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## Christian Institutions Are Striving To Enhance The Well-Being Of Students From Disadvantaged Groups In Karnataka

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### Abstract

In this article, we aim to demonstrate that the work of Christian educational institutions in various parts of India has been effective without any negative intentions. Educational development is found to occur where institutions are active, especially among those who are deprived, poor, exploited, and excluded from mainstream society. The institutions have given hope to these individuals, who have been striving to assist in educational, social, economic, and political ways. This research, based on the empirical studies of two taluks, namely Mysore and Heggadadevanakote, in the Mysore district in Karnataka State, concerning the role of Christian educational institution schools in tribal education, found many issues of relevance. 2020-2021 saw the collection of data from students between the ages of 6 and 14. Other groups of individuals were also included in the data, including NGO representatives, tribal and non-tribal people, local leaders, administrators, and elected representatives. It endeavors to concentrate on areas of study that are not yet explored. Christian institutions in educational development in the State of Karnataka, India have been empirically examined in the paper for the first time. The various forms of their contribution to educating the tribal people of Karnataka can be understood through this study, which has policy implications. The H.D. Kote taluk of Mysore district was confirmed by this study. Due to only one government school in this taluk, the education level of the tribals was significantly lower than that of Mysore.

**Keywords:** tribal education, Christian institutions, pragmatic work , Karnataka

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## Introduction

India's economic growth has been steady and it is also boosting poverty reduction. India is still home to a significant portion of the world's poor, and approximately 30% of its population lived below the poverty line in 2009-2010 (Varadharajan, Thomas, and Kurpad, 2013). The fact that most of the poor people in our country are from lower castes is more distressing. The majority of individuals belonging to lower castes are not literate. Socially disadvantaged groups can be empowered through education, which is considered the most potent tool. The socially disadvantaged population of India has been encouraged to develop socioeconomically through various constitutional and administrative measures taken by the government of India since independence. Government sectors have experienced multiple levels of reservations. The purpose of these reservations is to bring out the underprivileged segments of society and make them equal to the main stream of society. A number of laws were formulated like the Protection of civil rights act 1955/1976 and the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) act 1989 (Source - <https://palakmathur.wordpress.com/.../minorities-in-india-dalits-by-palak>). Practically speaking, most of these laws have been ineffective in their proper implementation.

Christian institutions have been putting in effort into almost every aspect of tribal life, with a particular emphasis on education and health. Their goal was to preserve the existing culture while introducing modern life and culture. Engaging with dedicated and highly trained personnel who help them gain confidence is the key to their innovative approach to working with tribal people. Cooperation is something they are willing to do, and their work is seen as a service. Christian institutions seem to have been more successful in carrying out welfare work among tribal communities, as Fuchs (2005) observes. Compared to the government agencies, it is more impressive. Their dedication to being insiders has led to their development of a sense of community with the local population. Missionaries provided community education through missionary schools, primarily by teaching Christian scriptures to develop loyal followers. Christianity was widely propagated by missionaries, who distributed tracts and condemned Hindu practices through speeches in bazars and public places.

## The Contribution of Christian Missionaries to Education in India

The contribution of the Christian missions in pioneering modern education in India has been both qualitative as well as quantitative. The Christian educational institutions were among the best organized and managed in the country. These missionaries helped the tribals to proceed from savagery to modernity and thereby took off a heavy load from the shoulders of the government of India. Enormous work has been done by the Christian missionaries in educating the youth of India. Christian missionaries take especial care of the youth of the country, irrespective of sex, creed, colour, and caste and have built for them numerous elementary, secondary and higher educational institutions. It was St. Francis Xavier who led the way in elementary education by exhorting his companions to build a school in every village. St. Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit to come to India and started the Indian mission in 1542. These schools were the pioneers of the modern system of primary education. Looking back, the earliest conversion in India took place among the Parvars of South India. These people were harassed by Arab pirates and powerful Hindus and ultimately protected by the Portuguese at the cost of adopting Christianity and the whole caste was baptised.

