

# From Illiteracy to Employment: How Educational Levels Shape Economic Outcomes for Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj

Suman Chaudhary<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Durgesh Mani Tripathi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Buddha P.G. College, Kushinagar*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Buddha P.G. College, Kushinagar*

**Abstract**—Education plays a crucial role in shaping employment opportunities, income levels, occupational mobility, and household economic well-being. Among Scheduled Caste (SC) households, educational disadvantage has historically been associated with restricted access to formal employment, dependence on low-paid occupations, and persistent socio-economic vulnerability. In this context, the relationship between educational attainment and economic outcomes assumes particular significance in Prayagraj, a socially and economically diverse district of Uttar Pradesh. The present study examines the transition from educational deprivation to improved employment and economic conditions among SC households, with particular emphasis on how differences in educational attainment are reflected in occupational structure, employment opportunities, income, and economic security. The study highlights a clear association between educational level and the nature of employment available to SC households. Households characterised by illiteracy or very low levels of schooling tend to have greater dependence on casual labour, agricultural activities, informal employment, and other occupations offering limited income stability and social security. With increasing educational attainment, opportunities gradually expand towards skilled, salaried, professional, and public or private sector employment. Education also contributes to occupational diversification, greater earning potential, improved awareness of employment opportunities, and enhanced capacity to access institutional and economic resources. However, educational advancement does not automatically eliminate economic disadvantage. Differences in household resources, skill development, gender, location, access to institutions, and the availability of suitable employment continue to influence economic outcomes. The study therefore underscores education as an important pathway for improving the livelihood conditions of SC households while recognising the need

for complementary interventions in skills, employment generation, and inclusive economic development.

**Index Terms**—Education, Inclusive development, Employment, Scheduled castes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important forces shaping the socio-economic transformation of a region. It influences not only individual knowledge and skills but also employment opportunities, occupational mobility, income generation, and the overall economic well-being of households. In developing regions, improvements in educational attainment can gradually shift populations from traditional and low-productivity occupations towards skilled, salaried, entrepreneurial, and service-sector employment. This transition is particularly significant for Scheduled Caste communities, which have historically experienced disadvantages in education, employment, asset ownership, and access to economic opportunities. Prayagraj, an important urban and regional centre of Uttar Pradesh, reflects many of these socio-economic transitions. The expansion of educational institutions, increasing awareness of education, improved connectivity, government interventions, and changing aspirations among younger generations have contributed to gradual changes in the educational profile of disadvantaged communities. For SC households, increased access to schooling and higher education has created pathways beyond traditional occupations and casual labour. Education is increasingly enabling individuals to acquire skills, compete for formal employment,

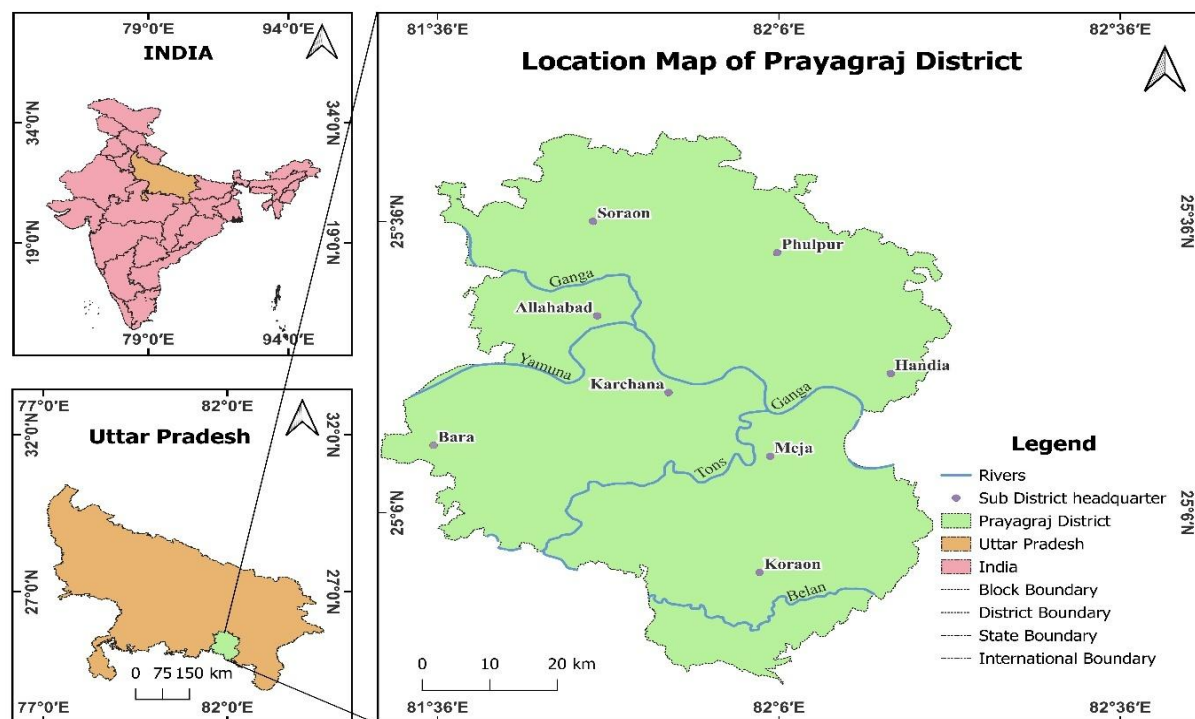
participate in emerging service-sector activities, and pursue self-employment and entrepreneurship.

