Pattern of Scheduled Castes Employment in Rural Maharashtra

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Abstract: The present study is an attempt to find out link between caste and employment in rural Maharashtra. The primary data was collected through schedule from 253 rural households of different social groups from all six divisions in Maharashtra. The study found differences among various social groups in access to land and employment. The scheduled castes were landless, depended upon farm and non-farm casual unskilled low wage employment and fewer in farm and non-farm self-employment. Government land or common land should be distributed among landless scheduled castes agricultural labourers on priority basis. There should be establishment of industries in rural areas to create skilled jobs. Giving access to credit and encouraging self-employment activities among scheduled castes can be an important initiative.

Keywords: Caste, Gender Discrimination, Land Holdings, Rural Employment

JEL Codes: J31, J71, Q15

INTRODUCTION

According to census (2011) 68.8 per cent of India's population lives in rural area and depend upon agriculture and allied activities for their survival. The real picture of people's livelihood in rural India is given by Darling (1925) almost hundred years ago. He said that 'the Indian peasant is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt'. The introduction of new agricultural technologies since mid-1960s gave concessions to wealthy farmers lobby. This enhanced economic position of upper & middle caste peasants and benefitted less to landless low castes (Jeffery and Lerche, 2000). The scheduled castes, mostly landless faced extreme poverty and caste – prejudice during this period.

Rural Employment was major agenda of the Indian Government after Independence. Surplus labour in agriculture needs to be absorbed by modern industrial sector (Dr.

Ambedkar 1917, Fei and Ranis 1961, Lewis 1954). But India's performance of Industrial growth in creating employment is not satisfactory (Kannan and Raveendran, 2019, Papola and Sahu, 2012, Sundaram and Tendulkar, 2003). According to Dandekar and Rathi (1971) India focused on massive public works programme to create employment and public assets to reduce poverty in rural India. It can be seen from the initiation of Employment Guarantee scheme during early 1970s in Maharashtra and employment generation through Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) in1980s, and the MGNREGS implementation at national level in 2005. But the MGNREGA work cannot be a substitute to regular work (Rodgers, 2020). To address poverty issue and improving living standard of rural masses, it is not only important to just focus on creation of employment through public works but the pattern of employment is equally important. Also the issue of land ownership inequality needs to be addressed seriously.

Ownership of land also decides socio-economic privileges and deprivations in rural India (Mohanty, 2001). The legislative measures to allot land to rural landless were inadequate. Only 0.27 per cent of the India's 320 million acres of cultivable land was distributed through Bhoodan movement (GOI 1963. The ceiling reforms made meager surplus land for redistribution (Rammohan, 2008). The loopholes in land reform legislations, lack of updated land records, apathy of bureaucracy, escaping attitude of landowners, illiteracy and lack of strong social movement are the major reasons that hindered distribution of land among landless rural households (Appu, 1996; Mearns, 1998; Patel, 1974; Deshpande, 1998; Murdia 1975).

The development of rural non-farm sector is important due to its strong forward and backward production linkages (Ranis and Stewart, 1993). According to Bhalla (1995) sustained growth in agriculture & income and occupation diversification in rural areas is the most effective way to reduce poverty. The growth of rural non-farm sector is also important in poverty reduction among the small and marginal farmers and disadvantageous sections of society (Ravallian and Datt, 1995). But the employment growth in rural non-farm sector was in low productive unskilled casual employment. The census of 2011 shows that number of agriculture workers did not decline in India. They are 54per cent in agriculture with absolute number of around 263 million. This was due to the fact that on one hand number of cultivators declined while number of agricultural labourers increased. Thus the agricultural development is very important along with rural non-farm sector in reducing poverty in India.

Caste, Gender and Employment

Caste plays an important role in the determination of patterns of employment among various social groups in rural India. In rural India upper castes are land-owners, middle ranked castes are farmers & artisans and lower castes, scheduled castes are labourers

doing manual jobs (Beteille, 1996; Dumont, 1970; Bayly, 1999). Thus caste in India is not only a social category but is also an economic and occupational category. Caste is not merely a division of labour but also a division of labourers (Dr. Ambedkar, 1979).

