

Problems And Challenges Of Bhovi Community In Shivamoga District

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ABSTRACT

The Bhovi community, an integral part of Karnataka's social fabric, faces multifaceted challenges and struggles that impede their socio-economic progress and cultural integration. The Bhoovi Community is one of the scheduled cast communities in Karnataka and this community has a rich historical background. Embankments, stone carving, well construction, house building, sculpting making and selling are the traditional professions of this community. In recent time, due to the impact of industrialization and globalization traditional profession are disappearing so people become unemployed and even depend on unorganized sector for their livelihood. As they have lower education or even illiterates, they are facing many of the socio-economic problems. In this regard, a field survey covering 169 Bhovi people was made using interview schedules in Malur Shikarpur (Tq) Shivamogga district to assess the problems and challenges faced by Bhovi community. It is found that illiteracy and low-education are major problems and challenges faced by Bhovis. As a result, they believe in blind faith and for their livelihood, they are depending on unorganized sector. Consequently, they have lower status in society. It is suggested to provide more reservation for Bhovi community in education and employment and promote gender equality among Bhovi families.

Key Words: Bhovi Community, Schedule Caste, Shivamogga, Karnataka

Introduction

The **Bhovi** are a community are also known as Bhovi, Bovi, Bayyar, Bhoi and Bhoi. They are historically known for the people belonging to the Bhovi community were backward. The word Bhovi is thought to derive from a king named Bhovi, who ruled over a region in southeastern India in medieval times. The etymology suggests that the community migrated to their current location from Eastern India. During the course of their migration, they picked up several local languages en route. Members of the community can therefore speak various languages such as Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and Gujarati. The Bhovi community has been involved in the construction of stone art and architecture, water fountains and roads. Some heritage sites in Karnataka were constructed by skilled workers from the community, who used to work as builders and sculptors. During the Vijayanagara Empire, their skills in these fields were highly respected.

The Bhovis fall under the list of Scheduled Castes in Karnataka. Members of other scheduled castes in Karnataka have protested the inclusion of the Bhovis in the list, claiming that the Bhovis are not "backward" enough to merit inclusion. Bhovi women play a significant role in the economic, social and religious spheres of their community and contribute to the family income. While architecture and geology are their traditional and primary occupations, agriculture is the secondary occupation for those settled in villages. Their village councils consist of elderly men, with women given limited powers.

The patron deity of the Bhovi is Shiva in the form of Eshwara and Muneshwara. Many members of the community are also devotees of Anjaneya. The community also worships the earth as a deity, and through this, are said to have been blessed with wonderful skills to work the earth, a reference to their stone-cutting and well-digging activities. Members of the community also worship various local goddesses in the regions they have settled in. 955,752 people in Karnataka identified themselves as being part of the community in the 2011 census. 74.9% of the population was rural and 49.2% were literate. Only 2.9% were graduates.

They are present in almost all districts of Karnataka, but the majority of the population lives in the Kalaburagi, Shimoga, Sringeri, Narasimharajpur, Kundapur, Sirsi, Karwar, Belagaum, Dharwad, Gadag, Vijayapur, Bagalkot, Raichur Mysuru, Bhadravati, Karnataka and Bengaluru districts. The present study is made in Kalaburagi district.

Aims and Objectives of the Study:

- To look into educational problems of Bhovi community.
- To study the socio-economic problems faced by Bhovi community.
- To suggest for the overall development of Bhovi community.

Area and Methodology:

The present study was begun with literature search as the author searched the secondary literature on socio-economic background of the Siddi people scattered across different villages of Bidar district. To study the socio-economic conditions, the author searched the habitations of Siddis and surveyed them. As the Siddis are scattered, the interviews were made with 200 Siddi people, of which 31 people were rejected to provide adequate information and finally, the primary data collected from 169 respondents were found correct and the present study covered the primary data collected from 169 Siddi people living in Bidar district. The collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under:

Universe, Methodology and Limitations:

The present study is made in Malur Village of Shikarpur (Tq) Shivamogga district of Karnataka. The interviews were made with 200 Bhovi people, of which 31 people were rejected to provide adequate information and finally, the primary data collected from 169 respondents were found correct and the present study covered the primary data collected from 169 Bhovi people living in Malur Village. The collected primary data is analysed and discussed as under:

Analysis and Discussion:

1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents:

Age of the respondents reveals the knowledge about different aspects such as education, social culture, present social trends, modern occupations, etc and the age of the respondents is as under.

