

Inclusion of Scheduled Caste into Mainstream - Is it Reality : Case Study on Raneyars of Karkala, Udupi

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ABSTRACT

Raneyar is caste which has been scheduled in constitution as scheduled caste, who are been recognised as inhabitants of Dakshina Kannada, Chickmangalore and Madikere. This study covers case study of Raneyar in karkala and their inclusion to mainstream of society. Is scheduled caste are free from untouchability and how many of them know that there is law to abolish untouchability. Is people have changed throughout history of independence and after launching intensive programmes by the government of India to make untouchability free society – there is question in mind is it reality?. If you take socio, economic and educational status of Karkala it is a taluk area where you can see most elite people when it comes to day today life there is temple which are not open to Dalit's, now also you can find houses which are closed to this people, there are wells in which this people can't fetch water, there are rented houses which not opened to dalit's and more over the scavenging work of municipality on contract is done by untouchables this is what inclusion means in developed or modernised society. Another surprising thing is that the some forms of untouchability practiced locally are not under the purview of law but damaging self-esteem of most of the Raneyar. In this context the study explains the socio-economic and educational status of Raneyar and the challenges faced by this section of society targeting their emotional wellbeing with recommendation to make changes in the laws which can help this people in real sense.

Key Words : Raneyar, Scheduled Caste, Untouchability and Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Untouchability is a direct product of the caste system. It is not merely the inability to touch a human being of a certain caste or sub-caste. It is an attitude on the part of a whole group of people that relates to a deeper psychological process of thought and belief, invisible to the naked eye, translated into various physical acts and behaviours, norms and practices.

How to cite this Article: Sridevi, K. (2014). Inclusion of Scheduled Caste into Mainstream - Is it Reality : Case Study on Raneyars of Karkala, Udupi. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.*, **1** (2&3) : 157-163.

Untouchability is present in nearly every sphere of life and practiced in an infinite number of forms.

The 1950 national constitution of India legally abolishes the practice of “Untouchability” and there are constitutional reservations in both educational institutions and public services for Dalits. Unfortunately, these measures have not changed the reality of daily life for most Dalits, as the Indian government frequently tolerates oppression and open discrimination aimed at this group.

India’s caste system assigns individuals a certain hierarchical status according to Hindu beliefs. Traditionally, there are four principal castes (divided into many sub-categories) and one category of people who fall outside the caste system—the Dalits. As members of the lowest rank of Indian society, Dalits face discrimination at almost every level: from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. The discrimination against the Dalits is especially significant because of the number of people affected; there are approximately 167 million Dalits in India, constituting over 16 percent of the total population.

Within the Dalit community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. Dalits are divided into leather workers, street sweepers, cobblers, agricultural workers, and manual “scavengers”. The latter group considered the lowest of the low and officially estimated at one million, traditionally are responsible for digging village graves, disposing of dead animals, and cleaning human excreta. Approximately three-quarters of the Dalit workforce are in the agricultural sector of the economy. A majority of the country’s forty million people who are bonded labourers are Dalits. These jobs rarely provide enough income for Dalits to feed their families or to send their children to school. As a result, many Dalits are impoverished, uneducated, and illiterate.

Dalits have been oppressed, culturally subjugated, and politically marginalized. The principals of untouchability and “purity and pollution” dictate what Dalits are and are not allowed to do; where they are and are not allowed to live, go, or sit; who they can and cannot give water to, eat with, or marry; extending into the minutia of all aspects of daily life.

Moreover, discrimination for Dalits does not end if they convert from Hinduism to another religion. In India, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity (among other religions) maintain some form of caste despite the fact that this contradicts their religious precepts. As a result, dominant castes maintain leadership positions while Dalit members of these religions are often marginalized and flagrantly discriminated against. For example, Dalit Christians are provided separate burial areas from non-Dalit Christians.

3000 years of caste oppression have left the Dalit community socially, economically and psychologically marginalized. Dalits are constantly subjected to egregious violence, dehumanizing labour (such as manual scavenging), and a pervasive system of social exclusion. Though protections exist in Indian law, they are seldom enforced as caste hierarchy is mirrored in the bureaucratic, police and court systems.

Raneyar are small section of society who lives at district of Dakshina Kannada, Madikere and Chickmangalore. Their main occupation is selling fish even though nowadays these people are getting education but when it comes to literacy rate it will not cross 20%.

Origin:

There is no proper evidence to trace the original habitant of Raneyar, but it has been communicated from regeneration to generation that they are from

- Ranebennur and they were part of Tippusulthn army
- Mysore region

Social life:

Raneyar have five clans they are:

1. Poojari clan
2. Gowda clan
3. Patri clan
4. Vathinagowda
5. Birani clan

All these clans have similarity in all socio, cultural and religious matters.

