

Unveiling The Vulnerability Of SC & ST Categories: A Dual Facet Of Human Development

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Abstract

The progress of education is closely linked to the overall advancement of society and plays a vital role in driving social change. Education is crucial for acquiring employability skills and accessing well-paid job opportunities. Kerala, a state in India, has achieved 100% literacy and is a leader in promoting education and health. The state's progress in the health and education sectors is fundamental to Kerala's development and a source of pride and inspiration for the entire nation. Significant achievements in literacy, infant¹ mortality, maternal mortality, life expectancy, and other human development indicators characterize Kerala's development model. Kerala's complete literacy and advancements in human development have distinguished it from different states in India. While Kerala's success in the Human Development Index is commendable, it's also essential to consider the flip side. Despite leading in human development, some individuals cannot benefit from its progress. This article aims to explore the dual facets of human development in Kerala.

Keywords: Scheduled Cast, Scheduled Tribe, Human Development, Vulnerability, Higher Education, Enrolment, Dropout, Government Job.

Introduction

Education is a critical driver of social change, with its development closely linked to overall societal progress. Social change refers to the shifts in human interactions and relationships within society. Education influences people's perspectives and traditional approaches to social and economic issues by serving as an instrument of social change. Education is a human right and an essential determinant of people's future lives. It is based on education that a person can progress naturally and find employment opportunities to lead a better life. Primary, higher, and vocational education play a role in entering the workforce. Education is critical in acquiring employability skills and finding well-paid employment opportunities. Let's look at the Kerala development model. Kerala is one of the states in India that has achieved 100% literacy and is at the forefront of enriching the potential of education and health. Kerala has reached the first position in the Human Development Index based on health, education, and standard of living. Kerala claims to be at the forefront of human resource development and improved quality of life. Today, it is very relevant to discuss whether the benefit of the said development is available to socially backward groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, most of whom live at the bottom of the society. The objective measure of development is how much it has uplifted those at the bottom of society to the forefront. Even now, socially disadvantaged individuals need more access to better health facilities, education facilities, and well-paid employment opportunities. This study examines the education status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students in Kerala, which claims to be developed and ranked first in the Human Development Index, based on enrolment, dropout, and number of persons employed in government institutions. A comparison was also made with other groups of students with

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SC and ST students in terms of enrolment and dropout in High school and Higher education institutions. We must address these educational disparities to ensure a more equitable and just society.

In the 2011 Indian Census, the SC population was 16.6 %, while the ST population was 8.6 %, making up a quarter of the total population. The SC population in Kerala stands at 3,039,573 individuals, accounting for 9.10 % of the state's total population, while the ST population in Kerala is 484,839 individuals, constituting 1.45 % of the total population. Even after 60 years of the formation of the state of Kerala, the full development of the socially backward sections still needs to be completed. Development in the health and education sectors is considered extremely important in Kerala's development path. The most prominent feature of Kerala's development model is the achievement in these two areas, followed by the advancement in development indicators like literacy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, and life expectancy. Complete literacy and development in human development indices brought Kerala a unique position, apart from other states in India. Of course, Kerala's achievement in the Human Development Index is worth mentioning, but it is equally important to examine the other side. While standing at the head of human development on one side, it is a non-hidden reality that some people cannot embrace its richness on the other side. This article deals with exploring the dual facets of human development in Kerala.

Review of Literature

Aswini Deshpande (2000) studied intergroup disparities in educational institutions, focusing on caste-based inequalities in India. The study highlighted the need for government intervention to address inequities among vulnerable sections, particularly scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Krishnamurthy Sundaram (2006) studied the prevalence of the caste-based hierarchy system in India and assessed the economic criteria for evaluating backwardness. The study revealed that SC and ST communities are already recognised as disadvantaged and receive more attention. However, the reservation of 27% of seats for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in higher education must be considered sufficient. It was suggested that raising the reservation to 50% for OBCs would help develop a more skilled workforce.

In their 2007 paper, CE Ajith Kumar and M Lathika compared Kerala's achievements with those of the entire country. They noted that Kerala had achieved high literacy rates even before its formation and that the state is nearing complete enrolment in education. The study also highlighted the issue of educated unemployment in Kerala, which they found disproportionate to the state's high level of education.

