

# A PROFILE OF SCHEDULED CASTES IN KARNATAKA – A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

**\*Dr.Nagabhushaniah.B.N.** Associate Professor of Sociology, Govt. First Grade College of Arts Science and Commerce, Sira.

Abstract:

In the present study contributes the profile of SC in Karnataka. we have analysed how the agrarian structure has undergone change in the different periods of Indian history. In this chapter we shall specifically focus on the profile of the SCs in Karnataka with reference to the Government Orders regarding the inclusion of castes under the SC list, their brief history, their numerical strength on the basis of Census Reports and their traditional occupations etc. A brief history of Karnataka is also included in this chapter as a prelude to our understanding of the profile of the SCs. Karnataka is the eighth largest state in India in terms of both area and population. The present state of Karnataka came into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956 under the States of Reorganisation Act of 1956. Formerly it was known as Mysore State. On November 1st, 1973 the name of Mysore was changed to Karnataka. It is situated on the western edge of the Deccan plateau. It extends from 11° 5'N' to 19° 'N' latitude and from 74° E to 78° 6' E longitude. Its neighbours are Maharashtra and Goa on the North, Andhra Pradesh on the East and Tamil Nadu and Kerala on the South. On the West, it opens out on the Arabian Sea.

Keywords: SC, Govt, History, Karnataka, Profile.

Introduction:

The name 'Karnataka' is derived from the word 'Karunadu' literally meaning the land of black soil, the land of fragrance, lofty land and land at height (plateau). The history of Karnataka goes as far back as the epics. In the fourth century BC Karnataka was part of the great Mauryan empire. Later it was ruled by a number of dynasties namely the Satavahanas, the Kadambas, the Gangas, the Chalukyas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagar and the Wodeyars of Mysore. During the British rule, the Karnataka area was distributed among the princely states of Mysore, Hyderabad, and the British provinces of Bombay and Madras and the small principality of Coorg.

After Independence under the States Reorganisation Act of 1956, the districts of Bellary, Mangalore and taluk of Kollegal from Madras presidency, the districts of Belgaum, Dharwad, Bijapur and Karwar from Bombay presidency, the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur from the princely state of Hyderabad and the whole of the part 'C' state of Coorg were merged with Mysore state. Till 1973, the original name "Mysore State" remained

unchanged. On November 1, 1973 the state was renamed as 'Karnataka' under the Chief Ministership of Late Sri Devaraj Urs.

## Objectives

- present study contributes the profile of SC in Karnataka

Till 1997, the state had twenty districts namely: Bangalore (District), Bangalore (Rural), Belgaum, Bellary, Bijapur, Bidar, Chikkamagalur, Chitradurga, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwad, Gulbarga, Hassan, Kodagu, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore, Raichur, Shimoga, Tumkur and Uttar Kannada. Seven new districts were created in 1997 carving from certain old districts. They are: 1. Bagalkot (from Bijapur district), 2. Chamarajnagar (from Mysore district), 3. Davanagere (from Chitradurga district), 4. Gadag and 5. Haveri (from Dharwad district), 6. Koppal (from Raichur district), and 7. Udupi (from Dakshina Kannada district).

At present there are 101 caste groups listed under the SCs in Karnataka (see Appendix -1). In fact, the present list is an improved one over the earlier list published in the Mysore Gazette under notification (Legislative Department) No. LD.1262-LEGIS-5-56-i dated 10.12.1956 (see Appendix - 2).

The old list recognised 142 castes as SCs in different areas of the State. The composition of area restriction not only led to the recognition of some castes as SCs in various areas but also boosted the number of SC. Consequently the number of SCs were more in the old list than in the present list. But in the Census of 1961 and 1971, only 100 SCs were enumerated (Usha Rao, 1981; 357-363). The SCs constituted 13.32 per cent and 13.14 per cent respectively of the total population of the state in 1961 and 1971 census. The increase in the proportion of SC population during the decade 1961-1971 is very marginal, i.e., 0.08 per cent. In subsequent years the area restrictions were removed and the list of SCs as per the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 1976 contains 101 caste groups and the same has been in force since 27<sup>th</sup> July 1977 (see Appendix 1). The number of persons who were enumerated as SCs in 1981 Census were 55,95,353. They accounted for 15.07 per cent of the total population of Karnataka.

In the next decade (1991) the population of SCs rose to 73,69,279, constituting 16.38 per cent of the total population. Thus the SC population has registered a decadal growth rate of 31.70 per cent which is considerably higher than the growth rate for the total population (21.12%). (see Census of India 1991, Series 11 Karnataka, Part II-B (II) ). The district-wise distribution of the SCs in Karnataka is presented.

