

## ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARAIYA WOMEN IN MADURAI DISTRICT

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### **Abstract**

*Scheduled Caste people in Madurai District who constitute one fifth of the total population of Tamil Nadu became economically and socially backward for centuries together, of whom, major part of them lived in villages or segregated places. Wherever the Scheduled Caste people lived, their economic condition was not good. In the rural areas, they worked as landless agricultural labourers as coolies on daily wages. Most of them were agricultural coolies, on daily wages and dependent entirely upon the property owners. They lived under the control of the property owners, the land on which they worked belonged to the property owners. They did not have habit of saving. They suffered from repayment of debts. They lived in thatched huts in segregated places of no ventilation or sanitation. Due to the strict restrictions imposed on Scheduled Castes, They were socially immobilized largely. Moreover, they were denied good opportunities, their influence and ability were denied good opportunities, and their influence and ability were underestimated. The Economic backwardness would contribute to social backwardness; hence, the economic status of Scheduled Caste should be enhanced. The Central and State Government realized the fact that the government had to do something for the betterment of them in India since independence. The Government introduced schemes of assigning house-sites to the needy Scheduled Caste people from 1947 onwards.*

**Keywords:** *Caste, agricultural, labour, rural areas, social backward*

### **Introduction**

The Paraiya women in Madurai District who constitute the major population of Tamil Nadu state were lived a very good position in sangam age. Because of existence of practice of untouchability of paraiya women among the other High Caste people in India their position were degraded. Wherever the Scheduled Caste people lived, their economic condition was not good. In the rural areas, they worked as landless agricultural labourers as coolies on daily wages. Moreover, they were denied good opportunities, their influence and ability were denied good opportunities, and their influence and ability were underestimated Their potentials went unrecognized. The condition of Scheduled Caste people in towns and cities in Madurai and elsewhere in Tamil Nadu took to all kinds of menial jobs and earned for their livelihood. In the same, the Paraiya women of the Madurai District took all kinds of manual jobs but earned very little.

The city of Madurai, the district headquarters has a great tradition behind it. During the Sangam age, it was the seat of Tamil Culture. Probably over 2500 years old and it is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu. It is believed that the Lord India, the king of Gods, created the city. Indira was worshiping Lord Shiva as a Srayambhu Lingam which was situated hear a lotus and built a big temple and constructed a lotus shaped city around the forest and built a big temple and constructed a lotus shaped city around the temple. On the

day of naming ceremony. Lord Shiva appeared and blessed the land and people by showering the divine Maduram is referred to sweetness.

Scheduled Caste people who constitute one fifth of the total population of Tamil Nadu become economically and socially backward for centuries together, of whom, major part of them lived in villages or segregated places. They led a poverty-stricken life. Their life became one of the untold miseries. Most of them neither had wealth nor own property. From the beginning of the caste system of Tamil Nadu, the Scheduled Caste or the low caste were denied the right to own property or to have wealth. The Scheduled Castes were miserably ill treated by the caste Hindus because of notion of the segregation and discriminate attitude towards them. Some of them remained as bonded labourers. Since the high caste, Hindus and property owners exploited their labour for low and nominal wages they remained downtrodden.

#### **Occupation Status of paraiya women**

Most of them were agricultural coolies, on daily wages and dependent entirely upon the property owners. They lived under the control of the property owners, the land on which they worked belonged to the property owners. They did not have habit of saving. They suffered from repayment of debts. They lived in thatched huts in segregated places of no ventilation or sanitation. Due to the strict restrictions imposed on Scheduled Castes, They were socially immobilized largely. The Economic backwardness would contribute to social backwardness; hence, the economic status of Scheduled Caste should be enhanced. The Central and State Government realized the fact that the government had to do something for the betterment of them in India since independence. The Government introduced schemes of assigning house-sites to the needy Scheduled Caste people from 1947 onwards. The Tamil Nadu Government gave house-site to the Scheduled Caste people by acquiring private lands or prombokku lands, with the assistance of the officials of Harijan Welfare Department, Madurai.