Rakesh Basant and Gitanjali Sen (2010) stated that enrolment in higher education is influenced by social, economic, religious, and demographic factors. They found that economically and socially disadvantaged groups participated less in higher education and recommended strengthening reservation policies to support these vulnerable groups.

In their 2012 study, Khalid Khan and Nidhi S Sabharwal highlighted issues related to higher education. They examined the disparities in accessing higher education among various socio-religious and occupational groups. Their findings revealed a lower enrolment probability for higher-education SC and ST groups. They also noted that urban areas had the highest enrolment probability. They suggested that improving the economic conditions is essential to enhance the participation of SC and ST groups in higher education.

S. Behera (2015) investigated higher education accessibility for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the participation of minorities. The study concluded that government intervention is needed for tribal development.

Harihar Sahoo and Sumana Acharya (2019) studied the factors influencing higher education and the high dropout rates among scheduled caste students. They discovered that personal issues and academic difficulties are the primary reasons. The authors suggested that the government implement new programs to support vulnerable minorities and reduce the educational achievement gap.

S. Irudaya Rajan and S. Sunitha (2020) studied the literacy and education levels of scheduled castes and tribes. Their findings revealed low enrolment of SC and ST students in graduation and post-graduation programs. Additionally, they sought to identify the obstacles contributing to their low levels of education.

Analysis and Discussion

The study was conducted based on secondary data. Data were collected from the economic reviews and census reports from 2015-16 to 2021-22.

Table 1.1: Proportion of SC/ST Students in Schools

YEARS	SC	ST	OTHERS
2016-17	10.71	2.12	87.17
2017-18	10.45	2.05	87.53
2019-20	10.31	1.98	87.71
2021-22	9.90	1.85	88.25

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

Table 1.1 gives the data regarding the proportion of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in schools. The enrolment of SC students in 2017-18 is 10.45% of the total enrolment. Their after it shows a declining trend up to 2021-22. It constitutes 9.9 % of total students in the State. ST students constitute 1.85 % of total school enrolment in 2021-22.

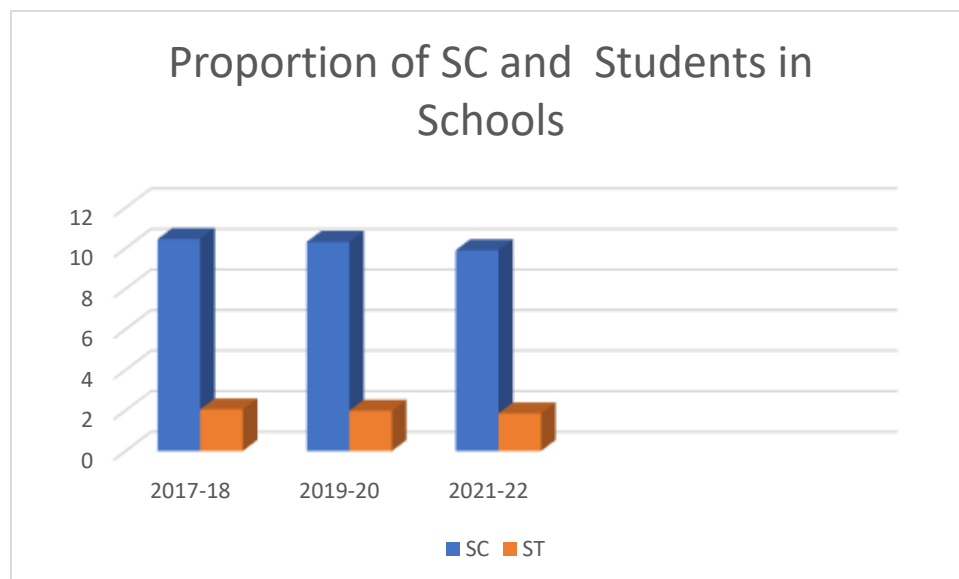


Figure 1.1

SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Table 1.2: Percentage of SC & ST Students in Government Schools

Categories	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2021-22
SC	13.46	13.48	13.06	12.29
ST	3.85	3.86	3.7	3.33
Others	82.69	82.66	83.25	84.38
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Directorate of General Education

