



## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SC & ST SARPANCHES IN RAYALASEEMA REGION**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper deals with the socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayat Raj in backward region of Rayalaseema Region in Andhra Pradesh. The main source of livelihood of the inhabitants is agriculture and agriculture allied activities. Caste plays a dominate role in our Indian society and leads to the inequality among the human beings on the bases of social, economic and educational aspects of the community under study. Inequality leads to discrimination in all walks of life. The problems of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes vary from one stratum to another. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are the most disadvantaged section among the socio-economic groups. This study reveals that despite such efforts, only slight improvement can be seen in the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes while majority of them are still staggering under the burden of acute poverty. The objective of this paper is to explore the Socio-Economic status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Sarpanches in Rayalaseema Region of Andhra Pradesh.*

**Key words:** *Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Social, Economic and Livelihood.*

### **Introduction**

Social inequalities existed in the villages and these have continued for centuries. To bring about an egalitarian Society, the concept of social justice figured in the Indian Constitution. The constitution of India made an attempt to provide reservations to the disadvantaged sections. Protective discrimination was advocated to enable the disadvantaged sections to catch up with other sections and join mainstream society over the decades. However, social inequalities continued for a long time in the Indian society. The reasons may be several. The people from higher social strata had received education, and they controlled and managed land. They took up high income - generating activities. On the contrary, people in the lower strata people were denied education, and they were deprived of their right to manage and to control land. Thus, they were forced to take up low - income generating activities. Particularly in the villages the people from lower strata took up supportive works for the people who had taken up agricultural activities, such as Carpentry, Blacksmith, Leather work, and labour.

Further, the marginalized sections, i.e., SC, ST, and OBC have become an important component in defining of the development policies because of their socioeconomic deprivation in the traditional society like India. The political involvement of the upper castes is still more in institutions like Assembly and Parliament. The reservation of seats was 15% in State Assemblies and Parliament. On the contrary there was no representation from the larger sections of the marginalized castes i.e., from the backwards. As a result of this, at present, political participation in India is limited to only a few upper castes. As they manage and control the political system, land pattern. The upper caste people do not mind in formulating and execution of welfare and developmental policies intended for the weaker sections. It can be seen in the failure of several programmes. Among these are community Development Programmes (CDP) and National Extension Programme (NEP). These programmes were implemented in tune with the upper caste people in the rural areas.



Sukla Deb Kanoongo (1996), Ujwala Hiremath(1997), Nagendra Ambedkar (2000) had made studies on Panchayati Raj on various aspects in recent times. In his research on women's leadership in the Panchayati Raj with special reference to the State of West Bengal, found that many of them, in spite of being educated, in spite of having a tradition of political activity in the family and of having great support from their respective parties, are unable to participate in the whole process in a meaningful way. Many are finding the responsibilities very demanding, some are thoroughly engaged in their domestic responsibilities and some do not maintain good health. He also felt that the socio-cultural factors acted as a deterrent in many cases.

Ujwala Hiremath (1997) conducted a survey of 40 women members of ten village Gram Panchayats in Karnataka. Her studies show the same trend that is seen at the national level politics: members of influential families always seem to have an edge over the rest.

Majority of the members were illiterate-thumb impression ones. However, it was interesting to note that all these women had a manifesto of development items for the village-shelter for the poor, electricity, toilets, roads, schools, water facility, doctors for primary health centers, sewing machines for young girls and many other things, including old-age and widow pensions, employment for youth, girls' education, transport facilities, etc.

Nagendra Ambedkar (2000) in his book on "Panchayat Raj at Work" explained the origins and growth of panchayat raj institution in India and structural patterns of panchayat raj in Rajasthan. The author also has given importance to electoral system of the local bodies. Further, he analysed the socio-economic and political background of the panchayat raj elite, their perceptions and orientations of various issues, pertaining to the panchayat raj institution. Finally he analyzed the leadership in panchayats and the qualities, attitude of the leaders towards weaker section of the society.

### **Objectives**

The present paper intends to analyse the involvement of weaker sections representatives in the institutions of Panchayat Raj in the four districts of Rayalaseema Region. This paper's main objective is to study the socio-economic background of the SC/ST sarpanches in these four districts namely Anantapuramu, Chittoor, Kurnool and Kadapa district.

