Chapter: 6  
On Inter-Caste Inequalities and Economic Situation of Dalit

6.1 Introduction

In the previous section, we examined the concept of social exclusion, its theoretical connotations and policy implications. Economic dimensions of the caste system brings out important features indicating restrictions on assets ownership that not only differs for different social groups but also restricts occupational mobility. Thorat examines this issue further in detail because one of the important features of the caste system relating to property rights is restrictions on owning business or undertaking production activity for low caste untouchable, excepting impure and polluting economic activities (like those relating to leather and sanitary products). The former untouchables were not entitled to undertake business and or production activities or own property. This also included restriction on the ownership of agricultural land for production purposes. The new legal framework of rights under the Indian Constitution removes the customary restrictions on the ownership of property and business by the untouchables. The government has also initiated policy measures to improve access and ownership of private enterprise for the untouchable to correct the disparities created by the historical denial of these rights. However, notwithstanding these efforts the consequences of the past denial still continue. Keeping this in view, we examine this issue in this chapter based on Thorat's writing where he has dealt in detail. He examines the access of low caste untouchables to private enterprise, access to capital assets employment, rural labor conditions, occupational pattern, and poverty among discriminated groups.

6.2 Access to Capital Assets

Thorat provides detailed framework for analysing access to capital assets through examining access to agricultural land, disparities in landownership, access in private enterprises, occupational pattern, employment, rural labour, wage rates in agriculture and non-agriculture employment, and levels of poverty (Thorat 2009; Thorat and Newman 2010; Thorat and other 2010).

6.2.1 Access to Agricultural Land

Thorat analyzes the nature and extent of inequality in the ownership of agricultural land among different social groups and to evaluate the comparative position of SCs. Their analysis is
undertaken both at the all India and the state levels in order to highlight the regional and geographical similarities or differences.

Thorat examines the patterns of landownership and how SCs or the former untouchables are landless which prominently comes out as a common feature of the Indian rural economy, as majority of SC households own small size of land (56 per cent) who are, as he termed, 'near-landless households, while a more than 13 per cent are land less. These near landless households largely work as agricultural / non agricultural laborers because their negligible landholding is not sufficient to support them. In terms of area owned, their share is only 8.64 per cent. Evidence of the limited access of SCs to land resources is also provided by the mini scale proportion of medium and large farmers among them (6 per cent). Thus, landowning SC households are either nearly landless or largely marginal and small farmers.

Between 1982 and 1992 there were very minor changes in the pattern of landownership the landless and near landless households declined by 0.37 percentage points, while the medium and large farmers declined by 0.69 percentage points. In the years 1999-2000 a drop in the landless households but a substantial increase in the near landless households.

The state-wise analysis of landless households indicates that the highest proportion of SC landless households was in Bihar (23.8 per cent), followed by Gujarat (18.1 per cent), Maharashtra (16.7 per cent), Tamil Nadu (15.1 per cent) and Punjab (12.2 per cent) for the period of 1999-2000. The incidence of near landless households was between 50-86 per cent in all the states except Madhya Pradesh (34 per cent) and Rajasthan (37 per cent). The pattern of landownership was highly skewed, especially in Punjab, Kerala, Haryana and Bihar, where more than 90 per cent of the SC households were landless or near landless.

Further Thorat provides an understanding on the existing disparities in Landownership. The landless and near landless households are much higher among the SCs than all social groups together as the disparity ratio in these land size categories is greater than unity. Considering that the all households include three social groups SCs, STs and non SCs / STs the inter social disparities among SCs and non SCs/STs are even higher. The disparity ration was 0.81 in 1992 for the marginal farm size category and declined with the increase in the size of the holding. This implies that the gap between the proportion of SC households and all households in the respective farm size category was higher for successively higher category to the disadvantage of the former group.
The relative proportion of medium and large farms was particularly low among SCs. Between 1982 and 1992 there was no perceptible change in the disparities. The 1999-2000 figures, although not directly comparable with the 1992 estimates, also point towards the existence of extensive inter social group disparities in the pattern of landownership.

In this concern Thorat also gives the state-wise analysis. The State wise analysis indicates that the disparity ratio of landless plus near-landless households between SCs and non-SCs/STs in 1992 was above 1 in all the states, implying that the incidence of landlessness was more pronounced among SCs. The inter social groups disparities were particularly high in Haryana (2.90), Jammu and Kashmir (2.01) and Punjab (2.38).

The 1999-2000 data substantiates the inequitable landownership across social groups. Except for Assam and Himachal Pradesh, where the disparity ratio was close to 1, in the rest of the states. The proportion of SC landless plus near land less households was higher than their non SC/ST counterparts.

6.2.2 Access to private enterprise

Thorat examined the access of low caste untouchables to private enterprise and captures the disparities between them and the higher castes (HC) based on the data of fourth economic census pertaining to the year 2005. Private enterprise constituted about 95 per cent of the total enterprises in the country in 2005. As per the 1998 economic census, about 39.16 million enterprises were owned by the private sector out of a total of 41.82 million enterprises in the country.

Pertaining to the ownership of private enterprise, it is observed that about 95 per cent of the enterprises were owned by the private sector in 2005. The share of each of the social groups in total private enterprise based on 2005 economic census and their share in population in the total population of the country for 2004-05 based on the 61st National Sample Survey (NSS) provides some interesting results to understand the existing disparity.

Thorat clearly brings out that the ownership of private enterprise is unevenly distributed among the social groups in accordance to their population share.
The estimates tell that about 10 per cent, 21 per cent, 43 per cent and 25 per cent of the total population located in the rural areas in the country SCs, STs, OBCs and HCs, respectively, as against the figures 10 per cent, 46 per cent, 40 per cent and 45 per cent of the total rural private enterprise in the country in 2005. We can observed that the share of SCs, and STs is much lower than their share in the country’s population, however the share of the HCs is much above their population share. In private enterprise is fairly close to their share in population. Between 1998 and 2005 there has been a marginal decline in the share of the STs, with the difference going to the HCs. The share of the SCs and OBCs remained the same.

