

## Social Change among Chalavadi Caste: A Sociological Study



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*Abstract: Chalawadi community has been the victim of oppression and exploitation since history. A part from the various reformatory movement from time to time, they continued to be the most backward, exploited and deprived section of society. After Vedic period the Varna system and caste system became rigid. Hence the conditions of Chalawadi caste people become worst day by day and they continued to be victims of violence and oppression at the hands of the caste Hindus. Recently as a result of Industrialization, Urbanization expansion of Education and Modernization there have been occurring changes in Indian caste system. Hence the present study focuses on the changes among Chalawadi caste of Karnataka. Today the people of Chalawadi caste accepted social changes to face the demands of evolving situations, which provide novel opportunities to bring about changes in their conventional socio-cultural life.*

*Keywords: Chalavadi, Chalawadi, change, caste, subaltern,*

### **Introduction**

Change is law of nature and it is ubiquitous phenomenon. Social Change is the basic feature of every society, which is inevitable also. It is an important process with no end. Social change is an alteration of social structures including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms, values and cultural aspects No society can escape from such changes hence a sociologist is required to take these changes into consideration for proper study of society. Recently Indian society with its peculiar institutions is changing very rapidly as a result of dynamic nature of the people, Kuppuswamy B. (2010) opined that “Indian society has now taken up the task of changing itself from agricultural society to an industrial society, from a colonial society with emperors and monarchs to a Republican society, from society based on

caste and class to a society which aims to be casteless and classless with equality of opportunity to every citizen quarantined by the Indian constitution.”

Social change indicates the transformation of various social institutions and style of living, without such changes society will be inactive and dull. Hence the concept of social change captured the mind of sociologists and social anthropologist to concentrate attention on changes in communities and tribes. Later other sociologist like M. N. Srinivas studied the changes in caste system by imbibing upper castes by lower caste people and tribes, which Srinivas called it Sanskritization.

In this way social change began among low caste people including Chalavadi of Karnatak. Hence social change acquired a dominant place in the history of mankind. Recently as a result of industrialization, urbanization expansion of education and modernization there have been occurring changes in Indian caste system. Hence the present study focuses on the changes among Chalavadi caste of Karnataka. Today the people of Chalavadi caste accepted social changes to face the demands of evolving situations, which provide novel opportunities to bring about changes in their conventional socio-cultural life.

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1) To know the historical background of the Chalavadi community.
- 2) To analyze the social status of the Chalavadi community.
- 3) To study the social change among Chalavadi community.

### **Methodology**

The present study entirely depended on secondary data. The Secondary data are those data which have already been collected by someone else and already been passed through the statistical process. The researcher adopted the secondary data.

## **Meaning of Caste**

Caste system is one of the salient features of Hindu society, because of which Indian social structure has its own unique place in the world. It is an inseparable entity of the Indian society. There is no comparable institution elsewhere in the world for the caste system. Hence H. R. Mukhi (1975) opined that “Caste is one of the characteristics of Hindu society, which is continuing since time immemorial. The system has come to stay and is a part of our socio political set up and influenced the entire hub of the social structure”.

Caste is determined by birth and therefore no effort should be made to alter one's position. We use the word caste to distinguish one person from another. We say that such and such person belong to a particular caste by name. In saying it we generally mean to convey that he is born of parents or is also an important aspect of caste and Inter caste matrimonial relations are forbidden. The “Pollution blockade stipulates that untouchables should remain outside the civic society. People should subsist according to their caste rituals and rites and there by accomplish their religious duty and obligations that is, dharma, by staying within their caste folds” (Ghuman, 2011).

## **Theories of Caste**

The caste system in India is as old as Vedas, whether or not it was practiced during the pre-Aryan period, as a debatable. But it is almost certain that features of the caste system began to appear and operate as soon as the northern part of the Indian sub- continent. To support this opinion Karve Iravati (1961) said that Manu, the mythical Hindu law –giver has ascribed the origin of caste as the progeny of inter – Varna unions and the number of castes growing as the mixtures and permutations there of increased the variety. While Aryan did not have caste, there nevertheless may have been castes in India prior to the Aryan period. Karve also opined that caste is a social process and that process of caste making is going on throughout history and is happening even today.

So many attempts have been made to understand how the caste system originated. Some of these ideas have been considered as theories of the caste system. Due to its all pervading nature it has drawn the attention of social scientists especially sociologists and anthropologists. Let us discuss some of the theories of pertaining to the origin of caste system.

