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Socio-Economic Impact of Land Reforms on the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Kumar Chikkala Kranthi*

Department of Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad 500046, Telangana, India

Email: krakumr@gmail.com Mobile: 8309087315

ABSTRACT

One of guiding principles before formulating the now highly popular MGNREGA scheme was to ensure that the lacunae and shortcomings noticed in the earlier welfare schemes should not be 'replicated' in the new scheme. The issue at stake in this paper would be to explore whether the land reforms initiatives of the government are serving their intended purpose and the quality of life of the beneficiaries has improved to the desired level.

KEYWORDS: Socio-economic conditions SCs, migration and untouchability

***Corresponding author**

Dr. Chikkala Kranthi Kumar

Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology,

School of Social Sciences,

University of Hyderabad,

Hyderabad 500046, Telangana, India

Email: krakumr@gmail.com Mobile: 8309087315

INTRODUCTION

Even after more than 71 years of independence, the largest number of total workers (56.5%) and 72.5% of the rural work force in India are engaged in agriculture (Ministry of Finance, 2007).¹ Land is a major determinant in the economy, society and polity of the country. Ownership of land is not just about holding an asset. It is the veritable gateway to a degree of financial security, social status, power and even a sense of identity. A number of studies bring out that, due to their inability to provide collaterals like land documents, many rural folk are denied loans by financial institutions to meet their immediate needs. No wonder, such persons become easy prey for the loan sharks.

It is in this context that, in recent times, the issue of ownership of land, especially by the Dalits (the hitherto deprived sections of society) has assumed special significance. The Constitution of India has, in its various Articles, spoken about the need to improve the lot of the downtrodden. Successive governments (even in British India) have passed a spate of legislations on land-related issues. Yet, landlessness continues to be a major issue, especially in rural India. It is pleasing to hear of slogans like 'land to the tiller', but what is the situation on the ground? Even when a person is shown on the records as the owner of a piece of land, the moot question is: is he always the one who is actually deriving full benefits from it? Have financial constraints and heavy indebtedness, etc., reduced him to the state of being a landless labourer on his 'own' land? Added to that is the spate of suicides by farmers, who are unable to sustain themselves on the uneconomic land-holdings.

Who are the major players who have tended to make a mockery of the noble intentions of the framers of our Constitution, or brazenly flouted the provisions contained in the legislations, by latching on to the loopholes in these? The period since August 1947 has seen a sea-change in the social fabric of our country. The hitherto deprived sections of society can no longer be expected to silently accept the injustices being committed on them as something 'divinely ordained.' Today, they are more articulate. Hence, there is an urgent need to make a sincere endeavour to understand all the underlying issues and address these in a fair and equitable manner.

In this context the present study endeavour's to provide a comprehensive account of the ground realities of the land distributed to landless Dalits in the combined State of Andhra Pradesh through an empirical study.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilised both secondary and primary data. The secondary data included: government publications, media articles, census data and reports of the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commissions, etc. The primary data – qualitative and quantitative – was collected from three districts, each one from the three regions: Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and

Telangana: of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh State. As is well known, the earlier State has now been divided into Andhra Pradesh (comprising of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema) and Telangana States. Since the universe was found to be large, stratified random sampling method, covering 100 individuals from each district was adopted. The data for this paper was obtained from an in-depth study undertaken in three districts (Anantapur, Nellore and Khammam) of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana during May -July 2018.

According to the 2011 Census, the male and female populations in all the three districts were almost equal. Amazingly, this finding also applied to SCs also. However, it emerged that the proportion of SCs to the total population (19.82%) of the district was very significant in Nellore (Handbook of Statistics, Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore District, 2011, Andhra Pradesh)² and Khammam districts (15.18%) (Handbook of Statistics, Khammam District, 2011, Andhra Pradesh)³, as against 12.61% in Anantapur district (Handbook of Statistics, Anantapur District, 2011, Andhra Pradesh)⁴. As regards distribution of surplus assigned land to SCs, it was ascertained from the office of Chief Commissioner of Land that Anantapur district was in the first position, followed by Nellore and Khammam Districts (Report of Chief Commissioner Land Administration Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2015)⁵. This seems to be rather enigmatic, since Nellore District has the largest number of SCs among the three districts.

