CHAPTER II
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METHODOLOGY

Inequality and the resultant discrimination in varying degrees on the grounds of gender differentiation are commonly witnessed, admitted and even justified in most human collectivities. Needless it is to stress the point that gender is one of the most pervasive and taken-for-granted features of society. However, critical analysis of masculine and feminine characteristics and their influence on life and development needs to be taken up in the case of some special groups. One such group, which requires be understanding and theorizing in terms of nature and depth of gender discrimination and empowerment is the Scheduled Caste. This is so because it is often argued that scheduled caste women suffer from a double discrimination of their low caste position as well as gender prejudice.

The present research analysis is directed towards a critical look into the nature and extent of decision-making power and possible changes in the family and work-related life of Scheduled Caste women in modern Urban-India. As stated in the first chapter, the main objective of
the present study is to analyse decision making power of Scheduled Caste women regarding family matters and other important social institutions namely marriage, health-related issues, legal rights, personal needs, etc.

The present research work is a sociological analysis in the area of empowerment among Scheduled Caste women. Accordingly, the study starts with the basic assumption that women from the scheduled castes have very little power in terms of family and work-related decision-making. Available sociological literature on the Indian scenario clearly suggests that they are discriminated against by the high caste groups in their surroundings. Further, it is assumed that they are dominated over by their male members in their own families. In other words, the helplessness, powerlessness and invisibility of Scheduled Caste women is apparent both at the private and public social space. Keeping this broad conceptual orientation and related assumptions for test; it is decided to find out the nature and extent of problems relating to general empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in urban Karnataka.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The study analyses the process of empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in three representative urban locales in the state of Karnataka.
The broad objectives of the study are stated as the following:

To study, critically examine the nature and extent of empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women in urban Karnataka. More specifically:

1. To understand and empirically record the present socio-economic and educational conditions of Scheduled Caste women within the family and in the work place in comparison with their male counterparts in the study area.

2. To examine the power dimension of scheduled caste women in families and in relation to social institutions such as marriage, gainful employment and the like in terms of the power of participation, decision-making and decision alterations.

3. To assess the level of awareness of these women regarding their constitutional and other legal rights in India.

4. To suggest pragmatic ways and means to improve the economic and power dimensions of these women within family and society.

Study Hypotheses:

In order to conduct a field-based empirical study to achieve the research objectives stated above, following working hypotheses were formulated for qualitatively testing them in the field. These hypotheses have been formulated on the basis of review of existing literature in the
area, general observation by the researcher and interactions with some scholars in the field of research.

H1: The power structure among Scheduled Caste families in urban Karnataka is highly differentiated, women having little power in terms of family and work related decision-making.

H2: Scheduled Caste women employees are discriminated against and treated deleteriously in comparison with Scheduled Caste male employees by their other colleagues and superiors in the workplace.

H3: Besides domination, discrimination and exploitation by the high caste groups in the surroundings, Scheduled Caste women are dominated over, and exploited by male members in their own families and immediate community. Hence, sources of power are split vertically, are based on social, and gender discrimination.

H4: Caste is still a dominant factor in the maintenance of social status among Scheduled Caste women in urban Karnataka. However, gender prejudice adds to the caste discrimination.

H5: The level of awareness among Scheduled Caste women in urban areas regarding their legal rights is still quite low. Further, whatever little awareness this group possesses does not lead itself to attitudinal change and practice.

The study has adopted qualitative analysis of field-based primary data to test the study hypotheses stated above. The responses being open,
qualitative and relative to the perception of the respondents, no statistical technique to test the hypotheses has been adopted. Instead, the hypotheses were tested through analytical-theoretical logic. Conclusions drawn are crosschecked with the existing research studies and generalisations are made keeping this in mind.

Study Universe:

This empirical study, based on primary field data, was conducted in three urban localities in Karnataka. These three urban centers are Bangalore (Metropolis), Hubli-Dharwad (Large twin-cities) and Shimoga (Small city). This study area was selected because of (1) its representative character in terms of the size of urban population in Karnataka, and (2) because these three urban centers broadly represent the Southern, Northern and Central Parts of Karnataka State respectively. Chapter III presents the demographic and socio-economic profile of the study area.

