

Inter-group Inequality in India: Insights from Surveys and the World Inequality Database

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Data Seminar Series

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCED STUDY OF INDIA

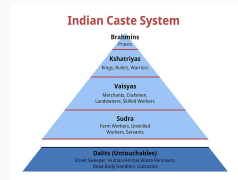
University of Pennsylvania

25th October 2023

- Social structure around the world
 - groups, identity, setting norms
 - rigid, hierarchical, hereditary
 - examples: religion, caste, ethnicity, race
- Significant consequences
 - impacts economic development, non-inclusive
 - limits mixing and integration
 - restricts socio-economic mobility → intergenerational inequalities
- Salience of caste (and religion) in India violence
 - untouchability (43%); endogamy (90-95%)
 - politics: candidates, voting, policy making
 - occupation (3 times more likely to be in traditional)

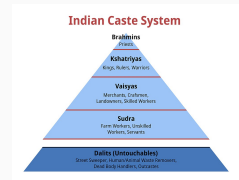
Caste System

- Terms used:
 - **Caste (admin)**
 - Scheduled Tribe (ST), Scheduled Caste (SC), Other Backward Caste (Class) (OBC), and General/Forward Caste
 - **Jati:** practiced version of the varna system
 - varna: brahman (clergy), kshatriya (warrior class), vaishya (merchant), shudra, (labourers); and untouchables
 - thousands of jatis (or sub-castes) within each varna



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 - thousands of jatis (or sub-castes) within each varna
- Defining features
 - principle of gradation and rank gradation
 - restriction on women (similar to shudra) gender
 - spatial variation in norms
 - intruded into other religions too



- Census
 - pre-independence (1871-1941): *jati*(*DSAL*)
 - post-independence (*censusindia.gov.in - caste*); (*SECC 2011 - caste and jati*); (Bihar 2022 *jati* census)
 - *economic census*: 1990, 98, 2005, 2013 caste

Datasets - often used

- Census
 - pre-independence (1871-1941): *jati*(*DSAL*)
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 - *economic census*: 1990, 98, 2005, 2013 caste
- Surveys
 - ▶ *NSS*: consumption, wage, PLFS, wealth
 - only caste groups: SC/ST/General; and OBC (post-1999)
 - ▶ *IHDS*: 1993/2005/11, panel, captures income
 - groups: SC/ST/OBC/General (Brahmin/non-Brahmin)
 - *jati requires cleaning paper- "A Division of Laborers"*
 - ▶ *DHS/NFHS* 1992/'98/'05/'15/'19; health, geo-coordinates
 - groups: SC/ST/OBC/General
 - *jati in NFHS-4 and 5 requires cleaning*
 - separately for men/women in hh

All capture religion information

- Population share : religion caste upper caste Bihar_1931_2023
 - Hin-80%; Mus-14%; Oth-6% (*in 1951 Hin-84%; Mus-10%; Oth-6%*)
 - SC: 17%; ST: 9%; OBC: 45% (*in 1951 SC-15%; ST-6%*)

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- DHS/NFHS
 - **Deshpande 2001**: CDI (occ,educ, landholding, assets, livestock)
- NSS datasets (and reports)
 - **Kojima 2006**: (consumption) fifty-fifty::endowments: discrimination
 - **Madheswaran and Thorat 2018** wage "discrimination" (28.5%)
 - **Vakulabharanam and Zacharias 2009** bn caste- 13% wealth ineq
- Income-based (IHDS)
 - **Boorah, 2005**: 1/3rd income diff to "discrimination"
 - **Desai and Dubey 2012** continued persistence of caste disparities in education, income and social networks
- Economic Census
 - **Iyer, Khanna, and Varshney, 2013**: under-representation of SC/ST and modest decrease 1990-05

Wealth Inequality, Class and Caste in India 1961-2012

- Data: IHDS'11, NFHS'05, NSS-AIDIS, NSS-Consumption
- Groups(caste+religion) - SC, ST, OBC, FC(Brahmins), FC(Rest of Hindus, Rest of Muslims, Others

