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Research Article

Spatial Distribution of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Population: A Case Study of Samba District (Jammu and Kashmir)

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Abstract

The spatial distribution of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) reflects historical processes of settlement, occupation, socio-economic differentiation, and state policy intervention. This paper examines the spatial distribution of SC and ST populations in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir using Census data (primarily 2011) and historical-geographical interpretation. The study reveals that SCs form a substantial proportion of the district population and are largely concentrated in rural plains and agricultural settlements, while STs are comparatively fewer and exhibit dispersed distribution patterns. The paper contextualizes these patterns historically through migration trends, agrarian structures, and socio-political transformations in the Jammu region.

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KEYWORDS: Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Spatial Distribution, Samba District, Jammu and Kashmir, Rural-Urban Distribution, Caste-Based Settlement, Tribal Communities, Agrarian Economy, Pastoral Mobility, Socio-Economic Marginalisation, Historical Settlement Patterns, Demographic Structure, Social Stratification, Regional Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The spatial distribution of marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is closely linked to historical patterns of land ownership, occupational specialization, social hierarchy, and state formation. In Jammu and Kashmir, especially in the Jammu region, SC populations are relatively higher compared to Kashmir Valley, while ST communities are more dominant in mountainous districts. Samba district provides an important case study to analyze these spatial dynamics within a historically agrarian and borderland context.

2. Study Area: Samba District (Jammu and Kashmir)

Samba district is located in the Jammu region and was carved out of Jammu district in 2006. According to the Census of 2011, Samba had a population of about **318,898**, with a literacy rate of about **81.4%** and a sex ratio of **886 females per 1,000 males**.

The district has both rural and urban settlements, with roughly **83% of its population residing in rural areas**, reflecting its agrarian character. Administratively, the district includes multiple tehsils, blocks, and villages (over 370 villages recorded in census village directories), indicating a dispersed rural settlement structure.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study relies mainly on secondary sources:

- Census of India 2011 data (district and town level)
 - Government statistical reports
 - Historical and geographical literature on Jammu region
- Spatial analysis is carried out through descriptive statistical interpretation of SC/ST population proportions and their rural-urban distribution.

4. Historical Background of SC and ST Settlement in Samba

Historically, the Jammu plains including Samba were part of Dogra-ruled agrarian territories where caste-based occupational hierarchies structured settlement patterns. Scheduled Castes such as Chamar, Megh, and others were traditionally associated with agricultural labour, leatherwork, and artisanal occupations, leading to their concentration in village peripheries.

Scheduled Tribes in Jammu region largely include Gujjars and Bakarwals, pastoral communities historically practicing transhumance across Himalayan and sub-Himalayan zones. Their presence in Samba is comparatively limited due to its plain's geography and agricultural orientation.

Colonial land revenue systems and Dogra administrative reforms reinforced caste-based settlement and occupational specialization, shaping contemporary spatial patterns.

5. Demographic Profile of SC and ST Population in Samba

5.1 Overall Distribution

According to Census 2011, Scheduled Castes constitute about **28.80%** and Scheduled Tribes about **5.51%** of Samba district's population.

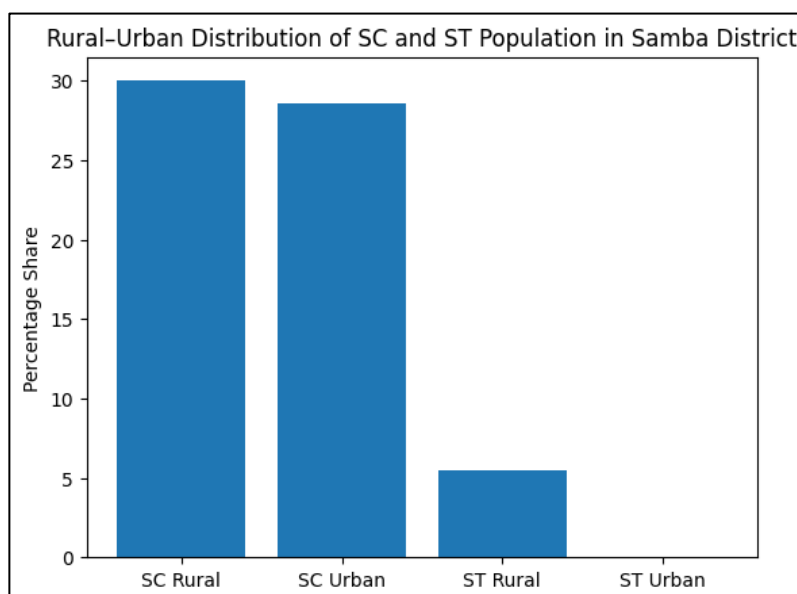
District-level administrative data also shows approximately **0.92 lakh SCs** and **0.18 lakh STs** residing in the district.

