79%), bank and insurance (4.71%), central government (4.38%) and college (1.68%). The Sherpa job-holders have the highest representation in state government jobs (76.92%), followed by bank and insurance (10.99%), central government (7.69%), primary school (3.30%), high and HS school (1.10%). The Sherpa remain unrepresented in College services. The Bhutia job holders are distributed like this: state government (51.67%), bank and insurance (17.50%), high and HS school (11.76%), primary school (10.03%), central government (6.67%), college (1.67%). Yalmos are mostly found in state government jobs (62.50%), central government jobs (25.00%) and in high and HS School (12.50%). Other tribes are found in state government jobs (55.26%), followed by high and HS school (28.95%), primary school (7.89%), central government (5.26%) and college (2.63%).

In all categories of job, Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang and Bhutia not only fulfill their respective reservation quota but in some cases their presence is three to four times more than the quota. On the other hand the presence of Sherpa, Yalmo and other tribes is minimal. The share of Lepcha to the total ST employees is highest in the category of teachers in high and HS schools (36.44%) followed by central government jobs (33.33%), primary school teachers (31.78%), college (25.00%), state government jobs (19.99%) and bank and insurance sector (15.25%). For the Limbu the distribution pattern of employees to the total ST employees is like this: college (25.00%), primary school (14.02%), state government (12.40%), central government (8.99%),

high and HS schools (8.47%), bank and insurance (8.47%). Tamangs are the most advanced among tribes in terms of high share of government and semi-government jobs. Their share of jobs held by the STs in the study area is like this: state government (37.01%), primary school (36.45%), high and HS school (32.20%), college (31.25%), bank and insurance (23.73%), central government (23.31%). Sherpas fulfill their reserved quota having a share of 16.90% of the jobs in bank and insurance, 13.78% of state government jobs, 12.50% of the central government jobs, but they have only 2.80% share of primary school jobs, and 0.85% of high and HS School jobs. The Bhutia have the largest share of jobs in bank and insurance (35.59%), followed by central government jobs (14.29%), college (12.50%), state government (12.20%), primary school (12.15%), high and HS school (11.86%). The Yaloms fails to fulfill their quota in all categories of job and remain unrepresented in primary school, college and bank insurance. Except in high and HS school where the share of other tribes is 9.32%, they fall short of their quota in all other categories of jobs.

Overall, the Lepcha are above the quota in two categories, namely, primary school (10.56%) and high and HS school (11.11%), the Tamangs exceed the quota in four categories like state government (11.34%), primary school (12.11%), high and HS school (9.82%) and bank and insurance (9.52%) and Bhutia in one category namely bank and insurance (14.29%). The remaining tribes have a share which is much less than their quota. Out of 42 entries only in seven categories (16.68%) the reservation quota has been fulfilled by the individual tribe across the types of jobs. Tribes not only fail to fulfill the reservation quota but remain unrepresented in five categories in their own homeland. The findings of the study clearly point to inter-tribal inequality in terms of access to the categories of jobs and in most cases the share of jobs of an individual tribe is much less than their reserved quota. This precisely means that the policy of reservation eludes justice and the principle of equality as the already advanced tribes corner the benefit at the cost of the most backward and more deserving tribes.

Conclusion

Tribes in India are not distributed equally all over the country and there are pockets of concentration of different tribes. Tribes are declared as ST state wise and the same tribe may not be able to avail the provisions of reservation uniformly across the states and union territories. Inequality among the tribes is noted in terms of access to jobs reserved for them across the states and regions. Socio-economic, political, historical factors

place different tribes differently with differential 'life chances'. In Darjeeling, as in other parts of the country, there exists inequality among the STs in terms of access to jobs under the reserved category. Inclusion of new communities under ST category has placed the economically and socially weaker tribal communities in a difficult situation as they are not equipped in terms of education, economy and skill, to compete with the relatively advanced ST communities for government jobs. In Kalimpong - I the new entrants (Tamang and Limbu) are better placed compared the conventional ST communities and therefore the former corner the job opportunities at the cost of the latter categories who deserve secure government jobs more than anybody else to combat poverty. Intra-tribal inequalities have also been noted in respect to categories of job, nature of job, gender and all other aspects among the ST communities in our study area.

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