**District-wise Distribution of SCs in Karnataka**  
(Total SC Population as per 1991 Census 73,69,279)

Name of District	Total SC Population in each district	Percentage of the SC population in each district to the total SC population in the State
1. Bangalore District	7,11,775	9.66
2. Bangalore Rural	3,26,599	4.43
3. Belgaum	4,06,955	5.52
4. Bellary	3,65,154	4.95
5. Bidar	2,60,033	3.53
6. Bijapur	5,09,862	6.92
7. Chikkamagalur	1,95,852	2.66
8. Chitradurga	4,32,668	5.87
9. Dakshina Kannada	1,75,548	2.38
10. Dharwad	4,10,499	5.57
11. Gulbarga	6,10,641	8.29
12. Hassan	2,73,379	3.71
13. Kodagu	59,009	0.80
14. Kolar	5,70,400	7.74
15. Mandya	2,26,626	3.08
16. Mysore	5,97,921	8.11
17. Raichur	3,97,923	5.40
18. Shimoga	3,37,921	4.59
19. Tumkur	4,08,524	5.54
20. Uttara Kannada	91,990	1.25

Source: Census of India 1991, Series – 11, Karnataka, Final Population Totals, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, p.1-2.

The distribution of the SC population is not uniform throughout the state. Further, the highest concentration of the SC population is found in the ten old districts (before 1997) of the state, namely Bangalore District including rural (14.09%), Gulbarga (8.29%), Mysore (8.11%), Kolar (7.74%), Bijapur (6.92%), Chitradurga (58.87%), Dharwad (5.57%), Tumkur (5.54%), Belgaum (5.52%), and Raichur (5.40%). These ten districts account for more than 73 per cent of the total population of the SCs in the state. So far as the least SC populated districts in the state are concerned, Kodagu ranks first (0.80%) and Uttara Kannada second (1.25%).

Of the total SC population in the state (73,69,279), the males accounted for 50.97 per cent (37,56,069) and the females 49.03 per cent (36.13,210). As regards the rural-urban distribution of the SCs is concerned, as many as 76.60 per cent reside in rural areas and only 23.40 per cent in urban areas. This, indeed, confirms the fact that rurality is one of the major characteristics of the SCs.

The sex ratio for the total population of the state of Karnataka is 960 females per thousand males. However, among the SCs it is (962) slightly better than the sex ration of the general population. Further, the sex ratio of the SCs in rural areas is considerably higher (969) than in urban areas. Surprisingly, compared to the rural population, the sex ratio of the SC rural population is slightly less.

So far as the literacy of the SCs is concerned in the state, 38.06 per cent in the age group of 7 years and above are literate. The percentage of the males and females of the SC population in the same age group are 49.69 and 25.95 respectively. However, compared to literacy rates of male (67.26%) and female (44.34%) of the total population, the literacy rates of SC male and female are lower. Besides, compared to SC male literacy rate, the SC female literacy rate is considerably lower. This clearly reflects the wide sex-disparity among the SCs in respect of literacy. The same scenario prevails throughout the state and the country as well. Of the 101 castes groups listed under the SCs in Karnataka, members belonging to only four castes are represented in our sample. Brief profile of each of these individual castes is given below:

**Adi Karnataka:** ‘Adi Karnataka’ (hereafter AK) means the oldest people or settlers of Karnataka. This term came into usage during the 1931 Census. Perhaps there is a history behind the usage of the term. Due to the impact of social movements like the non-Brahmin movement especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Madras Government on the recommendations of the provincial legislative council in 1922 ordered that the word ‘*panchama*’ be removed from the government records and insert ‘Adi Dravida’ for untouchable castes of Tamil origin and ‘Adi Andhra’ in the case of Telangas. A similar reason might be attributed for the introduction of this term in 1931 Census in the old Mysore State. The caste like Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra appear to be rather hazy. They seem to be more like generic terms applied to the ex-untouchables of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh respectively, rather than names of any specific castes. However, it is to be noted that ‘AK’ does not refer to any one particular caste but subsumes a number of castes and sub-castes like Holey, Madiga, Chalvadi, Balagai, etc., who were regarded as untouchables in the old Mysore State (Usha Rao 1981 : 34).

