



History

SOCIAL STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN SALEM DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

In traditional Indian society, the status of the individual and the group were always influenced by descriptive values. Membership in a particular caste determined his or her position in the areas of economic, social and political life. When the power of caste was supreme in society, one's own customs and religious beliefs play an important role in determining the social status of its members as a whole and women in particular. Social empowerment meant that removal of all the existing socially induced inequalities, disparities and other persisting problems besides providing easy access to basic minimum services. For this, 110 scheduled caste women have been selected and collected their opinion about the social empowerment status through questionnaire. The results are subduced into tables and discussed by using percentage analysis. The results found that majority of the scheduled caste women have living in owned houses and motor cycle for commuting. The results suggested to the scheduled caste women who stayed in rented house that they should empower themselves or through government trainings for getting awareness about the free houses offered by the government and initiate to apply the free houses.

KEYWORDS : Social Status, Scheduled Caste Women, Women Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION:

Empowerment of women is a crucial factor in the sustainable development of a nation. It is a global issue being discussed in many formal and informal campaigns. Since women constitute nearly half the population, their contribution to the economy, culture, politics, health and education is of great importance in the building up of a nation. Now empowerment of women has become the slogan and motto of many social reformers. Many of them agree that if this half of the population is deprived of basic human rights like social dignity, the term development itself requires a definition. According to Swami Vivekananda, there is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.

Scheduled castes consider better economic and social status or economic independence as a sure way of forcing change in the antagonism of higher castes towards them. But rural high castes show a marked characteristic of caste consciousness. They think that even after giving them equal social opportunities, scheduled castes cannot overtake them in education or material progress. The antagonism of high castes towards the scheduled castes is becoming less rigid due to technological advancement, industrial and educational development, though the traditional division of Hindus into Varnas (colours) or castes is still basically intact. Modern means of communications and social mobility have also contributed to the lessening of the rigidity among castes. In hotels, cinema halls and public transport and even in meetings/conferences, people of all castes in urban towns and cities are seen at the same place, same table eating and drinking together.

2. SOCIALEMPowerMENT OF WOMEN:

Social change was a dynamic process and when a section of society, particularly the weaker sections like the SCs/STs and women was to be conferred the right to property, literacy and equality in the political process, it resulted in radical transformation in social practices in a society where money had retained a 'ceremonial character that was obligatory and effective', as described by Mauss (1990). Unlike political and economic empowerment, which could be introduced using a 'top down' approach, the social empowerment of the weaker sections and women cannot be thrust down but had to evolve and emerge from within. Constitution of India guarantees the following:

- Article 14 : Equality before Law
- Article 15 (4) : Enjoins states to make special provisions for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or for Scs.

The following schemes are supported to empower the schedules caste women in Salem district.

1. Reservation in government appointments,
2. Reservation in admission to educational institutions and

3. Reservation of seats in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and the Legislative Assembly of the State.
4. Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers
5. Centrally-sponsored Pilot Scheme of Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)
6. Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana
7. Supporting Project of All India Nature of Scs
8. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis
9. Assistance to SC/ST affected by riots

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Tyagi and Tarannum Siddiqui, (2016), women entrepreneurs can benefit from the initiatives of the MSMEs sector which contribute significantly to the manufacturing output, employment and economic growth of the country. Women entrepreneurship can foster the economic empowerment of women, particularly through MSMEs sector by helping them to become successful entrepreneurs. The roles of women and other socially deprived section of society i.e. SC/ST were increasing with a very slow but sure pace in MSMEs as an entrepreneur, requiring more support from government and financial institutions. The study from Shantha Kumari, (2016) noticed that in India and other countries in South Asia, people had been systematically discriminated against on the basis of their work and descent for centuries. Over 200 million people were Dalits, also known as untouchables or outcasts. They experienced violence, discrimination and social exclusion on a daily basis. Economic growth in India had been strong over the past decade. However, the caste disparities were increasing.

Nalla Sushma, (2016) observed in the study that the empowerment of Schedule Caste women in India and suggested measures to improve their empowerment position. The study stressed that in India and other countries in South Asia, people had been systematically discriminated against on the basis of their work a descent for centuries. Over 250 million people were scheduled caste also known as untouchables or outcasts. They experience violence, discrimination and social exclusion on a daily basis. After independence, Scheduled Caste women had some socio, economic and political provisions at some extent. However, it was concluded that they must come on their own accord to develop themselves by attaining will power and confidence which cannot be given by anybody.

From the results of Anup Kumar Kapoor and Meenal Dhall, (2016), it is observed that India was enduring a rapid socio-economic, demographic, nutritional and health transition. According to article 47 of the Constitution of India 'the State shall regard raising the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and improvement in public health among its primary duties'. There was a transition from their early occupation to the present occupation which imbalance life

of the tribes. Shift from agriculture or hunting gathering to daily wagers was a severe shock for them which could be the reason for deterioration of their health. The design of the development programmes and the health needs of the tribal population have to be identified keeping in mind their habitat and socio cultural practices. The findings from Shekhara Apparaya, (2015) revealed that majority of the respondents were suffered from discrimination, caste based inequality, exploitation, poverty, etc. Hence, it was suggested to provide higher education and employment to scheduled castes living in backward areas. Further, it was essential that the NGOs should look into the problems of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In a male dominated society, women are browbeaten and not treated on par with men. Moreover, the Scheduled Caste women are the most oppressed among the oppressed people living outside the boundaries of the village, away from civilisation, education, religion and culture. Even with a little human sensibility one would be stunned with the realistic authentic accounts of the life conditions of the Scheduled Caste women, their suppression, humiliation, sufferings, dilemmas and exploitation. Scheduled Caste women experienced patriarchal dominion more severe than that of non-SC women. So, this research has emerged to explore the social empowerment status of the Scheduled Caste women in Salem district of Tamilnadu.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Followings are the research objectives of the study.