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- Graded disparity in 2010s
 - **Income/Consumption** : $ST(.7) < SC(.8) < Mus(.8) < OBC(.9) < \mathbf{ALL} < FC(Non_Brahmin)(1.5) < FC(Brahmin)(1.5) < Others(2.4)$
 - **Education** (educ yrs) :
 $ST(-2.1) < Mus(-1.4) < SC(-1.3) < OBC(-.2) < \mathbf{ALL(8)} < FC(Non_Brahmin)(+2.3) < FC(Brahmin)(+3.5) < Others(+3.6)$
 - FC: $Rajput(9) < Other(9.2) < Baniya(10.3) < Brahmin(11.9) < Kayasth(12.3)$

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 - FC: $Rajput(9) < Other(9.2) < Baniya(10.3) < Brahmin(11.9) < Kayasth(12.3)$
- Is the disparity closing? **not so much**
 - SC's avg consumption 21% l.t. overall in 1983 and 24% in 2009
 - ST's avg consumption 29% l.t. overall in 1983 and 26% in 2009

- (Net) wealth gap **persistent** : (*wealth share-pop share*)
 - ST (-5pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)
 - SC (-10pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)
 - OBC (-4pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)
 - Muslim (-2pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)

Wealth Inequality, Class and Caste in India 1961-2018

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 - OBC (-4pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)
 - Muslim (-2pp for 1991, '02, '12, '18)
- Representation Inequality (*pop share in each decile-pop share*) :
 - under-representation of SCs, STs, and Muslims in the Top 50%
 - over-representation of FC's in the Top 50%
- Inequality within each group
 - highest within FC group (top 10% own 60%) and lowest within SC (top 10% own 45%)

Novel ways/Lesser used

- Last names
 - Caste: *Social Diversity in Corporate Boards and Firm Outcomes; Political corruption and road construction*
 - Religion: *Nilabhra algorithm; In-group bias*
- People of India Project 1985:
 - *Communities, Segments, Synonyms, Surnames- R. Singh*
- Historical datasets
 - 1901 hierarchical ranking: 5-12 ordered categories by province
 - 1911 jati and traditional occupation tables by provinces
- Using RCT repositories?

World Inequality Database

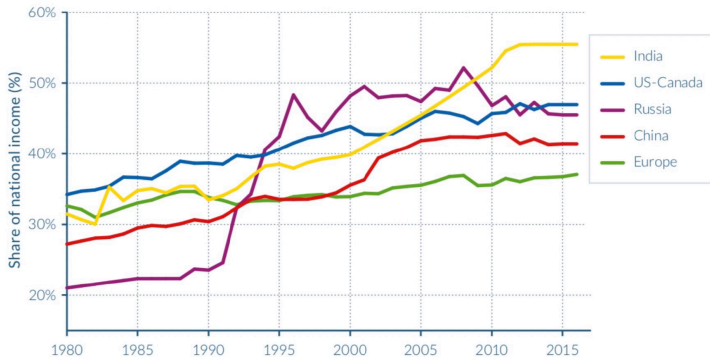
- Making the distribution as central as growth(GDP)
 - share of the income/wealth to the top 10% (1%, etc.)
- Combines different sources to compute inequality
 - surveys miss rich individuals; consumption-led
 - surveys + rich list example
 - (*generalized pareto*; *BFM*)
- Methodology: transparent; follows *DINA*
- Long-run series of income and wealth inequality
 - annually updated; allows cross-country comparisons
 - data in workable format
- Reports
 - *World Inequality Report 2022*
- useful for policymakers; academics

India: Snapshot in 2021

- Avg of adult population
 - national income: \$10,360
 - national wealth: \$50,120
- Top 10% *vis-a-vis* bottom 50%
 - earn 20 times more income
 - own 55 times more wealth
- Affluent elite; very high level of inequality
 - income: top 10% and 1% hold respectively 57% and 22%
 - wealth: top 10% and 1% hold respectively 63% and 30%
- Long-run inequality trends
 - Income inequality 1922-2015
 - Wealth inequality 1961-2019

Cross-Country Comparison: 10% share

Top 10% income shares across the world, 1980–2016: Rising inequality almost everywhere, but at different speeds



Source: WID.world (2017). See wir2018.wid.world for data series and notes.