PRESENT FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF THE BENEFICIARIES

Land reforms were initiated with the primary objective of improving the socio-economic conditions of the deprived sections of society. It was felt that possession of their own land would impart a greater degree of dignity and create a sense of ownership among the beneficiaries. The Table below can give us an idea about the financial impact of land allotment on the beneficiaries.

Table 1: Financial viability for the families of the respondents

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Financially Viable		
			Yes	No	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	72 (72%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	15 (15%)	85 (85%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	26 (26%)	74 (74%)	100 (100%)
Total			113 (37.70%)	187 (62.30%)	300 (100%)

It was rather shocking to note that 85.0% of the beneficiaries in Marripadu Mandal of Nellore district and 74.0% of those in Madhira Mandal of Khammam district stated that the financial viability of their families had not improved much even after allotment of the land to them. It was only in Garladine Mandal of Anantapur district that the majority (72.0%) stated that their financial viability had improved.

SOCIAL IMPACT ON THE BENEFICIARIES

Land, especially in rural areas, can be a very valuable asset for the person concerned. It can impart an element of social status and serve as a collateral, when such a person approaches financial institutions for loans, mostly crop-related ones. The Table below should show the extent to which the concerned beneficiaries benefitted socially, after receiving the assigned land.

Table 2: Social impact on the beneficiaries

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Generated more income	Raised social status	Both	Can't say	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	40 (40%)	10 (10%)	22 (22%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	20 (20%)	75 (75%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	20 (20%)	3 (0%)	3 (3%)	74 (74%)	100 (100%)
Total			63 (21.0%)	15 (5.0%)	45 (15.0%)	177 (59.0%)	300 (100%)

The responses were found to be varying in all the three Mandals. The 'non-committal' responses were predominant in Marripadu Mandal of Nellore district (75.0%) and Madhira Mandal of Khammam district (74.0%). However, 40.0% of the respondents in the Mandal in Anantapur district and 20.0%, in the Mandal in Khammam district stated that the allotment of land had helped them to generate more income.

RESPONDENTS' SAVINGS AT DIFFERENT PLACES

It has already been mentioned that allotment of land has, at best, only brought about a marginal improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries. Of greater consequence, however, has been the recognition by the government of the need to provide a degree of succor to the landless poor. Some of the beneficiaries appear to have been able to mobilise

some savings out of their increased earnings. The Table below depicts the avenues in which such persons are depositing their savings.

Table 3: Preferred mode of the respondents for depositing their savings

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Bank	SHGs	Post Office	No Savings	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	15 (15%)	42 (42%)	5 (15%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	4 (4%)	10 (10%)	1 (1%)	85 (85%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	7 (7%)	30 (30%)	3 (3%)	60 (60%)	100 (100%)
Total			26 8.67%	82 (23.33%)	9 (3.0%)	173 (57.67%)	300 (100%)

What stood out was that an overwhelming 85.0% of the beneficiaries in Marripadu Mandal in Nellore district reported that they had no savings. The corresponding figures in the case of Garladine Mandal in Anantapur district and Madhira Mandal were 28% and 60% respectively. In all the three Mandals, savings in the Post Office was found to be the least preferred option. Interestingly, SHGs emerged as a very popular option in the entire study area. This was followed by banks.

ANNUAL SAVINGS OF THE RESPONDENTS

One of the intended outcomes of land assignment is to improve the savings levels of the beneficiaries. The amounts saved could, besides improving the financial condition of the persons concerned, could also come in handy for meeting anticipated and unforeseen contingencies, without having to approach others for loan – often at very cruel rates of interest. Table 4 below depicts the quantum of annual savings of the beneficiaries.