- To study the social status of the selected Scheduled Caste women in Salem District.
- To examine the empowerment of women particularly Scheduled Caste women in Salem District.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN:

The researcher has used both descriptive and analytical assessment. For examining the social empowerment status of the sample Scheduled Caste Women, questionnaire has been used as a research tool. Further, the researcher has collected the secondary data through various books related social empowerment of scheduled caste women, journals, magazines, past research thesis and web resources. One hundred and ten scheduled caste women have been selected by using random sampling method and collect their opinion towards their social empowerment status. Percentage analysis has been applied for examining the social empowerment status.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Generally in India, caste system can only be comprehended when it is essentially permeated by religious conceptions. Further, caste system had established a "direct link between the religious beliefs and the social differentiation." This section has explained about the social empowerment status through type of house owned by the respondents and their type of vehicle used. Further, free houses getting from the government details also discussed in this section. The detailed explanations are given in the following tables.

7.1 Type of House used by the Respondents:

An attempt has been made to know the type of house of the respondents. For the purpose of this study, it has been classified into three categories viz., own, rented and leased. The details are furnished in the following table.

Table No. 1 : Type of House used by the Respondents

S.No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Own	57	51.8
2.	Rented	51	46.4
3.	Leased	2	1.8
	Total	110	100.0

It could be surmised from the above table that 51.8 percent of the respondents reside in their own house, 46.4 percent of the respondents are living in rented house and 1.8 percent of the respondents dwell in leased house. It is noted from the analysis that majority (51.8) of the respondents are living in their own house.

7.2 Free Houses and House Sites Distribution 2015-2016:

The distribution of the free houses and house sites by the government to the scheduled caste women in Salem district upto the year 2015-16 have been discussed in the following table.

Table No. 2 : Free Houses and House Sites Distribution 2015-2016

Name of the District	House / House Sites distributed (Up to the Year)					
	SC	ST	BC	D.C & MBC	Others	Total
Salem	1565	184	1744	810	221	4524

Source : www.salem.tn.nic.in

The facilities regarding housing, distribution of free house site pattas, construction of houses for poor Adi-dravidars and Tribals and provision of infrastructural facilities to SC / ST are provided through the Tamil Nadu Housing Board, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, the Adi-dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department and the Rural Development Department. Tamil Nadu Housing Board reserves 18% of the plots developed, houses / flats constructed in all its schemes for allotment to SCs. Hence, the scheduled caste are using the facility and residing in their own house due to the allotment of schemes provided by the government. Especially in Salem district, out of 4524 allotment of free houses and house sites, the scheduled caste has 1565 allotment of house sites and free houses benefitted by the government scheme.

7.3 Type of Vehicle Owned:

An attempt has been made to know the type of vehicle owned by the respondents. For the purpose of this study, it has been classified into five categories viz., bicycle, moped, motor cycle, auto and car. The details are furnished in the following table.

Table No. 3 : Type of Vehicle Owned.

S.No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Bicycle	9	8.1
2.	Moped	37	33.4
3.	Motor cycle	60	54.9
4.	Auto	4	3.6
	Total	110	100.0

It could be obtained from the above table that 8.1 percent of the respondents have owned bicycle, 33.4 percent of the respondents have owned moped, 54.9 percent of the respondents have owned motorcycle and 3.6 percent of the respondents have owned auto. It is found from the analysis that majority (54.9%) of the respondents have owned motor cycle.

8. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is found from the analysis that majority of the scheduled caste women are living in their own house followed by rented house. The reason why most of the respondents resided in their own house can be attributed to the fact that the scheduled caste people find it difficult to find houses for rent even today. And many of them prefer staying with their own community people for safety and security reasons. Since there are many schemes from the government, many scheduled caste women utilize these benefits and prefer staying in their own houses in the colonies. From the distribution of government free houses, around 35 percent of the scheduled caste women in Salem district got free houses.

From the analysis, it could be found that majority of the respondents owned motor cycle and moped. The result shows that high usage of motorcycle among the scheduled castes shows their low economic status due to their poverty and the distribution of free motorcycles by the government

The research also recommended to the scheduled caste women who stayed in rented house that they should empower themselves or through government trainings for getting awareness about the free houses offered by the government and initiate to apply the free houses.

9. CONCLUSION:

This research has mainly discussed on social empowerment status of scheduled caste women in Salem district of Tamilnadu. This research found clearly the social empowerment status through staying house type and vehicle owned. Also, around 35 percent of the SC women only stayed in government free houses and remaining are staying in rented or other type of house. So, the SC women have initiated themselves for their empowerment status and Tamilnadu government also should take necessary steps to support to enhance their social empowerment status through various schemes.

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