

Weaker Sections & Democracy in India

Women, SC, ST and Minorities

Weaker Sections

- Vulnerable groups facing structural discrimination
- Women
- Scheduled Castes
 - denial of the right to education historically; languishing behind, socially and politically
- Scheduled Tribes
 - detached from the mainstream and underdeveloped
- Dalits
 - in a state of oppression historically
- Minorities

Democracy in India

- Democracy – Best form of Government
- B. R. Ambedkar
 - Democracy as a means to bring about a significant change in the living conditions of the depressed sections without resorting to bloodshed.
 - An opportunity to uplift the weaker sections of the society.
- Constitutional Provisions for the Protection & Promotion of the Social, Economic, Cultural, Educational and Political interests of the Weaker sections.
- For example: Abolishment of Untouchability (Article 17)
- Reservation of seats in PRIs for SCs, STs and Women

Unfree after Independence

- Amartya Sen
 - Freedom in terms of capabilities
 - Political, social and economic capabilities.
 - Large population “unfree” to pursue the lives they value.
 - “Uncertain Glory” as we are making economic progress but the weaker sections are reeling under poverty.

Unfree after Independence

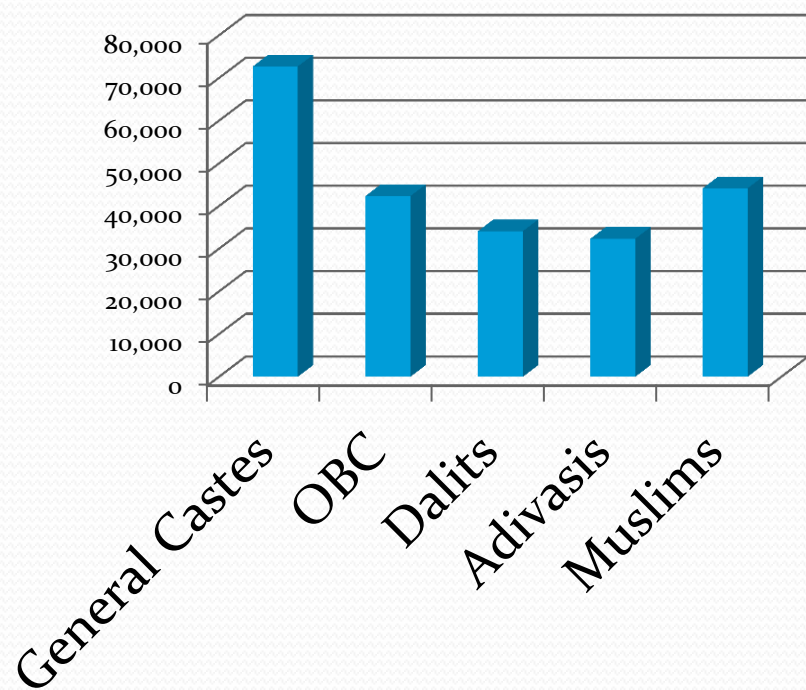
- India's development disaster:
 - world's largest number of poorly educated and prone to poor health,
 - in spite of being the world's third largest economy in purchasing power parity terms.

Conditions for success of Democracy

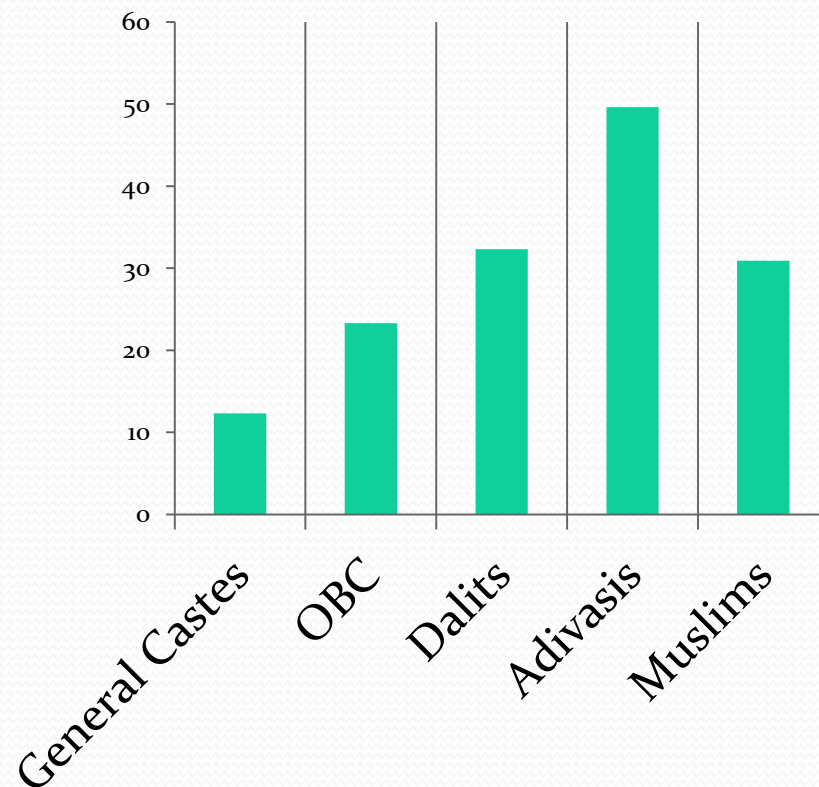
- Elimination of Poverty & Illiteracy.
- Empowerment of poor, illiterates and the weaker sections.
- Participation of weaker sections in the political and economic decision-making process through PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions).
- Eradication of social evils.
- Willingness among political representatives to sincerely perform their duties & not to take advantage of governance & poverty of voters.
- Feeling of tolerance & communal harmony among people
- Powerful and responsible opposition
- Fair, impartial and efficient press to form public opinion

