



THE PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

We get a lot of valuable information regarding untouchability from the works of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, M.K. Gandhi, G.S. Ghurye, A. Ayyappan, B Kuppaswamy, J.H. Hutton, H.N. Brailsford, D.R. Desai and others.

Basically, the people considered within the scheduled castes category are untouchables in India. For the first time, the Government of India prepared a list of people under the head 'Scheduled Castes, amounting to a population of 5.35 crores. Now their number has increased tremendously in all the states of India. In this paper, the researcher has tried to prove that, even today untouchability occurs among the Madiga community in a few villages in the Haveri district.

KEYWORDS :**METHODOLOGY:****Objectives of the study:**

- To examine the respondents facing untouchability.
- To analyse the respondents' education and religious disabilities in the study area.
- To know the respondents' reasons for the practice of untouchability.

Research Methodology:

Every researcher's intention is to know about the problems and issues in the research area. For this purpose, it is essential to study the scholarly views, opinions and observations, etc in the field. Further, it is also important to collect the data from different published and unpublished sources. The following are the sources of data for the present study.

Sources of Data:

The present study is empirical. The present study is mainly based on primary data collected from the Madiga community who are living in the Haveri district and a few selected villages. The Madiga community people living in rural and urban areas were interviewed to collect information from the field. Hence, the present study helps the researcher to write this article.

Selection of Field Study Area:

The Madiga community is found all over Karnataka state. But a higher population of this community is found in the Haveri district and a few selected villages in Karnataka.

Simple random sampling was collected from 150 respondents in the field area of Aladakatti, Basavanal, Baradi, Devagiri, Nadiharalahalli and Karadagi villages of the Haveri district.

Forms of Untouchability in Study Area:**1. Social Disabilities (Untouchability) in study area:**

In the social sphere following disabilities are inflicted against the Madigas in the field study region.

Madigas were prohibited from using public wells and taps in their village. In some villages, they were not allowed to even pass near a public well. This rule was practised with varying degrees of strictness. In Haveri, the Madigas were allowed to come near the well but were forbidden to draw water out of it. In some villages like Aladakatti, Basavanal, Baradi, Devagiri, Nadiharalahalli and Karadagi the untouchables were not allowed to use the main roads of the village at day time as it was considered derogatory to the well-being of the upper castes. The presence of a Madiga was meted out as an ill-luck for the passerby belonging to an upper caste. The very shadow of a Madiga was called a harbinger of evil luck. They were allowed to use the main roads of the village at night. Whenever a Madiga saw a man from the upper caste he was

supposed to prostrate upon the ground so that his shadow may not fall on the higher caste. Two decades ago, a Madiga's child was not allowed to attend a school where the children belonging to upper castes were studying as their presence in the school would lead to its pollution and would defile the child sitting beside them. The Madiga children remained illiterate as there were no separate schools for them. Moreover, education was not considered as a necessity for these children. There were many religious texts that forbid the Shudras from being schooled. Even today many social restrictions were placed upon the Madigas, for instance, the bride and bridegroom belonging to the Madiga community were not allowed to sit in the palanquin like their counterparts in the upper castes. Madigas were harassed by Upper castes if the former tried to break this restriction or if a Madiga bridegroom tried to sit on a horse. Besides these restrictions, the washermen did not wash Madiga's clothes and the shopkeeper would not supply them with food-stuffs and tea. In some villages the tea shop keepers serve the tea for Madigas in separate cups, and that too outside the shop. Many Madigas serve as Agricultural Coolies in the fields of upper-caste people. During the work, Madigas were not allowed to touch the drinking water pots which were kept in the fields. Madigas had to bring their own plastic tumbler or mug into which the upper caste field farmer poured the water. If the Madiga forgot to bring a tumbler or mug then he had to cup both hands in which the upper caste farmer poured the drinking water from the pot directly. But today due to awareness of government rules, practising untouchability is less in percentage when compared to the past two decades in the field area.