### **Method of Study**

The present study is based on a survey of 451 Sarpanches drawn from Anantapuramu (113), Chittoor (150), Kadapa (73) and Kurnool (115) districts of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The present paper is depends on both primary and secondary data source. The primary data was collected from the selected sample SC/ST respondents through using pre tested Interview-Schedule. And secondary data were also collected various government reports, dailies, articles, books and internet etc.

### **Findings and discussion.**

1. It was found that most of the Sarpanches 78.27 per cent are in the age of less than 50 years of age among whom 54.55 per cent are in between 20- 40 years which means young enough to be enthusiastic and dynamic. It was only 23.73 per cent Sarpanches who are from the age group 40-50 year. This could be seen in all the four districts. There is a tiny fraction of 17.97 per cent Sarpanches who are in the age group 20-30 years among whom women predominate (64.20%). This shows the emerging trend of youth showing interest to enter Panchayati Raj unlike in the past when only old



people entered positions of power. This also indicates double empowerment one for the disadvantaged SC & STs in general and for the group of SC & ST women in particular.

The provision of reservation in Rayalaseema region has seen that Women outnumber male Sarpanches in all four districts in the recent decades. These women who were once doubly disadvantaged in terms of caste/ Tribe and also as belonging to gender category of women come to occupy positions of power at grass root level democratic Institution of Gram Panchayat. In a way it is real empowerment of the disadvantaged and a step in the right direction.

2. It was observed that in all four districts of Rayalaseema region, it can be observed that SC Sarpanches are 84.7 per cent among whom women are found to be of 55.24 per cent. Similarly among STs women Sarpanches are 55.07 per cent. The point of inference here is that Women Sarpanches outnumber Male Sarpanches in all the four districts. Chittoor district has largest Sarpanches followed by Kurnool, Ananthapur and Kadapa has the least number in the region. At gram Panchayat level there would be the influence of higher community and faction in the process of election and decision making. However, it would be political participation of SC and ST has been numbered out is the positive indication as effective decentralization of power and implementation of 73rd constitutional amendment at Gram Panchayat level. Contesting in the election from disadvantaged group is the successful step towards the empowering of men and women among SC and ST.

3. Rayalaseema districts Anantapuramu, Kadapa, Kurnool and Chittoor are the characterized by religions found in the state and the country. Muslims are majority after Hindus. Christians are the least in number. Among the SC and ST Sarpanches majority Sarpanches are from Hindu community with 93.35 per cent among SC and ST. Only 6.65 per cent Sarpanches are from Christians. These are probably the converts from Hinduism. They are more in Kurnool and Chittoor Districts than Ananthapur and Kadapa districts.

4. Education is only the weapon to bring Socio-economic development and making long period suppressed SC and ST to participate in the political sphere. Education has great influence on SC and St community and especially on women from last two decades.

The data presented in the Table-4 analysed that 30.6 per cent of Sarpanches are illiterates, 25.94 per cent Sarpanches are qualified only with primary level education. 13.52 Per cent respondents are qualified with upper primary education, 18.85 per cent respondents qualified with High school level education and 11.09 per cent respondents qualified with college level education.

The Literacy is the most important factor for becoming Sarpanches and for political involvement. It will give awareness , knowledge on duties and responsibilities of the citizen . Education gives boost of confidence among SC and ST especially among women. But literacy level of Andhra Pradesh is always lesser than national level and SC and ST literacy is also least in number comparative with other communities.

Most important thing that during the 75 years of Independence period constitutionally Indian government put various steps forward for the welfare of the suppressed people on the name of reservation, welfare, provision of scholarship, education, employment, Hostel facility and so many inputs. All these brought somewhat development among SC and ST.



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Family is the basic for the structure of the society. Family is more important to strengthen the society. From a long period Indian family system remained as joint family. But due to the industrialization, urbanization and modernization joint family system started to split as nuclear family system. Naturally in joint family there would be no freedom for expressing their feeling and for taking decision making and also for women. In joint family headman only involved in societal aspects, remaining members permitted only to work especially women work is confined for house hold activities.

