

Impact And Challenges Of Social Exclusion On Kembattis Of Coorg

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Abstract

India has nurtured people of diverse cultures and faiths to a greater degree. India has culturally sanctioned inequalities of gender, caste and class than any other nation, and therefore remains one in which the destinies of women and members of disadvantaged communities remain unchanged. People of India have far too long looked away from enormous sufferings and injustice which surrounds lower community members. The convergence of the economics of inequality and the politics of dominant communities has made India a more divided and unequal society. Independent India was called democratic, socialist, and secular country. According to this policy there is a separation between state and religion. Practicing untouchability or discriminating a person based on his caste is legally forbidden. The urban Indians became more flexible in their caste system customs than rural. But still there is a discrimination based on castes. Violent clashes and caste tensions are witnessed, sometimes high castes strikes the lower caste who try to uplift their social status. The caste identity has become a subject of political, social and legal interpretation. In many cases the legal system is involved to decide if a person is entitled for positive discrimination. But with all positive discrimination policy most of the communities who were low in the caste hierarchy remain low in the social order even today. Most of the degrading jobs are even today done by the dalits.

Andre Beteille rightly says that caste not only remains a salient feature of the social morphology, it is still manifestly correlated with every form of social stratification, whether based on wealth, occupation, income, education. Significant changes have taken place in the Hindu religion, but caste remains the same. Every important reformer including Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Vivekananda has attacked caste and hierarchy of caste.

The recent attack on the caste by egalitarians of both radical and liberal persuasions appeared well meaning. Caste should be attacked for its dual role in elective politics and reproduction of inequality. Sociological literature on the caste is voluminous, while addressing social ideal of

equality we must recognize it as an equivocal ideal. As great sociologist's of our time has reminded us " in every century it has been defined by negating some form of inequality" - R. Aron

This paper looks at discrimination and social exclusion towards the most backward scheduled castes.

Exclusion is a multilayered concept which requires understanding complex human relations.

Keywords: social exclusion, egalitarian, social morphology, caste inequality

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Introduction

The Coorg for ages been inhabited by various tribes and castes. But not all tribes the same social status and we find an hierarchical social division among them. During the British period two class of people could be identified, one who belonged to the upper caste and the other to the lower class, these were the ancient slaves and used to do agricultural work for their masters. The most important class of people who owned lands are the kodavas, Ammakodavas, the gowdas, the heggades, the Brahmins, the Moppilahs, the mohammadans, the malayalees, the Konkans Christians, the lingayats etc. As regards to the depressed classes the major communities who live in coorg are the yeravas and the Harijans.

The Kodavas of coorg form the largest single community in kodagu. Lewis Rice in 1878 describes them to be people of aesthetic sense. Sir Erskine Perry observed in 1853 the inhabitants of kodagu have independent bearing, outward wellbeing and finest race he has seen in India. They worship spirits of their ancestors and also worship Kaveri. They are very industrious, the gowdas or vokkaligas formed the next largest community. The lingayats and mohammadans also mopillas also form a sizeable number among coorg population. The oppressed classes such as yeravas and Harijans called poleyas during British period together form another one-fourth of the total population. It is this Harijan community called Kembattis are studied in this paper. Coorg is a district which has a rich cultural heritage and diverse communities. One such backward community is kembatti community who are basically a agricultural community, who are indigenious to this district. Majority of Kembattis are landless and worked as labourers on others land. Today

Kembattis are at bottom of social strata and also economically weak. The Kembattis used to cultivate a paddy variant known as “kesari Bhatta” in local language, even in the drought conditions. During their annual cultivation festival called “Panangarilla” these people lead the customs, and also the same practice was repeated every year and the paddy variant was red in colour which was later related to the same people and hence called Kembattis.

