

# Beyond Economics: Review of Selected Studies in The Context of Indian Society

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## **Abstract:**

In consideration of social and economic history of ‘dalits’, it has attracted many scholars throughout the world. Many scholars from sociology have studied ‘dalits’ in various approaches. Indian and foreign sociologists have contributed their research with respect to ‘dalits’ in India. Unfortunately, economists in India have not considered ‘dalits’ and their economics as a research topic in their branch. Economics of ‘dalits’ or ‘economics of castes’ does exist and could be interesting and challenging; besides that, except rare exception, none of Indian economists has considered economics of castes as a research topic. The economics of castes is unexplored branch of economics even today. While dealing the economics of castes, there seems more discrimination and injustice in the academic world of economics. In this article, the focus has been given on economics castes, which is stated as ‘beyond economics’

**Keywords:** dalits, discrimination, economic anthropology, social economics, market

**1. Introduction:** Indian society is known by its social structure based on caste hierarchy. The caste hierarchy had determined the occupation of many castes. The caste hierarchy had adversely affected the depressed castes. The untouchable castes were forced to live with caste given occupation, which sustained their economic poverty and deprivation for next several years. The untouchables are now known as ‘dalits’ in the recent times, especially in ‘Maharashtra’ state. ‘Dalits’ have been placed at the bottom in the Indian social structure. They had been kept in severe social, economic and cultural poverty over a long period of time. They did not have means of production. They were working as service provider. The caste hierarchy had divided the services of ‘dalits’ as most inferior. Besides that, inhuman treatment, exploitation, concept of pollution, untouchability, atrocities etc. were attached to ‘dalits’ for hundreds of years. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of ‘dalits’ fought for their rights. He was able to provide certain rights to ‘dalits’ in pre and post-independence period. The constitution of India also has given certain safeguards to ‘dalits’. In spite of that, large majority of ‘dalits’ are suffering from social evils, especially in rural area. In consideration of social and economic history of ‘dalits’, it has attracted many scholars throughout the world. Many scholars from sociology have studied ‘dalits’ in various approaches. Indian and foreign sociologists have contributed their research with respect to ‘dalits’ in India. Unfortunately, economists in India have not considered ‘dalits’ and their economics as a research topic in their branch. Economics of ‘dalits’ or ‘economics of castes’ does exist and could be interesting and challenging; besides that, except rare exception, none of Indian economists has considered economics of castes as a research topic. The economics of castes is unexplored branch of economics

even today. While dealing the economics of castes, there seems more discrimination and injustice in the academic world of economics. In this article, the focus has been given on economics castes, which is stated as 'beyond economics'.

## 2) Objectives of the Study:

- 2.1 To review the Indian society with respect to caste hierarchy.
- 2.2 To explore the potential research avenues of economics beyond economics
- 2.3 To review the contribution of researcher in the field of social economics.

## 3) Hypothesis:

- 3.1 The Indian researchers have neglected the significance of economics in the context of castes.
- 3.2 The foreign researchers have contributed to the field of economics of castes.
- 3.3 There exists greater potential to study the economics beyond economics, especially in the context of caste economics.

## 4) Literature Review:

The castes in India have been addressed by several foreign researchers and also by some of the Indian sociologists. The most remarkable contribution was made by Russel R.V. (1916) (Tribes & Castes of Central Provinces) and Enthoven R.E. (1922) (The Tribes and Castes of Bombay). This has been referred by all the researchers even in the present period. These two works have described the castes and tribes of selected states in details. Kroeber (1950), Hutton J.H. (1961) and Beteille Andre (1971) also have explored the Indian castes and their social existence. Besides them, Cohen Bernard (1955) and Akerlof George (1976) also have contributed to the sociology of caste. In terms of sociological aspects, Indian castes have been studied by several researchers. However, very few researchers have contributed this subject in the context of economics. Akerlof George and Rachel Kranton (2000) have explored the relationship between an identity and economics, which can be referred as one important contribution which has explored the social economics. Thorsby David (2001) has explained the relationship between economics and culture with logical analysis. Suguna Pathy (2010) has given the analysis to economic anthropology in the colonial period.

## 5) Methodology:

The present research article is based on the secondary data. The data has been collected from the books published by the various researchers. The researcher also has used selected researches available with the library and e-articles available on the authentic websites.

## 6) Analysis of Data and Results :

The ultimate goal of economics is social welfare and maximum satisfaction of both, the individuals and the society as a whole. This has been central theme of economics. 'Dalits' are important part of society, constituting significant share in total population. Besides that, economics in India has never dealt 'dalits' or depressed castes as basic part of study. Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other Tribes (DTs/NTs) constitute around 30 per cent of Indian population. This huge population was never brought under the orbit of economics. Economics never explored the castes of weaker section with respect various economic indicators. Economics could not give solution to the

problems of these segments of the society. This is because; Economics in India is nothing but Economics of 'elite' group. It explored only cream of the society and rest of the people had no economics. This approach has brought huge setback to Indian economy and society. Large section of the society remained in severe economic poverty and deprivation. Economists were silent over these issues. The million dollar question is that, whom should we blame? The branch of 'economics' has been living in compartments in India for the several years. The traditional 'economists' in India did not try to interlink this branch with 'sociology' and 'psychology'. This negligence brought the isolation to the branch of 'economics'. The base line of this basic subject in relation to Indian society is that, "economics in India has emerged from the caste hierarchy". The study of the Indian economy in multi-dimensional approach must be linked with 'sociology', 'culture' and 'psychology', whereas this has not been done in general.

