Research Paper

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Socio-economic Status of Dalit Working Women in Gulbarga City

Social Science

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

Dalits are discriminated and suppressed by their castes in society and Dalit women are discriminated and suppressed by their caste as well as their gender in family and society. The education and employment has given Dalit women social status and respect. To assess the social status, equality and respect of Dalit working women, the present study was made in Gulbarga city. Totally 500 Dalit working women were interviewed to collect the primary data. The findings revealed that education and employment given social status, equality, respect, satisfaction in work life, etc to Dalit working women.

Introduction:

The terms 'Dalits', 'Shudras', 'Scheduled Castes', 'Mlechchas', 'Chandals', etc are used synonymously to mean Dalits in India. Sociologically, the Dalits can be defined on the basis of three social characteristics (Vivek Kumar, 2009):

1. Their structural location in Indian society
2. Social exclusion they suffer in the society
3. Their unique construction of consciousness, which is anchored in their structural location and social exclusion.

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste. Dalits work as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual and this pollution was considered contagious. Hence, the Dalits were become neglected and alienated from the society. The history of categorizing some castes as Scheduled Castes commenced with the Government of India Act, 1935. Based on the grouping Scheduled Castes, reservation was given in education and employment to these castes. Consequently, now scheduled castes are in public employment.

Among Dalits, women are not decision makers for their castes or communities and men arrange their marriages. They are expected to be committed and loyal to their husbands. They have to earn wages like their men besides taking care of the children, kitchen and guests. Widowhood does not entitle them for remarriage and their sexuality is controlled under strict surveillance, while men can remarry and flirt around. A Dalit woman poet has succinctly put the predicament of Dalit women as: "Dalit women's issues have less in common with Dalit men's issues than with those of the upper caste women. If there, is any soul in this country who is subjected to all kinds of oppression and exploitation, it is the Dalit woman. On one side she is oppressed by the caste system, on the other side she is subjected to gender oppression and class exploitation. She is a Dalit among Dalits" (Challapalli, 1998). Gopal Guru (1995) argues that the situation of Dalit women is different from that of the non-Dalit women and they have to simultaneously confront the problem of caste as well as patriarchal domination. Therefore, they should talk differently. Hence, Dalit women were become neglected in their families, community and society at large. Due to increase in educational opportunities and employment, gradually the Dalit women are working in different types of employment. Still their status is lower in family and society. The present study was made to address the sociological problems of inequality of Dalit working women in Gulbarga city.

Objectives of the Study:

Following are the objectives of the present study.

- To study the age group of Dalit working women in Gulbarga city.
- To look into the discrimination and inequality faced by Dalit women in family and society.
- To find out whether there is increase or change of status of Dalit women due to employment.

Scope and Methodology:

Gulbarga city is located in Hyderabad-Karnataka region of Karnataka state and it backward and recently recognized under Article 371(J) of the Indian Constitution. The term 'Dalits' is used as synonymously to 'Scheduled Caste' in the present study. Further, the primary data was collected from the scheduled caste women working in different departments in Gulbarga city. Depending on the availability, total 500 Dalit working women are surveyed and of which, 250 Dalit women are State Government employees, 150 are Central Government employees including autonomous organizations and 100 are Local Government employees. The primary data was collected using questionnaire and questionnaire was circulated among the Dalit women working in different departments. The collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under.

Analysis and Discussion:

The collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under.

1. Age of the Respondents:

Information on age of the respondents helps to know about their level of knowledge and understanding about different aspects in their family life as well as their work life. Age is also important while assessing the work experience at their work place. Hence, the collected primary data on age of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 1. Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Dalit Women Working Under						Total	
	Central Govt		State Govt		Local Govt			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Below 25 Years	07	4.6	12	4.8	13	13.0	32	6.4
26 to 40 Years	68	45.3	63	25.2	32	32.0	163	32.6
41 to 50 Years	60	40.0	116	46.4	43	43.0	219	43.8
51 to 60 Years	15	10.0	59	23.6	12	12.0	86	17.2
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

2. Education of the Respondents:

Comparatively education is source of knowledge. Where there is more education, there is more knowledge and vice versa. As such, information was collected from the respondents on their level of education and the collected primary data is tabulated as under.

