



Political Participation Among Koramas of Karnataka: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

Korama community is one of the scheduled castes in Karnataka. They are traditional musicians; basket & broom makers and sellers. In present paper researcher used Koramas household and village survey data from Savadatti taluk to examine who participate in voting, membership in political parties, contesting in various forms of elections, village meetings called by elected local governments, and what effect these meetings have on beneficiary selection for welfare programs. The main objective of present paper is to examine the political consciousness and participation of the Koramas. The present paper elaborating about respondents political consciousness and participation which includes respondents vote for various political parties, membership in various political parties, respondents contesting in various elections, support of political parties to respondents, etc., Researcher has collected information through primary and secondary data. The basic materials for this paper come from the primary data collection method, through the participant observation and interview schedules. The sample has been chosen from the 4 villages of Savadatti taluk of Karnataka. By using simple random sampling method 120 respondents were chosen for the present study.

KEYWORDS

Koramas, Political consciousness, Political participation, Membership

INTRODUCTION:

Dalits in India are officially termed scheduled castes, form the largest discriminated community. Their discrimination is based, first, on their birth into specific 'untouchable' castes, and secondly, on their traditional 'polluting' work. As a result, although almost one in five Indians is a Dalit, their political participation as a large minority community in India remains disproportionately low. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted its concern over the under representation of Dalits in all levels of government. The Committee went further to state that, dalit candidates are frequently forcibly prevented from standing for election or, if elected, forced to resign from village councils or other elected bodies or not to exercise their mandate, and that many Dalits are not included in electoral rolls or otherwise denied the right to vote.

It is true that the quota system has resulted in over 100,000 Dalit were elected as representatives across the country today in village councils or other elected bodies. Unfortunately, however, political representation through quotas has not led to effective political participation for the majority of Dalits. The main obstacle is the multiple discrimination these Dalits face arising from the caste hierarchy and long continued poverty.

Discrimination on the grounds of caste is morally, legally and democratically wrong. But caste equality can come about only when Dalits make use of the full array of political weapons available to them to achieve it, that is political activity is essential to the struggle for Dalits' liberation. After getting independence many facilities are provided to import political participation, special provisions also made to the scheduled castes by quota system. In spite of all these, the political participation level of scheduled caste is not improved because of ignorance, low literacy and their low socio-economic background. Koramas of Savadatti taluk in Belgaum district are the dalits, because of their illiteracy and poverty they lack in political participation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

To examine the political awareness among Korama community.

To analyze the nature of political participation in Korama community.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher adopted a simple random sampling method to study the problem.

Universe of the Study:

In Karnataka Savadatti Taluka of Belgaum district has been selected for the present study. According to the Census of India, the total population of Savadatti Taluk is 3, 11,693. It is surrounded by 133 neighboring villages. And the Total population of Scheduled castes in Savadatti taluk is 26,404 which consist of 13,271 males and 13,133 females. Among the Scheduled castes of Savadatti taluk, Korama population is estimated to be around 2000.

The Sample:

A Simple random sampling method is adopted for selecting the sample. Keeping eye on the present research and duration of the study, the respondents have been selected from four villages (Chikkumbi, Hooli, Sattigeri, and Shindhogi) of Savadatti taluk. The data was collected from 120 persons (head of households).

DISCUSSION:

Demographic profile of the Respondents

Table No-1: Age wise classification of Respondents

Age-group	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	10	08.33
31-40	41	34.17
41-50	34	28.33
51-60	18	15.00
Above 60	17	14.17
Total	120	100.00

The above table reveals about the age-wise classification of total 120 respondents. 41 persons between 31 to 40 years age group are participated with highest percentage of 34.17, the second highest persons participated is between 41 to 50 age group numbering 34 with percentage of 28.33, between 51 to 60 age group 15 percentage are participated. Above 60 years age group 17 persons are participated and between 21 and 30 age group 10 persons are participated in Interview

schedule with percentage of 8.33.

Political Awareness:

The present data indicates that all of the respondents are politically conscious about their democratic rights and duties. It is observed that 100 percent of the respondents have voted in the last general elections. In last MLA, MLC, elections respondents have voted in favor of different political parties.

