



## Socio-Economic Status of the Bettakuruba Tribal Women: a Case Study from the Chamarajanagara District, Karnataka

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### KEYWORDS

Bettakuruba, Tribal women, socio-economic status, Chamarajanagara

### ABSTRACT

*The objectives of this paper is to find out the socio-economic status of the Bettakuruba tribal women and to suggest ways and means for their overall development. The Bettakuruba community has a rich and cultural heritage, and strong traditions, but lacks socio-economic empowerment. They are not able to create wealth, since they cannot hold land and properties and so on. Anyhow, governments offered constitutional relieves in the form of reservations, but it is still difficult to reach the needy people. Therefore, a detailed research study has been carried out on the socio-economic status of women in the Bettakuruba community. Here several strategic suggestions as well as policy guidelines have been suggested.*

### Introduction

A socioeconomic status is an intricate concept covering of two different aspects, the social aspect that includes status or position within a social stratification and the economic aspect that includes resources such as income, occupation and wealth. Even though there is no generally accepted definition of the term “socioeconomic status”, it was defined heterogeneously by writers and scholars. A socioeconomic status is a construct that reflects one’s access to collectively desired resources, be they material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities. (Oakes and Rossi, 2003). Furthermore, it has been defined as the position that an individual or family occupies with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions and participation in the group activities of the community (Chaphin, 1928). Very often it is measured as a combination of various factors such as education, income and occupation. Therefore, it can be said that a socioeconomic status is not a unitary concept and with this notion in mind, for the present study a socio-economic status is measured by using some of the prominent factors such as social factors, demographic factors and economic factors. (Shrabanti Maity, Victoria Haobijam and Alok Sen, 2014).

Women in a tribal society play a vital role within their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they are still lagging far behind in the various walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. Empowering may be understood as enabling weaker sections of society, like poor women, especially

tribal women, to acquire and possess power and resources, in order to make decisions on their own. After the analysis of the data and field observation, we discovered that lack of education, poor health status and infant mortality rate, low level of wage work, lack of self employment opportunity, organizing capacity and leadership quality are the main obstacles to the economic empowerment of tribal women (Puttaraju and O. D. Heggade, 2012).

A socio-economic profile has an important role in characterizing the social life and behavior of an individual. It is, therefore, essential to analyze the socio-economic background of tribal women and to understand the pattern of relationships between tribal women and local environment. In Indian society, caste and kinship has been a very important influencing factor on social life, and it exists an acute disparity in terms of standard of living and sub-culture among various groups and regions. A study of the socio-economic conditions of a leader would help reveal its sociological significance. At the same time, socio-economic stratification determines the structure of political power (Nagaraja, S. and Pallavi. S. K, 2013).

### **Justification of the Study**

The socio-economic status of women is the position which they attain as a result of the various norms, beneficial and obligations in the society. It is often found that women are the most vulnerable section of the society relative to their male counterparts, and they often happen to be last receivers of the opportunities offered by the development of the country. Tribal women are more isolated in term of education, employment and health facilities than the mainstream women. So, they might be are more deprived when compared with their male counterpart as well as women from other communities. So, in this regard, this study is an attempt to highlight the socio-economic status of Bettakuruba women in a district called Chamarajanagara. The Bettakuruba are the tribal group who are the original inhabitant of the hilly region: consequently they are bound to be isolated from the mainland as well as its development. Hence, in such a case, it is of the utmost importance to find out the socio and economical condition in which they are living in order to help them to come closer to the stream of development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the socioeconomic status of the Bettakuruba women in Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka.
- To find out the educational level of the Bettakuruba Tribal women in the study area.
- To examine the factors influencing on the socioeconomic status of the Bettakuruba women in the study area.

### **Methods of the study:**

The present study is based on primary data collected from 100 sample respondents from 10 Tribal settlements of Gundlupet taluk in the Chamarajanagara district following the purposive sampling method. A schedule is used to collect the demographic, social and economic status of the Bettakuruba women and have also been used Interviews, observation, group discussion, and case study methods.

## **Review of Literature:**

There are a good number of studies, explaining the causes and consequences of backwardness and the low socio economic status of tribal women. Such studies are related to a general enquiry on women exploitation and dependency. These studies have identified lack of education, absence of skills and training, lack of property rights, social isolation and segregation and male control over resources and reproductive rights as responsible for women disempowerment.

Awias (2009) explained through his work that tribal women play a major role in the co-management of natural, social, economic resources and crop production, livestock production, horticulture and post harvest operations but they remain backward because of their traditional values, illiteracy, superstitions, indecision making, social evils and many other cultural factors.

Ashok Kumar (2015) highlighted the socioeconomic condition of Jenukuruba tribal community in Mysore district. This study revealed that, the Jenukurubas are social and economically very backward compare to other communities, even tribal communities. These people are suffering from illness, illiteracy, poverty, lack of food and other problems.