The economic significance of this educational transformation extends beyond individual households. As educational levels rise, household employment structures tend to become more diversified, income-generating opportunities expand, and dependence on irregular and low-paid work can decline. Better education can also strengthen awareness of government employment programmes, financial institutions, markets, technological resources, and social security provisions. Consequently, changes in educational attainment can contribute to broader regional economic transformation by improving the quality of the workforce, increasing productivity, encouraging occupational mobility, and strengthening household purchasing capacity. However, the relationship between education and economic improvement is not uniform. Persistent disparities in income, skills, gender, rural-urban conditions, and access to quality employment can limit the economic returns of education. Thus, the movement from illiteracy towards higher educational attainment represents more than a demographic change; it is an

important component of the changing economic geography of Prayagraj.

## II. STUDY AREA

Prayagraj District is located in southern Uttar Pradesh, extending from 24°47' to 25°45' N latitude and 81°31' to 82°21' E longitude, with an average elevation of about 98 metres (322 feet) above sea level. The district occupies a strategic geographical position at the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. It is bordered by the Baghelkhand region to the south and southeast, the Middle Ganga Valley to the east, Bundelkhand to the southwest, and Awadh to the north and northeast. Along with Kaushambi, its western part forms the Lower Doab. The district experiences a humid subtropical climate with three distinct seasons: summer from April to June, monsoon from July to September, and winter from December to February. The Ganga and Yamuna are the principal rivers and significantly influence the district's agriculture. Their fertile alluvial plains support extensive cultivation, with wheat and rice being the major staple crops.



Map 1: Location of the Study Area.

According to the 2011 Census, Prayagraj had a population of approximately 5.95 million, recording a

growth rate of 20.63% since 2001. The district covers about 5,482 km<sup>2</sup> and is administratively divided into 8

tehsils and 20 development blocks. It contains approximately 3,003 villages, according to the Prayagraj Statistical Bulletin. These geographical and demographic characteristics provide an important context for analysing educational attainment, employment patterns, and economic transformation among Scheduled Caste households.

### III. OBJECTIVES

- To examine the spatial and temporal pattern of educational attainment among Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj District.
- To analyse the relationship between educational levels and employment patterns among Scheduled Caste households.
- To assess the influence of educational attainment on household income, livelihood and overall economic status of Scheduled Caste households.
- To examine the role of education in promoting occupational mobility, reducing dependence on low-paid informal employment, and contributing to the broader economic transformation of Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj District.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured household survey covering 460 Scheduled Caste households across 23 development blocks of Prayagraj District, with 20 households selected from each block. The survey focused on educational attainment,

employment status, occupational structure, household income, livelihood sources, and other relevant socio-economic characteristics. Secondary data were obtained from the Census of India, District Census Handbook, National Sample Survey reports, Government of Uttar Pradesh publications, and other relevant official sources. These data provide the demographic, educational, employment, and socio-economic context of the study area. The collected data were systematically tabulated and analysed using percentages, averages, ratios and correlation analysis. Educational categories were compared with employment status, occupational structure, and household income to assess the relationship between education and economic outcomes. Block-level comparisons, tables, graphs, and maps are used to identify spatial variations and explain the role of education in improving the economic conditions of Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj.

### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Educational attainment:

Table 1 presents the spatial distribution of educational attainment among Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj District in 2025. The district-level distribution indicates that 27.4% of respondents are illiterate, 33.1% have primary education, 30.1% have secondary education, 8.4% are graduates, and only 1.0% have postgraduate or higher education. Thus, nearly three-fifths (60.5%) of the surveyed population is concentrated in the illiterate and primary-education categories, while higher educational attainment remains relatively limited.

