



THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SCHEMES RESERVED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DALIT WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Dalits in Indian society have endlessly suffered because of the stigma given to them. Dalits are being socially oppressed for centuries, economically depressed, politically marginalized, prevented from education, banned from certain occupations, suffered under extreme poverty, and degraded in society to the extreme lowest sections. Dalit women suffered a lot in association with Men. Many educational and economic schemes were carried out over the years to recover the social status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. The social position of Dalit women will vary from place to place depending on numerous factors such as their education, career, family, society, and region. Tamil Nadu is one of the pioneering states in India that implemented educational and economic measures to improve the lives of Dalit women. It has brought many modifications to their lives. However, it has not been successful in ensuring centum economic security for Dalit women. The sufferings of Dalit women are not fully wiped out by the efforts taken by the government. This research paper aims to critically analyse and highlight the educational and economic schemes implemented by the government and their impact on the lives of Dalit women. Thus, the paper concentrates on the educational and economic status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. The researcher has used descriptive and analytical methodology.

Keywords: Dalit Women, Education, Economic Status, Government Schemes, Tamil Nadu.



INTRODUCTION

‘Dalit’ is the word that means ‘oppressed’ or ‘untouchable’ in Sanskrit denoting the community belonging to the lowest caste in India. The people belonging to this community are poor and are oppressed by other upper-caste communities. They suffer a lot for their daily survival. Dalits in ancient times were prevented from public spaces because of untouchability. They became the victims of such cruel practices. Dalits were prohibited from entering the temple, were not allowed to wear slippers, and were denied basic needs such as drinking water, proper food, etc. One could notice changes in the austere behaviour towards the Dalits especially, after the post-independence. While open discrimination and untouchability reduced over the last few decades, Dalits remain an oppressed community.

“The Progress of the Dalit Community should be measured in terms of the progress made by its womenfolk.” (Ambedkar) Dalit women are the most marginalized ones around the globe. Dalit women in India face multiple marginalization based on their caste, class, and gender. Born in a Dalit community, they are marginalized. Being women, they are marginalized. Finally, they are marginalized based on their lower class. Thus Dalit women in comparison to Dalit men suffer multiple marginalization. They face severe exclusion in the political, social, and economic world. They have no priority in the political scenario, are not accepted in society and economically they have no hold of anything.

According to the constitution of India, all Indians have the fundamental right to education (Article 21-A), the right to own land (Article 19(1)(f)), the right to live a standard life in society (Article -21), the right to express themselves (Article 19(1)(a), and the right to make decisions (Article- 21), etc. Dalits/Scheduled castes are the group of people who have the least access to these rights or are barred from accessing them. Discrimination among the castes still exists and more over gender discrimination is predominant in India. It is against this backdrop the research scholar is trying to focus on the educational, social, and financial status of the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu.

The Indian government soon after the independence launched many schemes and programmes for the empowerment of the Dalit community. The sole aim of these schemes was to uplift the Dalits in our country by promoting education and raising their economic status thus improving their social lives. This paper focuses on the various educational and



economic schemes set apart by the government to promote the education and livelihood of the Dalits and in particular for the Dalit women. But we witness these schemes have not entirely helped them to make a standard life in society.

Therefore, the researcher through this paper is evaluating the government schemes preserved for the Dalits and in particular for the Dalit women. It also evaluates the way these government schemes are implemented. The researcher also evaluates the educational impact of these schemes to improve the livelihood of Dalit women. Educational and social status go hand in hand. Proper education will improve the living condition of the individual and it will be reflected in their advanced social status.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to evaluate the various economic schemes conserved for the education of the Dalit and in particular for the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu by the central and state government and the way it makes an impact on their social lives.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 1) To know several social and economic rights of the Dalit Women from the constitution of India.
- 2) To study the educational and economic schemes reserved for the Dalits
- 3) To analyse the difficulties in implementing economic schemes.
- 4) To evaluate the impact of these economic schemes on Dalit Women.
- 5) To verify the various challenges encountered by the Dalit women in accessing these schemes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ❖ What are the specific educational and economic schemes reserved by the government for the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu?
- ❖ Do these schemes benefit the Dalit women in Tamil Nadu?
- ❖ What is the progress brought out by these schemes?
- ❖ How far have these schemes helped Dalit women improve their social lives?



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted the Descriptive method for this paper. The secondary sources of data are used from published journals, articles, and government bulletins. The budget allocation under various schemes the economic survey made among the Dalits and the relevant research articles are studied for a deeper knowledge of the problem.

