

International Journal of Scientific Research and Reviews

Social Change Among Scheduled Castes: A Study In Rural Areas Of Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Among many sociological problems faced by India, Caste system remains, as it existed before; Caste system is exclusively a sociological problem of Indian system with some unique characteristics. The system has enjoyed the benefits of hierarchy for a long period of time. Those below the social stratum, those who have remained at the lower rungs of the social stratum for various reasons have achieved legitimacy form Institutions and Law in general as Scheduled Castes. Post-independence India thought of implementing an egalitarian set up for multi-polar society that was posing a stiff challenge to the egalitarian notion stressed by Indian architects of Freedom. They dreamt of bringing the masses below the social dominant hierarchy to the mainstream by introducing developmental measures for the weaker sections of Indian society. Reservation became an elementary principle to safeguard the weaker sections legally and emancipator methods were taken to provide safeguards to the disenfranchised section in elevating the downtrodden to the social mainstream. It is no doubt noticed that there has been utilization opportunities given to the depressed classes for social mobility and development of socio-economic challenges posed by the caste system. The research under taken covers Davanagere district of Karnataka state rural areas as field of study for research. Population census and other statistical details reveal (both State and Central figures) that the presence of the Scheduled Caste is distributed in growing numbers. The motto of the research is to examine weather state sponsored schemes and welfare programmes reach the Scheduled Castes of the area taken up for research activity. The study also examines the changing social and economical conditions of living. All factors bear relevance as valid sociological parameters for the study.

KEY WORDS : Social Change, Scheduled Caste, Karnataka, Sociological Parameters.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The human societies are characteristically stratified with the hierarchical arrangements of a type followed in which some are allowed to be rich, better off, and stronger, while others poor and weak; some superior, while others inferior; and some privileged, while others deprived¹. Fundamentally, stratification is a functional requirement and hence this kind of arrangement has been a requisite of every social system. But it needs to be changed for the good deed of all. Indian society is a complex society of various linguistic groups, like religious, castes and groups. Indians are distributed in various caste groups and they are identified with their caste for accessing their social status. Every caste is having its own status and it has lead many discrimination in the society².

The history of categorizing some caste as Scheduled Castes commenced with the Government of India Act, 1935. This step, is the part of the British Government, was meant to treat the most oppressed and exploited castes with a degree of special political dispensation. Most of these castes were known as 'untouchable' in the context of the Hindu social structure. Thus, the 'Scheduled Caste' category initially comprised castes that were isolated and disadvantaged by their 'untouchability', their low status in the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy, which exposed them to an oppressive life, characterized by a blatant deprivation of opportunities.

In Karnataka the Scheduled Castes is sizeable part of the state's population. Not all SCs are basically untouchables. Some of the castes and sub-castes, classified as 'Scheduled Castes' during the 1970s and 1980s, were non-untouchables who did, however, have a history of deprivation. Scheduled Castes are known by different names in different parts of the state and comprise many sub-castes and communities. At present, there are about 101 sub-castes that have been recognized as Scheduled Castes in the Karnataka. In Karnataka the people which belong to Scheduled Caste were called as Holeya, Madiga, Adidravida, Adikarnataka, Chalavadi, Korama, koracha, Chammara, Bhovi, and Lambani etc. The majority of these castes are small in number. While the Scheduled Castes are the largest single group in Karnataka, they are also the weakest group in terms of political, economical, social and cultural resources.

Even though, India is democratic country, though Constitution provide equality, liberty, Justice and equal Human development, as a concept, will have little value or significance until the human development levels of disadvantaged people, particularly of the Scheduled Castes are raised to the levels of those of the dominant classes. Both the Central and the state governments have implemented policies directed at the socio-economic empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. This study will assess the changing socio-economic Status of Scheduled Castes in Karnataka.

2. SCHEDULED CASTE

The term Scheduled castes refers to a list of Castes prepared by the British Government in India. During the ancient period and medieval periods they were known as Panchamas, Chandalas and Anthyajias. Panchamas were called name Shudras, out castes uncivilized. It was Gandiji who first used the term Harijan or Children of God to the lower castes to integrate them into the Society. Dr. Ambedkar used the word dalit to these people the same people are called Scheduled Castes. In constitution of India with the intension of brining them to mainstream of the society. Article 342 declares the low castes and the weaker section as SCs. In general, the people who are in the lowest strata of the social hierarchy called as Scheduled Castes.