In order to grant the land acquisition for Scheduled Caste, the government of Tamil Nadu passed an Act known as Acquisition of land for Harijan Welfare Scheme in 1978. The government prombokku lands and unused wastelands are all earmarked for this purpose under this Act. Powers of the government had been conferred on the District Collector, so that they could expedite acquisition proceedings. The District Collector pointed out that the acquisition and distribution of free houses-sites for Scheduled Castes was not satisfactory until 1978.

#### **Land Acquisition**

The Land Acquisition Scheme is generally carried out in Madurai District by the special staff under the supervision of the District Collector and the District Harijan Welfare Officer. The District Collector of Madurai, R.A. Seetharamadass (1972-74), while addressing

the press, said during his period 40,000 acres of cultivable lands had been acquired and distributed to 21,000 landless agriculturists in Madurai District. The house site-pattas were also distributed to 25,000. The Government of Tamil Nadu had been introducing land reforms from time to time in order to help the poor landless Scheduled Castes. The Tamil Nadu Land Reform Act 58 of 1961 fixed the called as 30 standard acres, whereas the Tamil Nadu Land Reform (Reduction of ceiling of land) Act of 1970 reduced the ceiling to 15 standard acres, by which the government had the authority over the surplus lands.

The following table gives the details about the Land Acquisition and its distribution to the landless Schedule Castes in Madurai District from 1980-81 to 1986-87.

**Table 1 Acquisition of Land, Amount Allotted and Spent and Number of House-site Pattas issued from 1980-1987 in Madurai District**

Sl.No.	Year	Extend of land Acquired in (acres)	Amount allotted in lakhs (Rupees)	Expenditure incurred in lakhs (Rupees)	No. of House-site issued
1.	1980-81	106.63	5.00	5.00	1297
2.	1981-82	223.67	16.00	16.42	3792
3.	1982-83	129.67	11.00	11.18	4273
4.	1983-84	119.04	10.00	10.84	2538
5.	1984-85	40.99	9.00	9.16	1213
6.	1985-86	63.28	6.00	5.85	1187
7.	1986-87	65.40	6.00	7.07	1562
	Total	748.68	63.00	65.52	15862

In Madurai District the total number of villages, which come under the Harijan Housing and Development Schemes were 1.02 in 1985. Out of which 788 villages were covered under this scheme. In 1960's the amount was estimated that a house for Scheduled Caste would cost Rs.940/- per family, out of which Rs. 750/- was treated as subsidy and Rs. 190/- was given as loan. These loans can be paid to the Government in hundred equal installments.

There arose a discussion in 1972, in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly about the construction of better houses for Scheduled Castes at the cost of Rs. 2,680/- and Rs. 2,850/-. Yet another proposal was passed by which Rs 5,000/- was sanctioned to the beneficiaries for the each house. These proposal were sent to the Central Government for

its consent. Responding to these proposals, the Central Government instructed to extend loan facilities to the beneficiaries who had the repaying capacity through Life Insurance Corporation of India. For others, others, the houses were constructed at the cost of Rs. 940/- and Rs. 1,500/- per house. The beneficiaries were asked to pay Rs. 250/- for constructing their houses. This amount was to be adjusted in two ways; by installment way of paying cash or by providing material for the house construction.

### **Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Caste**

Along with TAHDCO assistance, programmes the Central Government provided Special Central Assistance Scheme under the special component plan for accelerating the economic development of Scheduled Castes from the year 1980. This is in addition to the states efforts for the economic development of Scheduled Castes. The quantum of Special Central Assistance is effort based and it should be used only for the economic development of Scheduled Castes. With the help of Special Central Assistance the State Government had taken efforts to improve the economic conditions of the Scheduled Caste both in traditional sector and industries services.