Human Development Survey (2004-05)

**Mean Household
Income (Rs)**

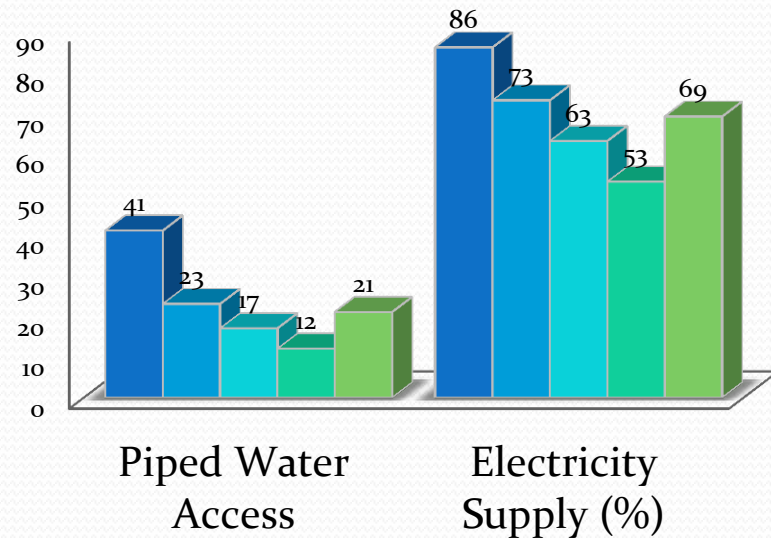


Poverty (%)