The economic and political development in India in twentieth century had led to break down of the caste system. The link between caste and traditional occupation has weakened as observed by Ghurye (1961), Beteille (1965), Srinivas (1969), Desai (1984), Mayer (1997), Epstein et al. (1998), Jodhka (2004) and Shah (2007). But there are many studies showing caste based discrimination in access to employment in Indian labour market. Studies by Jeffery (2001), Kumar (2008) found that lower and artisan caste are concentrated in unskilled or low paid semi-skilled occupations in informal sector. The women from the good financial households are less likely to join the workforce (Abraham, 2009). The labour force participation rates of women from lower castes are low and they are also discriminated in case of total employment days and wages.

There are very few studies which examine social group wise employment pattern in rural Maharashtra. To the present research is an attempt to study the link between caste, gender and employment in rural Maharashtra.

METHODOLOGY

The primary data for the study was collected through schedule using multi-stage random sampling technique from different social groups in rural Maharashtra during April to June, 2022. The variations among different social groups regarding their access to land, employment were studied. There are five broad occupations in rural areas: agricultural labour, non-farm casual labour, non-farm own enterprise activities, non-farm regular salaried employment and cultivation which were considered in the present study. Marginal farmers are those farmers who have less than 1 ha of land, small farmers with 1-2 ha of land, semi medium farmers with 2-4 ha of land, medium farmers with 4-10 ha of land and large farmers are farmers with more than 10 ha of land. Households having less than 1 acre of land is considered as near landless farmers.

The study was carried out in six divisions of Maharashtra. These divisions are Nagpur and Amravati divisions from Vidarbha, Aurangabad division from Marathwada, Nashik division from Khandesh, Pune division from western Maharashtra and Konkan division from Konkan region. The study selected one district from each division of Maharashtra on the basis of highest main rural works as per the 2011 census of India. These districts are Nagpur, Yavatmal, Nanded, Ahmednagar, Pune and Thane. The main rural workers data for Thane district is of undivided Thane district as per 2011 census. From each district one taluqa was selected having highest or second highest number of main rural workers depending upon travel convenience. These taluqas are

Hadgaon from Nanded, Pusad from Amravati, Sangamner fron Ahmednagar, Mauda from Nagpur, Haveli from Pune and Palghar from Palghar districts.

Lastly from each taluqa two villages were selected to carry out primary survey. These villages were Nevri and Mardga from Hadgaon, Nimbi and Pardi from Pusad, Konchi and Mendhwan from Sangamner, Mathani and Dhamangaon from Mauda, Kondhanpur and Rahatwade from Haveli, Panchali and Birwadi from Palghar tauqas. While selecting the villages those villages having significant number of rural main workers (main workers have employment days of more than 183 days in a year) and scheduled castes population were selected. According to Kumar and Nazia (2020) on the basis of working population, NSS 68th Round, 18th Schedule employment and unemployment, 2011-12 in the Hindu religion 10.08 per cent of the working population belong to schedule tribe, 28.33 per cent belongs to schedule caste, 40.83 per cent belongs to other backward castes and 20.95 per cent belongs to others i.e. forward caste. So around 5 per cent of the village population was surveyed randomly, and 40 per cent sample households were from Scheduled castes &other backward caste and the remaining 20 per cent were from high caste Hindus. Total 253 households from all the divisions of Maharashtra were selected. The data was analysed using SPSS to find out the land holdings and pattern of employment etc. among various social groups in rural Maharashtra. The chi square test (5 per cent significance level) was used to know the significance difference among various social groups in access to land, pattern of employment etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Households

The primary data was collected from total 253 rural households from all the divisions of Maharashtra. Out of these 253 households, 100 (39.5 per cent) were scheduled castes, 99 (39.1 per cent) were other backward castes and 54 (21.3 per cent) were high caste Hindus. Out of total 253 surveyed households 41(16.2 per cent) are from Nagpur district, 46 (18.2 per cent) from Nanded, 65 (25.7 per cent) from Yavatmal, 38 (15 per cent) from Ahmednagar, 32 (12.6 per cent) from Pune and 31 (12.3 per cent) from Thane district. The study shows that out of 253 surveyed households 229 (90.5 per cent) families were joint families whereas the number of divided families was 24 (9.5 per cent). In case of the SC households 14 (14.0 per cent) families were divided families, whereas the number of divided families was only 01 (1.9 per cent) in case of high caste Hindus, and 9 (9.1 per cent) in case of other backward castes. Out of these 253 households 245 (96.8 per cent) families in surveyed villages had access to fair price shops.