Study Sample:

This is a sociological study of Scheduled Caste women in urban Karnataka. With this broad object, all women belonging to the Scheduled Castes in Urban Karnataka ideally constitute the study universe. However, as it is impractical and nearly impossible to engage all
in a census survey to cover all Scheduled Caste women in the state; a representative sample of them from the study is as noted above, has been selected.

The method employed for the present study is that of cluster random sampling method. While selecting samples it was kept in mind, that sample should be sufficient in size to enable the researcher to arrive at significant conclusions and generalizations beyond the study sample. At the same time, the manageability of data was also considered. Enough attention was paid while finalising the sample size, to the fact that the respondent group, due to its inadequate exposure to the outside world, would not be easy to have immediate and intimate access. With this principle, it was decided to select a total number of 500 Scheduled Caste women from different age groups and sub-castes among the Scheduled Castes while selecting the study sample. Vital demographic and socio-economic factors were considered to give the study sample a representative character.

As stated above, the study sample consists of house-wives and working women from the three cities in Karnataka. The employed and domestic married and unmarried, educated and less educated were major dichotomous, variables considered for this purpose.
Employed or 'working women' means those who are doing some work or job outside their home to earn wages or salary. On the other hand, the 'house-wife' includes married, literates as well as the illiterate but not engaged in any job outside their family. They are full time domestic, non-paid workers working within their own families.

The total number of 500 respondents constituted two groups of 250 each; 250 house-wives and 250 working women. The study respondents consisted of higher, middle and lower classes; they belong to different educational levels and are residents of 3 cities in Karnataka. The area wise distribution of the sample is presented in the following diagram.

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      500 Respondents
         /           \
Bangalore     Shimoga      Hubli-Dharwad
   (200 respondents) (150 respondents) (150 respondents)
      /   \       /   \       /   \       /   \       /   \
  100 House-Wives 75 House-Wives 75 House-Wives 75 House-Wives 75 Working Women
  100 Working Women 75 Working Women 75 Working Women 75 Working Women

Working Women - 250
House-Wives - 250
Total - 500 Respondents
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Research Tools and Techniques:

In order to test the research hypotheses stated earlier, the data for the study was collected with the help of two distinctive techniques: Interview and observation. Individual interview with the help of a carefully constructed and pre-tested interview schedule was used to generate facts recorded in the schedule format. Observation technique was used as an additional qualitative tool to supplement the quantitative data collected through the interviews. Observation record sheet was used for this purpose in the study. Interview schedule and Observation record sheet are given as appendix I.

The interview schedule consisted of questions covering all the aspects of the subject to be investigated. In the preparation of the schedule, attempts were made to construct partially structured questions as much as possible, so as to enable the respondents to answer them naturally without much difficulty. Lead questions were totally avoided to keep the responses open and candid. The schedule was carefully constructed and pre-tested in Shimoga and Bangalore cities before it was used for data collection in the field. During the course of the interviews, the researcher managed to establish close rapport with the respondents enabling her to collect inner insights and intimate impressions.
The observation helped in finding out feelings, motives, values and beliefs of the respondents on various matters regarding which they were required to respond. It gave the researcher additional information of their state of mind, which could not be ascertained through interview schedule alone.

The interview schedule consists of three parts with 31 main questions. Most of the interviews of working women were conducted at their work place during leisure hours with prior appointments or during their working hours with the permission of the head of their institutions, and a few at the residence. Remaining interviews of house-wives were conducted at their houses. Each interview took about 45-60 minutes on an average. It took eight months to complete data collection.

**Processing of Data:**

This study aimed at inferring generalizations from the verifiable primary data and the purpose of analysis was to obtain more than one variable description as the background characteristics for individual differences.

Information, collected through interviews and supported with field observations, has been systematically presented for critical analysis in the following chapters. Various operations involved in the processing
of data were classification, application of categories through coding and tabulation, etc. before arriving at conclusions. The quantitative data are presented in the form of tables with percentages. The data tables have been compared for data analysis, and interpretation. Analysis of data is presented in the next four chapters.