Ajay Saraogi (2013), highlighted the status of women in tribal society in India, and he explained anthropologists have been recently divided on the status of women in Indian tribal societies. The actual treatment, legal status, opportunity for social participation and the character and extent of work, all determine each in a specific sense and manner, the status of women in a society. All these four determinants are independent from each other and not casually related. The correlation between them is empirical and not conceptual.

Das (2012) in an attempt to find out the level of autonomy and decision making power of tribal women and the impact of socio-economic status on decision making roles concluded that the tribal women enjoy autonomy at their household level, especially in social aspects and at some point enjoy equal rights along with their husbands in economic matters. But due to low literacy rate and unemployment the community participation of the women is inactive and autonomy levels are very low.

According to Franzmen (2000) and Scott (1988) the religious sphere, which is most dominating among tribes, constitutes a major field for male domination. In fact, women are deprived of public authority, while religion legitimizes gender hierarchy. The subordination of women in religious activities and their denial of access to positions of religious leadership has been a powerful tool in most world's religions in supporting the patriarchal order and the exclusion of women from the public forum. The religious sphere is a major field for male dominance, and a strategy to deprive women of public authority.

Veen Bashi explained that India as a whole is characterized by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits, in the economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official, political and religious spheres Indian women suffer profoundly, because all time there are socio-cultural factors which validate for the status of women in particular society. Speaking of tribal girls' education, he showed that education is a fundamental right that provides opportunities for socio-economic uplift. In India reasons associated with the lack of education for girl children are financial constraints, early marriages, submissiveness, motherhood, and parental perception of education on women's worldview. The girl child is deliberately

denied education and the future opportunity of total development.

### Result and Discussion:

In the present study we attempted to understand the different aspects of the social and economic status of the respondents. The main features of the socio-economic profile are family composition, education composition, occupation composition, marital status, family income, and family background of the respondents. Nevertheless, these variables could help us know the socio-economic status of tribal women in the selected study area.

*Table: 1 Type of family*

Type of Family	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear family	105	87.5
Joint family	11	9.2
Extended family	4	3.3
Total	120	100

A family is the basic unit of society, which assigns social status, roles and social responsibilities to every individual. A family is the most powerful medium through which a value system can develop over a period of time, and individual behavior and attitudes are determined by the family which he/she belongs to. That is, whether the family is joint or nuclear and it also determines the status and role of tribal women.

Table No 1 shows that 81.7% of the respondents belongs to nuclear families and 16.7 % of the respondents belongs to joint families and only the remaining 1.7% of the respondents are living in an extended family. Thus, the data indicate that there are more nuclear families than joint and extended families.

*Table: 2 Age of the respondents:*

Age group	Frequency	percentage
Below 20 years	07	5.8
21-30 years	28	23.3
31-40 years	42	35.0
41-50 years	17	14.2
51-60 y	15	12.5
Abobe 60 years	11	9.2
Total	120	100

The above table shows that 10.0% respondents are in age group below 20 years, 17.5% of respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years, 25.8% of respondents are come 31 to 40 years age group, 19.2% of respondents are come under below 41-50 years age category, 15.8% of respondents are in the 51-60 age group, and only 11.7 % of respondents are above 60 years.

*Table: 3 Marital status of the respondents:*

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	82	68.3
Unmarried	13	10.8
Widow	18	15.0
Divorced/separated	7	5.9
Total	120	100

Marital status is also a social indicator for understanding the socio-economic status of women. The early marriage system has been one of the important characteristics of Bettakuruba community. Marital status change the women's status. It also changes the women's role and increases the duties and workload of the women. The marital status of the respondent is shown in the table 3.

The table 3 shows that out of 120 of respondents 65.8% of them are found to be married, 13.3% unmarried, 18.3% widowed and only 2.5% of them are divorced/Separated. Nowadays married and widowed/ divorced women get different a treatment in the society but before there was no discrimination in this community. Remarriage is accepted in this society.

*Table: 4 Educational status of the respondents*

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	49	40.8
Lower Primary	33	27.5
Higher Primary	18	15.0
High school	10	8.3
PUC	06	5.0
UG and Above	02	1.7
Professional Course	02	1.7
total	120	100

The educational status is divided into 7 categories which are illiterate, Lower primary level, Higher primary level, high school level, Pre-University level, under graduation and above, also other professional course. The educational status of the respondents is shown in Table 4, that reveals that 42.5% of respondents were observed to be illiterates followed by Lower primary (26.7%), Higher primary (14.2%), High school (6.7%), Pre university (5.0), under graduate and above (2.5% ) and only 2.5% women studied in Professional courses. This is mainly because tribal women are more prone to their traditions and they do not come forward to upgrade their educational standards. Among this community school drop out is very common both boy and girls.

