

DEPRESSED CLASSES OF SOUTH KANARA

(A Socio-Economic Survey)

BY

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TO

SRI. AMRITLAL VITHALDAS THAKKAR
(Thakkar Bappa)

ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY

FOREWORD

This book embodies the results of the socio-economic survey of 480 families of the Depressed Classes in South Kanara, carried out in 1945 by Dr. R. G. Kakade. The Servants of India Society had deputed Dr. Kakade, who is one of its members, to South Kanara to manage on its behalf the affairs of the Depressed Classes Mission at Mangalore. This provided him with an opportunity to undertake this survey. Dr. Kakade had, however, to carry out his survey under heavy handicaps. He was an utter stranger to the district and did not know the local languages. In consequence, the survey could not adequately cover all the Depressed Class communities all over the district. But this in no way detracts from the value of the pioneer factual enquiry conducted by him.

The report describes in great detail, and with the help of valuable statistical data, various social and economic disabilities under which the Depressed Classes of South Kanara labour. It unfolds a sad story of widespread illiteracy, abject poverty, bad housing and ruinous indebtedness. Dr. Kakade has thrown a flood of light on the appalling conditions under which the agrestic serfs (*Mulad Holeyus*) and the ghat labourers, among others, work and eke out a precarious living. Dr. Kakade analyses the causes of the pitiable condition of the depressed classes and attributes it more to economic than to social factors. He does not however content himself merely with a diagnosis of the disease, but suggests remedies for its cure. It is to be hoped that his concrete suggestions for the improvement of the condition of these down-trodden people will receive the consideration they deserve.

The Indian Constitution as passed by the Constituent Assembly provides for the abolition of untouchability (Art. 17) and prohibits discrimination in social and economic matters by one community against another (Art. 15). Dr. Kakade's report vividly brings out how great a leeway will have to be made up if this ideal is to take practical shape even in an advanced district like South Kanara. A well thought-out plan spread over a stated period and executed according to schedule, for ameliorating the condition of the Depressed Classes not only in South Kanara, but all over the country, is the only hopeful method of achieving real progress.

The lines of such a comprehensive and constructive effort are indicated in Dr. Kakade's report. If this method is adopted, periodical investigations, as provided in clause 301 (1) of the Indian Constitution, will have some meaning. They will enable us to review the progress made and lead on to the further steps necessary to increase the tempo of the ameliorative work for the uplift of the Depressed Classes.

18, Ferozshah Road
New Delhi }
November 22, 1949.

H. N. KUNZRU

PREFACE

The movement for the elevation of the Depressed Classes originated in South Kanara towards the end of the last century. Essentially a part of social reform among the Hindus, it ebbed and flowed for about two decades according to the degree of support it could gather from the public in general and sympathetic officials in particular. In the 'twenties the movement assumed political colouring owing to its being included as an item in the political programme of the Indian National Congress. As a result, a large number of ardent Congressmen in the district of South Kanara started actively participating in the movement and doing uplift work of all kinds. The ameliorative work in the district by the Government of Madras was confined largely to educational field till the 'thirties. Mahatma Gandhi's fast in 1934 for resisting with his life the Communal Award of the British Government gave a sudden spurt to the movement. The issue of removing untouchability by and through throwing open Hindu temples to the Depressed Classes, now called Harijans, became for some time the cynosure for the public. The all India Harijan Sevak Sangh was formed in the same year for achieving the above objective and also for undertaking other ameliorative measures among the Harijans. A Harijan Sevak, a full-time worker, was appointed to work in South Kanara under the guidance and supervision of the District Harijan Sevak Sangh. A network of Taluka Sanghs was soon woven in the district. The years that followed witnessed hectic activities by all these Sanghs, to be slightly interrupted by war conditions. During the regime of Congress Government in the Madras Province a couple of important Acts were placed on the Statute Book for the abolition of untouchability in public places and some other ameliorative measures adopted for improving their general condition. The war years saw more or less the continuity of Government policy in this connection.

Against this background, I always felt during my stay in South Kanara that time had come for taking stock of the progress made by different agencies, official and non-official, in ameliorating the condition of the Depressed Classes in the district. It was felt that such an attempt, if made, would help one in passing under rapid review the measures taken, the difficulties encountered and the results finally achieved during a fairly long span of 50 years.

Knowledge of these and other cognate questions was thought to be highly useful for framing realistic policy in this connection for the future, both for officials and non-officials. Further, no socio-economic fact-finding surveys of the Depressed Classes in the district or in a contiguous region on the West Coast of the province were known to have been taken in the past, as are found for some Untouchable Communities in some regions of the Bombay Province. Also to make up this deficiency, I decided to take a socio-economic survey of the Depressed Classes in the district.

Such a survey being the first of its kind in South Kanara, I thought it desirable to cover almost all the Depressed Class communities not only from one taluka but throughout the district. Thus, though the area selected for the survey was very wide, the time to cover it with the help of interpreters was very short. Only 480 families belonging to various communities and living in about 93 villages and hamlets, could be approached within a period of about four months. As a result, the survey could not but be defused.

Not being conversant with any one of the local languages of the district, I had to rely upon some friends to act as interpreters in the course of the survey. I cannot adequately express my sincere thanks to all of them who helped me in diverse ways in completing the survey. Though they are too numerous to be mentioned here, I feel impelled to place on record the names of few of them, such as, Mr. S. R. Mundkur (nephew of Mr. M. S. Ekambara Rao) Mr. K. Koti; Mr. U. Ramchandra; Mr. B. M. Kudubi, B. A., L. T. (Coondapur); Miss P. Nagu; Mr. K. K. P. Ram Pothawal (Karkal); Mr. N. Basappa; Mr. M. K. Babu Shetty (Kasargod); Mr. U. Sukanas Acharya, B. Sc., L. T. and Mr. J. Wamana, Mr. V. S. Kudva, Managing Director, Canara Public Conveyance Company, gave me a free pass to go any time anywhere on the routes plied by the Company in the district and also arranged for the priority for my interpreters, for which act of kindness I am extremely thankful to him and the C. P. C. Co. The District Labour Officer and his Department readily extended to me whatever help I needed during my survey work, for which I must put on record my deep sense of appreciation. But for the cooperation and help that I did receive, this survey, I am quite aware, would not have been completed.

I cannot adequately express in words my gratitude to Prof. D. R. Gadgil, Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, for going through the manuscript and also for making valua-

ble suggestions on certain matters. Though some of his suggestions have been incorporated in this book, responsibility for the views expressed therein is entirely mine. My thanks are also due to Mr. N. V. Sovani, Assistant Director, Gokhale Institute, for his esteemed help in editing the manuscript finally for the press. Mr. D. V. Deodhar, formerly Assistant Statistician in the Gokhale Institute, checked the tabular statements in the report for which help I am thankful to him also.

Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, President, Servants of India Society, has laid me under deep obligation by agreeing to write a foreword to this book, in spite of his numerous pressing engagements and preoccupations. I also owe grateful thanks to the Servants of India Society for publishing this report as one of its publications.

Servants of India Society, }
 Poona 4. }
 November 23, 1949.

R. G. KAKADE

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