A similar pattern is observed in urban areas as well. In 2005 the share the SCs in private enterprise was much lower than their share in the total population. While their share in the country’s population is about 21 per cent, the account for only 6 per cent of the country’s private enterprise, which is almost three and a half times less than their share in the urban population. In the case of HC, the share was much above their population share the percentage share in enterprise being 57 per cent as against a population share of 45 per cent. In the case of the OBCs and STs, the share in enterprise was fairly close to the population share and, hence, in their case the disparities were relatively less. Between 1998 and 2005, there was some increase in the percentage share of the OBCs which was mainly at the cost of the HCs.

Thorat further provides ownerships by type of enterprise and ownership by major activity. The private enterprises in economic census are classified into own account enterprise (OAE) and establishments. An OAE is one that is normally run by a household without hiring any worker on fairly regular basis. An enterprise employing at least one hired worker on a fairly regular basis is an establishment. Establishments are further classified into non directory establishment (NDE) and directory establishments (DE). This classification is based on the number of workers engaged in a production unit.

A DE is an establishment employing six or more workers (including at least one hired worker) daily on a fairly regular basis. An NDE is an establishment employing less than six workers (including at least one hired worker) daily on a fairly regular basis. Thus DE and NDE, constitute establishments with hired workers. Understandably, the number/strength of hired workers reflects the scale of operation of the enterprise. The OAE, are generally petty production activities run by the household, mainly by means for family labor while establishments generally indicate economic ventures undertaken on a relatively large scale.
Further enterprise based on household labor are generally low economic ventures and often taken up as a last resort. These are regarded as residual sector activities providing livelihood support similar to traditional agricultural activities carried out at subsistence level. A lot of informalization and casualization takes place in the form of self-employment. The DEs, on the other hand, are better economic ventures with higher capital output ration, electricity consumption, use of institutional capital, capital per worker, and so on.

The percentage of private enterprises within social groups by type of enterprises in rural India in 2005 indicates that household based enterprises constituted the highest proportion at 71 per cent of total enterprises. Thus the OAEs accounted for the bulk of private enterprise in rural areas, and the remaining 29 per cent was shared by enterprises that were operated with hired workers.

Between 1998 and 2005 there was a significant change in the composition of OAEs and establishments in rural areas. There is a significant decline in the share of OAEs and a shift towards establishments with hired workers. The share of establishments increased from 15.56 per cent in 1998 to 29 per cent in 2005, indicating a 14 per cent increase in the share of establishments.

In 2005 among social groups in rural areas, the SC and ST households operate a relatively higher proportion of household based enterprises as compared to the all India average. The share in the case of both groups is about 80 per cent each, which is higher than the all India average of 71 per cent as well as the share of the OBC (77 per cent) and HCs (61 per cent). Thus the ownership of household enterprise by the OBCs and HCs and lower than for the SCs and STs. However the opposite is true in the case of NDEs and DEs. The SCs and STs own less of these two categories of enterprise as compared to the OBCs and HCs. It indicates that the SCs owned a relatively lower share of NDEs and DEs and the figure goes up as we move from SCs and STs to OBCs and HCs put together, the SCs own about 32 per cent of hired worker enterprises, compared to 51 per cent for HCs.

The same pattern is observed in urban India as well. In 2005 the SCs owned a relatively higher proportion of OAEs and the share falls as we move from the SCs and STs to OBCs and HCs. For instance, 67 per cent of the total enterprises owned by the SCs were OAEs as compared to 61 per cent for the STs, 60 per cent for the OBCs and 49 per cent for others. The percentage shares of owning hired worker based enterprises were 33 per cent for the SCs, 38 per cent for the STs, 40 per cent for the OBCs and 51 per cent for the HCs.
Between 1998 and 2005, there has been some decline in the share of OAEs for all social groups, and a corresponding increase in the share of enterprises based on wage labor.

The results clearly reveal a higher share for the HCs in the ownership of private enterprises in both rural and urban areas. The concentration among the HCs particularly in enterprises with hired worker, is quite clear from their share in total enterprise in the rural and urban areas during 1998 and 2005. In 1998, in rural areas, the share of ownership of the SCs and STs is lowest in the case of hired worker based enterprises. The STs, SCs, OBCs and HCs respectively account for about 2.93 per cent, 5.5 per cent, 36.11 per cent and 55.43 per cent of the total DEs in the country. Further the share of SCs and STs owning DEs is much lower (5.5 per cent and 2.93 per cent respectively) than their share in the country’s population which is 17.91 per cent and 10.42 per cent respectively, on the other hand the share of the OBCs and HCs owning DEs (92 per cent) is much above their population share (71.7 per cent). For 2005 separate figures for DEs and NDEs by social groups are available. However, both taken together also indicate the concentration of establishments with hired worker among the OBCs and HCs particularly among the latter.

A similar pattern is observed in urban areas as well. In 1998, the share of the SCs in DEs is much lower than their share in the total population. While their share in the country’s population is about 12 per cent, they account for only 3.6 per cent of the DEs. The OBCs and HCs together account for almost 94.4 per cent of the total DEs in the country. This reflects higher inequality in business ownership carried out at a higher scale of operation.

Ownership pattern by employment

We further look at the distribution of workers across social groups in rural and urban areas. In rural India, private enterprises owned by the HCs, employed about 47 per cent of the total workers in all enterprises, and another 39 per cent were employed in enterprises owned by the OBCs. Put together, enterprises by the HCs and OBCs employed about 86 per cent of the total workers in private sector enterprises located in rural areas. The remaining 14 per cent were engaged in enterprises owned by the SCs and STs. Enterprises owned by the SCs accounted for about 9 per cent of the total workers.

Workers classified into hired and perennial categories follow a similar pattern. In the case of hired workers, the HCs account for about 58.55 per cent of the total hired workers, and the
OBCs comes next with 34 per cent. The rest 7 per cent are accounted for by SC and ST owned private enterprises. The same pattern is observed for perennial workers, the HCs accounting for about 44 per cent, followed by 42 per cent for the OBCs, 10 per cent for the SCs and only 4.75 per cent for the STs. It may be noted that the HCs and OBCs account for nearly the same proportion of hired workers in rural areas.

