Socio-economic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT: This paper addresses the socio-economic status of the scheduled tribes in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. In the sample, majority of the households are from Konda Dora tribe. More than 70 per cent of the sample population are illiterate. Cultivation is the primary occupation of most heads of the sample households. Income from cultivation supports majority of the sample population. More than 53 per cent of the cultivators have farm income around Rs.2000/- to Rs.5000/- Even though the wage laborers are more in the sample population, the share of income derived from that is less when compared to cultivation. There is a need to put more attention on educational aspects of the scheduled tribes, this can only be achieved by motivating the younger generation.

INTRODUCTION

The scheduled tribes are the segregated and isolated communities and are largely concentrated in the states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharastra, Gujarat and Rajasthan where they constitute about 80 per cent of the scheduled tribe population of India. In some of the North-Eastern states also they form more than 80 per cent of their population, and mostly live on the hillsides and forests. They are isolated from the rest of the society due to poor transportation and communication facilities and have remained as educationally, culturally, economically and socially disadvantaged sections. Scheduled tribes have been considered to be lowest in the social hierarchy. Being mostly illiterate, they have been subjected to all kinds of exploitation – social, economic and political. They comprised about 6.87, 6.82, 7.76, 8.08 and 8.60 per cent of India's population in 1961,1971,1981,1991 and 2001 Census of India respectively.

Even today, widely pervasive reality in respect of tribal communities in India is that most of them are geographically isolated, economically weak, socially ignorant, politically indifferent, culturally rich, behaviourally simple, trustworthy and leading their life in the lap of nature. They are facing problems, which force them to lead a life at bare subsistence level. Most of them are in the situation featured with poverty, deprivation, disadvantages which are difficult to be tackled effectively on their own and making the government in particular and society in general to intervene in a planned manner to solve the miseries of tribes and facilitate their development process. A large number of tribal communities continue to be extremely backward and some of them are still in the primitive food gathering stage, whereas some others have progressed fairly in terms of economic and educational advancement.

In Visakhapatnam district, the growth rate of tribal population from 1981 to 2001 is 57 per cent. For Andhra Pradesh and India it is 58 and 63 per cent

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respectively. This indicates that growth rate of tribal population in Visakhapatnam district is less than that of state and national average respectively.

The share of tribal population in the total population of Visakhapatnam increased marginally from 13.74 to 14.55 from 1981 to 2001, the same for Andhra Pradesh and India stands at 5.93 to 6.59 and 7.6 to 8.20 respectively.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The primary data comprise of collecting information from the selected sample tribal households in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh by way of canvassing a structured schedule among them. In addition, the secondary data are also taken from the Chief Planning Officer, Visakhapatnam District. The primary data has been collected during the month of June and July of 2007. A sample of 138 households was selected for the study. A multi-stage random sampling technique was employed to select the sample households. In the first stage, Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh was selected for the study. Then, Anantagiri mandal from the district was selected. In the third stage, four villages from the mandal were selected. Those are Damuku, Ananthagiri, Chilakalagedda and Khambhavalasa. In the fourth stage, all the tribal households in the sample villages were interviewed with a pre-prepared schedule.

This paper analyse the socio-economic status of the sample households taking into consideration heads of the households, educational qualifications, type of drinking water, specific classification of caste/tribe, type of occupation, and extent of land cultivated etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the gender-wise classification of the head of the households in the sample. Out of the sample of 138 in Visakhapatnam district, male households heads are 121, and the remaining 17 are female heads of the household. With regard to the overall sample households, the male headed households are more than female headed households. In these communities only 12 per cent of the households are headed by females. The existence of the female-headed households does not indicate the existence of matrilineal societies but in those

particular households, the males are not alive. This may be because of the reduced level of the life expectancy and other reasons, like epidemics being on rampage in those particular areas.

TABLE 1

Heads of the household surveyed in the study area

Sex	Household heads
Male	121(87.68)*
Female	17(12.32)
Total	138(100.00)
*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 2 denotes the classification of educational qualification of the head of the households in the total sample households. In the district, out of 138 households, the illiterate heads are 115. The head of the households having primary and secondary educational qualifications are only twenty in number. It is very sad to note that out of the total sample surveyed the household heads having higher education are only of three households. The literacy rate with regard to the head of the households is only 16.67 per cent.