The economic structure in India has been built on the 'social system' existed for hundreds of years. The economic activities, distribution of resources, wage determination etc. are determined on the basis of social system. The caste hierarchy has brought the economic inequality in all aspects. This can't be hidden. This can't be neglected. We must accept this reality in order to end the evils of caste hierarchy. Accordingly 'development' plans can be designed. The understanding of this economic structure and academic experiments in this regard may bring solution. Unfortunately, most of the Indian economists still do not consider the 'caste hierarchy' as the origin of the economic inequality between various social groups. Thus the economists are involved in activities as '*beating behind the bush*'. It is really surprising that, why the Indian eminent and intellectual economists have not given attention towards these basic issues? Did they not understand? Did they not see? Or were they not capable? I do not find any of these possibilities, and then question is that why they did not study?

Sociology and Economics of Castes has been interesting field of research for many foreign scholars. They have contributed their best. There has been series of scholars, who studied 'dalits' in pre and post-Independence period. In this regard, the pioneer work has been done by two famous scholars in pre-Independence period. Enthoven R.E. (1922) (The Tribes and Castes of Bombay) and Russel R.V. (1916) (Tribes & Castes of Central Provinces) have contributed remarkable work. Both the authors have done a comprehensive and authoritative work that describes the history, caste, custom and manners of the various groups of people that inhabit the then Presidency of Bombay and Central Provinces. They have listed systematically various castes and tribes in selected regions of India, which includes all those castes, which are now known as 'dalits'. Even in the contemporary period, these two famous contributions remained relevant. Some other scholars are- Abbe Dubois(1857), Kroeber (1950), Hutton J.H. (1961), Beteille Andre (1971) and others.

In the recent period, the famous foreign scholar Gail Omdvet has given her remarkable contribution to 'dalit' studies. Some of her contributions are- 'Dalits and the Democratic Revolution : Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India' (1994), 'Dalit Visions: The Anti-Caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity' (1994), 'Buddhism in India : Challenging Brahmanism and Caste' (2003) and 'Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India'(2004). In the similar way, there are few more foreign scholars, who have considered 'dalits' as a part of study. (Zelliot Eleanor: 1978, Detlef: 2003 and others)

In the context of economics of castes or 'dalit' economics, some of eminent foreign scholars have contributed to the field of economics of castes. It was really surprising and appreciable that, these foreign scholars have given much attention towards the caste based economics. For them, it was difficult

to understand the 'Indian Caste Hierarchy' or the 'Varna System', besides that they have considered the 'economics of castes' as the important issue. Their contribution must be appreciated. In this regard, I must quote some of the eminent scholars as- 'Cohen Bernard' (1955), 'Akerlof George' (1976), 'Akerlof George and Rachel Kranton' (2000), Dirks Nicholas (2001) and Sivan Anderson (2005) Thus it can be stated that, the foreign scholars have considered 'dalits' as an important issue of study, especially in sociological approach. Few of them have explored in 'economic' approach.

In Indian academic system, there has been study of various branches of economics. Starting from 'Money' to 'Trade' and from 'Individual to 'Society'. All branches are being studied. These branches are more traditional. Ofcourse, these are essential branches of economics, but there are needed to look beyond such 'economics'. There is lot of 'economics' beyond existed 'economics' in India. Although the ultimate goal of 'economics' is maximum welfare of the society, economics in India never thought in realistic way. Therefore, there is need to develop such branches of economics, which are directly and indirectly related to the society and the groups of society. It is a fact that, Indian society has been divided into various social groups. There has been heterogeneity in Indian society. Indian economists must think this reality and accordingly, there is need to develop the branches of economics. In many foreign countries, there have been expansion of branch of 'economics' to its various branches of 'sociology', 'culture', 'psychology', 'philosophy' etc. Some of the new branches of economics are- 'Social Economics', 'Cultural Economics', 'Economic Psychology', 'Economic Philosophy', 'Identity Economics', 'Gender Economics', 'Resource Economics' and other similar branches are being studied separately. These branches of economics are more applied in nature and which are linked directly with the social welfare. Along with traditional economics (Micro Economics, Macro Economics, Public Finance, Money and Banking etc.), these interdisciplinary branches of economics have developed to one significant level in foreign countries. Unfortunately in India, these branches have been neglected and no efforts are being carried out to develop such branches. This has resulted into various grass root economic problems of weaker sections of Indian society, especially 'dalits'. The intellectuals from economics should go beyond the traditional economics for the sake of 'India'. But the established academic system does not bend. Well! May be they are also victims of the social system. They are living in that academic system which has been created by social-cultural philosophy of the caste hierarchy. But yet there is time to think, they must think about this reality, otherwise, they will be protecting the economic injustice of 'dalits'.

