

OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN AND EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL MADIGA WOMEN IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

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Abstract -

In the state of Andhra Pradesh(unified), people belonging to 59 castes were incorporated in the list of Scheduled Castes. In this, Malas and Madigas are the main castes. Except a total of 8 castes, remaining all are sub castes either to Malas or Madigas. Out of the 59 Scheduled castes, Mala, Madiga, Adi Dravida and Adi Andhra together constitute 93.6 percent of the SC population of the state. Madiga are numerically the largest SCs with a population of 60,74,250 constituting 49.2 percent of the State SC population. They are followed by Mala having a population of 51, 39,305(41.6 per cent). 82.5 per cent of SCs are living in rural areas of the State. Among the numerically major SCs, Madigas have a rural population of 85.1 per cent, followed by Mala (81.9 per cent). The work participation rate (WPR - the percentage workers to the total population) is the highest at 52.2 per cent among Madigas. The occupational pattern of Madiga women is agriculture, livestock rearing, hiring out labour, caste professions and MGNREGA.

Key Words:*Madiga, Madiga women, Occupational pattern, labor, employment, agriculture*

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I. INTRODUCTION

As per the anthropological survey of India, the Mahadigas, aka Madigas are the Indian aborigine kings and they were the first rulers of Indian land. In general, they are considered to be indigenous people of the region descended from Neolithic settlers who have been incorporated into the caste system as general manual laborers for agriculture and leather working. Madigas are one of the major families of dalit classes widely spread across South India, in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and northern Tamil Nadu particularly. The leather work which was the foundation for their expansion over the centuries, was also the source of their distinctive untouchability, rarely questioned before it was outlawed in the mid-20th Century.

PROFESSION: The Madigas used to peel the skins of the dead animals, clean them by soaking in the bark of the tree TANGEDU and KARAKKAYA, make them completely dry. With the dried skins they used to make horse saddles, beautiful footwear and various artefacts, besides many percussion instruments and make excellent rhythmic sounds.

By right of trade the Madiga secures not only the hide of cattle, the carcass too is his. As death is always caused by disease, never by slaughter, the flesh is poisonous and loathsome in the extreme, especially in a country where decomposition is a rapid process. In this phase of their occupation lies the beginning and end of the Madiga's degradation.

Dr. Kolakaluri Enoch (1968) in his literary work titled "OORABAAVI", describes the extraordinary efficiency of *Madiga women* in their work.

As per 2001 census, 82.5 per cent of SCs are living in rural areas of the State. Among the numerically major SCs, Madigas have a rural population of 85.1 per cent, followed by Mala (81.9 per cent). More than half of Madigas are illiterate with literacy rate of 47.5 per cent. The lowest female literacy rate also was recorded in Madiga. At the individual caste level, Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra and Mala have more percentage of school going children than the overall State SC population. The work participation rate (WPR - the percentage workers to the total population) is the highest at 52.2 per cent among Madigas.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the occupational pattern and employment of the Madiga women
2. To suggest necessary measures in the light of the findings of the Study to enhance employment of Madiga women

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both secondary and primary sources of data and information. The secondary sources include all the relevant and connected data published and unpublished by the State and Central governments, Census of India at different decades, Ethnographic Notes, Handbook of Statistics, A.P, A.P Scheduled Castes of India 2001, Handbook of Statistics of selected districts and information provided by Bureau of Economics and Statistics.

The primary sources of data and information are the respondent Madiga women from the three districts of unified Andhra Pradesh viz., Anantapur, Nalgonda and Prakasam. 300 respondents from 9 villages, i.e., 3 villages for each district have been selected.

IV. Hypotheses

1. Most of the Madiga women are employed in agriculture as labour
2. Caste professions are almost disappearing
3. MGNREGA is a good source of employment for Madiga women

V. FINDINGS

The occupational pattern of Madiga women is agriculture, livestock rearing, hiring out labour, caste professions and MGNREGA. 87% of Madiga women's major occupation is labour. Only 13% of them have agriculture as occupation.

1.1 Working on own farm and as agricultural labour:

The particulars of working on own farm and as agricultural labour are furnished in Table-1. Very few respondent Madiga women are working on own farm. In Anantapur, Nalgonda and Prakasam districts the respondent women working on own farm are 12, 19 and 8 respectively. At the overall level, 39 out of 300 respondents are working on their own farm. This shows that great majority of Madiga families do not have their own farms. 88, 81 and 92 respondent Madiga

women in Anantapur, Nalgonda and Prakasam districts respectively do not work on their own farms. Almost the same situation exists with other family members.

