



Research Article


Scheduled Castes in India: An Examination of Constitutional Provisions, Safeguards, and Development Schemes

Dr. Sonkhothang Haokip*

Department of Political Science, Arunachal University of Studies, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sonkhothang Haokip*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15237275>

Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>This study explores the intricate process of identifying SC (Scheduled Castes) in India, looking at the safeguards, development programs, and constitutional provisions put in place to advance the welfare of SC groups. The Indian Constitution provides various safeguards for SCs, including social, economic, educational, cultural, political, and service safeguards. These safeguards seek to advance the economic and educational interests of SCs, eliminate "untouchability," and offer reservations in educational institutions, government services, and elected bodies. The study analyses the provision of reserved seats in India's State Assemblies (2019), the Lok Sabha, and Union Territories and the reservation percentage for each State for government services. Additionally, it examines the role of the NCSC (National Commission for SC) in overseeing the implementation of safeguards and development schemes for SCs. Various programs, such as the PMSS (Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme) and the NOSS (National Overseas Scholarship Scheme), are also discussed, highlighting their impact on promoting the educational and economic empowerment of SC communities. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the complexities of recognising and safeguarding the rights of SC in India, highlighting the need for continued efforts to promote social justice and equality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 24-02-2025 ▪ Accepted: 23-03-2025 ▪ Published: 17-04-2025 ▪ IJCRM: 4(2); 2025: 212-221 ▪ ©2025, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes
	<p>How to Cite this Article</p> <p>Haokip S. Scheduled Castes in India: An Examination of Constitutional Provisions, Safeguards, and Development Schemes. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(2):212-221.</p> <p>Access this Article Online</p>  <p>www.multiarticlesjournal.com</p>

KEYWORDS: India, Scheduled Castes, Population, Safeguards, Development Schemes

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian society, like many others, is characterised by stark social and economic inequalities. The Scheduled Castes (SCs), formerly known as "untouchables," are among the most disadvantaged groups struggling with low social standing and limited access to resources. Despite constituting around 16.6% of India's population, according to the 2011 census, the SCs face significant challenges in achieving social and economic equality

[Nath Baiju, K. Parakandathil & Ruvega PK 2015, PP. 1-9, 1] [19]. Historically, people have discriminated against, excluded, and marginalised the SCs, perpetuating their disadvantaged position. The Indian Constitution, recognising the need to address these injustices, provides specific legal and constitutional protections to the SCs [Karade Jagan 2008, Pp. 11-12, 2] [14]. These policies' main goals are to enhance the social and economic status of SCs and other marginalised groups and

ensure their equitable participation in the nation's economic, political, and social life. [Constitutional Safeguard for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes n.d, 3] [5]. The Constitution also establishes the National Commission for SCs, which plays a crucial role in defending the interests of the SC community. Additionally, various government schemes and the Government initiate programs to promote the educational, economic, and social empowerment of the SCs [Kanwar Jeetu 2019, Pp. 1-11, 4] [13]. This article explores the recognition of SCs in the Indian Constitution, the percentage of the SC population in each State, and the various constitutional provisions and schemes to safeguard their rights and promote their development. By examining these aspects, we can better understand the complex issues surrounding the SCs and their efforts to address them. Furthermore, this analysis aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities for promoting social justice and equality for the SCs in India.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary Objectives

- i) To examine the constitutional provisions and safeguards for SC (Scheduled Castes) in India.
- ii) To analyse the development schemes and programs implemented to promote the welfare of SC communities.

Secondary Objectives

- i) To investigate the provision of reserved seats in India's State Assemblies, the Lok Sabha, and Union Territories.
- ii) To assess the role of the National Commission for SC (NCSC) in overseeing the implementation of safeguards and development schemes for SCs.
- iii) To identify the impact of these safeguards and schemes on promoting the educational and economic empowerment of SC communities.

Overall Objective

To provide insights into the complexities of recognising and safeguarding the rights of SC in India.

Study Significance

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the recognition and safeguarding of Scheduled Castes' (SCs) rights in India. Here are some key aspects of its significance:

- i) **Promoting Social Justice and Equality:** The study highlights the need for continued efforts to promote social justice and equality for SC communities, which have historically faced discrimination and marginalisation.
- ii) **Understanding Constitutional Provisions and Safeguards:** Through analysing the constitutional guarantees and protections for SCs, the research offers important insights into the challenges of acknowledging and defending their rights.
- iii) **Informing Policy Decisions:** The analysis of reserved seats in India's State Assemblies, the Lok Sabha, and Union Territories, as well as the reservation percentage for each

State, can inform policy decisions to promote the welfare of SC communities.

- iv) **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Development Schemes:** The study's analysis of several initiatives, including the NOSS (National Overseas Scholarship Scheme) and the PMSS (Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme), can assist in assessing how well they support the economic and educational empowerment of SC communities.
- v) **Contribution to the Literature:** This comprehensive analysis contributes to the existing literature on SCs in India, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in recognising and safeguarding their rights.

