

Educational Status of Dalit Women In India: Transformation and Challenges (With Special Reference To Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh)

Paper Submission: 15/06/2021, Date of Acceptance:26/06/2021, Date of Publication: 27/06/2021

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Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Buddhists, toiling masses, workers, landless labourers, poor cultivators, nomadic, denitrified tribes, tribals, all come under the term Dalit. Those who fight against the varna and caste systems and those who raise their voices against the political, social and economic oppression, are dear to Dalits. The seekers of power, wealth and prestige, landlords, capitalist, the practitioners of religion and caste based politics, those who wish to continue the tradition of injustice and atrocities against Dalits and the government in power which supports and protects these, are the enemies of Dalits. Dalit women's life is difficult because patriarchal social norms are in control among Dalits. Equally true is a fact true is a fact that Dalit women's attempt at self-actualization is not restricted to her family. Different experiential world obtains for urban Dalit women and rural Dalit women. There are innumerable instances of Dalit rural labourer women falling prey to atrocities by rich, upper caste landlords. The dual exploitation is more severe for Dalit women in rural area. The urban Dalit women are more conscientized because of the educational environment. New cultural ethos is attractive to her but she lacks the confidence to imbibe these values. One reason for this lack of confidence is patriarchal ideology being quite strong within the household. The very inner drive for Dalit woman to change is a ray of hope. The authors would like to analyzed Educational Status of Dalit Women Transformation and challenges.

Keywords: Dalit women, Exploitation, Oppression and Transformation

Introduction

Hinduism has degraded women. Patriarchal society system manifested in *Manusmriti*, Hindu Festivals, Hindu pantheon of Gods victimized and preyed upon women. Chaturvanya treated women as born Dalit. She led a life of deprivation and subjugation. As a woman she was also in a slave like position vis-a-vis Dalit man. Psychological, social and cultural proscriptions unleashed by Manu restricted her autonomy. The entire Dalit society including men and women did not have equal doubly enslaved, were slaves of their slave husbands. Manu upheld this slaver. There is an important point which I think is a matter of discussion, is that is the issue of Dalit Women. Is it possible to separate the two? As inequality in India has arisen due to religious, social and economic factors, Sudra and Women have been treated at par. Then in analysing women, a classification will have to be done as Dalit women, other than Brahmin women and Brahmin women. One school of thoughts proposes treating Dalit women no tin isolation but treat all women subjugated by Manu's dicta as on an equal footing for the twins of emancipation of Dalits and emancipation of women. Need is to combine Dalits and women as both are victims of the same system.

The Brahminical tradition did maximum harm to women and Dalits. Just as the untouchables were at the receiving end of the varna based caste system, so were women belonging to all castes. Women and the untouchables had been denied the right to education and access to learning. Many years later Mahatma Phule launched a campaign against this caste – ridden social order. Against this back – drop, Phule broke the statement and opened the first school for women in 1847. After that, in the last 100 years, many social reformers like Agarkar, Ranade, Lokahitwade, Karve raised their voices against the injustice meted out to women. Issues like widow remarriage, child marriage, deserted women, dowry, women's

education were raised and women's progress was focused on. In the post-independence era; equal rights in the areas of education, employment, development were accorded to women by the constitution. But in reality, women were not given an equal status. In fact as more and more women came forward; gained education, started getting organized, the anti-women establishment started being its fangs in overt and covert forms. Women started perceiving how male domination had influenced the social psyche, social transaction and social thinking. Many dowry to the bridegroom during the marriage ceremony, the practices of male headed

household, male owing the property, males controlling the decision making process in families.

In contrast, the women has an inferior and secondary status. She has to live as a counterpart of the male, her individual personality and existence is not recognized. Her husband is her god, lord and master is her legendary 'protector' for seven life times. Hence even in the social milieu the male is the omnipotent controller. He has the privilege of education, political clout, power, freedom of setting his sight on any goals, while the female is to be his mere shadow.

Table No.1
Literacy rates of SCs and General in Andhra Pradesh from 1961-20011

Year	General Persons	SC Persons	General Male	SC Male	General Female	SC Female
1961	21.19	8.47	30.19	13.43	12.03	3.4
1971	24.57	10.65	33.18	15.9	15.75	5.3
1981	29.94	17.65	39.26	24.8	20.39	10.25
1991	44.09	31.59	55.13	41.88	32.72	20.92
2001	61.11	53.52	70.85	63.51	51.17	43.35
2011	67.66	49.02	75.56	70.2	59.74	55.4

Source: Director of Census operations -1961-2011, Govt. of India.

