

Study on Socio-Economic Conditions of Scheduled Tribes with Special Reference to the Medha Community in Davanagere District, Karnataka

Nitinkumar.V¹ & Dr. Girish D.H²

¹Research Scholar ² Assistant Professor

Department of Economics, Davanagere University, Davanagere.

Abstract:

This study examines the socio-economic conditions of the Medha community, a Scheduled Tribe in Davanagere district, Karnataka. It investigates various aspects of their livelihoods, including income levels, educational attainment, and housing conditions. Through a comprehensive analysis of primary data collected via surveys and interviews, the study aims to identify the challenges faced by the community and assess the effectiveness of existing socio-economic development initiatives. Findings will contribute to understanding the socio-economic disparities within the Medha community and propose recommendations for policy interventions to improve their overall well-being.

Keywords: Tribal community, Medha, craftsmen, artisans, socio-economic status.

Introduction

India, embodying the ethos of "Vasudaiva kutumbakam" – one world, one family, is among the largest low-middle-income countries, with a substantial tribal population of 8.6%. Despite seven decades of independence, India struggles to bridge the gap between tribal and non-tribal populations. Tribes often face socio-economic marginalization, hindering their educational and economic opportunities, access to public services, and integration

into the national mainstream. Geographical isolation exacerbates these challenges.

The Medha tribe, also known by various names like Medar, Meda, Medaru, across different regions, primarily speaks Kannada. As per the 2011 census, their population is 37,371. Known for their craftsmanship, they produce baskets, mats, hand fans, and other household items using bamboo, showcasing their unique artistry. However, despite their

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skill, their craft remains largely unrecognized by both academic institutions and governmental bodies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the social, economic, cultural, and educational status of the Medha community.
2. To assess the socioeconomic conditions of the Medha tribe.

Methodology

Data were collected using both primary and secondary sources. Simple random sampling was employed to select 100 participants from the study area.

Salient Features of Medha Tribes

Despite societal changes, the Medha tribe has preserved its cultural heritage. Limited research exists on their socioeconomic status, necessitating comprehensive studies. Known for their craftsmanship, Medha people have traditionally crafted daily-use items using bamboo, demonstrating their proficiency as weavers. Some engage in manual labor or ceremonial drumming. This study focuses on the tribal settlements in Davangere, highlighting the following features:

Result and discussion

Table 1: Land Ownership Distribution among Medha Tribe

Land in acres	% of land holders
No land	29
Below 2 acre	31
2 to 5	35
Above 5	5
Total	100.0

Table 1 presents the distribution of land ownership among members of the Medha tribe in Davangere district, Karnataka. The data shows the percentage of landholders categorized by the size of land they own. The majority of households (35%) own land ranging from 2 to 5 acres, followed closely by those owning less than 2 acres (31%). A significant portion of the population (29%) does not own any land, while only a small percentage (5%) owns more than 5 acres. This distribution highlights the varying degrees of land ownership among the Medha tribe, influencing their socioeconomic conditions and livelihood strategies.

Table 2: Housing Facilities among Medha Tribe

Hosing facilities	% of house holders
Simple huts	20.5
Semi pukka house	54.0
Pukka house	25.5

This table (2) illustrates the distribution of housing facilities among households within the Medha tribe of Davangere district, Karnataka. Among the surveyed households, a significant percentage (54.0%) resides in semi pukka houses, indicating structures that are partially built with permanent materials. A notable portion of households (25.5%) live in pukka houses, which are fully constructed with durable materials. A smaller percentage of households (20.5%) reside in simple huts, highlighting a diversity in housing conditions within the community.

This distribution underscores the varying levels of housing infrastructure and living standards among the Medha tribe in the region.

Table 3: Educational level among Medha Tribe

Education level	% of total sample
Primary Education	10.0
SSLC	35.0
PUC	30.0
DEGREE	15.0
Post-graduation	2.5
Illiterate	7.5
Total	100.0

Table 3 presents the educational levels of the sampled individuals from the Medha tribe in Davangere district, Karnataka. Among the surveyed population, the highest percentage (35%) has completed SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate), followed by 30% who have completed PUC (Pre-University Course). A smaller percentage (15%) has attained a degree-level education, while a minority (2.5%) has pursued post-graduation studies. Approximately 10% have received primary education, and 7.5% of individuals are categorized as illiterate. This distribution provides insights into the educational profile of the Medha tribe, highlighting variations in educational attainment levels within the community.

