

GROWTH AND AMELIORATION OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN SALEM DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU - A STUDY

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

There is no tool for development more effective than empowerment of women

– Kofi Annan

In this research, the researcher has mainly focused on growth and development of the scheduled caste women through social, economic and education in Salem district of Tamilnadu. Most of the scheduled caste women are familiar about the benefits of government schemes and living in their own house. Around 37 percent of the Scheduled Caste women are unaware of the financial loan schemes with less than 3 percent interest rate through National Scheduled Castes Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC) under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013. So, the government should conduct an awareness programme for creating more awareness about the schemes that help to enhance the social status of the scheduled caste women. Around 10 percent of the scheduled caste women drink which leads to a decline of their social status in society. So, for understanding their unpleasant activities, the government should conduct necessary awareness programme that could help to recognize their social status and also their forthcoming generation. Hence, the scheduled caste women should avoid consuming alcohol for their betterment of social status.

The study shows that 20 to 30 percent of the scheduled caste women do not accept the abolition of dowry, remarriage after being widowed and remarriage after separation / divorce. At the end of 20th century, with technologically updated life and equal rights of men and women, the government should also make the marriage rules flexible to increase the social status of the scheduled caste women. So, they should accept the government rules and increase their social status with support of remarriage activities. Most of the scheduled caste women are not

interested to participate in social activities due to their fear. So, for increasing the social status of the scheduled caste women, they have to improve their self identity, self consciousness, skills through various training programmes conducted by the government and non-government organizations to step-out of the fear and focus in the society to empower themselves and to uplift their knowledge by participating in many programmes related to social and community issues.

It was found that Scheduled caste women with better economic status were protesting more against the elders in the family for fixing their marriages without their consent. Thus in this analysis also, gaining economic influence or power by Scheduled caste women was really influential in motivating them to formulate their own ideas on status consciousness and individual rights. These always contribute to the attainment of new dimensions of women's status among the Scheduled caste in the society. Legislation must be introduced to abolish the entire fabric of scheduled caste system and announcement of one's own caste by any means must be made punishable in the case of diversity among them.

The implementing agencies of each block can jointly conduct a detailed household survey in order to have a complete profile of households in their area of operation. It will help them in identifying various categories of the weaker sections, especially the scheduled castes and in chalking out appropriate credit schemes for helping them to improve their economic conditions.

The present ongoing economic support programmes are not concentrating on the educated women as well as the uneducated scheduled caste people. So, it is a must to classify and design viable works for improving their income, employment and asset positions. In certain places, it is necessary to appoint a lady officer to study the programmes which are mostly suitable for the welfare of women.

It is clear from the study, women from Devendrakulam and Adi dravidar communities are found to reach the major position in the acquisition of land. Educational and economically well-developed scheduled caste women do look on land as a status symbol more than others. So, the scheduled caste women who have more economic status, would purchase land for increasing of their wealth position. When wealth increases, their economic status also increases.

Education of women is very important in the society to uplift their status. Normally, the scheduled caste women get the chance for education, but they are not utilizing it in a proper way. Hence, they should educate themselves to enjoy their privileges as a token of recognition of their status in society. Among the selected scheduled caste women, most of them are not having awareness about the various schemes offered by the Central and State governments. To create an awareness and understanding of the various schemes among the Scheduled Caste groups, the governments should appoint some skilled persons who are familiar with the schemes to create an awareness among the scheduled caste women. They may be subjected to periodical re-orientation training programmes through seminars, workshops, and review conferences at district, block and village levels. The development of a society is judged by the level of literacy. So the government should provide compulsory free education facilities to the members of Scheduled Caste. Vocational centres should be started at district and block levels to impart training to them.

It could be found from the study that majority of the scheduled caste children are studying in government schools. To ensure the power of knowledge of the scheduled caste children, the government should introduce the SC, ST children schemes in CBSE and English medium schools to enable them to compete with other children. Like in higher education, government should consider introducing some quota for scheduled caste students in the private

schools also. It is evident from the study findings that around 34 percent of the scheduled caste children are residing in hostel for their study. Most of the scheduled caste children have stated that there are no recreation facilities and medical facilities in the hostels. Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatravas Yojana is a centrally sponsored hostel scheme for Scheduled Caste girls and boys effective from 1.1.2008. The major focus of the scheme is to enable and encourage students belonging to Scheduled Castes to attain quality education. The scheme provides 100 percent assistance from the State Governments and Union territories as well as Central and State Universities / Institutions for setting up and maintenance of hostels for SC girls. The scheduled caste parents should be made aware of the hostel facilities. So, they would encourage their children to utilize the government hostel schemes. The government can also take steps to stop the inclusion of cost in application forms for educational institutions and employment.

Authority of Caste and the supremacy of descriptive values as determinants of social status were highly typical in Indian character. Here individuals or social groups were no exception to this phenomenon. Scheduled caste women as a distinct group in our society by virtue of the heritage could enjoy only the provision of the lowest dimensions of social status in Salem.