Takeaway

- caste discrimination persists, and the disparity is not closing down
- recent years development is very inequality-enhancing
- need more than affirmative policies

Instruments of Change

- education: curriculum should directly target caste discrimination topics
- laws, policies, state machinery
- informed debate and discussions rather than rhetorics
- statistics: MEASURE!

Thank You

Examples from daily news media

Uttarakhand: Dalit Man Killed After 'Eating With Upper Caste People' at a Wedding

The victim's family alleges the man was physically tortured for several hours before he was shifted to a hospital where he succumbed.

Sunday, Oct 22, 2023

Telangana Today
FOR LOCAL TO GLOBAL NEWS

Hyderabad Telangana AP News India World Entertainment Science and Tech Sport Business

Home | India | Dalit Groom Attacked For Riding Horse In UP

Dalit groom attacked for riding horse in UP

A 22-year-old Dalit groom was allegedly beaten with rods and sticks, and forced to dismount the horse in Uttar Pradesh.

Rajkot: Dalit groom on horse dragged down, beaten

TNN / Updated: Feb 17, 2020, 11:57 IST

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Dalit man stripped, beaten up in Karnataka for touching upper-caste person's bike

A complaint was filed against 13 men under SC/ST Act for assaulting the 32-year-old Dalit man and his family over caste differences.

MONEYCONTROL NEWS | JULY 20, 2020 / 04:13 PM IST

Rajasthan: Nine-Yr-Old Dalit Boy Passes Away After Alleged Assault by Schoolteacher

The accused, Chait Singh, reportedly saw India drinking water from an earthen pot 'reserved for upper-caste teachers', and proceeded to beat him up.



Two Dalit grooms, two states, two fates: One attacked for riding horse and other trots into history

While in Rajasthan's Bundi district, bridegroom Shreeram Meghwal became the first Dalit groom to ride a horse to his wedding, another Dalit groom came under attack for daring to do the same in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district.

Go Back

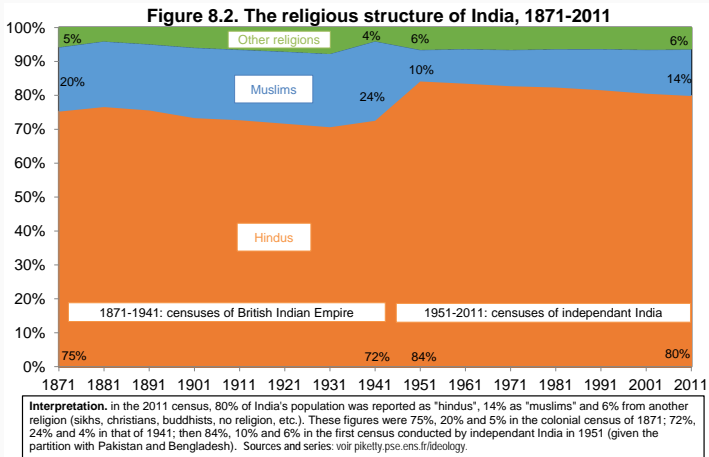
Principle of Gradation and Rank

- *"One striking feature of the caste system is that the different castes do not stand as an horizontal series all on the same plane. It is system in which the different castes are placed in a vertical series one above the others—the principle of gradation and rank."*
(Ambedkar, first in 1987) -
- *Source-* Graded Caste Inequality and Poverty: Evidence on Role of Economic Discrimination, Journal of Social Inclusion Studies, Thorat and Madheswaran 2018