Sundaram & Tendulkar (2003) and Barooah et al. (2014) found that amongst the poor, scheduled castes comprised the largest section of the deprived people. The present study found that out of 245 households 114 (56.5 per cent) households were below poverty line. Most of the families below poverty line were scheduled castes (53.7 per cent), followed by other backward castes (44.3 per cent). The least number of high caste Hindu (37.5 per cent) families were below poverty line. The study found that 94.9 per cent of the households have bank accounts in public (85.8 per cent), co-operative banks (11.7 per cent) or private (2.5 per cent) sector banks.

There exists caste and gender based inequality in attainment of education in the rural Maharashtra. In this regard the least educated group is scheduled caste/tribe rural females (Paranjape, 2007). In case of educational performance in rural Maharashtra the study observed gender differences. The female illiteracy (14.2 per cent) was relatively higher compared to male illiteracy (9.1 per cent) in rural Maharashtra. The highest illiteracy was observed among other backward caste females (17.2 per cent) followed by Scheduled castes (14.0 per cent) and High caste Hindus (9.3 per cent).

House Types

As per Census (2011) one-fifth of the scheduled caste had concrete roof, two-fifths have tap-water and three-fifths have electricity in India. In study area out of 253 households surveyed throughout rural Maharashtra 207 (81.8 per cent) household houses were pucca houses. More than nine-tenth (90.7 per cent) of the High caste Hindus houses were pucca houses, followed by Scheduled castes (83.0 per cent) and other backward castes (75.8 per cent). 19.0 per cent of thee scheduled caste houses in rural Maharashtra had concrete roof, whereas 47.4 per cent other backward caste and 44.4 per cent high caste Hindu house roofs were made up of concrete. The study observed the universalisation of houses electrification in rural Maharashtra. It is observed that the villages in Maharashtra are heading towards universalisation of drainage and road infrastructure facilities as the three-fourth of the households have access to internal pucca roads and the four-fifth of the houses in rural areas were having drainage facility. Under the swachh Bharat Mission private toilets are made available in most of the households (95.0 per cent) in rural Maharashtra. The major difference among Scheduled castes and non-Scheduled castes private bathrooms was that of covered & uncovered bathrooms. 98.0 per cent of the high caste Hindus private bathrooms were covered, followed by other backward castes (82.8 per cent) and and only 64 per cent of scheduled caste households private bathrooms were covered.

Access to Drinking Water

The study found that out of 253 households surveyed 163 (64.4 per cent) have tap drinking water facility. 72.2 per cent of the high caste Hindu families have tap drinking

water facility, whereas the same facility was available to less number of SC (65.0 per cent), and other backward caste (59.6 per cent) households. The important observation from the study is that 28 per cent SC households have to purchase drinking water in the study area, this proportion was less in case of other backward castes (22.2 per cent) and high caste Hindu families (20.0 per cent). Thus there is commercialisation of drinking water facility in many villages in Maharashtra. As the scheduled castes are purchasing water from other communities, they had access to water without any restrictions.

Land Holdings

The pattern of employment in rural areas is largely determined by the ownership of land and land holdings. Scheduled castes are mostly landless, or they are mostly agricultural labourers having insignificant landholding (Diwakar, 1999). The study found that out of 253 households studied in rural Maharashtra 128 (50.6 per cent) owned the agricultural land whereas 125 (49.4 per cent) households were landless. 69.0 per cent of the Scheduled castes households were landless followed by High caste Hindus (38.9 per cent) and other backward castes (38.4 per cent). The study found the average land holding in rural Maharashtra was 1.47 acres. But the average land holding was highest in case of high caste Hindus (1.87 acres), followed by other backward castes (1.77 acres) and in case of scheduled castes it was 0.96 acres only.

Most landlessness among Scheduled castes was observed in Nagpur (76.5 per cent), Yavatmal (96.2 per cent) and Thane (84.6 per cent) divisions in Maharashtra. If we consider the number of near landlessness households (14.6 per cent) then the total landlessness in rural Maharashtra is 65.2 per cent. Near landlessness can be measured in terms of having land less than one acres. 21.2 per cent of the other backward castes were near landlessness followed by the high caste Hindus (14.6 per cent) and Scheduled castes (8.0 per cent).