A mention has already been made of the highly noticeable proportion of beneficiaries in all the three Mandals who mentioned that they had no savings. In the case of those beneficiaries who could manage to make some savings, the general trend of savings was found to be less than Rs 10,000. Still, one cannot ignore the seven beneficiaries in Garladine Mandal in Anantapur district who reported that they had annual savings in excess of Rs 10,000. There were no such persons in the other two Mandals. The Mandal in Anantapur district also enjoyed the distinction of having as high as 56% beneficiaries with annual savings in the range of Rs 5,000-10,000. The comparatively good performance in this Mandal was ‘diluted’ by the fact that as high as 15% beneficiaries in the

Mandal in Nellore district and 20% of the Mandal in Khammam district were having annual savings below Rs 5,000.

Table 4: Annual savings of the respondents (Rs. in thousands)

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Rs.1000-5000/-	Rs.5001-10000/-	Above Rs.10000/-	No savings	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	9 (9%)	56 (56%)	7 (7%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	15 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	85 (85%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	20 (20%)	6 (6%)	0 (0%)	74 (74%)	100 (100%)
Total			44 (14.67%)	62 (20.66%)	7 (2.33%)	187 (62.33%)	300 (100%)

UTILISATION OF THE INCOME FROM THE ALLOTTED LAND

It has already been mentioned that the income from the allotted land was generally not very substantial. Still, it would be of interest to see what the Table below would reveal about the utilisation of income from this land by the respondents.

Table 5: Utilization of the income from the allotted land

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Improving the condition of the house	Providing better education for the family members	Acquiring electrical and electronic gadgets	Investing on land	Joining self-help groups	Self-employment purposes	Not used	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	29 (29%)	8 (8%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	30 (30%)	0 (0%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	0 (0%)	13 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	85 (85%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	16 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (10%)	0 (0%)	74 (74%)	100 (100%)
Total			45 (15%)	21 (7.0%)	5 (1.7%)	1 (0.3%)	41 (13.67%)	1 (0.3%)	187 (62.33%)	300 (100.0%)

A very enigmatic finding in all the three Mandals was that hardly any of the beneficiaries in the three Mandals spent such earnings either on improving the condition of the land, and for self-employment purposes. Some of the beneficiaries have joined SHGs, in Mandals in Anantapur and Khammam districts. The largest proportions of the beneficiaries in the surveyed Mandals in

Anantapur and Khammam districts utilised the amounts on improvement of the condition of their houses (obviously renovation and repairs). Beneficiaries in the Mandal in Anantapur district appeared to be quite progressive since a noticeable proportion of them spent their earnings on the education of their children and acquiring electrical gadgets. ‘Improved education facilities for the children’ was found to rank very high for 13% of the beneficiaries in the Mandal in Nellore district. Unfortunately, none of the beneficiaries in Madhira Mandal in Khammam district reported spending this amount for educational purposes.

SOURCES FOR TAKING LOANS

It is clear that many of the beneficiaries were not very well-off and had to take loans occasionally to meet their pressing financial needs. The Table below should reveal the preferred sources of loans in the study area.

Table 6: Sources for taking loans

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Banks	Millers/ Traders	Landlords	Friends /relatives	Money lenders	Private people	Not taken any loan	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	66 (66%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	9 (9%)	0 (0%)	19 (19%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	12 (12%)	3 (3%)	17 (17%)	10 (10%)	43 (43%)	1 (1%)	14 (14%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	15 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	57 (57%)	0 (0%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
Total			93 (31.0%)	3 (1.0%)	20 (6.7%)	13 (4.3%)	109 (36.3%)	1 (0.3%)	61 (20.3%)	300 (100%)