Kembattis worship their ancestral goddess “panangala” and wear red coloured dress during this festival as the part of their tradition. So “Kempu” means red and so this might be also a reason for them to be called as Kembattis. These Kembattis also have family names based on their occupational practices, which will be discussed later. There are around 17 communities in coorg who speak the “Kodava” language among them Sanna, Malla and Boddu kodavas were typical tribal groups. But the 19th century changed the scenario in political and economic aspects unified them as single group called Kodavas. Apart from these the Ammakodavas, Heggade, Ire, koyava, kudiya, madivala are some of the local communities who also speak kodava language. But with same lifestyle and being a native inhabitants of the land they are excluded from the caste system and given a low position in caste hierarchy. According to 1991 census dalits constitute about 20.33% of coorg population which means they are around 18% of the people who speak local kodava language, and 82% are others. So including scheduled castes there are 17 communities who speak kodava in coorg. The book published in Kodava and Kannada language “Pattole palame” by N. Chinnappa [1974] exposes the rituals, customs, traditions, of Kodavas. But the people who have control on ownership of lands especially agricultural lands became dominant castes. Who are unable to have ownership and control on agricultural production with limited population and economically weak became socially marginalized group. The 20th century beginning saw the revival of brahminical values, which also supported Brahmin-Kshatriya-vaishya-sudra model. When caste identity became a subject of political, social, and legal interpretation, the inequality became wider. The Kembattis were lost in the mele were excluded on the lines of non-political representation, less educational awareness, low population they became landless labourers. In 1956 the unification of Karnataka was done and again this coorg community were neglected. Unable to find their ancestral background and proper socio-cultural studies they were handed over the Adi-Karnataka [untouchables] status.

2] REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma[1974] opined that scheduled castes are suffering not only because of imposed social and cultural disabilities but perhaps much more because of the imbalances created by the emergence of structural differentiation within them, which is a consequence of the policies and plans undertaken ostensibly for their uplift and welfare. The differential treatment given to the politically weaker and sometimes to the non-preponderant groups within scheduled castes is a major reason for these continuing inequalities. He found that disparities affecting scheduled castes at three levels namely between scheduled castes and the general population, between the various scheduled castes and among scheduled caste in particular district or area.

Patwardhan[1974] analysed the kind of degree of mobility among scheduled castes in an urban context. The author found that untouchables are still facing ritual, economic and social disabilities. This study indicates that socio-economic conditions of SC's are weak. So he insists that socio-economic development of SC and ST'S through TAHDCO schemes.

Rao[1997] analysed the caste and poverty through a case study of selected castes at malikipuram village. The author stated that structural changes taken place in the economy didn't help the economic development of scheduled castes and they continue to be landless poor. Because the only tertiary sector is looked upon in which scheduled castes have little access.

Kamble[1982] observed that in addition to constitutional safeguards, several legislative measures have been taken to abolish untouchability and bring them on par with other sections of Indian society by providing educational and occupational spheres, which constitutes biggest core of welfare schemes for the scheduled castes. Who have for centuries suffered the worst kind of inhuman treatment nowhere else found in the world.

Murthy and Rathnaiah[1988] examined the socio-economic status of the scheduled caste groups [Malas and Madigas] in Andhra Pradesh. The authors found malas and madigas treated as untouchables by the upper caste of Hindus, they were also socially, politically, economically, educationally backward and generally allowed to live on the outskirts of the city or village. So it's very clear that untouchability is practiced everywhere. Hence it is essential to find the ways for culminating untouchability practices through empowerment practices.

Benjamin[1991]expressed that main problem of the scheduled castes is their very low status based on untouchability which suited the requirements of older polices and ideologies of Hindu society operated in the name of the religion.He found that most of scheduled caste students give up their studies due to the lack of financial support.There are many constrains for them to shape their career.But the social system and cultural constraints seems to stand in their way.

Vijayakrishna naidu[2004] based on the field study ,the author explains about empowerment issues pertaining to scheduled castes in detail,unlike many other factors he took a extensive study on education, occupation,political participation, social status and empowerment of scheduled castes.

Girish Agarwal and Colin Gonsalves[2005] have taken the issue to the point where the inhuman system of untouchability and slavery were invented.The article unfolds their painful journey towards human terrain and struggle to fight against the forces that obstruct their journey .The record of their sufferings and creativity was both unsettling and illuminating dalits, constitutes more than a fifth of India's population of over one billion. However 55 years after the adoption of Indian constitution ,which ordains basic human and civil rights and equality before the law for all citizens of India, stigma and discrimination against dalits continues unabated.To make the matter worse dalits have faced social,linguistic,and systematic barriers that were virtually impossible to overcome in a hostile legal environment.The entire system works to exclude and ostracize dalits.