In the surveyed villages of rural Maharashtra 16.6 per cent of the households were marginal farmers and 12.3 per cent were small farmers. Thus 94.1 per cent of the households in rural Maharashtra were landless, marginal of small farmers. This proportion was 97 per cent in case of the SC households. Compared to scheduled castes more proportion of the other backward castes and High caste Hindus were small, medium farmers in rural Maharashtra. 13.0 per cent of the Scheduled castes were marginal farmers, whereas 17.2 per cent of other backward castes& 22.2 per cent of high caste Hindus were marginal farmers. Also in case of small farmers 7.0 per cent of Scheduled castes were small farmers but 15.2 per cent of the other backward castes and 16.7 per cent of the High caste Hindus were small farmers.

The study found the large number of landless and marginal farmers in rural Maharashtra. But this has not promoted the land lease in and lease out activity in the

Table 1: Social Group Wise Types of Farmers

			Types of Farmers						Total
			Landless	Near Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Large	
Category	SC	Count	69	8	13	7	2	1	100
		% within Category	69.0%	8.0%	13.0%	7.0%	2.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	38	21	17	15	6	2	99
		% within Category	38.4%	21.2%	17.2%	15.2%	6.1%	2.0%	100.0%
	General	Count	21	8	12	9	3	1	54
		% within Category	38.9%	14.8%	22.2%	16.7%	5.6%	1.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	128	37	42	31	11	4	253
		% within Category	50.6%	14.6%	16.6%	12.3%	4.3%	1.6%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

study area. The land leasing activity was not seen in the rural Maharashtra. The study found that out of 125 households who owned land in rural areas 39 (31.2 per cent) have irrigation facilities. In case of High caste Hindus more than 50 per cent of the land was irrigated whereas in case of other backward castes about one-third land was irrigated. In case of Scheduled castes only one-fifth of the land was irrigated in rural Maharashtra. The irrigated land was mostly found in the Yawatmal (Yeldari dam area), Ahmednagar and Pune districts. The main source of irrigation in rural Maharashtra was wells (64.1 per cent) followed by Tube wells (15.4 per cent).

Pattern of Employment

The study observed that main occupation in the rural Maharashtra was agriculture. According to Thorat (1993) most of the SCs & STs are agricultural labourers. Deshpande (2001) found the clear and persistent inter-caste disparity in occupational attainment. The social groups other than SC/ST are less in agriculture labourer category and more as cultivators and regular, salaried employees (Mutatkar, 2005).

In study area farming continues to be the major occupation of 35.2 per cent of the households followed by agricultural labour (29.2 per cent), and non-farm labour (16.2 per cent). The annual farm servants were not observed in the study area. This shows the complete casualisation of the rural agriculture labour market in Maharashtra.

Non-farm self-employment and regular salaried was the occupation of about one-tenth of the households each in rural Maharashtra. But the caste-wise analysis gives the altogether different picture of the situation. Most of the SC households (37.0 per cent) depended upon agricultural labour for their livelihood, followed by non-farm causal

Table 2: Social Group Wise Employment Pattern– Male

			Patterns of Employment					Total
			Cultivation	Agricultural Labours	Non-Farm Self Employment	Non-Farm Labour	Regular Salaried	
Category	SC	Count	17	37	7	29	10	100
		% within Category	17.0%	37.0%	7.0%	29.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	45	30	11	6	7	99
		% within Category	45.5%	30.3%	11.1%	6.1%	7.1%	100.0%
	General	Count	27	7	5	6	9	54
		% within Category	50.0%	13.0%	9.3%	11.1%	16.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	89	74	23	41	26	253
		% within Category	35.2%	29.2%	9.1%	16.2%	10.3%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

