

Perception of Scheduled Tribe Students Towards Their Status in Karnataka

Dr. N.R. Savatkar

¹Assistant Professor of Sociology, KLE Society's S.V.S. Bellubbi Arts and Commerce College, Saundatti,
Dist : Belgavi, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT : Tribals in India, in general, are facing some common problems such as problem of geographic separation, economic problem, cultural problem, social problem, health problem and educational problem. The tribal culture is entirely different from the way of life of the civilized people. The tribals fail to understand the civilized people, their customs and practices, beliefs and attitudes and so on. They are suspicious of the civilized people. They are clinging tenaciously to their customs and traditions. During the British rule some foreign Christian missionaries made an attempt to propagate their religion in some of the tribal areas, particularly in the north-eastern provinces. They even tried to impose their culture on them. Even today such an attempt is going on.

KEYWORDS : Scheduled Tribes, Perception, Status, Karnataka

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the tribals of India are in a way geographically separated from the rest of the population. Some of them are living in the unapproachable physical areas such as deep valleys, dense forests, hills, mountains, etc. It is difficult for them to establish relations with others and hence, socially they are away from the civilized world. This kind of physical as well as social isolation or seclusion has retarded tribal development. The welfare programmes and developmental projects undertaken by the government many a time do not reach the tribals because of this geographic isolation. Hence the tribals need to be protected from leading an isolated life away from villages, towns and cities. Regular contact should be maintained with them through the network of roads and communication system.

The tribal people are economically the poorest people of India. Majority of them live below the poverty line. The tribal economy is based on agriculture of the crudest type. The innocence, illiteracy and helplessness of the tribals are exploited by the outsiders. The British policy, in particular, had led to ruthless exploitation of the tribals in various ways as it favoured the Zamindars, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors and excise, revenue and police officials. About 90% of the tribals are engaged in cultivation and most of them are landless and practice shifting cultivation. They need to be helped in adopting new methods of cultivation. The tribals possess uneconomic holdings because of which their crop yield is very less. A very small percentage of the population participates in occupational activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Due to illiteracy and ignorance the tribals are not able to appreciate modern concept of health and sanitation. They do not take much care pertaining to their own health. They believe that diseases are caused by hostile spirits and ghosts. They have their own traditional means of diagnosis and cure. Good number of them fall a prey to the diseases such as skin disease, forest fever, typhoid, T.B., leprosy, malaria, venereal diseases, small pox, etc. contact with outsiders further added to a few more diseases in the tribal areas. It is observed that the Todas of Niligiri Hills have been suffering from some modern diseases like venereal diseases, diabetes, blood pressures, etc., after coming in contact with the British who made Niligiri Hills as one of their summer resorts. These diseases take a heavy toll of tribal life. Their suspicion and lack of faith in modern doctors have made them not to avail themselves of the modern medical facilities.

Review of Literature : Traditionally, Indian society has been based on rigid hierarchy and the scheduled tribes have been deprived of social, economic and cultural rights. They were engaged in uneconomic occupations with no right to education. They remained victims of suppression and exploitation until independence. During British rule they had some open avenues for modern, secular education and occupations. At the time of independence, the constitution provided special facilities for their education and employment. Although their progress is marginal, education continues to be an effective means for their development. Chitnis (1979) and Premi (1984) hold that instead of providing equal opportunity to all, the present system of education is creating new inequalities.

The available data show that only a small proportion of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students have been able to reap major benefits of higher education and modern education. It is because education among them is still a problem. Chakrawarty and Singrole (1988) is of the opinion that "The socio-economic development of scheduled tribes is closely linked with their educational advancement, more so in today's changing world in which education plays an increasing role in every day life apart from equipping a person with necessary skills for more effective participation in different spheres of economic activity". Smith and Cheung (1968) assessing the trends in the effects of parental status as a determinant of educational outcome, feels that the effect of background on schooling differ for men and women. The number of years that an individual's father has attended school is clearly a strong determinant of educational attainment for both men and women.

Mazumdar, K. (1973:188) said that the tribals do not want to remain in isolation on ground of neither false prestige nor the spiritual superiority of their ancestors. The tribals are gradually rising to a more higher and advanced cultural and social life and may be expected to raise the same standard of living as the rural people of the same area has got. Munda, G.S. (2000:35) said that the majority of the scheduled tribe students have entered government, service either in the Railways, police, forest departments, the PWD etc. Thus with the spread of education there has been diversification of occupation among them. People do not flock into the hereditary occupational structure of the caste system, but have found a new freedom in the occupations made available by urbanization.