Statement of the problem:

Recognizing and safeguarding Scheduled Castes' (SCs) rights in India remains a complex and ongoing challenge. Despite constitutional provisions and safeguards promoting social, economic, educational, cultural, and service equality, SC communities face significant barriers to educational and economic empowerment. Specifically, there is a need to address the following problems:

- i) **Ineffective Implementation of Safeguards:** The Indian Constitution provides various safeguards for SCs, but their implementation remains inconsistent, leading to continued disparities in education and employment.
- ii) **Limited Access to Education and Employment Opportunities:** SC communities face significant barriers to accessing quality education and employment opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.
- iii) **Inadequate Representation and Participation:** Providing reserved seats in India's State Assemblies, the Lok Sabha, and Union Territories is insufficient to ensure adequate representation and participation of SC communities in the political process.
- iv) **Lack of Effective Development Schemes:** Various programs aimed at promoting the educational and economic empowerment of SC communities, such as the PMSS (Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme) and the NOSS (National Overseas Scholarship Scheme), have had limited impact due to inadequate funding, implementation, and monitoring.
- v) **Political Exclusion:** SC communities face significant barriers to political participation, including limited access to political power, inadequate representation, and lack of voice in decision-making processes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of Research: This study uses a descriptive and analytical research design and secondary data sources to examine the recognition and protection of Scheduled Castes' (SCs') rights in India.

Data Sources

- i) **Textbooks and Academic Journals:** Relevant books, articles, and research papers on SCs in India, published in reputable academic journals.

- ii) **Websites and Online Resources:** Official websites of government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations working on SC issues in India.
- iii) **Government Statistics and Reports:** Data from government sources, such as the Census of India, NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization), and MSJE (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).
- iv) **Government Annual Reports:** Annual reports of government departments and ministries responsible for SC welfare and development.
- v) **Schemes and Programs for SCs:** Analysis of government schemes and programs aimed at promoting the educational, economic, and social empowerment of SC communities.

Data Collection Methods

- i) **Documentary Research:** Collection and analysis of secondary data from textbooks, journals, websites, and government reports.
- ii) **Content Analysis:** Analysis of government schemes and programs for SCs.

Data Analysis Methods

- i) **Descriptive Statistics:** Analysis of government statistics and data, including percentages, to identify trends and patterns related to:
 - a) Population percentage of SCs in different states
 - b) Number of reserved seats for SCs in state assemblies and the Lok Sabha
 - c) Reservation percentage for SCs in government jobs and educational institutions
- d) **Inferential Statistics:** The analysis of percentages and other quantitative data to draw inferences and conclusions about recognising and safeguarding SCs' rights in India.
- e) **Thematic Analysis:** Analysis of documentary research to identify key themes and findings.
- f) **Policy Analysis:** Analysis of government schemes and programs to evaluate their effectiveness in promoting SC welfare and development.

1. The Recognition of SC (Scheduled Castes) in India

"Scheduled Castes" (SCs) are defined as races, castes, tribes, or groupings that Article 341 designates as such under Article 366(24) of the Indian Constitution [Singh Neha & Chauhan Sujata 2018, Pp. 226-238, 5] ^[20]. According to Article 341(I), in consultation with the State Governor, the President may specify the castes, tribes, or groups identifying the following groups as SCs about that UT (Union Territory) or State. Experts/professionals make the specification through public notification. The Parliament has the authority to add or remove any caste, tribe, or group from the list of SCs by law under Article 341(2). Subsequent notifications may amend previous ones, but only under specific circumstances. In this context, Article 16(4) refers to SCs as "backward castes." However, neither the Constitution nor the laws clearly define economically and socially disadvantaged classes. Identifying such classes is left to

the discretion of the appointed authorities. The Supreme Court has ruled that it is not within its jurisdiction to establish criteria for determining backwardness. Identifying backward classes begins with caste, professional associations, or other groups. It is feasible to start with these groups and examine whether they meet the criteria for backwardness. If they do, a "backward class of citizens" encompasses all socio-economic groups, communities, and classes. The fundamental idea and overall objective should consider all relevant groups, sections, and classes that comprise the nation's population. One may start with this group, section, or class and then move on to others, specifying a class as backwards without placing it in the same relative position as the SC. It is incorrect to assume that the educationally and socially weaker sections mentioned in Article 15 and the backward classes of citizens envisioned in Article 16(4) are the same [Singh Mahendra Prasad & Raj Subhendu Ranjan 2012, P. 94, 6] ^[21]. Article 16(4) emphasises social backwardness. India has historically faced challenges due to social, educational, and economic factors. Article 341 of the Constitution mandates the Statutory List of SCs notification. The Constitution (SC) Order, 1950 was the first to provide the SC lists. Alternatives to statehood for dispersed minorities include reserved legislative and administrative seats. The Constitution of India validates claims for group rights, stipulating group benefits for SCs and other underprivileged groups. These benefits include reserved constituencies, quotas for administrative positions, and admissions to colleges, universities, and medical and technical schools. Although the Constitution does not explicitly mention the term "SC," Article 341 empowers the President to compile a list in consultation with each State's Governor. An Act of Parliament has since amended the President's orders defining the SCs in each State. The SC list may include OBC (Other Backward Classes) and SC. However, since the term "backward classes" describes SCs in the laws, it is essential to distinguish between the two [Dasbasu, D 1960, P. 331, 7] ^[8]. According to Article 341 of the Constitution, after consulting with the Governor, the President may publish a public notice about any UT or State identifying the castes, tribes, or races that will be considered SCs [Johari, J C 1995, P. 350, 8] ^[12]. The Special Officer for the Union is responsible for investigating all matters related to the protections for minorities outlined in the Constitution concerning the Union's business. The Special Officer must report to the President at designated intervals on how these protections work. The President will then arrange to present all of these reports to Parliament. The Constitution does not define the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and SC categories to designate backward groups. Instead, the President may prepare a list of these castes and tribes under Articles 342 and 341 [Upadhyay HC 1991, P. 47, 9].