Urban India follows a pattern that is similar to that of rural India. In urban India also, the HCs employ 67 per cent, followed by the OBCs, at 25.50 per cent. The SCs and STs account for 5 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively. With respect to hired and perennial workers, the HCs employ the majority of both categories in the enterprises owned by them again followed by the OBCs. The others employed about three fourths of the total workers in urban areas, which may be attributed to the higher scale of operation in enterprises in urban industrial locations. The OBCs account for about 20 per cent of the total hired workers. SC and ST owned enterprises claim a very small share of hired laborers as their enterprises are mainly OAEs and much less NDEs and DEs. The SCs and STs account for a small proportion of hired workers. The same pattern is observed in the case of perennial workers. As a matter of fact, the concentration of employment in enterprises owned by the HCs indicates the dependence of workers, particularly the low caste ones, on the HC and OBC enterprise owner.

Thorat also focuses on the ownership of private enterprises by major activity. The private enterprises operate both in agricultural and non agricultural activities. Agricultural activities include livestock production and agricultural services, with hunting, trapping and game propagation, forestry, logging and fishing being part. Enterprises engaged in all activities other than agricultural activities are termed as non agricultural enterprises. These activities include mining and quarrying, manufacturing, activities related to electricity, activities related to electricity, gas and water; construction and wholesale trade; retail trade; hotel and restaurant; transport; storage and warehousing; communication, finance and insurance and community services. Understandably a higher share of entrepreneurship in the sector of manufacturing; construction and wholesale trade; hotel and restaurant; transport, storage and warehousing, communication, and finance and insurance shows the diversification of the economy away from agriculture.

The estimates provided by Thorat indicates that the share of 17 major activities in the total enterprises for four social groups in rural areas. These include activities associated with agricultural
and non agricultural enterprises. At the overall level, retail trade with 35 per cent agriculture with 22 per cent, and manufacturing with 20 per cent account for the major segments of private enterprise in rural India. These three activities put together account for about 77 per cent of the total entrepreneurial activities. Other community, social and personal service activities, with 6.33 per cent and education with 4.22 per cent come next.

Retail trade, manufacturing and agriculture also occupy a prominent position for all social groups, although their percentage share varies among the four social groups in rural area. In the case of retail trade, which is the most preferred activity by all groups, there is not much variation across the four social groups the percentage share is close to the all India average. In the case of activities relating to agriculture, while the share of the SCs, STs and OBC is more or less similar, the share of agriculture for the HCs is lower. The same is the pattern for manufacturing activity. Thus the share of the HCs is relatively low in the case of agriculture and manufacturing, as compared to SCs, STs, and OBC. However, the HCs enjoy a relatively greater share in activities associated with education, other community, social and personal, service activities and health and social work. The difference between the SCs and HCs in the case of these activities is particularly pronounced. For instance, in the case of the HCs, education activity accounts for about 8.50 per cent of the total, as against 0.75 per cent for the SCs, STs, and OBC.

Further some inter social group differences are clearly comes out from Thorat's analysis. The SC share in activities relating to construction, transport and storage, mining and quarrying, retail trade and agriculture is fairly close to their population share. This is particularly so with respect to their share in construction and transport and storage. However, in the case of education, health and social work, and other community, social and personal service activities, the share is much less. The HCs enjoy a much higher share in these activities. For instances almost 90 per cent of education activity is accounted for by the HCs, compared to only 1.78 per cent and 0.79 per cent for the SCs and STs respectively. It is about 7 per cent for the OBCs.

Subsequently Thorat gives urban situation in this concern for 17 activities by social groups. At the overall level, like in rural areas, retail trade with 44 per cent and manufacturing with 20 per cent account for a major segment of private enterprise in urban areas. These two activities put together alone account for about 64 per cent of the total entrepreneurial activities. The other community, social, and personal service activities, with 6.20 per cent, and hotels and restaurants, and transport and storage, with 4 per cent each, come next.
Retail trade and manufacturing are also the major activities for all social groups. In the case of retail trade, the share of each of the social groups was quite close to the all India average of 40 per cent. In the case of the second most important activity, namely manufacturing, the share varies across social groups. The share for the HCs was lower as compared to the SCs and OBCs. Similarly, in the case of education, and health and social work, the share was also greater among the HCs as compared to the SCs and other social groups. For instance, while the share of education activity for HC was about 3 per cent, it was about 1 per cent in the case of other social groups.

It is observed that the share of the SCs and STs in two prominent activities, namely retail trade and manufacturing, was much lower (than their share in their population) as compared to that of the OBCs and HCs. The share of the HCs was particularly high in the case of public administration, defense, compulsory social security, education and financial intermediation. In fact, in the case of financial intermediation, the share of the HC is total activity was above 9 per cent. In two other activities, it was more than 75 per cent.

6.2.3 Occupational Pattern:

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the Indian population although, in recent decades, some trends towards the occupational diversification of rural workers from the agricultural sector to the non agricultural sector have been observed. Traditionally, scheduled castes (SCs) have been denied properly rights. The caste hierarch, as a system of occupational of social attainment, has relegated SCs to the periphery of the occupational realm and, therefore, economic mobility.

Therefore Thorat analyzed the changes in the livelihood patterns among various social groups in India, particularly SCs. Specifically, the analysis examines three major aspects of occupational diversification, namely the shift from agricultural to non agricultural occupations in rural areas, the pattern of diversification within the agriculture sector and the changes in the occupational pattern in urban areas.