The history of Christianity in southern Karnataka is largely the history of the Mysore Mission. The work of evangelization in the territories of the raja of Mysore was started by Fr. Leonard Cinnami, an Italian Jesuit belonging to the province of Goa. He set up his residence Ramapura in Mysore in 1653 which became the first

centre of the Kannada mission. Arrubale, Bassanpura, Kudulupalyam and Marathahalli were other little centres, where Christianity was established between the years 1650 and 1660.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objectives of the study are: To find out the priority given to education in the activities of the Christian institutions and Christian institutions are striving to enhance the well-being of students from disadvantaged groups in Karnataka. To explore the institutions contribution to empowering the disadvantaged groups in Mysore district of Karnataka. To evaluate the present situation in terms of the number of educational institutions and other management activities.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The study being proposed is both historical and analytical. The researcher planned to measure the contributions of Christian institutions to primary education in Mysore district, as indicated in the objectives. The primary aim is to document how these institutions have contributed to the development of primary education from a sociological point of view. Comprehending the historical role of Christian missionaries and institutions in education in Mysore district and Karnataka was necessary to do that. For the purpose of the present study which attempts to measure the contributions of the Christian institutions to the primary education in Mysore district, four taluks have been selected, namely, Mysore, Periyapatna, H D Kote, and K R Nagara. The interview schedule contained queries pertaining to the identification particulars of the parents, household particulars, educational background of the parents, income and expenditure of the households, and opinions of the parents regarding the level of educational attainment and empowerment of their children from the Christian educational institutions.

### **Result and Discussion**

The respondents pertaining to the role of Christian educational institutions in empowering the disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, backward classes are analyzed. This analysis is purely based on respondents opinion regarding ranging questions related to co-relation between social empowerment and Christian institutions. However, since the respondents are students studying in Christian educational institutions, their opinion cannot be taken as their considered opinion. However, the factors such as parental opinion, teachers tutelage, and the overall atmosphere in the school influencing respondents opinion may not be ruled out, as this section doesn't apply any parametric statistical tool to test the veracity. Here, the respondents opinion are given with the application of descriptive statistics.

The study reveals the opinion of the respondents regarding the spread of Christian schools in places where the population of the backward castes are more in comparison to other communities. 27% of the respondents agree to the statement that Christian schools are spread more in places, where backward communities are more in number. 20% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement. However 33% of the respondents are unsure about this. 14% disagree with the statement and 6% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. This clearly indicates a tilt towards the positive side. As it is evident in the chart 47% of the respondents believe that Christian schools are located more in places where population of backward castes are more in number.

The opinion of the respondents regarding the spread of Christian schools in places where the population of the Scheduled castes are more in comparison to other communities. 34% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that Christian schools are spread more in places, where backward communities are more in number. 32% of the respondents agree to the statement. However 14% of the respondents are neutral about this statement. 8% disagree with the statement and 12% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. This clearly indicates that the respondents feel that Christian schools are set up in places where people belonging to Scheduled castes are more in number. As it is evident in the chart 64% of the respondents believe that Christian schools are located more in places where population of Scheduled castes are more in comparison to others. This could also mean that Christian schools are catering to the oppressed classes of the society by extending valued based quality education to them.

The opinion of the respondents regarding the spread of Christian schools in places where the population of the Scheduled tribes are more in comparison to other communities. 26% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that Christian schools are spread more in places, where tribal communities are more in number. 25% of the respondents agree to the statement. However 29% of the respondents are neutral about this statement. 12% disagree with the statement and 8% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. This clearly indicates that the respondents feel that Christian schools are set up in places where Scheduled tribes population are more. As it is evident in the chart 51% of the respondents believe that Christian schools are located more in places where population of Scheduled tribes are more in comparison to other communities. This means that the majority of the respondents believe that Christian schools are catering to the oppressed classes of the society by extending imparting good education, thereby doing their bit in bringing these communities to the mainstream of the society.