CHART No-1
Respondents Voted in the Favor of Various Parties

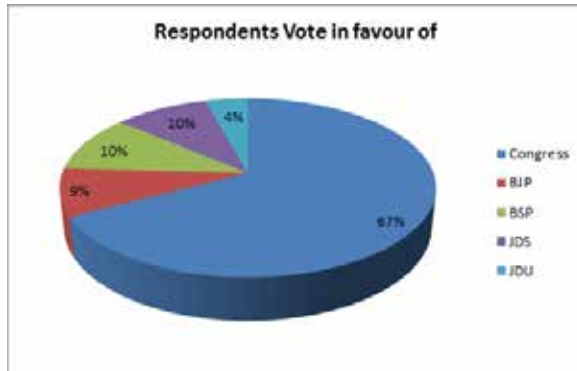


Chart No-1 reveals about the respondents franchise their vote in favor of various political parties in the last general elections. Among them 60 per cent franchise their vote in favor of Congress-I. 15 per cent of the respondents voted in favor of B.S.P, 12 per cent of the total respondents voted in favor of Janata Dal (S). And 10 per cent were voted in favor of Bharatiya Janata Party, and another 3 per cent of the respondents voted in favor of Janata Dal (U).

Political Participation:

The ways measuring political participation is in terms of people exercising their vote without any fear and pressure. In present research work 81.67 per cent of the respondents exercised their franchise without fear and pressure, and 18.33 per cent exercised their franchise under pressure and fear of Upper caste leaders.

TABLE No-1
Reasons for Voting without Fear and Pressure

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Social Awareness	64	53.33
Educational Awareness	14	11.67
Political Awareness	20	16.67
Not Applicable	22	18.33
Total	120	100.00

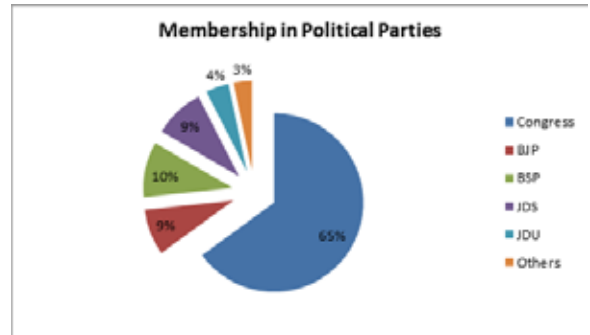
Table No-1 reveals that 18.33 per cent voted under pressures, all others voted without fear and pressure. Among them 53.33 per cent has social awareness, 16.67 per cent has educational awareness and 11.67 per cent has the political awareness.

TABLE No-2
Reasons for Voting under Fear and Pressure

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Pressure of upper caste	12	10.00
Educational Backwardness	04	3.33
Both	06	5.00
Not Applicable	98	81.67
Total	120	100.00

Table No-2 reveals about, those who exercised their franchise under fear and pressures. 10 per cent of the respondents had pressure from the upper caste. 3.33 per cent voted in pressure because of educational backwardness and the remaining 5 per cent of the respondents have voted under pressure and fear due to both educational backwardness and pressure of the upper caste leaders.

Chart No-2
Membership in Political Parties



The question of membership of a political party is based on several factors in the Indian context. Unless one because the executive member of any of the units. They will not hold a formal membership of any political party. However, people will identify themselves with one or the other political parties or have alliance or support political parties. Such as a support will be based on several criteria including the policies of a political party.

Chart No-2 reveals that a large majority per cent of the respondents were the member of Congress party (58%), followed by 15 per cent of B.S.P, 12 per cent are the member of the Janata Dal (S). 5 per cent are the members of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and 2 per cent are the member of the Janata Dal (U). And another 8 per cent are the members of the other parties like BSR, KJP, etc.

