

59. STATUS, SURVIVAL AND CURRENT DILEMMA OF SCHEDULE CASTE ARUNDHATHIYAR WOMEN IN RANIPET DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

Schedule Caste Women had some basic problems and the different kinds of gender inequality were displayed in mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity professions, ownership, and household matters. Education can pave the way for an overall development of individuals and for the society. Female literacy is not only an end itself, but also serves as a catalyst for overall performance, in other segments too. Since women comprised the majority of the Schedule caste population in India. Among the Schedule Caste women, Arundhatiyar women population were below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination. this research paper mainly concentrates on status, survival and current dilemma of ScheduledCaste Arundhatiar women in Ranipet district of Tamil Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

Schedule Caste refers to one's caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial caste which have borne the stigma of untouchability, because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupation. Based on the recent estimate Schedule Caste population should be around 300 million or more they were the neglectable fifth varna of the Hindu society the outcasts. As per 2011

census in India the total population is more than 121 crores of which Schedule Caste constitutes 20.13 crores which comprised of 103,535,314 males and 97,843,058 females and the sex ratio works out to 946 females per 1000 males, and their literacy rate is 66.07 percent.

Since women comprised the majority of the Schedule caste population in India. Among the Schedule Caste women, Arundhatiyar women population were below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination. There will be improved implementation of programmes, which are already women oriented, with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for the mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities. In order to enhance Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women's empowerment, access to credit for consumption, production and other livelihood formalities are the core factors responsible for determining the status, survival and current dialamo of Schedule caste Arundhathiyar women in Ranipet District of Tamil Nadu. In respect of Gender related Development Index (GDI), India was placed in the

98th position (among 140 countries) with a GDI value of 0.586.

STATUS OF SCHEDULE CASTE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

At present, one in every four households in the world is headed, by a woman. When compared to men, the majority of Arundhatiyar women earn, on an average, about three fourths of the pay of males for the same work outside of the agricultural sector, in both developed and developing countries. There is inequality in the opportunity given to girls, for their formal school education, worldwide. Of the world's nearly one billion illiterate adults, two-thirds are women.

Two-thirds of the 130 million children worldwide, who are not in school, are girls. During the past two decades, the combined primary and secondary enrolment ratio for girls in developing countries, increased from 38 per cent to 78 per cent. United Nations observed that, despite the recent election of women heads of state in Tamil Nadu women are making scant progress around the world in getting into leadership positions in business, government and academia. Women outlive men in almost every country. In industrialized countries, women's average life expectancy in 1992 was 79.4 years, up from 74.2 in 1970. Women are becoming increasingly affected by HIV. Today, about 42 per cent of estimated cases are women, and the number of infected women is expected to reach 15 million by the year 2010. An estimated 20 million unsafe abortions are performed worldwide, every year, resulting in the deaths of 70,000 women. I 92 Approximately, 585,000 women die every year, over 1,600 every day from causes related.

STATUS OF SCHEDULE CASTE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN TAMIL NADU

Launching the nation-wide campaign to reverse the alarming decline in the

ratio of women, in population, in the country, Minister for Women and Child Development, Government of India said, "It is a tragedy that every year, half a, million girl children are being killed and prevented from being born, ironically with the help of modern tools of science and technology, leading to the decline in the ratio of women, in the population. It is shocking, that the declining sex ratio has already led to a situation, where brothers shared a wife, and in some cases, even fathers and sons shared a wife in several parts of the country".

Ever since India became free, there have been phenomenal changes, in the condition of women. The constitution has given women the much needed status. They are now equal before law. There can be no discrimination by the state on grounds of gender. Women continued to be marginalized both in policy formulation and programme implementation. Low level of skills lead to lower wages and low earning. In terms of employment, she enjoys the same status as men, and has to be given equal pay or equal work.