The opinion of the respondents regarding the fee structure of Christian schools in comparison to other schools. 33% of the respondents agree to the statement that primary schools run by Christian institutions do not charge exorbitant donations and fees compared to other schools. 12% of the respondents agree to the statement. However 30% of the respondents are neutral about this statement. 20% disagree with the statement and 5% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. This clearly indicates that the 45% of the respondents feel that Christian schools do not charge exorbitant donations or fees compared to non- Christian schools. However, it should be noted here that 30% of the respondents are unsure about this statement, which may either indicate their unwillingness to categorically say that Christian schools do not charge higher fees or their agreement or disagreement to the statement. 30% of the respondents, which is a sizeable number, have chosen not to respond, may say a thing or two about schools in their neighborhood.

As it is evident in the chart 25% of the respondents believe that Christian schools are also charging higher fees and donations in comparison to other schools in their places. This chart clearly indicates that, although Christian schools may not charge higher donations and fees from the students, their fee structure may not be too low either to enable the students from the downtrodden sections to have access to education at these schools. Christian schools may have been located in places where SC/ST and backward classes are more in number, when it comes to fee structure, which is a basic determining factor in admission, these schools may not be too accessible to the said communities at large. Only those from these communities, who can afford to pay the fees have the opportunity to study in Christian schools.

The opinion of the respondents regarding the Christian schools adherence to reservation policy as stipulated by the central and the state governments. 46% of the respondents are not sure about the weather Christian institutions strictly adhere to reservation policies of the state and central governments. These respondents are neutral about this statement. This may indicate that respondents may not be aware of school's admission statistics, which is more concerned about school management. However 32% of the respondents do agree to the statement that Christian schools strictly adhere to the reservation policies of state and central governments.

This is a good percentage, which tells a lot about school's image of being the facilitator of social justice through education, in the eyes of the stakeholders; the influence of their parents should not be ignored here. In that sense, society at large thinks that Christian educational institutions do follow mandatory reservation policy of the government. 12% disagree and 10% strongly disagree to this statement, which indicates that 22% of the respondents do feel that Christian schools are not strictly adhering to the reservation policy. This could mean that Christian schools may be admitting students based on institutional criteria and may also be according importance to roaster policy, but as it was found during administration of the questionnaire, these respondents have the feeling that sometimes their schools may not have taken the roaster policy seriously.

This is an important revelation of the study. A large percentage (46%) of students are unsure about reservation policy and 22% of the respondents do not believe that roaster policy is not being implemented strictly, and only 32% of the respondents believe that their schools follow reservation policy of government. However, it should be noted here that 32% is not a small proportion and one more thing to be noted here is that, notwithstanding the reservation policy, there might be good number of students belonging to SC/ST, OBC communities in Christian schools. The very fact that these schools are set up in areas where SC/ST and OBC population are more, as part of the vision of the institution, speaks volumes about their intent. Hence, the respondents opinion regarding this should be considered keeping other factors in mind as discussed in previous charts, such

as the schools started by Christian institutions in tribal areas and places where population of scheduled castes and backward classes are more in number in comparison to other communities.

The opinion of the respondents regarding Christian schools following their own reservation policy for female students belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities. 38% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement about Christian institutions following their own reservation system for girls belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities along with government's roster policy. 34% of the respondents disagree with the statement. It clearly indicates that 72% of the respondents are of the opinion that Christian schools do not provide additional reservation for female students belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities. 16% of the respondents are unsure about the statement.

However, 8% of the respondents agree that their schools follow additional reservation for female students and 4% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement. As it is clear from the chart, the respondents do not endorse the statement about Christian institutions providing additional reservation for female students belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities.