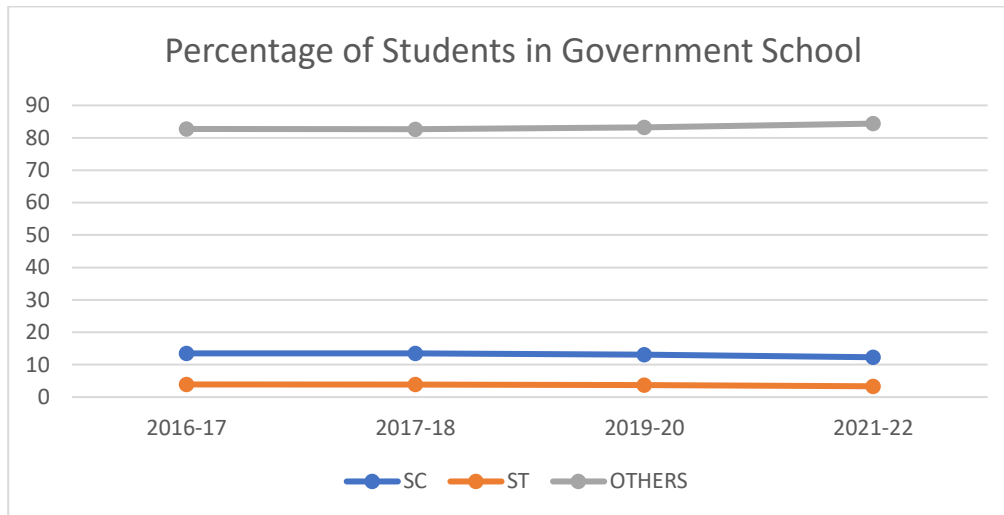


Figure 1.2

The above table represents the enrolment of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students in Government schools. The percentage of SC and ST students who appeared during 2016-17 is 13.46% and 3.85%, respectively. Instead of a slight increase in SC students' participation in 2017-18, all other years under consideration showed a declining trend. The enrolment of ST students in government schools has shown an alarming trend. When comparing the appearance of SC and ST students in government schools, Tribal students showed less participation than SC students.

SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN PRIVATE AIDED SCHOOLS

Table. 1.3: Percentages of SC & ST students in Private Aided Schools

Categories	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2021-22
SC	10.56	10.33	9.95	9.49
ST	1.55	1.44	1.32	1.23
Others	87.89	88.23	88.73	89.28
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Directorate of General Education

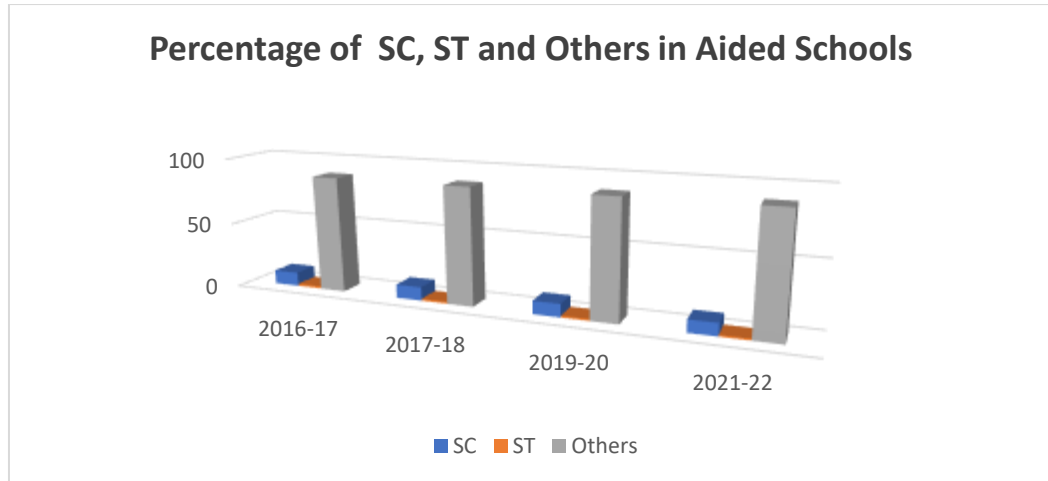


Table. 1. 3 shows the enrolment of SC and ST students in private aided schools of Kerala during 2016-2021. The participation of these students in government-aided schools from 2016-17 to 2021-22 has declined over the years. The percentage of ST students who appear in government-aided schools is near the ground level. When comparing enrolment of SC and ST students in government-aided schools, both SC and ST students showed poor participation.

SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN PRIVATE UNAIDED SCHOOLS

Table 1.4: Percentage of SC & ST students in private unaided schools

Categories	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2021-22
SC	4.11	4.13	4.06	3.95
ST	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.47
Others	95.43	95.41	95.47	95.57
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Directorate of General Education

The above table represents the percentage of students of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who attend unaided schools. The percentage age of tribal students in unaided schools was constant at a shallow level compared with SC students. The enrolment of SC and ST students constitutes below 5% of the total enrolment in unaided schools. It is clear from the table that the involvement of SC and ST students in unaided schools could have been better.

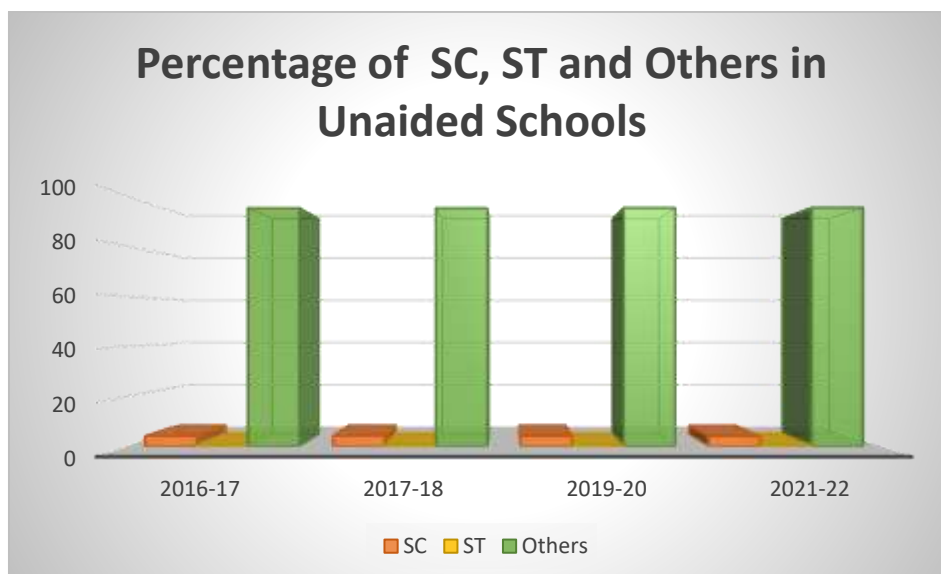


Figure 1.4

Comparison of Enrolment of Students among SC- ST and Others in Government, Aided and Unaided Schools.

Table 1.5

Years	Government Schools			Private Aided Schools			Private Unaided		
	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST	Others
2016-17	13.46	3.85	82.69	10.56	1.55	87.89	4.11	0.46	95.43
2017-18	13.48	3.86	82.66	10.33	1.44	88.23	4.13	0.46	95.41
2019-20	13.06	3.7	83.25	9.95	1.32	88.73	4.06	0.47	95.47
2021-22	12.29	3.33	84.38	9.49	1.23	89.28	3.95	0.47	95.57

Source: Directorate of General Education

The above table represents the overall picture of enrolment of SC- ST students in government, aided, and unaided schools. When comparing the percentage of school students' participation among SC and ST, it can be seen that the enrolment of scheduled tribes is very low. The central portion of the enrolment of both SC and ST students is at government schools, which shows that an attractive policy has been implemented in government schools. To improve the status of SC and ST students, the government provides primary education aid, stipends, lump-sum grants, and scholarships. From 2016-17 to 2021-22, the arrival of SC-ST students in private, unaided schools could have been better, indicating huge expenditure for unaided schools compared to government schools. Comparing the enrolment of SC-ST school students with others shows that the arrival of others in government, aided and unaided schools were almost the same at the upper level.