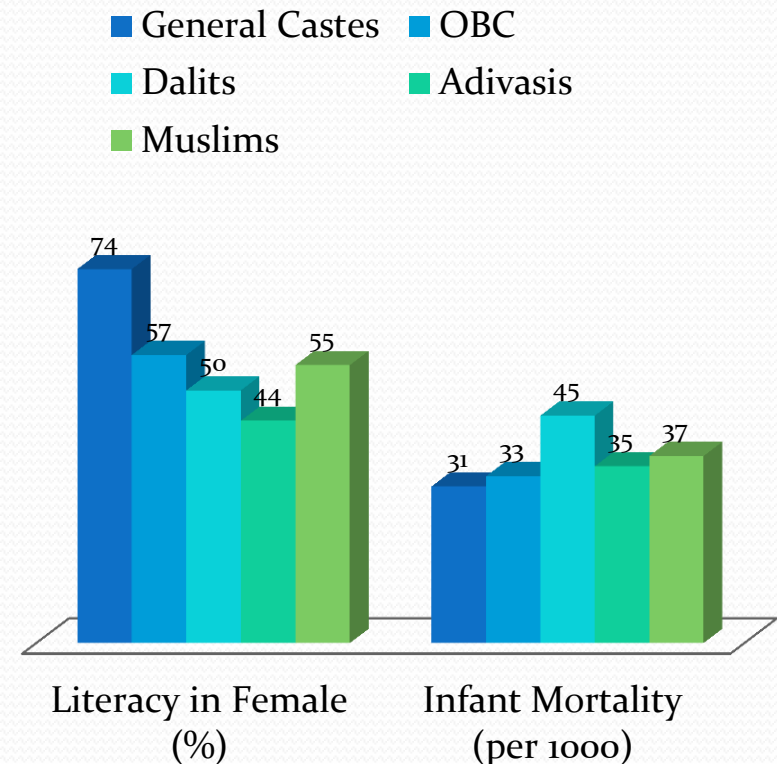
Human Development Indices

Infrastructure Indicators



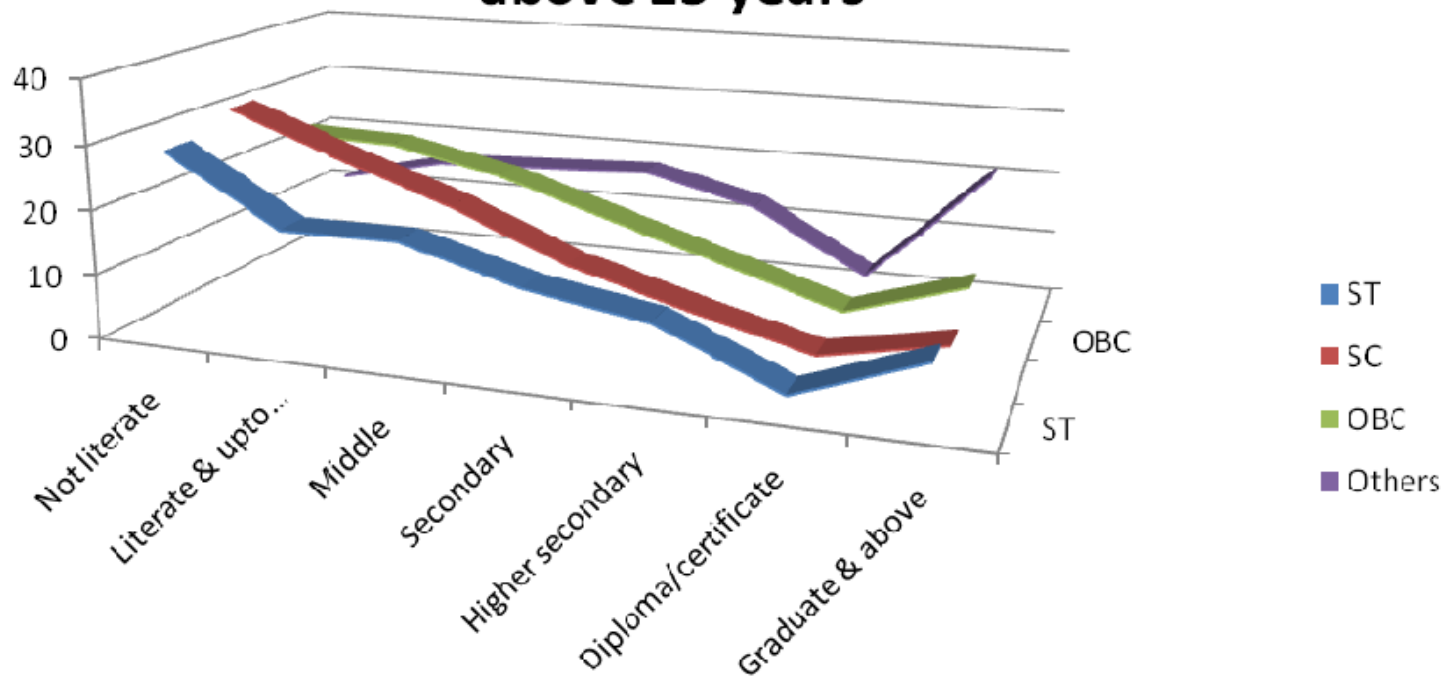
■ General Castes ■ OBC
■ Dalits ■ Adivasis
■ Muslims