After the study of tribals of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh Goyal, R.S. and Singh, R. (1991:108) state that, the tribal people are opening upto the socio-economic changes taking place in the society. They are adopting education, new methods of cultivation and other developments. But in this process government support is rather essential, as it creates necessary environment for development. In the tribal societies the social roles and the occupational roles are deeply interwoven and the family, Kin and the community take care of both the roles, Singh, Y (1967:59) observes, "in the tribal and peasant societies a child becomes man or woman much earlier than in advanced societies". The child in tribal societies learns the roles and skills in the setting suited to his limited requirements and thus gets socialized in an early episode of life.

Lakara S. (1976) observed that agricultural tribes are gradually migrating to towns and cities neglecting agriculture, tribal handicrafts and traditional mode of living. There is reawakening among more educated and brighter sector of tribals, for the preservation of all the good aspects of the tribal culture. The less educated youths were gradually becoming delinquent because of various unwanted situations.

II. OBJECTIVES

- [1] It is an attempt to understand the perspective of scheduled tribe students towards their status.
- [2] The study aims at understanding the perception of scheduled tribe students regarding their status in the society.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in four universities of Karnataka, which represent different regions of the state. The universities are Mysore university, Mysore, Gulbarga University, Gulbarga, Karnatak University, Dharwad and Kuvempu University, Shimogga. The study is based on survey method to select samples quota sampling method was used. To collect the required information interview schedules were used. For the present study 300 scheduled tribe PG students were selected as a samples.

Limitations of the Study : The present study is confined only to post-graduate scheduled tribe students. The study covers the respondents from only four universities representing different regions of the Karnataka state.

IV. ANALYSIS

Many scheduled tribe people even educated feel inferior to others so far as their social status is concerned, because scheduled tribe people also are being exploited in many ways by other sections of the society. Moreover the strength of educated mass among scheduled tribes is very low. Even though many educated scheduled tribe people have achieved social, economic, equality with others, they are not psychologically free from inferiority feeling. Hence here an attempt is made to understand whether they are inferior to other castes as far as their social status is concerned.

Table 1

Social class and attitude regarding whether their social status is inferior to other castes or not

Sl. No.	Social class	Opinions					Total
		Yes, definitely	Yes many times	Yes may be	No	No opinion	
1.	Upper class	-	01 (2.8)	03 (8.3)	31 (86.1)	01 (2.8)	36 (100.0)
2.	Middle class	03 (2.2)	13 (9.4)	23 (16.5)	95 (68.3)	05 (3.6)	139 (100.0)
3.	Lower class	06 (4.8)	25 (20.0)	19 (15.2)	71 (56.8)	04 (3.2)	125 (100.0)
	Total	09 (3.0)	39 (13.0)	45 (15.0)	197 (65.7)	10 (3.3)	300 (100.0)

The study clearly shows that the scheduled tribe people are not inferior to others so far as their social status is concerned. But some of the respondents have inferiority feeling regarding their status in the society during certain circumstances. Among all the respondents, 65.7% [197] respondents have opined that they have no lower social status in the society, 15.0% [45] respondents have said that their social status may be inferior to other upper castes only during certain conditions. But 13% [39] respondents have opined that they feel many times inferior to other upper castes. Remaining 3.0% [9] respondents feel definitely inferior to other castes. But other 3.3% [10] respondents have not given any definite opinion regarding this aspect.

Thus the study discloses that the educated scheduled tribe people are achieving higher social status in the society. It shows that the people in the society irrespective of castes and religion are becoming more secular in mind. Similarly the respondents irrespective of their social class are more aware of their status. Although somewhat upper class respondents have superiority feeling, where as lower social class respondents have inferiority feeling. Today all the students irrespective of caste are standing in educational institutions at all levels. This close mix up of all the students helps to develop the feeling of equality among the students. It reduces caste feeling and practice of casteism, although some students do not completely mix up with other students, which may be due to environment of their socialization. Therefore here an attempt is made to understand the mix up of the respondents with other caste students.