There have been several academic experiments in the field of economics in western countries. Several sub-branches of economics have been developed by foreign scholars. These academic innovative branches of economics would help to Indian economists to look beyond traditional economics and to explore the grounded economics. The economics of caste is most important inter-disciplinary subject which can be linked with all sub-branches of economics. Some of the recent contribution to these new branches of economics is given below-

Akerlof George and Rachel Kranton (2000) have explored the relationship between an identity and economics. The authors have considered how identity, a person's sense of self, affects economic outcomes. They have incorporated the psychology and sociology of identity into an economic model of behavior. The authors have proposed that in the utility function, identity is associated with different social categories. The authors further have given models of gender discrimination in the workplace, the economics of poverty and social exclusion, and the household division of labor; In each case, the inclusion of identity substantively changes conclusions of previous economic analysis. In the context of

India, Identity with respect to all socio-economic indicators is based on caste hierarchy. Hence identity and economics in Indian context must be explained considering caste hierarchy; this would be exploring the real picture of Indian society.

Culture also has strong effect on economics. Indian society has been under the influence of culture for hundreds of years. The culture based on caste hierarchy determines the economics of many castes. Even in the contemporary period, it is true. In the context of Indian society, this has to be explored more effectively. Thorsby David (2001) has explained the relationship between economics and culture with reasonable evidences. According to the author “cultural relationship and processes can also be seen to exist within an economic environment and can themselves be interpreted in economic terms”. Thus the author has recommended having a separate branch of economics titled ‘Economics of Culture’. Indian society has traditional cultural history which can be linked with various economic processes existed even in the contemporary period. The culture also has been linked with poverty. This branch has to be developed in the context of India.

Suguna Pathy (2010:104) has given the analysis to economic anthropology in the colonial period. According to the author, the socio-economic formation in general is the consequence of different modes of production, the inherent diversities and the complexities. The general setting of Indian society or castes with respect to land, income and occupation are linked with socio-economic setting based on caste hierarchy. The modes of production given to certain castes were exploring the superiority or domination; whereas, other castes had no share in modes of production and land. This inequality created by the historical socio-economic setting of the society exists even in the contemporary period. The researcher has to measure the intensity of inequality and deprivation among the selected castes. This analysis may be helpful for policymakers to frame the policy accordingly.

Economics psychology plays an important role in determining the economic behaviour of an individual and the society. In the context of Indian society, economic psychology must be elaborated in the context of caste system. There is also exists perfect relationship between rationality and economics. Besides these, there are number of other branches of economics, which need to be developed in India. During the exploration of these branches of economics, the caste system must be considered. Some of the authors have tried to explore the caste economics in selected efforts.

Siwan Anderson (2005) has explained the economics of castes in selected region of India. The author has compared upper caste and lower caste with respect to economic indicators. The key finding of the study was that income is substantially higher for low caste households residing in villages dominated by a backward caste. The empirical study found that, the caste culture (or the caste system) directly affects the efficiency of markets. The social identity impacts very simple trading relationships. This shows that, the caste and economics has strong relationship. The caste determines the economics. Therefore, the caste economics must be explored more effectively in the context of India. Thorat Sukhdeo and Katherine Newman (2007) have explained the relationship between caste and economic inequality. The authors have explored that the caste persists as a system of inequality that burdens the Indian economy with inefficiencies in the allocation of labour and other critical resources, reducing the full development of human capital in society.

Economics of castes need to be promoted; since such studies can give constructive solutions to their problems. Each caste or tribe has its own economic problems, which are linked with their social hierarchy or caste hierarchy. Their occupations and income has been inferior, which has resulted into severe poverty and deprivation. The academicians must think this ground reality and have

to conduct various studies in this regards. However, there have been number of practical and psychological problems as discussed above. Therefore, in this situation, the role of government and policymakers is most important. The government must promote the economics of castes or economics of 'dalits' through its various agencies. Special incentives or scholarships for research on economics of castes must be given. In order to change the attitude of the researcher and students from non-dalits, the policymakers must introduce economics of castes or 'dalit' economics at graduation and post-graduation level. This subject may help to understand the reality of 'dalits' and other depressed castes. All these efforts are essential to design certain solution for the economic problems of 'dalits' , so that they can come in the main stream of the society.

### 7) Conclusion:

Indian society is characterized with social stratification, which is based on the castes. A large section of the society has been living severe poverty and deprivation. This worst position of them sustained over a long period of time. The caste hierarchy has resulted into economic poverty and deprivation of various communities. This is a fact that, even today, the social and economic position 'dalits' and 'tribes' is influenced by caste hierarchy. They are living severe economic problems. These problems are unsolved for hundreds of years. The intellectuals from economics must consider this reality seriously and conduct various studies in this regard. Such effort may bring some constructive solution. Therefore, the understanding of 'economics' in India must be changed. 'Economics' must be linked with social and economic reality of the society.

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