

Social Exclusion of Ravuthar Community: A Case Study

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Abstract: *India, the world's largest democracy, has a multi-cultural rash that has numerous religious communities. According to the 2011 census, 79.8 percent are practicing Hinduism and 14.2 percent are adheres to Islam, while the remaining 6 percent are other religions. According to Rizvi and Roy (1984), Indian Muslims are not a homogeneous community as it appears in the general perception Muslims are divided based on different religious ideologies, caste differentiation and customary practices. Among the different Muslim communities, Ravuthar is one of the Muslim communities from the South Indian States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala who are socially excluded at a wider. The etymology of the word suggests 'ravath' means 'warriors'. But in reality, the Ravuthar community is facing high discrimination among the Muslim community at Thiruvegappura Panchayat, Palakkad District, and Kerala by using descriptive research design. The researcher has employed an interview guide and case study. From the case studies, the relevant information was collected by the researcher. In the community, they were facing various issues such as stigma discrimination based on their linguistic and spatial. Their representation in any religious or social positions is very less. People considered as they are standing the lower layer of the social ladder. They are facing much discrimination within the Muslim community. This study intends to contribute suitable measures and suggestions to abolish the social exclusion of Ravuthar Community.*

Keywords: Social Exclusion, Discrimination, Ravuthar Community

1. Introduction

Islamic religion and culture are fulfilled with moral values and principals improved with honesty, likeness, equality, organization, kindness, empathy, unity and freedom of choice. Hence there shouldn't be any kind of discrimination, negligence inequality from the part of the followers to each other, but all are accountable to God. Man will take responsibilities for the sake of administration of directions from God. So Islam strictly opposes any kind of discrimination. So the discriminations on the basis of caste, colour and creed. But in practice, people are considering many of the classes as in lower layer of social ladder based on their occupation, education, economic and social and other status as found in Ossan community (traditionally barbers) and Pussala community (they are newly converted to Islam. The word Pussala is derived from Puthu - Islam) and which can also be seen in Ravuthar community.

Ravuthar belonging into Muslim community from the south Indian states of Tamil Nadu. The etymology of the word suggests the root word 'Ravath' means 'warriors'. They are also known as 'Turukars' meaning Turk because of their Turkish ancestry. Ravuthar a multi ethnic community has been considered in the lower layer of social ladder in the rural areas of Malabar. The history of the advent of Ravuthar community to Thiruvegappura Panchayat can be traced back to second half of the 16th century. The community had been engaged the work of sewing and silk making and stitching. They have brought here by Thiruvegappura Sree Mahadeva Temple board for making silk used for religious affairs. They have been addressed by the name of their occupation as "Neythan" which means someone who is engaged in sewing. So the other community people used the term in the sense of social demarcation. So the Ravuthar community facing different types of segregation from the Muslim community such as social participation, marriage, religious

participation, customs and norms, politics, spatial and linguistic etc.

This study highlights the caste system practices in Muslim community and different types of exclusions faced by the Ravuthar community. Further, the study helps to provide awareness among the Muslim community about the caste practices and to know the characteristics and features of Ravuthar community and culture and tradition etc. Moreover the study gives various discriminations and segregations which practice in Muslim community and may help to change this social stigma which exists in Muslim community.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to understand the dimensions of the social exclusion suffered by Ravuthar community or what are the challenges and issues faced by Ravuthar community. Here the researcher would like to study the ways in which how Ravuthar community excludes or discriminated within the Muslim community and their effort to tackle social exclusion.

2.1 Study Area and Methodology

The study was conducted in Thiruvegappura Panchayat, Pattambi Taluk, and Palakkad district in Kerala state. The Panchayat is a multi-ethnic caste in nature and Ravuthar community were lived in a geographical area. This area is called as "theruv". Now the area has a population 260 families who lived in the Panchayat wards of 1, 2, 12 and 16.

The present study is focused on how the Ravuthar community is excluded or discriminated among the Muslim community at Thiruvegappura Panchayat, Palakkad District,

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and Kerala by using descriptive research design. The researcher purposively selected the area and the study was conducted based on primary data was collected from 10 households of Ravuthar community and the secondary data was obtained from books, journals, articles, reports, newspaper, websites, etc. The researcher has employed an interview guide and case study for this study. From the case studies, the relevant information was collected by the researcher. One household has considered as a unit of the study.

