

Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The Constitution of India seeks to secure for all its citizens, among other things, social and economic justice, equality of status and opportunity and assured the dignity of the individual. Several provisions have been incorporated in the constitution for safeguarding and promoting the interests of the scheduled tribes in various spheres so as to enable them to the join the national mainstream.

This paper addresses the socio-economic status of the scheduled tribes in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. In the sample, majority of the households are the tribe of Konda Dora. Majority of the sample households in the study area are Hindus and more than 70 per cent of the sample population are illiterate. Cultivation is primary occupation participated by the most heads of the sample households. Income from cultivation supports majority of the sample population. More than 53 per cent of the cultivators have farm income around Rs.2, 000.00 to Rs.5, 000.00. Even though the wage laborers are more in the sample population, the share of income derived from that is less when compared to cultivation. There is a need to put more attention on educational aspects of scheduled tribes, where this only can motivate them for future life.

Introduction

In the traditional caste system, Indian society was divided in to four groups on the basis of traditional occupations. They are 1) Brahmin 2) Kshatriya 3) Vaishya and 4) Sudra. But in the modern Indian social system there are two more marginalised caste groups namely, Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes, who are living out side the main stream of the society because of their lower social status. The caste based stratification of the society adversely affected the equality of opportunities to the disadvantage of these

groups.

The scheduled tribes are the segregated and isolated communities and are concentrated in the states of Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharastra, Gujarat and Rajasthan where they constitute about 80 percent of the Scheduled tribe population of India. In some of the North Eastern states also they form more than 80 percent of their population, and mostly live on the hillsides and forests. They are isolated from the rest of the society due to poor transportation and communication facilities and have remained as educationally, culturally, economically and socially disadvantaged sections. Scheduled Tribes have been considered to be lowest in the social hierarchy. Being mostly illiterate, they have been subjected to all kinds of exploitation - social, economic and political. They comprised of 6.87, 6.82, 7.76, 8.08 and 8.60 percent of India's population in 1961,1971,1981,1991 and 2001 census

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respectively.

Even today, widely pervasive reality in respect of tribal communities in India is that most of them are geographically isolated, economically weak, socially ignorant, politically indifferent, culturally rich, behaviourally simple, trustworthy and leading their life in the lap of nature. They are facing problems, which force them to lead a life at bare subsistence level. They are in the situation featured with poverty, deprivation, disadvantages which are difficult to be tackled effectively on their own and making the government in particular and society in general to intervene in a planned manner to solve the miseries of tribes and facilitate their development process. A large number of tribal communities continue to be extremely backward and some of them are still in the primitive food gathering stage, where as some others have progressed a little in terms of economic and educational advancement.

In Visakhapatnam district, the growth rate of tribal population from 1981 to 2001 is 57 per cent. For Andhra Pradesh and India it is 58 and 63 percent respectively. This indicates that growth rate of tribal population in Visakhapatnam district is less than that of state and national average respectively.

The share of tribal population in the total population of Visakhapatnam increased marginally from 13.74 to 14.55 from 1981 to 2001, the same for Andhra Pradesh and India stands at 5.93 to 6.59 and 7.6 to 8.20 respectively.

The Data and Methodology

The primary data comprise of collecting information from the selected sample tribal households in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh by way of canvassing a structured schedule among them. In addition, the secondary data are also taken from the Chief Planning Officer, Visakhapatnam District. The primary data has been collected during the month of June and

Table 1: Head of the Household

Gender	No. of head of the households	Percentage
Male	121	87.68
Female	17	12.32
Total	138	100.00

July of 2007. A sample of 138 households was selected for the study. A Multi-stage random sampling technique is employed to select the sample households. In the first stage, Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh was selected for the study. Then, Anantagiri mandal from the district was selected. In the third stage, four villages from the mandal were selected. Those are Damuku, Ananthagiri, Chilakalagedda and Khambhavalasa. In the fourth stage, all the tribal households in the sample villages were interviewed with a pre-prepared schedule.

This paper analyse the socio-economic status of the sample households taking into consideration like, heads of the households, educational qualifications, type of drinking water, specific classification of caste, type of occupation, and extent of land cultivated etc.

Table 1 describes the gender wise classification of the head of the households in the sample. Out of the sample of 138 in Visakhapatnam District, male head households are 121 and the remaining 17 are females. With regard to the overall sample households, the male headed households are more than female headed households. In these communities only 12 per cent of the households are headed by females. The existence of the female-headed households does not indicate the existence of matrilineal societies but in those particular households, the males are not alive. This may

Table 2: Educational Qualifications of the Head of the Household

Educational Qualification	No. of head of the households	Per cent
Illiterate	115	83.34
Primary	14	10.15
Secondary	6	4.35
Higher	3	2.17
Total	138	100.00