Table 3: Social Group Wise Employment Pattern- Female

Category			Housewife	Cultivation	agricultural Labour	Non-Farm Self Employment	Non-Farm Labour	Regular Salaried	Total
					Pattern of Female Employment				
Category	SC	Count	15	7	66	1	10	1	100
		% within Category	15.0%	7.0%	66.0%	1.0%	10.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	14	29	51	2	1	2	99
		% within Category	14.1%	29.3%	51.5%	2.0%	1.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	General	Count	5	26	21	0	2	0	54
		% within Category	9.3%	48.1%	38.9%	.0%	3.7%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	34	62	138	3	13	3	253
		% within Category	13.4%	24.5%	54.5%	1.2%	5.1%	1.2%	100.0%

labour (29.3 per cent) and cultivation (17.0 per cent). Scheduled castes were least (7.0 per cent) in non-farm self-employment and farm self-employment (17.0 per cent). 50 per cent of the High caste Hindus and 45.5 per cent of other backward castes were the cultivators. In 2004-05, only one-fifth of the SC households were self-employed in agriculture (Gang et al., 2012). Other backward castes were relatively more in non-farm self-employment. The study also found that the 16.7 per cent of the High caste Hindus were in the regular salaried occupations.

Farm and non-Farm Male Casual Employment

Farm Male Casual Employment

During 2005-2015 there was highest increase in the number of agricultural workers among SCs however the number of SC cultivators has reduced (Bisht et al., 2018). The study found that 37.0 per cent of the SCs worked as agricultural labourers in rural Maharashtra, followed by OBCs (30.3 per cent). Only 12.9 per cent of high castes Hindus were found to be working as agricultural labourers in study area. Out of the total 74 male agricultural labourers 37 (50.0 per cent) were from Scheduled castes, followed by other backward castes (40.5 per cent) and high caste Hindu (9.5 per cent).

The study found that most of SC (73.0 per cent) male agricultural casual workers got per 3-6 months of annual employment, whereas compared to Scheduled castes, other backward castes (56.7 per cent) and high caste Hindus (71.4 per cent) got 6-9 months of employment per year.

In agriculture these workers (89.2 per cent) received wages of Rs. 100-200 per day, and only 10.8 per cent workers received wages between Rs. 200-300 per day. It was found that 42.9 per cent of high caste Hindu workers got per day wages between Rs. 200-300 in agricultural sector. For male agricultural casual workers (95.9 per cent) the working hours were between 8-12 hrs per day. Most of these male agricultural casual workers (87.8 per cent) worked in their village only. Some SC (18.9 per cent) and high caste Hindu (28.6 per cent) agricultural labourers had to travel nearby within taluqa village for the agricultural casual work.

Non-farm Male Casual Employment

It was found that about 16 per cent of the males were working in non-farm sector in rural areas. Out of the total 41 households engaged in non-farm casual labour employment 29 (70.7 per cent) were Scheduled Castes. The other backward castes and High caste Hindus were less in non-farm casual labour employment compared to Scheduled castes. Most of the males in non-farm sector were working as drivers (48.8 per cent) followed by construction workers (26.8 per cent), labourers (12.2 per cent) and painters (12.2 per

Table 4: Social Group Wise Pattern of Non-Farm Casual Male Employment

			Non-Farm Casual Employment Male				Total
			Construction Labour	Porter	Driver	Painting Labour	
Category	SC	Count	7	3	16	3	29
		% within Category	24.1%	10.3%	55.2%	10.3%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	3	0	1	2	6
		% within Category	50.0%	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	General	Count	1	2	3	0	6
		% within Category	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	11	5	20	5	41
		% within Category	26.8%	12.2%	48.8%	12.2%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

cent). In non-farm casual labour, most of the Scheduled Castes were engaged in driving activity, followed by construction labour. They also worked as loaders and painters in non-farm sector.

51.0 per cent of the male non-farm casual workers received employment for the 6-9 months, followed by 34.1 per cent workers receiving 3-6 months of work and only 06 workers (14.6 per cent) got the non-farm casual employment of 9-12 months. Most of the SC male non-farm causal workers (51.7 per cent) received the employment of 6-9 months, followed by 34.5 per cent of Scheduled castes received 3-6 months of employment. The study found that 66.7 per cent and 33.3 per cent of other backward caste males got 6-9 months and 9-12 months of employment respectively.

