



WOMEN EDUCATION IN RURAL KARNATAKA -A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON RURAL DALIT WOMEN

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Abstract: *Education has been universally acknowledged as the tool par excellence of economic, political and socio-cultural development. It is also the booster of social status for both individuals and community as a whole. This study has a macro perspective and aims to capture the empowerment potential of education and so far its impact on empowering Dalit communities. This study is addressed to examine the extent to which education has helped and enabled Dalit women to improve their economic conditions. Economic empowerment of Dalit women is examined in terms of; new skills acquired, lucrative jobs secured, improvement in their income, consumption, freedom to manage their money matters and overall improvement in their economic condition. Dalit women being treated as 'Dalit among Dalits'; her political empowerment was only a wishful thinking a few decades ago. However, it is presumed that spread of education has kindled hope of Dalit women bracing themselves for political empowerment.*

It is also true some Dalit women have proved their in National and State politics. Keeping this in view, the study also focused on the extent of political empowerment of our respondents and the role of education in it. The study would capture the overall educational situation among Dalit women across the country, the state and Tumkur District. It is hoped that such an exercise help as capture regional variation in the situation. This would lead us look for region-specific reasons for prevailing scenario in Karnataka.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been hailed as the tool par excellence of socio-economic development and as an instrument of equalizing opportunity for the poor and the downtrodden. Further, it's potential as the foundation of development and empowerment of Dalit community in



general and that of Dalit women in particular has been acknowledged by all. According to the Government of India and Karnataka have made strenuous efforts to bring every Dalit family within the fold of education through various State supported programmes and policies of positive discrimination. The main thrust of all the educational programmes designed especially for the benefit of Dalit communities is not only to provide access to educational facilities and help their educational progress as also use education as an effective instrument of empowerment.

Along with the programmes for educational development; governments have also implemented many programmes for the socio-economic development of Dalit women. However, a conceptive over view of the progress of education among the Dalit women in rural India presents a shockingly a disappointing scenario as the growth of education in terms of literacy and representation rural Dalit girls at higher level of education is below national average. When the very instrument has seemingly failed to achieve its confirmed goals; it is but obvious that one has to re-examine the situation. Keeping the growth of educational level of Dalit women as the vantage point, this study has attempted an examination of the educational situation among the Dalit Women and its impact on their empowerment.

After analyzing of the growth of education and its impact on Dalit women in rural India, this study broadly addresses itself to such questions as to why the growth rate of education among Dalit women is comparatively slow and unsatisfactory. To what extent the system and process of education which was once meant for privileged castes has opened its doors to Dalit Women? And what is the outcome?

- What is the present level of literacy?
- How many of them have been able to have access for education?
- What extent education has helped them to improve their socio-economic and cultural conditions of life?
- Whether education has liberated them from ignominy within their household, extended kin group, community and the larger society?
- Whether education has brought them any improved new identity and if it has been acknowledged by upper caste people? What is the adverse impact of education on Dalit women?



- What is the plight of those uneducated women?
- How best education could be used to liberate Dalit women? And a host of other questions are submerged under the iceberg of these broader issues. Search for empirical answers for the above question has guided the objectives of this study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Even though the constitutional provisions and development plans are intended to create conditions conducive for the establishment of equality between the *Dalits* and the caste Hindus, many studies reveal that these people are still the under-privileged and are discriminated in various forms.

Govindakutty (1975) studied the Scheduled Castes of Kerala and states that notwithstanding law abolishing untouchability phenomena does not seem to have completely loosened its hold. He further notices that despite educational development and economic advancement they are not better off than what they were in the past and finally states that it would not be hasty to conclude that the influence of traditionalism on social attitudes is still strong enough.

Parvathamna (1984) concentrates on the Scheduled Castes of the state of Karnataka and has found that even though systematic efforts have been made through the constitutional measures and policy formations, the living condition of these people in the rural areas is still of agony.

Singh (1987) studied the Scheduled Castes of eastern Uttar Pradesh taking Chamars, Pasis, Musahars, Doms, Bahelias, Kanjars, Nats, etc. as reference groups and has concluded that the Scheduled Castes are still lagging behind the caste Hindus in economic front. Similarly they are also educationally much behind the caste Hindus.

Selvanathan (1989) is of the opinion that as there is a close relationship between caste and occupation in the traditional set-up, Scheduled Castes residing in villages are not allowed to shift to more productive occupations as a result of which they are still below the poverty line and their monthly income is significantly lower (Rs. 482) as compared to the non-Scheduled Caste people (Rs. 760). Likewise the literacy rate of these people is also very low.

However, on the other hand, studies conducted by Patwardhan 1965, Beteille (1969), Lynch (1969), Duskin (1972), Srivastav and Lapoint (1985), Singh (1987), Dahiwal (1989), Prakash (1989), Chetty (1991), Rao and Bobu (1994), etc. show that as consequences of the



constitutional and legal protection provided to the Scheduled Castes, there has been an upward change in the socio-political and economic status of these people.

Singh (1987) shows the changing socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes. He finds that they have gradually realised their self-world and some of them have also given up the practice of eating beef and have already begun to identify themselves as *Kshatriya* and even Brahman also. Dahiwale (1989) finds that among the Mahar, Mang, Dhor, Chamar and Bhangji, 13% of people have become qualified and about 29% have taken to modern jobs as against 42.5% who have been able to raise a better economic standard under the development programmes.

