

Scheduled castes in Kalaburagi City: A sociological survey

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Abstract

The scheduled castes were depressed, suppressed and discriminated in society since immemorial days. As such, to bring social equality, the Indian Constitution and the Government has made all efforts. It is essential to know about the social equality achieved by these castes and problems faced by them. For this purpose, a sociological survey of scheduled castes was made by interviewing 450 scheduled castes living in Kalaburagi city, who were formerly from untouchable communities. It is concluded that though there is development of scheduled castes, they have not achieved social equality completely.

Keywords: Scheduled castes, Kalaburagi, sociological survey

1. Introduction

The terms 'Dalits', 'Shudras', 'Scheduled Castes', 'Mlechhas', 'Chandals', etc are used synonymously to mean Scheduled Castes in India. The term 'Dalit' is not defined clearly. Many would include all the Scheduled Castes as Dalits, but it is noted that all the Scheduled Castes are not Dalits and all the Dalits are Scheduled Castes. The Census Report of 1911 actually laid down ten tests to mark off the untouchables from those who were touchables. Under these tests the census superintendents made a separate enumeration of castes and tribes who are (1) denied the supremacy of the Brahmins, (2) did not receive the Mantra from Brahmana or other recognized Hindu Guru, (3) denied the authority of Vedas, (4) did not worship the great Hindu gods, (5) were not served by good Brahmanas, (6) have no Brahmin priest at all, (7) have no access to the interior of the ordinary Hindu temple, (8) cause pollution, (9) bury their dead and (10) eat beef and do not reverence low. Though it was the first attempt to define Dalits in an official government document, it however does not give clear picture (Ghosh and Ghosh, 1997) [1].

The term Scheduled Castes refers to a list of castes prepared in 1935 by the British Government in India. But during the ancient period and medieval period they were known as 'Panchamas' (fifth group), 'Chandalas' (heathens or outcastes) and 'Antyajas' (lowest class) and during the British period they came to be called first as 'Depressed classes' (dalit jatis) or Exterior Castes (avarnas), later as Harijans (Children of God) as 'Scheduled Castes' (castes listed in the Government Schedule). An examination of how these terms appeared at different periods of history reveals how the so-called untouchables were subject to various types of humiliations before they came to enjoy the same social and economic privileges along with the other castes in India (Kamble, 1995) [2].

After Independence, the Government of India took up the removal of untouchability as one of its main and important tasks. Equality constitutes the "basic structure" of the Indian Constitution. Excessive "redress" of disadvantages to a group, class or caste sought through privilege of protection by positive discrimination in jobs militates against it. Thus, the

subject is attended by splendid legal niceties (Upadhyaya, 1998) [3]. In order to end exploitation of these sections at the hands of upper caste Hindus, the modern polity provided many protective measures in the constitution and initiated many programmes of their social development. The schemes which have been taken-up for socio-economic upliftment of scheduled castes, are in the field of education, occupation, economic upliftment, health and housing schemes. The Indian Government has provided many facilities in the field of education and occupation to scheduled castes in order to bring about their upliftment. Many scheduled castes people have sought urban employment, away from their rural exploitative system. Now that members of scheduled caste community are in a position to seek entry in urban occupation, a change in their life pattern is expected.

Due to the provisions of the Indian Constitution and efforts of the Government, now the scheduled castes are improving and developing as they are getting equal opportunities in urban areas. Still, in social status and respect, they are lagged behind as compared to all other castes, they are not getting equal status. Hence, present study is made to assess the social status of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi city.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study is made

- To look into the social and educational background of scheduled castes;
- To study the problems faced by scheduled castes; and
- To find out the attitudes of scheduled castes to control and restrict discrimination in society.

3. Scope and Methodology

The author has studied secondary literature published in books, research journals, conference proceedings, web based sources, etc. Based on theoretical background derived from secondary literature, it is decided to conduct survey of scheduled castes, who were formerly untouchables. Such communities include Holeya, Madiga, Bhangis and Dhors living in Kalaburagi city. Kalaburagi city is backward city of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. As the geographical area of Kalaburagi city is vast and population of scheduled castes is

large to cover, a sample survey of 450 scheduled caste respondents was made. The collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under.

4. Analysis and Discussion

i) Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation of the respondents shows the work doing for the livelihood. Earlier all the occupations were based on the caste of the respondents. But, due to globalization, there is increase in education and employment opportunities and as such, the new employment opportunities made the different castes to take up other professions based on their education. The information on occupations of the respondents covered under the study is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Occupation of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	138	30.6
Industry/ Business	45	10.0
Service Sector/ Formal Employment	73	16.2
Seasonal/ Informal Sector employment	194	43.1
Any Other	--	--
Total	450	100

The occupations of the respondents shows that majority, that is 194 (43.1%) are engaged in seasonal and informal sector employment followed by, 138 (30.6%) are engaged in agriculture, 73 (16.2%) are engaged in service sector and formal employment and the remaining 45 (10.0%) are engaged in industry/ business respectively.

ii) Conditions of Depressed Classes Due to Welfare Policies of Government

The Government has provided many schemes to ameliorate the conditions of Depressed Classes. As such, many of the castes have developed by getting education and employment in different sectors. As such their socio-economic conditions also improved considerably. In this respect, opinions were collected from the respondents that whether the conditions of depressed classes improved or not and the collected data is tabulated as under.