The literacy rates of general and SC's from 1961 to 20011 are shown in Table 1. The literacy rates of Scheduled Castes are always lower than the general literacy rates. Further, even among Scheduled Castes, female literacy rates are lower when compared to male literacy rates. In 1991 and 2001 the difference between SC female and SC male is more than 20 per cent. Thus, the literacy rates of Scheduled Caste women are at the bottom and it did not exceed 43.35 per cent in 2001.

Challenges of Dalit women in accessing education

There are range of problems most of which have roots in their historical backwardness and Isolation due to their caste status and isolation, class (economic difficulties i.e. poverty), and also due to difficulties in comprehending the subject. Availability and accessibility of educational institutions this plays a vital role especially in case of dalit girls for their education. Education is considered important or relevant only for boys. Education is considered important or relevant only for boys and not for girls as girls are considered as 'Parayadhan' and after their marriage; girls education will not be fruitful for any of the family. Girls are considered to be meant for household work, child rearing and bearing, look after the siblings. So with this though pattern it leaves little time for scheduled caste and specially scheduled caste girls for studies. Even if they get admission in schools the serious problems that scheduled caste students were face the discrimination.

Social Transformation among Dalit women

Dalit women are more awakened and aware of their existence in the society now a day. They have revolutionary mind. They are participating in all kinds of social gatherings organized on various social issues. Dalit women are always ahead in the huge

procession on the Dhamma Chakra Parivartana day. They are seen in large numbers on the Diksha Bhoomi at Nagpur. Dalit women today are living like burning flames in the society. To name some of them, Mayawati and Phoolan Devi are championing the cause of Dalits through their political activities. The political awakening is definitely more among Dalit women as compared to the women of the higher castes. They are very conscious in the matter of their right to vote and keeping in mind the qualification and work of the candidate rather than the symbol.

Need and significance of the study

I do not treat all women as one category. Social conditions, prevailing in the country point to different nature of disabilities of upper case women and Dalit women, the latter being at a still lower rung. Upper caste women is an adjunct to a man, a dependent and a slave in the house hold. There is a qualitative difference between the plights of non-Dalit and Dalit women. Dr. Ambedkar realized this double bind of Dalit woman and tried to restore human dignity to her. As per this position emancipation of Dalit women originates in the agitation launched by Dr. Ambedkar. A major reason of differentiation between an upper caste woman and a Dalit woman is that the upper caste woman has been ahead of Dalit woman in education and other social spheres for last many decades. It is a fact that Dalit woman lags behind her. The emancipator movement for women has so far been a prerogative of upper caste women. These women never took Dalit women along with them in the movement.

Review of Literature

Venkateswarlu V & Samba Siva Rao. G (2020) in their study found that the education of the Dalit Women and their sub section. It is observed that the 44.7 per cent of the respondents are reported to

E: ISSN NO.: 2455-0817

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be illiterates. According to this study, it is revealed that a significant i.e. 44.7 per cent of total Dalit-Women and 42.9 per cent, 43.5 per cent, 88.9 per cent have reported from among the cross sections of Mala, Madiga and Other sub-section have found to be illiterates. So in this connection Government should take necessary action to improve the literacy level among the Dalit-Women.

Samba Siva Rao G. & Venkateswarlu V (2018) in their study found that the Self Help Group concept is more impressive or attractive for the development of women in the villages, in this study 82.33 per cent of the respondents had reported that they have taken loan from SHGs. In their study reveals 48.38 per cent of respondents have informed that they have taken for the loan for the purpose of their children education. According to this study, it was found that there is a good significance in investing money for their children's education which was borrowed from S.H.Gs and also found the changing attitude of Dalit Women for educating their children.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the Socio-economic and demographic profile of the sample respondents in the study area.
2. To examine the educational level of the dalit women in the study area.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant association between age and level of education of the respondents.
2. There is a significant association between Social status that was improved and education level of the respondents.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted to study Educational status of Dalit Women and Transformation and Challenges in Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology in Brief

Multy stage sampling Technique was used for the study. In first stage the researcher selected Kolluru mandal which is having highest percentage of dalit women population in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. The second stage four villages were selected for this study. In third stage eight Self Help Groups were selected from each village. In fourth stage fr five members were selected from each SHG for the study. Total sample size was selected 160 by adopting Convenience Random Sampling Method. Data was collected through both Primary and Secondary Sources. In this study primary data was collected through Structured Interview Schedule. The Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS package. In the present study univariate and bivariate tables were prepared. Graphical representation, Bar-diagrams, Frequency was also made. Statistical tests such as Chi-square were employed for the study.

