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SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study along with the study conclusions, some broad suggestions, and recommendations for improving the power dimensions of the Scheduled Caste women. The major objective of the study has been to inquire into the process of empowerment of the Scheduled Caste women in three urban locales in the State of Karnataka, and more specifically, to understand the socio-economic and educational conditions of the Scheduled Caste women within the family and in the workplace and examine the power dimensions of the Scheduled Caste women in families and in relation to social institutions such as marriage, gainful employment and the like in terms of power participation, decision-making and decision alterations. The study is also undertaken to assess the level of awareness of these women regarding their legal rights, political and health issues.

This study examines the process of empowerment of Scheduled Castes women in an integral fashion. The data and findings of the study,
which have implications for policy formulation and planning for women's welfare, are summarized in this chapter. The findings and conclusions of the study are presented here in the hope that it may provide useful guidance for further study in this area of research and may initiate hypotheses for further intensive research.

SUMMARY:

The present study focuses on Karnataka. The respondents were drawn from three major cities in the State of Karnataka, namely Bangalore, Shimoga and Hubli-Dharwad. The sample consists of 500 Scheduled Caste women from these three cities. Among them, 250 are house-wives and the rest 250 are working women. The 'domestic' and 'employed', 'married' and 'unmarried', 'educated' and 'less-educated' were the major dichotomous variables considered for this purpose. The data for the study was collected through individual interviews and observation during the interviews.

The present research work is based on the primary data. The decision-making power is measured through the expression of attitude, knowledge, practices and awareness of the Scheduled Caste women in the urban context. The information given by the respondents forms the basis for the manifestation of their values and attitude towards family
matters and other vital issues of the society. On the basis of the information collected from the respondents, certain generalizations are made. It should be said, at the outset itself, that the study found some regional differences in this regard.

In analysing the information given by the respondents, certain common features came to light. The present study has nearly 70 percent of the respondents from the age group of 23-42 years. The remaining 30 percent belong to other than this age group. The bulk of respondents in the study selected by random sampling belong to the younger generation followed by middle-aged respondents. A small percentage (4.2) is from the older age group. Each generation is represented from the perspectives of each age group.

Regarding educational status, it is evident from the data that the literacy level among the urban Scheduled Caste women is low. 70 percent of them are below the graduation level. The respondents who have completed post-graduation and technical education are relatively few; 19.8 percent are graduates, 10 percent are post-graduates, and 16 percent are illiterates. In case of respondents’ father/husband, 50 percent of them are well below the education level of a graduation; 10 percent are illiterates, 25 percent are graduates, and 26 percent are post-graduates and technical degree holders. The educational level of the respondents’ husband/father is higher than that of the women respondents. Totally,
lower educational level has been found in a large number (70 percent) in this category.

It is found from the study data that the occupation held by the majority of the respondents, and their husband or father is typical of the middle class people in India. Most of the respondents belong to low-level occupations, that is, blue collar work and clerical jobs. Graduates, postgraduates and technical education holders are not many in number.

The study sample largely consists of married respondents, that is, 79.8 percent. Because of various reasons, 23 percent are divorcees or separated from their husbands and 39 percent are widows. When the nature of the family pattern is viewed, it is found that nuclear families are less in number than joint/extended families. Regarding the annual income of the family, most of the respondents had lower middle and middle class economic status.

The power to decide one’s family size is an important factor in empowering women in the family. An analysis of the attitude of respondents towards the size of the family reveals that, though a majority of the respondents are in favour of accepting small family norm, they do not have full freedom to decide, as circumstances are not favourable for them. They have to take the consent or approval of their husbands or elderly members of the family.
In the case of preference of the sex of the child, it is found that there is an increasing awareness among the Scheduled Caste women about the futility of craving and yearning for male children only. 25 percent respondents preferred male children. The study hypotheses, that is, preferring male children, is not confirmed. They have however, a strong and positive attitude towards spacing between children. But, in reality, they are not provided with an opportunity to take own decisions of their own regarding family planning and spacing of childbirth. It is true that the Scheduled Caste women in the urban society have little power over their fertility and this is due to socio-cultural constraints like the dominance of patriarchal values, subordination of women, traditional attitude of the elder members and lack of proper knowledge and courage.