Caste and Gender

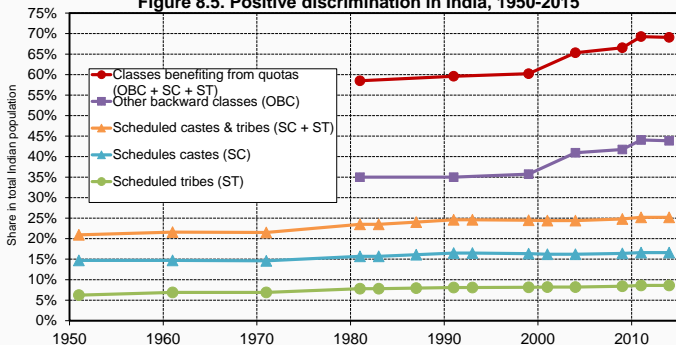
- "The subordination of women was crucial to the development of caste hierarchy, the women being subject to increasing constraints the higher the caste in the hierarchy" (Liddle and Joshi 1986: 50)
- Several scriptures (including Manusmriti) - treat women and Shudras identically in terms of religious privileges or denial of access to knowledge
- Women can engage in water regulation, transplanting, and weeding but not in ploughing
- allows *anuloma* (upper-caste men marrying lower-caste women) to some extent than *pratiloma*

Religious structure of India: 1871-2011



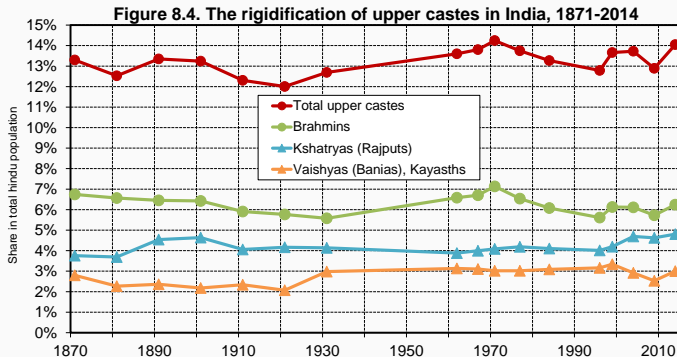
Caste categories: 1950-2015

Figure 8.5. Positive discrimination in India, 1950-2015



Interpretation. The results reported here were obtained from the decennial censuses 1951-2011 and NSS surveys 1983-2014. Quotas for accessing universities and public sector jobs were enacted for "scheduled castes" (SC) and "scheduled tribes" (ST) (ancient discriminated groups of untouchables and aboriginal tribes) in 1950, before being gradually extended beginning in 1980-1990 to "other backward classes" (OBC) (ancient shudras), following the Mandal commission in 1979-1980. OBCs are registered in NSS surveys since 1999 only, so the estimates reported here for 1981 and 1991 (35% of population) are approximate. Sources and series: see piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology.

Upper caste India: 1871-2011



Interpretation. The results reported here were obtained from British colonial censuses conducted between 1871 and 1931 and from post-electoral surveys (self-declaration) conducted between 1962 and 2014. One observes a relative stability over time of the fraction of the population registered as brahmins (ancient class of priests and intellectuals), kshatriyas (rajputs) (ancient class of warriors) and other upper castes: vaishyas (banias) (craftsmen, tradepeople) and kayasths (writers, accountants). Other local upper castes such as marathas (about 2% of total population) were not included here. Sources and series: see piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology.

Bihar Demography: 1931-2023

Bihar Demography, 1931 & 2023 (% of Bihar's population)