With regard to the overall sample, the illiterate heads constitute more than 83 per cent. It is an indication that nearly 93 per cent of the heads of the households are either illiterates or with primary education. This indicates the inadequate performance of the governmental programmes, which are to raise the educational status of the scheduled tribes in the study area.

TABLE 2

Educational qualifications of the head of the household

Educational qualification	Household heads
Illiterate	115(83.34)*
Primary	14(10.15)
Secondary	6(4.35)
Higher	3(2.17)
Total	138(100.00)
*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 3 shows the classification of the total sample households with regard to their specific community. Although this is not a predetermined one, only these tribes have been found in the selected

sample villages which have been surveyed.

In the present analysis, we have come across different tribes such as Konda Dora, Manne Dora, Nooka and Mooka Dora, Gadaba, Kotiya, Bagata, Yerakula and Valmiki. In the sample of the district, majority of the households belongs to the tribe of Konda Dora with 76 per cent, and the next majority tribe is Bagata representing 10 per cent of the sample.

TABLE 3

Distribution of sample households based on their community affiliation

Community groups	Number of households
Konda Dora	105(76.10)*
Manne Dora	–
Nooka & Mooka Dora	3(2.17)
Gadaba	9(6.52)
Kotiya	4(2.89)
Bagata	14(10.14)
Yerakula	–
Valmiki	3(2.17)
Total	138(100.00)
*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 4 shows the religion-wise classification of the sample households. In the sampling process, as it is not a predetermined one, we have come across only two religious groups, Hinduism and the Christianity.

In the survey area of the district, out of 138 sample households, 116 (84%) belong to Hinduism (semi-Hinduised) and the rest are found to be adhering to Christianity in the far-flung places, this is quite interesting.

TABLE 4

Distribution of the sample households based on religion

Religion	Number of households
Hinduism	116(84.05)*
Christianity	22(15.94)
Total	138(100.00)
*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 5 presents the educational qualifications of the total sample population surveyed. The levels of education are divided in to three categories. 'Primary' level indicates the standard from first to fifth class, 'Secondary' level indicates the standard from sixth to 10th class, and the 'Higher' educational level indicates the classes above 10th standard, this

classification stands for this operational purpose only.

In the study area, out of 537 persons who are above five years, 377 are illiterates, as such more than 70 per cent people do not know how to read and write. Although there are persons who have educational qualifications, that number is far below than the level of illiterates. The male literacy rate is 36 per cent, and that of females is 24 per cent. In the case of literacy, the government is doing a lot but the actual picture expects more than that is being implemented till now.

TABLE 5

Distribution of sample population (more than 5 years of age-group) according to their educational qualifications

Level of education	Male	Female	Total
Illiterate	171	206	377
	(64.29)*	(76.01)	(70.20)
Primary	59	44	103
	(22.18)	(16.24)	(19.18)
Secondary	24	16	40
	(9.02)	(5.90)	(7.45)
Higher	12	5	17
	(4.51)	(1.85)	(3.17)
Total	266	271	537
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)
Literacy rate percentage	35.72	23.98	29.79
*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage			

Table 6 brings out the classification of the sample households based on whether their children (6-11years) are in school or not. In the sample of Visakhapatnam district, 17 per cent of the households have eligible children not going to school. This is an indicator of backwardness in this region. There is need to enhance the income of the parents and to motivate them so that they can send their children to school.

TABLE 6

Distribution of the sample households indicating expression about their children in school (6-11) years

Expression by household member	Number of households
Yes	38 (27.54)*
No	23(16.67)
NA	77(55.80)
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 7 present the classification of the sample households based on the type of the source of drinking water. This variable is considered because in the forest areas, lack of safe drinking water is the main reason for high disease prevalence. In fact, these areas are like disease prone areas where they are the first to be affected in the country with any type of disease. Nevertheless, this is only one of the reasons for the high rate of disease prevalence.

In the study area, out of 138 households sample only 30 per cent are able to get protected source of drinking water. This indicates that the majority of the sample is far away from the use of safe drinking water. This indicates that much more action-oriented activities are needed in this part of the district.