The SC rural workforce in India is predominantly employed in the agriculture sector and its dependence on this traditional sector is more prominent than that of the non SCs/STs. Over the years, this proportion has shown a gradual decline. The occupational diversification of rural main
workers from the agricultural to the non agricultural sector, which was negligible during the 1980s, sharpened in the 1990s. The percentage of rural SC main workers engaged in the agricultural sector declined by more than 11 percentage points from 84.49 per cent in 1991 to 72.93 per cent in 2001. This trend towards the shifting of the workforce away from the agricultural sector occurred across all social groups, and its pace with regard to the SC, and the non SCs/STs has been almost at par. As a result, during 1981-2001, the disparity index of workers engaged in the agriculture sector has been more or less unchanged for SC vs Non SCs/STs. The pattern of occupational shift from the agricultural to the non agricultural sector among SCs and Non-SCs/STs during the past decade

The magnitude of shift was reported to be more prominent among the non SC/ST households, which is why the inter social group disparity among them accentuated marginally from 1.04 in 1993-94 to 1.09 in 1999-2000. At the state level, the all India trend is discernible in all the states in varying magnitudes. The diversification trend among the SCs in particularly noticeable in the smaller states of Assam, Haryana, Kerala and Punjab. In the larger states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar (including Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, where the concentration of the SC population is higher, the decline during 1991-2001 has been lower, ranging between 3-11 per cent. In two of the states, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, this Marginal decline came about after increase in 1981-91. Therefore, the net change in the percentage share of the rural SC workers engaged in the agricultural sector to the total SC main workers is quite low in these states.

Thorat also gives state-wise disparity index of workers engaged in the agriculture sector. In 2001, in most states, the disparity index of SC versus non SC/ST workers engaged in the agricultural sector remained above 1, indicating a higher percentage of SC workforce in agriculture than the percentage of non SC/ST workforce. The exceptions were Assam, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan where it was less than 1, and Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, where the index was near unity.

Thorat also gives the information distribution of rural household engaged in the agriculture sector for SCs. It is shown that heavy dependence of the SC workforce on the agriculture sector and the persistence of disparities among SCs and non SCs/STs, since a larger proportion of SC rural workers is engaged in the traditional sector as compared to that of the non-SC/ST rural workforce.
The possession of land in India is not only a source of livelihood but also considered as status symbol. The perpetuation of the elite through control of land has been a historical fact in this country. SCs have faced selective and historical discrimination as far as the ownership of land and land assets are concerned. Therefore Thorat analyses whether there has been any change in the occupational pattern in the agricultural sector such that an improvement is discernible or not in SCs access to land.

It is found that the percentage distribution of the workforce employed as cultivators to the total main workers by social groups empirically substantiates that SCs were discriminated against with regard to possessing land. Cultivation is the major economic activity of STs and non SC/ST. In 2001, only 27 per cent of the SC rural workers had access to land as against 54 per cent STs and 47 per cent non SC/ST.

The majority of SC workers in rural areas have traditionally served as agricultural laborers their engagement in this occupation has been rather favored by the upper castes. Moreover, due to a lack of education and technical skills, their absorption into other jobs has been difficult. As agricultural laborers, they are unorganized and they have neither social nor economic security. Over the past decade (1991-2001), the occupation diversification of SCs from the agriculture to the non agriculture sector has occurred more an account of a decline in the proportion of agricultural laborers (by 9 percentage points) and to a lesser extent due to a drop in the percentage of SC cultivators.

The proportion of self employed rural agricultural households is more than two fold and that of agricultural laborer households about half among non- SC/ST than among SCs. Between 1993/1994 and 1999/2000 the outreach of rural households to land resources had worsened as evidenced by the declining proportion of the SEA and the rise in the percentage of agricultural labor households.

At the state level, there are large inter-state variations in the land that SC rural workers can access. In Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan, more than half the SC main workers in the rural areas were cultivators. In Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Kerala and Punjab, less than 15 per cent of the SC workers were cultivating land. The proportion of cultivators went down in 1981-2001 in almost all the states, although the percentage pint change during this period was negligible in Kerala and Maharashtra. The state with the highest concentration of an SC
population Uttar Pradesh witnessed a very steep full of 7 percentage points in the proportion of rural SC cultivators in the total main workers (from about 52 per cent in 1981 to 45 per cent in 2001).

The inter social group disparity index of workers engaged as rural cultivators clearly indicates a far better access of non SCs/STs to agricultural land as compared to SCs. These disparities have remained more or less unchanged during the past two decades at the all India level, and have actually worsened in some states such as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Thorat writes about the rural occupational structure in the non agricultural sector. He observes that the sectoral occupational diversification trends brought out earlier indicated the same shift in the SC rural workforce from the agricultural to the non agricultural sector. The census of India classified the non agricultural workforce into (a) those engaged in household industry and (b) other workers. The household industry is defined as ‘an industry conducted by the head of the household himself or herself and/or by the members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas. It relates to production, processing, servicing, repairing or making and selling (but not merely selling) of goods. Thus, the concept of household industry signifies, in some manner, that the workers engaged in this industry have some access to capital. In contrast, the non agricultural workers classified as ‘other workers’ are those who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, commerce, business transport, mining, construction, political or social work, pavement service, etc., and have negligible access to capital.

The household industry accounts for a very small proportion of the rural non agricultural workers, engaging less than 4 per cent of the total main workers. The rural labor forces that has been shifting out of agricultural occupations has been absorbed into the non agricultural sector as ‘other workers’ rather than into the household industry as is evident from the rising proportion of other workers in the past two decades and the near stagnancy in the household industry during this period. In fact, the percentage of workers in the household industry actually declined during 1981-91, rebounding during the subsequent decade to a level marginally above that of 1981.

Across social groups, the proportion of rural workers in the household industry was more or less same for SC’s and Non SCs/STs in both the decades. But in the same period, the increase in the percentage of other workers was much higher among SCs (11.70 percentage points) than Non-SCs/STs (9.89 percentage points). So, while the disparity index of SC and Non-SC/ST
workers in the household industry remained unchanged, that of other workers worsened with regard to SCs.

The SC rural labor absorption in the household industry and, hence the SC access to capital was particularly low in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Over the years, the proportion of SC workers in the household industry has increased markedly in Assam and Orissa, while a perceptible decline has occurred in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The state level pattern of disparity between rural SCs and Non-SCs/STs in access to capital brings out some interesting results. The all India trend indicated that SCs had poorer access to land and capital resources, but the inter-social group disparity in the access to capital was less pronounced. However, in several states – Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan – the disparity index of greater than 1 indicates that SC rural workers had somewhat better access to capital than their Non SC/ST counterparts (as evidenced by the proportion of workers in the household industry). However, in Bihar, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, the rural SC workers were relatively worse off in this aspect.