2. Scheduled Castes Population in Indian States

Scheduled Castes (SCs) have historically comprised a significant portion of India's population. Over half of the SC population lives in seven states: Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. Notably, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and West

Bengal have SC populations exceeding one-fifth of their total population. As of the 2001 Census, SCs comprised 16.2% of India's population. The 2011 census revealed a slight increase, with SCs comprising roughly 16.6% of the population. A breakdown of the population distribution shows that SCs account

for 12.6% of the urban population and 18.5% of the rural population. India's population experienced a 17.64% growth rate every decade from 2001 to 2011. During this period, the decadal SC growth rate was 2.8%. The 2011 census provides a detailed breakdown of the SC population in each State.

Table 1: SC Populations and States/UTs based on the 2011 census

SN	State	Population Percentage	SN	State	Population Percentage
1	Uttar Pradesh	20.70%	19	Uttarakhand	18.76%
2	West Bengal	23.51%	20	Himachal Pradesh	25.19%
3	Tamil Nadu	20.01	21	Jammu & Kashmir	7.38%
4	Assam	7.15	22	Andhra Pradesh	16.41%
5	Bihar	15.91	23	Puducherry	15.73%
6	Maharashtra	11.81%	24	Chandigarh	18.9%
7	Goa	1.71%	25	Manipur	3.78%
8	Rajasthan	17.83%	26	Sikkim	4.63%
9	Karnataka	17.15%	27	Madhya Pradesh 15.15%	15.62%
10	Punjab	31.94%	28	Meghalaya	0.58%
11	Orissa	17.13%	29	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1.8%
12	Haryana	20.17%	30	Daman & Diu	2.52%
13	Gujarat	6.74%	31	Mizoram	0.11%
14	Jharkhand	12.08%	32	Ladakh	0.07%
15	Chhattisgarh	12.82%	33	Arunachal Pradesh	Nil
16	Kerala	9.10%	34	Nagaland	Nil
17	Delhi	12.79%	35	Lakshadweep	Nil
18	Tripura	17.83%	36	Andaman & Nicobar Island	Nil

[10] Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics: Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, New Delhi, 18 September.

India's SC (Scheduled Castes) population varies significantly across states. Punjab leads with the highest SC population percentage at 31.94%, followed by Himachal Pradesh (25.19%), West Bengal (23.51%), and Uttar Pradesh (20.70%). In contrast, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Lakshadweep have zero percent SC population.

3. Provisions in the Constitution for the SC safeguarding

Notably, the Indian Constitution guarantees safeguards for the SC community, which strongly emphasises the reduction of social barriers and educational and economic goals. Article 41 highlights employment, education, and public assistance rights, whereas SC, ST, and Weaker Sections' economic and educational interests are supported by Article 46. India is actively combating prejudices based on caste, religion, ideology, gender, and other factors. The Constitution aims to achieve social justice and equality for all disadvantaged groups by providing equal access to opportunities and high-quality education. It aims to end prejudice by equating these groups with other groups, ensuring equal opportunities for each person to achieve top-notch education according to their plan and techniques. By outlawing discrimination based on caste, race, religion, gender, or place of birth, the Indian Constitution guarantees protection for every person. Article 14 categorises protections offered to SC under significant headings, ensuring the State cannot restrict their legal rights within India's boundaries. Key Constitutional Provisions for SC Safeguards:

(i) SC Commission for Safeguarding in India: Established by the Constitution, with a National Commission (NC) appointed by the President [Basu, D. Das 2002, P. 393, 11]. Article 341 (1)

identifies SC individuals, and Article 338 mandates the appointment of a Special Officer to oversee safeguards for SC welfare. The Special Officer, appointed as the Commissioner of SC, is responsible for investigating issues related to protections and provisions in various statutes, with the Indian President reporting on their effectiveness. The Government established 17 regional offices across India to support the SC Commissioner.