DALIT WOMEN IN THE PATRIARCHAL INDIAN SOCIETY

In a male-dominated culture, Dalit women undergo multiple oppression like caste discrimination, class discrimination, and gender discrimination which they can never escape. The Vedic scripture and *Manusmriti* prevent Dalit women from empowering their lives in society through economic, political, social, educational, and personal channels. Even in the 21st century witness severe oppression and exploitation imposed on Dalit women. They are the most deprived section of society. They are being denied the fundamental constitutional rights.

Economic rights most often are denied to the Dalit women causing a great inequality and oppression of this section. "Economic stability increases an individual's options and choices in life. Economic empowerment puts women in a stronger position and gives them the power to participate, together with men, in the shaping of society, to influence development at all levels of society, and to make decisions that promote their families and their well-being. Economic empowerment of women is a matter of human rights and social justice." (Tornqvist and Schmitz, 2009).

DALIT WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU

According to the Population Census report made in 2001 in Tamil Nadu, the share of Scheduled Caste (SC) population is 1.19 crore. 70 percent of the scheduled castes live in rural areas. The sex ratio among the SCs is 999/1000 which is rather high in comparison to the ratio of Scheduled Tribe (ST) and general. Dalit women in Tamil Nadu numbered 59,245,79 according to the Census made in 2001 constitute a large section of the population that is 9.49% of the State population, 19.11% of the State women population, and 49.96% of the State Dalit population.



The caste system, untouchability, and gender discrimination have seriously affected the social status of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. Although untouchability was outlawed in India soon after independence, the caste system exists in several parts of the country in its variant forms. It remains a major part of the social structure. Dalits are legally recognized as a community of people who fit into the Scheduled Caste (SC). The women belonging to this Dalit community face a lot of discrimination, exclusion, rejection, and restriction in their place of work, prevented freedom from exercising political, and social benefits, murder, sexual abuse, physical violence, trafficking, and early marriage.

The caste segregation pulls down the Dalit women to the lowest position within the social structure. The discrimination would take place in different forms such as preventing access to certain public places such as religious functions, common functions, and educational institutions, denial of constitutional rights such as deciding on one's marriage, occupation, unequal wages based on gender disparity, and denying proper medications. This subjugation of the Dalit women causes severe economic oppression among the Dalit women. They need to depend on the men for each and everything and they live in utter poverty all through their lives. It is for this very reason some economic measures planned by the government to eradicate poverty in the lives of Dalits. Women are often limited to the household work. The social system and the gender-based traditional rules restrict Dalit women from accessing proper education, skill development, and employment opportunities outside their homes.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOR DALITS

The Indian constitution equally distributes human rights to all the citizens of India irrespective of their caste, class, gender, and faith. The Dalits in our country also have the same rights as any other citizens of the country. They have an equal right to live, the right to equality, the right to education, the right to speech, and expression, the right to employment, and a right to live with dignity.

The caste system, class system, and gender bias oppress the Dalit women and prevent them from exercising their basic human rights. Indian constitution articles 341 and 342 recognize those communities who suffered from the age-old practice of untouchability. The Scheduled castes who are subjected to multiple isolation need special consideration for safeguarding their interests.



Article 46 of the Indian Constitution promotes the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections of society and seeks to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Articles 14 and 15 guarantee the citizens of India equality in all aspects. According to these articles, every person in the country must be treated equally in the eyes of the law and it's the right to equality. Article 16 speaks of the SC and their access to educational institutions, employment, and other socio-economic benefits. Article 21-A in the Constitution of India provides free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. Article 19 of the Indian constitution provides the right to freedom of speech and freedom of choosing their profession. Article 21 grants personal liberty for all regardless of their caste to live a dignified life.

EDUCATIONAL SCHEMES FOR THE DALITS

Education can make a huge transformation in the lives of anybody. As a step to promote education among the Dalits, the government has introduced certain educational and economic schemes for them. The government has preserved educational scholarships but the majority of Dalit girl children are not permitted to make use of this opportunity. The family feels educating their daughters is adding expenses to them at the time of their marriage. It is just a customary belief based on gender that higher education is not necessary for Dalit women. They think that investing money in educating a girl child will demand more money during their marriage. It is not going to bring an income for their family. They are ignorant of the value of education and how it could be the best investment for an individual.

The government of India understood many of the scheduled castes' children do not go to school because of their poor economic background. Being aware of this situation the central government has set apart various educational scholarships for the Scheduled Caste to ensure education is not denied to them due to their poor financial status. Scholarships are given for Pre-metric, post-metric, and for obtaining higher studies in India and abroad. These are some of the scholarships given by the central government to promote education for these students all over the country including both boys and girls. The central government implements these scholarship programs for the Scheduled Caste students through the state governments.