### **Cluster Development Programmers**

The Cluster Development Programme was carried out by the TAHDCO from 1982-83 as an Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) for the economic upliftment of the Scheduled Castes in 15 districts of Tamil Nadu state. The programme was implemented in 15 blocks, 1000 Scheduled Caste families would be covered. In Madurai District, the blocks selected to implement the Cluster Development Programme for the year 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 were Vadasandur, Nilakkottai and Andipatti respectively before the bifurcation. While the Development Schemes were drawn for the selected block the following norms should be taken into consideration, such as the existing economic and social structure of the target population, skill availability and the need for improvement, attitude and aptitude of the target beneficiaries, status of social infrastructure facilities, local resources and environment and their requirements in terms of training, finance marketing and organization as identified in devising various schemes. These schemas are the Petty Trade Loan Scheme; the Government of Tamil Nadu has introduced it. This offers on interest free loan scheme to improve the economic condition of the Scheduled Caste and also to reduce unemployment problem among educated youth of Scheduled Caste people. The Government of Tamil Nadu entrusted Petty Trade Loan Scheme to TAHDCO from 1984. This scheme was earmarked with 31 trades and they had been identified and implemented in the villages, wherever it was deemed necessary to the needy. TAHDCO is the only agency, which gives loan and subsidy for these schemes. From 1968 onwards, this scheme was implemented through the district Harijan Welfare Department for the welfare of

Scheduled Castes and other eligible communities with a view to improve their economic condition.

Under this scheme loans ranging from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 10,000/- would be sanctioned to Scheduled Caste. An important feature of the scheme was that loans up to Rs. 1,000/- would be given on personal security and if applicants seeking loans over and above that limit should provide property as security.

### **The Small Farmers Development Agency**

Most of the farmers in Tamil Nadu are holding less than 2 hectares of land. Social and economic justice would necessitate adequate attention by paying to the credit needs of the vast majority of these small farmers. The problem of the small farmer is one of the credits alone. He has to be assisted to get irrigation facilities, other inputs like seeds and fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides and to market his produce profitably. On the basis of the recommendation made by the All India Rural Credit Review Committee (1969) the Government of India has established Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDA) in many parts of the country. There were 87 such agencies formed at the end of March 1975. These agencies have a primary role to play in developing and strengthening the infrastructure, in provided adequate finance to small and economically week farmers. The Small Farmers Development Agencies Programme now forms a part and parcel of IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme). During the fifth plan period (1974-1985) with an allocation of Rs. 2.50 lakhs per block per annum. From these agencies the Scheduled Castes of Madurai District got benefit and equipped the status of their life the main function of the agency are as follows:

- i. To identify Small Farmers/Marginal Farmers:
- ii. To formulate economic development programmes for enabling them to cross the poverty line;
- iii. To Promote Rural Industries;
- iv. To create common facilities for production, storage and marketing and
- v. To strengthen the existing Co-operative Industries and strengthen their supervisory personnel

In addition to the above, the agency gives subsidy to eligible farmers on capital investments on the programme sponsored by them. The rule is that of a catalyst that activates the existing Government Agencies to implement the programmes and to induce the existing credit institutions to provide credit.

### **Cattle Loan**

The Government of Tamil Nadu had extended the liberalized scheme of giving loan for buying plough bulls at the cost of Rs. 500/- out of which Rs. 250/- would be treated as subsidy and Rs. 250/- as loan. 100 percent subsidy is provided for buying cow. The amount

sanctioned for cow loan is Rs. 500/- . These facilities would be made available to the person those who are socially and economically backward classes particularly to the Scheduled Caste. This facility was extended to the person who became a member in the Co-operative Society. The Co-operative Societies had been functioning since 1970. For Scheduled Castes, plough bulls could be given at free of cost. Under this scheme, only a few selected persons would be benefited. In the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Sathyavanimuthu, the then Minister for Harijan Welfare.

### **Family Expenditure**

The calculation of an average family's expenses has been done with the help of the data collected from the respondents. A man needs 400 grams of rice per day and a woman needs 300 grams. Two children consume together 500 grams of rice. Hence, a family of four members needs 1200 grams of rice per day. Therefore, per year they need 430 kilograms of rice. Taking into account the guests and visitors, approximately, the family need will be 500 kgs of rice per year. If the cost of rice per kg is Rs. 7/- approximately the family need Rs. 3500/- for rice alone.

This is for a family, which consumes only rice for a whole year. But this amount could be reduced in families, which consume other grains, or the Government subsidized rice.