TABLE 7

Distribution of sample households according to the availability of quality drinking water

Quality of drinking water	Number of households
Protected	42(30.00)*
Unprotected	96(69.00)
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 8 describes classification of the sample households based on the type of their house. Houses have been classified into three types. 'Pucca' house is a type of house built by concrete and having some facilities like own toilet facility, separate rooms for persons and so on. 'Semi-Pucca' house is a typical house in the tribal areas. The walls of the semi-pucca houses are built by brick; have large tiles on the top, the house has been provided through the food for work programme. The 'thatched' houses have mud walls and palm leaves as their roof top cover.

In the sample, out of 138 households, more than 58 per cent have a typical semi-pucca tribal house. In

TABLE 8

Distribution of sample households according to the type of dwelling

Type	Number of households
Pucca	5(3.62)*
Semi-Pucca	81(58.70)
Thatched	52(37.68)
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

addition, nearly 38 per cent of them have thatched houses. Nearly 96 per cent of the households do not have proper housing facilities in the sample survey area of the district.

Table 9 shows the classification of the households based on whether they have ration cards or not. The typical ration card is an indicator of the services provided by the government and the level of economic status of the households in the government's records. The households with a 'White' card are low-level income persons and are provided with essential commodities at subsidised prices and other facilities. The households with a 'Pink' card indicate high income of the households. No card indicates that none of the services are provided to them from the part of the government side. In the survey area of the district, out of 138 sample households majority of them (83%) are below poverty line and the people are in need of external help in the form of health, food and other basic amenities.

TABLE 9

Distribution of sample households according to the possession of ration card type

Type of ration card	Number of households
White	114(82.61)*
Pink	2(1.45)
No card	22(15.94)
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 10 shows the occupation-wise classification of the sample heads of the households. In the sample survey of 138 households, 107 (77.5%) are in cultivation and the remaining are in wage labour, employees, housewives and some practicing non-

TABLE 10

Distribution of primary occupation of the heads of the households in the study sample

Occupation	Number of households
Cultivation	107(77.5)*
Wage labour	24(17.39)
Non-agricultural activities	3(2.17)
Employee	1(0.72)
House wife	3(2.17)
Others	–
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

agricultural activities. Here majority of the households depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Here the agricultural cultivation is playing the key role, and the tribals are engaged in settled cultivation.

Table 11 reveals the occupational pattern practised in the study area. For operational purposes, they are taken as, persons practising cultivation, wage labour, non-agricultural activities, employees, students, and housewife. In the study area, 178 persons are cultivators, in which, males form more than 77 per cent of the share but it is interesting to see some women are also depending on cultivation. It is also observed that both men and women are engaged as wage labourers.

But as the agricultural sector can provide only seasonal employment, the government should encourage the people who are willing to take up self-employment, and encourage small-scale industries in such areas that could create employment for a number of persons. It is interesting to see that many women are taking up different occupations in the survey area.

TABLE 11

Distribution of the sample population of males and females according to the occupational types

Occupational types	Male	Female	Total
Cultivation	161(90.45)*	17(9.55)	178(100.00)
Wage labour	198(54.54)	165(45.45)	363(100.00)
Non-agricultural activities	3(100.00)	–	3(100.00)
Employee	1(100.00)	–	1(100.00)
Students	47(52.81)	42(47.19)	89(100.00)
House wife	–	42(100.00)	42(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage			

Table 12 gives the classification of the sample households, who are practising other occupations for their earning. Majority of the works are in agriculture, the government sponsors some other works, like bamboo work — basket weaving and the other works stand for non-agricultural works. In the study area, out of the sample of 138 households, 132 are wage labours and only three sample households have persons practising other occupations for earning. It indicates that tribal people depend on the agricultural sector for their main earning and for their survival.

In this respect, the government should take necessary steps to provide non-agricultural employment provision for the willing tribal people so that they can have other income generating alternative, and thus are able to come out from the clutches of starvation and poverty.

TABLE 12

Distribution of the sample household on their subsidiary occupations

Occupations	Number of households
Wage labour	132(97.78)*
Bamboo work (solely)	–
Others	3(2.22)
Total	135(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 13 shows the classification of the sample households based on whether the houses are electrified or not. This electrification is a development indicator, because this plays a great role in improving their standard of living. With regard to this, out of the 138 sample households, only 19 houses are having the facility of electricity. More than 86 per cent of the houses are not electrified. In this regard, this area is very backward; the government should take more steps to provide the facility of electricity to these areas. As the areas are far-flung, and in thick forests area the electrification is necessary for their safe existence and development.