3. SOCIAL CHANGE

Social Change is a universal phenomenon. In the thousands of years of its existence the human society has undergone vast number of changes and is still in the process of change. In a very simple sense change can be understood as modifications in the existing society. This modification can take place in terms of food habits, dressing habits, performance of rituals, practice of customs, traditions and taboos, forms of interaction among the people. Biesanz and Biesanz³ says “social change as significant alteration in social structure, in cultural definition and the material products of socio-cultural action”. Bottomore⁴ defines “social change as a change in social structure (including changes in the size of a society) or in particular social institutions or in the relationships between institutions”. Thus social change is conceived in three types-i.e. civilizational, cultural and social. In this study integrated approach is used in explaining the socio-economic change among Scheduled Caste communities. Which is at its different stages of change.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OVERVIEW

The SC population constitutes 16.21 percent of the population in Karnataka. The share of the SC population to the total population of India in 2011 is about 16.26 percent which is almost equal to that of Karnataka. The Scheduled Castes comprise 101 castes and sub castes (the SCs ad STs order (Amendment) Act, 1976 has notified). The predominant castes among the SCs are Adi Karnataka (34.13%), Banjaras (11.85%), Bhovis (10.04%), Adi Dravidas (7.2%), Holayas (7.5%), Mahar, Madiga. Samagara, Mang and Mochi (6.6%). 41 (Forty One) SCs have returned population below 1000. The Census of India 2011 gives the details about the distribution of Scheduled caste population among the various districts of Karnataka. In the same census of the 18.6 percent population of SCs live in Davanagere district. The population of these communities has distributed unequally in the rural area also.

5. RURAL AND URBAN DISTRIBUTION

The majority of the SC population resides in rural areas, but its share of the rural population has been declining from census to census. However, SCs have remained socially, economically, and educationally backward since the beginning of the caste stratification of Indian rural society. They are rather complex, involving many factors. Their living quarters were located in the lower part of the village. As per the 2011 census, 75 per cent of the SC population is residing in rural areas. Among major SCs, Banjara have the highest (88.9%) rural population followed by Holaya (82%), Madiga (80.3%), Adi Karnataka (76.2%) and Bhovi (74.9%). But on the other hand, Adi Dravida have (62.8%) urban population. With this backdrop the study assumed great importance to study on social change of selected rural Scheduled Caste Communities in Karnataka.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Scheduled Castes represent very backward communities; they are suffering with different fundamental problems and disqualification throughout their life. However, after independence, the Governments of India and Karnataka have brought many Developmental Programmes for the upliftment of SC communities as well as many voluntary organizations; have tried to improve the socio-economic conditions through various legal and welfare measures. Even other of these weaker sections many question arising.

Whether SCs have succeeded to get the advantages of developmental programmes? Whether the administration and facilities of SCs properly changing to the beneficiaries? The SCs have improved their standard of living by participating in education and political period and by avoiding the reservation policies? To know whether SCs are identifying them several in mainstream of society in the current days. To get the answer to above questions it is very important to study and conduct research in the present study.

But now-a-days there are some process of changes that are taking place among SCs and there is a need to study the SCs to understand these changes. In view of these gaps the present study will be imperative and important.

7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following specific objectives are framed for the present study;

- To understand the socio-economic background of the Scheduled Castes.
- To study the factors contributing for the changing socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes.
- To explore the extent of governmental development programmes of Scheduled Castes to enhance their socio-economic status.

- To analyze whether the recent socio-economic status of in these communities helping them to get social justice.
- To draw suitable suggestions to enhance socio-economic status of Scheduled castes.

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1. Variables For The Study

The study has taken different variables, such as Family, Culture, Occupation, Political participation, Income and Education level of the Scheduled Caste peoples in order to analyze the overall status of Scheduled Castes in respect of social, economic, political and education.