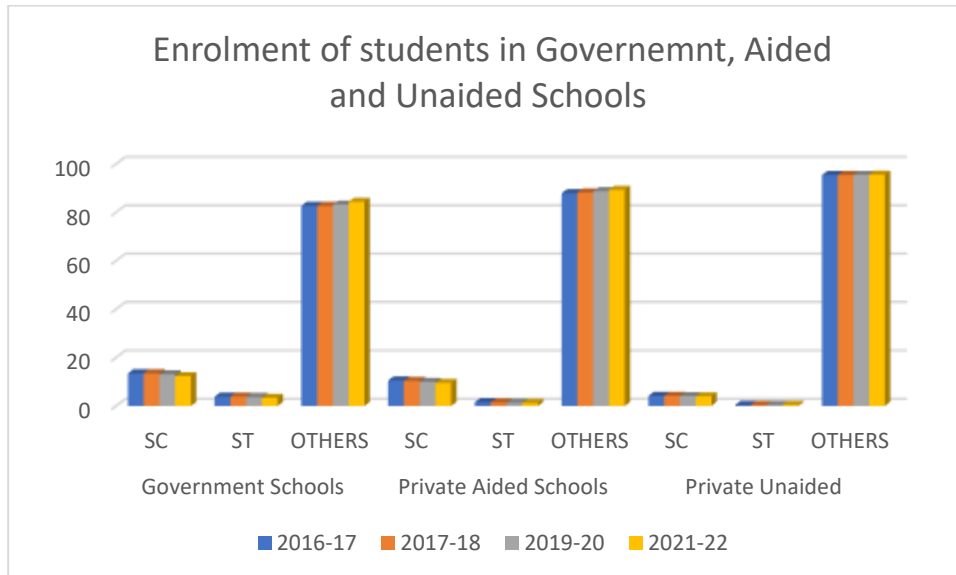


Figure 1.5

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN KERALA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

Kerala has achieved significant success in education, particularly in providing compulsory primary education for all. The state has also made remarkable progress in primary, high school, and higher secondary education. Improving higher education is a crucial goal for the government, and to support this, the Kerala State Higher Education Council was established on March 16, 2007. This council coordinates higher education agencies, introduces new ideas and programs, and advises the state government and the Ministry of

Higher Education. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in attaining the goal of a knowledge-based economy in the state.

ENROLMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF KERALA

Table 1.6 Percentage age of SC students in higher education in Kerala

Courses	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
BA	13.74	11.61	15.08	10.6	10.39	7.75
BSC	13.74	14.62	15.08	15.4	15.47	11.66
BCOM	14.04	13.66	13.42	13.4	13.35	8.41
MA	14.99	15.47	15.65	15.6	15.77	9.09
MSC	12.06	11.9	11.59	11.4	11.26	8.51
MCOM	13.16	12.89	13.47	13.4	13.30	11.67

Source: Directorate of Collegiate Education

Table 1.6 shows the enrolment of SC students at various course levels. The participation of SC students in arts subjects from 2015 to 2021 has declined from 13.74% to 7.75%. In the case of science subjects, the arrival of SC students was 13.74% in 2015-2016, and after that, a slightly increasing trend up to 2021, then it declined. From 2015 to 2021, BCOM showed a declining trend. The age of SC students in post-graduation courses also has a declining trend. In Kerala, the participation of SC students in higher education is meagre compared to other communities. So, the government should take necessary steps to improve the enrolment of socially backward groups in the state.