Table 2

Sex of the respondents and opinion regarding mix up with other caste students

Sl. No.	Sex of the respondents	Opinions				Total
		Yes, always	Yes sometimes	No	No opinion	
1.	Male	176 (88.9)	21 (10.6)	-	01 (0.5)	198 (100.0)
2.	Female	83 (81.4)	16 (15.7)	02 (2.0)	01 (1.0)	102 (100.0)
	Total	259 (86.3)	37 (12.3)	02 (0.7)	02 (0.7)	300 (100.0)

The study clearly shows that the scheduled tribe students of higher educational institutions are mixing with other caste students. They are not having any inferiority feeling to mix up with other caste students. It shows that the higher education definitely brings about equality among the people. Among all, 86.3% [259] respondents are always mix up with other caste students. 12.3% [37] respondents are of the opinion that they mix up with other caste students sometimes only. They do not always mix with other caste students. But 0.7% [02] respondents do not mix up with other caste students. Equal respondents have not given any different response to the question. Thus the study clearly shows that most of the respondents irrespective of their sex mix up with other caste students. But only two girls do not mix up with other caste students either due to inferiority feeling or superiority feeling. As it is known a majority of the respondents closely mix up with other caste students. It does not mean all the students have similar attitudes toward other caste students. Some may have good and some may have negative attitudes toward other caste friends. Hence an attempt is made to understand the attitudes of respondents to word other caste students.

Table 3

Area of the respondents and attitude towards other caste students

Sl. No.	Area	Opinions				Total
		Good	Good feeling towards some students only	Not good	No opinion	
1.	Rural	200 (80.6)	44 (17.7)	01 (0.4)	03 (1.2)	248 (100.0)
2.	Urban	42 (80.8)	09 (17.3)	01 (1.9)	-	52 (100.0)
	Total	242 (80.7)	53 (17.7)	02 (0.7)	03 (1.0)	300 (100.0)

The study reveals that a majority of scheduled tribe students have good feeling towards other caste students. It shows the close and intimate relationships between different castes in India, which is the result of higher education with democratic values. Among all, 80.7% [242] respondents have better attitudes toward other caste students, which shows equal status of scheduled tribes with others. 17.7% [53] students have opined that they have good attitudes toward some students only where they may experienced any type of discrimination by some students of other castes. But only 0.7% [02] respondents have negative attitudes toward other caste students. These students either may have inferiority feeling or may be exploited by other caste students. Remaining 1.0% [03] students have not given any response to the aspect. Hence the study shows that most of the educated scheduled tribe people have good feeling towards other caste students. It show that education helps to achieve equal status with upper caste people in the society because educated people are always identified with mainstream of the society.

Although educated mass is identified with mainstream of the society, some low caste students some time feel themselves inferior to other upper caste students. It is due to their early socialization and utter poverty. At the same time some students feel educationally inferior to other caste students, because of inferiority feeling among themselves or superiority feeling of upper caste students. Keeping this aspect in mind an attempt is made to understand the opinion regarding whether respondents are educationally inferior to other castes or not.

Table 4

Area of the respondents and opinion regarding whether they are educationally inferior to other castes people or not

Sl. No.	Area	Opinions			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
1.	Rural	10 (83.3)	184 (82.1)	54 (84.4)	248 (82.7)
2.	Urban	02 (16.7)	40 (17.9)	10 (15.6)	52 (17.3)
	Total	12 (100.0)	224 (100.0)	64 (100.0)	300 (100.0)

The study revealed that the scheduled tribe students are not educationally inferior to other caste students. They are also educationally equal with all the other students. It helps them to enhance their social status in the society. Among all the respondents 74.7% [224] have opined that they are not inferior to other caste students in any way .21.3% [64] respondents have felt that sometimes they feel inferior to other caste students because of their environment and non availability of educational infrastructure in time. But only 4.0% [12] respondents have agreed that they are inferior to other caste students so far as educational advancement is concerned. They are not adjust with all the students belonging to other castes. They may develop inferiority feeling and fail to adjust with academic career. However a majority of the scheduled tribe educated mass think that it is educationally equal to other caste people and achieving higher social status in the society.

Table 5

Opinion regarding caste of room partner in hostel or rented room

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	My own caste	30	10.0
2.	Scheduled caste	07	2.3
3.	Other caste students	164	54.7
4.	Not applicable	99	33.0
	Total	300	100.0

The study also revealed that a majority of the scheduled tribe students are staying with other caste friends in their rooms. It shows increasing democratic values among the students belonging to all castes. The feeling of casteism is gradually vanishing. Among all the respondents 54.7% [164] students room partners are belonging to other than tribes, 10.0% [30] respondents room partners are of their own castes. But 2.3% [07] respondents are staying with scheduled caste students. Remaining 33% [98] respondents are staying with their parents or relatives.