The reforms in the Panchayat Raj Act have given greater share for women, in rural governance. At present, the concept of Self-Help Groups for women, particularly in rural areas, has given them an opportunity to organize themselves, to engage in productive activities, that could augment their earnings, which leads to their social and political empowerment.

Schedule Caste Women had some basic problems and the different kinds of gender inequality were displayed in mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity professions, ownership, and household matters. We shall look into the classification of gender disparity at birth, growth and survival. In being born as female children and in giving birth to children, women experience grave disparity, while the

infant mortality reveals, that the right to be born is denied, the maternal mortality speaks of the lack of medical care and attention to women.

Education can pave the way for an overall development of individuals and for the society. Female literacy is not only an end itself, but also serves as a catalyst for overall performance, in other segments too. General literacy levels of women in Tamil Nadu (64.55 per cent) have been always above the national average (India's female literacy 54.16 per cent). Even though female literacy in Tamil Nadu has shown considerable increase, the gender gap between male and female literacy rates has continued. The need to narrow down the gap is urgent. The inter-district imbalance in literacy levels, ranges from 49.10 per cent in Vellore to 85.39 per cent in Ranipet.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Department of Women and Child Development, since its inception, has been implementing special programmes for holistic development and empowerment of women with major focus on improving the socio-economic status of women. Women Development In the Women and Child Development Sector, the Nodal Department of Women and Child Development also implement a few innovative schemes, besides formulating policies and programmes; enacts amends legislations affecting women and co-ordinates the efforts of both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to raise the overall status of women, on par with that of men. The programmes of the Department include: i. Empowering Strategies Employment and Income Generation Welfare and Support Services iv. Awareness generation and gender sensitization and v. Other enabling measures. These programmes play the role of being both

supplementary and complementary to the other general development programmes, in the sectors of health, education, labour and employment, rural and urban development etc.,

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Generally speaking a women entrepreneur may be defined as a women or a group of Schedule Caste women , who initiate, organise and run a business and development of the society. Women can efforts and the basic quest and better quality life. The Schedule caste and Arundhathiyar women participation in quality and Employment, earning , education, health status and decision-making power among the schedule caste women's.

Today with the realization of the need and importance of women empowerment particularly in Schedule caste share in Industrial employment opportunities. As consequence of all this the extent of poverty among schedule caste was as high in the total population. The importance of empowerment and survival of the Schedule caste and Arundhathiyar stand a better chance of economic empowerment has come a long way from the earlier welfare orientation approaches in the weaker section.

The approach towards uplifting the poor women economically should be Self Help. In fact, even the individual effort is too inadequate to improve their economic status. Thus the SHG is considered as the movement of self development. The SHG is the institutional informal setup through which the micro credit is routed by the formal and semi formal micro finance institutions to assist the poor women. The NGOs on the other hand directly lend micro credit to the members of the SHGs out of their own corpus. After careful consideration the Schedule Caste women are prone to occupational health problems associated with degraded

working environmental, mental stress, long hours of work, they suffer from Malnutrition, Post Delivery and child bearing and deprivation. They generally achieve the growth and sustainable development of the economy through Schedule Caste women empowerment of the medieval society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of the study is to analyse Status and Survival and Current Dilemma of Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women in Ranipet District of Tamil Nadu. The specific objectives are,

- Socio-Economic and Health Status of Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women in the study area.
- To study accessibility of rural Schedule Caste women welfare programmes among the study area.
- To identify the indicator for Empowerment Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women in the study area, and
- To offer suitable suggestions for the empowerment of Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women in the study area.

Methodology

The study is an analytical one based on the sample survey method employing both primary and secondary data. Survey method involves description, secondary analysis and interpretation of the condition that exists and also some type of contrast and comparison that may attempt to discover the relationship that exists between the existing and the non-existing variables. Multi stage random sampling method becomes essential when a sufficient number of rare units are to be identified in sample.