5.2 Urban Distribution

In Samba Municipal Committee area, SCs constitute around **28.57%** of the population, while STs account for only **0.04%**, reflecting strong rural concentration of tribal groups.

5.3 Rural Distribution

SCs are widely distributed across rural settlements where they traditionally engage in agricultural labour and allied occupations. ST populations are more dispersed and often linked with seasonal migration patterns associated with pastoral livelihoods.



6. Spatial Patterns of SC and ST Population

6.1 SC Spatial Concentration

The spatial pattern of SCs in Samba shows:

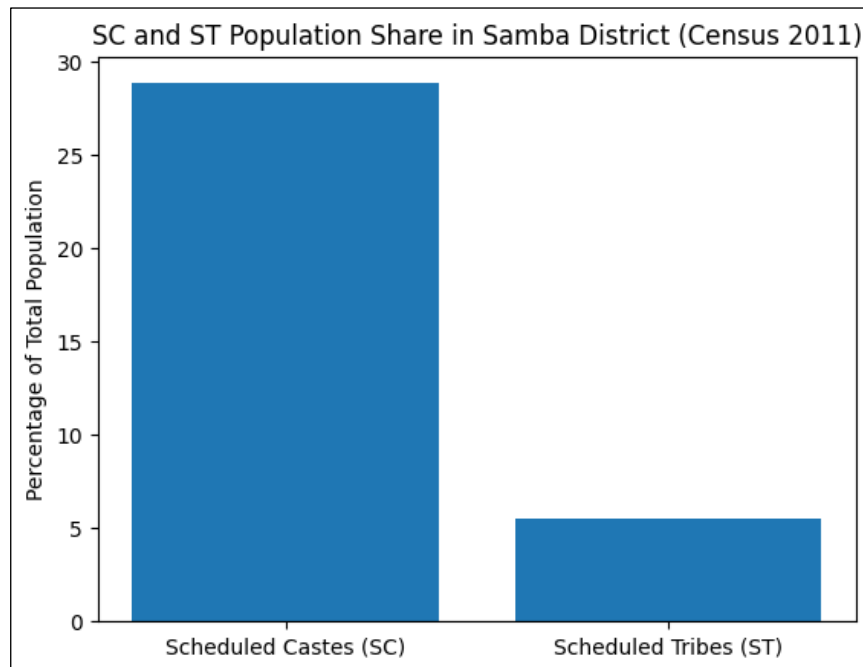
- Higher concentration in fertile agricultural belts
- Settlement in peripheral village clusters
- Significant representation in rural labour economy

These patterns reflect historical exclusion from landownership and dependence on agrarian employment.

6.2 ST Spatial Dispersion

ST population's exhibit dispersed spatial patterns due to:

- Transhumant pastoral traditions
- Seasonal migration between foothills and plains
- Limited integration into sedentary agrarian settlement structures



Category	Population Share (%)	Settlement Pattern	Historical Basis
Scheduled Castes	28.80		Agrarian labour traditions under Dogra rule
Scheduled Tribes	5.51	Dispersed and mostly rural	Pastoral mobility (Gujjar-Bakarwal traditions)
SC Urban Share	20.57(Samba town)	Semi-urban concentration	Labour migration and modernization
ST Urban Share	0.04	Minimal	Limited sedentary settlement

7. Socio-Economic Implications

7.1 Education and Literacy

Despite improvements in literacy rates across Samba district, SC communities still lag behind district averages due to historical marginalization and economic constraints.

7.2 Occupational Structure

SC households remain concentrated in agricultural labour and informal sectors, whereas ST communities engage in livestock rearing and seasonal wage labour.

7.3 Developmental Challenges

Challenges include:

- Unequal access to land and resources
- Educational disparities
- Infrastructure gaps in SC-dominated villages

8. DISCUSSION (HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION)

The spatial distribution of SCs and STs in Samba reflects continuity with historical socio-economic systems shaped by caste hierarchy, agrarian relations, and pastoral mobility. Post-independence policies such as land reforms and reservation systems have improved socio-economic indicators but have not entirely altered settlement patterns rooted in historical structures.

9. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that SC populations in Samba are spatially concentrated and historically rooted in agrarian settlement systems, while ST populations remain comparatively dispersed due to pastoral traditions. The spatial distribution reflects deep historical processes of social stratification and livelihood specialization. Targeted development planning must consider these spatial and historical dynamics to ensure inclusive growth.

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Bhart Singh is affiliated with Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. His academic interests include research, teaching, and scholarly inquiry in his area of specialisation, with a focus on contemporary academic and socio-economic issues.



Virender Kumar is a PhD student at Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. He is engaged in advanced academic research and scholarly activities, contributing to the field through systematic study, critical inquiry, and academic exploration. His research work reflects a commitment to developing knowledge and strengthening his expertise through rigorous doctoral-level study.