It is evident from the data, 31 percent of the Scheduled Caste women agree on the issue of women having the freedom of choice in mate selection. They supported the idea that, decision about mate selection should be taken by the girl. 68 percent think that women do not have adequate freedom in this regard. The respondents did not favour self-selection of their partners by girls. They felt that the decision about male selection should be left to the respective parents. It was considered better to heed to the advice of the parents because they are the well wishers of their daughters. The respondents, in general, opined that girls should not be given the freedom of choice in mate selection.
On the issue of attitude towards the basic institution of marriage and its different aspects such as the marriageable age, inter-caste marriage, dowry, type of marriage, widow remarriage, divorce, etc. this research work has shown that there is a more marked considerable change in the thinking of the respondents than what is generally perceived in popular literature. The overall data clearly reveals that 47 percent of the Scheduled Caste women respondents in both group A and B preferred increased age at marriage. The main reason for this attitude towards higher age of marriage is that younger girls are not suited mentally and physically, to take up the responsibilities of a married life. The remaining half of the respondents felt that they do not have such liberties as deciding the marriageable age.

The study reveals that there is no significant change in women in their attitude towards inter-caste marriage from what is generally conceived. Only 19 percent of the respondents showed a positive attitude towards taking decision regarding inter-caste marriages. The remaining 81 percent think that it is not possible to take any decision on their own in this matter. Some of them are afraid of the bounds of the family and society and their objections to inter-caste marriages. Some respondents clearly opposed inter-caste marriages. The main reason for their opposition is the respondents’ conservative nature, caste rigidities and fear of retribution and retaliation from the society.
In the matter of dowry, it is found that there is an ambivalent attitude with some respondents. 35.2 percent respondents said that, women have to have freedom to decide on giving dowry and they are clearly unfavourable the dowry practice. It becomes evident from the data that working women have more power in deciding this matter. 64.6 percent expressed the opinion that, women have no power to independently decide in this regard. Some are also in favour of this practice. They say that giving dowry is compulsory and inevitable in our society.

It is observed that, traditional and simple marriages are still encouraged by the Scheduled Caste Women in urban Karnataka. Women who were interviewed, saw marriage as a worthy and an ultimate concern of an individual's life. 64 percent preferred simple marriage and 66.6 percent preferred traditional marriage, while 40 percent preferred registered marriage. There is a greater preference for simple and traditional type of marriage. On this score, it is found that the impact of education and employment was felt only marginally. The Scheduled Caste women of urban Karnataka are still committed to the Hindu ideals, customs and traditions.

With regard to the attitude and perception of the Scheduled Caste women in case of the widow remarriage, this research study points out that only 13 percent of the respondents have a positive attitude towards
the widow remarriage. They are of the opinion that it is desirable under all the conditions. This favourable attitude is seen more among the educated and working women. 49 percent of the respondents expressed their preference for the desirability of remarriage in certain conditions, that is, in case the widow is young, or if she has no child, no economic independence and so on. 38 percent expressed a negative attitude towards widow remarriage by saying it is not appropriate under any circumstances. In a small city like Shimoga, a greater number of respondents were opposed to the widow remarriage. Many of them are of the conviction that marriage is for a lifetime and if it ends prematurely, it should be accepted as one's own fate.

With regard to the acceptance of divorce, only 12 percent consider divorce as good and appropriate. In favour of divorce or separation, these respondents consider divorce as the best solution, instead of subjecting the women to continued suffering. On the other hand, 40 percent respondents felt divorce or separation from their husband is sometimes desirable and appropriate. According to them divorce is good under certain circumstances when no adjustment can be made between the husband and the wife. They would consent the separation only in extreme conditions like the husband having illicit relationship. 47.4 percent of the respondents are not in favour of separation. According to them, divorce is not right and appropriate under any condition. If they are separated, the family will suffer, as the
care of children will be hampered. The Scheduled Caste women of urban Karnataka still believe that marriage is a sacrament. They think that woman should tolerate her husband and try to live with him throughout her life. Only such women, according to them, have respect in the society.

While examining the desirability and the perception of the Scheduled Caste women on employment, the data reveals that 91 percent of the respondents, including both house-wives and working women, have a positive attitude towards the issue of women being employed. 09 percent expressed a considerable negative attitude towards the issue. Among the 500 respondents, 71 percent desired employment for economic independence. 32.8 percent considered employment for social status while 39.4 percent preferred jobs for the utilization of time and education. 58.8 percent have preferred employment to supplement their family income. The desire for economic independence indicates that the Scheduled Caste women are slowly trying to achieve self-reliance. It also proves that in urban families, the Scheduled Caste women still feel that they are economically insecure. It can be concluded that the urban Scheduled Caste women are of the opinion that, in modern society employment is a social and economic necessity.

