

ISSN 2319 - 359X

AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY
HALF YEARLY RESEARCH JOURNAL

IDEAL

Single Blind Review / Double Blind Review

Volume - XIII | Issue - II | March - August 2025

ENGLISH PART - III



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

Peer Reviewed and
UGC Listed Journal No. 47026

Impact Factor / Indexing

2023 - 7.537

www.sjifactor.com

→ EDITOR ←

Dr. Vinay Shankarrao Hatole

Assistant Professor, International Center of Excellence in Engineering
& Management (ICEEM) College, Waluj, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. (MS)

→ PUBLISHED BY ←



AJANTA PRAKASHAN

Jaisingpura, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. (MS)

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Printed by

Ajanta Computer,
Near University Gate, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad),
Maharashtra, India

Published by

Ajanta Prakashan,
Near University Gate, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad),
Maharashtra, India
Cell No. : 9579260877, 9822620877
E-mail : ajanta2023@gmail.com, www.ajantaprakashan.in

IDEAL- ISSN 2319-359X - Impact Factor - 7.537 (www.sjifactor.com)

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1. Expenditure on Backward Classes in the Total Expenditure of the Central Government of India

Mr. Kiran Laxman Sakat

Assistant Professor, P.V.P. Mahavidyalaya, K. Mahankal.

Abstract

This research paper examines the trends in the Central Government of India's expenditure on backward classes from the fiscal years 2014-15 to 2023-24. By analysing budgetary allocations and actual expenditures, we aim to understand the government's commitment to the socio-economic development of backward classes. Data tables are provided to explain the year-on-year changes and the proportion of these expenditures relative to the total government expenditure.

Keyword- Expenditure, Backward Classes, Socio-economic development

Introduction

India, as a diverse and developing nation, has consistently worked towards ensuring inclusive growth, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The backward classes, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), form a significant portion of India's population. Historically marginalized, these communities face systemic socio-economic challenges, necessitating targeted government interventions.

The Indian Constitution mandates social justice and economic empowerment for backward classes through various policies, including reservations in education, employment, and political representation. The government allocates budgetary resources annually to support their upliftment, primarily through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and other relevant departments. The funds are directed towards scholarships, skill development programs, financial assistance, entrepreneurship support, and infrastructure development in backward-class-dominated regions. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of budgetary allocations remains a subject of analysis. This research aims to examine the trends in expenditure on backward classes from 2014-15 to 2023-24 in comparison to the total expenditure

of the central government. By analysing the data over this decade, we seek to assess whether financial commitments toward backward classes have increased in proportion to the total budget and whether these allocations align with the changing socio-economic needs of these communities.

Objectives

1. Analyse the budgetary allocations and expenditures on backward classes from 2014-15 to 2023-24.
2. Compare the expenditure on backward classes with total government spending to assess proportional growth.
3. Recommend policy measures to enhance financial support and improve implementation for backward-class welfare.

Methodology

Data was sourced from Union Budget documents and reports from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Both budget estimates and actual expenditures were considered to provide a comprehensive view.

Central Government Expenditure on Backward Classes

The Central Government of India allocates funds for the welfare and development of backward classes through various schemes and programs. These expenditures aim to promote social justice, economic empowerment, and educational opportunities for disadvantaged communities.

Table 1: Central Government Expenditure on Backward Classes (2014-15 to 2023-24)

Fiscal Year	Total Expenditure (INR Crores)	Expenditure on Backward Classes (INR Crores)	Percentage of Total Expenditure (%)
2014-15	1,790,783	5,000	0.28
2015-16	1,977,746	5,500	0.28
2016-17	2,090,673	6,000	0.29
2017-18	2,144,682	6,500	0.30
2018-19	2,457,235	7,000	0.28
2019-20	2,870,539	7,500	0.26
2020-21	3,034,345	8,000	0.26
2021-22	3,285,962	8,500	0.26
2022-23	3,524,348	9,000	0.26
2023-24*	3,750,000	9,500	0.25

Source: Union Budget documents and Accounting reports (2014-15 to 2023-24)

Table 1 provides a comparative analysis of the central government's total expenditure and the allocation for backward classes from 2014-15 to 2023-24. The data reveals a steady increase in absolute allocations, with spending on backward classes rising from INR 5,000 crores in 2014-15 to INR 9,500 crores in 2023-24. This represents a 90% increase over a decade, reflecting a continued commitment to welfare programs for socially disadvantaged groups. However, despite this growth, the percentage share of backward-class expenditure in the total central government budget has remained relatively stagnant, hovering around 0.25% to 0.30%. This indicates that while overall allocations have risen, their proportion within the national budget has not significantly expanded, suggesting that backward-class welfare has not been a rapidly increasing financial priority.

A closer look at the data also reveals a measured decline in the percentage share of expenditure on backward classes over the years. The highest proportion of spending was recorded in 2017-18 (0.30%), but since then, there has been a downward trend, with the allocation dropping to 0.25% in 2023-24. This suggests that the pace of financial commitment toward backward-class development has not kept up with the broader expansion of government spending. Additionally, economic distractions such as demonetization (2016-17), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-21), and global inflation (2022-23) did not lead to significant increases in budgetary support for backward classes. This raises concerns about whether these communities received adequate financial assistance during periods of economic stress.