TABLE 13

Distribution of the sample households on the electrification of their house

House electrified	Number
Yes	19(13.77)*
No	119(86.23)
Total	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 14 shows the people's participation in public organizations. This is to bring out the knowledge of the people in this matter and their level of participation in these organizations. The main thrust was not only on DWCRA but also on PRIs and VSS. However, after field investigations, they opined that they did not have any knowledge about other organizations and about their functioning. In the

sample surveyed, a number of people are found to be members of the DWCRA committees, which helped them to inculcate the habit of thrift and going for combined self-employment practices. It is quite interesting to see a tribal woman being a President in a Panchayat (Damuku village), and many are members of the Vana Samrakshana Samitis (VSS) – a programme initiated for the development of the forestation and increasing the role of the indigenous people in these matters. With regard to this sample, the villagers said that the government should initiate many more steps to encourage the tribal people to participate in the decision-making process.

TABLE 14

Distribution of sample households based on their participation in public organizations

Organization	Number of member households
DWCRA	105(76.08)*
Panchayat	3(2.17)
VSS	40(28.98)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 15 shows the extent of land owned by the sample households and the same whether they are with ownership rights or not. As the terrain is inaccessible, although the tribal people own land, the land is less in size. It is taken in acres. For practical purposes after the compilation of the data, the extent of land owned is divided into three categories 1) one acre or below, 2) above one acre and below three acres, and 3) three acres and above. In the sample of 138 households, 109 have land. Vast majority of them are small and marginal farmers. Many of them are not

TABLE 15

Distribution of sample households according to extent and ownership of land cultivated

Having ownership rights

Extent of land cultivated (in acres)	Ownership of land	Total extent of land
Below 1	18(26.47)*	68(100.00)
1 to 3	5(13.89)	36(100.00)
Above 3	2(40.00)	5(100.00)
NA	–	29(100.00)
Total	25(18.12)	138(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage		

having the necessary ownership rights. In the sample households, 18.12 per cent have both land and ownership rights. The government should intervene in this matter to issue the much awaited ownership rights for the people.

The Table 16 shows the classification of the eligible household sample based on the income derived from cultivation. As explained earlier most of the tribal farmers are doing with marginal land that too on the hill slopes, and it is their traditional type of cultivation.

In the sample, majority of the farmers are deriving the level of income adjacent to less than Rs. 5000/- yearly. Only a small per cent of the sample are able to derive more income from cultivation. Thus much is expected from the government to increase their level of income from cultivation by educating them in using the cost effective modern implements and the high yielding varieties. In order to raise their standard of living the government should go for more pro-active steps to increase the productivity in agriculture.

TABLE16

Distribution of the sample households on their income from cultivation for the year 2006

Income range for the year 2006	Number of sample households with cultivable land
Less than Rs. 1000/-	4(3.67)*
Rs.1000/- to Rs. 2000/-	33(30.28)
Rs. 2000/ - to Rs. 5000/-	58(53.21)
Rs. 5000/- and above	14(12.84)
Total	109(100.00)
* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage	

Table 17 shows the trends with regard to the annual income through the wage labour and if any other occupations are being practised by the households in the study area. With regard to the study area, as described earlier, nearly 98 per cent of the sample depends on wage labour as a supplementary earning for their livelihood. However, as there is dearth of opportunities, many are able to derive only negligible income from the source of wage labour. Over the three years, the same trend is repeated. This may be due to exploitation from the non-scheduled tribe people.

In this context, it has been suggested that the government should endeavour to provide as many days of wage employment in this area so that the minimal amount derived from cultivation can be supplemented through this wage labour. The government should concentrate on reducing the exploitation in the wage labour and in reducing the working hours. The government should try to implement the minimum wage laws strictly.