Table 1: Spatial Distribution of Educational Attainment among Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District (In %), 2025.

| S. No. | Blocks     | Illiterate | Primary | Secondary | Graduate | Postgraduate and Above |
|--------|------------|------------|---------|-----------|----------|------------------------|
| 1      | Kaurihar   | 20         | 35      | 32.5      | 10       | 2.5                    |
| 2      | Holagarh   | 30         | 35      | 25        | 10       | 0                      |
| 3      | Mauaima    | 30         | 32.5    | 27.5      | 10       | 0                      |
| 4      | Soraon     | 20         | 37.5    | 30        | 10       | 2.5                    |
| 5      | Bahariya   | 27.5       | 37.5    | 27.5      | 5        | 2.5                    |
| 6      | Phulpur    | 20         | 40      | 27.5      | 10       | 2.5                    |
| 7      | Bahadurpur | 20         | 35      | 32.5      | 10       | 2.5                    |
| 8      | Pratappur  | 27.5       | 32.5    | 30        | 7.5      | 2.5                    |
| 9      | Saidabad   | 27.5       | 37.5    | 30        | 5        | 0                      |
| 10     | Dhanupur   | 30         | 32.5    | 30        | 5        | 2.5                    |

|    |                    |      |      |      |     |     |
|----|--------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 11 | Handia             | 30   | 30   | 32.5 | 7.5 | 0   |
| 12 | Jasra              | 27.5 | 30   | 32.5 | 10  | 0   |
| 13 | Shankargarh        | 30   | 30   | 27.5 | 10  | 2.5 |
| 14 | Chaka              | 27.5 | 35   | 27.5 | 10  | 0   |
| 15 | Karchhana          | 30   | 30   | 35   | 5   | 0   |
| 16 | Kaundhiyara        | 30   | 30   | 30   | 10  | 0   |
| 17 | Uruwa              | 27.5 | 35   | 27.5 | 10  | 0   |
| 18 | Meja               | 30   | 30   | 30   | 7.5 | 2.5 |
| 19 | Koraon             | 27.5 | 32.5 | 30   | 10  | 0   |
| 20 | Manda              | 30   | 30   | 30   | 10  | 0   |
| 21 | Sahson             | 30   | 32.5 | 32.5 | 5   | 0   |
| 22 | Shringverpur Dham  | 30   | 30   | 35   | 5   | 0   |
| 23 | Bhagwatpur         | 27.5 | 32.5 | 30   | 10  | 0   |
|    | Prayagraj District | 27.4 | 33.1 | 30.1 | 8.4 | 1   |

Source: Surveyed by Researcher, 2025.