Data Analysis of the study

Table No. 2
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Religion

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Hindu	120	75.0
Christian	40	25.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Table No. 2 shows that the Religion wise distribution of the sample respondents majority i.e. 75.0 per cent of the respondents were reveals that they are Hindus, while 25.0 per cent of the of the respondents were stated that they are belongs to Christian respectively. The details are in line with the overall religious composition of India.

Table No.3
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Community

Variable	Frequency	Percent
BC	4	2.5
SC	148	92.5
ST	8	5.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Caste is an important sociological variable in India. It has been defined as homogenous community (Resely, 1969) hereditary membership and endogamy (Kelkar, 1909) hereditary occupation (Srinivas, M.N, 1966, Senart, 1930). Purity of decent and purity of occupations are considered as the main criteria of the caste system. Indian society is traditionally divided into four varnas and the Koya (caste) which developed later and continued to grow in number through extending division of labour and the incorporation to tribes to a lesser extent.

To Bottomore (1975), "Konda dorais the endogamous group and principal reference group of the individual, embodying a distinctive style of life and maintaining it by the exercise of coustomary, judicial sanctions. The caste system is continuing its hold on the population and its continuity is a solid proof of its adaptive capacities (Sharma 1977). For the purpose of present analysis castes are divided into three categories Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. Table No. 3 reveals that the majority of the respondents i.e. 92.5 per cent belongs to Scheduled Castes, while 5.0 per cent and 2.5 per cent of the sample respondents were belongs to Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Castes respectively.

Table No.4
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Age

Variable	Frequency	Percent
20-25	9	5.6
25-30	29	18.1
30-35	38	23.8
35-40	25	15.6
> 40	59	36.9
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

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In all sociological studies age is taken as an important variable which influences the perceptions or attitudes of the respondents. The assumption is that the difference in age always leads to corresponding variation in the perceptions of the respondents. The data on the ages of the respondents is presented the following above table No.4. Majority i.e. 36.9 per cent of the respondents noticed that their age group in between more than 40 years. Followed by 23.8 percent, 18.1 per cent, 15.6 per cent and 5.6 per cent of the respondents reveals that their age group in between 30-35 years, 2-30 years, 35.40 years and 20-25 years age group of the sample respondents respectively.

Table No. 5
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Marital Status

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Married	141	88.1
Unmarried	4	2.5
Widows/Divorced	15	9.4
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Table No.5 shows that Marital status wise distribution of sample respondents Out of the 160 respondents 141 respondent reported that of which 88.1 per cent of the respondents were married, followed by 9.4 per cent, 2.5 per cent of the respondents noticed that they were Widows/Divorced of the sample respondents.

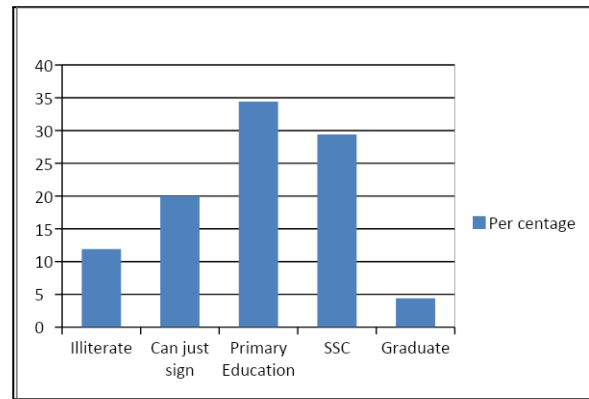
Table No.6
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Educational level

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	19	11.9

Can just sign	32	20.0
Primary Education	55	34.4
SSC	47	29.4
Graduate	7	4.4
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Figure No.1
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Educational level



The table No.6 and Figure No.1 Shows that the Age wise distribution of the sample respondents. Majority i.e. 34.4 per cent of the sample respondents reveal that their level of education is primary education. Followed by 29.4 per cent, 20.0 per cent, 11.9 per cent and 4.4 per cent of respondent noticed that their level of education is SSC, Can just sign, Illiterate and Graduate respectively.

