

# Social Mobility and Employment of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in India

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Castes were one of the groups which were most backward. The basic determinants of Scheduled Caste status were untouchability and impure occupation. Other determinants were their low economic, political and educational conditions. Given the structural limitation of the ritual barrier for social mobility, Scheduled Castes have had to rely upon the principles of democracy and secularism in free India.

Employment is perhaps the most important among them. It is mainly through employment that there has been social mobility among scheduled Castes, which is manifested in Changed Family, marriage, religion and leadership structures as well as emancipation of members of these castes. One thus expects a great deal of social economic and cultural change to have taken place among Scheduled Castes. However, it is a task for sociologists and other social scientists to examine from time to time the extent of change and obstacles to such desired changes. In this context a question may be raised has occupational mobility significantly contributed to social mobility among scheduled Castes? This paper tries to examine these questions. In this context a question may be raised has occupational mobility significantly contributed to social mobility among scheduled Castes? This paper tries to examine these questions. In the organized sector, Scheduled Castes are employed in government and public sector undertakings. Scheduled Caste leaders' relief from unsympathetic and oppressive administration, facilitation of the utilization of opportunities and readier access to benefits. Further government work is regarded as a source of prestige for both the individual and the group. With the world population moving towards towns and cities, urban centres are increasingly becoming more and more important. In India with urban population growth rising to 30 percent (approximately), India can no longer be described as a land of villages. The volume of empirical research done on the Indian urban society is much less than that of on rural society. Often the importance of urban centers is either minimized or in them. Second, many have considered such basic institutions as caste and joint family as essentially rural even if they occur in cities fortunately there is now an increasing awareness among sociologists of the fact that India has had urban centers since the time of the Indus Valley Civilization several

centuries before Christ and that towns and cities in all parts of India throughout its recorded history (Shah, 1988:2). The present article examines the extent of occupational mobility achieved by Scheduled Caste groups such as Adi-Dravida, Mundala, as a result of employment analyzed in terms of their social relations changing attitudes and lifestyles. Here Scheduled Castes are housed in segregated colonies in different parts of the city. Until recently they were engaged in menial jobs such as cleaning the streets, carrying night-soil, cleaning latrines, transporting city waste, etc. Though some of them still continue in their traditional jobs in the city corporation, many have sought jobs in the state and central governments departments, schools and colleges, hospitals and banks, etc (1). The present article examines the above question of social mobility of Scheduled Castes paper as a result of employment in an urban society accepts changes and tolerates ambiguities, more readily than rural society. Scheduled Castes living in urban areas also change more readily than their counterparts in rural areas. Andhra Pradesh presents a mixture of communities, castes, religions, languages and cultures. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains make up the major religious groups. Brahmins, Bunts and Billavas are the important Hindu caste groups. The other caste groups are Goudas, Vishwakarmas, Adi-Dravida, Samagara are the important Scheduled Caste groups found in Andhra Pradesh.

## II. INTERGENERATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

Though it was difficult to compare the employment of the respondents with that of their fathers and grandfathers in order to evaluate intergenerational occupational mobility, an attempt was made to group the employment of fathers and grandfathers.

## III. EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION

It is generally said that migrants are more enterprising than non-migrants. To ascertain such a relationship, the class of employment in this study was also compared with the rural-urban origin of the respondents and the same was compared with migrants from within the district of Mangalore. This is to be expected since employment, particularly in the organized public sectors, draws personnel from rural areas. Since these people are members of Scheduled Castes and many of the Scheduled Castes have been predominantly living in rural

areas only after employment do they migrate to the place of work in towns and cities? However it is interesting to note that in the higher-class status of employment we find more people drawn from rural background than from urban(2). In other words it seems to suggest that members of the scheduled Castes from urban areas are given low status employment while a greater number of rural scheduled Caste members succeed in getting high-status employment. This proves the fact that migrants are more enterprising than the locals They are driven by the 'achievement motivation.' (McClelland, 1961) Many a migrant is the first-generation learner who is drawn to the urban area for further study and employment opportunities. Further, he tries to satisfy his other needs of a house and marriage. But his children lack his dynamism because all the needs of the children are taken care of by the migrant father.

#### IV. RESERVATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The general attitude in any work organization regarding the employment status of Scheduled Castes is that they occupy present positions because of their caste status and the policy of reservation. Most non-scheduled Castes, out of 40, with whom discussions were held, expressed this view the respondents attributed their present employment status to the fact that their caste was a scheduled Caste, and that they were eligible for reservation. They expressed their view that they would not get the job under the normal circumstances of caste discrimination prevailing in Hindu society. Merit as the reason for employment is given by only 12 percent of the respondents. One respondent, who had risen through hard work and merit, lamented that his colleagues attributed all his achievements to his caste status. To those who had responded that their employment was due to the policy of reservation the question, was asked whether they thought that they would have got the job even without that policy? Only 32.7 percent among them were confident that they might have got the job even without that policy. However, respondents in class 1 positions have relatively higher level of confidence, 60 percent of whom felt that on their own merit they would have obtained the employment. Such a level of confidence decreases steadily as the grade of position declines. Several respondents remarked that 'merited' Scheduled Caste candidates should be recruited as 'General Category' candidates thereby enabling many more Scheduled Caste candidates to get their employment under reservation quota(3). The remaining 67.3 percent felt that due to their incompetence, prejudices of non-scheduled Castes and lack of opportunities, they might not have got the job without the reservation policy.