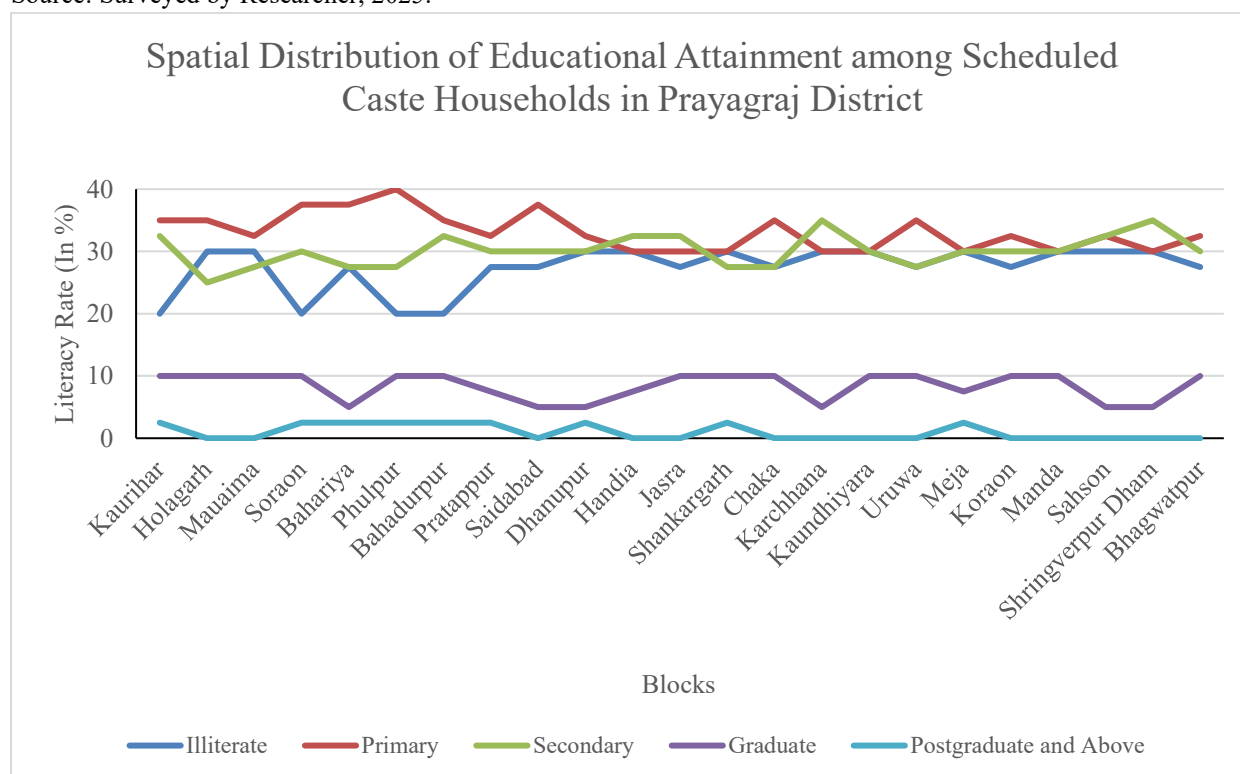


Fig 1: Block-wise Distribution of Educational Attainment among Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

Considerable spatial variation is visible across the blocks. Kaurihar, Soraon, Phulpur, Bahadurpur, and Jasra show comparatively favourable educational profiles, particularly because of their relatively lower shares of illiteracy and higher representation in secondary and graduate education. Kaurihar records the lowest illiteracy (20%) and a relatively high

proportion of secondary education (32.5%). In contrast, Holagarh, Mauaima, Dhanupur, Handia, Shankargarh, Karchhana, Kaundhiyara, Meja, Manda, Sahson, and Shringverpur Dham record around 30% illiteracy, indicating persistent educational disadvantage.

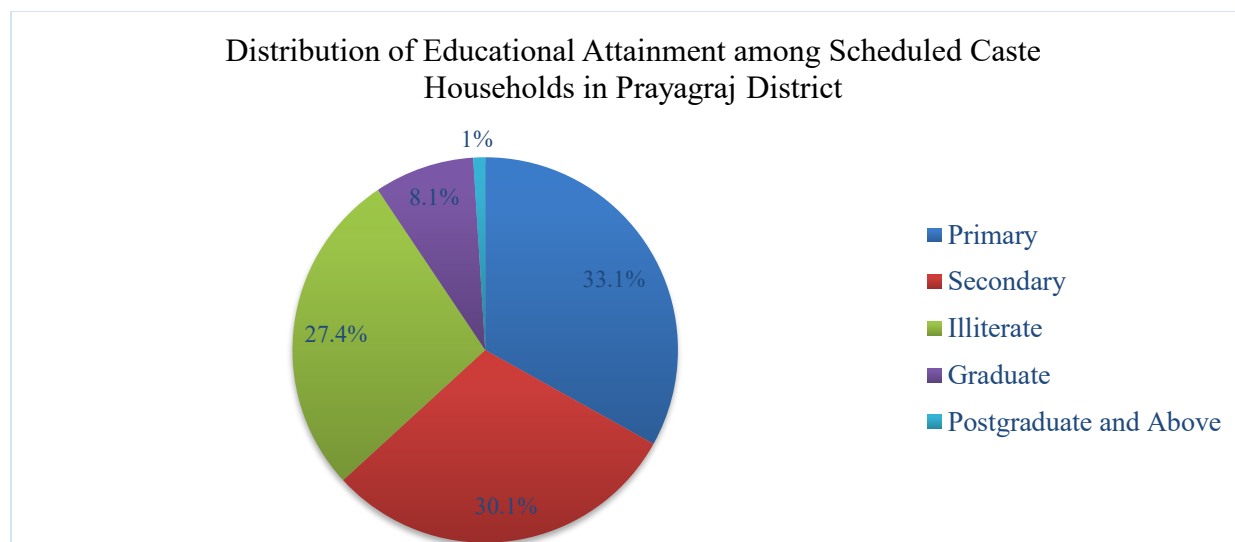


Fig. 2: Distribution of Educational Attainment among Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

The concentration of primary education in most blocks may reflect gradual improvement in access to elementary schooling, while the sharp decline at graduate and postgraduate levels suggests difficulties in continuing education beyond secondary school. Such spatial differences can be attributed to variations in household income, parental education, accessibility to secondary and higher educational institutions, transport facilities, early entry into employment, and rural socio-economic conditions. Economic constraints may particularly encourage SC households to prioritise immediate income generation over prolonged education. Overall, the distribution demonstrates a gradual transition from illiteracy towards primary and secondary education, but higher education remains geographically and socially limited. This educational structure has important implications

for employment opportunities and the economic mobility of Scheduled Caste households across Prayagraj.