Financial position

Medhas are found in a stringent financial condition as they solely depend upon bamboo products. Their profession

is to prepare products like canes, furniture, baskets etc. which is not so profitable. 20.5% of the sample respondents has government jobs, as their occupation followed by 55.5% and 12% got small business, remaining occupied agricultural and other activities.

Table 4: Annual Income Levels among Medha Tribe

Annual income level in thousands	% of total sample
below 20,000	62.5
20,000-30,000	18.5
More than 30,000	9.0
Total	100.0

This table illustrates the annual income levels in thousands (INR) among the sampled individuals from the Medha tribe in Davangere district, Karnataka. The majority (62.5%) of the surveyed population reports an annual income of 20,000 INR. Additionally, 18.5% fall within the income range of 20,000 to 30,000 INR annually, while 9% report an income exceeding 30,000 INR per annum. This distribution provides an overview of the income disparities within the Medha tribe, reflecting varying economic circumstances among its members.

Table 5: Fair Price Facilities among Medha Tribe

Faire price facilities	% of total sample
No Ration cards	11.0
Under BPL category	57.5
BPL category	31.5
Total	100.0

This table presents data on the availability of fair price facilities among the surveyed Medha tribe population in Davangere district, Karnataka. Approximately 11% of the surveyed individuals do not possess any ration cards, while a significant majority (57.5%) fall under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, qualifying them for subsidized food and essential commodities. The remaining 31.5% of the sample population holds ration cards under the BPL category, indicating varying degrees of access to government welfare schemes aimed at ensuring food security and affordability among tribal communities.

Health Status

The health needs and problems of this community are influenced by interaction of various socio-economic and political factors. Due to certain adverse conditions like lack of access to health services, malnutrition, illiteracy, unhygienic personal habits etc. These people are suffered from health issues.

Table 6: Health Facilities among Medha Tribe

Health Facilities	Have	Not have
First aid facilities	37%	63%
Health insurance facilities	45.5%	54.5%
Sanitation facilities in working area	49.5%	50.5%

This table provides an overview of health facilities available to the Medha

tribe population in Davangere district, Karnataka. 37% of the surveyed individuals have access to first aid facilities, while 63% do not. Health insurance facilities are accessible to 45.5% of the population, whereas 54.5% do not have access. Regarding sanitation facilities in the working area, 49.5% of the population reported having access, while 50.5% do not have access. These statistics highlight disparities in healthcare infrastructure and access among the Medha tribe, indicating areas for potential improvement in health service provision and accessibility.

Suggestions

1. Basic amenities such as housing, clean water, sanitation facilities, community halls, and libraries are essential for improving the quality of life among the Medha tribe.
2. Hostel facilities and scholarships should be provided to children of the Medha tribe from primary education through higher education to ensure equal access to education opportunities.
3. Implement an integrated development strategy for the Medha tribe that fosters economic and social empowerment simultaneously, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle of progress.
4. Promote small-scale industries in the region to generate employment and boost economic opportunities in this underdeveloped area.

5. Support and promote innovations in bamboo products, facilitating market access and enhancing the economic prospects of the Medha tribe.
 6. Government initiatives should collaborate with NGOs to expand educational opportunities and employment options for the Medha tribe, fostering sustainable development and community empowerment.
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Conclusion

The Medha tribes require focused attention and the formulation of an integrated policy for their development. Despite some improvements, the socio-economic conditions of this community remain largely unchanged. Observations reveal significant challenges in education, health, sanitation, and overall socio-economic infrastructure. Therefore, it is imperative for the Government of India, Karnataka State Government, and local authorities to prioritize the upliftment of the Medha tribes to address these pressing issues effectively. Only through concerted efforts can the Medha tribes overcome these challenges and achieve sustainable development.

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