**Definition of Terms used in the Study:**

Important terms used in this study are presented with working definitions as to be used precisely and meaningfully in the thesis.

1) **Empowerment:**

The concept 'empowerment' is used here as an active, multi dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all the spheres of life.

In the opinion of Gopalan, Former Secretary to India in the Development of Women and Child Development, Human Resource Development Ministry, “Empowerment is a state without oppression – an environment of freedom, choice, equality and respect for individuals – a life with dignity”.
Sharma (1991) points out that "The term empowerment refers to a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations".

According to Nath and Chatterjee (1995), "for true empowerment what is most significant is the control of ideology that is control over thoughts and perceptions that shapes individual beliefs, values and attitudes – ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling and analysing. This control intern confers decision-making power, which increases access to and control over resources".

Speaking at a workshop, Griffen (1987) spoke about what empowerment meant to her. "The word simply meant adding to women’s power. Power is having control, being listened to, being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with contribution to make".

According to Kapur (2001), empowerment as a word is now being widely used and has recently entered the vocabulary of government and non-government organizations, and other individual agencies as of women studies. But this word has seldom been defined, particularly women’s empowerment, though its key
ingredients like gaining greater control over their lives and decision-making has been mentioned frequently.

The term ‘empowerment’ in the present study is used to mean realization of one’s own capacity, potentiality and their full identity in all spheres of life. The empowerment of women is mentioned as higher literacy of education, better health care for herself and for her children, higher age at marriage, greater work participation, better consciousness of their rights, self realization of power and status, self respect, knowledge and awareness of one’s own life and society. Empowerment provides greater autonomy in decision-making. It enables a person to have positive attitude to plan their lives both as individuals and members of social system.

2) Decision Making:

In Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sociology, Sharma defines the term ‘decision-making’ as, “A volitional act resulting in a sequence of actions leading to achievement of a goal through transforming initial information in an uncertain situation. Decision-making is the central process at all levels of data processing and psychological control within a system of purposeful activity”.

“Decision-making is an orderly process, which one goes through, in order to pass judgment and terminate controversy” stated by Griffiths (1958).

Decision-making in this study is used as an act of choice in a given situation. It is the ability to make decisions about one’s own action and responsibility to make decisions about the action of others.

3) Power:

According to Barness (1986) the term ‘power’ is understood as “the capacity to enforce one’s will, to get things done, to press through a sequence of action even against opposition”.

It is very difficult to define and measure power through a particular indicator, because power always differs in various situations. In the present study, the term ‘power’ is used with decision-making process of Scheduled Caste women. Power is always relational. The power held by a person demands his/her ability to make decisions about his/her own personal action and responsibilities to make decisions about actions of the others.
Here women’s power is understood as woman’s ability to take independent decisions on personal matters.

4) Scheduled Caste:

In the constitution of India, Article 366(24) the term Scheduled Caste is stated as “Such Castes, races or tribes or parts of groups with such castes, races or tribes as are deemed, under article 341, to be Scheduled Castes, for the purpose of the constitution”.

Scheduled Castes have been an integral part of the Indian society. These castes refer to such castes which have undergone certain social, economic and religious discrimination for a long time, and which include hundreds of sub-castes. These castes belong to the lowest stratum of the Hindu caste hierarchy. The touch or proximity is considered polluting by the caste Hindus. These castes are being outside the Hindu society.

5) Urban Area:

The definition adopted in Census of India 1961 and adhered to in census of India 1971 as well as in 1981 census has been retained for the 1991 and 2001 census also. According to this definition urban area includes:
i) All places with municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee etc.

ii) All other places which satisfy the following criteria:
   a) A minimum population of 5,000
   b) At least 75 percent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and
   c) A density of population of at least 400 per square kilometre.
   d) All places which though not satisfying the above criteria, had pronounced urban characteristics.
References:

5. Encyclopaedia of Sociology, vol. I.