8.2. Sample Size

The present study will be conducted in the Davangere district of Karnataka state. The district comprises of 6 taluks. We have included the families of SCs in overall Davangere district. The present study is based on the primary data, by using simple Random Sampling Method and data was collected at least not less than 150 respondents. For this purpose the study have planed to select 6 taluks and 25 families from each taluk by adopting simple random sampling method.

8.3. Research Design

In the present study keeping in view of the objectives, the descriptive research design will be adopted to view the changes of socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes.

8.4. Primary Sources

Primary Sources to be collected from the sample respondents through structured, closed-ended interview schedules. The interview scheduled finalized with the help of pilot survey. For collection of primary data questionnaire to be divided into different parts like general information, socio-economic information and other relevant information as relating to changing socio-economic aspects of scheduled castes.

8.5. Interview Method

The study to be used interview method and finds it is useful for collection of primary data. For collection of primary data the study have planed to visit to scheduled caste families personally in the study area to gather relevant information from the sample respondents.

8.6. Secondary Sources

Secondary data to be collected from different sources like reports, journals, and books statistical department and government offices. In addition to that the study also used sources like District census handbook, District Gazetteer, international sociological Journals, Books and papers etc.

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditionally Scheduled Castes are inclusive groups which are extremely conservative, insular and economically backward. But in recent times as the result of education and exposure to other forces of social changes there has been change in the attitude of these communities. These aspects of changes have been major areas of focus in the present study.

- The study shows that the majority of the people among the Scheduled Caste community they are living in rural areas. The houses which they live in are mostly tiled houses. The majority of the respondents are uneducated or educated only up to the high school level. The occupation of most of the respondent's coolies or agriculture labour, which has resulted in low individual income or low family income.

Table 1: Occupation Status of the respondents

Occupation	No. of respondent	Percentage
Coolie	76	50.66
Agriculture	24	16.00
Govt. service	13	08.66
Private Sector	06	04.00
Traditional	00	00.00
Self employment	11	07.33
Others	20	13.35
Total	150	100.00

The above Table 1 shows the occupational pattern among the respondents. Majority respondents of these communities are either illiterates or have education less than high school. This is reflected in the occupational pattern of the respondents of this study. Out of the total 150 respondents of the study majority of the respondents are in those occupations which do not require substantial educational qualification. Majority of the respondents 76(50.66%) are involved in coolie or working for daily wages. There are only 13 (8.66%) respondents who are in government service. This low representation of the members in government and private sector can be attributed to low levels of education among the SCs. In the community there are 20 (13.35%) respondents who are involved in other occupations.

It is from the study data that the occupation held by the majority of the respondents belong to low-level occupations, that is, agricultural labor, blue color works and clerical jobs. Only a small

number of SCs are employees in public sector. Regarding the income of the family, most of the respondents' (78.25%) had lower middle and middle class economic status.

Table 2: Type of Family

Family type	No. of respondent	Percentage
Nuclear	138	92.00
Joint	12	08.00
Extended	00	00.00
Total	150	100.00

Table – 2 gives details of the type of family in which the respondents lived in. The data shows that the Joint Family System among the SCs is disappearing as a majority 138(92%) of the families today is of nuclear type. It is universally accepted fact that family is changing with regard to its size and functions.

- Marriage in one of the important institution in India. Changes in marriage custom is one of the important indicator of modernization and social mobility. The study reveals that the attitude of scheduled castes towards marriage is changing. It is well known that the child marriage was the dominant norm of SCs but now it has been revealed that SCs are prefer to marry at the age of 18 and 19 of a girl and boy respectively. The practice of Child Marriage has disappeared. A majority (72%) of the respondents have shown favorable attitude towards abolition of the child marriage. And it is observed that the dowry system among SCs has recently come into practice due to the impact of higher caste people. The amount of dowry depends on the economic, education and social status of the bridegroom's families. There is also a change in the endogenous character of SCs. Majority (85%) of the respondents opposed the inter-caste ad inter-religious marriages.
- Education has tremendous potential to function as an instrument of social change. It not only reflects the life, needs and aspirations of the people but also plays a predominant role in social mobility and progress. The educational data shows that 93 per cent of the respondents' parents were illiterate. But 87 per cent of the respondents' children were literate. The education in modern times accelerated both social and economic change.