## 2. Occupational Structure:

Table 2 shows considerable spatial variation in the occupational structure of Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj District. At the district level, agricultural labour constitutes the largest occupational category (42.4%), followed by cultivators (21.8%), daily labourers (17.2%), private/government services (11.6%), and self-employment (7.0%). Thus, nearly 60% of households depend primarily on agricultural and daily wage labour, indicating continued dependence on relatively low-income and less secure occupations.

Table 2: Block-wise Occupational Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

| S. No. | Blocks     | Agricultural Labour | Cultivators | Daily Labour | Private/Govt. Service | Self-Employed |
|--------|------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1      | Kaurihar   | 25                  | 25          | 20           | 20                    | 10            |
| 2      | Holagarh   | 45                  | 20          | 15           | 12.5                  | 7.5           |
| 3      | Mauaima    | 50                  | 17.5        | 15           | 10                    | 7.5           |
| 4      | Soraon     | 22.5                | 27.5        | 20           | 20                    | 10            |
| 5      | Bahariya   | 40                  | 22.5        | 17.5         | 12.5                  | 7.5           |
| 6      | Phulpur    | 25                  | 30          | 20           | 15                    | 10            |
| 7      | Bahadurpur | 20                  | 25          | 22.5         | 20                    | 12.5          |
| 8      | Pratappur  | 47.5                | 20          | 15           | 10                    | 7.5           |
| 9      | Saidabad   | 52.5                | 17.5        | 12.5         | 10                    | 7.5           |
| 10     | Dhanupur   | 55                  | 15          | 15           | 10                    | 5             |

|    |                      |      |      |      |      |     |
|----|----------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| 11 | Handia               | 42.5 | 22.5 | 17.5 | 10   | 7.5 |
| 12 | Jasra                | 35   | 25   | 20   | 12.5 | 7.5 |
| 13 | Shankargarh          | 57.5 | 15   | 15   | 7.5  | 5   |
| 14 | Chaka                | 37.5 | 27.5 | 17.5 | 12.5 | 5   |
| 15 | Karchhana            | 45   | 20   | 20   | 10   | 5   |
| 16 | Kaundhiyara          | 60   | 15   | 12.5 | 7.5  | 5   |
| 17 | Uruwa                | 40   | 25   | 17.5 | 10   | 7.5 |
| 18 | Meja                 | 32.5 | 27.5 | 20   | 12.5 | 7.5 |
| 19 | Koraon               | 47.5 | 20   | 17.5 | 10   | 5   |
| 20 | Manda                | 55   | 17.5 | 15   | 7.5  | 5   |
| 21 | Sahson               | 35   | 30   | 20   | 10   | 5   |
| 22 | Shringverpur<br>Dham | 62.5 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 7.5  | 5   |
| 23 | Bhagwatpur           | 42.5 | 25   | 17.5 | 10   | 5   |
|    | Prayagraj District   | 42.4 | 21.8 | 17.2 | 11.6 | 7   |

Source: Surveyed by Researcher, 2025.

The highest dependence on agricultural labour is recorded in Shringverpur Dham (62.5%), followed by Kaundhiyara (60%), Shankargarh (57.5%), Dhanupur and Manda (55% each), and Saidabad (52.5%). In contrast, Kaurihar (25%), Soraon (22.5%), and Bahadurpur (20%) show comparatively lower

dependence on agricultural labour. These differences can be attributed to variations in agricultural opportunities, land ownership, irrigation, market accessibility, and the availability of non-farm employment.