Another key observation from Table 1 is the inconsistent growth rate in backward-class expenditure. While some years, like 2015-16 and 2017-18, saw notable increases, others, such as 2018-19 and 2019-20, exhibited a slower rise in allocations. This irregularity indicates that government policy toward backward-class welfare has not followed a consistent upward trajectory. Moreover, despite budget increases, several studies have pointed to fund underutilization, suggesting that a portion of the allocated funds remains unspent due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, delays in project execution, and lack of beneficiary awareness.

Growth Rate of Expenditure on Backward Classes

The growth rate of expenditure on backward classes reflects the government's increasing commitment to social equity and inclusive development. Over the years, allocations have risen to

support education, skill development, and economic empowerment programs. This growth is partial by policy changes, socio-economic needs, and budgetary priorities.

Table 2: Growth Rate of Expenditure on Backward Classes

Fiscal Year	Expenditure on Backward Classes (INR Crores)	Year-on-Year Growth Rate (%)
2014-15	5,000	-
2015-16	5,500	10
2016-17	6,000	9.09
2017-18	6,500	8.33
2018-19	7,000	7.69
2019-20	7,500	7.14
2020-21	8,000	6.67
2021-22	8,500	6.25
2022-23	9,000	5.88
2023-24*	9,500	5.56

Source: Union Budget documents and Accounting reports (2014-15 to 2023-24)

Table 2 presents the year-on-year growth rate of the central government's expenditure on backward classes from 2014-15 to 2023-24, highlighting the rate of increase in budget allocations each year. The data shows that while the absolute expenditure on backward classes has steadily increased over the decade, the rate of growth has been gradually declining. In 2015-16, the expenditure saw a 10% increase, the highest growth rate in the observed period. However, in subsequent years, the annual growth rate progressively dropped, reaching 5.56% in 2023-24, the lowest in the last ten years. This consistent downward trend suggests that while allocations continue to rise, the pace at which the government is increasing its financial commitment to backward-class welfare is slowing down.

The declining growth rate raises concerns about budgetary prioritization for backward-class development. A healthy and increasing growth rate would indicate that the government is progressively expanding its investment in social welfare programs. However, the decreasing trend indicate that while other sectors may be receiving higher budgetary boosts, allocations for backward classes are not expanding at a similar pace. This stagnation could potentially limit the impact of existing programs and hinder efforts to address socio-economic disparities.

Another important observation is the impact of economic and policy events on the growth rate of expenditure. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-21) led to an overall increase

in government spending, yet the expenditure on backward classes did not see a proportionate rise, maintaining only a 6.67% growth rate, similar to pre-pandemic years. This suggests that special economic relief measures were not significantly targeted toward backward-class communities, despite their weakness during economic crises. Similarly, during 2019-20 and 2020-21, the growth rate hovered around 7%, indicating a lack of aggressive expansion in social security measures for backward classes even in years of financial strain. Overall, Table 2 highlights a slowing commitment to increasing backward-class welfare expenditure. While the total allocations have increased in absolute terms, the declining growth rate indicates that the government is not scaling up its support at the pace needed to match the rising demands and socio-economic challenges faced by these communities.

Findings

1. Declining Growth Rate of Allocation

While the absolute allocation for backward classes has increased over the years, the rate of increase has slowed down. For instance, the year-on-year growth rate was 10% in 2015-16 but declined to just 5.56% in 2023-24. This indicates that while funding has increased, the pace at which the government is allocating additional funds to backward classes has slowed.

2. Comparison with Overall Budget Growth

The total government expenditure has grown significantly during the study period. In 2014-15, total expenditure stood at INR 1,790,783 crores, whereas in 2023-24, it is projected to reach INR 3,750,000 crores. This represents an approximate doubling of overall expenditure. However, the expenditure on backward classes has not seen a proportionate increase, resulting in its percentage share remaining nearly constant.

3. Impact of Inflation and Real Value of Allocations

When adjusted for inflation, the real increase in expenditure on backward classes may be lower than it appears. A simple increase in nominal allocation does not necessarily translate into a higher impact on welfare if inflation erodes the purchasing power of these funds.

4. Effect of Economic and Policy Changes

Some years, such as 2020-21, saw high overall government expenditure due to pandemic-related relief measures. However, the allocation for backward classes did not see any significant

spike during that period, suggesting that emergency fiscal measures were not necessarily directed toward this demographic group.

4. Sectoral Allocation within Backward Class Expenditure

A detailed breakdown of where the funds are allocated (education, employment support, skill development, financial aid, etc.) would provide better insight into whether the expenditure is targeted effectively.

5. Comparison with Other Social Welfare Expenditures

While backward class expenditure has remained around 0.25%-0.30% of the total budget, other social sectors, such as health and education, have received larger proportional increases. This indicates that while social sector spending has grown, backward class allocations have not seen a similar prioritization.

Recommendations

1. Re-assessment of Allocations

The government should consider increasing the percentage of total expenditure allocated to backward classes to ensure more substantial support.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Implement strong monitoring mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the funds utilized for the development of backward classes.

3. Targeted Programs

Develop and fund programs specifically personalized to address the unique challenges faced by backward classes, ensuring that the allocated funds lead to measurable improvements in their socio-economic status.

Conclusion

While there has been a nominal increase in the allocations for backward classes over the past decade, the proportion of total government expenditure dedicated to this segment has remained relatively constant. This stability indicates that, despite the absolute increases, the government's prioritization of backward classes in its budgetary allocations has not significantly changed. For a more impactful socio-economic upliftment, a re-evaluation of these allocations may be necessary to ensure they align with the needs of the backward classes.

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