

Entrepreneurial Communication Challenges for Dalits in India: A Case Study of Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: According to the Economic Survey 2006-07, Scheduled Castes constitute 16.23% of the total population of the country (2001 Census) but continue to suffer on account of severe socio-economic deprivation arising out of poor asset base, dependence on wage labour, subsistence level of farming, engagement in scavenging and other unclean jobs and other social evils. The research on SC entrepreneurship is scarce and there are few in-depth studies on this subject. There is an urgent need as well as wide scope for research on SC entrepreneurship in a developing country like India, which is riddled with the unique caste system non-existent anywhere else in the world. The study intends to provide insight into the entrepreneurial challenges among persons belonging to Scheduled Castes.

Keywords: Dalit Entrepreneurship, SC Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Communication

I. Introduction:

Although reservation has been provided to the Scheduled Castes in Government jobs, the number of such openings is obviously small compared to their population size. Besides, liberalized economic policies in recent years have strengthened the view that Government or private jobs need to be right-sized and despite that even in future this avenue is not likely to grow substantially. Under the circumstances, other avenues for employment and livelihood such as entrepreneurship or self-employment assumes importance. These can provide both employment as well as better incomes – opportunities. Planning Commission (n.d.)

Entrepreneurship is particularly important as the so called “Scheduled Castes” have run and managed a number of traditional and cottage industries such as handicrafts, pottery, leather-work for centuries. The skills, know-how and domain of knowledge necessary for this purpose have been passed on from one generation to the next and are available with them even today. Our history is evidence that many small enterprises like fan-making, leather craft and manufacturing of musical instruments were their monopoly. These deserve to be revived with help of the new available technologies to make these neglected enterprises by traditionally skilled persons as successful entrepreneurship ventures. Another factor that contributes to the attractiveness of entrepreneurship in the context of this community is the feeling of self-worth and independence that it generates. Planning Commission (n.d.)

National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (herein after referred to as NSKFDC) a Government of India Undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, was incorporated under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956, on 24th January 1997 as a 'company not for profit'. It is fully owned by the Government of India and has an authorized share capital of Rs. 200.00 crores. NSKFDC is to act as an apex institution for all round Socioeconomic upliftment of the Scavengers Safai Karamcharis and their dependents throughout India. Iyer, Khanna & Varshney (n.d.)

National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) was set up by the Government of India in February, 1989 as a Government Company under Section 25 (A company not for profit) of the Companies Act., 1956. NSFDC is a fully owned Government of India Undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and is managed by a Board of Directors with representation from Central Government, State Scheduled Castes Development Corporations, Financial Institutions and non-official members representing Scheduled Castes.

II. Research Methodology:

The study is largely based on analytical approach. It entails collection of information from secondary and primary sources. The methodology adopted for the intensive study was such that it could effectively collect the facts to evaluate the entrepreneurial challenges for SC persons in India and assess their impact to successfully achieve the objectives of the study. For this purpose both secondary and primary sources were used. The Study was taken up in Andhra Pradesh. Stratified random sampling was used because every member of the population strata has the equal chance of selection. It is simple to design and interpret and can calculate

the estimate of the population and the sampling error (if sampling from the strata is simple random sampling then whole procedure is called stratified random sampling).

Visakhapatnam District was selected. Five Blocks from the district were further selected. In addition, the District Head Quarter town was invariably. Atleast 10 persons from each block were randomly selected as respondents. Atleast 10 persons from the District Head Quarter also selected as respondents.

III. Results:

The study revealed that SC entrepreneurs are typically young persons with about ¾ 54% of them lying in the age group of 25 to 35 years. Another 32% of the entrepreneurs were below 25 years of age. Thus, as many as 86% of the entrepreneurs were found to be below 35 years of age. As many as 89.90% entrepreneurs are married and therefore have family responsibilities. About 80% of the sample is educated up to the High School level or more, with 63.50% entrepreneurs having a High School degree. Only 9.40% entrepreneurs were found to be equipped with vocational training. The survey revealed that the most commonly used mode of transport among SC entrepreneurs is the bicycle (43.80%). This is followed by two-wheelers with 24.8% of the sample using them. From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that a typical SC entrepreneur is a young person below 35 years of age –more likely in the age group 25 to 35 years. He is married and is educated up to the high school level or more but has not undergone vocational training. His normal mode of transport is either a bicycle or a two-wheeler.

The study revealed that the predominant form amongst such enterprises is the proprietary firm (98.40%). Almost 38% of the surveyed enterprises are registered. Most of the enterprises (69.5%) were found to be young – having been set up between the year 2001 and 2006. 78.50% of the enterprises are engaged in providing services and 12.60% are engaged in manufacturing. 5.80% are engaged in dairy business while 5.40% enterprises produce leather goods. Another 1.4% are engaged in piggeries and 1.3% produce agricultural goods. The overwhelming percentage (82.66%) was of enterprises engaged in the unspecified category of “any other”. Almost 49% of the enterprises are being run by the entrepreneurs themselves and do not have a single employee. In other words, these are very small units or businesses. As many as 47.78% of these have only three employees or less. In all, 3.40% entrepreneurs have more than three employees and the maximum number of 13 employees was found in only 1 enterprise. 93% were found to have at least one SC employee.

95.3% of the sample size was made up of enterprises whose initial capital outlay was less than Rs. 1 lakh. Of these, 47.10% entrepreneurs have initially invested less than Rs. 25,000 in their enterprises. There were only 3.90% enterprises having an initial investment between Rs.1 to 2 lakh. As many as 68.5% of them had a turnover of less than Rs.50,000 per annum. Another 30% enterprises registered a turnover ranging from Rs.50,000 to Rs.2,00,000 per annum. The highest initial turnover that was recorded was around Rs. 4 lakh per annum. Borrowing under Government schemes had the highest share of 39.7%.

IV. Conclusion:

The research on SC entrepreneurship is scarce and there are few in-depth studies on this subject. There is an urgent need as well as wide scope for research on SC entrepreneurship in a developing country like India, which is riddled with the unique caste system non-existent anywhere else in the world. The present research is an effort in this direction with fervent hope and sanguine belief to make positive contributions and bench-mark in the field of research & its implications on SC entrepreneurs.

References:

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