They writes that, the NSS classification of Non agricultural workers as self employed in non agriculture (SENA), non agricultural labor and ‘other workers’ provides additional insight into the limited access to SC households to capital resources.

In 1993-94, 10.7 per cent of SC households were SENA and about the same proportion were non agricultural laborers. By 1999-2000, although the proportion of SC SENA households increased marginally to 12 per cents, it was still about 3 percentage points lower than the non SC/ST SENA households.

Across the states, the access to capital of SC rural households was quite poor in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, while it was better than the All India average in West Bengal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Orissa.

Thorat also gives the urban occupational pattern in his writings. He writes that, given the limited availability of cultivable land in urban areas, the urban workforce is predominantly engaged in non-agricultural activities. The NSS categorization of the urban workforce into self employed,
regular wage earners/salaried class and casual laborer brings out very interesting features of the urban occupational pattern across social group. As expected, the percentage of self employed SC workers was much lower than of non SCs/STs while that of SC casual laborers was much higher in both the decades.

The inter social group variations in the percentage of regular wage earners/salaried households were of very low magnitude, indicating the positive role of the reservation policy for the scheduled groups. But the brunt of slackening public employment in the economic reforms period has been borne in greater part by SCs. The proportion of regular wage earners/salaried class among SC households declined from 44.4 per cent in 1993-94 to 37.6 per cent in 1992-2000, while the corresponding decline was only by 2.8 percentage points for non SC/ST households.

The state level analysis (1999-2000) indicates that at least one third of urban SC households were casual laborers in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, Orissa and Tamil Nadu, together with the high incidence of casual labor, the percentage of regular wage/salaried households was quite low (about 30 per cent) in comparison to the all India average (38 per cent), indicating the poor status of urban SCs. The regular wage earner / salaried class SC households were even lower in Assam (26 per cent) and Jammu and Kashmir (19 per cent).

In most states, except for a few such as Maharashtra, there was a steep fall in the proportion of this category of SC households from 1993-94 to 1999-2000. The decline was particularly not notable in Tamil Nadu (33 percentage points), Gujarat (23 percentage points) and Assam (22 percentage points). Contrary to the all India trend, in Maharashtra, the proportion of regular wage earners increased among urban SCs during the 1990s. In general, SCs in urban areas appear to be in a relatively better position in Maharashtra, with nearly 54 per cent regular wage earners, and west Bengal, where more than 40 per cent were self employed.

6.2.4 Employment:

Thorat gives in his writings, the current employment scenario of SCs in the rural and the urban areas, and examines the changes in their level of employment and unemployment during 1983-1999/2000. He also highlights the levels of disparity in employment and unemployment among different social groups. Their analysis is based on the current Daily Status (DS)
employment statistics in NSS reports for 1983/84 and 1999/2000 on the employment and unemployment situation among SC and Non-SCs/STs

The all-India employment levels of SCs and Non-SCs/STs in the rural areas indicates that the employment rate of SC males in rural India was 46.2 per cent, whereas the figure stood at 48 per cent for Non SC/ST males. The employment rates for SC and Non SC/ST rural female stood at about 21.1 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively.

The level of employment for rural SC Males was the highest for Jammu and Kashmir (55.4 per cent), Assam (51.6 per cent) and the lowest for Kerala (41.5 per cent), Maharashtra (41.9 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (43.2 per cent). Rural SC females had better access to employment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh (36.8 per cent), Karnataka (31.7 per cent), Tamil Nadu (30.6 per cent), and Gujarat (30.5 per cent) compared to their very low level of employment in West Bengal (10.6 per cent) and Assam (12.2 per cent).

At the all India level, the disparity in employment rates across social groups as evidenced by the ratio of SC and non SC/ST employment rates, shows near parity in male employment. At the state level – in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Punjab – there was substantial disparity in employment rates between SC and non SC/ST Males. While, for the most part, SC Women occupied a relatively better position in employment terms than non SC/ST women, they were relatively disadvantaged in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.

Throat also writes about the changes in the level of rural employment. He writes that, the employment rates of both SC Males and Non SC/ST males have declined by nearly 7 percentage points over the 16 years under study. The employment rates for SC and Non SC/ST females were found to be declining by a much lower magnitude.

Contrary to the all India trend, the employment rates for SC males increased marginally in Gujarat, moderately in Haryana and sharply in Kerala. The employment rates for SC females increased in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, with the change particularly high, at 11 percentage points, in Jammu and Kashmir. The other states that indicated and Marginal increase were Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The rest of the states recorded a declining trend in the employment rates for SC females. The condition of Non SC/ST females was favorable only in Kerala.
While the employment rate of urban SC males was about 46 per cent, that of urban Non SC/ST males was almost 50 per cent. For SC Females, the employment rate was 14 per cent as against 11 per cent for non SC/ST females.

Approximately over 50 per cent of the urban SC Males were employed in West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. The states that indicated a low rate of urban SC Male employment were Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. For SC females, despite the low employment rate, it was high in the Southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

In the case of non – SCs/STs, 10 states employed more than 50 per cent of the males. Among those, West Bengal, Punjab and Karnataka indicated high rate of employment. The rate of employment for Non SC/ST males was lowest in Bihar, Orissa and Kerala. The employment rate of Non SC/ST females varied from 4 per cent to 15 per cent it was high in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, and lowest in Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa and Bihar, in that order.

In 1999-2000, the existence of a narrow disparity in employment rates between the SC and the non SC/ST males in urban India. The analysis for SC and non SC/ST females. Also highlighted the fact that in the urban areas, more SC females were employed than non SC/ST females.

The lowest disparity between SC and non SC/ST males was found for the states of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Conversely, the highest disparity was found to exist for the states of Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. The employment rates of SC females were higher than those of non SC/ST females in 17 major states, the only exceptions being Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Assam. Assam, in particular, a high degree of discrimination female employment.

The unemployment level of SC males and females was about 5 and 2.1 per cent, respectively, in the rural areas. Interestingly, the unemployment rates of both SC males and females were higher than those for non SC/ST males (3.4 per cent) and females (1.9 per cent), indicating that SCs have limited employment opportunities compared to non SCs/STs.