The analysis of data in relation to the opinion of the respondents about the preferable type of employment reveals that the number of
respondents preferring professional, administrative jobs and business is limited. The maximum number of respondent aspires for teaching and clerical jobs. The respondents consider certain jobs as unsuitable and risky for women. They think that, women are incapable of doing certain jobs. The study also reveals that, there is a possible change in the attitude of the Scheduled Caste women towards employment. But they have been restricted by their domestic responsibilities. They consider domestic roles as more important than their own career. They often prefer to take up soft jobs due to economic compulsion, rather than considering employment as part of their personality development.

Regarding the role of employment in changing the status of the Scheduled Caste women within the family and society on account of working outside, the study findings reveals that a great majority of the respondents are of the opinion that employment has positively affected their status in the family and society. As a result, they enjoy certain respect and power in decision-making and in their participation. The findings confirm that employment is a powerful instrument in raising the status of women.

The study data on the question of sharing domestic work among the male and female members confirms that 33.6 percent of both working and non-working women's husband or male family members performs the all domestic work. However, their co-operation is relatively
higher in the case of the employed. 45.8 percent respondents said that they do not get any help from their male members. The respondents feel guilty to ask their husband or other male members of the family to help them in their domestic work. For the average women, the question of equality with men is something she has never bothered about as she has accepted it as part of her domestic role.

Regarding decision-making process in the family budgets, 44.6 percent of the respondents said that, their suggestions are taken into account. Among these, though their suggestions are taken, a majority of the respondents’ husband or male member’s decision is final. 55.4 percent respondents said that male members or husbands take all the decisions in determining the family budget. It is also found that some men do not like their women to interfere in the financial affairs. In the case of house-wives as well as working Scheduled Caste women, education and job have no considerable impact on their traditional power structure in the family. The study still finds a majority of respondents’ husbands occasionally consulting their wives while making financial budgets, but while taking decisions their say is final.

The analysis of data, regarding the nature of spending their income reveals that, 35 percent employed women spend their income independently. One of the main reasons observed in this regard is that a majority of the respondents are living separately from their
family/husband and they shoulder all the responsibilities of the family. 51 percent spent their income jointly with their husband/family members. 12.8 percent have no freedom in this regard. Their husband/family members will spend their income. A large number of respondents have less control over their own earnings; male members control them. Even though women are earning, they have little say in economic decisions.

It is clear from the study data that the discrimination of women at workplace by male colleagues, that more than half that is 58.4 percent of the respondents are differentiated at workplace by their male colleagues. This is because many persons believe that women always give priority more to family work than to their professional work. Hence, they do not take their jobs very seriously and the efficiency of working women is always suspected by men. The co-worker often cannot mentally accept the superiority of a woman’s work and performance.

Regarding the discrimination of the Scheduled Castes by the high castes, the study data reveals that, only 13.4 percent respondents consider that the Scheduled Castes are not discriminated by others in society. But a majority of the respondents, that is 86.6 percent, are of the opinion that, the Scheduled Castes are generally differentiated and treated separately from the rest of the society. Though they are legally
provided with equal opportunities, they continue to suffer discrimination in many forms.

From the analysis of the study data, regarding caste discrimination, it becomes clear that, a majority of 82.3 percent of the respondents had suffered caste discrimination. According to the respondents, some of their neighbours expressed caste feelings and showed discrimination openly and a majority of the neighbours do not show it openly. It is also evident from our study that caste feelings are more prominent and pronounced among the persons of low education and low occupational status.

An overall view of the data reflects the opinion of the Scheduled Caste women respondents regarding the reservation policy. 92.6 percent are in favour of reservation and they desire to have it in all the fields. They strongly expressed the opinion that reservation for Scheduled Castes should continue until they got social justice. Only 5 percent were of the opinion that reservation is desirable but is required in certain fields and for a certain period. Not a single respondent felt that reservation is not required. A majority of the respondents are of the opinion that, the Scheduled Castes have been oppressed by the high caste Hindus for too long a time. Now is the time for the restoration of through reservation to set centuries of oppression. So long as power structure is in the hands of the high castes, equality will never be achieved. The respondents viewed
reservation policy as the only method for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes.