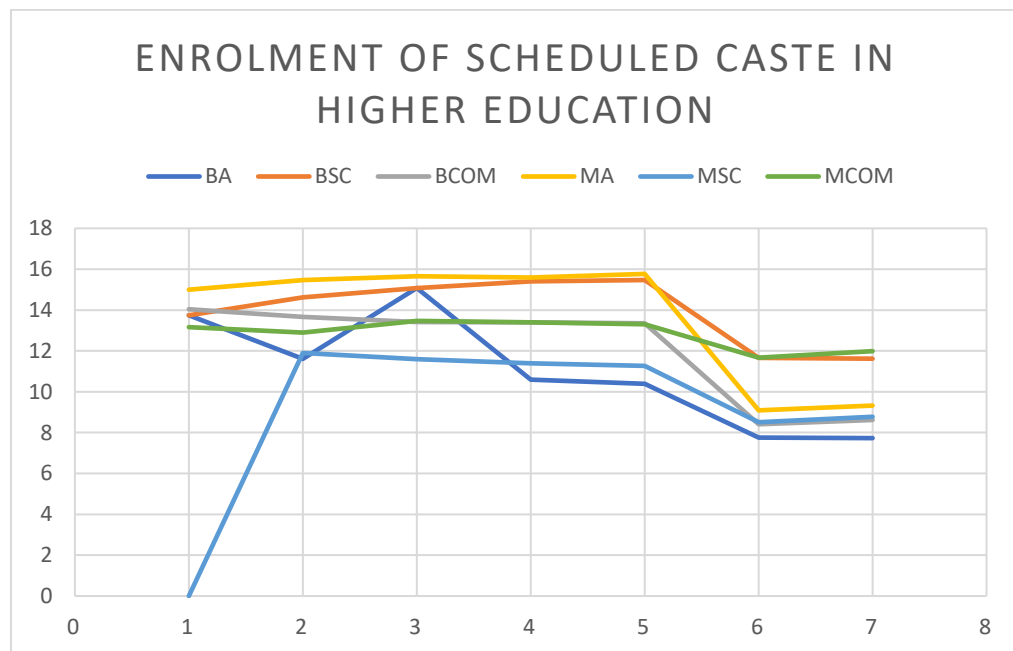


Figure 1.6: ENROLMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF KERALA

Table .1.7: Percentage of ST students in higher education in Kerala

Courses	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
BA	2.67	2.5	3.56	2.5	2.25	2.41
BSC	0.93	0.94	0.95	1	0.97	1.09
BCOM	1.78	1.76	1.78	1.8	1.85	2.13
MA	4.71	5.11	5.61	5.8	6.02	6.25
MSC	2.75	2.95	3.1	3.2	3.33	3.86
MCOM	2.37	2.36	3.88	4.4	4.90	6.91

Source: Directorate of Collegiate Education

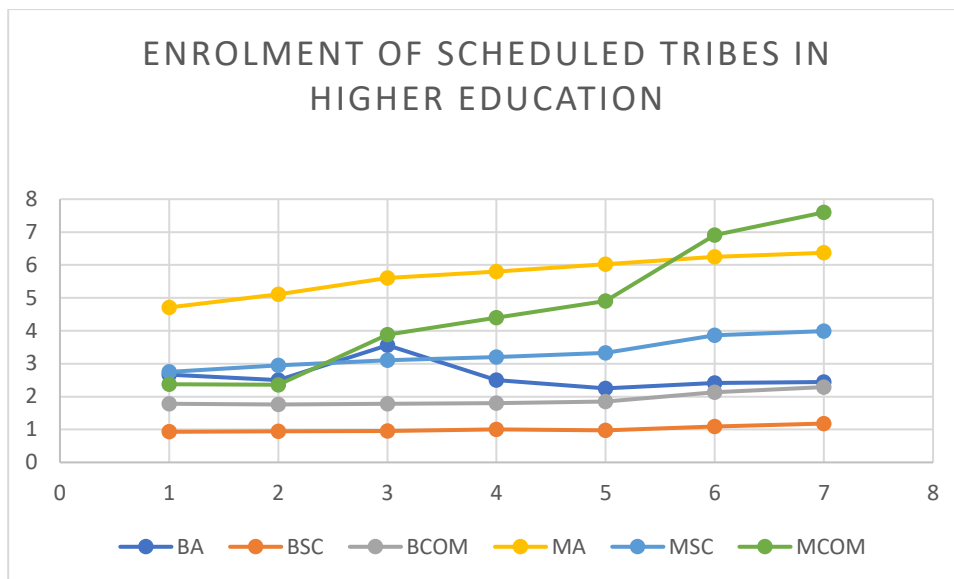


Figure 1.7: Enrolment Status of SC & ST Students in Higher Education

The above table depicts the enrolment of scheduled tribe students in graduation and post-graduation. The percentage of ST students in different graduation streams shows almost a stagnant level of participation. Meanwhile, post-graduation schemes show an increasing trend of involvement. The percentage of ST students' participation in higher education is comparatively feeble, even if they show a growing trend. This disparity in enrolment in higher education is one of the reasons for the dual face of human development in Kerala. The state should implement programs to uplift vulnerable sections, especially those in scheduled cast and scheduled tribes.