An amendment to Article 338 of the Constitution replaced the one-member system with a multi-member one. The 46 Amendment, aimed at modifying Article 338 of the Constitution to replace the one-member system with a multi-member one, was enacted by Parliament members due to concerns that the Office of the Commissioner for SC needed to be revised to schedule for revision in managing constitutional safeguards. In 1987, the Government established the NCSC (National Commission for SC), a multi-member panel to address the issue of SC. The 89th Amendment to the Constitution Act of 2003, effective February 19, 2004, transferred the responsibilities of the previous NCSC. The MSJE released the NCSC Rules on February 20, 2004, after the NCSC had framed them.

NCSC Composition: The NCSC comprises a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and three other members, each chosen by the President. The vice-chairman and Chairman are cabinet members [Bakshi, P.M, 2013, P. 306, 12] ^[6]. The NCSC can establish a commission to examine documents and question witnesses, and anybody can be summoned for questioning while making an affidavit and swearing an oath. They are responsible for planning for their welfare, protection, and advancement. However, the 102nd Amendment Act of 2018 completed this duty. The National Commission administers India's Civil Rights and

Atrocities Act for SC and ST. The NCSC has investigated numerous recent atrocity reports.

Table 2(i): SC List National Commission, NCSC Chairman and Vice Chairman

National Commission	The NCSC Chairman	Vice Chairman	Year
1 st National Commission	Mr. Suraj Bhan	Fakir Bhai Vaghela	2004
2 nd National Commission	Dr. Buta Singh	Narendra M.Kamble	2007
3 rd National Commission	Dr. P.L. Punia	Raj Kumar Verka	2010
4 th National Commission	Mr. Raj Kumar Verka	Raj Kumar Verka	2013
5 th National Commission	Dr. Ram Shankar Katheria	L. Murugan	2017
6 th National Commission	Mr. Vijay Sampla	Arun Halder	2021

[13] Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Commission for SC Brochure 2018. Accessed 8 September 2024. Available from <https://ncsc.nic.in>

Table 2 (ii): NCSC Members

Members (1)	Members (2)	Members (3)	Year
Mr. Surekha Lambature	Mr. Phool Chand	Mr. V. Devendra.	2004
Mr. Mahendra Boudh	Mr. Mrutyunjaya Nayak	Mr. Satya Bahin	2007
Mr. Latha Priyakumar	M. Shivanna,	Mr. Raju Parmar	2010
Mr. Ishwar Singh	Mr. P.M. Kamalamma,	Mr. Raju Parmar.	2013
Mr. Keshapagula Ramulu	Mr. Yogendra P.	Mr.Swaraj Vidwaan	2017
Mr. Subhash Ramnath P.	Mr. Dr Anju Bala	-	2021

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Commission for SC Brochure 2018. Accessed 8 September 2024. Available from <https://ncsc.nic.in>

Every State Government and the Union must consult the Commission on any significant policy issues affecting SC (Scheduled Castes) under Article 338, Clause 9 of the Indian Constitution. The Chairman of the National Commission for SC (NCSC) was selected based on questionnaire results. The NCSC is a formal organisation that protects the interests of SCs in India. In addition to providing resources to support the SC community, it aims to offer protection from exploitation and discrimination. As it works with the SC and its growth, the NCSC is an essential organisation in India. All significant policy issues affecting SCs must be discussed with the Commission by the Union Government, as mandated by the Constitution and each State Government. Monitoring the Indian government's or any State government's important policy choices, legislative acts, and executive actions is essential. According to Article 338's Clause (10), "the SC references must be read as encompassing mentions to such Other Backward Classes (OBC), depending on the President, by order, identified after receiving the Commission's report submitted by Article 340, Clause (1)".

(ii) Social Safeguards: Article 15 of the Indian Constitution prohibits prejudice based on sex, caste, religion, ethnicity, and place of birth. There are no limitations or restrictions on citizens' access to public areas like shops, restaurants, hostels, and entertainment venues, nor in public resources like wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, and public resorts. The State must provide equitable treatment before the law and protection against it. The Constitution's Articles 17 and 25(2) (b) mandate that the State provide social protections for SC. Article 17 deals with the removal of untouchability in society. To address untouchability against SCs, the Parliament passed the Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989 and the Civil Rights Act of 1955. Article 25(2) (b) aims to promote social welfare, reform, and the inclusion of all socio-economic strata in public Hindu religious organisations [Kanwar Jeetu 2019, P. 1-11,14] ^[13].

(iii) Economic Safeguards: Articles 23, 24, and 46 of the Indian Constitution provide economic protection for Scheduled Castes (SC). Article 23 states that beggars, human trafficking, and other similar types of forced labour are prohibited, and breaking this rule has legal penalties. Article 24 prohibits children under 14 from working in mines, factories, or other dangerous jobs. Despite not being specifically addressed in this article, SC makes up the majority of young workers engaged in dangerous tasks. "The State shall promote with special care the economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly the SC, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation," Article 46 states [Bakshi PM 2013, P.90, 15] ^[6]. According to Article 335, while filling jobs involving the administration of the State or Union, the demands of members of the SC must be considered while administrative effectiveness is maintained. The State may enforce forced labour for public goals without violating the 23(2). However, when it does so, it is prohibited from discriminating exclusively based on racial criteria, religion, caste, or class.