The data given in Table – 5 reveals that 79.6 percent of the sarpanches are from Nuclear families and only 20.40 per cent Sarpanches are from Joint family. It is analyzing that nuclear families are more independent to involve in activities liberally in political sphere.

## **Conclusion**

Inequalities continue to exist in the villages and these have continued for centuries. Under these circumstances, soon after Independence the concept of social justice figured in the Indian constitution. Thus the constitution of India made an attempt to provide equal social opportunities for the development of all the people in the society, without any discrimination on the basis of caste, sex or race. After Independence, India was one among the countries which went in for social and economic transformation of the rural population. As a preferred condition, rural development became a definite strategy for the improvement of the living conditions of the rural poor. In this direction the Government of India made efforts to solve problems such as poverty, ill health, illiteracy, and backwardness of varied nature prevailing in rural areas, by giving greater attention to the uplift of the rural poor. By this case study we came to know that the representatives belonging to weaker sections are able to make use of the welfare inputs provided for the development of SC, ST and OBC in the study area. Due to the illiteracy and ignorance of weaker section's representatives, several welfare policies intended for the welfare of SC's, ST's and OBC's are not being implemented properly through the institutions of Panchayati Raj. Greater effort is needed for effective implementation of



these policies for the welfare of weaker sections and bring them to the main stream and provide equal opportunity as stipulated in the Indian Constitution.

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**Table 1, Distribution of the Sarpanches by Age**

S.No	Age group In years	No. of Respondents																Total	Percentage
		Ananthapuramu				Chittoor				Kadapa				Kurnool					
		SC		ST		SC		ST		SC		ST		SC		ST			
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1	20-30	4	5	1	2	7	22	3	4	5	7		1	8	11		1	81	17.97
2	30-40	14	19	3	4	22	20	5	4	9	15	2	2	18	23	2	3	165	36.58
3	40-50	8	12	4	5	13	16	1	3	5	7	2		13	15	2	1	107	23.72
4	50 and above	14	13	2	3	13	11	3	3	9	8		1	9	7	1	1	98	21.73
5	Total	40	49	10	14	55	69	12	14	28	37	4	4	48	56	5	6	451	100

Source: Field Survey

**Table 2, Distribution of Respondents by Their Caste & Tribe**

S.No		No. of Respondents								Total	Percentage
		Ananthapuramu		Chittoor		Kadapa		Kurnool			
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1	SC	40	49	55	69	28	37	48	56	382	84.7
2	ST	10	14	12	14	4	4	5	6	69	15.3
	Total	50	63	67	83	32	41	53	62	451	100

Source: Field Survey



**Table -3, Distributions of the Sarpanches by Their Level of Education**

S. No	Level of Education	No. of Respondents																GT	Percentage
		Ananthapuramu				Chittoor				Kadapa				Kurnool					
		SC		ST		SC		ST		SC		ST		SC		ST			
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1	Illiterates	23	36	2	4	7	17	4	5	9	9	2	1	6	10	1	2	138	30.6
2	Primary	7	5	2	4	14	22	5	5	9	15		1	10	15	2	1	117	25.94
3	Upper Primary	5	4	2	2	2	6	8	2	3	2	5		7	14	1		61	13.52
4	High school	4	1	2	2	17	17	1	1	4	4	2	1	16	11	1	1	85	18.85
5	College	1	3	2	2	11	5			4	4		1	9	6	1	1	50	11.09
6	Total	40	49	10	14	55	69	12	14	28	37	4	4	48	56	5	6	451	100

Source: Field Survey

**Table -4, Distribution of the Sarpanches by Their Religion**

S.No.	Religion	No. of Respondents				Total	Percentage
		Ananthapuramu	Chittoor	Kadapa	Kurnool		
1	Hindu	109	141	67	104	421	93.35
2	Christian	4	9	6	11	30	6.65
	Total	113	150	73	115	451	100

Source: Field Survey

**Table- 5, Distribution of the sarpanches by the structure of their families**

S.No	Type of Family	No. of Respondents				Total	Percentage
		Ananthapuramu	Chittoor	Kadapa	Kurnool		
1	Joint family	23	35	15	19	92	20.40
2	Nuclear Family	90	115	58	96	359	79.6
	Total	113	150	73	115	451	100

Source: Field Survey