Development Indicators



Educational Levels of Weaker Sections

Chart 6: Distribution of urban population above 15 years



Women in India: A Status Report

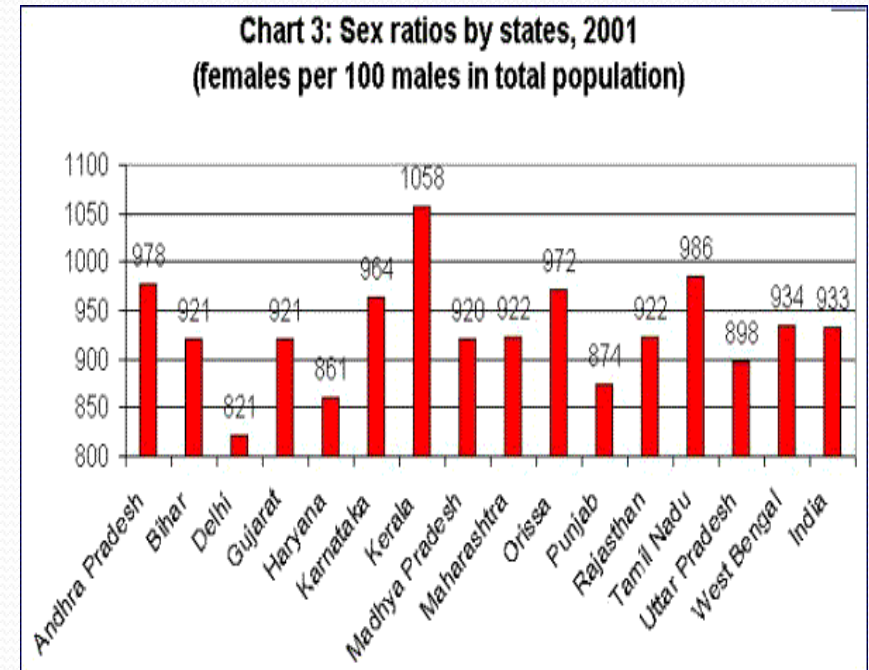
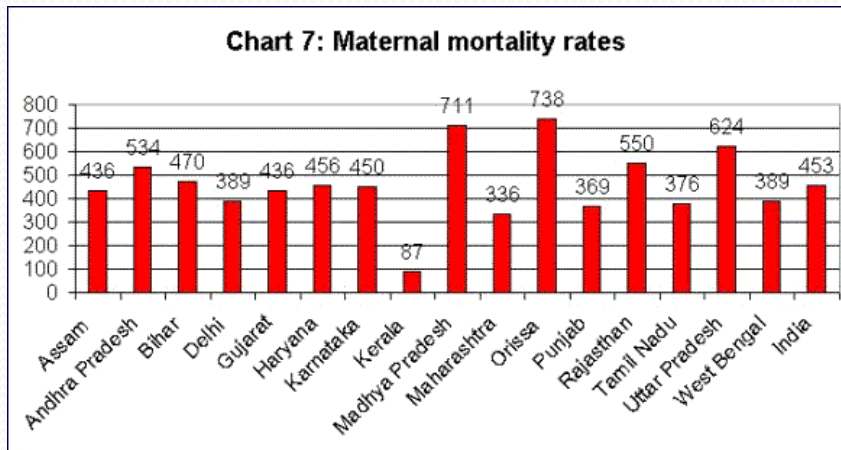
From 'womb' to 'tomb'

- Female foeticide
- High Infant Mortality Rates
- Low Educational Levels of Girls
- Child Marriages
- Dowry System
- Domestic Violence
- High Maternal Mortality and so on..

Women in India. A Status Report

Gender inequality index: India's rank – 130

Share of seats held by women in Parliament – 12.2 %



Rural
Urban
Divide

Equality in Educational Levels

Chart 2: Urban Literacy rates in 2004-05

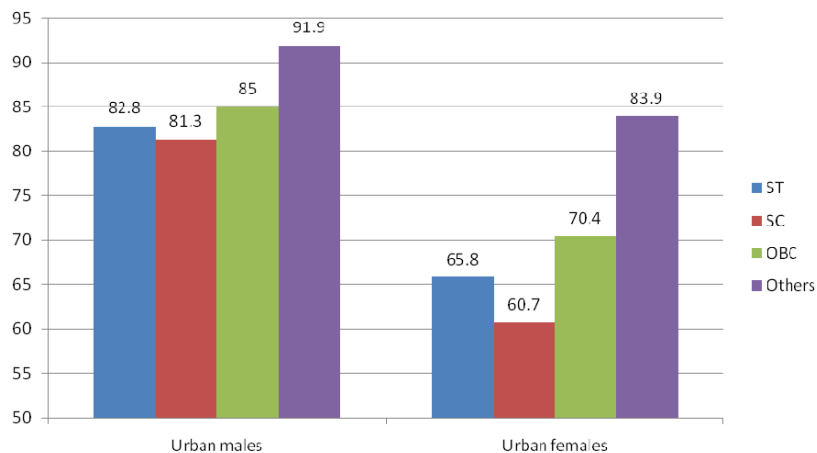
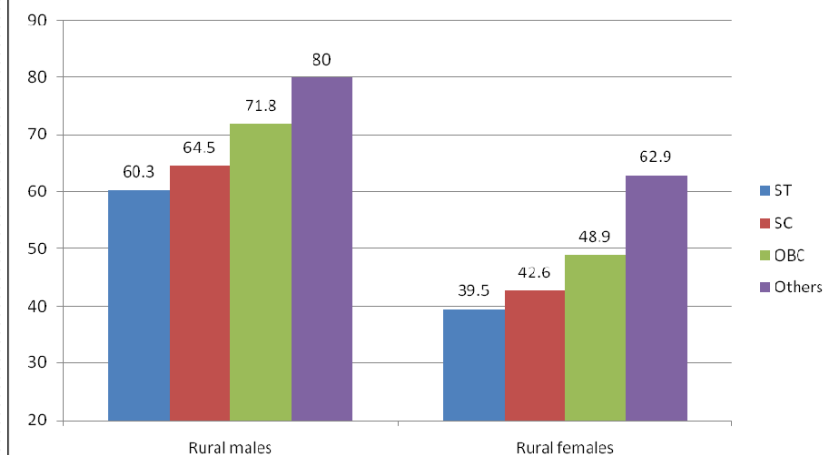