Gail Omvedt[2006] provided the information about dalit movements in India ,their mode of organization, engagement in politices and contribution to the process of democratization and egalitarianism.The work explores social economic and cultural content of dalit transformation in modern India. It outlines the policies required to facilitate the empowerment of dalits.

3.1] IMPACT AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion is based on the caste,religion,ethnicity,gender,race, nationality .Social exclusion is a process which involves denial of rights and opportunities , which the majority enjoy, resulting in the inability of individuals from excluded groups to participate in basic socio-economic and political functioning of society.Social exclusion is the denial of basic welfare rights which provides

citizens positive freedom to participate in socio-economic life. Infact social exclusion is opposite of social integration in this scenario individuals, groups, and communities are not recognized at societal level. The concept of social exclusion can be applied with the Indian context where caste and untouchability is been practiced from centuries. Due to chaturvarna shudras were denied of education, they were condemned to be lowly and not knowing the way of escape they became reconciled to eternal servitude. Millions of dalits are subjected to the socio-economic, political and cultural exclusion, that are deeply embedded in religious practices. In contemporary Indian social system the practice of social exclusion and discrimination has been practiced in one form or the other and it exists in a newer forms.

3.2 INDICATORS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

a] caste based exclusion

b] Untouchability based social exclusion

a] Caste based social exclusion Caste system is based on the division of people into groups in which civil, cultural, and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined by birth and made hereditary.

The civil and economic rights are unequal and hierarchical and it provides a regulatory mechanism to enforce social, and economic organizations through instruments of social ostracism and the caste system is enforced with the back up of Hindu philosophical elements. Ambedkar [1936] - caste at the top of the social order enjoys more rights at the expense of those located at the bottom of caste hierarchy and have fewer economic and social rights.

b] Untouchability based social exclusion

The untouchables who are placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy suffered the most due to unequal entitlements of rights. They suffered the most due to unequal entitlements of rights. They suffered civil, economic, religious, cultural rights which are based on the notion of social exclusion.

4] Objectives of the paper

* To examine socioeconomic status of Kumbh community

*To study the educational awareness

* To understand their stratification of caste at local level and occupational base

* To understand social exclusion of Kembatti women in employment and their status in the family.

To suggest few policies.

5] METHODOLOGY

5.1] Universe of the study

The study on which the paper is based was located in Nehru colony, Jodi beeti on the outskirts of ponampet town, gonikoppa road, virajpet taluk of kodagu district. In this colony around 100 families of kembatti community reside, who are patrilineal in nature.

5.2] Data collection

The people have to be questioned on many aspects such as personal lives, interview schedule [quantitative data methods] were done with a focused group discussions and caste studies to get primary data from them.

5.3] Samplings

In the present study total of 100 families were interviewed. A systematic random sampling technique was used.

5.4] Data analysis

Statistical package with quantitative data, interview notes, case studies were used to interpret the findings.

6] Scope for further research

Research on impact and challenges of social exclusion from caste perspective has been limited. The findings of the study presented in this paper is a significant contribution to the stratificational and exclusion studies also for sociology in analyzing social inequality. Further

research is needed to enrich the available information and knowledge , since social exclusion is voluminous in nature, helps in better policy making especially in Indian social scenario.

7] Limitations of the study

The study of impact and its challenges in relation to social exclusion is very vast. This present study is restricted to the particular geography/area, thus the scope of the study is restricted. Only a micro approach was adopted to the particular study, so a detailed analyses and macro approach was not possible.

8] Findings of the study

8.1] caste and its social status

It plays an important role, because Kembattis suffer low social esteem due to caste based stigma and low quality of living. Due to social exclusion they suffer from backwardness compared to local dominant castes. Kodagu Kembattis are also called as poleya in native Kodava language. Within kodava region there are many other low castes who also suffer the same fate such communities can be listed according to stratification:

Table.1. Community Stratification

Sl no	Name of the Community	Occupation
1	Kodavas	Agriculture
2	Amma kodavas	Agriculture
3	Kodava Heggade	Agriculture
4	Kodava Ire	Gold smith
5	Kodava kudiya [ST]	Agriculture
6	Kodava medha[ST]	Bamboo
7	Kodava Boone pattamma	Astralogy
8	Kodava madivala	Washerman
9	Kodava savitha samaja	Barber
10	Kodava koyava	Agriculture

11	Kodava banna	Agriculture
12	Kodava kembatti	Agriculture

In fact Kodava Kembatti also cultivates land but are mainly landless labourers, only 3% of them have small land holdings. Economically they are poor since they are marginalized from main stream workforce. Also, Kembattis do not possess a specialization in any other modern art, architecture and technology.