As a consequence, they had remained culturally, socially, economically and educationally more backward than any other social categories in the country. Even though, several attempts were made to improve the social status of these downtrodden sections, in effect they could touch upon only the fringe of the problem. It was only after the emergence of India as a democratic republic that considerable progress was achieved by the society. The breakdown of tradition and conservatism in society removed the permanent barriers to social mobility in India. This process was equally applicable to various sections of Indian society as well. Ever since the beginning of freedom movement in India, the backward

classes and particularly the scheduled caste women derived new means of social movement aiming at the overthrow of the conventional restrictions imposed on them and the acquisition of new areas of status in society. In this attempt women of these sections played a significant part.

In the preceding discussions an earnest attempt has been made to assess the various conditions and motivating influences leading to the status mobility among the slated sections of Indian society till very recently viz. the scheduled caste women. With the basic assumption that with the attainment of new areas of education and the new opportunities for the acquisition of education, women among the scheduled caste women could improve their educational status and thereby can enter into the domains of new status in society, the study was started. It is also assumed that status of women in the society depended to a great extent on the amount of acquiring wealth, new occupational facilities or employment opportunities, and the modification of social customs and related changes in social life.

Scheduled caste women in Salem have been improving their general socio-economic status along the dimensions of education, occupation and income. They are eager to have access to new sources of wealth. When they became really conscious of their relatively low status in the society, a desire to rise in status with regard to that of others could generally be felt. Here entry into the political field also is not an unimportant one. As they have gained new experiences in all these fields, a tendency is noticed among the scheduled caste women to validate their new positions in society by seeking new channels of modifications in customs, religious practices etc. under the shade of Sanskritisation. Even subjecting themselves to religious conversion by scheduled caste women is not absent as a means of improving their social status. Caste organizations too are instrumental in elevating their social position. The role of legislations in this regard is highly

prominent in magnifying the sources of status improvement for scheduled caste women.

The present study revealed that scheduled caste women are more eager to attain new status positions by educating the future generation too. In this attempt, it was seen that those who had already attained higher education (graduation and above) and economically well-off sections of the scheduled caste women are more active in educating their children to any level. As a consequence of this, they are taking keen interest in the education of their children and are providing tuition in order to improve the educational standard of the future generation and to cultivate more elevated standard of life or status in the society. But though sending children to prestigious institutions like English medium schools etc. are expression of status symbols, the women in the sample have not shown much interest in this. This may perhaps be due to the fact that local schools may facilitate more availability of the benefits of government concessions. It is interesting to note that scheduled caste women who were educated and economically well-to-do are predominantly self-motivated in the education of their children. Among the three communities in the study, the Arunthathiyar women are found to be more satisfied with the educational progress of their children and this indicated that they are moving ahead with the improvement of status.

Patterns of personal or social interactions with members of high castes had enabled Scheduled caste women to enhance their status position in the society. In the present study, this was investigated in terms of the practices of interdining between scheduled caste women and higher castes. As the educational and economic status of scheduled caste women increase, the practice of interdining with the members of higher castes is also found to be on the increase.

This change is through the breakdown of traditional restrictions on the scheduled caste women for interdining with the upper castes, a radical

improvement in their status compared to the former conditions that existed in the society.

Eventhough scheduled caste women are trying to retain the traditional caste order in certain aspects of their life, a tendency to deviate from the rigid observance of customary practices could be observed with their development in education and higher economic status. When a transformation has taken place in their educational and economic career, they are capable of acquiring higher social status in life and this in turn has influenced the observance of various customary practices, quite commonly in the line of modernity.

The present study reveals that majority of the scheduled caste women in the sample are very particular to have landed wealth as their major asset. This feeling is due to the overall contribution of land in building up status symbols. In general, among the scheduled caste women, possession of new items of wealth, land and housing architecture are found to facilitate the status identification of these women in a more visible manner as revealed in the study.

Another important factor which paved the way for the status elevation of scheduled caste women is their involvement in the political field. The present study showed that majority of the scheduled caste women irrespective of communal conditions are found to be interested in politics at a minor or major level. An important finding of the study was that economically weaker sections of the scheduled caste women are found to be more involved in political affairs. As an indicator of women's movement outside their home, it was found in this study that scheduled caste women of lower educational backgrounds (the illiterates and those educated upto secondary level) are more involved in political activities like rallies, demonstrations, picketing, strikes, meetings, election campaigns, etc. in Salem.

An important issue emerging from the present study is that the scheduled caste women, in sharp contrast to their former life have learned to adapt themselves to new dimensions of acquisitive process in social life for the deliberate improvement of status particularly through the active responses to various provisions of legislation and planned progress in Salem.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has deeply discussed about the scheduled caste women empowerment status in three dimensions like social, economical and educational. The future researchers can extend the research on identify the political empowerment of the scheduled caste women. Also, the upcoming researchers can examine the growth of scheduled caste women who completed their higher studies in the study area. Furthermore, the researchers can extend the research on various geographical locations ie., other than Salem district of Tamilnadu and India.