### **Traditional Theory**

The traditional theory explains its origin from the ancient literature and believes that caste has a divine origin. There are it is opined that castes were created by Brahma. He created Varna's for the maintenance of different social functions for the maintenance of society. The four Varna's have emerged from the different parts of Brahma's body, which is a symbols description. It indicates the work performed by each of them. Since The Brahmin emerged out of the mouth, his duty is to serve society as priest and teacher, and also preserves his cultural heritage. The Kshatriya from his arms, which symbolise strength and he has to defend society from internal and external egressions and rule the dynasty. The duty of Vaishya who came out of the thighs is to provide food for the members of society and look after its economic well being the Sudra, is born out of the feet, Is to serve the members of other castes.( Nagendra S.P.1968).

### **Occupational Theory**

Nesfield (1885) (in Ram Ahuja 1990) believed caste system as the natural result of the occupational division of Hindu society. In his words "function and function alone is responsible for the origin of caste system". He viewed that in the beginning when there was no rigidity, each individual was free to have occupation of his choice. But gradually due to practicing the same occupation over a long period of time, the skill of occupation was passed on hereditarily from generation to generation, where occupational changes come to a half. "Occupational Guild" came into existence, which later on came to be known as castes. There after castes were identified on the basis of fixed occupation persons in noble occupation like educating the people, fighting in the war field, trade and agriculture were regarded as members of superior

castes. The others were treated as persons belonging to inferior castes, such as the Sudras. Thus with the rigidity in the system every occupation became hereditary and through which the caste system came into existence.

### **Chalavadi Caste**

The untouchable castes in Karnataka were the worst victims of the caste system during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These castes were virtually leading the life of slaves under superior castes. They were under control and mercy of the upper castes. According to the Mysore census 1881 “both Holeya and Madiga castes were considered as ‘out castes’. They were also called ‘Right hand or ‘Balagai’ and ‘Left hand’ or ‘Yadagai’ respectively due to strong notion of pollution these castes were treated as ‘Unclean’ and ‘Impure’. A Holeys having to deliver anything to a Brahmin places it on the ground and retires to a distance, when meeting in a street or road, the Holeya moves as far as possible away the path of his superior”.

According to the Mysore census of 1901 the main occupation of the Holeya is cultivation. Holeys constitutes in fact, quite as fully as its name implies, the backbone of cultivation in the country. ‘HOLA’ is the Kanarese name for a dry crop field and Holeya mean the man of such land. The Holeyas are also village watchman and generally messengers. They are also called ‘Chalavadis’ and ‘Kulavadis. According to Lewis, Rice B (1897) in Mysore Gazetteer (Vol.I,P.215) Chalvadis are also recognised as ‘priests’ among the Holeya caste and engaged themselves in the priestly duties. They attend the funeral and marriage ceremonies of Holeys. The traditional occupation of Chalavadi is to tour from village to village and propagate religious ideas. But very little is known about the religious ideas which this caste propagated”.

Further Lewis, Rice B opined that “The Kularadi had a recognised position in the village and he has always been recognised as an ultimate reference in case of boundary disputes, because he worked on the field of caste Hindus from morning to evening. Similarly caste Hindus also regarded him as an authentic source of information on their land boundaries”

On the other hand the occupation of Madiga caste know as ‘ Left hand’, is more concerned with the polluting lather, Hence the Madiga had a lower ritual status than the Holeya. According to the Mysore census 1901, “The Madiga is the village cobbler. He removes the carcasses of the village cattle, skins them and is bound to supply the village community with agricultural articles made of skin or lather such as the thongs of the bullocks, buckets for lifting water etc”.

### **Origin of Chalavadi Caste**

There are a number of writings on the Indian castes and tribes. Thurston, Hayavadana Rao, J. S. F. Meckenzo, Risley, Iyer and others had published the ethnographic material on castes and tribes of India As far as origin of Chalavadi or Holeya caste there are three sources viz, Mythological, historical and Etymological origin. Let us try to understand these in brief.

### **Mythological Origin**

According to one of the legends, “Jambava Rishi was created by Adishakti, when earth was still in a fluid state. When he was floating on its surface, by the command of the creator he killed his younger son and mixed his blood with liquid earth, when upon it curdled into a solid mass. The name of the younger so is ‘Heppumuni’” (Heppu meaning curdle) by the grace of Parameshawara and Parvati the boy was revived and gave rise to the caste of Dokkaloru, who are regarded on the inferior progeny of the Madigas. They claim descent for themselves from ‘Yugamuni,’ the elder son of Jambava. They were pure at first, but Jambava Rishi was one day presented with a cow by Lord Shiva for the sake of his children. Once during his absence his son Yugamuni had a visit from another Rishi called Sankhya and extended his hospitality. Sankhya Rishi found the h milk of cow so sweet that he tried to prevail upon Yugomuni to kill her to parake the flesh. Yugamuni did not agree, but Sankhya Rishi himself killed a himself a cow and ate the flesh. On his return Rishi Jambava was horrified at the deed and dragged both the offenders for punishment to Shiva’s court. They were doomed to become Chandalas thenceforth and their decedents became right hand and the left hand castes as Sankya had stood on the right

side and Yugamuni on the left side at the entrance to the court, while awaiting judgement". (A. K. Ayer, 1931, P. 128-129). Hence it is said that 'Madigas' are descendents of 'Yugamuni' and 'Holeya' or 'Chalavadi' are descendents of Sankhya.