Table - 1: Particulars of working on own farm and as Agricultural labour

S. No	District	House Holds	On own farm				As Agricultural labour			
			Respondents		Other family Members		Respondents		Other family Members	
			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Anantapur	100	12	88	16	84	71	29	32	68
2	Nalgonda	100	19	81	28	72	79	21	29	71
3	Prakasam	100	08	92	12	88	92	08	70	30
Total		300	39	261	56	244	242	58	131	169
% to Total			13.00	87.00	18.67	81.33	80.67	19.33	43.66	56.33

In Prakasam district 92% of respondent Madiga women stated that they work as agricultural labour. This is followed by respondents in Nalgonda and Anantapur districts. At the overall level 81.33% respondents are agricultural labour. This shows that Madiga women by and large are eking out their living mainly as agricultural labour. Agricultural labour employment is seasonal and their wages are at the mercy of land owner farmers. Depending on the work on the farm and also season the wages are paid. The wages are usually low. The agricultural labour is at the lowest bottom of the population hierarchy.

1.2. Number of days of labour, employment in agriculture:

Employment in agriculture is highly seasonal. There are peak periods and slack periods. Work will be more during peak periods and less in slack period. It is reported that slack periods are longer and the work naturally scanty during this period. It is obvious that more unemployment prevails in agricultural sector. The labour does not get work for several days.

The details of number of days employed in agriculture are presented in Table 2. It is noted that the number of days employed in agriculture is relatively better in Prakasam district when compared with Anantapur and Nalgonda districts. At the overall level, 26.33% of

Madigawomen respondents are employed in agriculture for about 70 days. 14.67% respondents got work for 100 days, while 16.33% of respondents got employment in agriculture for more than 100 days. Highest number of respondents that is 22% of them in Nalgonda district gets work in agriculture above 100 days.

Table – 2: Number of days of labour employment in agriculture

S. No.	Working days	Districts			Total (N=300)	% to Total
		Anantapur (N=100)	Nalgonda (N=100)	Prakasam (N=100)		
1	Below 30 days	12	28	10	50	16.67
2	Below 50 days	28	20	30	78	26.00
3	70 days	35	18	26	79	26.33
4	100 days	08	12	24	44	14.67
5	Above 100 days	17	22	10	49	16.33
Total		100	100	100	300	100.00

1.3. Employment in Caste profession:

The caste professions are almost disappearing under the new economic policy. The products prepared by the caste professionals are replaced by modern works or products. Negligible percentage of households is engaged in caste profession. Shoe making is one of the important functions of the caste professionals.

Table –3: Annual Income from Caste Profession

S. No.	Districts	House Holds engaged in Caste Profession	Income from Caste Profession			
			Rs.1000	Rs.1500	Rs.2000	Rs.3000
1.	Anantapur	04	00	02	02	00
2.	Nalgonda	11	02	03	05	01
3..	Prakasam	02	00	01	01	00
Total		17	02	06	08	01
% to Total		5.67	11.76	35.29	47.06	5.88

5.67% of Madiga women at the overall level are engaged in caste profession.

1.4. Employment in Livestock rearing:

The important livestock particulars are provided in Table- 4. Bullocks, Cows, Milch cattle, poultry, sheep and goats are some of the livestock. The livestock wealth of the selected respondents by and large is very poor. It is not at all a big Asset. About 1/3rd of the

Table -4: Livestock particulars (No. of respondents)

S. No.	Districts	House Holds	Livestock					
			Bullocks	Cows	Milch cattle	Poultry	Sheep's	Goats
1	Anantapur	100	04	05	13	28	03	08
2	Nalgonda	100	06	03	12	35	06	02
3	Prakasam	100	02	07	29	32	02	04
Total		300	12	15	54	95	11	14
% to Total			04.00	05.00	18.00	31.67	03.67	04.67

respondents have poultry activity followed by milch cattle rearing. Prakasam district appears to be better placed in milch cattle and poultry activities. 54 respondents said that they possess milchcattle at the overall level. Sheep and goats provide some employment to 25 respondents. The position of bullocks is very low. About 15 respondents possess non-milch cows.

1.5. Role of respondents in livestock rearing:

The details of respondents' role in rearing livestock are provided in Table- 5. The important works related to rearing are green grass, watering, washing, removing dung and other works. The respondents' role is very less in Prakasam district.

