

# **Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes with Special Reference to Agricultural Landless Labourers**

Selected papers presented at the Workshop organised jointly with  
the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra,  
at Pune during March 16-17, 2001.

**Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics**  
(Deemed to be a University)  
Pune – 411 004

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## Foreword

The Scheduled Castes account for nearly 17 percent of India's population. Over 45 percent of working population of this group are agricultural labourers. Nearly 33 percent of agricultural labourers belong to the Scheduled Castes. Due to their weak assets position and unassured employment opportunities in rural areas, the incidence of poverty is still over 48 percent among this group. Systematic welfare measures have been introduced ever since the inception of the planning era to improve their socio-economic conditions. However, most surveys and studies have shown that they hardly brought any appreciable improvement in the standard of living of agricultural labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes. Therefore, there is a need to review and re-address the socio-economic issues that are connected with the development of this group. Keeping this in view, a two days workshop on "*Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes with special reference to Agricultural Landless Labourers*" was organised jointly with the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra, during March 16-17, 2001, at the Institute.

While the main objective of the workshop was to bring out the current socio-economic status of landless agricultural labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes, it specifically addressed ten major themes that are related to their employment, wages, migration, credit and labour linkages, anti-poverty programmes, special component plan and its impact, micro finance and its relevance, etc. A total of 17 papers were presented in the workshop focusing on various current issues pertaining to agricultural labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes. Besides, Prof. N. Rath gave an inaugural address, while Prof. V. M. Rao and Prof. B. S. Baviskar presented respectively a keynote paper and the valedictory address. Out of the 17 papers presented at the workshop, 13 papers are included in the present volume, after going through a reviewing process by referees. While we intended to include all papers which were presented at the workshop, we could not publish all of them in the volume.

I am grateful to all the participants who presented the papers at the workshop in response to our invitation and also revised them in accordance with the referees' comments. I am also thankful to Dr. Sanjay Chahande, Director of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra, for his initiative and encouragement for organising the above-mentioned workshop and in actively participating in it and Shri Umesh Chandra Sarangi, Divisional Commissioner, Pune, for making insightful observations on the theme of the workshop at the inaugural session. I am thankful to the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra, for providing financial support for organising the workshop and for the publication of the present volume. Dr. A. Narayanamoorthy of our Institute acted as the overall coordinator for the publication of this volume.

The papers included in this volume clearly bring out the current socio-economic status of agricultural labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes besides suggesting a number of issues for further research. It is hoped that the papers published in this volume would be useful not only to the researchers working in this area but also to the policy makers concerned with the welfare of the weaker sections of our society, particularly the agricultural labourers from the Scheduled Castes.

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics  
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V. S. Chitre  
Director

June 2003

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