On grocery items each family spends from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- per day. The cost on grocery thus is from Rs. 1800/- to Rs.3800/- per year. Apart from this, each family spends Rs. 300/- on Masala powder for a year. The next item is mutton. The respondents say that at least once a month they need half kg of mutton, which cost Rs. 45/- totaling to Rs. 540/- per year. At the time of the annual celebrations more money is spent on non-vegetarian items like mutton, Chicken and fish that is about Rs. 200/- more than on vegetarian.

The family spends on dress normally during the harvest and the festival seasons. A man buys 2 sets of clothes per year costing about Rs. 400/- . A women spends Rs.750/- on cloths. For a child the family spends Rs. 300/- to Rs. 600/- per year on clothing. Hence the clothes for a family with one child cost Rs. 200/- on average. Each family spends about Rs. 200/- on washing. In many families the dhobi gets his wages only in case or paddy or grains. At the time of harvesting he gets 25 measures to 40 measures of the produce, only for ironing he charges 50 paise per cloth. Approximately the cost on washing is Rs. 200/- to Rs. 250/- per year cosmetics; the family spends from Rs. 240/- to Rs. 300/- per year.

On recreation items the family spends around Rs. 120/- per year. The family spends Rs. 800/- approximately on firewood or kerosene for the year. Cigarettes and cigars betel leaves and nuts and drinks add a the expenditure. Each family spends an amount on children's education. An approximate family expenditure of a respondent for a year for four members as calculated by the researcher is as follows.

Table 2 Family Expenditure

Items	Rs.P.
Rice	800.00
Grocery	450.50
Masala Powder	200.00
Non-Veg. Items	140.00
Dress	1000.00
Washing	200.00
Firewood & Kerosene	200.00
Cosmetic items	150.00
Recreation	150.00
Travelling	200.00
Guest, Health & Children's education	1000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>4490.50</b>

Source: Field Survey

### Household Equipments

Except for water, a family requires cash to buy the needed items. Very often the income is not sufficient to balance the domestic budget. In many families the desire to acquire modern gadgets and items like Television, had necessitated huge borrowings from moneylenders who charge heavy interest rates. Besides, the respondents declared that, unlike in the past, nearly 30 percent of the men had got addicted to drinks and drugs, which had led to the impoverishment of the Paraiya families. So some of the Paraiya families continue to be in the grip of cruel moneylenders.

### Expenditure pattern

Women's abilities as financial managers are obviously affected by the levels of income. In the majority of the families income was augmented by the earnings of the women themselves. Most of the women have developed strategies to increase their income in order to balance their budgets. A less socially acceptable way for balancing the budget is to seek is loan from moneylenders. Money is sometimes borrowed from relatives or from neighbours. Major expenses can be classified the expenditure on marriages. Besides, the Paraiya women families have non-planned expenditure such as expenditure on land improvement, crop cultivation, family celebrations and festivals, repairing old houses or

constructing new houses and health. Marriage expenditure sometimes comprises the payment of heavy dowry to the bridegroom's party. The paraiya families are very often compelled to borrow from moneylenders, banks or both. There were a number of Hindu temples, in the Madurai District and the government appointed Scheduled Caste people as a temple trustees in these temple. As in records in 1972, there were 491 Adi-Dravida temple trustees in the Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu. Of course certain number of Adi-Dravida temple trustees are appointed in the Madurai District. It is to be noted that they were paralyzed and were not able to discharge their duties freely because of the Hindus suppression. So far not even a single women entrepreneur belonging to Scheduled Caste has either a petrol bank or even a brick line of her own.

#### **Conclusion**

The pariya women in Madurai District are lived in a good position due to the government assistant especially the house loan, agricultural loan cattle loan are provided by the government of tamilnadu and the loans are exempted for some extend deponce upon the extension of ruling party along with some vocational training programme to the rural women are conducted by the government as well as non-governmental organization for the development and implementation of such schemes to the poor and needy people of schedule caste people in and around Tamilnadu. Now their positions are elevated in a high level compare to other high caste people economically socially and politically.

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