Table 1- Educational Schemes by the Government

Sl. No	Scholarship	Objectives
1.	Pre- Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students	To support the family of SC children in educating their children.
2.	Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students	To increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio of SC students in higher education focusing on the poorest households. To grant financial assistance at the post-matriculation level.
3.	Central Sector Scholarship of Top-Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students	To recognize and promote quality education among SC students pursuing studies beyond class 12 th and to grant economic support.
4.	National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste Students	To provide opportunities to Scheduled Castes students to continue higher education: M.Phil/Ph.D degrees in Sciences, Humanities and Social Science streams.
5.	National Overseas Scholarship	To facilitate the students to obtain higher education like Master's degree or Ph.D. courses by studying abroad.
6.	Free Coaching Scheme for SC and OBC Students	To provide good quality training for SC and OBC candidates. To enable them for competitive examinations. To secure admission to reputed technical and professional higher education institutions.
7.	Upgradation Of Merit Of SC Students	To upgrade the merit of SC students To provide them with remedial and special coaching in classes IX to XII.
8.	Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana	To construct hostels for SC students who live in rural areas to encourage their education.
9.	Educational loans from the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation	To support with financial assistance in pursuing full-time Professional/Technical courses.
10.	Educational loans from the National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation	To help the students from the community of Safai Karamcharis or Manual Scavengers and their dependents pursue higher education.

(Source - The author has created the table)



ECONOMIC SCHEMES FOR DALIT WOMEN

The year 2001 was declared as Women's Empowerment Year by the Indian government focusing on the empowerment of the women in our country. The main objective of observing the year as Women Empowerment Year was to make a large-scale awareness of women's various rights to focus on their issues and make a change in their lives. The government has launched some economic schemes to ensure the provision of training, employment, and income-generation activities to make all Dalit women economically independent and self-reliant.

Financial schemes for the economic empowerment of Dalits in India include: -

- ❖ National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation is meant to finance certain income-generating activities for Scheduled Castes who are below the poverty line limits.
- ❖ National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation to provide credit facilities to beneficiaries.
- ❖ Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan to support scheduled caste families in increasing their productivity and income.
- ❖ Self-Employment Programmes to provide self-employment for educated unemployed people. In this programme, 50 percent of the benefit was for Scheduled Castes.
- ❖ Wage Employment Programmes for the development of rural areas. Infrastructure like roads to connect the village to different areas, which made the village more accessible, and also other social, and educational schools and infrastructure like hospitals.
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana for the integrated development of Scheduled Castes.
- ❖ Indira Awas Yojana is providing financial assistance for making houses to the BPL rural households belonging to Scheduled Castes.



STATE GOVERNMENT - TAMIL NADU

The state government of Tamil Nadu has been taking many specific steps to empower the women of the state. The government has focused on education, gender equality in the participation in the governance, health, and nutrition of women, equal rights, eradicating gender bias and discrimination in occupation, and taking action against the violence caused upon women.

Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Tribal Welfare Department exhibits economic funds with the objectives of ensuring the socio-economic and educational improvement of the Dalits.

- Various programmes are carried out such as infrastructure facilities, drinking water, roads to link, house sites, housing, schools, hostels, health centres, community halls, and so on.
- The government educational institution is provided with breakfast, mid-day meals, and many more to promote compulsory education. various types of educational grants and scholarships are given to all Dalits and in particular for Dalit girl children.
- Educational accessories like school bags, uniforms, textbooks, pens, bags, laptops, etc. are given by the government under various schemes.
- To facilitate transportation, they are freely provided with bicycles, two-wheelers, and free bus pass for the girl children. Many scholarships are announced in the state.
- Mobiles and laptops are provided to students going for higher education.
- During every five-year plan, the government allocates funds for educational schemes for marginalized groups to promote education among them.
- Special scholarships and fellowships, mid-day meals, uniforms stationery items, books, and textbooks are given to the children belonging to the Dalit groups to boost them for the upper level of education.
- Residential middle schools called Ashram schools were made and reservations were given for the Dalits.



CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING ECONOMIC SCHEMES FOR DALIT WOMEN

When any economic policy is implemented for women, Dalit women face a lot of limitations in accessing it as they go through multiple forms of discrimination. Dalit women face a lot of barriers in receiving the schemes given by the government which their counterparts, the upper caste women do not experience in receiving these schemes. Economic rights are the major area where Dalit women are being abandoned.

Even though the government has implemented several orders and reservations of seats for Dalits for their higher studies, only a few are reaching that level of higher education. the discrimination the students face at their primary and school levels prevents them from utilizing these benefits and going for higher education. they are easily dropped out because of their experience. The excellence in education in government schools is very poor in comparison to private schools. Dalit parents are unable to send their children to private schools due to financial issues. The educational assistance given by the government is not sufficient to send their children to the private institutions.

