

“Socio-Economic Conditions of Scheduled Castes: A Study in Kalaburagi District”**Dr. BUDHABHARAT SHANKARRAO Ph.D**

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Scheduled castes are most backward castes in Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Though, Government has formulated many of the welfare schemes for the empowerment of scheduled castes, still their position is vulnerable as they are socially discriminated, exploited, suffering from poverty, illiteracy, etc. Hence, to analyze the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes the present study is made. Totally 450 respondents were interviewed to collect the primary data. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were suffered from discrimination, caste based inequality, exploitation, poverty, etc. Hence, it is suggested to provide higher education and employment to scheduled castes living in backward areas. Further, it is essential that the NGOs should look into the problems of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district.

Introduction:

Indian society is a heterogeneous, wherein people belonging to various castes and communities reside. The people of Indian society are divided on the basis of castes. Caste system is based on Varna System where the Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Vysyas, Kshatriyas and Sudras. Those people who are outside the varna system are known as Avarnas or Antajas or Panchamas or Chandalas¹. They are external in the sense that they were required to stay outside the village settlement. The concept of pollution attached to them was responsible for treating or categorizing them as Scheduled Castes. There are more than 3743 castes and sub-castes in Indian Society³. The caste system is characterized by a status hierarchy, the scheduled castes or the so-called untouchables are at the base, in fact, at the lowest of the social and ritual status. These sections had, on account of their low social and ritual status, been subjected to a variety of disabilities under the traditional caste system. All through the ages, the Scheduled Castes had suffered from social injustice and exploitation. They were denied all privileges and benefits as had been enjoyed by the upper castes. Their entries into temples of upper castes, public places, educational institutions, etc. were restricted. On account of their

being on the lowest rung of the social ladder, they were forced to take up unclean and menial occupations and jobs, which yielded low incomes.

They were associated with a variety of specialized traditional occupations such as scavenging, cobbling, disposal of carcass, basketry, etc. As a consequence, these castes have remained socially, economically and educationally, politically and culturally backward for several centuries⁴. During British period, many of the socio-political reform movements were organized to empower the weaker sections especially, scheduled castes and after independence, the Constitution emphasize social equality that is equality irrespective of race, caste, religion or gender. Consequently, to achieve equality and social justice, reservation in education and employment was provided to the scheduled castes. Due to these efforts of the government, scheduled castes are getting education and employment in society and thereby showing development. Still, the conditions of scheduled castes are vulnerable in backward areas like Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Hence, the present study was made to assess the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district, which is a head quarter of Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study is made:

- To look into the social background such as age, gender, occupations, etc of the scheduled caste groups;
- To know about the problems faced by the scheduled castes in society; and
- To study the economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district.

Scope and Methodology:

The present study was began with literature search and books, journals, web sites, research reports, etc were studied to get theoretical background to the topic and based on theoretical background selected 450 respondents from different castes such as Holey, Madiga, Dhor, etc living in Kalaburagi district. Kalaburagi district is located in Hyderabad-Karnataka and got privilege under Section 371(J) of the Indian Constitution. The scheduled

caste respondents from different occupational backgrounds were interviewed to collect primary data on their socio-economic conditions. Both villages and urban areas were covered to select and interview the respondents and collected primary data is analyzed, interpreted and discussed as under.

1. Gender-wise Distribution of the Respondents:

It is noted that the information was collected from the respondents of both the gender.

The gender-wise distribution of the respondents is shown as under.

Table No. 1. Gender-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	294	65.3
Female	156	34.6
Total	450	100

It is noted from the above table that of all the respondents 294 (65.3%) are males, whereas the remaining 156 (34.6%) are female respondents.

2. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents:

Age of the respondents plays a significant role in the knowledge and awareness about socio-economic, educational, religious and such other aspects. Further, it also helps to know about the knowledge and expertise in their occupation. Hence, the information collected on the age of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 2. Age-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 Years	37	8.2
26 to 40 Years	151	33.5
40 to 60 Years	143	31.7
Above 60 Years	119	26.4
Total	450	100

Age of the respondents revealed that 151 (33.5%) of the respondents are between the age of 26 to 40 years followed by, 143 (31.7%) are between the age group of 40 to 60 years, 119 (26.4%) are of above 60 years and 37 (8.2%) are of below 25 years. To collect information from all the age groups, the respondents of different age groups were surveyed.

3. 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 No. 3. 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/ Caste Based Occupations	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, informal sector employment and caste based occupations 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.

4. Conditions of Scheduled Castes Due to Welfare Policies of Government: The Government has provided many schemes to ameliorate the conditions of Scheduled Castes. 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 scheduled castes improved or not and the collected data is tabulated as under.

Table No. 4. Conditions of Scheduled Castes is Due to Welfare Policies of the Government

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Improved Considerably	173	38.4
Has Not Improved	199	44.2
It is as Bad as Before	43	9.5
Can't Say	35	7.8
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, 173 (38.4%) have expressed that the conditions of the scheduled castes is improved considerably, 199 (44.2%) have stated that the conditions of scheduled castes has not improved, 43 (9.5%) have opined that the conditions of scheduled castes is as bad as before and the remaining 35 (7.8%) 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.

5. 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 No. 5. 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	92	20.4
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 92 (20.4%) 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.

6. Change in Socio-economic and Educational Conditions of Scheduled Castes since Independence:

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 much legislation and curbed inequality of the scheduled castes and took measures for the development of the scheduled castes. 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 No. 6. Change in Socio-economic and Educational Conditions of Scheduled Castes since Independence

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 since independence, 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 caste is worse.

Conclusion:

Though, government formulated legislations to curb discrimination based on caste, harassment, atrocities and untouchability, in few areas, still it is prevailed. It is also highlighted that many of the scheduled castes are facing bad incidents in public places due to their castes. Many of the scheduled castes are suffering from deprivation in socio-economic and educational aspects. The monthly income of majority of the scheduled castes is very low as they are living below poverty line and are working still in unorganized sector or caste based occupations. Hence, there is need to intervene to the problems of the scheduled castes. To sum up, it is emphasized to provide free and compulsory higher education to the scheduled castes. There is essential need to organize awareness campaigns against the social inequality, social discrimination, atrocities and untouchability practiced against the scheduled castes. For this purpose, the social welfare organizations should come forward to address and solve the problems of the scheduled castes. It is also suggested to the scheduled castes to organize themselves in the association irrespective of their individual communities, so as to protect their interests themselves. It is on the part of the government at the local level to address the problems of the scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district.

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