Chetty (1991) evaluated the impact of development on the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh and concludes that the programmes have played a vital role in providing for the increased output, increased net income, and improved asset position of these people. Likewise, Rao and Babu (1994) have studied the Scheduled Castes of about 80 villages in the state of Karnataka to examine the impact of development schemes have been able to achieve the proclaimed objectives. They conclude that, while a good number of these people have been benefited by the schemes, some are much behind the upper castes and are distinguished as a separate community in terms of their socio-economic status.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the progress of education among rural Dalit women in general
2. To examine the impact of education on the occupation and economic empowerment of Dalit women
3. To ascertain the extent to which education has empowered Dalit women on other social status indicators mentioned earlier.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE STUDY

Sample: Keeping the focus, the requirements of the study, time and resource at the disposal of the researcher, 400 women respondents from Dalit women spread across Madhugiri, Sira, Pavagada and Koratagere taluks of Tumkur district were chosen to collect primary data. Variables such as age, educational level, marital status, occupation, family background, economic status etc guided the selection of respondents. The respondents were selected on the basis of purposive random sampling method with a provision for quota to respondents whose views were felt very relevant to the present study.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS

According to the opinions of the sample as presented in the table 1.1,

Table 1.1 Respondents Impact of education on Occupation:

Sl.No	Nature of impact	Frequency	Percentage
1	Helped in securing government job	22	05.50
2	To manage dairying properly	58	14.50
3	To learn and take up tailoring	40	10.00
4	Helped me manage my business	06	01.50
5	No concrete positive impact	274	68.50
	Total	400	100.00

Education has not made any significant, concrete and positive impact on the Occupational prospects of an overwhelming majority 274 (68.50 percent) of the respondents. Among those remaining 126 respondents who admitted the positive impact of education, 22(5.5percentage) have admitted education as having helped them to secure Govt. jobs and another 40 (10percent) are able to learn tailoring. Thus the impact of economic impact of education on the women under study seems to be negligible.

Table 1.2 Occupation of the Respondents

Sl.No	Occupations	Frequency	Percentage
1	Agriculture + Agricultural labourer	139	34.75
2	Beedi Rolling	63	15.75
2	Dairying +Poultry	82	20.50
3	Tailoring	28	07.00
4	Govt Service	22	05.50
6	Petty Business	06	01.50
7	House Maid	24	06.00
9	Unemployed	36	09.00
	TOTAL	400	100.00

In order to verify the opinions of the respondents, data on their present occupation were analyzed. Table 1.2 presents the distribution of respondents among occupations. It is revealed that a significant majority 139(34.75 percent) of them continued to toil on their family's agricultural land and also work as agricultural labourers whenever they are free. While 28 respondents have taken up Tailoring, only six women do petty business. 22or five percent of the respondents are fortunate enough to get into government service. All others are engaged in none too prosperous occupations. This situation is surprising and



disappointing considering the fact that more than 5 decades of concerted efforts to educate Dalit women seems to have gone a futile exercise.

Table 1.3 Respondents' Education, Occupation and Income:

Sl.No	Reasons for backwardness	Frequency
1	Lack of job opportunities in our neighborhood	314 (78.50)
2	Traditional socio-cultural and economic factors	202 (50.50)
3	Low academic merit and conservative attitude	203 (50.75)
4	Inability to pay bribe to officials	105 (26.25)
5	General neglect of villages	276 (69.00)
6	Apathy of the Officials	211 (52.75)
7	Lack of encouragement and absence of leadership	178 (44.50)
		N=400

Education-occupation-income constitutes a tripod on which the process of empowerment has to take place. There is a symbiotic relation between the three and, the empowerment of an individual is difficult as both better occupation and high income depends on better education. Opinions of the respondents about the impact of education on their occupation, and income were verified by the distributing them among occupations, and their educational level attained by them. It is saddening to note that more than 1/3 or 34.75 percent of the respondents are still toiling as agricultural labourers while 82 (20.50) are engaged in Dairying. Another significant number 63 (15.75) have taken up Beedi rolling. An insignificant number (22 or 5.50) of the respondents have been fortunate enough to secure government jobs.

Not surprisingly the data presented in the table 1.3 reveals almost a usual trend as more two-third (42 out of 64 (65.63 percent) of the illiterate respondents are agricultural labourers. While 21 out of 88 (23.86 percent) of those who possess SSLC-plus qualification have been able to secure government jobs. The Higher Primary and Higher Secondary School dropouts have engaged themselves in dairying and Tailoring.

Apathy of the bureaucracy, inability of the respondents to bribe them and the lack of a leader among them are some of the reasons quoted by the respondents. The foregoing analysis suggests that mere education itself is not enough in the herculean task of empowering Dalit women. The whole process of education will turn out to be a futile exercise avenues of jobs are created.



CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion reveals that education is yet to go a long way in becoming an effective instrument of empowerment of Dalit women. It has not made any appreciable achievement in attracting Dalit women to its fold. Viewed from another angle as a means for a better job, the achievement our respondents are disappointing as only five percent of our respondents are able to secure jobs. And, they are yet to get freedom to manage their earnings. According to the data status quo scenario continues except women have become literates.

The foregoing discussion is an eye opener to various other questions. The data begs questions such as what is wrong with our systems of education. Are Dalit women reluctant to receive education? A comprehensive research on the existing content and process education would resolve this issue.

The data also suggest that more imparting of knowledge in itself or providing financial assistance would not bring any succor to their lives. The need of the hour is empowerment through concrete sustainable programmes particularly providing them better jobs.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Providing job-oriented education along with conducting capacity building programmes regularly.
2. Enhancing the quota for women under reservation of jobs and providing placement facilities.
3. Enhancing the quota for women under reservation of jobs and providing placement facilities.
4. Setting up small scale factories in rural areas and taluk canters and creating more job opportunities.
5. Enhancing and liberalizing bank loan for self-employment.
6. Making administrative system Dalit friendly and service-oriented

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