The government opened many ashram schools, that is residential schools, and gave preference for the Dalit students but many parents hesitated to send their children to the ashram schools because of the poor educational quality, lack of infrastructural facilities, and distance of the school from the home which leads to an increased number of dropouts.

Dalit women face another form of rejection at job interviews. They are being questioned about their surnames during the job interview whereas, non-Dalits are never been asked this question. The reservations given to the Dalits are denied for them on many occasions at the time of implementing it. Dalit girl children are prevented from obtaining student scholarships based on their religion and faith. The Tamil Nadu government is not willing to extend the scholarships meant for the Dalit students who converted to Christianity. Ilamurugu said to the Times of India, “When Dalits get converted to Christianity, they become OBCs and they have 30% reservation. If they extend benefits under the post-metric scholarship scheme, they have chances of availing benefits under the OBC reservation too and so the state government should strictly restrict the benefits only to SC students.” (Yazhinian - 2023).



The government has provided multiple economic schemes to promote education to improve the social life of the Dalits, they criticize these educational schemes have poor implementation and therefore, it is not catering to the purpose of its real motivation. The scholarships are provided not on time sometimes it is delayed and corruption is also taking place while distributing educational funds. Students who are going to private schools find difficulty in accommodating to the new culture. They face discrimination from the authorities, teachers, and peer groups. The medium of instruction becomes another reason in the initial days and some find it hard to adapt to the situation.

Some parents are unaware of the government schemes given for the support of education. They still don't send their children to school because of their financial issues. They are not aware of the transportation facilities and also they reveal the limitation of the schemes which is the unavailability of free transportation facilities for male children and are limited to one child from a family. Only a few percent of parents make use of the free hostel facilities by sending their children to the hostels for study.

The incentives given for all the students who passed the higher education are limited these years to those who score higher marks in board examinations. Thus the beneficial status of the incentives and awards is reduced to a great extent. Many of the students who study in private schools are denied the support of the government provisions for educational schemes for it applies to the students who are studying in government schools. The Scheduled Caste students at times do not get scholarship amounts.

OUTCOME, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's educational and economic schemes had a positive outcome. Those schemes have helped many Dalit women to empower themselves. It has made them to make a livelihood for themselves. It has improved the educational, social, and economic lives of many Dalit women. These schemes have helped the Dalit women to make a difference in their lives to a certain extent but many still live in pain and suppression. The women in the state lack economic assistance to make a proper livelihood for themselves.

- The educational and social empowerment of the Dalits is possible only through proper and higher education.



- Most of the Dalits stay in rural areas where they do not get much facility for education. They need to walk very far to reach school. It prevents them from going to school daily. Lack of transportation to the areas where Dalits are dwelling.
- The literacy rate of the Dalits especially Dalit girls is still behind the expected level even after the government has provided certain economic support for their educational upliftment.
- To improve the employability among the Dalit women to raise the standard of their lives, employment skills training can be made available for them.
- The Dalit Women should be given more opportunities to focus on various skills which will cater to their economic needs.
- Employment skills are not dependent on the completion of higher education therefore, this training can benefit many Dalit women who lost the opportunity to go for higher level education.
- Successful vocational training programmes enable individuals to prepare themselves for any job.
- The economic status of their family needs to be settled. Still, some Dalit women experience similar barriers in accessing employment skills training as they struggle to access higher education.

Manu Alphonse, the research project director on “Tracking Budget with intersectionality framework for an Evolution of Gender Responsive Budget for Dalit Women in Tamilnadu” carried out in 2013 in Tamil Nadu writes in this final report, “Tamilnadu State Schemes & Dalit Women - Gaps and Concerns”, clearly shows, existing schemes are hardly ever based on real needs and capabilities of Dalit women and hence prove ineffective. An effort towards intersectional budgeting for Dalit women should keep these concerns in focus!

CONCLUSION

Caste discrimination is an age-old practice that dehumanizes people. Even in this 21st century, it still exists in its rigid forms. It is the cruel form of discrimination that continues to be practiced in various parts of our country. Dalit women continue to suffer discrimination and social exclusion. Dalit women have been deeply afflicted and wounded in recent times.



They face discrimination not only for their gender but also because of religious, social, and cultural structures. Dalit women are placed in the lowest position in the hierarchy.

The various educational and Economic schemes introduced by the government for the Scheduled caste communities were to promote and provide educational opportunities for the children belonging to this community regardless of their gender had a certain positive impact on their lives. Many Dalits including women made use of this opportunity and came up in their lives. However, due to various reasons such as untouchability, remoteness of their dwellings, and lack of awareness of the government schemes some Dalit children did not make use of these opportunities. The literacy rates of the Dalit community are still behind the expected level. Education is the only means of achieving economic and social comfort for the backward classes in the coming generation.

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