Table: 5 Occupational structure of the respondents:

Type of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural	20	16.7
Agriculture labour	53	44.2
Collection of minor forest product	29	24.1
Govt service	4	3.3
Any Other	14	11.7
Total	120	100

Occupation is considered as the main source of income, and it represents the socio-economic status of people. Tribal women in India contribute positively to the local economy and participate along with men in subsistence activities. In reality, women do more work than men. In the study area they carry out all types of work at home as well as outside that according to the needs of a mixed agro-pastoral economy. Apart from caring for the house, children and cattle, the major portion of the agricultural work is made by women, who do weeding, hoeing, harvesting and threshing. Women also work as labourers. The role of women is important in economic as well as non-economic activities.

The above table (5) shows that out of 120 of respondents 38.3% are working as agricultural labourers, 20.0% are engaged in agriculture, 26.7% in the collection of minor forest products, 6.7% in government service, and 8.3% of respondents are engaged in other occupations like business, tailoring, selling in livestock product, gazing cattle, handicraft etc.

Table: 6 Type of land

Land holdings	Frequency	Percentage
No Land	49	40.8
Below 2 Acre	54	45.0
2 to 4 acre	10	8.3
Above 4 Acre	7	5.9
total	120	100

Land can be considered as the key resource of the Bettakuruba community. The pattern of land holding influences the economic status of a household but also the social status in the community. The distribution of land of the sample households has been shown in table 6.

The above table shows that out of 120 of respondents, 37.5% of respondents have no land, 42.5% less than 2 acres, 10.8% hold up 2 to 4 acres, only 9.2% of respondents hold up above 4 acres. The table clearly shows that the majority of the Bettakuruba in the study area hold up to only below 2 acres. In the study area the Bettakuruba who is landless or who have less than 2 acres are dependent cooli and collect less forest products. Most of the Bettakurubas do not cultivate land.

*Table: 7 Annual family income of the respondents.*

Income in RS	Frequency	Percentage
Upto 10000	34	28.4
10,001-20,000	57	47.5
20,001-30,000	19	15.8
30,001-40,000	06	5.0
Above 40,000	04	3.3
total	120	100

The income of a person in general, is an indicator of his/her economic status. The economic status of a person will impact on his/her attitude. Therefore, the study assumes that the attitudes of women belonging to the families with higher income differs from that of the attitude of women who are in middle or lower level of the income group. The economic status of a family also plays an important role in influencing the attitudes, ideas and values of its family members and their decision-making process. The respondents' annual income is indicated below in the table No.7, in a detailed manner.

Table No 7 indicates that 23.3% of respondents have annual income of up to Rs. 10,000, 40.8% of respondents annual income is from Rs.10,001-20,000, 19.2% of respondents annual earning is Rs.20,001-30,000, 7.5% of respondents are earning is 30,001 to 40,000 and only 9.2% of respondents annual income of above Rs. 40,000.

*Table: 8 Preferred Place of Treatment by the respondents:*

Place of treatment	Frequency	Percentage
Govt Hospital	66	55.0
Private Hospital	28	23.3
Traditional healers and temple	22	18.4
Don't go anywhere	4	3.3
Total	120	100

Health conditions can be taken as another important socio economic indicator. Even in this modern era quite a large number of people including tribes believes in superstitious practices, preferring the shamans and healers. Preferred place of treatment by the respondent women has been presented in Table 8.

The above table indicates that 59.2% of respondents prefer Government hospitals for treatment whereas 17.5% of respondents prefer private hospitals or clinics, 20.8% of respondents are dependent on traditional healers and temples, but 2.5% of respondents do not take treatment. This is due to lack of education, old mentality, belief in superstition and low economic status.

### **Cause of Low Socio-economic Status of Respondents**

The researchers asked some questions to know opinions of the respondents about the main reason of Bettakuruba women's backwardness. In the study area, the higher percentage of respondents reported that the main cause of backwardness and poverty, as well as lack of education, the patriarchal system

as such are the causes of the low status of Bettakuruba women, together with an inferiority complex, culture constraints, and lack of awareness.

## Conclusion

In this study, we found that Bettakuruba women have multidimensional roles and responsibilities in their families. Their work burden is higher than that of men, but most of the time spent in their household activities. The literacy rate of Bettakuruba women is low. They are deprived from acquiring an education due to various social, personal, economic factors which are directly related to their incapacity to get a waged job. Only few Bettakuruba women own their houses and some land. Most of the Bettakuruba women have to work more but have a comparatively less decision making power than the male counterparts in agriculture. Actually, the decision making role of men is superior in most of the variables. Only few activities see an equal contribution of men and women in an household decision making. Thus, it can be concluded that the socio-economic status of Bettakuruba women is low, and policy makers and local development practitioners should design appropriate and effective policies and programs in this regard. Informal education classes should be supported for illiterate women with some incentives. Efforts are necessary to be made to develop women's social prestige, self-confidence and feeling of equality by educating them. Poverty is the most threatening constraint against the improvement of women's socio-economic status. Various programs such as vegetable farming, goat farming etc. , education, free health, and incentives for higher and employment based programs etc should be launched by the government in order to increase the living standard of the community.

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