(iv) Educational and Cultural Safeguard: The State may provide special arrangements for advancing any socially and educationally behind people, including SC, under the 15 (4). The State may set aside seats for SCs in general and professional courses at educational institutions under this article, including private, state-aided or unaided institutions, except minority educational institutes. The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act of 2002 added Article 21A, ensuring that all children aged 6-14 are entitled to free and compulsory schooling. Article 29 (2) also stated that no citizen, including SC members, can be denied admission to or receive state aid based on race, language, caste, religion, or any combination thereof. [J. Manjunath, 2010, Pp. 167-173, 16] ^[11]. Article 350 guarantees the right to preserve distinctive languages, scripts, and traditions and mandates

instruction in the mother tongue, while Article 29 safeguards the rights of minorities, including SC.

(v) Political Safeguards: Each State's Legislative Assembly has seats reserved for the SC, except for the ST in Assam's autonomous districts, which is mandated by Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution, ensuring equal representation in State/UT/local Governments, State legislative assemblies, and Parliament. Article 330: Reservation of seats for the SC in the House of People. Additionally, the State Legislative Assembly reserves seats for SC under Article 332. Each State and UT has

to set aside seats in the Lok Sabha for the SC based on population. Any State's Legislative Assembly's number of seats set aside for SCs under clause (1) must correspond to the State's total population to the greatest extent feasible [Laxmikanth M 2012, P. 55.1, 17] ^[16]. SC and ST seats account for roughly 131 of the 543 Lok Sabha seats or around 24% of all available seats [Bakshi PM 2013, P. 303, 18] ^[6]. The Delimitation Commission of India modifies the seats designated for SCs based on population changes. The reserved seats are provided in each State as shown in the table below:

Table 3: Provision of Reserved Seats in India's State Assemblies, 2019

Name of UT/State	Total seats	SC Seats	Name of UT/State	Total Seats	SC Seats
Andhra Pradesh	175	29	Punjab	117	34
Arunachal Pradesh	60	-	Rajasthan	200	34
Assam	126	08	Sikkim	32	02
Bihar	243	38	Tamil Nadu	234	40
Chhattisgarh	90	10	Tripura	60	10
Goa	40	01	Uttarakhand	70	13
Gujarat	182	13	Uttar Pradesh	403	84
Haryana	90	17	West Bengal	294	68
Himachal Pradesh	68	17	Telangana	119	14
Jharkhand	81	09	Union Territory		
Karnataka	224	36	Chandigarh	-	-
Kerala	140	14	Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	230	35	Delhi	70	12
Maharashtra	288	29	Lakshadweep	-	-
Manipur	60	01	Pondicherry	30	05
Meghalaya	60	-	Jammu & Kashmir	90	07
Mizoram	40	-	Ladakh	-	-
Nagaland	60	-	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-	-
Orissa	147	24			

[19] State-wise Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, MLA and MLC Seats. n.d. Accessed 19 October 2024. Available from <https://gkchronicle.com>

Scheduled Caste (SC) seats in India vary significantly across states and union territories. Some states, such as Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh, have no SC seats due to their relatively small SC population. Similarly, certain union territories like Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Ladakh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands also lack reserved seats due to low SC populations. In contrast, union territories like Delhi, Pondicherry, Jammu, and Kashmir do have reserved seats. Among the states, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of reserved SC seats at 85, followed by West Bengal at 68 and Andhra Pradesh at 48. The population of each State determines

the allocation of SC seats. However, some states and union territories lack reserved seats due to insufficient population. For instance, Sikkim has the fewest total seats in its State Assembly, with only 32 seats, whereas Uttar Pradesh has the most, with 403 seats. States with substantial populations, such as Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, have bicameral legislatures. The Indian Constitution ensures representation of SCs in state legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha through reserved seats. The Constitution's Articles 332 and 330 require SCs to have reserved seats in state legislatures, and Article 331 guarantees representation in the Lok Sabha.