Table - 5: Role of respondents in livestock rearing

S. No.	District	House Holds	Respondents role in rearing livestock				
			Green Grass	Watering	Washing	Removing the dung	Other Works
1	Anantapur	100	10	38	13	11	37
2	Nalgonda	100	15	40	10	14	32

3	Prakasam	100	29	15	13	12	17
Total		300	54	93	36	37	86
Total			18.00	31.00	12.00	12.33	28.67

1.6. Employment in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

Employment Guarantee is one of the important tasks of the government. Even in British days, the government was taking up famine works like laying of roads, canals, tank repairs etc. After independence also, the government continued the programs for creating employment for the rural people. Unemployment was in serious proportions and hence rural people were continuously agitating for employment through local works. Because of the agitations and representations of the people and their representatives, the government thought of some employment guarantee or guarantee programs. Particularly Maharashtra was leading in rural employment guarantee scheme. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was enacted in Parliament. This scheme started in a village in Ananthapur District by the then Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Smt. Sonia Gandhi. According to this scheme a minimum of 100 days of employment is to be provided for poor rural people. Employment Guarantee cards are issued to them for making them eligible for the works under NREGA. This program gave immense benefit to the rural unemployed poor people. The NREGA is changed into MGNREGA later.

1.7. Employment in MGNREGA:

The details of employment in MGNREGA are presented in Table- 6. Three categories of workers were working under MGNREGA. They are respondents, girls in the family and other members of the family. 70% of the respondents are reported working in MGNREGA scheme in Ananthapur district. This is followed by 78% and 23% of respondents working in Nalgonda and Prakasam districts. At the overall level, 73.67% of respondents out of 300 could find employment in MGNREGA. Even girls in the family were sent for employment in MGNREGA because of poverty. 18, 10 and 36 number of girls in Anantapur, Nalgonda and Prakasam districts totalling 64, were employed under MGNREGA. Other members of the family were also working in MGNREGA in large numbers. 72, 63 and 75 members were working in MGNREGA.

Table - 6: Employment in MGNREGA

S. No.	District	House Holds	Respondents		Girls in the family		Other members in the family	
			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Anantapur	100	70	30	18	82	72	28
2	Nalgonda	100	78	22	10	90	63	37
3	Prakasam	100	73	27	36	64	75	25
Total		300	221	79	64	236	210	90
% to Total			73.67	26.33	21.33	78.67	70.00	30.00

At the overall level 210 out of 300, that is 70% of families were working in the same scheme.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

1. 87% of Madiga women do not work on their own farms. Almost the same situation exists with other family members. At the overall level 80.67% of respondents are agricultural labour. This shows that Madiga women by and large are eking out their living mainly as agricultural labour. Agricultural labour employment is seasonal and their wages are at the mercy of land owner farmers. The wages are usually low. The agricultural labour is at the lowest bottom of the population hierarchy.

2. Livestock rearing is a low-level activity and employment of Madiga women is very low.

Employment in MGNREGA

3. Three categories of workers were working under MGNREGA. They are respondents, girls in the family and other members of the family. At the overall level, 221 respondents out of 300 could find employment in MGNREGA. Even girls in the family were sent for employment in MGNREGA because of poverty. At the overall level 210 out of 300 families were working in the same scheme. The target of 100 days employment is not achieved in any of the districts. It is clear that the annual income from MGNREGA scheme is totally inadequate for making a living.

4. Negligible percentage of households is engaged in caste profession.

5. At the overall level 237 out of 300, felt that they lost the caste trade as all of them are engaged in agricultural labour work.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Occupational pattern and employment: About 87% of Madiga women are engaged in agricultural labour. About 6% of Madiga women are engaged in caste occupation. Agriculture by owner farmers is only marginal. If the economic conditions are to be improved for Madiga women, the agricultural labour conditions have to be improved and their income increased. Agriculture work is seasonal and their wages are low and therefore employment for Madiga women with fair wages has to be improved.

2. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): MGNREGA should be linked to agriculture. Employment under MGNREGA should be provided at least for two hundred days and the wages have to be enhanced.

3. It is suggested that each of Madiga women should be allotted at least 3 acres of land. Necessary assistance or loan be provided for land development.

4. Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Efforts should be made to form SHGs for all Madiga women and funds may be made available for them for self-employment and other welfare measures.

5. Assistance should be provided to Madiga women in livestock rearing as it enhances their employment.

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