Table 3: Job aspiration for their children

Occupation	No. of respondent	Percentage
Agriculture	10	06.66
Agricultural labour	00	00.00
Govt. service	93	62.00
Private Sector	25	16.66
Self employment	17	11.35
Coolie	00	00.00
Not responded	05	03.33
Total	400	100.00

The job aspiration by parents for their children not only shows their career aspirations for them but it also shows their awareness about the career possibilities they see in getting a particular job by their children. Table 3. shows the career aspirations of respondents for their sons. Out of the 150 respondents majority of the respondents 93 (73.25%) felt that they prefer a job for their children in the government service. When asked with them the reason for preferring a government job for their son they said that government job provides job security, a good salary and it is easier to get a job in the government service than in the private sector because of the reservation facility.

- The study reveals that participation of SCs, in voluntary association's activities is in on increasing, however, the political organization of the SCs has undergone a change. The traditional authority of upper caste has weakened. Today, the approach of the police and court of law for seeking justice. The study reveals that 79 percent of the respondents have shown interest in contesting panchayath elections. Thus it is clear from the above, that the several changes have taken place among the SCs in their social, economic, religious and political life. The respondents of this study are extremely critical of Govt. welfare schemes, majority of the households are not satisfied with implementation of Govt. welfare schemes. Analysis of the attitude of respondents towards continuation of protective measures comprising constitutional safe guards and welfare schemes for SCs reveals that 85.70 percent of the respondents are in favor of their continuation.
- Regarding the discrimination of the Scheduled Castes by the high castes, the study of data reveals that, only 26.45 percent respondent consider that the Scheduled Castes are not discriminated by other in society. But a majority (73.55%) of the respondents is of the opinion that the Scheduled Casts are generally differentiated and treated separately from the rest of the society.
- One more important change among SCs as seen in the preceding paragraphs, state programmes in provisioning housing and electricity to SC households have resulted in a visible improvement in living conditions. It is observed that the overall, the majority (87%) of housing conditions of SCs have improved considerably, primarily because of the massive efforts of the government in providing houses through various housing programmes such as Ashraya, Ambedkar Housing Programme, Indira Awas Yojana, Neralina Bhagya etc.

Finally, it may be concluded that for the last three generations a lot of changes have been brought about by upward mobility. The younger generations shows interest in participating political, education and new occupation etc.

10. SUGGESTIONS

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is a need to reconsider the policy as a whole, to uplift the real downtrodden. In this regard, some suggestions, that may be followed, are as under;

- The policy of reservation for SCs should be continued till the discriminatory caste system, in our society, prevails.
- There is a need of education in the process of empowerment of SC population in the rural areas are must.
- Government Educational programmes is to need SC children's of the expenditure on programmes goes to payment of scholarships, construction and maintenance of hostels and residential schools and training for employment.
- Rural SC women depend upon agricultural labour or agriculture related activities so they have Equal pay for agricultural women workers and it should ensured and schemes for skill up-gradation should be formulated and implemented.
- The central and state Government should planned implement special employment programmes to help rural SC population.
- Organized Social Services groups should be assisted in helping the rural SC population for seeking protection through legal measures.
- It is also important that rural population is trained to demand access to health care. Training, education and awareness for health must be ensured with special reorganization for gender concern in health.
- Poverty reduction programmes must target the SCs because so many other deprivations arise out of income poverty.
- Pooled funds of Government can be deployed more intensively in interventions designed to reach these populations.

11. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that is why the low level status of rural SC population is low as compared to other castes, they are faced so many problems. There is need for providing facilities to improve their socio-economic status, whether it is psychological. In Karnataka with a special focus on livelihoods, education and health; examine whether government policies have been effective in improving the human Development indicators of the Scheduled Castes; and suggest future interventions to ensure that they enjoy equal rights and equal access to goods and services in society. Thus the exploration of educational, occupational and income status and attitudinal components of SCs personality reveals that there has been considerable change in education, occupation, mode of

living, the changes in the attitude towards basic norms, values and institutions of the society. The direction of the change in towards adoption of more rational and pragmatic attitude. It seems that education. Job reservation, occupation and Govt. schemes were primarily responsible in contributing a lot in the changing of social, cultural attitude and life style of SCs in Davanagere District.

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