Chart 1: Rural Literacy rates in 2004-05



Women
Doubly
Cursed

Dalits

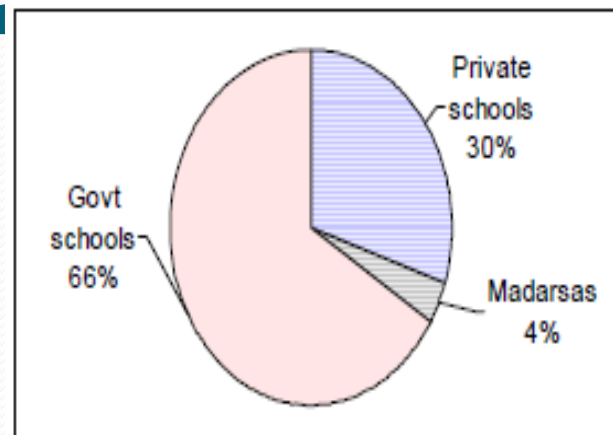
- Dalit does not refer to a caste but a group who are in a state of oppression, social disability, and who are helpless and poor.
- Literacy rate round 24 % only.
 - Dalit girls drop out of primary school despite of reservations and academic aptitude, because of poverty, humiliation, isolation or bullying by teachers and classmates and punishment for scoring good grades (National Commission Report for SC/ST, 2000)
- Denial of access to land, good housing, education and employment.
- Structural discrimination(physical, psychological, emotional and cultural)
 - Physical segregation of their settlements
- Vulnerability of scavenger community to diseases, reduced healthcare and diseases.

Minorities/ Muslims

Participation in Administration

Government-related Employment	% Muslim
IAS	3.0
IFS	1.8
IPS/Security Agencies	4.0
Indian Railways	4.5
Education Department (state level)	6.5
Home Department (state level)	7.3
Police constables	6.0
Health Departments	4.5
Transport Department	6.5
Judiciary Employment	7.8

Enrollment of Muslim children

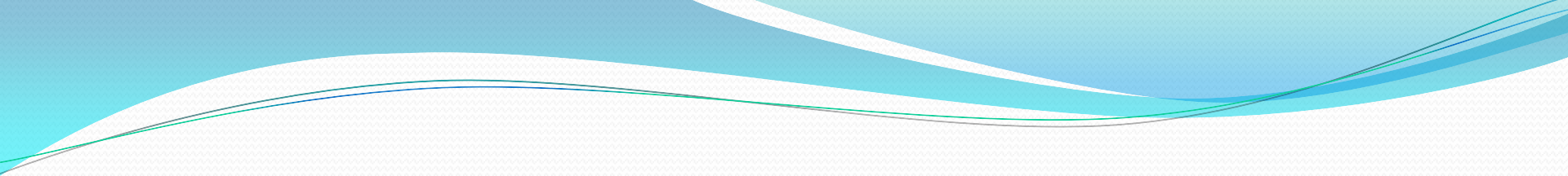


Financial Exclusion

	Muslims	Other Minorities	Others
Pvt sector banks	6.6	7.9	85.5
PSU banks	4.6	6.3	89.1

For democracy to be complete

- Participatory parity.
- Provision of Public goods and Merit goods.
 - Widespread public services from schools, hospitals , parks to crematoria as they struggle from birth to death.
- Shift from ‘according to ability’ to ‘according to needs’.
- Tolerance and communal harmony among people
- For instance,
 - Provision of public housing in ‘*capitalist*’ Singapore; shared between people of all races, namely Chinese, Indian and Malay.

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- Strengthening of democracy because of existence of smaller regional political parties providing voice to the voiceless. Eg – RJD, BSP etc.
 - A quarter of century has been spent on focusing on economic architecture in the name of “economic reforms”, its now time to focus on building capabilities, especially of the vulnerable groups of the Indian society.