The Holeyas and Madigas who were enumerated separately under their respective names in the 1921 Census were clubbed together under one name AK in 1931 Census. Thus the term AK includes both Holeyas and Madiga. It is observed that in some districts like Mysore and Kolar, mostly Holeyas call themselves as AK while in some others like Bangalore and Tumkur, Madigas also call themselves as AK. It does not mean the Holeyas and the Madigas are one and the same. Though they have their dwellings at one end of a village and not scattered among the houses of the other castes within the village, they are really quite distinct. The Holeyas belong to the 'right-hand' division 'Balagaivyavaru' while the Madigas belong to the left-hand division 'Edagainyavaru' (Srinivas 1960 : 31, Usha Rao, 1981 : 37). Interestingly one claims superiority over the other. Thus, there is a constant conflict over their respective status in relation to the other. Subramanyam (1975) observes that two castes i.e., Mala (counterpart of Holeyas in Karnataka) and Madiga reside in separate hamlets in villages. There is an innate hostility between them. There is also a clear dichotomy in the occupational set up... Though the other castes consider them as polluting they have among themselves as inherent antagonism for each other. The Mala (Holeyas) and Madiga do not have any social intercourse, do not intermarry or inter-dine and often there are big quarrels between these castes which to other castes seem fairly trivial. Generally, the Holeyas are traditional agricultural labourers while the Madigas are the leather workers. From the point of view of the doctrine of pollution, leather workers have a status lower than that of those who do manual labour on the farm. Besides, there is a vast amount of segregation, discrimination and untouchability between the Holeyas and the Madigas themselves (Mumtaz Ali Khan, 1979 : 7).

**Adi Dravida:** The term Adi Dravida (hereafter AD) is derived from the words 'Adi' meaning from the 'beginning' and 'Dravida', 'the 'Dravidian' people. The term was coined in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a view to elevate the status and consolidate the self-respect of the untouchables in Tamil Nadu. The late E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker addressed the untouchables in Tamil Nadu as AD. This term was used in Karnataka around 1920. The Madiga or the Edgai (left hand) sections in Bangalore, Chikkamagalur, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya and Mysore district adopted this term. Surprisingly, the term is also being used by the Holeyas or the Balagai (right hand) sections in part of Chitradurga, Tumkur and Shimoga districts. However, this term is not used in North Karnataka (K.S. Singh, 1999 : 26). Like AK, the term AD also includes both the Madigas and Holeyas.

**Bhovi:** The name "Bhovi" is of recent origin. It is applied to the Voddas of old Mysore State. Prior to 1961, only the name 'Vodda' was used in the earlier Censuses or Gazetteers. Even in the census of 1941, the caste 'Vodda'

was enumerated under 'Depressed classes'. The name 'Bhovi' as a synonym for 'Vodda' appears for the first time in the Constitution (SCs) Order 1950. It was enumerated as 'SCs' in the Census of 1951. The first conference of the Bhovis was held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1944 at Davangere in the Mysore State. A resolution was passed at the conference regarding the change of name of their community from 'Voddar' to 'Bhovi'. Accordingly, the Government Order 1946 states "Government are pleased to direct that the community known as 'Vodda' be in future called 'Bhovi' in all government communications and records" (Usha Rao, 1981 : 44). In this way, the name Bhovi as a synonym for 'Vodda' got into official circulation.

The Bhovis are known by different names, such as Bovi, Wadda, Tudug- Vaddar, Voddar, Woddar, Waddar, Girinivaddar, Od and Odde (K.S. Singh 1999 : 259-261). Of course, there is no confusion regarding the caste to which they refer. According to Lewis Rice (1897 : 255) that the Bhovis are said to be originally immigrants from Orissa and Telugu country and they generally speak Telugu. L.K.A Iyer (1931 : 659-672) observes that the caste Vodda is made up of three endogamous groups such namely : 1) Kallu or Uru or Handi Voddas, 2) Mannu or Bailu or Deshada Voddas and 3) Uppu Voddas. Kallu Voddas are stone workers while Mannu Voddas are earth-diggers. The Uppu Voddas are employed as sweepers in municipal towns. Within the hierarchy of Voddas, the Uppu Voddas occupy the lowest rank as they are engaged in sweeping and scavenging. The Bhovis are mainly concentrated in Bangalore, Kolar, Chitradurga, Shimoga, Dharwad and Tumkur. Apart from traditional occupation such as earth digging, stone cutting, those who settle in villages pursue agriculture as a secondary occupation and often they work as daily wage labourers.

**Korama:** The word 'Korama' is derived from the word "Kuru" meaning 'fortune telling'. In fact this meaning is equivalent to the Telugu name, i.e., Erukula, which comes from the root "Erugu" 'meaning to know or divine'. The word "Korama" is also said to be a derivative of Tamil "Kuranj" meaning a hill country. Accordingly, the Koramas are a wild tribe living in jungles. Surprisingly, they were regarded as forest and hill tribe in the earlier Censuses. They are also known as Koraches or Koravas. According to Nanjundayya (1906 : 1) the names 'Koramas' and 'Korachas' are only local variants referring to one and the same caste. Further he describes them "as a wandering tribe, found all over the state. They are decidedly of Tamil origin, borne out by the language they speak which is common to them irrespective of the place they live in, whether as Yerukulas in the Tamil tracts, as Koramas and Korachas in the Kannada parts, or as Koravis or Kaikaris in the Mahratta country". Thurstone (1909 : 91-96) notes that Korama or Koracha are known by different names in different localities. They are known as Korava from the