8.2] Educational awareness among kembattis

There is a new awareness about education due to the initiatives taken by government, free boarding schools, hostels, free education all have contributed for the literacy awareness among kembattis. But since 1900 the changes began, and today we can witness many graduates, post-graduates and government employees. In 1962 the first person from kembattis by name kuttada Bheemiah became a graduate. In 1964 a women from kaikeri family named Kaveramma H.C. became a qualified doctor. New generation is keen to get higher education. There are many revolutionary changes in pursuing education. According to 2011 census kembattis constitute around 12,575 populations, women make 6025 but their literacy rate stands around 32%.

In the available samples around 100 families were respondents among them only 38 families were educated. The zilla panchayath coorg OBC/ Minorities office letter W BCM-1/CR-20/2014-15, Dated 26/11/2014 refers to social and educational census to know literacy progress among Kembattis.

8.3] Stratification

Stratification is the one of the important indicators of caste status, but typically in Coorg there is only family names associated within Kembattis , but we do not find any kind of stratification among them.

Various family names of Kembattis in Coorg

Table. 2

Sl.no	Family names
1	Bhillari Kuttada
2	Pemmani Kuttada
3	Thoocha Kuttada
4	Moo Kuttada
5	Cheenga Kuttada
6	Moonja Kuttada
7	Cho Kuttada

The term Kuttada came from the word Kutta because of their ancestors lived in Kutta near Virajpet taluk of coorg district.

8.4] Occupation

Kembattis are agricultural labourers even to this day , their economic status has not raised, and they live under below poverty line.They cultivated paddy for many decades but after 1960, they are also engaged in coffee plantations. Parellely Kembattis also were weavers of mats ,baskets,fishing baskets.There mats are used in auspicious events such as marriage ceremony, these mats are weaved from a throny plant in past decades ,and mats were known as ‘palambu’ in local language.They also prepared ‘korikode’ a umbrella used extensively for agricultural activities during harvesting season. Even Kembatti women are actively engaged in this activity. Kembattis also involved in animal husbandary,piggery and poultry. In this case study about 71% Of families are engaged in agriculture and its allied activities,12% of them in piggery, 7% of them in mats and basket making which are mostly sold in weekly fares. Also 3% of them in poultry,4% of them are government employees other 3% of the people work in unorganized sectors.

8.5] Exclusion factors on Kembattis

Kembattis faced a social exclusion for many decades , being a bonded and agricultural labours , they never had their voice for social equality and justice, But the forced labour was prohibited by Britishers in 1842. This also helped them to rebuild their lives.And after independence they were paid a meager amount as labour charges.Kembattis were denied of many civic rights and were not

given even water to drink at higher castes homes, also during 1955 they should maintain a distance when a Brahmin passes by and were denied from wearing footwears and western attires . They were prohibited from fishing, but today the situation is changed. In past Kembattis were not allowed to participate in festivals and were prohibited from using coconuts . But Gandhijis visit to coorg and to the village of “keri” where it had a majority of Kembattis bought social awareness among them.

The Hindu Newspaper of 14th October 2010, says there are 101 sub-castes among scheduled castes and six major groups in Kodagu[coorg] which includes Adi Karnataka,Adi- ndhra,Adi-Dravida,korama,Bhovi and Adiya group which is found only coorg. All the mentioned caste groups are facing both caste based exclusionand untouchability based social exclusion. Kembattis of coorg are listed under Adi- Karnataka title.

8.6] Family

Among Kembattis of coorg, the joint family system is very rare. Patriarchical family system is found among them.Here a family consists of husband –wife and their unmarried children. After marriage a new family is set by the children. So later, occupation ,lifestyles, earning, everything will be independent in nature. Ancestral property will be given only to male child and women are not entitled to get it. But in this case study we witnessed only 2% of families getting ancestral property . A senior male member of the family holds the rights to distribute and protect the family property and wealth. Ancestral male is called as “Karonane” and he is worshipped . In worshipping him , a person is choosed to offer prayers and he is called as “Devathakka”.