Table 4: Provision of Lok Sabha SC Seats Reserved in the Parliament of India and UTs

Name of States/UTs	Total seats	SC Seats	Name of State/UT	Total Seats	SC Seats
Andhra Pradesh	25	04	Punjab	13	04
Arunachal Pradesh	02	-	Rajasthan	25	04
Assam	14	01	Sikkim	01	-
Bihar	40	06	Tamil Nadu	39	07
Chhattisgarh	11	01	Tripura	02	-
Goa	02	-	Uttarakhand	05	01
Gujarat	26	02	Uttar Pradesh	80	17
Haryana	10	02	West Bengal	42	10
Himachal Pradesh	04	01	Telangana	17	03
Jharkhand	14	01	Union Territory		

Karnataka	28	05	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	01	-
Kerala	20	02	Chandigarh	01	-
Madhya Pradesh	29	04	Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu	02	-
Maharashtra	48	05			
Manipur	02	-	Delhi	07	01
Meghalaya	02	-	Lakshadweep	01	-
Mizoram	01	-	Pondicherry	01	-
Nagaland	01	-	Jammu & Kashmir	05	-
Orissa	21	03	Ladakh	01	-

[20] List of constituencies of the Lok Sabha. Wikipedia. n.d. Accessed 21 October 2024. Available from <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

The Indian Constitution provides various safeguards for Scheduled Castes (SC) to ensure their representation and protection in the country. The Lok Sabha's reserve of seats for SCs is one such clause. As per the table, 84 reserved seats for SCs are allocated based on their population share. However, eight states - Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Sikkim – do not have Lok Sabha seats for SCs. In contrast, some Union Territories (UTs), such as Delhi, have reserved seats for SCs in the Lok Sabha. The table also reveals that Sikkim, Mizoram, and Nagaland have the fewest total seats, with one each, while Uttar Pradesh has the most seats, with 80. Notably, SCs do not have any seats in the Rajya Sabha, India's upper house of Parliament.

(v) Service Safeguards: Articles 16(4A), 335, and 16(4) of the Indian Constitution provide service safeguards for SCs [Narang, A.S 2012, P. 559, 22]. These provisions enable the State to

reserve posts or appointments for members of underrepresented citizen classes, including SCs. According to Article 335, consideration should be given to the claims of SC members when appointing people to positions in offices and services related to Union or State services, while maintaining administrative effectiveness. The State may create a policy that reserves promotions to any group or groups of posts in the State's services for SC members that the State deems remain underrepresented in the State's services, notwithstanding Article 16(4A). The claims of SC members to posts and services under Article 335 are considered consistent with the maintenance of administrative efficiency. The following table shows the reservation percentage offered by the Government for Government services. This provision aims to promote representation and inclusion of SCs in government services, address historical disparities, and promote social justice.

Table 5: SC Reservation Percentage for each State for Government Services

SN	Name of the State/UTs	% SC	SN	Name of the State/UT	% SC
1	Andhra Pradesh	15	20	Punjab	29
2	Arunachal Pradesh	-	21	Rajasthan	16
3	Assam	07	22	Sikkim	07
4	Bihar	15	23	Tamil Nadu	18
5	Chhattisgarh	13	24	Tripura	17
6	Goa	02	25	Uttaranchal	19
7	Gujarat	07	26	Uttar Pradesh	21
8	Haryana	20	27	West Bengal	22
9	Himachal Pradesh	25	28	Telangana	15
10	Jharkhand	10		Union Territory	
11	Karnataka	15	29	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-
12	Kerala	08	30	Chandigarh	-
13	Madhya Pradesh	16		Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli	03
14	Maharashtra	13	31	Delhi	15
15	Manipur	3	32	Lakshadweep	-
16	Meghalaya	-	33	Pondicherry	16
17	Mizoram	-	34	Jammu & Kashmir	08
18	Nagaland	-	35	Ladakh	01
19	Odisha	16	36		

[23] Mukherjee Sandeep. Reservation Policy. New Delhi: Variety Books Publishers; 2014. P. 72

The Indian Government provides reservation percentages for government services based on state population. However, Scheduled Castes (SC) hold only 15% of Central Government services. Punjab has the highest reservation percentage, with 29% for SC, followed by Himachal Pradesh at 25%, Uttar Pradesh at 21%, and Haryana at 20%. In contrast, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh, Mizoram, and Meghalaya have 0% reservation. The new reservation policy has reduced the SC quota

percentage in Jammu and Kashmir to 8% following the removal of Article 370. Ladakh has also adopted a new reservation roster, modifying quotas for specific categories. Ladakh's SC quota has decreased from 8% to 1% under the newly approved reservation roster.

4. Schemes and Programs for SC Development

The Government is committed to the well-being of SC citizens, ensuring equality of opportunity in education and employment.

The Indian Constitution's Preamble, Directive Principle of State Policy, Fundamental Rights, and various Articles reflect the State Government's dedication to its citizens. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) oversees SC interests. Central Ministries and State Governments are primarily responsible for promoting SC interests. However, the MSJE supplements their efforts by implementing specially designed schemes in crucial sectors. The SC Development Bureau aims to enhance SC welfare by empowering them in social, economic, and educational aspects (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment,

SC, and Welfare in India). The Special Component Plan (SCP) efficiently allocates funds from general development sectors to the SCP. Key programs benefiting lower classes include housing and economic and educational development. Although the Government has launched numerous schemes and programs for SC, this study highlights those from 2017-2018 [Annual Report 2018, 24] ^[2-3]. Table 8 displays actions taken by central ministries and State Governments to advance and safeguard SC interests, including schemes and programs.