TABLE 17

Distribution of the sample households on their annual income through subsidiary occupations of earning for the year 2006

Income ranges for the year 2006	No. of households with income from subsidiary occupation
Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 2000/-	54(40.00)*
From Rs. 2001/- to Rs. 5000/-	69(51.11)
Rs. 5001/- and above	12(8.89)
Total	135(100.00)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 18 indicates the classification of the sample households based on the level of their annual income for the year 2006. In the sample area, there is a mixed out come with regard to the level of annual income. It is quite sad to see some sample households have a level of income of below Rs. 3000/- for a year. It is striking to note that nearly 90 per cent of the sample households in the last three years remain in the range between Rs.3000/- to Rs.10000/- per year.

TABLE 18

Distribution of the sample households on their total annual income

Range of annual income (in Rs.)	Number of sample households
Rs. 3000/- and below	10(7.25)*
Rs. 3001/- to Rs. 5000/-	68(49.28)
Rs. 5001/- to Rs. 10000/-	56(40.58)
Rs. 10001/- to Rs. 20000/-	3(2.17)
Above Rs. 20001/-	1(0.72)
Total Sample households	138(100.00)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

CONCLUSIONS

In the study area more than 87 per cent of the total sample households are male headed and more than 12 per cent of the total sample households are female headed. More than 83 per cent of the households in the study area are headed by illiterates. This indicates that more attention is needed from the part of the government to educate these people. There is a need to put more attention on educational aspect of scheduled tribes, where this only can motivate them for future betterment of life. The majority of the total sample households in the study area belong to Konda Dora and Bagata communities which are listed as the scheduled tribes. More than 84 per cent of the total sample households follow Hindu religious practices, and around 16 percent of the sample households are Christians.

It is very sad to see that more than 70 per cent of the total sample population are illiterate. As majority of the heads of the households are illiterate their progeny are also illiterate. More than 75 per cent of the female population are illiterate. 19.18 per cent of the total sample population are having primary education. Only 29.8 per cent of the total sample is educated. More than 16 per cent of the children are not going to school. It is very sad to see that children are not going to school which calls for special measures in our universal primary education programme.

The households having availability of safe drinking water is only 30 per cent for the total sample households. Drinking of protected water reduces the disease prevalence, as most of the diseases are due to contaminated water. So to reduce the prevalence of diseases in this area providing safe drinking is the first measure to be adopted.

The sample households with kutcha houses in the total sample are of 38 per cent. It is interesting to see that only 1.45 per cent of the sample households are having pink card. Most of the sample households are white card holders, indicating their backwardness as they are generally given to backward households. But there is need to improve efficiency in the services provided for these card holders and to provide cards for all the households, as the 'no card holders' in the sample households surveyed are 15.94 per cent of the total sample.

Cultivation is the primary occupation practised by the most heads of the sample households and the wage labour follows. There is a need to increase the

employment generation activities in this area as lack of sufficient income is the root cause for all the problems in any society. The wage labour is primary occupation for most of the sample population followed by cultivation. More than 97 per cent of the eligible total sample households are having wage labour as their subsidiary occupation for their livelihood.

Only 13.77 per cent of the total sample households are electrified. More facilities should be linked with electricity; a lot has to be done in providing this facility to the sample population in particular and the scheduled tribe community of the area in general. The participation of scheduled tribes in the public service organisations makes them capable to decide on their own some of their issues. More than 76 per cent of the sample households are members of DWCRA. It is quite interesting to note here that there exists a female president for a tribal panchayat in the study area.

More than 53 per cent of the cultivators have farm income around Rs. 2000/- to Rs.5000/- annually. Income from cultivation supports majority of the sample population. However, measures should be initiated to increase the levels of farm income for the scheduled tribes in the study area in the particular and all the farming community in general. It is quite interesting to note that more than 8 per cent of the sample households are deriving more than Rs. 5000/- from subsidiary occupations. Even though the wage labourers are more in the total sample population, the share of income derived from this is less as compared to cultivation. This indicate the predominance of agriculture in the study area and of sample households. With regard to total annual income, there is definite change in the sample households as some households are moving from low-income range to high-income range. The incomes of the scheduled tribes are paltry when compared to the incomes of the general population. More than 49 per cent of the sample households are having average total income annually in the range of Rs. 3000/- to Rs.5000/- only. However, there is a change in the income levels of the sample households.

The present study report is based on a sample survey, and has not been compared with similar studies conducted by other authors elsewhere, hence no references has been cited.