The highest percentage of unemployed SC males (14.09 per cent) and females (9 per cent) was found in Kerala, while Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan had low unemployment rates
for SC males (2-2.5 per cent). Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh had less than 1 per cent for SC females.

Across social groups, more SC males were found to be unemployed than non SC/ST males in all the states except Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa and West Bengal. The unemployment rate, of SC females was also lower than non-SC/ST females in five of these states – Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, West Bengal and Punjab.

Between 1983 and 1999/2000, the CDS unemployment rate of the SCs declined by more than 2 percentage points for both males and females, whereas the decline in the unemployment rate of the non SCs/STs was marginal. The all India trend of a declining SC unemployment rate was observed in nearly all the states except Assam, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the case of males, and Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka in the case of females.

Thorat also gives the situation of urban unemployment, so level disparity and change. The unemployment rate of SC males varied from 7.2 to 5.2 per cent during 1983-1999/2000. Similarly, the unemployment rate for non SC/ST males was 5.28 per cent in 1983 and 3.5 per cent in 1999/2000.

At more than 5 per cent, the unemployment rate of SC males was very high for Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The opposite was true of Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. According to the CDS, the unemployment rate of females was lower than that of males. The unemployment rate of SC females was the highest for Kerala (8.7 per cent) and the lowest for Uttar Pradesh (0.02 per cent).

More SC males were unemployed than non SC/ST males in all the states except Orissa. Similarly, more SC females were unemployed than non SC/ST females in nine states. The inter social group disparity was particularly sharp in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Over the period (1983-1999-200), the CDS unemployment rate for SC and non SC/ST males declined by about 2 percentage points. A marginal decline occurred in the unemployment rate of females belonging to both social groups. Across the states, except in Assam, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, a declining trend was registered for SC male unemployment. The reduction was notably drastic in Andhra Pradesh (6.27 percentage points), Rajasthan (4.87 percentage points). The unemployment
rate of SC females reduced substantially in Rajasthan (2.04 percentage points) and by an even lower magnitude in most states, other than Assam, Karnataka and Kerala. The change in almost all the states for non SC/ST workers was more or less similar to the observed trends for SC workers.

6.2.5 Rural Labor

Thorat presents the status of schedules caste (SC) rural labor in India. They also addressed the issue of economic inequality within social groups and focuses on various aspects of deprivation related to SC wage laborers. He used the data of NSS reports for 1974-75 and 1999-2000 on the rural labor and wage discrimination situation among SCs and non SCs/STs in India.

In their writings, the data shows that approximately three fourth of SCs, live in rural areas, where livelihood opportunities are either in the form of self employment in the form or the (rural) non farm sector, or in wage labor. At an all India level, the proportion of SC rural laborers to total rural households was 57.41 and 61.42 per cent for 1974-75 and 1999-2000, respectively. This indicates that far from decreasing dependence on wage as an income generating element, the dependence of the SC rural labor households has, in fact, increased between 1974-75 and 1999-2000.

A state wise analysis of the data in 1974-75 indicates Kerala (85.59 per cent), Bihar (78.73 per cent), Tamil Nadu (77.36 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh (72.87 per cent) as denoting the highest percentage for the SC rural labor households to the total rural households. The status was more or less maintained in 1999-2000, with the figures displaying similar trends for SC laborers. The highest percentages for SC rural labor households to total rural households in 1999-2000 were for Kerala (83.66 per cent), Tamil Nadu (82.22 per cent), Bihar (76.96 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh (74.66 per cent).

Comparing the figures for SCs and Non SCs/STs, it can be said that the SCs depended more on rural labor than Non-SC/ST for both the periods under study. Thorat said that, considering the enormously high percentages of SC wage laborers in the farm and the rural non-farm sectors, it was more than apparent that the workforce of this social group faced a two-fold discrimination first, it had limited access to agricultural land and other capital assets; second, limited access to income generation and livelihood opportunities further relegated it to the periphery, thereby leaving it with no option but to engage in manual wage labor.
Across social groups, the proportion of rural laborers was much lower among non SCs/STs 22.69 per cent in 1974-75 and 31.82 per cent in 1999-2000. A comparative picture of the magnitude of wage labor among SCs and non SCs/STs clearly indicates a substantially higher incidence of laborers among the rural SC households. The disparities in the levels of rural and agricultural labor households among SCs and non SCs/STs are strikingly evident.

At the state level, in 1999-2000 the percentage of rural labor households was higher for SCs as compared to non SCs/STs for all the states. The disparity index for agricultural labor was relatively higher in Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in that order. From the mid 1970s to the late 1990s, the disparities between SCs and non SCs/STs in terms of the percentages of agricultural labor households and rural labor households have decreased at both the all India level as well as in all the states.

6.3 Landownership background of rural and agricultural labor households.

Thorat, highlight the characteristic features of labor households that own land and those that do not. Further, the distribution of labor households possessing land has also been delineated by the size of their landholdings, with a focus on the size specific prevalence of labor households.

Figure shows the rural labor households with and without land, in 1999-2000. At the all India level (1999-2000), about 41 per cent of all rural labor households owned some land, but the proportion of SC rural labor households possessing land.

All India level the rural labor households with land and without land during the period of 1974-75 and 1999-2000. The ratio were particularly low for the northern states of Punjab and Haryana. In 1999-2000, the SC agricultural labor households in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal had a lower proportion of land holding than the all India level. The land owning rural labor households were largely concentrated in the land size category of less than 0.40 ha. The proportion fo rural labor households with a land size of 0.4-1.0 ha or more than 1 ha was particularly low for SCs (6.6 per cent and 2.3 per cent, respectively) compared to that of all rural labor households (9.4 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively).

Here Thorat said that, the incidence of wage labor encapsulates interesting features regarding the prevalence of inequality in wage labor between SCs and all labor households. First,
the incidence of wage labor among SCs was almost twice that of all social groups put together. Second, the share of rural labor households among SCs was much higher than their respective share in the total rural households.