Table 6 (A): Schemes and Programs for SC Development Rs in Crores

SN		2016-2017			2017-2018			
Allied Coaching Program for Weaker Sections with SC and OBC								
1	BE	25.00	RE	2.00	BE	25.00	RE	25.00
PoA Act, 1989 and Implementation of PCR Act, 1955								
2	BE	150.00	RE	228.49	BE	300.00	RE	305.17
Babu Jagivan Ram Chhatravas Yojna (BJRCY) Girls Hostels								
3	BE	40.00	RE	30.00	BE	150.00	RE	150.00
Children Pre-Matric Scholarships (cleaning & prone to health hazards)								
4	BE	2.00	RE	1.00	BE	2.70	RE	2.70
State SC Development Corporation Equity support								
5	BE	20.00	RE	20.00	BE	20.00	RE	20.00
National SC Development and Finance Corporation								
6	BE	139.00	RE	138.00	BE	128.21	RE	128.21
National Safai Karamcharis Development & Finance Corporation								
7	BE	50.00	RE	50.00	BE	50.00	RE	44.83
Self Employment Scheme Liberation & Rehabilitation of Scavengers								
8	BE	10.00	RE	1.00	BE	5.00	RE	5.00
SC Students Pre-Matric Scholarship (Class IX & X)								
9	BE	550.00	RE	510.00	BE	50.00	RE	50.00

[24] Sharma Rachna. Schemes and Programs for SC, 2018, No.9/RN/ Ref/3/2018

Table 6(B): Scheme and Programs for SC Development Rs in crores

Programs/Scheme SC Development	2016-2017		2017-2018	
	BE	RE	BE	RE
1. SC Scholarships after matriculation	2791.00	2820.70	3347.99	3347.99
2. Pradhan, Mantri Adarsh Gram-Yojana	90.00	50.00	40.00	40.00
3. BJRCY Boys Hostel	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
4. Assistant to VO's Working for SC	50.00	70.00	70.00	70.00
5. SC students' grade of merit	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
6. Sub-plan Special Central Assistant	800.00	800.00	800.00	800.00
7. Dr. Ambedkar Foundations	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
8. Dr. Ambedkar, International Center	100	100.00	40.00	40.00
9. National Fellowship for SC	200	200.00	230.00	230.00
10. National Overseas Scholarship (SC)	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00
11. Dr. Ambedkar National Memorials	16.99	16.99	62.00	62.00
12. 'Top Class Education' for SC	21.00	31.00	35.00	35.00
13. 'Credit Guarantee Fund' for SC	10.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
14. 'Venture Capital Fund' for SC	40.00	40.00	40	40.00
Total: Table 8 (A) + Table 8 (B) =	5128.99	5131.19	5418.91	5418.91

Sharma Rachna. Schemes and Programs for SC, 2018, No.9/RN/ Ref/3/2018

The Indian Government has implemented various schemes and programs for developing Scheduled Castes (SC) at the federal level. The MSJE (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) oversees these initiatives, which State Governments, Central Ministries, and Union Territory Administrations support. The MSJE receives funding for these programs, which include scholarships, hostels, and deferred-interest loans. The Indian Government has introduced several plans and programs for the overall development of SC through its various Ministries and

Departments (2018). One such initiative is the Scheme for the Department of Empowerment and Social Justice, which allocated funds in 2017-18. The Government has introduced scholarships to reduce the dropout rate among SC students. Pre-matriculation scholarships are available for families whose members work in cleaning-related occupations that put their health at risk. State Governments and union territory administrations supervise this initiative. Scholarships and financial aid are also available to SC students who wish to pursue

education beyond matriculation at prestigious institutions such as IITs (Indian Institutes of Technologies), IIMs (Indian Institutes of Managements), National Institutes of Technologies (NITs), and prominent medical, law, and other institutions. The Indian Government established this program to provide better educational opportunities for SC students. National fellowships support research programs leading to PhDs, M.Phils, and other research degrees. The National Overseas Scholarship Program assists students seeking master's and doctorate degrees abroad. SC students also receive free coaching to help candidates from impoverished backgrounds prepare for competitive examinations. Two corporations have been established under the MSJE to assist SC beneficiaries struggling to make a living. The National Safai-Karamcharis Finance & Development-Corporation (NSKFDC) provides loan facilities for socio-economic development to persons who benefit from the scavengers' guide and their dependents through State channelising agencies.

The Government provides the SC Sub-Plan (SCSP) as an additive to the SCSPs of the UTs/States based on factors such as SC population, relative backwardness, and the proportion of SC families in states with Special Central Assistance (SCA) programs for economic development. The State and Central Governments jointly sponsor the Share Capital Contribution (SCDC) program to benefit SC families. The Indian Government has also introduced initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship among SC, including a fund for venture capital and a credit guarantee program for young and start-up business owners. These funds offer preferential financing to SC business owners focused on creative thinking and emerging technologies.