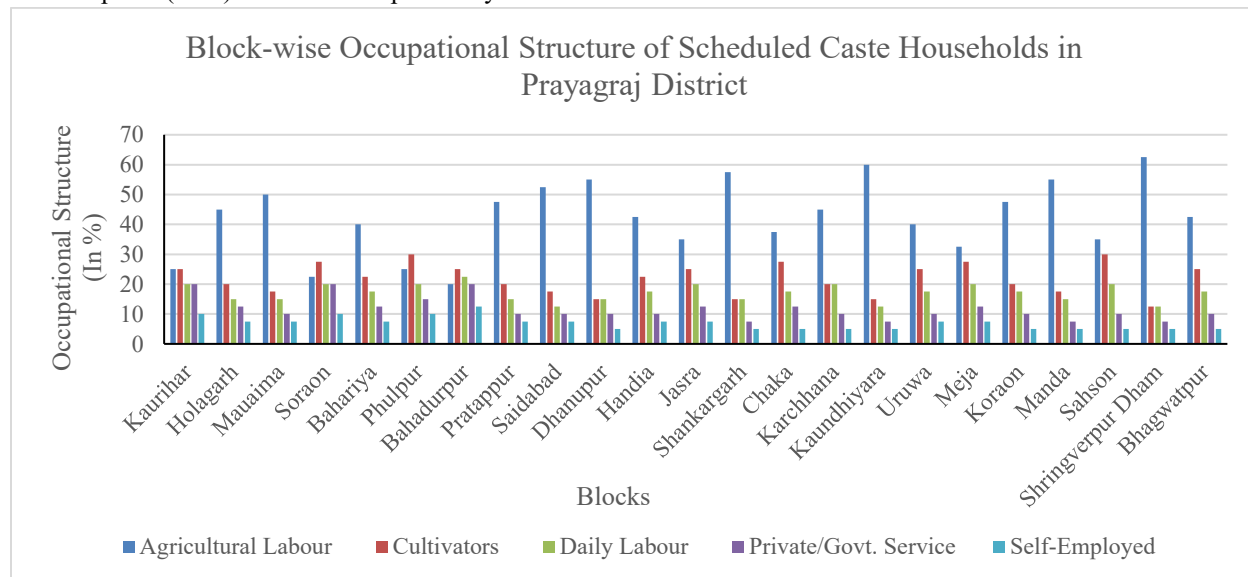


Fig. 3: Block-wise Occupational Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

Cultivation is relatively prominent in Phulpur (30%), Sahson (30%), Soraon (27.5%), Chaka (27.5%), and Meja (27.5%), suggesting comparatively greater access to agricultural land. Private/government

employment is highest in Kaurihar and Soraon (20% each), followed by Bahadurpur (20%), while self-employment reaches its highest share in Bahadurpur (12.5%).

Occupational Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District.

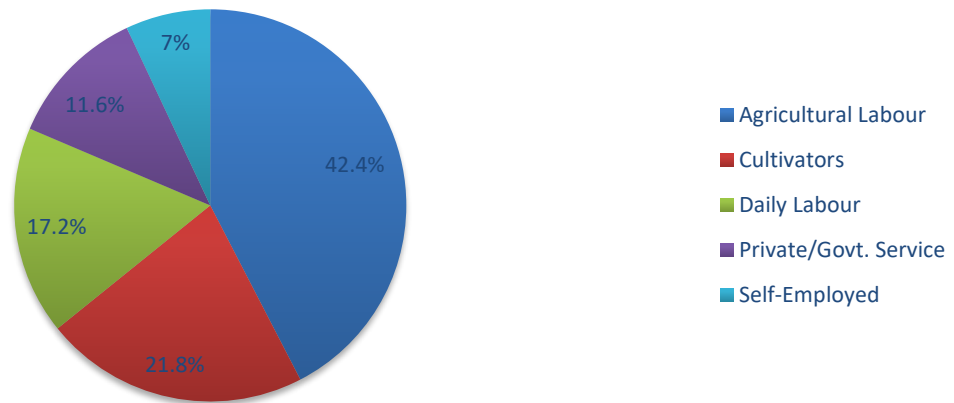


Fig. 4: Occupational Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

The concentration of SC households in agricultural and daily labour is associated with limited land ownership, lower educational attainment, inadequate skills, rural employment structures, and restricted access to formal-sector jobs. Conversely, blocks with greater educational attainment and better connectivity tend to show relatively higher participation in salaried and self-employment activities. Overall, the occupational pattern demonstrates a gradual but incomplete shift from traditional agricultural dependence towards diversified employment, closely reflecting differences in educational and economic opportunities across Prayagraj District.

### 3. Household income:

Table 3 presents the block-wise monthly income distribution of Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj District in 2025. At the district level, 35.0% of households earn below 15,000 per month, while 37.7% fall in the 15,000–25,000 category and 27.3% earn 25,000 or more. This indicates that although a considerable proportion of households have moved beyond the lowest income group, a substantial section continues to experience limited economic capacity.