Language:

Even though this people are living in South Canara their mother tongue is Kannada. The Kannada is different then what other speak.

Marriage system:

Marriage use to be function of 8 to 9 days but it has been changed now. Girls are given importance in the whole process of marriage as it is commonly seen among tribes. The two parties will agree for marriage and the process of coming to each house to confirm future of their girl is common practice and the finalisation of marriage happens by engagement. There are two kinds of marriage and they have both matrilineal and patriarchal lineage. The expenses of the marriages are shared by both the parties.

1. Daremadhuve
2. Sulegrike

Vadhudakshine: is very common practice which is practiced till today is that broom group should give money and bring her to his family.

Marriage cloths: cloths related to marriage like dare sire, sari for mother in law, Musuku sari will be brought by broom party even Mangalasuthra, Kaluogula, earing nose ring are given by broom.

Marriage meals: each marriage there will be at least 5 get-togethers of two families. The incidence are; first visit to girls house, when bride party visit boys house, during engagement, the day of marriage and day after marriage.

Osage: When girl mature for the first time they celebrate but now it has been stopped practicing. Devadasi system was there among these people but one of their leaders Ramegowda has stopped it 40 year back.

Naming ceremony: they celebrate naming ceremony after 16 days of birth of new baby. Usually the naming will be done by elder person of the family. You can find very primitive types of name among the older generations like Hegana, Paddu, Honu, Akkamma but now modern names are been kept.

Eating pattern:

The economic conditions of this section of society is so low that most of the people will use to have one meal a day but now the condition has changed. They are non-vegetarians. They slaughter pig to their deities so pork is their common food with fish.

Celebration of festivals: they celebrate all most all the festivals celebrated by Hindus.

Atiamavase: is very important festival they drink a solution prepared from banayan tree which is common practice even in south canara.

Nagarapanchami: each family have their own place of god Naga to believe then the coconut which they give to puja will be mixed with turmeric powder and eaten by all members of the family.

Krishnashtami: this people prepare special kind of sweet which will be given to first baby of the family before serving to others.

Navarathri: is one such festival were all the members will go to temple and pray during this nine days there is pattern for celebration. First day the pooja will be done by the hatusamastaru *i.e.*, on behalf of caste members, second day by the Gowda *i.e.*, leader of the society, third day vathinagowda, fourth day by the President of the caste council, fifth day by the pathri, sixth day by the poojary, seventh day by yagamana, eighth day birani and on ninth day any member can willing to give they can sponsor the pooja.

Maripooja: once in a year the celebrate maripooja to their family god.

Funeral practice: early days they use to burry but the system of cremation came into exist. When there is death in family, head of the council informs to every family through birani and all the members of council should come there. They have rituals on third, thirteen and sixteenth day of death.

Economic status:

The main occupation of Raneyar is selling fish. Most of them take fish and sell in the rural areas, women of the family use to go to remote areas to sell dry fish and get rice or monetary payments. But nowadays women are stopped going because they don't get profit is one reason on other side economic conditions improved to certain extent that they can earn in the city itself. Another important occupation is racing pigs. Now people are started to work for different firms by which they can earn and we can see few people working in government and private sector to better their condition. Even though it's difficult to digest but few girls are get into prostitution to earn money.

Educational status:

If you see the general literacy rate of nation which is increasing in that context we can see that there is raise in number of literate if you consider literacy rate of this section of people it is only 20% them are literate but one thing is sure that people are able to realise importance of education so now you can find children going to school. The main obstacle for education in this group is addiction of parents to alcohol most of the family lose their earning persons in young age which insist the children to take up the responsibility of family. Most of

the families are not aware of the social welfare programmes, which are available to them.

An intricate caste system in India influences life to a great extent. Castes or *jatis* (as they are called in India) are actually the hereditary grouping of people defining their social status. Even after so many years of Independence, caste-based demarcation is still there; though with time, it is changing. In urban areas, this separation is not that obvious but the difference between various castes becomes obvious in rural areas. Sometimes the caste-based gap takes a violent turn and leads to clashes between various groups segregated on the basis of their castes. But when it comes to personal attacks with indirect ways we have to think really untouchability has abolished. Though changes are there but India still needs to work on this issue so that caste-based inequalities can be uprooted from our society forever. The caste system becomes problematic when it is used for ranking the society as well as when it leads to unequal access to natural as well as man-made resources. These are the instance to prove that untouchability still exist in elite society.

- Refusal to rent houses to Raneyars in certain neighbourhoods in Karkala. Even if they have provided with rented house but they are not allowed to fetch water from well.
- Raneyars are not allowed to enter into their houses and they are compelled to stand far away from the houses of dominant castes.
- Raneyars can only go to certain parts of their houses *i.e.* the outer extension of the house, outside the threshold but not the interior parts of their houses
- Thee speak nicely with Raneyars they appreciate this people for their beauty when they know that we are Raneyar we can see question mark whether there is any rule that says Raneyars can't be fair and beautiful.
- Even after struggling hard to get educated after also if you experience these kind of discrimination dalits are damaged emotionally.
- The discrimination is so hidden in minds of untouchables in such a way that older Raneyars fear to enter some of the temple even today.