	1931	2023
Bihar Population	24 million	130 million
Religion		
Hindu	85.2	82.0
Muslim	14.6	17.7
Hindu+Muslim Share	99.8	99.7
Castes		
Brahmin	5.5	3.7
Rajput	5.0	3.5
Kayastha	1.3	0.6
Bhumihar	3.6	2.9
Total (above)	15.4	10.6
Yadav	12.7	14.3
Khushwaha	5.0	4.2
Kurmi	3.3	2.9
Bania	0.6	2.3
Total (above)	21.6	23.7
Kevart/Kevat	0.8	0.9
Mallah	1.9	2.6
Teli	2.8	2.8
Dhanuk	2.2	2.1
Prajapati (Kumhar)	1.2	1.4
Badhai	1.0	1.5
Chandravanshi (Kahar)	1.8	1.6
Total (Above)	11.7	12.9
Chamar/ Mochi/ Ravidas/ Charmkar	4.6	5.3
Dusadh/ Dhari/ Darahti	5.1	5.3
Mushahar	2.9	3.1
Pasi	0.7	1.0
Total (Above)	13.3	14.6
Total (Above Castes)	62.0	61.8

Source: 2023 data from the Bihar Caste Census as reported by the Indian Express on Oct 2, 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/bihar-caste-census-data-8965210/>; 1931 Data from the Census of India, 1931, Bihar & Orissa, Vol 7, Part 2, Ch. 16-17, for 10 districts corresponding to modern Bihar: Patna, Gaya, Shahabad, Saran, Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Mergihar, Bhagalpur, Purnea. Data analysis by Chiranjay Tumbhe, IIMA.

2.1 Individual- Range of Gross Total Income (AY 2019-20)

Range (in INR)	No. of Returns	Sum of Gross Total Income (in Crore INR)	Average Gross Total Income (in Lakh INR)
< 0	-	-	-
= 0	2,53,681	-	-
>0 and <=1,50,000	29,48,760	23,607.03	0.80
>150,000 and <= 2,00,000	17,14,443	30,416.98	1.77
>2,00,000 and <=2,50,000	56,25,504	1,32,859.76	2.36
>2,50,000 and <= 3,50,000	1,57,01,027	4,79,642.18	3.05
>3,50,000 and <= 4,00,000	55,93,314	2,08,588.49	3.73
>4,00,000 and <= 4,50,000	45,85,531	1,94,628.06	4.24
>4,50,000 and <= 5,00,000	41,55,307	1,97,230.94	4.75
>5,00,000 and <= 5,50,000	33,39,387	1,74,664.55	5.23
>5,50,000 and <= 9,50,000	1,20,95,349	8,53,541.09	7.06
>9,50,000 and <= 10,00,000	6,86,279	66,869.18	9.74
>10,00,000 and <=15,00,000	35,09,475	4,20,255.00	11.97
>15,00,000 and <= 20,00,000	11,77,954	2,02,144.89	17.16
>20,00,000 and <= 25,00,000	5,93,896	1,32,200.43	22.26
>25,00,000 and <= 50,00,000	8,79,502	2,95,879.50	33.64
>50,00,000 and <= 1,00,00,000	2,52,816	1,70,198.09	67.32
>1,00,00,000 and <=5,00,00,000	1,05,052	1,87,961.10	178.92
>5,00,00,000 and <=10,00,00,000	5,991	40,570.23	677.19
>10,00,00,000 and <=25,00,00,000	2,461	36,294.17	1,474.77
>25,00,00,000 and <=50,00,00,000	530	18,068.29	3,409.11
>50,00,00,000 and <=100,00,00,000	196	13,527.94	6,902.01
>100,00,00,000 and <=500,00,00,000	133	23,415.06	17,605.31
>500,00,00,000	9	11,737.11	1,30,412.36
Total	6,32,26,597	39,14,300.04	

India Income Inequality: 1922-2015; (Chancel and Piketty 2019)