Dropout rate - Kerala

Kerala has achieved the lowest dropout rate of school students among all states. When a student stops attending classes, they are considered a dropout. There are various reasons for students dropping out, including academic failure, health issues, family responsibilities, and mental health challenges. The dropout rate among SC and ST students has decreased from 2016 to 2021. In Kerala, the dropout ratio is higher for ST students compared to students from scheduled castes and other categories. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data for 2020-21 is not available. The districts with the highest dropout rates for SC and ST students are Idukki and Malappuram, respectively.

Table 1.8: DROP OUT RATIO

YEARS	SC	ST	OTHERS	TOTAL
2016-17	0.26	2.27	0.08	0.22
2018-19	0.12	1.29	0.08	0.12
2019-20	0.13	1.16	0.07	0.11
2020-21	NA	NA	NA	NA
2021-22	0.11	1.17	0.08	0.11

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction

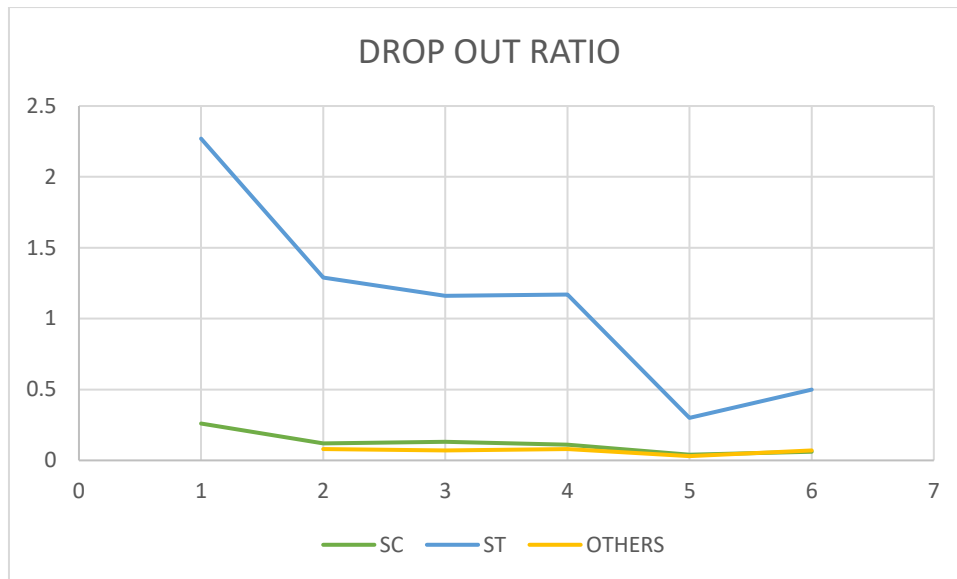


Figure 1.8

Table 1.9: Number of SC and ST Employees in Government Departments

Year	Gazetted		Non-Gazetted		Last Grade	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
2018	10.05	2.23	9.17	2.22	12.14	4.12
2019	10.17	2.2	9.00	2.28	12.33	3.98
2020	9.98	2.34	9.14	2.34	11.61	4.22
2021	9.97	2.38	9.45	2.34	11.84	4.09

Source: General Administration Department

The above table shows the employment status of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe peoples in Kerala. The SC population in gazetted posts shows a declining trend of 10.05% in 2018 to 9.97% in 2021. Non-gazetted SC constitutes 9.45 % of total non-gazetted in 2021. The proportion of the ST population in government departments shows a slight increase. The share of scheduled tribes in gazetted and non-gazetted posts is negligible, below 3%. Comparing the employment status of SC and ST with those of other categories, it is clear that they constitute only below 20% of the total employees in government departments. This is a pathetic situation because the government provided reservations for these groups, but there needs to be more qualified persons to be appointed under this category.

Conclusion

Kerala's literacy, school enrolment, and higher education progress is impressive. However, considering the socio-economic and religious differences, it becomes clear that these achievements are less significant. Despite numerous efforts by the federal and state governments to address the educational disparities among vulnerable minorities such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, these disparities persist at the grassroots level. The education quotas are ambiguous, and there is a lack of concrete plans for the upliftment of vulnerable minorities.

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