The limitation of the study is researcher didn't get much to conduct this study. Ravuthar community is spread in 13 districts of Kerala. The limitation is that the researcher didn't get a chance to conduct a comparative study on Ravuthar community in different areas of Kerala because researcher wants to this research in a short period of time.

3. Result and Discussion

We know that community is the smallest territorial group that can embarrass all aspects of social life – Kingsly Davis. Ravuthars keeping all the characteristics of community such as they lived in a geographical area, they have we feeling and community sentiments, they have common interests, and likeness. They are lived in a geographical area because they have common features and characteristics. They are an ethnic group because they are speaking Tamil-Malayalam mix language in their homes.

We know that they are migrated from Tamil Nadu and they are following the words of Tamil like Atha to father and Athachi to mother and Akka, etc. They can handle the languages of both Malayalam and Tamil very easily. It seems in an elder generation but in the younger generation, they are difficult to handle Tamil language but they are using Tamil in common words like Atha, Athachi, etc.

The senior citizens and middle-aged people of the Ravuthar community are not well educated. In early period they are migrated to place another place for better livelihood. So they didn't get a better education, now the condition is changed. Ravuthar community formed an organization that is, Ravuthar Federation and Ravuthar Youth Federation. The federation provides educational support and provides career guidance class to the Ravuthar students. It is very helpful to the students to improve their quality of education.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, all of them had to quit their traditional woven work and beedi-therapy due to acute poverty, starvation and financial crisis and turned into another job for the well-being of the community. Many of the families are migrated to Tamil Nadu and other placed for better livelihood due to poverty and starvation. This process is known as "panjampizhakka". "Panjam"- "pavam" which means "poor or damn" and "pizhakka"- "rakshappeduka" which means "overcome the poverty".

3.1 Exclusions of Ravuthar Community

The researcher used many criteria to examine the social exclusion faced by the Ravuthar community. It includes the economic, political, social, religious and spatial. The attitude

of the people towards this community as a distinct one is still in the mind in different forms such as social status, political involvement, language, culture, etc.

3.2 Social Exclusion

Ravuthar community has been addressed by the name of their occupation as „Neythan“ which means someone who is engaged in woven work. But in the present scenario, the term has been used in the sense of social demarcation. They have been marginalized due to the vibrant traditional customs by other Muslim community members. In India, the caste system is practiced based on the job. The people attitudes towards this community like that.

3.3 Economic Exclusion

During the early period, they are engaged in woven work and beedi making. Many of them had to quit their traditional work of sewing due to acute poverty and financial crisis and turned into other jobs to wipe out the social stigma that has been associated with their community. Most of the Ravuthars are middle-class family. They are suffered many difficulties in their job. Other Muslim community people see their job as a discriminated way. Many of them are migrated to Tamil Nadu for better income and livelihood.

3.4 Political Exclusion

Many small and leading political parties are working in Thiruvegappura area Such as; CPIM (M), IUML, INC, WELFARE PARTY and PDP. Ravuthars have membership in these political parties but they have not the key role in political parties and majority people didn't allow giving such opportunities. The stigma is existing in each every member of the area which is they are "Neythans". Their political rights and interest are often getting violated and they are neglected from political opportunities and participation in the election.

3.5 Religious Exclusion

Ravuthars are following Hanafi – school of Fiqh but in this area, they are following Shafi – school of Fiqh. Shafi and Hanafi school of Fiqh is two of the four religious Sunni Islamic school of jurisprudence. Their involvement in religious groups and boards such as Mahalla and other committees is very weak. They are often afraid of expressing their needs as the socially constructed norms which lied upon intolerance, forced them to be silent for many years.

3.6 Spatial Exclusion

Ravuthars are living in a particular geographical area called "Theruv" which means "street". The term itself is an oppressed view of subjective perception. They have separate mosques and Mahallu boards within this boundary. This idea may be generated from the thought of being a separate entity to uphold their rights and concern. So the people show spatial discrimination towards the community.