6.4 Wage rates in agricultural and non agricultural employment

Throat writes that, unlike the disparities between SC and non SC rural labor households in terms of wage labor and landownership patterns, the differences in their real wage rates are less found. All India average real wage rate in agricultural occupations was Rs. 1356 in 1999-2000 (base 1986) for SC Male laborers, more or less equal to all male laborers countrywide. Across the states, the real wage rates of SC agricultural laborers varied from Rs. 9.00 in Orissa to about Rs. 20.00 in Punjab to Rs. 31.17 in Kerala. Of the 17 major states in the country, in nine states Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar, Utttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu – the wage rates of the SC Male laborer was lower than the national average.

In the non agricultural occupations, SC males received an average real wage of Rs. 19.76 as against Rs. 21.01 received by all male non agricultural laborers. Wage differentials among SC laborers and all laborers engaged in non agricultural occupations existed in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

By and large, the agricultural wage rates of the SC wage laborers did not differ much from the national average for male, female and child laborers. However, the wage rates of SCs in the non agricultural sector were somewhat lower than the national average in eight state. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

6.5 Poverty

Thorat assesses the status of scheduled castes (SCs) with respect to poverty in the rural areas, captures the impact of the past exclusion of SCs in India by conducting an inter social group poverty analysis and identifies the economic factors associated with the persistently high poverty among SCs. Their analysis is based on all India and State level dates in three time periods 1983, 1993-94 and 1999-2000. specifically they presents the magnitude of rural poverty among SCs at the all India and state levels. They also analysis the disparities in the magnitude of rural poverty across social groups and also attempts identify the factors or determinants of poverty in rural areas.
In their analysis they first capture the inter social group disparities in rural poverty. In 1999-2000, there were about 36 per cent of SCs as compared with 21 per cent of non SCs/STs in rural areas. The poverty disparity ration between SCs and non – SCs/STs, the incidence of rural poverty was about 70 per cent higher among SCs.

The disparities in rural poverty between SCs and Non SCs/STs were far more glaring in some states. At the state level, the disparity was particularly high in a few states, including Punjab, Karyana and Rajasthan, which had poverty gap ration of 5.31, 3.98 and 3.72, respectively. Thus, poverty among SCs was about five times higher in Punjab, about four times higher in Haryana and about three and a half times higher in Rajasthan as compared with the all India average.

In another five states Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra – and the union territory of Pondicherry, poverty among SCs and about two times higher than the norm. in rest of the states, which include west Bengal, Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim poverty among SCs was close to the all India average disparity ration of 1.7.

The incidence of poverty for the SC category tended to be consistently higher than that for the non SC/ST category. There are particular regions where the magnitude of poverty among SCs was particularly high. At the all India level, about 27 per cent of rural persons were poor. The incidence varied considerably among the different states. The states of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh constituted regions of high poverty, where the poverty percentage was 37 per cent, 44 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. Interestingly, the same group of states also indicated a high degree of poverty for all the social groups. In the case of SCs, the incidence of poverty was on the higher side in Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh (Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal stood fourth and fifth, respectively)

Thus, a group of five states Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal turned out to be the pockets/regions of high poverty. It is pertinent here that baring a few exceptions, these five states constituted a region of high poverty in 1983-84 as well as in 1993-94.

At the overall levels, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana together constituted regions of low rural poverty, with Andhra Pradesh and Kerala running fourth and fifth, respectively. The same set of states Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana (along with the
additional states of Gujarat) constituted regions of low rural poverty for the SC category. However, despite lower poverty levels, the inter social group disparities were high in several states.

Thorat also analysis of regional variations of poverty. Rural poverty declined for all social groups taken together at a per annum rate of 3.2 per cent during 1983-2000. the incidence of poverty in the rural areas also declined for all social groups. However, the rate of decline was slower among SCs as compared to non SCs/STs.

In the case of SCs, the head count ration declined by 2.9 per cent per annum during 1983-2000. There were significant inter-state variations in the rate of decline in rural poverty. Poverty among SCs reduced by a higher per annum rate in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan (varying from 4.5 per cent in Gujarat to 8.7 per cent in Kerala) and by relatively low rates in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Assam (varying from 1.7 per cent in Uttar Pradesh to 2.3 per cent in Orissa). In rest of the states, poverty reduced by a margin of about 4-4.5 per cent.

The incidence of rural poverty also declined for the non SC/ST group between 1983-2000 by about 3.3 per cent per annum. Poverty declined at a much faster rate (well above the all India average) in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, where the annual rate of decline exceeded 6 per cent and even shot up to 8 per cent in some states. The rate of decline was comparatively less in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. In the remaining states, poverty declined at a Moderate rate, closer to the national average.

Here Thorat said that, two features seem to average quite clearly with respect to inter-state variations in the change in rural poverty among social groups. First, a set of states show lower levels of decline in rural poverty during 1983 and 1999-2000 for all the social groups: these include Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and Assam. Second another set of states show a higher decline in rural poverty for SCs and non SCs/STs these include Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan. The fact that the high poverty states (Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and Assam) showed to lower decline in poverty during 1983-2000 implies that in those states, identical factors may have influenced the slower decline in rural poverty. Similarly, in so far as a greater decline occurred in low to medium poverty states, identical processes seem to have accelerated the decline in rural poverty during 1983-1999/2000. The subsequent section on the determinants of poverty throws further light on this aspects.
The rate of decline in rural poverty being less among SCs as compared to non SCs/STs at the all India level and in all the states except Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, the disparities in rural poverty between the two social groups increased marginally.

In 1983, the poverty disparity ration between SCs and the Non SCs/STs was 1.57, indicating 57 per cent higher poverty among SCs. The disparity ration remained nearly the same in 1993-94 (1.54), but increased to 1.7 in 1999-2000 figure 6.15. Thus, the gap in rural poverty between SCs and non SCs/STs during 1983 and 1999-2000 did not decline. Among the 17 major states – with the exception of West Bengal the disparity ration seems to have increased. Most of the small states also indicate increase in the gap in poverty between SCs and non SCs/STs.

Thorat selected a set of indicators to capture the economic features of high and low poverty states. These indicators have been classified into seven groups indicating the following.