Table 3: Block-wise Monthly Income Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

| S. No. | Blocks      | Below 15,000 | 15,000-25,000 | 25,000 and Above |
|--------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1      | Kaurihar    | 15           | 32.5          | 52.5             |
| 2      | Holagarh    | 30           | 42.5          | 27.5             |
| 3      | Mauaima     | 40           | 40            | 20               |
| 4      | Soraon      | 10           | 30            | 60               |
| 5      | Bahariya    | 25           | 42.5          | 32.5             |
| 6      | Phulpur     | 12.5         | 35            | 52.5             |
| 7      | Bahadurpur  | 10           | 27.5          | 62.5             |
| 8      | Pratappur   | 35           | 42.5          | 22.5             |
| 9      | Saidabad    | 47.5         | 37.5          | 15               |
| 10     | Dhanupur    | 52.5         | 35            | 12.5             |
| 11     | Handia      | 35           | 42.5          | 22.5             |
| 12     | Jasra       | 27.5         | 42.5          | 30               |
| 13     | Shankargarh | 55           | 32.5          | 12.5             |

|    |                    |      |      |      |
|----|--------------------|------|------|------|
| 14 | Chaka              | 32.5 | 42.5 | 25   |
| 15 | Karchhana          | 42.5 | 40   | 17.5 |
| 16 | Kaundhiyara        | 60   | 30   | 10   |
| 17 | Uruwa              | 35   | 42.5 | 22.5 |
| 18 | Meja               | 20   | 40   | 40   |
| 19 | Koraon             | 42.5 | 40   | 17.5 |
| 20 | Manda              | 52.5 | 35   | 12.5 |
| 21 | Sahson             | 25   | 45   | 30   |
| 22 | Shringverpur Dham  | 65   | 27.5 | 7.5  |
| 23 | Bhagwatpur         | 35   | 42.5 | 22.5 |
|    | Prayagraj District | 35   | 37.7 | 27.3 |

Source: Surveyed by Researcher, 2025.

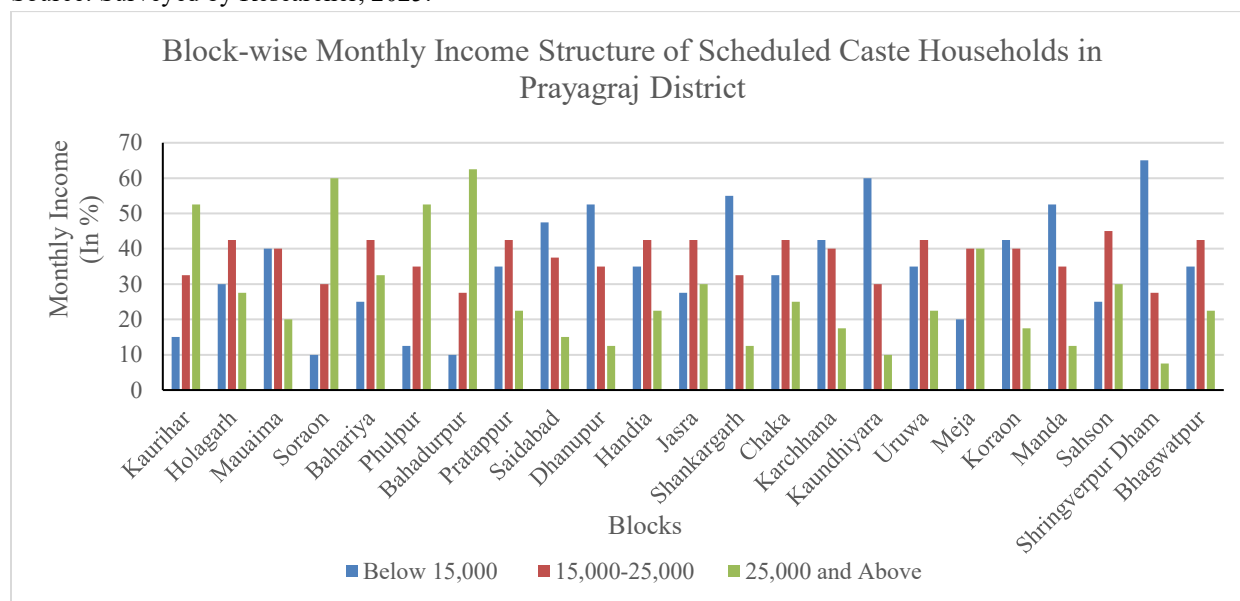


Fig. 5: Block-wise Monthly Income Structure of Scheduled Caste Households in Prayagraj District, 2025.