Table No.7
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Age Vs. Educational level

Variable		Educational level					Total
		Illiterate	Can just sign	Primary education	SSC	Graduate	
Age	20-25	0 0.0%	1 3.1%	1 1.8%	6 12.8%	1 14.3%	9 5.6%
	25-30	3 15.8%	4 12.5%	7 12.7%	11 23.4%	4 57.1%	29 18.1%
	30-35	4 21.1%	4 12.5%	13 23.6%	16 34.0%	1 14.3%	38 23.8%
	35-40	1 5.3%	6 18.8%	8 14.5%	9 19.1%	1 14.3%	25 15.6%
	>40	11 57.9%	17 53.1%	26 47.3%	5 10.6%	0 0.0%	59 36.9%
Total		19 100.0%	32 100.0%	55 100.0%	47 100.0%	7 100.0%	160 100.0%

$X^2 = 39.726$, $df=16$, $P < 0.001$ Significant 0.5% Figures in Parenthesis indicate percentages

Source: Primary data. N=160.

The above table No.7 also shows that the Age Vs. Educational level of the dalit women. Out of the 160 respondents 19 respondents reported that were illiterate, of which 57.9 per cent of the respondents have reported that their age group above 40 years. Followed by 21.1 per cent, 15.8 per cent,

5.3 per cent, of the respondents reveals that their age group in between 30-35 years, 25-30 years and 35-40 years respectively. Of the total sample 32 respondents have found and out of which 53.1 per cent of the respondent's level of education is Can just sign their age group is above 40 years. Followed by

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18.8 per cent, 12.5 per cent, 3.1 per cent of the respondents noticed that their age groups in between 35-40 years, 25-30 years, 30-35 years and 20-25 years of the dalit women. Out of the 160 respondents 55 respondent reported that their level of education is Primary education, of which 47.3 per cent of the respondents have reported that their age is above 40 years, followed by 23.6 per cent, 14.5 per cent, 12.7 per cent 1.8 per cent of the respondents reveals that their age group in between 30-35 years, 35-40 years, 25-30 years and 20-25 years respectively. It is noticed that 34.0 per cent of the respondent's level of education is SSC their age group in between 30.35 years. Majority i.e. 57.1 per cent of the respondents reveals that their level of educational qualification is Graduate that their age group in between 25-30 years. Generated the Chi-Square table value 39.726 found to be significant it is more than the table value. The statistical calculations indicate that there is a significant association in between Age of dalit women and Education level of the respondents.

Table No.8
Percentage Distribution of sample respondents by Type of family

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Joint Family	20	12.5
Nuclear Family	140	87.5
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Table No.8 shows that the Type of family wise distribution of the sample respondent. Of the total 140 sample respondents i.e. 87.5 per cent of the stated that they were Nuclear family where as 12.5 per cent of the respondents reveals that they were Joint Family.

Table No.9
Percentage Distribution of sample respondents by Size of family

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Below 3 Members	22	13.8
3 - 5 Members	127	79.4
5 - 7 Members	11	6.9
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Table No. 9 analyze the size of family of the sample respondents. Majority i.e. 79.4 per cent of the sample respondents notice that their family size in between 3-5 member, followed by 13.8 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the sample respondents reveals that their family size in between Below 3 Members and 5-7 members respectively.

Table No.12
Percentage Distribution of Sample respondents by Social Status has improved Vs. Educational level

Variable	Educational level					Total	
	Illiterate	Can just sign	Primary education	SSC	Graduate		
Social status has improved	Strongly Agree	9 47.4%	11 34.4%	22 40.0%	21 44.7%	3 42.9%	66 41.2%
	Agree	3 15.8%	9 28.1%	17 30.9%	19 40.4%	3 42.9%	51 31.9%

Table No.10
Percentage Distribution of sample respondents by Type of Housing Conditions

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Thatched	76	47.5
Tiled	28	17.5
Terraced	56	35.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

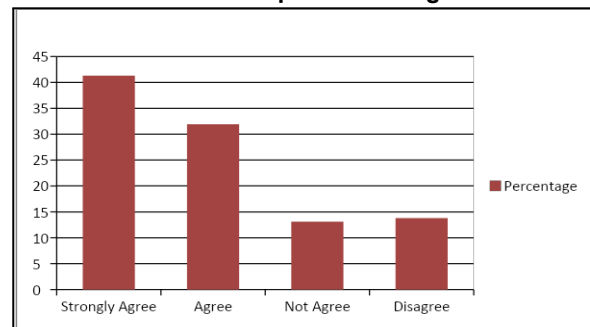
Table No.10 shows that the type of housing condition of the respondents. Majority i.e. 47.5 per cent of the respondent reveals that their type of housing condition is Thatched, followed by 35.0 per cent and 17.5 per cent of the respondents stated that their type of housing condition is Terraced and Tiled.