2. Economic Disabilities due to Untouchability in the study area:

In the economic sphere of life, Madigas suffer from the following imposed disabilities: (i) In more than 60 Villages in the Haveri district Madigas are not able to take up any job or profession meant for upper castes. (ii) Madigas are allowed to take up their conventional occupations which involve dirt or soil (iii) Madigas are living in dirty slums, in utter poverty because of their economic backwardness caused by these imposed disabilities. In the field study area, many Madigas are landless or small farmers, so they depend on the upper caste for their daily bread. Madigas work as agricultural coolie in the fields of upper castes and take whatever wages are given by the upper caste men for their coolie service. Madigas are paid very low wages for their work.

3. Religious Disabilities (Untouchability) in the study area:

Following disabilities were imposed upon Madigas, (i) In the sphere of religious life Madigas of the Haveri district were prohibited from entering temples. (i) Madigas of the Haveri district and villages in the field study region even were not

allowed to approach the monasteries and cremation grounds because their presence would lead to impurity. (iii) Their worshipping in the temples would defile the ground of God as well the worshippers. (iv) Madigas in the field study region, till today offer their prayer to the upper caste people's god and goddess by standing outside the temple.

Table 1 Practice of Untouchability in the Study Area

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	113	75.33
2	No	37	24.66
3	Total	150	100

Table no. 1 explains the practice of untouchability in the study area. Out of 150 respondents, the majority of the respondents that is 113 respondents (75.33%) of respondents have experienced untouchability in their area. Because of their lack of education, poverty, dominance by the upper caste people, and also for some other reasons, these respondents experience untouchability.

And remaining 37 respondents that is 24.66% of the total respondents have not experienced any practice of untouchability in their area because they got a good education. They are educated, modernized, have social awareness, have developed good economic conditions for their family, and have good interaction with the other upper caste people.

Table 2 Respondent's reasons for the practice of untouchability

Sl. No.	REASONS	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Lack of education	67	44.66
2	Lack of social awareness	51	34
3	Rigid social system	21	14
4.	Not Applicable	11	7.33
	TOTAL	150	100

Table no. 2 explains the reasons for the practice of untouchability in the study area. In India's traditional social system, untouchability is experienced by low-caste communities. Similarly, in some cases in rural areas, the Madigas are untouchable. The respondents said, there are several reasons for untouchability in the field of study like illiteracy, lack of social awareness, lack of social system study, lifestyle, occupation, diet, social position, etc. 62 respondents that form 44.66 per cent of the respondents face untouchability because of lack of education. 51 respondents that are 34 per cent of the total respondents face untouchability because of a lack of social awareness because the higher caste people feel that the respondent's community are untouchable. And another 21 respondents forming 14 per cent of the total respondents feel that they face untouchability in their region because of the rigid social system 7.33% respondents said that the reasons indicated above in the table are not applicable to them.

Table 3 Respondent's reasons for the non-practice of untouchability

Sl. No.	REASONS	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Education	81	54
2	Modernization	31	20.66
3	Social awareness	20	13.33
4	Not Applicable	18	12
	TOTAL	150	100

Tables no. 3 explains the reason for not practicing untouchability in the respondents' areas. By observing the above table 81 respondents that form 54% of respondents,

give their reason as 'Education' for not practicing untouchability in their area. It means they are highly educated and education is the source for the entire field area. When they have knowledge that is education it helps them to lead a life of equality with other community people in the society. 31 respondents that are 20.66% of respondents have said that 'Modernization' helps them to avoid untouchability in their area. With the help of education, the family background of the respondents and their community get the means for modernization.

There are 20 respondents that are 13.33% of the total respondents who give their reason as 'Social awareness'. When they get knowledge and education they automatically get social awareness. And another 18 respondents that are 12% of the total respondents have said as not applicable. It means they are facing the problem of untouchability, which was explained in the earlier table.

Major findings:

1. In the field study region Madigas are below the poverty line.
2. It is noticed that the majority of them, in one way or another face problems like untouchability, humanization, and suppression.
3. Due to the awareness of the government's strict rules people are afraid to openly practice untouchability.
4. Religious discrimination still persists.
5. The data reveals that 44.66% and 34% of the respondents face untouchability because of a lack of education and lack of social awareness.
6. However, it is noticed that in a few villages e.g. 54% and 20.6% of them do not practice untouchability because education and modernization help them to live along with the common people.

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