Majority of the non-farm casual male labourers (53.7 per cent) received per day wages of Rs. 100-200, whereas considerable (39.0 per cent) of the non-farm casual workers wages were between Rs. 200-300. Almost half of the SC non-farm casual workers received wages between Rs. 200-300 per day. Due to this comparative better wages in non-farm sector, considerable number of SC worker were working in the non-farm sector. The study also observed the more working hours for the non-farm casual workers. All of them had to work for 8-12 hrs per day.

The study found that most of these non-farm casual workers (56.1 per cent) working destination was nearby taluqa, whereas 31.7 per cent got the employment at village level itself. In case of Scheduled castes 51.7 per cent of the non-farm casual workers employment destination was taluqa place, whereas 34.5 per cent worked in their villages. Some of them (13.8 per cent) also went to the district headquarter for the non-farm work.

Farm and non-Farm Female Casual Employment

Farm Female Casual Employment

There also exists higher gender gap in work force participation rate in rural India (Sanghi et al., 2015). The proportion of scheduled castes women in the workforce is higher than proportion of other social group women in workforce in villages. Also the total days of employment are higher for SC women workers (Swaminathan, 2020).

Table 5: Social Group Wise Employment of Female Farm Casual Labours

			Nature of Casual Employment Female	Total
			Agriculture Labour	
Category	SC	Count	66	100
		% within Category	66.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	51	99
		% within Category	51.5%	100.0%
	General	Count	21	54
		% within Category	38.8.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	138	253
		% within Category	54.5.0%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

The study found the high proportion of scheduled castes women in casual farm and non-farm casual employment. The study also found that from 253 households surveyed in rural Maharashtra 138 (54.5 per cent) women joined the casual agricultural labour force and 13 (5.1 per cent) joined the non-farm casual labour force. 66.0 per cent of the SC women were found to be working as agricultural labourers, followed by other backward castes (51.5 per cent) and only 38.9 per cent of the high caste Hindu women were engaged in agricultural labour activity. Most of the high caste Hindu women were involved in cultivation activities on their own farms. All the female agricultural labourers were found to be working in their villages itself.

The study found that half of the female agricultural labour received 3-6 months of employment and remaining half received 6-9 months of the employment. 66.7 per cent of the high caste Hindu women employed for 6-9 months as a casual labour in agricultural sector followed by SC women (53.0 per cent) and other backward caste women (39.2 per cent). 47.0 per cent of the SC women and 60.8 per cent of other backward caste agricultural labourers received 3-6 months of the employment in rural areas. In Nagpur and Nanded the SC female agricultural casual labour received more employment of 6-9 months.

Four-fifth of these female casual labourers received wages of Rs. 100 to 200 for their work and only one-fifth received wages between Rs. 200 to 300. Relatively more other backward caste women (31.4 per cent) received higher wages followed by high caste Hindu (14.3 per cent) and SC women (12.1 per cent). The study found that 86 per cent of the women work for 8 hours per day in rural areas in farm sector.

Non-Farm Female Casual Employment

Table 6: Social Group Wise Non – farm Female Casual Labour

			Non - farm Casual female work		Total
			Construction Labour	Company Labour	
Category	SC	Count	8	2	10
		% within Category	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	0	1	1
		% within Category	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	General	Count	2	0	2
		% within Category	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	3	13
		% within Category	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

Out of total 13 female non-farm casual workers 10 (76.9 per cent) were in construction activities and 03 (23.1 per cent) were working in private companies and out of total 13 female non-farm casual workers 10 were from SC category. 80 per cent (10) of them were found working in house construction sector and remaining 20 per cent in private companies as a casual workers. Other backward caste and high caste Hindu women were least found in the non-farm casual labour employment. They mostly were engaged in agriculture related activities, working on their own farms.

The study also found that women working in non-farm rural sector did not receive better wages. They (76.9 per cent) mostly received wages between Rs. 100 to 200 per day in studied areas. Only 23.1 per cent of the female non-farm casual labourers received wages of Rs. 200 to 300 per day. In private companies mostly the wages ranged between Rs. 200-300 per day.