#### V. EMPLOYMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS

One of the ways by which occupational mobility facilitates social mobility for the immediate members of the family is by helping them also to get better education and employment. It is now a well established fact that a person already in employment acts not only as a chief source of information for

others concerning employment opportunities in his workplace or elsewhere, but he also helps make the necessary contacts. Such networking has been a crucial link in the rural- urban relations in India. It is common among members of the upper castes, but it is also widely practiced by members of the Scheduled caste employees in various organisations not only have their associations to promote employment opportunities for people from their own caste, but are also expected to be helpful in other respects. To throw light on this aspect, an attempt was made to find out to what extent the respondents had facilitated employment for their own family members. Keeping in mind some of that were made above, it seems that a class of high-status employment also facilitates employment for dependent family members. Either such dependent members perform well in their education and in entrance tests or interviews when seeking jobs or the employment status of the respondents becomes instrumental in getting jobs for family members also.

#### VI. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT THE PLACE OF WORK

Pemay group acceptance is an important factor in one's occupation considering that caste identifies of persons play an important role even in formal organizations (Ramawamy, 1982), members of Scheduled Caste employees are likely to face situations which are hostile. The hostility would come not merely because of their low-caste status, but also because of prejudices the upper castes may have towards their favored status (such as reservation in education and employment) Indeed due to such hostile atmosphere in the workplace newly employed Scheduled Castes persons tend to seek the support and cooperation of other Scheduled Caste employees. In order to assess the nature of work experience the respondents were asked to describe the interpersonal relationships in the workplace and outside the workplace. Thus a person having had a good relationship at the beginning of his service tended to find it to be the same at present also. The fact that 78 percent found interpersonal relationships at the workplace good and another 14 percent fair indicates upward social mobility. Those who have viewed the relationships as caste-biased do not mean that they have viewed the relationships as caste-biased do not mean that they have not achieved any social mobility.

#### VII. SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE THE PLACE OF WORK

Social relationships at the workplace usually go beyond the formal place of work. Colleagues may frequently visits each other families may meet and share common interests Here there may be a process of selection based on caste region and language identities. To assess this, the respondents were asked whether other caste colleagues visited them in their houses and whether they accepted lunch, dinner or tea. The reason why some Scheduled Caste employees are not visited at home by colleagues is that many of them do not invite nor show interest in extending the social relationship at the workplace of their families due to sense of inferiority. Some were of the

opinion that if they had low-cost status but had not been Scheduled Castes, there would have been a better social relationship expressed in terms of visiting their colleagues in their houses and vice versa. Among those who did not agree community or not there would have been no difference. Their Colleagues would have visited them irrespective of the difference in caste. This really indicates a marked change in attitudes which may result in better social relationships in future. Given this situation, how often do Scheduled Caste employees visit colleagues from other castes in their houses? On what occasions do they pay visits? What is their experience? Nearly 80 percent of the respondents said that they too visited the houses of their colleagues. The pattern of response indicates that most Scheduled Caste employees go to visit their friends only on invitations (57 percent) and only a very small proportion (10 percent) visit others in work-related matters.

#### VIII. IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON FAMILY AND CASTE COMMUNITY

This social mobility of a person has an important bearing on the family and the caste community. It is a common feature that migrants help their kith and kin. Since most of the respondents are first-generation government employees their family and caste community. One of the most predominant ways of helping family and caste community. One of the most predominant ways of helping family and kin group members is by education. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents reported that had helped or were presently helping someone to be educated. It is found that higher ranking employees merely contribute financially, while only a small proportion of them contribute in kind. Considering the nature and the extent of the problem of unemployment, it is quite natural to seek the help of a well placed and well employed person in the family to get a job. In this regard about 48 percent of the respondents reported that they had helped at least one family member or relative revealed their caste background to their neighbours.

#### IX. PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL STATUS

A multiplicity of criteria determines social stratification and status of people in a society. Some such criteria are landholding education, income and influence they determine the status of individuals and groups in society(4). Social status is ascribed by a group of people to an individual or to a group. In this sense, social status is something that a person or a group is given by other people community. In recent years, however attempts have been made by sociologists and social anthropologists to assess social status as it is perceived by the people themselves i.e. subjective assessment of social status.

#### X. CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this article to assess the opportunities for social mobility in Scheduled Castes as a consequence of their employment. Especially differences in the cadre or class of employment were analyzed to see whether such differences played a significant role in opportunities for mobility. In the first place it was found that there had been a remarkable 'intergenerational mobility' in terms of the occupation of the respondents. For a majority of them, the respondents were the first in two or three generations to have held urban employment in the government or related departments. Thus it ought to have meant a major change in the social and economic conditions of life for them. How was this change perceived by them and by others? What were the indicators of such mobility? These were some of the questions that we attempted to answer in order to understand the process and nature of social mobility.

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