The analysis of data indicates that, 95.2 percent of the respondents are aware of the facilities provided for them. Only a small percentage (4.8 percent) showed ignorance of the facilities provided by the Government. But a majority of the respondents, that is 70.6 percent showed non-utilization of the facilities. 30 percent are not aware of the welfare programmes. Despite the awareness, a majority (329 respondents) were unable to utilized facilities provided by the Government. It is observed that complete awareness regarding most of the facilities has been very low.

The study data shows a mixed trend regarding the respondents' awareness of the law. Laws regarding inheritance of property and dowry prohibition are well known to the Scheduled Caste women. The respondents do not have much knowledge about laws such as the Special Marriage Act, Medical Termination and Pregnancy Act, Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act. The awareness regarding law is higher among the working women as compared with the that of the house-wives. The analysis of the data proves the hypotheses that whatever little awareness the respondents possess it is only partial.
Regarding medical treatment or practice of health care, the data analysis of the study shows that, 68 percent respondents prefer to visit doctors for treatment. 32 percent prefer home remedies. While in case of respondents’ husband or male members of the family, 75.6 percent visit doctors and 24.2 percent prefer home medicines for treatment. The level of awareness is relatively high among the Scheduled Caste women of urban Karnataka towards health care.

Data regarding opinion and awareness about vital issues such as dowry death, protest against alcoholism, atrocities on women and the dalit exposes the fact that dowry death as an important issue is well known to the majority 95.4 percent respondents. The respondents rarely know the incidents such as protest movements against alcoholism and atrocities on dalits and women. Most of the respondents showed a negative and submissive attitude towards such incidents which occur in our society.

The data reflects that 50 percent of the respondents do not consult any one in the family to exercise their franchise independently while voting. 25 percent of the respondents consult their husbands and 21 percent are influenced by their family members at the time of election. This data proves that the Scheduled Caste women in Urban Karnataka are not much interested in political participation.
CONCLUSIONS:

Women throughout the world continue to be regarded as inferior to and weaker partners of men. As a consequence women are adversely treated and subjected to discrimination on the grounds of sex. The present study is an attempt to look closely into the question of powerlessness, sense of identity and empowerment of the Scheduled Caste women of urban Karnataka.

Based on the analysis of the data, the present study has arrived at the following conclusions:

The basic assumption of the study is that, the power structure among the Scheduled Caste women is highly differentiated. They have very little power in terms of family and work related decision-making. The power among them splits vertically. Being Scheduled Castes, they are differentiated and dominated by the other caste people in the society. Besides, they are dominant by the male members in their own families and work place. Findings of the study prove that the socio-economic and educational conditions of the Scheduled Caste women are lower, compared to their male counterparts.

The power dimension of Scheduled Caste women in families in relation to social institutions and employment in terms of power of
participation, decision making and decision alteration is only marginal. Though they manifest positive aspirations they have little say in the family matters. They are still committed to the traditional ideals. The Scheduled Caste women express an intensive desire for gainful employment. But their attitude regarding the choice of employment and the manner of spending their income is found relatively unchanged. They have little power in budgeting their families and taking decisions for their families. They are considerably governed by the traditional patriarchal values.

The study concludes that the Scheduled Caste women employees are still discriminated against by the male colleagues at the working place. Caste is still a dominant factor in deciding the status among the Scheduled Caste women. Caste feeling is more prevalent towards persons of low status. The awareness of Scheduled Caste women regarding health and constitutional rights is still low. They are unable to make use of the opportunities provided for them by the Government.

Thus, the research study proves that, the image of woman in the mind of the Scheduled Caste men is generally low. The analysis of data on different decision-making dimensions shows that, in all crucial family matters, it is the men who are the effective decision makers. Urban Scheduled Caste women, in addition to being dominated, are discriminated by the high-caste in their surroundings. This also
demonstrates that Indian patriarchy, gender prejudice and caste
discrimination are mainly responsible for the present lower level of the
urban Scheduled Caste women. Gender bias leads to the authority and
power of male over female. Caste discrimination further leads to low
status.

The urban Scheduled Caste women are more conscious of gender
and caste discrimination than other caste women. They lack the
confidence to imbibe new values. The greatest stumbling block to
women’s full development is her own mental attitude, her own mindset.
Because their families and society condition them, low-level education
has resulted in their lower social status. Education of women is expected
to create sufficient awareness in them to be capable of taking decisions.
Instead of this, she is expected to remain submissive.