Table: 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 25 Years	31	18.34
26 to 40 Years	43	25.44
41 to 60 Years	68	40.23
More than 60 Years	27	15.98
Total	169	100.00

Age of the total respondents disclosed that, considerable majority that is, 68 (40.23%) of the respondents are between 41 to 60 years followed by, 43 (25.44%) are between 26 to 40 years, 31 (18.34%) are of less than 25 years and the remaining 27 (15.98%) are of more than 60 years respectively. It shows that, a great majority of the respondents are of middle age group.

2. Education Status of Respondents

It is essential to assess the education level of the respondents, so as to assess their skills in reading, writing, level of knowledge, etc in society and the education level of the respondents is shown as under.

Table: 2. Education Status of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	51	30.17
Primary	74	43.78
Secondary	23	13.61
Graduate	17	10.00
Post-Graduate	04	2.5
Total	169	100.00

Above table made it clear that, as stated by all the respondents, 51 (30.17%) are illiterates, 74 (43.78%) of the respondents have completed primary education, 23 (13.61%) have completed secondary education and .Graduates 17 (10.06%) have completed , Post-Graduate 04(-2.5%). It shows that, educational level of almost all the respondents is low and even good numbers of respondents are illiterates. It is concluded that education level of the respondents is lower in Bhovi Community.

3. Size of the Family:

It has been already discussed that, majority of the respondents are living in nuclear families and only few of the respondents are living in joint families. Hence, information was collected from the respondents on the size of the families of the respondents in terms of number of family members and presented in the following table.

Table: 3. Size of the Family

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 4 Members	40	23.67
5 to 6 Members	63	37.28
7 to 8 Members	31	18.34
More than 8 Members	35	20.71
Total	169	100.00

Above table revealed that, of the total respondents surveyed, 40 (23.67%) have expressed that their families have up to 4 family members, 63 (37.28%) have mentioned that their families have 5 to 6 family members, 31 (18.34%) have remarked that their families have 7 to 8 members and the remaining 35 (20.71%) have stated that their families have more than 8 family members. It shows that majority of the respondents have big families in terms of number of family members.

Table: 4. General, Personal and Family Problems

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Can't afford adequate education for children	43	25.44
Can't afford medicine for family	56	33.13
Can't able to get good food & clothing	31	18.34
Any other	27	16.00
No any problem	12	7.10
Total	169	100.00

It is observed from the above table that, few of the respondents are facing more than one type of problems. Particularly, the information collected on general, personal and family problems disclosed that, 43 (25.44%) of the respondents can't able to afford adequate education for their children, 56 (33.13%) are not able to buy medicines for their families, 31 (18.34%) are not able to meet requirements of good food and clothing, 27 (16.00%) are facing other problems and 12 (7.10%) of the respondents don't have any problems. It shows that, many of the respondents can't able to get adequate basic needs required for life.

As observed, Bhovi community people are backward in education and consequently women in these communities are not getting equal status among Bhovi community people and the reasons furnished by the respondents for the same are disclosed in the following table.

Table: 5. Reasons for Unequal Status for Women

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Traditions does not allow	25	14.8
Female is weaker sex & should be dependent	48	28.40
Women are economically unproductive	36	21.30
Any other	03	1.8
Not applicable	57	33.7
Total	169	100.00

The reasons furnished by the respondents for unequal status for women in their communities revealed that, 25 (14.8%) of the respondents have stated that their traditions don't allow for the equal status of women in family, 48 (28.40%) have mentioned that female is weaker sex and should be dependent, 36 (21.30%) have remarked that women are economically unproductive and as such having unequal status in their communities, 03 (1.8%) have also given other reasons and it is not applicable to 57 (33.7%) of the respondents as they have agreed that females have equal status in their families or a few of them have not expressed their views on the same.

Above discussion, revealed that the Bhovi community is fully backward in terms of social awareness, economic power, gender equality, modernity, etc. Hence, it was asked to the respondents to state the development or changed achieved by Bhovi community since independence and the collected primary data is shown as under.

Table: 6. Change/ Development among Bhovi Communities Since Independence

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully developed	08	4.7
Somewhat developed/ under developed	44	26.00
Backward/ Not developed	106	63.00
Don't know/ can't Say	11	6.50
Total	169	100

Surprisingly, above table made it clear that, majority that is, 8 (4.7%) of the total respondents have stated that Bhovi community is backward and not developed since independence, 44 (26.00%) have mentioned that Bhovi community is somewhat developed or under-developed, only 106 (63 %) have expressed that the Bhovi community is fully developed and the remaining 11 (6.50 %) have not expressed their views or are not aware about the same. Hence, it can be concluded that Bhovi community is not developed and remained backward in society since independence.