Table No.11
Social Status has improved through Education

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	66	41.3
Agree	51	31.9
Not Agree	21	13.1
Disagree	22	13.8
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary Data, N=160

Figure No.2
Social Status has improved through Education



The table No.11 and Figure No.2 Shows that the Social status has improved through education of the sample respondents. Majority i.e. 41.3 per cent of the sample respondents reveal that they were strongly agree their social status has improved through education, Followed by 31.9 per cent, 13.8 per cent, 13.1 per cent of respondent noticed that they were Agree, Disagree and Not Agree social status has improved through education respectively.

through education	Not Agree	4 21.1%	4 12.5%	9 16.4%	4 8.5%	0 0.0%	21 13.1%
	Disagree	3 15.8%	8 25.0%	7 12.7%	3 6.4%	1 14.3%	22 13.8%
Total		19 100.0%	32 100.0%	55 100.0%	47 100.0%	7 100.0%	160 100.0%

$\chi^2 = 11.682$, $df=12$, $P < 0.472$ Not Significant Figures in Parenthesis indicate percentages

Source: Primary data. N=160.

Table No 12 shows that the Social status has improved and educational level of the respondents. The majority 41.2 per cent of the respondents noticed that their social status was improved through education strongly agree. Followed by 31.9 per cent, 13.8 per cent and 13.1 per cent of the respondents reveals that their social status was improved education Agree, Disagree, Not Agree of the respondents respectively.

It can be seen from the table that the social status has improved through education of the respondents among the different educational level from the Dalit Women, out of 160 respondents 19 respondents were illiterates of which 47.4 per cent of the respondents have reported that their social status was improved through education strongly agree. Whereas 21.1 per cent of the respondents reveal that their social status was improved through education not agree, followed by 15.8 percent and 15.8 percent of the respondents reported that their social status was improved through education agree, disagree of the respondents.

Of the total sample 32 respondents were Can just sign from the social status has improved through education of the respondents among the different educational level from the Dalit Women of which 34.40 per cent of the respondents have informed that their the social status has improved through education strongly agree. Out of 160 respondents 55 respondents of primary education level of education have found out of which 40.0 per cent of the respondents of the dalit women have revealed that their social status has improved through education strongly agree. Of the total sample 47 respondents were SSC level of education from the social status has improved through education of the Dalit Women of which 44.7 per cent of the respondents have informed that their the social status has improved through education strongly agree. Followed by 40.4 per cent, 8.5 per cent and 6.4 per cent of the respondents reveals that their social status was improved through education Agree, Not Agree and Disagree of the respondents. Majority i.e. 42.9 per cent of the graduate educational level of Dalit women noticed that their social status was improved through education strongly agree. The generated chi-square value 11.682 is found to be not significant, because it is less than the table value. This indicates that there is no significant association in between Social Status has improved of the respondents and educational level.

Findings of the study

1. Majority (36.9 per cent) of the respondents were noticed in the age group of more than 40 years.
2. Out of the 160 respondents 141 respondents consist of 88.1 per cent of the respondents were found to be married.
3. 34.4 per cent of the sample respondents revealed that their level of education is primary education.
4. 87.5 percent of the respondents stated that they were living in Nuclear family.
5. 79.4 percent of the sample respondents noticed that their family size in between 3-5 member
6. 47.5 per cent of the respondent revealed that their type of housing condition is thatched.
7. Out of 160 respondents 19 respondents were found to be illiterates of whom 47.4 per cent of the respondents have agreed strongly that their social status was improved through education.
8. 42.9 per cent of the respondents with graduate educational level of Dalit women strongly agreed that their social status was improved through education.

Implication of the study

1. The study can help the policy makers to take effective measures for the welfare and development of Dalit women in the study area.
2. The study suggests for overcoming the obstacles for effective implementation of Educational policies for dalit women in study area.
3. It also explores how the dalit women get confidence to improve their Socio-Economic conditions, if needed it may suggest better policies for their further improvement in all aspects.

Conclusion

It is due to lack of education that Dalit women are 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 low. Since they cannot earn a good amount of money, they cannot afford to live in good houses, they cannot wear good clothes and they cannot look after their health. Being illiterate they are not aware of their own rights and their own life-situation. It is because they are uneducated and innocent and ignorant that upper caste people can easily exploit them and oppress them. Due to lack of education there is no knowledge

of health among them. They do not care about their health. They do all kinds of menial work, and they do work which is hazardous for their health. So, education is the main feature which helps a person to develop a good personality.

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