

The Social Status of Scheduled Caste Women in Anantapur

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ABSTRACT

Social exclusion manifests itself in the persistent lack of an individual's access to functioning as compared to other members of society and we model it as being in a state of deprivation over time. The Scheduled Castes were excluded from the main stream society, suffered stigma and discrimination, lived in poverty and remained marginalized group. The women among Scheduled castes suffered twin disadvantages, one because of their caste and the other because of their gender. Its almost 60 years since the Protective Discrimination was provided, and about three generations have reaped the fruits of it. How did it help Scheduled Caste Women? Was there social inclusion of Scheduled Caste women, the hitherto socially excluded? Did the Scheduled Caste Women in Andhra Pradesh benefit from Protective Discrimination as means of social inclusion? The study tries to find answers to these questions.

Key words: Social Exclusion, Deprivation, Equity.

INTRODUCTION

The women among the Scheduled Castes suffered twin disadvantages, one because of their caste and the other because of their gender. They were 'under privileged' among the 'under-privileged' and 'discriminated' among the 'discriminated'. The Scheduled Caste Women was essence and epitome of ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and pollution.

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Pradesh benefit from Protective Discrimination as means of social inclusion? The study tries to find answers to these questions

A study of the Scheduled Caste Women was carried out in Anantapur town, the district head quarters for Anantapur district. An attempt is made in this chapter to understand the demographic, educational and economic characteristics of the respondents, which will enable the understanding of the extent and degree of social change. In the background of the above features a greater insight into understanding the mobility process of the respondents and that of their spouses can easily be facilitated. The particulars also includes their age at marriage, age at entry into the job, type of family, and the material possessions owned by the respondents. The social status, economic conditions, land procession, income, place of dwelling that has a bearing on the socio economic status of an individual and group is discussed hereunder with special reference to the respondents in the study.

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All the respondents in the study are educated employed Scheduled Caste Women residing in Anantapur town. Their levels of education, and jobs reveal that they have come out of a socially disadvantaged status traditionally accorded to them. As presented in the previous chapter, the Scheduled Castes were denied access to education on the pretext that their menial heir occupations, do not warrant any education. The closed system of social stratification fortified by religious sanctions drove them to the fringe of their society with disadvantage in every realm of their lives.

One of the most significant factors which decide the social status of any individual or group of individuals relates to the economic conditions. There is close association between economic condition and occupation. Depressed economic conditions lead to illiteracy, social immobility, loss of personal freedom, and eventually affect the growth of the human personality. Economically the Scheduled Castes have been most backward lot.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper makes an attempt to investigate the status of Scheduled Caste Women who made use of Protective Discrimination in the spheres of education and employment to soar high into the orbit of socio-economic progress and in the process their social inclusion into the main stream society.

METHOD OF STUDY

The paper is based on primary data collected from 250 Scheduled Caste women in Anantapur town of Andhra Pradesh who are employed in diverse occupations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The various groups opted by the Scheduled Caste Women in their intermediate course.

Science, Arts, Commerce and Vocational courses were the options. 46.8 percent of the respondents have chosen Science groups namely Biology and Mathematics because what they assumed that by opting science group they can raise their social status in the society. Education is the means of realizing once life disuse which to development once personality and qualifies one in improving ones status in all respects. This has direct association to the social – economic and political statues of woman. It is due to lack of education Scheduled Caste woman are not able to come out of their poverty and marginalized situation. So education is the main feature which helps a person to develop a good personality. 44 per cent took Arts group like Commerce and History. They expressed that Bi.P.C. and M.P.C., groups are tough for them and as they belonged to Scheduled Caste even though they achieve status in the society, the orthodox upper caste people will always let them down.

Education is the means of realizing one's life –desires which help to develop one's personality and qualifies one in improving one's status in all aspects. This has direct association to the socio-economic and political status of women. 87.6 per cent of the respondents declared that education is highly important and important for the Scheduled Caste women.

It is due to lack of education that Scheduled Caste Women were not able to come out of their poverty and marginalized situation. Being not educated and trained properly they cannot go for a good or white collar job and they can't make entry into the organized sector. So, their economic status remains slow. Hence, education is the main feature which helps a person to develop a good personality. The respondent who said that education is less important, least important and indifferent for securing a good job was that not only education, but effort, skill and co-operation form family members add to a good job.

Education is a status symbol, and higher education is not only a status symbol, but also an effective means to upper mobility. Malthus feels: "It equips the individuals to earn their

own living, to stand on their own legs and to achieve their welfare through their own efforts."