As discussed above, almost respondents have agreed that the Bhovi community is not developed or under-developed in society and the reasons for under-development of Bhovi community as stated by the respondents are tabulated as under.

Table: 7. Reasons for Under-Development of Bhovi Community

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiteracy, Poverty & Negligence	56	33.4
Lack of adequate Political Representation	76	45.00
Not applicable	37	21.8
Total	169	100.00

The reasons furnished by respondents for under-development of Bhovi communities, of all the respondents surveyed, 56 (33.4 %) have mentioned that there is illiteracy, poverty and negligence, 76 (45.00%) have felt that there is lack of adequate political representation for Bhovi communities and it is not applicable to 37 (21.8 %) of all the respondents as they have already agreed that Bhovi people are developed. It is fact that none of the notable political leaders is from Bhovi community or in any other states. Further, due to poverty, majority of the respondents are illiterates and negligent.

As discussed above, for the under-development of Bhovi community in society, many of the respondents have given different reasons. Hence, it is essential to discuss about the problems faced by Bhovi community in society and information collected in this respect is tabulated as under.

Table: 8. Social Problems faced by Community

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, backwardness, etc.	43	25.44
Social inequality, discrimination & exploitation	56	33.13
Blind faith, evil practices, etc.	31	18.34
Alcoholism, etc.	27	16.00
Any other	12	7.10
Total	169	100.00

It is observed from the above table that, many of the respondents have stated more than one type of social problem. Specifically, among all the respondents, 43 (25.44%) have mentioned that Bhovi community is facing illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, backwardness, etc. in society, 56 (33.13%) have expressed that Bhovi people are facing problems of social inequality, discrimination and exploitation, 31 (18.34%) have stated that Bhovi community is facing problems of blind faiths, evil practices, etc, 27 (16.00%) have remarked that Bhovi people are engaged in bad habits such as alcoholism, etc and 12(7.10%) have also mentioned other problems faced by Bhovi community people. It is essential that Bhovi community should be given education and knowledge about the modernization and to give up bad habits, blind faith, evil practices, etc.

Table: 9. Family Annual Income

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Less than Rs. 6,000	27	15.98
Rs. 6,001 to Rs. 12,000	76	44.97
Rs. 12,001 to Rs. 24,000	47	27.81
Rs. 24,001 to Rs. 48,000	15	8.87
More than Rs. 48,000	04	2.37
Total	169	100.00

Family annual income of the respondents disclosed that, of all the respondents, 27 (15.98%) have stated that their family annual income is less than Rs. 6,000, 76 (44.97%) have remarked that their family annual income is between Rs. 6,001 to Rs. 12,000, 47 (27.81%) have mentioned that their family annual income is between Rs. 12,001 to Rs. 24,000, 15 (8.87%) have expressed that their family annual income is between Rs. 24,001 to Rs. 48,000 and only 04 (2.37%) have agreed that their family annual income is more than Rs. 48,000. It shows that all the respondents are living in poor families.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- ✓ As the caste based occupations of Bhovi communities were disappeared, it is essential to provide training with financial assistance to them in alternate modern self-employment opportunities such as stitching clothes, embroidery, beauticians, computer DTP, etc.
- ✓ More reservation is essentially needed for Bhovicommunities as their population is larger in the State, but percentage of reservation is lesser and even educationally they are fully backward.
- ✓ It is suggested to the Bhovi community to give up orthodox and conventional beliefs and blind faith based on orthodox culture.
- ✓ Bhovi community should get necessary awareness about the welfare schemes of the Government in education, housing, self-employment, etc and in this regard, it is suggested to the NGOs to organize awareness campaigns about these schemes.

Conclusion:

Of course, the Government of Karnataka has already conducted caste based census, but it has not been disclosed. But, it is noted that many of the Bhovi communities are most backward in terms of education and employment. In this regard, the Government should consider their development and for this purpose, there is need to increase the percentage of reservation and provide internal reservation to these communities. The Government should identify the skills of the Bhovi communities and provide self-employment training to them, so that they can get more income. The Bhovi should know about the gender equality and treat females equally in their families and society.

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