4. Exclusions Lead to Segregations

Ravuthar community is a majority in South Kerala but they are minorities in Malabar. They are migrated from Tamil Nadu to Kerala and together in a common area to live. Similarly, Ravuthars are the minority in Thiruvegappura. So the other Muslim community people have a difficulty to agree to the standard of living of Ravuthar community. They made dominance on them. Researcher identifies that the segregation process is held by self, which is Ravuthars have selected a geographical area to live. Because they want to keep the ethnicity of their community and they are relatives to each other. They are segregated based on cultural, linguistic and spatial. These types of segregation are leads to discriminations and social exclusion by others.

4.1 Cultural Segregation

Ravuthar community as they constitute an ethnic Tamil Muslim group they have been used to hold some customs like they have been following Endogamy culture in marriage to protect the ethnic purity. But as social mobility and modernization came there had some changes within this culture too. But other Muslim community members are not ready to have a marriage alliance with the members of Ravuthar community even if they are willing to do. The condition has changed a little than the earlier days. Because the stigma is exist in the word Neythan. Other community people addressed Ravuthars as Neythan, used in the sense of social demarcation. Ravuthars are not converted Muslims, their ancestry in turkey but Mappila Muslims are converted from chola dynasty. They considered the Ravuthars as they are standing the lower layer of the social ladder in society. Islamic religion and culture are based on moral values and principles enriched with justice, equality, fairness, brotherhood, mercy, compassion, solidarity and freedom of choice. Hence there shouldn't be any kind of discrimination, negligence and inequality from the part of the followers to each other, but all are accountable to God. Man will take responsibilities for the sake of the administration of directions from God. So Islam strictly opposes any kind of discrimination. So as the discrimination based on caste, colour and creed. But in practice, people are considering many of the classes as in lower layer of the social ladder based on their occupation, economic status etc. In this study shows a clear violation of Islamic tenets which practicing caste system.

4.2 Linguistic Segregation

Ravuthar community as they constitute an ethnic Tamil Muslim group they are speaking Tamil –Malayalam mix language in their house to keep the ethnicity of the community. They handle both the Tamil and Malayalam language very fluently. Discrimination is leading based on these linguistic segregations because the other people teased the Ravuthar by calling Pandiyans or annachi. They used the term in social demarcation. The community members have established an organization to ensure the rights. They are arguing for transforming their community status from mere OBC category to “Tamil Language Minority” for having an opportunity, equity and equality.

4.3 Spatial Segregation

The community members are located within a particular spatial area of their own called “Theruv” which means street. The term itself has a marginalized view of subjective perception. The spatial area is also known as theruv, Petta, etc. In this area, the place is known as Theruv. The spatial segregation also leads to discriminations. They are marginalized based on spatial segregation. They have less power in Mahallu committee and board. Other Muslim community people provide one or two sub-office barrier ship in these religious institutions. Their concept is that it's enough for Ravuthars. They have separate mosques and Mahallu boards within this boundary. This idea may be generated from the thought of being a separate entity to uphold their rights and concerns. Ravuthars have fully controlled the function of the masjid and the masjid is registered under Waqf Board as “Ravuthar Theruv Masjid – Thiruvegappura”. This also leads to discrimination on Ravuthars.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to prove that the caste system is practicing among the Muslim community. Researcher takes Ravuthar community as a case to prove which caste system is practicing among the Muslim community. Researcher takes the Ravuthar community from Thiruvegappura Panchayat with special reference. Because, Ravuthar community are belongs to different Panchayats of Pattambi Taluk, but in Thiruvegappura Panchayat, they are facing discrimination on the basis of their traditional job. Ravuthar community are segregated on the basis of their ethnicity, linguistic, cultural, social, and residential. They are segregated themselves to keep their ethnicity but this segregation is leads to the discrimination and exclusions. The Ravuthar community suffer many problems with their social life. They are discriminated on the basis of their traditional job. They were woven workers, now the society used the term woven work into Neythan. The word Neythan is used as a term of social demarcation. Here the researcher found that the Ravuthar community facing social exclusion and caste discrimination due to their segregation.

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