Non-Farm Self-Employment

There are inter-caste disparities in access to private enterprises in India. The former untouchables were not allowed to undertake business or production activities except impure and polluting economic activities (Olivelle, 2005). As far as non-farm self-employment among Scheduled castes is concerned, 5 Scheduled castes (71.4 per cent)

Table 7: Social Group Wise Non-Farm Self Employment

			Nature of the Non-Farm Self Employment			Total
			Passenger Vehicle	Kirana Shop	Pan Shop	
Category	SC	Count	0	2	5	7
		% within Category	.0%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	1	5	5	11
		% within Category	9.1%	45.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	General	Count	0	4	1	5
		% within Category	.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1	11	11	23
		% within Category	4.3%	47.8%	47.8%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

were found to run pan shops, and only 2 (28.6 per cent) were having tiny kirana shops. 80.0 per cent high caste Hindus and 45.5 per cent of the other backward castes owned kirana shops. 69.6 per cent of the owners of self-employment have taken loan from public sector banks, followed by private banks (21.7 per cent).

Table 8: Social Group Wise Investment Amount for Non-Farm Self-Employment

			Investment Amount for Non-Farm Self-Employment				Total
			Up to 50000	50001 to 100000	100001 to 150000	150001 to 200000	
Category	SC	Count	3	2	2	0	7
		% within Category	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%	.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	1	1	8	1	11
		% within Category	9.1%	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	100.0%
	General	Count	0	2	3	0	5
		% within Category	.0%	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	5	13	1	23
		% within Category	17.4%	21.7%	56.5%	4.3%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

Most of the investment (56.5 per cent) in non-farm self-employment was of Rs. between 1.0 to 1.5 lakhs. The majority other backward castes and high caste Hindus investment in non-farm self-employment was of between Rs. 1.0 to 1.5 lakhs. In case of scheduled castes, most of them had investment below Rs. 1.0 lakhs in self-employment. The study found that 40 per cent of high caste Hindu owners depended upon private banks, whereas 27.3 per cent OBCs took credit from private banks. Scheduled castes did not receive any credit form private sector banks. They got credit either from public sector banks (71.4 per cent) or micro-finance (28.6 per cent) institutions. The rate of interest

on credit from non-public sector institutions was higher than public sector banks.

The study also found that 70 per cent of the non-farm self-employment engaged only one person, followed by 26.1 per cent units engaging two persons. In case of Scheduled castes, 85.7 per cent of the units were of one person, followed by other backward castes (63.6 per cent) and High caste Hindus (60.0 per cent). It was also observed that non-farm self-employment location in most cases was in the village itself. The non-farm self-employment among women (03) was restricted to sewing machine operations.

Regular Employment in Rural Maharashtra

The study has found the less number of male regular employment among workers in rural Maharashtra. Out of 253 families surveyed only 26 male workers were found in regular salaried employment. Most of them were (76.9 per cent) in private sector employment. They were employed by contractor as contract workers in private companies.

Table 9: Social Group Wise Male Regular Employment

			Type of Salaried Worker Male		Total
			Public Sector	Private Sector	
Category	SC	Count	2	8	10
		% within Category	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	2	5	7
		% within Category	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
	General	Count	2	7	9
		% within Category	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	20	26
		% within Category	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

The study has found only 03 women workers in regular employment in rural Maharashtra. 02 of them were Anganwadi servants in Thane district, and one was the company contract labour.

MGNREGA Employment in Rural Maharashtra

The study found that out of 253 households surveyed 90 (35.6 per cent) families had enrolled for the MGNREGA scheme. Out of these 90 families enrolled 88 families had received job cards.

Out of 88 MGNRGA job card households only 20 families have got the employment under this scheme and they got the employment of 5-10 days in a year. These people who got the some work under this scheme were from Nagpur, Nanded and Yavatmal districts. The main reason for not enrolment for MGNREGA scheme is the unawareness

Table 10: Social Group Wise Enrolment in MGNAREGA

			Enrolment MGNAREGA		Total
			Yes	No	
Category	SC	Count	43	57	100
		% within Category	43.0%	57.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	30	69	99
		% within Category	30.3%	69.7%	100.0%
	General	Count	17	37	54
		% within Category	31.5%	68.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	90	163	253
		% within Category	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

about this scheme. And the other reason is apathy of the villagers towards this scheme as the scheme implementation is inefficient. The sufficient work is not available under this scheme in rural Maharashtra. Many households from the surveyed villages told that hardly any work was made available under this scheme during recent years. The role of Gram Panchayat and the awareness among the villagers is important for the efficient implementation of the scheme.