8.7] Status of women in family

Kembatti women are confined to domestic front and their work is to look after children and do the domestic chores. But women are free to participate in all social gatherings , no restrictions of any kind is imposed on them ,rituals, customs,and traditions are followed by the women. Even they worked with men in agricultural fields. Literacy rate is very low among them. Men have hardly matriculation level education,from 1964 onwards they showed interest in education. According to 2001 census Kembatti women are around 4050 and only 500 women had some basic

education .Also in this case study among 100 families were interviewed and data collected , only 32 families had educated women.

8.8] Employment of women

Kembatti women are economically very weak, she goes to agricultural lands as labourers with their men. And it only support hand to mouth. A very few women do the farming in a small quantity at the backyard of their houses at subsistence level. Since they didn't have any ownership of the lands , they cant cultivate at large quantities. So women are exclusively dependent on their men for livelihood. In spite of all these setbacks she should look after the expenses of the household. Since literary rate is too low and one cannot expect these women to come under empowerment process. The Kembatti women has only 2% representation in jobs. In this case study we witnessed only a few marginal number of women working.

9] Suggestions and recommendations

- * To formulate a special mission to eradicate untouchability
- * Govt/NGO'S should take up nationwide propaganda campaign against untouchability
- *Setting up separate departments and advisory councils to promote their welfare and safeguard their interests.
- *The National schedule caste finance and development cooperation should reach extensively to all remote corners of the nations to uplift them economically.
- * Enact a law providing reservations for dalits in private sectors.
- *Special component plan through providing statutory status to SC/ST.

10] CONCLUSION

From the above analysis it clearly reveals that the scheduled castes were always landless in traditional occupation. The upper castes turned into administrative services and the scheduled castes remained in agriculture. The scheduled castes were always been landless and upper castes were landlords not only in coorg, but so since colonial south india . The untouchables have been

the base of agrarian production . Hence, the mode of agrarian production cannot be understood without knowing the caste system. Since caste factor was not taken into consideration the debate on semi-feudalism in Indian agriculture has been sterile. The forces of production are modern , but the relations of production remain feudal due to the persistence of caste system . The exploitation of agricultural labourers and the rigid assignment of demeaning occupations on the basis of the caste system keeps dalits in the position of economic and physical vulnerability. The triple burden of caste, class and gender effectively ensures the dalit women are the furthest removed from legal protections. Only with honest implementation of laws designed to protect agricultural labours, abolishments of manual scavenging etc can make the social exclusion go away. There is a difficulty of slotting caste-based abuses into standard categories of human right violations as well as prevalence of constitutional and legislative protections at the national level , have allowed these atrocities to escape international scrutiny. As a signatory to several international humanrights conventions, India is obligated to abide by their provisions.

This study –research on kembattis is just an attempt to explore the hardships of dalits at exclusion background. The caste and untouchability are two social evils , they are strong and alive in our social system.The impact of social exclusion on untouchability has not been resolved by its constitutional abolition or by recent changes in Indian society such as legislation against it or reversed-compensatory discrimination towards untouchables . Its ghost will continue to haunt for many years to come. Great political figures of the stature of Gandhi,Ambedkar and Nehru capable of awakening the conscience of people are not visible in Indian subcontinent at the moment , rather we see the active and strong forces of Hindu fundamentalism, which has preservation of caste and untouchability . The caste and untouchability operates on five strong heads – political,religious,economic,cultural and social.

The untouchables at the bottom of caste hierarchy are considered to be impure and polluting and unfit for social association and inter relation with castes above. In his paper ‘‘Annihilation of caste’’ B.R. Ambedkar describes the indicators of social exclusion by referring peshvas who encouraged untouchability social exclusion operates in various forms viz social-prohibiting entry and use of public places,Economic exclusion-denial of rights to own assets like agricultural lands ,housing , denial of purchase and sale, health facilities, political exclusion that is denied to practice and political rights.

This impact of social exclusion has made the dalits as vulnerable community since from vedic times. The process of social exclusion has made dalits to depend on the upper communities ,the Kembattis of coorg are one such community. In the contemporary scenario , due to the impact of exclusion of dalits they are subjected to all forms of exclusions as discussed earlier.Astudy report from SC/ST commission NewDelhi reveals that untouchables in rural india covering 565 villages in 11 states the severity of social exclusion inspite of prohibition from the constitution of India.

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