Another mythological story describes their superior status ascribed by birth and later degeneration to the low castes due to their bad deed. This legend is narrated by Thurston (1907, Vol-2, p.3180) in his Castes and Tribes of South India. A part from this there are various folklore stories pertaining to the origin of Holeya and Madiga castes. But they are unscientific.

### **Historical Origin**

Although the origin of dalit community including Chalavadi caste as subaltern is complicated, the historical documents and recorded are available to illustrate how the untouchable castes originated. Such documents are examined here to know the origin of Ex- untouchables.

Enthoren (1920) in his caste and tribes of Bombay dealt with the Madigas and Holeyas of Karnataka. The callings of the leather work and agriculture were no despised during the Vedic times and were perused by the Aryans. Hence to Enthoren these castes were of superior origin and belonged to pre- Aryan race.

Dutt N.K (1931) in his 'Origin, Growth and Development of caste in India' discussed the fifth Varna He said that "the pre- Dravidean who remained Un absolved by the Dravidian treated as Pariahs. This spirit of contempt existed among the Aryamised Dravidans and was taken up from them by the Aryans"

### **Social Status of Chalavadi's**

Iyer L. K. A. and Nanjundaiah (1931) wrote that the members of this caste are sometimes styled by their official designation as 'Chalavadis' who are the conveners of meeting of the 18 Phana party, carrying brass cup and chain as insignia. 'Kulavadi', Is one who calls the villagers before the Patel and revenue officers generally even today in most parts of Karnataka Chalavadi continuous the same occupation in villages The instrument used on such occasions to call people is called the 'Halagi'

made of leather. For this job during British period Chalavadis came to be assigned a piece of land which of course is inadequate for their livelihood.

Generally their settlement is situated in slums and they are clamped by poverty and ignorance. They were not permitted to use 'Bricks' and 'stones' to build their houses. They were only allowed to live in the thatched huts. It is not only due to their utter poverty but also the caste prohibitions against them. In this context Buchanan F. (1807) wrote that "the Wholiyaru (Chalavadis) are not permitted to build their huts within the walls of town or villages, but there may be any hedge they generally inhabit between it had the Ditch. A Brahmin if he be touched by a Wholiya must wash his head and get a new thread.

The majority of the untouchable caste lived in huts or in the old one room houses, which were dark and unventilated. The houses were without windows and doors being very small, one could not enter without stooping. These houses were surrounded by sanitary space used by all people. Its main aim was to keep the lower castes on the low status by denying them all the civil rights. Caste Hindus kept them under perpetual ignorance and thereby reduced them to the class of slaves.

Proper dress was also denied to this caste. They were not allowed to wear the dress like upper castes. Chalavadis was forbidden to use white clothes which would insult his master class and he was only allowed to wear old clothes discarded by his master. The upper castes put severe restrictions on the food, dress, shelter and occupations. They were not allowed to take the occupations which could give them better livelihood. They also acted as 'Messengers' for caste Hindus. These Chalavadi messengers walk physically to far off places of caste Hindu relatives to convey the news of death etc., This happened during pre- British India due to lack of transport and communication facilities.

The people of Chalavadi caste were also guard the crops of caste Hindus in the day time which gave them work and money. It was necessary for them because of economic reasons. Thus those days for Chalavadis were very miserable and they led a half-starved-life. This was continued till Independence of India. Later as a result of



constitutional safeguards these people started to get education and occupations as per their choice.

### **Conclusion**

In the beginning it was a system for division of labour devised for smooth functioning of society but later on it became a rigid system based on birth and hereditary occupation, social relationship between different caste groups and community were regulated by certain norms. At this stage Varnas got transformed into caste groups some caste got transformed communities. The present study of the Chalavadi community is one of the marginalized groups; this community is also called by names like Holaya and also the Harijana, a name given by Gandhi to the former untouchables. The study has found that the Chalwadi caste continues to live as poor and marginalized and continue their traditional occupations along with agricultural and agricultural labour. The inhuman traditional works or duties of Chalavadi, include moving dead cattle's from upper caste house, beating the drums, cutting firewood and burning the dead bodies and so on. From the ancient to modern times Chalvadi community continued to suffer from deprivations of basic amenities such as shelter, health, education, and socio-economic decent employment and social disabilities and religious disabilities. As far as Indian social system is concerned today stigma of untouchables, whose presence only could pollute the high caste Hindus, washed off automatically from the minds and hearts of large number of people. They we can understand easily to what extent such replacement brought social change among them.

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