TABLE No-3
Respondents who Contested in the Elections

Election	Frequency	Percentage
M.P. Election	-	-
M.L.A. Election	-	-
Z.P. Election	01	0.83
T.P. Election	02	1.67
G.P. Election	06	5.00
Any other	01	0.83
Not Contested	110	91.67
Total	120	100.00

Table No-3 reveals about the respondents, who contested in the elections. None of the respondents contested in M.L.A and M.P Elections. 5 per cent of the respondents contested in Grama Panchayat elections, 1.63 per cent of the respondents contested in Taluk Panchayat elections. And 0.83 per cent contested in Zilla Panchayat election, and another 0.83 per cent contested in other forms of election, 91.67 per cent of the respondents never contested in any of the elections. In that 60 per cent not contested because of not having interest 20 per cent because of financial problems and another 11.66 per cent not contested in election due to the non cooperation of upper caste leaders.

So the 10 respondents (8.33 per cent) of the total are contested in various type of election. In that only 2 respondents got elected in the elections. Both candidates won the election because the seat was reserved for scheduled castes and also there win were in the form of unopposed.

The present research shows that dominant castes often engineer elections by propping up Dalit as proxy candidates. They

exploit these dalits's vulnerabilities as 'low' caste illiterates, as dependent on dominant castes for their livelihood, as lacking sufficient financial resources to meet election expenses.

Chart No-3
Support of Political Parties to Korama Community

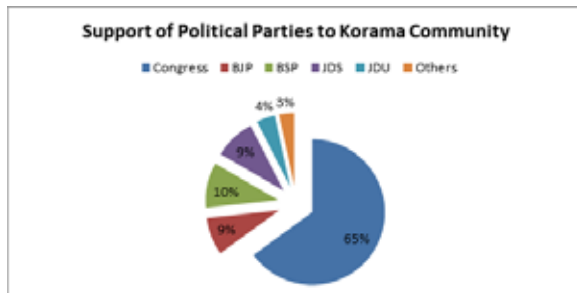


Chart No-3 shows that among the all political parties, which protects the interest of the Korama (or scheduled castes). 65 per cent of the respondents reported the Congress party has always supports the cause of the Dalits and introduced several programmes and policies, followed by BSP 10 percent. Another 9 per cent of the respondent attributed that the JDS, 9 per cent reported as BJP and 4 per cent projected the JDU as a party which protects interest of scheduled castes. And another 3 per cent reported that the other smaller parties like B.S.R, S.P, etc. have concern for the Korama Community or scheduled castes.

Government Policy and Programs:

Koramas of Savadatti Taluk are left behind in getting profit from Governmental policy and programmes. 40 per cent of the respondents reported that, they are not getting any assistance from governmental policies and programmes because of corrupt officers and lack of information. Only 60 per cent respondents got assistance from policies and programmes.

TABLE No-4
Assistance from the Government Policy and Programs

Assistance	Frequency	Percentage
Land	30	25.00
Loan	28	23.33
Tailoring Training	3	2.50
Help to Borrow Cattle	9	7.50
Hand Craft	2	1.67
Not Applicable	48	40.00
Total	120	100.00

Table No-4 reveals about the Koramas receiving assistance from the government policy & programmes. 25 per cent received assistance in land purchasing. 23.33 per cent of the respondents received various loan from government bank, 2.5 per cent received training in tailoring. And 7.5 per cent received financial to borrow cattle, another 1.67 per cent received financial help to start hand craft work.

FINDINGS:

Majority of Koramas of Savadatti taluk have political awareness.

The present research work reveals that 18.33 per cent respondents voted under pressures because of upper caste pressure & educational backwardness, and all others voted without any fear and pressure.

Only 10 respondents (8.33 per cent) of the total were contested in various type of elections, among them 2 were won the election by unopposed.

More than half of the respondents reported that, the Congress party has always supports the cause of the Dalits and introduced several programmes and policies.

40 per cent of the respondents reported that, they are not

getting assistance from governmental policies and programmes because of corrupt officers and lack of information.

CONCLUSION:

By Observing above findings we can conclude that, Koramas of Savadatti taluk in Belgaum district of Karnataka have political awareness but they lack in political participation due to non co-operation of dominant caste leaders as dependent on dominant castes for their livelihood, as lacking sufficient financial resources to meet election expenses. Political participation through quotas, therefore, in the absence of other measures, has potential to lead to a situation where caste hierarchy is reinforced, and Dalits are deterred from effective political participation in future.

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