1. ownership of income earning capital assets
2. employment diversification
3. quality of employment
4. urbanization
5. employment and unemployment rate
6. wage rates
7. education level, in terms of literacy rates and levels of education

The higher incidence of landless and near landless households, the lower proportion of self employed farmers or cultivators and non-farm self employed households, and the higher proportion of landless households was 10.2 per cent and the proportion of the landless and the near landless was 77.1 per cent among SC, while for non – SC/ST households, it was 4.8 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively. Similarly, the percentage of cultivators (27.3 per cent) and self employed cultivating households (16.9 per cent) among SCs was lower as compared to the 37.5 per cent and 30.8 per cent, respectively, among non SC/ST households.

Within the high poverty states, the level of urbanization as well as diversification of the workforce in non-farm activities was lower among SCs as compared to non – SCs/STs was 22.5 per cent and that of SCs was 11.1 per cent. The percentage of rural non agricultural worker among SCs was about 24 per cent as compared to 36 per cent among non SC/ST. Dependence of SC on
the agricultural sector, particularly as agricultural labor, was much higher. About 75.3 per cent of SC workers were dependent on agriculture, as compared to 64.1 per cent of non SC/ST. Among the SC workers dependent on agriculture, 52.2 per cent were agricultural laborers, as compared to 28.7 per cent among non SC/ST.

The daily wage earnings of both male and female SC agricultural laborers also tended to be lower than the overall wage rate. The daily wage earnings of male SC laborers engaged in rural non agricultural activities were found to be lower compared to the overall wage rate. Similarly, the literacy rate and enrolment ratio at various levels of education was also quite low. The literacy rate of SC males and females was 44.9 per cent and 14.5 per cent, respectively, as compared to 70.6 per cent and 28.6 per cent, respectively, of non SC/ST males and females. The proportion of males who completed primary/middle school, secondary and higher secondary education, graduation and above among SCs was 20.8 per cent, 19 per cent and 2.1 per cent, respectively, for the non SC/ST males. The corresponding figures for SC females were 7.2 per cent, 5.6 per cent and 0.3 per cent, respectively, while that for the non SC/ST females were 31.1 per cent, 21 per cent and 3.3 per cent respectively.

Therefore, Thorat said that, these statistics indicate that the persistently high chronic poverty conditions of SC households in high poverty states is closely associated with extremely low ownership of income earning capital assets such as agricultural land and non land assets, lower diversification of employment in the non-farm sectors, lower wage earnings in both the farm and the non-farm sectors, and lower levels of literacy and education as compared to the non SC/ST groups.

6.6 Summary

This chapter focused the writings of Thorat on the inter caste inequalities Dalit economic situation in his writings he examines the points of access of low caste untouchables to private enterprises, access to capital assets, employment, rural labor conditions, occupational pattern and poverty of among discriminated group.

Above the writings of Thorat we have understand that, in the case of landownership, the pattern of land ownership highly skewed against SCs. Nearly 70 per cent of SC households either do not own land or have very small landholdings of less than 0.4 ha. A very small proportion (less
than 6 per cent) consists of medium and large farmers. The scenario of landownership among SCs, is even grimmer in Bihar, Haryana, Kerala and Punjab, where more than 90 per cent of SC households possess negligible or no land.

In the case of private enterprises we can understand, significant inter-caste disparities in the ownership of private enterprise in rural and urban areas. While the share of the SCs and the STs was much lower than their share in the country’s population, the share of the HCs was much above their population share in the rural areas. In the case for the OBCs their share in private enterprise was fairly close to their share in population. Thus the OBCs and HCs had better access to private enterprise in rural areas. A similar pattern is observed in the urban areas as well.

In the case of occupational pattern, we understand that the trend towards occupational diversification of the rural workforce across all social groups as observed in 1993-94, 73 per cent of the SC rural workforce in India continued to be employed in the agriculture sector and their dependence on this traditional sector was more prominent than non SC/ST (68 per cent) in 1999-2000. the diversification trend among SCs in particularly sharp in Assam, Haryana, Kerala and Punjab. In Andhra Pradesh, Bihar (including Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, where the concentration of the SC population is higher, the decline in SC agricultural workers during 1991-2001 has been lower, ranging between 3-11 percentage points. Except in Assam, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, the disparity index of SC versus non SC/ST workers engaged in the agricultural sector remained above 1, indicating higher percentage of the SC workforce than the non SC/ST workforce. In the case of employment we understand that, the SC male employment rates (46.2 per cent rural and 45.8 per cent urban) were lower than the employment rates of non SC/ST males (48 per cent rural and 49.6 per cent urban), but the female employment rate was higher for the former social groups as compared to the latter by about 3 percentage points. In 1999/2000, in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, the SC rural male employment rate was 3-4 percentage points lower than the all India average of 46.2 per cent, while urban male employment was low in Kerala (41.4 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (41.9 per cent), Assam (41.9 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh (42.5 per cent). The SC rural female employment rate was very low, at 11-12 per cent in West Bengal, Haryana and Assam. In urban, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh too the SC female employment rate was much lower than the national average of 14 per cent.
In the case of wage labor we understand that the incidence for wage labor among rural SC households, was very high. In 1999-2000, the proportion of SC rural laborers to total rural households was 61.42 per cent. From 1974-75 to 1999-2000, the dependence of the SC rural labor households on wage income increased by about 4 percentage points. The percentage of rural labor households was higher than the all India average in Kerala (83.36 per cent), Tamil Nadu (82.22 per cent), Bihar (76.96 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh (74.66 per cent).

In the case of poverty, we understand that in 1999-2000, poverty was particularly high and concentrated in a few states such as Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, followed by Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Above the analysis for the economic characteristics of high and low poverty states revealed that with respect to most of the indicators of rural poverty, the states with high poverty lagged far behind the states with low poverty. The high poverty states were generally characterized by lower access to capital assets such as agricultural land and non-farm business, low urbanization, low sectoral diversification, lower deployment and wage rate, lower literacy and educational level, and high proportion of agricultural and rural labor. The analysis further averaged that within the high poverty states, the situation of SC with respect to these indicators was worse as compared to the situation of non SC/ST. the lack of access and deprivation with respect to all relevant indicators was, in fact the main reasons for the persistence of high poverty among SCs in the poverty prone areas.
Reference