Table No. 2. Education of the Respondents

Particulars	Dalit Women Working Under						Total	
	Central Govt		State Govt.		Local Govt			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Up to Primary	08	5.3	19	7.6	42	42.0	69	13.8
Secondary	11	7.3	34	13.6	23	23.0	68	13.6
PU/ Under Graduate	33	22.0	76	30.4	11	11.0	120	24.0
Graduate/ Post-Graduate	98	65.3	117	46.8	24	24.0	239	47.8
Any Other	--	--	04	1.6	--	--	04	0.8
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

3. Faced Discrimination and Exploitation in Life:

As discussed already, the Dalit women have faced and are facing discrimination and exploitation at different stages in their life. In this regard, it was asked to the respondents whether they have faced any types of discriminations and exploitations in their life and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 3. Faced Discrimination and Exploitation in Life

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Yes	112	74.6	196	78.4	89	89.0	397	79.4
No	28	18.6	41	16.4	06	6.0	75	15.0
Can't Say	10	6.6	13	5.2	05	5.0	28	5.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

4. Nature of Exploitation and Discrimination:

As discussed above, totally 397 of the respondents have faced cases of exploitation and discrimination and the nature of the such cases are discussed as under.

Table No. 4. Nature of Exploitation and Discrimination

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Discrimination & Alienation in Education	46	30.6	112	44.8	18	18.0	176	35.2
Caste based Discrimination	62	41.3	131	52.4	27	27.0	220	44.0
Gender based Exploitation & Harassment	31	20.6	34	13.6	12	12.0	77	15.4
Suppression in Work place	27	18.0	31	12.4	41	41.0	99	19.8
Social Alienation from Village	19	12.6	25	10.0	21	21.0	65	13.0
Public Humiliation	11	7.3	12	4.8	14	14.0	37	7.4
Any Other	05	3.3	08	3.2	03	3.0	16	3.2
Not Applicable	38	25.3	54	21.6	11	11.0	103	20.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

5. Status Gained Due to Job:

The Dalit women is suppressed and depressed in their families as well as in society. After getting education and employment, as proved by many studies, Dalit women gain social respect and status to a greater extent. As such, it is assumed that the respondents in the present study may have gained social status and respect and the collected primary data in this respect is tabulated as under.

Table No. 5. Status Gained due to Job

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Socio-economic Status & Respect Improved	63	42.0	75	30.0	28	28.0	166	33.2
Improvement in Economic Status	41	27.3	103	41.2	34	34.0	178	35.6
Decreased Economic Status and Respect	06	4.0	09	3.6	15	15.0	30	6.0
No Change in Any Aspect	30	20.0	52	20.8	23	23.0	105	21.0
Enhanced Social Respect	10	6.6	11	4.4	--	--	21	4.2
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

6. Attitudes of Society towards Family:

Historically, the Dalit people were suppressed and depressed in society. Now due to the Constitutional principles, the Dalits have gained equality in all aspects of society. But the social traditions have not changed completely to accept the Dalits as equal and as such, still few of the Dalit families are depressed, discriminated, exploited and even alienated in many of the places. But in urban areas, to a greater extent, the Dalits are treated equal. It was asked to the respondents to spell the attitudes of society towards their families and the collected primary data is presented in the following table.

Table No. 6. Attitudes of Society towards Family

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Socially Discriminated & Ill treated	52	34.6	73	29.2	24	24.0	149	29.8
Alienated from Forward Castes	04	2.6	10	4.0	07	7.0	21	4.2
Increased Social Status due to Economic Status	63	42.0	102	40.8	36	36.0	201	40.2
No Differentiation	31	20.6	65	26.0	33	33.0	129	25.8
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

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7. Satisfaction in Work Life:
As discussed above, the Dalit women are deprived from many aspects and even facing challenges, obstacles and barriers in their family as well as in their work place. Hence, their satisfaction in their work life may be lower. Hence, the information was collected from the respondents on their satisfaction in work life and presented in the following table.

Table No. 7. Satisfaction in Work Life

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Fully Satisfied	38	25.3	87	34.8	14	14.0	139	27.8
Satisfied to a Greater extent	82	54.6	120	48.0	61	61.0	263	52.6
Not Satisfied	30	20.0	43	17.2	25	25.0	98	19.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

Suggestions from the Study:
Following suggestions may be made from the present study.

- The employers or the authorities working in different departments should realize the equal rights of Dalit women and must treat Dalit women equally.
- It is suggested to Dalit working women to increase their awareness on legal provisions against inequality and discrimination based on caste and gender.
- Finally, the society must realize the equal rights of Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular and treat the Dalit women as equal in all parts of social activities.

Conclusion:
From the present study, it is observed that the education and employment has given Dalit women a social status and respect. The Dalits should realize the fact that education and employment increase the social status and respect and curb discrimination, suppression, exploitation, etc based on caste and gender. Hence, education and employment of Dalits should be encouraged by increasing more welfare schemes so that more Dalit women can gain education and employment and thereby social status and equal opportunities in family and society.

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