It was a bit comforting to note that a noticeable proportion of beneficiaries in all the three Mandals (20.3%, overall) said that they did not take loans. Money lenders were found to be the favoured sources for the largest proportion of beneficiaries in the Mandals in Nellore (43%) and Khammam (57%). Obviously, such persons were perceived as most approachable, even though in the long run, their terms would turn out to be most exploitative. A very significant proportion of beneficiaries (66.0%) in Garladine Mandal in Anantapur district, 12.0% in the Mandal in Nellore district and 15.0% in Madhira Mandal of Khammam district mentioned banks as the source of loans for them. Significantly, 17% of the beneficiaries in Marripadu Mandal of Nellore district said that they took loans from the landlords

PURPOSE OF TAKING LOANS

It has already been established that loans were almost unavoidable for the largest proportion of beneficiaries in all the three Mandals. The Table below should give an idea of the purpose for which such loans were being taken.

Table 7: Purpose of loan

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Health	Education	Family maintenance	Marriage	Agriculture	Not taken any loan	Purchased land	House construction	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	0 (0%)	8 (8%)	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	66 (66%)	19 (19%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	1 (1%)	16 (16%)	52 (52%)	4 (4%)	11 (11%)	14 (14%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	2 (2%)	8 (8%)	38 (38%)	1 (1%)	15 (15%)	28 (28%)	2 (2%)	6 (6%)	100 (100%)
Total			3 (1.0%)	32 (10.7%)	92 (30.7%)	10 (3.3%)	92 (30.7%)	61 (20.3%)	3 (1.0%)	7 (2.3%)	300 (100%)

In Garladine Mandal of Anantapur district, 66% of the beneficiaries mentioned agriculture as the reason for taking loans. The other two noticeable reasons in this Mandal were: educational purposes (8%) and weddings (5.0%). In the other two Mandals, maintenance of the family, agriculture and agriculture were found to be the most important reasons for taking loans. Interestingly, health did not figure as an important reason for taking loans in any of the three Mandals.

QUANTUM OF LOANS TAKEN BY THE RESPONDENTS

Related with the compulsion of taking loans is the amount taken is the repaying capacity of the borrower. The Table depicts the quantum of loans taken by the beneficiaries in the study area.

Table 8: Quantum of loans taken by the respondents

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Up to 10000/-	Rs.1000 1- 20000/-	Rs. 20001- 30000/-	Rs.3000 1- 40000/-	Rs.4000 1- 50000/-	Above Rs. 50,001/-	Not taken loan	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	35 (35%)	9 (9%)	15 (15%)	12 (12%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	19 (19%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	48 (48%)	15 (15%)	12 (12%)	6 (6%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	14 (14%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	33 (33%)	27 (27%)	9 (9%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
Total			116 (38.7%)	51 (17%)	36 (12%)	21 (7%)	10 (3.30%)	5 (1.7%)	61 (20.3%)	300 (100%)

If one ignores the beneficiaries who did not take any loan, the general quantum of loan taken by majority of the beneficiaries in all the three Mandals was 'up to Rs. 10,000'. Also, very few of them took loans in excess of Rs 50,000. Even in cases of extreme emergency, the tendency in all the three Mandals was to take amounts between Rs 10,000 and Rs. 40,000.

TYPE OF CROPS GROWN BY THE RESPONDENTS

It has already been mentioned that climatic and geographical factors precluded the growing of the same types of crops in the three Mandals. A crop grown extensively in one Mandal was not necessarily being grown with the same degree of enthusiasm in the other two Mandals. The Table below depicts the variety of crops grown by the beneficiaries in the study area.