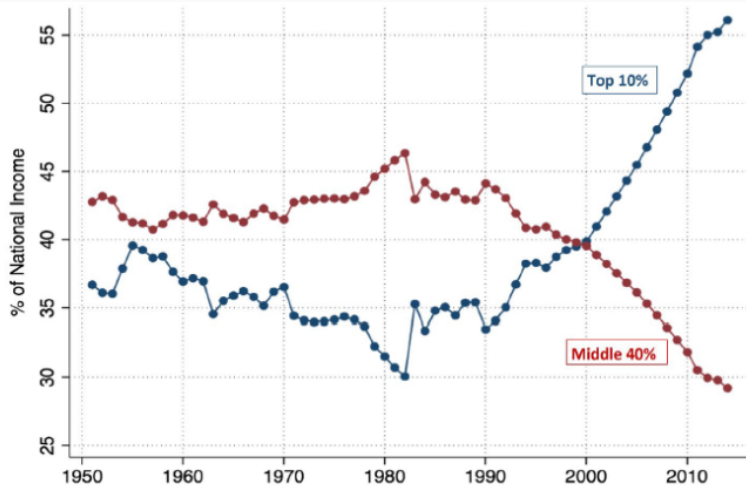
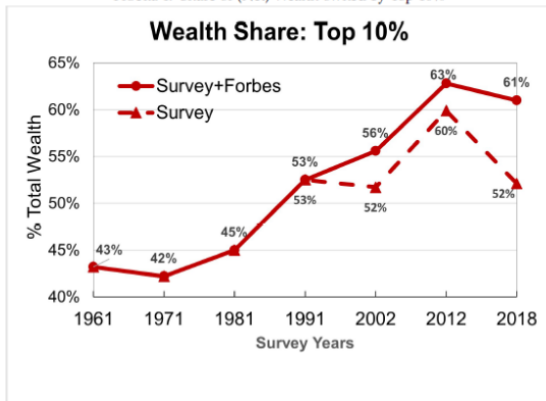


Figure 9. Top 10% vs. Middle 40% National Income Shares in India, 1951-2015
Source: Authors' estimates combining survey, fiscal and national accounts data.

India Wealth Inequality: 1961-2019

FIGURE 1. Share of (Net) Wealth owned by Top 10%



Notes: The figure presents the share of the *net wealth* owned by the Top 10% and Bottom 10% of the population, using NSS-AIDIS surveys and correcting the top distribution of wealth by combining the millionaires' list with surveys from 1961 to 2018. In 2018, the top 10% owned 61% of the total wealth after correcting the survey. The gap between survey and post-correction (survey plus Forbes) has increased in the latest survey round, highlighting the increased non-capturing of the wealthy individuals.

Good reads

- *Capital and Ideology- by Thomas Piketty* (Chapter 8: Ternary societies and colonialism: the case of India)
- *The Grammar of Caste: Economic Discrimination in Contemporary India- by Ashwani Deshpande*
- *An Obituary on Caste as a System- M N Srinivas*
- *Identity-Based Policies and Identity Manipulation-Guilhem Cassan*

References

- Caste at Birth? Redefining Disparity in India, 2001, Ashwini Deshpande
- Caste, Inequality, and Poverty in India, 2005, Vani, K. Boorah
- Caste and Tribe Inequality: Evidence from India, 1983-1999; 2006; Yoko Kijima
- Graded Caste Inequality and Poverty: Evidence on Role of Economic Discrimination, 2018, Madheswaran and Thorat
- Income inequality in village India: The role of caste- Swaminathan and Rawal
- Caste in 21st Century India: Competing Narratives, 2012- Desai and Dubey
- Caste and Entrepreneurship in India, 2013- Iyer, Khanna, and Varshney
- Caste and Wealth Inequality in India, 2009, Vakulabharanam and Zacharias

References-II

- Social Diversity in Corporate Boards and Firm Outcomes, 2023, Bhagavatula, Bhalla, Goel and Vissa
- In-group bias in the Indian judiciary: Evidence from 5 million criminal cases

Other common structuring of existing literature

- Welfare measures - consumption, income, wealth, entrepreneurship, etc.
- Data size
 - large sample surveys
 - small fieldwork-based small sample surveys
- Opportunity versus outcome
 - Opportunity: education, assets
 - Outcomes: wage, income
- Methodological
 - Caste differentials (differences in averages)
 - Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition (and variants)
 - Representational inequality

Other possible groups

- gender
- geography - rural/urban, states
- combination of the above (including caste)
-