

A Study of the Socio-Economic Problems of the Underprivileged Section of Thane District, Focusing on Jowhar and Mokhada Talukas

Summary of Minor Research Project

India is the world's largest economy with second largest concentration of tribals. The tribal communities remain isolated from the main stream and hence suffer the hardships due to widespread poverty, inadequate physical social infrastructure, inadequate employment opportunities, lack of quality education and inadequate and inappropriate health facilities etc. Hence, India has large sections of underprivileged people.

The term 'Underprivileged' has been defined in the English Dictionary as – "lacking the rights and advantages of other members of society". The purpose of the study is to highlight Jowhar and Mokhada, two such backward talukas of Thane district. Thane ranks third amongst the industrially developed districts of Maharashtra. In spite of the numerous industries and employment incentives, all talukas of the district are not equally developed. This study focuses on Jowhar and Mokhada. These talukas have a higher density of underprivileged members, mostly tribals living below poverty line, than the Coastal and River basin regions.

The study examines the socio-economic profile of the underprivileged population. An attempt is made to create awareness about the government schemes, policies and programs which are meant to improve their socio-economic condition. Some weightage is also given to the status of women in terms of social, physical, emotional and financial aspects. In spite of several efforts made by the government, poverty and inequality rampantly exists in these regions.

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is used as an effective tool to achieve an accurate socio-economic status of the people. MPI uses three dimensions as part of Human Development Index: health, education, and standard of living. It is used for measuring the level of deprivations in a particular household, area/village/taluka, in this case, Jowhar and Mokhada.

Data was collected, in an informal manner using structured interview schedules, which were translated into regional language i.e. Marathi in order to facilitate better and accurate responses from the illiterate tribal population of the selected sample. The study reveals that in Jowhar and Mokhada the basic necessities of life are hard to come by. The children are deprived of education, nutrition and good health. The percentage of malnourished population is high. Women are born to serve, suffer and starve. The study reveals the large numbers of people are socially excluded from the main stream. If such situation continues to persist, the aim of 'Inclusive Growth' cannot be attained. A nation can be said to be truly developed if all the regions are also making steady progress in a balanced way.

The aim of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to attain development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. Hence, it is essential to include every small area and region of the nation and not to concentrate on just a few for industrialization or modernization.

Most of the people in the backward areas are illiterate, ignorant and unaware of the government schemes meant for their upliftment. During research, awareness was created through various activities and programs like lectures, competitions, poster exhibitions, demonstrations, etc. in the backward areas to achieve inclusive growth by means of awareness.

This research is a small contribution towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. It also attempts to fulfill the objectives of XI Five Year Plan at micro level that it provides “an opportunity to restructure policies to achieve a new vision based on faster, more broad based and inclusive growth. It is designed to reduce poverty and focus on bringing the various divides that continue to fragment our society”.