When all the 250 educated respondents were asked "Do you think that your present education is adequate for your present job?" Their responses to the question are more than adequate, adequate, less than adequate. 82.8 per cent of the respondents told that their present education is more than adequate for their present job. Lastly 17 per cent of the respondents answered that their job is less than adequate to their education. This means they were highly educated but the job they are doing is less adequate. The reason given by them was they expected a higher position job but they could not get it and at last they were forced to go for the job which does not suit them.

Habitation has a lot of sociological significance. Merton (1957) reports that "The dwelling unit is the locus of the initial socialization of the child". This is suitably applicable in the case of Indian rural community where the existence of separate areas of living on the basis of caste-rankings and the theory of pollution and purity. The Brahmins and others superior castes have the best houses in the best possible locality on one hand and the low caste have the worst houses in the worst place on the other hand. Scheduled Castes are concerned not only with the type of houses and facilities available but also with the segregation practices forced on them.

Segregated habitation of the Scheduled Caste is based on the religious sanctions, social restrictions and economic oppressions practiced at different times. According to Manu the Sudras had no right to own property. They had to wander from one place to another without a fixed habitation. Later on, the untouchables were to stay at the end of the village or outside the village itself. Manu further says that "In India the ancient codes had already sanctioned that the dwellings of the untouchables shall be outside the villages.". The religious sanctions heralded the segregation of the Scheduled Castes. Hutton, (1946).

The respondents are living in Anantapur town of Anantapur district. The study area is urban place situated in a district, which is typically drought, famine and not one of the well developed districts in the state. Yet this has been noticeable change among the Scheduled Castes living in the town. The change by and large may be due to urban character of the study area. Majority of the respondents 93.2 lived in own houses. May be little strange compare to average national housing, but in the case of respondents each one of them were employed and their spouses were also employed. The respondents have also taken help of housing schemes meant for Scheduled Castes. Majority of the respondents have constructed houses. When we say they have a own house it does not mean they are necessarily living in that and the house is a comfortable and a big house. A house could also be a small two or three roomed house also. In spite of their problems the Scheduled Caste women owned own houses. They have constructed pucca houses in the town only amongst the other higher caste Hindus. And the communal relationship is very good with all the people. Those respondents not owning own houses desired to achieve it in future as they have responsibilities now.

As we know earlier, Scheduled Caste women face a life full of miseries, suffering, degradation and dehumanized way of life. Being a woman means a life of exploitation in the name of sex and weak variety of human subordinating to men, unwanted blunder since birth and a domestic servant for life. Put the two together in one body and you have a creative that reflect the humanity at it worst, a delight among delights worst among the worst. This is what it means to be a Scheduled Caste Women, first as a Scheduled Caste and second as a woman.

Woman always bother for family members but pay very less attention (or) consider her health and problems. Table 5 speaks about the general problems of the Scheduled Caste women in their job. The problems are long office hours, distance from house, family problems, heavy work load, relation with colleagues, demanding superiors, health problems.

42 per cent of the respondents mentioned that they have health problems pretending to their job. Very less respondent's husbands are living away from them. This leads to hypertension and blood pressure. So Scheduled Caste women are unhealthy in our research. Next 18 percent of the respondent's house is far from the place where they work. Means the distance of the office is far from the house. Women are sensitive and not as strong as men. 7 per cent of the respondents complained about the long duration of the office, office timings which they feel long. 2 per cent of respondents suffered from heavy workload and demanding superiors because the respondents belonged to Scheduled Castes, the superiors (boss) used to harass her in terms of official work. Here in terms of official work. And at last only one percent of the respondents were very unhappy with the relation of them with their colleagues. As the respondent hail from low caste a fine colleague in the office discriminate them.

As we know that 250 respondents are Scheduled Caste woman and all of them are working in various government offices and firms and one more thing is to be noticed that all are married and have dual responsibility regarding family particularly bringing up the children. Even though woman has developed a lot she has no freedom to live her own life with liberty. The money earned by her is given to various members of the family who ever is the head of the family.

In our study the findings tell that maximum i.e. 60.4 percent of the respondents give their salaries to husband. But those who live in joint families, the respondents hand over the salary to their in-laws.

Every creature on this earth from a small ant to the huge human beings having the nature of saving for tomorrow. So are our respondents. As they are working woman and earn money they save some money for tomorrow. They are worried for the future of their children. When the respondents were questioned whether they save money or not? All the respondents said that they save money. 100 percent of the respondents saved money.

The data reveals that all the respondents save money, and the other table depicts that if they save money where they deposit it, whether in Bank, Post Office or Chit funds. 76 percent of the respondents revealed that they save money in banks as they find that it will be safe there.