Indian traditions, customs, practices, beliefs and ideologies have
made women powerless. This is a great obstacle to the development of
herself dignity. Hence, they need to be empowered in all spheres of life.
Women have to empower themselves. Women have to be given powers
to decide for themselves. Unless they become conscious of their
oppression and utilize the opportunities, it will not be possible for them
to change their status. Otherwise subordination and subjugated status of
the Scheduled Caste women will continue. Legislation alone cannot put
her in the rightful place. She should fight for her own equality and get
rid of dependency. The change must be effected in the minds of both men and women.

A woman has every right to lead her life with dignity. She has the right to live life free from violence that she suffers at the hands of other members of her family. She has a right to education and information. Her right to health care, to have control over reproduction and control over her own self, her right of access to knowledge and information, right to participate in the economic and political process, and her right for recognition and respect can only empower women to fulfil her life. This would enable women physically and mentally to participate in the social, economic, political, educational development by taking right decisions. Empowerment of women entails that women, society and family are made aware of women’s human rights. If the Scheduled Caste women are to be empowered, it should be ensured that their human rights are respected, and they are to be treated with respect and dignity and not as subordinate human beings.

Women’s empowerment as well as their participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society is fundamental to the advancement of the human rights, social justice and sustainable development of the entire society. Empowerment helps women in making their own choices with regard to their lives and makes them more active in the society.
Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen sees development as freedom which in turn empowers women. He emphasizes, "Indeed the empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development for many countries in the world". To be empowered, the woman should develop self confidence, in her own capacity and the basic trust that she would be able to solve problems that come in her way. She has to have belief in her ability to fight against injustice and discrimination. Gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment are closely interrelated and interact with one another. Women are able to achieve empowerment when there is gender justice and equality and women rights are recognized. The status of women is a barometer of the democracy of any society. It is an indicator of development and how human rights are respected.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study reveals that, the power dimensions of the Scheduled Caste women in urban Karnataka as expressed in their attitude, knowledge and perceptions are limited. In India, various legislations, welfare programmes have been implemented to improve the status of women. Particularly, certain programmes have been formulated and implemented for the betterment of the Scheduled Castes. But unfortunately these programmes and facilities are not properly utilized by the underprivileged. It is observed that, complete awareness
concerning most of the facilities provided by the Government is very low. Keeping this in mind, based on the findings and the conclusion drawn in this study, some broad suggestions and recommendations may be given for empowering the Scheduled Caste women in urban Karnataka.

Towards empowering Scheduled Caste women of urban Karnataka the present study makes the following recommendations.

* Value education is essential for developing positive attitude towards women. In the family itself it has to be imparted by the parents to the younger members.

* The process of socialisation is vital in empowering women. Girl child should be inspired, encouraged and guided to develop self esteem, self confidence and self respect in her own ability and capabilities to fight against gender inequality and discrimination through socialisation. This would help to empower female child. This is easier said than done. However, the conscious section of modern Indian society should get involved in this process.

* Women’s quantitative as well as qualitative participation at all levels is essential for their empowerment. Proper execution of
existing legislation, coupled with awareness campaigns will be of considerable help in this vein.

* There is a need for non-discriminatory school counselling and career education programmes for all so that a broad socio-cultural perspective emerges at the community level.

* The recruitment programmes be restructured to ensure that all women, especially from depressed class and caste, have equal access to managerial, entrepreneurial technical training.

* Employment inculcates courage and power in women and in their families. So employment opportunities for women must be increased at all levels.

* Laws and legislation against the practice of untouchability and caste practices in public offices and public places should be executed in the right earnest. Mass media especially the electronic media have a significant role to play in this respect.

* Reservation quota is not fully used by the Scheduled Castes as a result of which backlog vacancies are found in many departments. Reservation for women must be made in all sectors.
Reservation for depressed castes needs to be continued until economic and social inequalities are abolished or at least reduced to a considerable extent.

Organised women's groups should be assisted in helping the needy women seeking protection through legal measures.

It is also important that women are trained to demand access to health care. Training, education and awareness for health must be ensured with special recognition for gender concern in health.

There is a need to promote research concerning violence. Violence against women should be systematically studied so as to affect measures for preventing violence against women.

The Central and State Government should planned implement special employment programmes to help Scheduled Caste women.

Equal treatment of women in all walks of life could only ensure women in the empowering process. For this she has to have access all the resources physical, social, economical, political, cultural are pre-requisites of empowerment. The public awareness programmes will help in taking justice.