Marked spatial differences are evident. The proportion of households earning 25,000 and above is highest in Bahadurpur (62.5%), followed by Soraon (60%), Kaurihar and Phulpur (52.5% each), and Meja (40%). These blocks also show relatively greater participation in cultivation, salaried employment, or diversified occupations, which can provide more stable and higher earnings. In contrast, the lowest-income households are concentrated in Shringverpur Dham (65%), Kaundhiyara (60%), Shankargarh (55%), Dhanupur and Manda (52.5% each), and Saidabad (47.5%). These areas have a greater dependence on agricultural and daily wage labour, as reflected in Table 2.

The observed distribution can be explained by differences in educational attainment, occupational

structure, land ownership, employment stability, market accessibility, urban proximity, and opportunities for non-farm employment. Households with higher educational qualifications are more likely to enter salaried, skilled, or self-employed occupations, thereby improving their income potential. Conversely, dependence on casual agricultural and daily labour generally results in irregular and relatively low earnings. The income pattern demonstrates a clear spatial relationship between employment diversification and household economic status, suggesting that improvements in education and access to stable employment can contribute substantially to the economic advancement of Scheduled Caste households in Prayagraj.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings establish that education is an important pathway towards occupational mobility, improved employment opportunities, and higher household income among Scheduled Caste communities in Prayagraj. However, the persistence of illiteracy, low educational attainment, agricultural dependence, and income disparities indicates that educational expansion must be accompanied by targeted economic interventions. Policy efforts should therefore move beyond improving enrolment and basic literacy towards retention in secondary education, expansion of higher education, vocational and digital skill development, career counselling, and stronger linkages between education and local employment opportunities. Block-level educational and employment disparities should be identified through spatial planning so that resources can be directed towards areas experiencing greater disadvantage. Particular attention is required for households dependent on agricultural and casual labour through skill training, entrepreneurship support, access to affordable credit, and employment diversification. Strengthening connectivity between rural communities, educational institutions, markets, and employment centres can further improve the economic returns to education. Government programmes for Scheduled Castes should also be better integrated so that scholarships, skill development, employment assistance, entrepreneurship schemes, and social protection operate as complementary interventions rather than isolated measures. The study therefore suggests that the transition from illiteracy to employment requires an integrated education–skill–employment policy framework, with greater emphasis on spatially targeted interventions. Such an approach can help convert educational advancement into sustainable livelihoods, higher household incomes, greater occupational mobility, and more inclusive regional economic development in Prayagraj District.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Asher, S., Novosad, P., & Rafkin, C. (2024). Intergenerational mobility in India: New measures and estimates across time and social groups. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 16(2), 66–98. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20210686>
- [2] Butool, F. (2018). Occupational mobility among Scheduled Caste workers: A study in the Pachambha village of Kaisarganj Block in Bahraich District, Uttar Pradesh. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 10(2), 160–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X18787565>
- [3] Hnatkovska, V., Lahiri, A., & Paul, S. (2012). Castes and labor mobility. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 4(2), 274–307. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.4.2.274>
- [4] Hussain, Y. R., & Mukhopadhyay, P. (2023). How much do education, experience, and social networks impact earnings in India? A panel data analysis disaggregated by class, gender, caste and religion. *SAGE Open*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231220942>
- [5] Kulkarni, V. S., & Weiss, M. (2008). Changing educational inequalities in India in the context of affirmative action. *Demography*, 45(2), 421–442.
- [6] Mahapatro, S. R., & Choudhary, R. (2022). Intergenerational educational and occupational mobility among Scheduled Castes in rural Bihar. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 24(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40847-021-00174-w>
- [7] Majumder, R. (2010). Intergenerational mobility in educational and occupational attainment: A comparative study of social classes in India. *Margin: The Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 4(4), 463–494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097380101000400404>
- [8] Mhadeshwar, V. B., & Kurlikar, P. R. (2021). Socioeconomic status of SCs/STs in India: Upgrading or degrading? *Journal of Exclusion Studies*, 11(2), 223–243. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2231-4555.2021.00016.4>
- [9] Mondal, S. (2022). Intergenerational educational and occupational mobility across caste groups in West Bengal. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 14(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X221136384>
- [10] Sharma, S., & Narayan, J. (2017). Educational outcome and earnings differentials in India: Dynamics of caste. *International Education and Research Journal*, 3(10), 1–5.

- [11] E. P., A. (2023). Stratified mobility: Trends and patterns in India. *Journal of Polity and Society*, 14(2).
- [12] Halder, S., & Bhattacharyya, D. (2026). Vertical mobility of Scheduled Castes at tertiary level within a social structure and beyond it. *Towards Excellence*, 18(1).