18 percent of the respondents said that they save money in chit funds because the returns are more in private firms. Bank interest is less but money will be safe where as private firms bank interest is less but money will be safe where as private firms give more interest but no safety of maturing the amount till it comes to your hand at the end. Only 6 present of the respondents save their money in post office why because the postal agents come to collect the money at home. There is no need of going to post office as they are busy with job and family this saves their time and mental tension. But at the same time the reason why the depositor is very less. So, it is clear that being a woman folk she saves money in various organizations.

To day is the age of material. Man is becoming materialistic day by day. The status of a person is identified not through his/her social status but by the material he/she possesses. An attempt was made in the study to look into the economic position and purchasing power in terms of the material possessions the respondents own. As all the respondents come in the slot of middle class car is a luxury for them very less per cent own it. Whereas a scooter, a refrigerator, washing machine is better and T V, bicycle are generally found in the entire house holds. As the table reveals only 32.4 respondents have cars, a luxury so to call. 100 percent of the respondents possess TV, 94.8 percent possess refrigerator and 92.0 percent of the respondents possess washing machine. These are the common materials today for an employee to facilitate their own life with comfort and all the middle class people hold it. The figures in the above table suggest that the standard of living of the Scheduled Caste women respondents is no way inferior to other higher middle class levels of living.

In Ancient India, endogamy was the accepted norm. But now, caste as a barrier to marriage is gradually wearing off, since people are more aware of personality characteristics which are important in making marriage a success. Very less and only 26 per cent of the respondents went for love marriage and inter caste marriage. The reason which they gave was they themselves do not know how they fall in love and got married they never thought that they will prefer in life i.e., love marriage because no one in their family has done it.

The reason they gave for inter caste marriages is that modern inter caste marriages have been considered to be more ideal from the view point of status consciousness among the lower sections of the caste society. The Scheduled Caste woman seems to have no objection to inter caste marriage because for them it means moving up in hierarchy of prestige and self - esteem. In this connection, it is meaningful to observe that the status of a Scheduled Caste woman can certainly be

improved by marrying high caste man having the courage and connection to break the high and the low caste barrier through marriage. Inter caste marriages can make a great deal of contribution in modifying the rigidity and spirit of the caste hierarchy and also to improve the status of the Scheduled Caste woman in relativistic terms.

CONCLUSION

The major thrust of the present study is to explore the social status of the Schedule Caste working women in an urban setting of Anantapur town, Anantapur district. In pursuit if this aim data were collected about demographic profile, educational, economic particulars and social conditions.

Finally it can be concluded from the paper that Protective Discrimination has not only brought tremendous change in the social status of a doubly disadvantaged section like

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Group Chosen in Intermediate Course

Group chosen	Frequency	Percent
Bi. P.C	84	33.6
M.P.C	33	13.2
C.E.C	41	16.4
H.E.C	69	27.6
Vocational	23	9.2
Total	250	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by their opinion on education

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Highly Important	185	74.0
Important	34	13.6
Less Important	12	4.8
Least Important	11	4.8
Indifferent	8	3.2
Total	250	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by their opinion on adequacy of their education for the present job

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
More than adequate	64	25.6
Adequate	143	57.2
Less than Adequate	43	17.2
Total	250	100.0

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Ownership of House

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Own House	233	93.2
Do not own house	17	6.8
Total	250	100.0

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents by the problems in the job

General problems	Frequency	Percent
Long Office Hours	17	6.8
Distance from House	46	18.4
Family Problems	80	32
Heavy Work Load	6	2.4
Relation with Colleagues	4	1.6
Health Problems	105	42.0
Total	250	100.0

Table 6: Distributions of the respondents by whom do they give their salary

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Retaining by self	50	20.0
Giving to Husband	101	40.4
Giving to In-Law	85	34.0
Giving to Parents	14	5.6
Total	250	100.0

If yes above, mode of savings

Mode of savings	Frequency	Percent
Banks	190	76
Post Office	15	6.0
Chit Funds	45	18
Total	250	100.0

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents by their material possession

Material possession	Frequency	Percent
Bicycle	250	100.0
Scooter	160	64.0
Car	17	32.4
TV	250	100.0
Refrigerator	237	94.8
Washing Machine	230	92.0

Table 8: Distribution of the respondents by type of marriage

Type of marriage	Frequency	Percent
Arranged Marriage	183	73.2
Love Marriage	30	12.0
Inter Caste Marriage	35	14.0
Total	250	100.0

that of Scheduled Caste women but also in terms of education, employment, values, attitudes, abilities, aspirations and included them into the main stream society.

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