

GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

PUBLICATION NO. 14

A Socio-Economic Survey
of
Weaving Communities in Sholapur
(Being a part of "Sholapur: A Socio-Economic Survey")

By

R. G. KAKADE, M.A., Ph.D.

RESERVE SECTION

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PREFACE

AS THE Fact-Finding Committee has pointed out, handloom weaving still constitutes the largest handicraft industry in India, providing a means of livelihood to over three million people. Its position and importance in the national economy of India for some years to come can, therefore, be hardly over-emphasised. Owing to the problems created, roughly since the beginning of the present century, by the competition of machine-made fabrics, the handicraft has attracted the attention of quite a large number of economists and philanthropists, both official and non-official, in the country. As a result, numerous broad descriptive accounts of the industry in various regions and/or provinces are available. But hardly any attempt has so far been made to study, in a comprehensive and detailed manner, the organisation of the industry as obtaining at any one centre. The organisation of the industry being more or less the same in its essentials all over the country, such a study is necessary for the proper understanding of the exact nature and extent of the problems facing the industry and suggesting appropriate solutions as well. It was with this belief that the survey of the industry in Sholapur, one of the biggest centres of handloom weaving in India, was undertaken. To make the picture of the industry logically complete, an attempt was also made to conduct a sociological survey of the communities traditionally engaged in the industry. The report of both these surveys was originally submitted as a thesis for the Ph. D. degree of the University of Bombay. The following pages present the same in a considerably abridged and revised form.

The entire work, in all its stages, was carried out under the guidance of Prof. D. R. Gadgil, Director of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. I cannot adequately express the deep debt that I owe to him for his encouragement and guidance. Dr. G. S. Ghurye, Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, Bombay University, has laid me under deep obligation by going through the manuscript and by suggesting some important improvements in the sociological chapters of this book. I tender my grateful thanks to him for the same. I must also record my deep sense of appreciation for the guidance and help given to me from time to time by Dr. Mrs. Iravati Karve in connexion with the sociological part of this work. My sincere thanks are also due to my friends Messrs. N. V. Sovani and D. V. Devdhar of the Gokhale Institute. Mr. Sovani helped me a great deal in the preparation of the manuscript for the press and in the correction of proofs. Mr. Devdhar rendered valuable assistance in checking the tabular statements and in recasting some of them wherever necessary.

I have to record my appreciation and tender my thanks to all those gentlemen and associations connected with the industry, too numerous to be mentioned here, who readily furnished me all the requisite information. Special mention should, however, be made of my friend Mr. S. V. Irabatti, an enlightened weaving *Karkhandar* of Sholapur, who helped me in various ways in the survey work. My thanks are also due to Mr. B. M. Deo, Assistant Librarian, and Mr. V. V. Kale, both of the Servants of India Society's Central Library, for helping me in my library work.

Last but not least, I acknowledge my indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the substantial financial help it has given towards the cost of the publication of this book.

R. G. KAKADE.

Servants of India Society, Poona.
5th August, 1946.

FOREWORD

DR. KAKADE'S work forms part of the Socio-Economic Survey of Sholapur City undertaken by the Institute at the invitation of the Sholapur Municipality. The work of the Survey was begun at Sholapur in June 1938, and the collection of data was completed by December 1939. The reasons which led to the delay in the publication of the report of the Poona Survey have also caused this work to lag behind.

In the plan of the investigations at Sholapur, Dr. Kakade was entrusted with the survey of the handloom weaving industry and the communities engaged in it, as an independent piece of work. Dr. Kakade had special qualifications for this work; he was a local man and he had acquired experience of investigational methods and knowledge of handicrafts and artisan communities by participating in the Institute's Poona Survey. Dr. Kakade wrote a thesis based on his investigation which earned for him the degree of Ph. D. of the University of Bombay. The bulk of this thesis was ready long before the appointment of the Fact-Finding Committee. And Dr. Kakade had submitted his data and report to that Committee as part of his evidence when deputed by the Institute to help members of the Committee in their work at Sholapur. It was not necessary to rewrite or recast any part of Dr. Kakade's thesis as a result of the publication of the report of the Fact-Finding Committee. However, Dr. Kakade has taken the occasion to include references to it in this publication wherever that was felt necessary. Dr. Kakade's original thesis has been considerably abridged and fully revised for publication. However, the actual investigation and the presentation of the results are both individually his to such a large extent that the work is published under his name.

The subject of Dr. Kakade's thesis is of special importance at the present day when the chances of survival of our traditional handicrafts are being universally discussed. A large part of the economic data included in this publication throws light directly on this problem. This is specially so because Dr. Kakade has not been content with presenting a static picture; he attempts to trace past history and to evaluate future trends. Even more important than this dynamic view is the integration of the economic problem with its social setting. This is vital in the field of handicraft economics. The capacity of any organization to survive is closely related to its capacity to adapt itself to changing circumstances; and adaptability depends not only, or perhaps not even chiefly, on economic conditions but also on social organization and communal tradition. It is, of course, difficult to differentiate sharply

social and economic phenomena; but surveying the problem as a whole, it is not necessary to do so. A comparative study of the whole situation at different places reveals significant differences and may help in indicating methods of solution. For example, the history of the Sholapur and the Poona handloom weaving industries offers a striking contrast. Among the many reasons for their varying fortunes, at least one would seem to be that at one place the entrepreneur and the artisan both belong to the same community and are bound by social ties, while in the other this relation does not exist. There will be occasion in a later publication to deal with this and other related questions. I shall content myself, at this stage, with hoping that the reader will find much of interest in the economic and social facts revealed, as well as in the investigational methods employed in Dr. Kakade's work.

Gokhale Institute
of Politics and Economics }
Poona 4
26th September, 1946 }

D. R. GADGIL.

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