It should be noted here that no institution follow such policies of providing additional reservation, however, they may create a conducive atmosphere for the female students, irrespective of communities to dream big in education. One needs to take a look into the admission statistics of male and female students taking community into consideration to determine whether the institution has given additional support to female students of these communities. Perception of the respondents does indicate that these schools do not follow additional or separate roster measures for female students.

The opinion of the respondents regarding the implementation of Right to Education (RTE) policy in Christian educational institutions. There is a opinion floating around among the general public that private unaided institutions are not too keen in implementing students under RTE. Christian institutions, being a minority institutions, would have a legal provision to provide preference to Christian students. However, it is mandatory on part of these institutions to implement RTE policy in their respective schools. Invariably, Christian schools are most sought after in all the places, because of their steadfast commitment to provide quality education to all. Hence, the demand for seats in Christian schools are always more. Given this situation, some of the institutions may not have implemented the RTE policy in letter and spirit. It is only logical to get the opinion of the students who are studying in these institutions to know whether, their schools are serious about admitting students under RTE.

As the chart indicates 31% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that Christian institutions strictly follows right to education policy in providing admission to students in their primary schools. 27% of the

respondents agree to the statement. However, 15% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. Although the figures, clearly indicates a tilt towards the positive side as the respondents believe that Christian institutions. As it is evident in the chart 58% of the respondents believe that Christian schools are implementing RTE in their respective institutions. 23% of the respondents, which is a sizeable number, are not sure about their schools conviction with regard to RTE. 4% of the respondents disagree with the statement and 15% of the respondents, which is not an ignorable percentage, strongly deny about Christian institutions implementing RTE in letter and spirit.

The study provides details about the opinion of the respondents regarding the Christian educational institutions carrying out special drive to attract and admit the students belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities in their respective places. As the chart indicates 45% of the respondents disagree to the statement that Christian institutions strictly carry out special drive to admit students of SC/ST and OBC communities. 3% of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. 23% of the respondents are not sure about the statement. 11% disagree to the statement and 18% strongly agree to the statement.

These figures, clearly indicates that the respondents doesn't believe that Christian institutions carry out any special drive to attract the students belonging to Scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. It is evident in the chart 48% of the respondents do not believe in the statement about Christian schools carrying out special drive to admit students from depressed classes. 23% of the respondents, which is a sizeable number, are not sure about their schools special conviction with regard to SC/ST and OBCs.

However, 29% of the respondents agreeing to the statement is a good sign, as it could indicate institution's initiatives towards admitting students from deprived classes. As some of these respondents stated during the field visits, though their respective schools may not conduct admission drive to attract students from SC/ST and OBCs, they do have counseling mechanism in place to motivate these students. In some of the schools, teachers also take special interest in motivating students to take admissions to their respective schools. Moreover, schools located in tribal areas and places where SC/ST and OBC population is more compared to other communities, admission of these students would naturally be good. And it was clearly established in the previous section of this chapter that some of these schools run by Christian educational institutions are located in places where population of SC/ST and OBCs are more in number.

## Conclusion

The respondents were asked to provide overall ranking Christian schools. Accordingly, it is observed that about 47 percent of respondents giving a rating as "Above average" which is the highest percentage. About one fourth (25 percent) of respondents rating as "Average" and about 18 percent of them rating as "Excellent."

Furthermore, about six percent and equally the same percentage of respondents rated as below average and poor. This clearly indicates that the Christian schools in which respondents are studying are successful in having stronger influence on their students.

On the other, when asked to rate the other non-Christian schools, it is observed there is a kind of spread of percentages among four likert scale. Accordingly, about 31 percent of respondents giving a rating as "Above Average" which is the highest percentage. About 28 percent of respondents rating as "Average" and about 26 percent of them rating as "Excellent." Furthermore, interestingly about 10 percent and five percentage of respondents rated as below average and poor. This clearly indicates that respondents have not given clear mandate for non-Christian schools, which means, they are of the opinion that Christian schools are better than non-Christian schools in their respective places.

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