Table 2: Conditions of Depressed Classes Due to Welfare Policies of the Government

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Improved Considerably	94	20.9
Has Not Improved	258	57.3
It is as Bad as Before	53	11.8
Can't Say	45	10.0
Total	450	100

On the developmental conditions of the scheduled castes due to the welfare schemes of the government, of the total respondents covered under the present study, 94 (20.9%) have expressed that the conditions of the depressed classes is improved considerably, 258 (57.3%) have stated that the conditions of depressed classes has not improved, 53 (11.8%) have opined that the conditions of depressed classes is as bad as before and the remaining 45 (10.0%) have not expressed their views on the same. Here the respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction about the social welfare policies of the government, as majority have not gained due to welfare

policies formulated for the scheduled castes.

iii) Faced Bad Situations due to Caste

The scheduled castes are discriminated, alienated and treated unequal in the society since immemorial days, even though legislations have been already passed by the government to curb such practices. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they have faced any of such bad situations in their life and the collected information is shown as under.

Table 3: Faced Bad Situations due to Caste

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Social Discrimination/ Alienation	128	28.4
Restrictions to Enter Public Places	56	12.4
Lower Treatment at Religious, Cultural and Public Functions	256	56.9
Atrocities from Forward Caste People	31	6.9
Not Faced Any Bad Situations	52	11.5
Total	450	100

It is observed from the above table that, a few of the respondents have faced more than one type of bad situations and a few of the respondents have not at all faced such bad situations in the society due to their caste. Of all the respondents, 128 (28.4%) have experienced social discrimination and alienation, 56 (12.4%) have faced restrictions to enter into public places, 256 (56.9%) have faced lower treatment at religious, cultural and public functions, 31 (6.9%) have faced atrocities from forward caste people and about 52 (11.5%) have not faced any of such bad situations in their life due to their caste. It is highlighted that even though social discrimination and lower treatment of the scheduled castes have banned long back, still it exists in the society as majority have faced such situations in their life. 7. General

iv) Problems Faced in the Society

Apart from economic problems, the scheduled castes are deprived from different aspects and privileges. They include lack of preference in education, social aspects, welfare services, etc. These are the general problems faced by the depressed classes in the society and the following are general problems faced by the respondents in the society.

Table 4: General Problems Faced in the Society

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Atrocities & Harassment	166	36.9
Untouchability & Social Discrimination	128	28.4
Social Injustice/ Inequality	272	60.4
Conflicts / Frictions between Communal Groups	174	38.6
Any Other	53	11.7
Total	450	100

It is noted that the scheduled castes are faced with general problems of more than one type. Particularly, of all the respondents, 166 (36.9%) have faced atrocities and harassment, 128 (28.4%) have faced untouchability and social discrimination, 272 (60.4%) have faced social injustice and inequality, 174 (38.6%) have faced conflicts and frictions between communal groups and 53 (11.7%) have faced other type of problems in the society.

v) Gender Equality

To assess the equality of status of males and females in the society, a question was asked to the respondents, whether they think that the boys are equal to girls in the society. In this respect, the collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table 5: Gender Equality

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	39.1
No	274	60.9
Total	450	100

It is surprising to note that majority, that is 274 (60.9%) of the respondents have not agreed that the girls are equal to boys, whereas only 176 (39.1%) have agreed that the girls are equal to boys. Surprisingly, still a great majority of the respondents are practice gender inequality, as they have stated that the females are not equal to boys. It shows the conventional beliefs, illiteracy, ignorance and neglect of the female gender in the society.

vi) Change in Socio-economic and Educational Conditions of Scheduled Castes

It is noted that the scheduled castes were depressed and deprived in different aspects of the society since immemorial days. However, after the independence, the government has passed many legislations and curbed inequality of the depressed classes and took measures for the development of the depressed classes. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether there are any change of socio-economic and educational conditions of the scheduled castes since independence and the collected information is tabulated as under.

Table 6: Change in Socio-economic and Educational Conditions of Scheduled Castes

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Improved	85	18.9
Improved to a Greater extent	113	25.1
No Change	184	40.9
Worse than Before	68	15.1
Total	450	100

On the change of scheduled castes in socio-economic and educational conditions due to government efforts, 85 (18.9%) of the respondents have expressed that it is fully improved, 113 (25.1%) of the respondents have stated that the socio-economic and educational conditions of the scheduled castes is improved to a greater extent since independence, 184 (40.9%) have remarked that there is no change in socio-economic and educational conditions of the scheduled castes and surprisingly, 68 (15.1%) of the respondents have responded that the socio-economic and educational conditions of the scheduled castes is worse.

vii) Barriers for the Overall Development of Scheduled Castes

It was asked to the respondents to furnish the barriers for the overall development of the scheduled castes in Kalaburagi city and the collected information is tabulated as under.

Table 7: Barriers for the Overall Development of Scheduled Castes

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate Caste based Reservation	105	23.3
Regional Imbalance	58	12.9
Negligence of the Depressed Classes	32	7.1
Social Barriers	255	56.7
Natural Factors	--	--
Any Other	--	--
Total	450	100

On the barriers to the overall development of the scheduled castes, among all the respondents, 105 (23.3%) have agreed that there is inadequate caste based reservation, 58 (12.9%) have expressed that there is regional imbalance, 32 (7.1%) have stated that there is negligence of the depressed classes and majority, that is 255 (56.7%) have remarked that there are social barriers such as untouchability, social discrimination, inequality, etc.

5. Concluding Remarks

It is concluded that the scheduled castes were depressed, suppressed, alienated, discriminated and faced untouchability associated problems in society. Realizing this situation the Government has thought that, if the economic status of these castes is improved, then there may be social equality. To achieve this purpose, the Government has formulated welfare facilities by encouraging education, reservation in education and employment, extending scholarships and fellowships, loans to start self-employment at concessional rates of interests, financial assistance to start self-employment, housing, etc. Even legislations to curb discrimination based on caste and gender have been already passed. It is surprising to note that, still there are many problems of social inequalities suffered by scheduled castes. Hence, it is essential to solve the problems of scheduled castes so as to achieve social equality.

6. References

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