Rather enigmatically, the largest proportion of beneficiaries in the study area reported that they not cultivating the land allotted to them. The reasons for these could include: physical possession not handed over to them, encroachments on the land or the land was not suitable for ready cultivation and the beneficiaries did not have the physical and monetary resources to make the land fit for cultivation. Paddy emerged as the most favoured crop for the beneficiaries in the Mandal in Anantapur district. It was the second choice for majority of the beneficiaries in the Mandal in Nellore district. Eucalyptus was found to be the most preferred crop for the largest proportion of beneficiaries in Marrispadu Mandal of Nellore district. In Madhira Mandal of Khammam district, Cotton (14.0%) and Paddy (10.0%) were found to be the two most popular crops. One found also find some 'exclusive' crops - groundnut (only in the Mandal of Anantapur district), Eucalyptus (only in Marrispadu Mandal of Nellore district) and Cotton (only in Madhira Mandal of Khammam district)

Table 9: Type of crops grown by the respondents

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Eucalyptus	Castrol oil	Paddy	Millets	Ground nut	Cotton	Chilies	No cultivation	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	60 (60%)	0 (0%)	11 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	10 (10%)	0 (0%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	85 (85%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (10)	2 (2%)	74 (74%)	100 (100%)
Total			10 (3.3%)	1 (0.3%)	78 (26.0%)	1 (0.3%)	11 (3.66%)	10 (3.33%)	2 (0.66%)	187 (46.3)	300 (62.33%)

MIGRATION OF THE RESPONDENTS AFTER LAND ALLOTMENT

The allotment of land to the landless is primarily intended to arrest the migration of the landless poor to other areas in search of work, especially during the off season. The Table below should give one an idea on the extent of migration after the distribution of land to the beneficiaries.

Table 10: Effect of land allotment on the migration of the respondents

(Percentages in parenthesis)

S. No	District	Mandal	Yes	No	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	24 (24%)	76 (76%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	60 (60%)	40 (40%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	41 (41%)	59 (59%)	100 (100%)
Total			125 (41.67%)	175 (58.33%)	300 (100%)

It could be seen that migration to other areas has not been checked to a significant degree. In fact, 76% of the beneficiaries in Garladine Mandal of Anantapur district; 40% in Marripadu Mandal of Nellore district and 59% in Madhira Mandal of Khammam confirmed that migration had not stopped. The probable reason may be either that the quantum, as also the quality, of land allotted may not be sufficient to sustain the families of the beneficiaries.

ENTRY OF RESPONDENT INTO PUBLIC PLACE OF WORSHIP

Sad to state, but the fact is that, despite the practice of untouchability being banned in the country, this obnoxious practice keeps manifesting itself in a disguised form in several parts of the country. One of the ‘favourite’ forms of untouchability is to prevent the entry of Dalits into public places of worship. The Table below should give an idea on this issue in the study area.

It was rather disgusting to note that 97% of the beneficiaries in the Mandal in Nellore district and 90% in that in Khammam district confirmed that they were prevented from entering public places of worship. The ‘better’ position in Garladine (79% of the respondents confirming that they were not being prevented from entering places of worship) only suggests that much more remains to be done before such a form of untouchability is totally eradicated from the country.

Table 15: Entry of respondents into public places of worship
(Percentages in parenthesis)

S.No	District	Mandal	Yes	No	Total
1	Anantapur	Garladine	79 (79%)	21 (21%)	100 (100%)
2	Nellore	Marripadu	3 (3%)	97 (97%)	100 (100%)
3	Khammam	Madhira	10 (10%)	90 (90%)	100 (100%)
Total			92 (30.7%)	208 (69.3%)	300 (100%)

CONCLUSIONS

This study was largely focused on the impact of land distribution on the SCs in three Mandals – Garladine (Anantapur district), Marripadu (Nellore district) and Madhira (Khammam district) of the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh.

This study has sought to examine how the quality of life of the beneficiaries has improved – in terms of providing better education to their children, having savings in banks, etc., and, more importantly, becoming less dependent on moneylenders, etc.

There is no denying the fact that land reforms have brought about a degree of improvement in the economic conditions of many beneficiaries. The issue at stake is: has this been able to make a dent in the ‘disguised untouchability’ that is still being practised in many rural areas? Are the upper castes now prepared to treat the Dalits with greater respect and dignity, or are the age-old prejudices still being allowed to continue?

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