Migration in Rural Maharashra

It is also found that significant number of migrants are temporary or seasonal (Keshri and Bhagat, 2013). They are engaged in casual wage works, followed by construction industry and agriculture (Dutta, 2016). The seasonal migrants are from socially deprival sections like ST, SC and OBC households who are mostly landless agricultural labourers (Mishra, 2020).

Table 11: Social Group Wise Migration in Rural Maharashtra

			Migration		Total
			Yes	No	
Category	SC	Count	6	94	100
		% within Category	6.0%	94.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	7	92	99
		% within Category	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%
	General	Count	0	54	54
		% within Category	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	13	240	253
		% within Category	5.1%	94.9%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

According to the Government of India (2011) census the number of internal migrants in India was 450 million accounting for almost one-third of the total population. The study found negligible rate of migration in the rural Maharashtra during the study period. Out of the total 253 households surveyed, 13 family members (5.1 per cent) were found migrating out of the village for the employment. Out of these families, 6 were Scheduled Castes and 07 were other backward caste families. Migration for work was not observed among high caste Hindu households.

It was found that out of these migrating families 53.8 per cent (9 family members) were regular migrants. The remaining 04 families have migrated permanently in the study area. Out of these 04 families who were migrated permanently two of them were having regular salaried employment and two families were involved in non-farm self-employment.

The regular migrants worked mostly as a farm and non-farm causal labourers. These migrants were seasonal migrants, migrating during the months of January to June of the year. The study found that most of these labourers (55.6 per cent) migrate for the period of 3 to 6 months, followed by 33.3 per cent migrating for the period 6 to 9 months.

Table 12: Social Group Wise Pattern of Employment of Migration

			Pattern of Employment of Migration					Total
			Casual Labour in Agri.	Casual Labour in Non Agri.	Non-Farm Self- Employment	Sala-ried in Private Sector	Sala-ried in Public Sector	
Category	SC	Count	1	4	1	0	0	6
		% within Category	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	OBC	Count	4	0	1	1	1	7
		% within Category	57.1%	.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	5	4	2	1	1	13
		% within Category	38.5%	30.8%	15.4%	7.7%	7.7%	100.0%

Source: Compiled from The Primary Data Collected During Jan-June 2022.

Out of these 13 families, 8 (61.5 per cent) migrated within talukas, whereas remaining 5 (38.5 per cent) have migrated outside taluka but within district. Most of these families (69.2 per cent) migrated within distance of less than 200 kms. The study found that 04 (30.8 per cent) families migrated beyond distance of 200 kms. These families were mostly from other backward caste category, whereas SC migrated within distance of 200 kms.

Thus the study found differences among various social groups in the rural Maharashtra in access to land and employment. Of the three social groups studied

scheduled castes, other backward castes and high caste Hindus, it was found that scheduled castes were the most vulnerable section of the society in rural Maharashtra relative to other backward castes and high caste Hindus. The scheduled castes were landless and depended upon farm and non-farm casual wage employment, fewer in farm and non-farm self-employment and regular employment. They also had less access to institutional credit due to lack of mortgage asset and depended considerably on non-institutional sources for their credit requirement. When the hypotheses were tested with the help of chi-square test with 5 per cent significance level, the study found high significant differences among various social groups in case of access to land, and employment pattern in rural Maharashtra.

POLICY MEASURES

It is not only important to uplift rural lower castes but to liberate them from the land owing castes and giving them access to land and credit is a much needed reform rural India needs. Karmveer Dadasaheb Gaikwad Swabhiman and Sabalikaran Yojana needs to be implemented effectively to distribute land among landless families. Giving access to credit and encouraging self-employment activities among scheduled castes in partnership with other social group members can be an important initiative. The people from rural areas should be made aware of their employment rights under MGNREGA scheme. Government should promote massive industrialization programme in rural areas to create skilled jobs.

The proportion of scheduled castes representatives in Panchayat Raj institutions should be doubled than their population share so that they would have say in village decision making. Also the rural deprived communities should focus on establishing co-operative societies for their development. There is a need to have machinery including labour officer to enforce minimum wage act and stop caste and gender discrimination in access to employment in rural areas.

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