Are there signs of improvement? Yes, things are definitely better than what they were 50 years back. They are not passive victims in contemporary India – despite tremendous odds; they struggle for their life, dignity and equality. However untouchability is not clearly fast fading remnant of our past.

Raneyar occupy the lowest stratum of the caste oriented hierarchical society, have been traditionally subjected to socio-economic disabilities and other disadvantages symbolising social inequality. Although education, health and employment are crucial for empowerment of socially disadvantage groups, the achievements made so far through plan efforts still reflect their backwardness in these sectors.

Educationally, dalit students have benefited from scholarships, and scheduled caste literacy increased (from 10.3% in 1961 to 2.4% in 1981), although not as rapidly as rapidly as among the general population. Improved access to education has resulted in the emergence of a substantial group of educated daliths able to take up white collar occupation and fight for their rights. Among Raneyar only few engineers can be found and no doctors. Most of them are coolie worker and do their traditional occupation.

Unfortunately, the broader conception of untouchability is never included within popular

discussion of the topic or within periodic evaluations that are undertaken by those responsible for monitoring such behavior. To date, there has been no rigorous examination of untouchability undertaken in a way that captures the complexity of the problem across distinct practices as well as geographic locale.

Because of the lack of information and discussion, there is systematic underestimation of untouchability within Indian life, the perpetuation of a wide variety of abuses is allowed to continue with impunity, there is a generally lack of awareness as well as sensitivity to the pervasiveness of the problem and, following from this, there is limited political will to address as well as change the situation.

In addition to these problems, the lack of rigorous examination precludes an assessment of how untouchability is structured as well as what factors contribute to the reduction and/or end of caste discrimination. While the second issue is obviously important to victims, human rights organizations and those concerned with social justice, the first is interesting because there are a wide variety of arguments concerning exactly what untouchability is. For example, there are scholars like Dumont (1971) who argue that untouchability is fixed, uniformly adhered to and practiced throughout India; there are scholars like Gupta (2000) who argue that untouchability is so highly variable that there are likely no patterns that hold across the country; finally, there are scholars like Ambekdar who argue that untouchability is structured but that it evolves in line with local context.

No doubt then that the people of India have reposed their confidence in the legal system of the state that it would promote justice. The legal system, however, includes the laws of the state and law enforcement machinery, which is designed to do justice. Law does not include merely 'letters', but it also includes the spirit or 'idea' behind it. Thus the "faithful realisation of existing law" in letter and spirit would promote justice. The law of the state would serve the end of justice only when they are expeditiously implemented by the law enforcement agency; otherwise they would remain 'sterile obstruction', serving no purpose. In any legal discussion on justice points out justice P.B. Mukherji, "it is not enough to analyse the concept and notion of justice. The road to justice is equally important as justice itself. What hinders the road to justice is delays, excessive costs, unfamiliar and illogical procedure, etc. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the law enforcement agency which involves the administration, police and judiciary, to implement the laws of the state honestly and sincerely. Of course, the successful working of the law depends on the harmonious, expeditious, honest and purposeful functioning of these three departments of the government.

Caste-based discrimination is the most complex human rights issue facing India today. The implications of this lack of data are significant: there is systematic underestimation of the practice of untouchability within modern India; the perpetuation of a wide variety of abuses is allowed to continue with impunity; there is a general lack of awareness and sensitivity to the pervasiveness of the problem; and, consequently, there is limited political will to address and change the situation.

Conclusion:

It is my hope that the government of India to seriously and systematically examine and address its own gaps in ending discrimination. Not until 1955, seven years and nine months

after independence, did the Indian government enact special legislation to give effect to the constitutional right by creating an avenue to try cases and obtain redress. The law, known as the Untouchability (Offences) Act of 1955 and amended as the Protection of Civil Rights Act in 1976, effectuated the right to file untouchability cases in Indian courts. The law, however, did not clearly define untouchability or its practice and offenders were often acquitted. The scope of the law remained limited to the practice of untouchability in public places and to the social boycott of “untouchables” due to caste prejudices. Both the 1976 Amendment and the later Prevention of Atrocities Act responded to these gaps in the scope of the law. If government conducts a survey about knowledge of law among dalit surely even 5% of dalits in general and Raneyar in particular may not be aware of this. Exactly how bad is untouchability within India? Till now no one is able to answer this, but reality is that many are suffering and there is need answer this. Rather than working on bring laws there is need of making people to realize that there are laws to protect them.

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