Most SC villages are integrated and improved through the Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gramme Yojana (PMAGY). The Scheme's primary purpose is to get implementation organisations to build hostels. The Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna offers dormitory accommodations for SC children in middle and upper secondary, universities, and other institutions. The Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Foundation was created as a separate organisation under the MSJE by the Indian Government. The Foundation's principal objective is to disseminate the beliefs and vision of Babu Jagjivan Ram for a caste- and class-free society (2021). The budgetary allocations for 2018-19 show that the budgetary allocation for SC has increased to 56,619 crores from 52,392.55 crores in 2017-18 (2017).

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Indian Constitution acknowledges the past injustices and inequalities experienced by SC (Scheduled Castes) and has created a strong framework for defending their rights and interests. The Constitution aims to promote social justice, equality, and empowerment of SC through various provisions, including reservations and social, economic, educational, cultural, political, and service safeguards. Despite these efforts, the SC community continues to face significant challenges, including poverty, lack of education, and social exclusion. The uneven population distribution of SC across different states and union territories further exacerbates these issues. Therefore, it is

essential to continue implementing initiatives and programs to promote the development and well-being of SC communities.

The Centrally Sponsored Schemes, implemented since Independence, have been instrumental in alleviating poverty and backwardness among SC communities. However, the Government must take further action to ensure employment equality, education, political representation, and law enforcement. Protecting the rights and interests of SC communities is a critical function of the National Commission for SC, and its work needs to be encouraged and reinforced. Ultimately, realising a welfare society, as envisioned by the Indian Constitution, depends on practically implementing these provisions and initiatives. It is imperative to guarantee the protection and advancement of the rights and interests of SC communities, as well as their equal participation in the nation's social, political and economic development. Everyone can flourish and realise their full potential in a more equal and inclusive society if they work together.

REFERENCES

1. Avasthi and Avasthi, Agarwal, and Narain, Lakshmi. Indian Administration, Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Educational Publications; 1993, P. 274
2. Annual Report. Government of India, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, 2017-2018. Accessed 2024 September 28. Available from www.ncsc.in
3. Annual Report. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2017-2018. Accessed 2024 August 11. Available from <http://socialjustice.nic.in>
4. Constitutional Provisions for Protection and Development for SC, n.d. Accessed 2024 May 15. Available from <http://ncsc.in>
5. Constitutional Safeguard for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, n.d. Accessed 2024 November 17. Available from <https://selfstudy anthro.com>
6. Bakshi PM. The Constitution of India, New Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd; 2013, P. 306.
7. Das, Bordia, Soumya, Maitreya, Hall, Gillette, and Denis, Nikitin. The Scheduled Tribes, Research Gate, 2014 June 1. Accessed 2024 July 23. Available from <https://www.researchgate.net>
8. Dasbasu D. Introduction to the Constitution of India, New Delhi: Prentice-Hall Publications; 1960. P. 331
9. Government of India. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, 2021. Accessed 2024 October 16. Available from <http://socialjustice.nic.in>
10. Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics. Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, New Delhi, 2018 September.
11. Manjunath J. Constitutional Safeguards and Administration of SC/ST Welfare, International Research, Journal Commerce Arts Science, 2010, Vol.1 (1), ISSN 2277-9809, Pp. 167-173
12. Johari JC. The Constitution of India, New Delhi, Sterling Publications; 1995. P. 350

13. Kanwar Jeetu. Constitutional Provisions for SCs and STs, International Journal of Law Management and Humanities, 2019, Vol. 2 (4), ISSN: 2581-5369, Pp. 1-11
14. Karade Jagan. Development of SC and ST in India, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing; 2008. Pp. 11-12
15. List of constituencies of the Lok Sabha. Wikipedia. n.d. Accessed 2024 October 21. Available from <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>
16. Laxmikanth M. Indian Polity, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publications; 2012. P. 55.1
17. Mukherjee Sandeep. Reservation Policy, New Delhi: Variety Books Publishers; 2014. P. 72
18. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Commission for SC Brochure 2018. Accessed 2024 September 08. Available from <https://ncsc.nic.in>
19. Nath Baiju. K. and Parakanddathil, Ruvega PK. Scheduled Cates and Scheduled Tribes in India & their Higher Education, Research Gate Publications, 2015. Pp. 1-9
20. Singh Neha & Chauhan Sujata. Constitutional Provisions Available to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, Journal of Legal Studies and Research, 2018, Vol. 2 (3), ISSN 2455-2437, PP. 226-238
21. Singh, Mahendra Prasad, Raj Subhendu Ranjan. The Indian Political System, Noida: Uttar Pradesh, Pearson India Education Service Publications; 2012. P. 94
22. Sharma, R. Schemes and Programs for Scheduled Castes, 2018, No.9/RN/Ref/ 3/2018.
23. Schemes and programs for SC, No.9/RN/Ref. (2018 March). Accessed 2024 August 07. Available from <http://164.100.47.193>
24. State wise Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, MLA and MLC Seats. n.d. Accessed 2024 October 19. Available from <https://gkchronicle.com>

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.