extreme south to the north of North Arcot where they are called Koracha and in the ceded districts they become Yerukula. Because of their thieving profession, they were listed as criminal classes and included among depressed classes in 1931 for educational facilities. Later they were notified as SCs in the SCs and STs Lists (Modification) Order, 1956. They are largely concentrated in Bangalore, Tumkur, Chitradurga, Chikkamagalore and Shimoga districts. In some northern districts of Karnataka, such as Belgaum and Dharwad, they are known as 'Bajantri'. They play music instruments on festive occasions and at temples. Their traditional occupations are fortune-telling, prophesying omens, bamboo work, mat-weaving, rope making and tattooing (K S Singh 1999 : 574). In addition to traditional occupations, they are presently engaged in cultivation mostly as wage labourers, and other subsidiary occupations.

The numerical strength of the individual castes including those represented in the sample and their relative percentage to the total SC population is presented.

#### Distribution of the SCs above One Lakh Population in the State

Sl. No.	Name of the caste	Total population	Percentage to the total SC population in the state
1	Adi Karnataka	25,13,790	34.11
2	Banjara/Lambani	8,23,505	11.17
3	Bhovi	7,96,670	10.81
4	Adi Dravida	6,44,908	8.75
5	Holaya, Holer, Holey	5,39,838	7.32
6	Bhambi, Bhambhi, Asadaru, Asodi, Chamadia	4,64,107	6.30
7	Madiga	3,63,620	4.93
8	Korama/Koracha	1,50,367	2.04
9	Chalavadi, Chalvadi, Channayya	1,38,313	1.88
10	Beda, Jangam, Budga Jangam	1,21,056	1.64

Source: Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India, Vol.6, (ed) Paswan and Jaideva, Delhi, Kalpaz Publications, pp.332-343.

Out of 101 castes designated as SCs in Karnataka, only 10 castes are having more than one lakh population in the state (as per 1991 Census). The data clearly show that in terms of numerical strength AK rank first (34.11%), Banjara/Lambani second (11.17%), Bhovi third (10.81%), AD fourth (8.75%), Holey fifth (7.32%), Bambi sixth (6.30%), Madiga seventh (4.93%), Korama eighth (2.04%), Chalvadi ninth (1.88%) and Beda Jangama tenth (1.64%)

respectively of the total SC population in the State. Further, they constitute more than 55% of the total SC population in the State.

Though Holeya and Madiga enumerated separately in the Census records, they generally identify themselves either with AK or AD. Thus both AK and AD include Holeya and Madiga. Putting AK, AD, Holeya and Madiga together, they constitute nearly 56 per cent of the total SC population in the State. Besides, they predominate over other SCs and have a lion share in the utilisation of the governmental benefits in the fields of education, occupation and political representation because of numerical strength on the one hand and political affiliation and articulation on the other (Venkatasubbaiah 1993 : 56-57). This observation, no doubt, reconfirms the fact that the various caste groups which are included under the rubric “SCs” have not made equal progress in the utilisation of special privileges extended to them. This has given rise to inter-caste disparities in the utilisation of special privileges (Ramaswamy 1974 : 1153; Patwardhan 1974 : 313; Lal and Nahar 1978 : 47 and Pimpley 1980 : 3).

### **Increase of SC Population in Karnataka**

The population of SCs has been on the increase in the State of Karnataka since 1961. The percentage increase of the SC population between 1961 and 1991 is presented.

#### **Percentage increase of SC population between 1961-1991**

Sl. No.	Year	SC population	Decade	Percentage increase in population
1	1961	31,17,232	-	-
2	1971	38,50,034	1961-1971	23.50%
3	1981	55,95,353	1971-1981	45.33%
4	1991	73,69,279	1981-1991	31.70%

It is evident from that during the decade 1961-1971, percentage increase of the SC population in the state was 23.50 per cent which rose to 45.33 per cent between 1971-1981 but came down to 31.70 per cent in the following decade i.e., between 1981-1991. Compared to the proportion of SC population to the total population in 1981 (15.07%), the population SCs in 1991 (16.38%) registered in increase of 1.31 per cent (16.38% minus 15.07%).

**Conclusion:**

Thus, the population of SCs has been on the increase since 1961 in Karnataka. To conclude, Karnataka is the eighth largest State in India in terms of both area and population. It has 27 districts. At present there are 101 caste groups listed under the SCs in Karnataka. The SCs accounted (as per 1991 Census) for 16.38 per cent of the total population. They are largely concentrated in the districts of Bangalore including Urban, Gulbarga, Mysore, Kolar, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Tumkur, Belgaum and Raichur. These ten districts account for more than 73 per cent of the total population of the SCs in the State.

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