Thus the study shows that the educated scheduled tribe students want to stay with other caste students as it leads to sanskritization process. Since they stay with other upper caste friends, naturally they follow the customs and traditions of upper castes and increase their social status equal to upper castes. Thus the social status of the scheduled tribes is on increase.

Naturally one should fight for his rights. To protect rights one must fight against any type of exploitation done by other caste people. There fore to protect ones rights every caste has organized its own caste organization in all fields. These organizations fight against exploitation done against them. Therefore to understand the attitude of fighting against exploitation the information is collected.

Table 6

Area of the respondents and opinion regarding protest against exploitation

Sl. No.	Area	Opinions				Total
		Yes, always	Yes, sometimes	No	No opinion	
1.	Rural	96 (38.7)	120 (48.4)	05 (2.0)	27 (10.9)	248 (100.0)
2.	Urban	27 (51.9)	16 (30.8)	01 (1.9)	08 (15.4)	52 (100.0)
	Total	123 (41.0)	136 (45.3)	06 (2.0)	35 (11.7)	300 (100.0)

The data show that one should protest against exploitation made against him. Some may protest always and some may protest some times only. Among all 41.0% [123] respondents have opined that one should always protest against exploitation who are more aggressive in nature. 45.3% [136] respondent have said that one should not always protest against exploitation, but should protest after clear understanding the situation and circumstance. 2.0% [06] respondents have opined that one should not protest against exploitation. Because they are of the opinion that it is not possible to fight against powerful mass up to end. Remaining 11.7% [35] respondents have not given response to the question. As far as area of the respondents is concerned a majority of urban back ground respondents always protest against exploitation, while rural back ground students some times protest against exploitation.

It is because urban students are more exposed to modernization than rural students. 38.7% [96] rural students and 51.9% [27] urban students want to protest against any type of exploitation always. But 48.4% [120] rural respondents and 30.8 [16] urban respondents have opined that one should protest against exploitation some times only 2.0% [01] urban background respondents have opined that one should not protest against any type of exploitation. Remaining 10.9% [27] rural background students and 15.4% [08] urban background respondents have not given any opinion. They are neither in favor of protest against exploitation nor against the protest against exploitation. Thus the study revealed that either always or some time the members of every depressed class must protest against exploitation to protect their rights. Other wise they never find their identification and increase their social status in the society.

V. CONCLUSION

Thus many scheduled tribe students have awareness towards their status. In this way in any developing country like India, the educational system becomes a powerful instrument of economic and social change for accelerating the process of transforming its traditional and agrarian ways and means of living into those of a modern and industrial society. Education is needed in all areas to cope with and repair the destruction already introduced and beyond this to make it possible for the people if they choose, to take advantage of the progress of science and technology in improving their standard of living.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chakravarthy, M. and Singrole, C.S. "Problems of Tribal Education – A Key to Development" *Man in India*, Vol. 14, 1983, p. 91-96.
- [2] Chitnis, S. *Problems of the S.C. College Students of Bombay*, In Buch, M.B. Op. Cit, 1979.
- [3] Goyal, R.S. and Singh Reena, "Tribals in Transition : The North-West Scenario". In "Tribal Demography in India" (ed) by Patil, R.N. and Jagatdeb, L. Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, p. 108.
- [4] Lakrer, S. "Impact of Education on the Tribals of Ranchi District. Ph.D. Thesis, Patna University, Patna, 1976.
- [5] Mazumdar, K. "Distribution of Tribal Population in Eastern Gujarat". *The National Geographical Journal of India*, Vol. 19, 1973, p. 188.
- [6] Munda, G.S. "Caste Dynamics and Tribal Society". Dominant Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2000, p. 35.
- [7] Singh, Y. "Socialization and Education" in *Papers in Sociology of Education* (ed.) M.S. Gore, NCERT, New Delhi, 1967, p. 59.
- [8] Smith, H. and P.L. Cheung, "Trends in the Effects of Family Background on Educational Attainment in Philippines". *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91, pp. 1387-1408, 1968.