Hence the sampling method was adopted in the study. In the first stage, Ranipet District was selected purposively for convenience of the study. In the second stage, some selected villages were selected for

the study based on the concentration of Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar population. In the third and final stage primary data were collected from all the Schedule Caste Arundhathiyar women in the selected area with help of face to face Interview through Interview schedule.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Banumathy (2006) has explained in her article "Self Help Groups and Bank Linkages" that the initial role played by the SHGs, prompted the NABARD to venture linkage of the SHGs with the banks in February, 1992. She has also stated that the RBI has advised banks to initiate action for the adoption of the SHG village program as a part of the corporate strategy, Kamaraju (2009) has mentioned in his article "Self Help Groups Emerging Rural Enterprises" that in rural areas the SHGs utilized the loan for purchasing milch animals, goat and for meeting personal urgent needs. Some SHGs have purchased power tillers for agriculture purpose on hire basis. Investment in power tiller will increase their income both individually and collectively.

Proggya Ghatak (2011), stated that the basic problem affecting the Dalit women's role and opportunities for employment in this sector spring from their helpless dependence caused by lack of adequate employment opportunities, limited skills, illiteracy, limited mobility and lack of autonomous status. There are several schemes of upliftment of Dalit women by the State and the Central Governments. But, the benefits of such schemes and programmes rarely reach to them. Indian bureaucracy is hopelessly insensitive, inefficient and corrupt. It hardly cares for them and their plights. Whatever funds come for their improvement, are cornered by unscrupulous local politicians, government functionaries and petty

bureaucrats. Thus, the funds which are earmarked by the government for their welfare are hardly able to bring any noticeable change in their life.

TasharKanti (2014) The concept and practice of human rights is the hallmark of any modern society. India's population, approximately 170 million people live in sub-human existence, shunned by much of the society because of their position as untouchables' or Dalits' literally means 'broken' people.

Medhe R. S, Archana Kujur(2016) Discrimination, violence are worldwide social problem, but nature of these problems are varies region to region. In outside India concern it is racial violence but in India it is caste based violence. Scheduled castes are more vulnerable section of the Indian society by non-scheduled castes part of the Indian society. They suffered from many inhuman atrocities and disabilities. However, the factor that was most striking was the institution of „untouchability“.

David Mosse(2018) Inherited Caste identity is an important determinant of the lie opportunity for a fifth of the world population, but has not have the same significance in global development policy debates as gender, race, age, religion or other identity charecterstics. This review asks why addressing caste-based inequality and discrimination does not feature in inter – Government comments such as the sustainable development goals.

Vandana (2020), highlighted that the ways in which dalit girls articulate and interpret sexual harassment, and the circumscribed ways in which they try to negotiate with their predicament while seeking higher education.

Ragavendra R.H(2020) There is much discussion on the issue of reservation and impact on the

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It is essential to know how far the socially marginalized froup of scheduled Caste lag behind the other section of the Indian population with respect to human development factors like litracy and health status of the Scheduled Caste population in India.

WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE

The strategy followed for the development and welfare of SC/ST has been to initiate target group oriented programmes by earmarking funds, providing subsidies and reservation in services and educational institutions also. According to the 2001 census, against the state's total population of 6.24 crores, the population of SC is 1.19 crores constituting 19 per cent and that of ST is 0.07 crores constituting 1.04 per cent. Nearly 70 per cent of the scheduled castes and 85 per cent of the scheduled tribes are living in the rural areas. A significant proportion of the scheduled caste / scheduled tribe population was economically backward, in some areas socially marginalized, lacking in resources and their access to education, employment and other income earning opportunities was limited. Several welfare programmes for the socio-economic development of the SC and ST population have been implemented by the Government with the objectives of facilitating faster socioeconomic development of SC and ST population. As a result of various measures taken by the Government, the status of SC and ST has registered quantifiable improvement during the last four decades. The following table indicates the growth of SC and ST population to that of total and SC and ST literacy rate, to that of general literacy rate in Tamil Nadu.

Table -1

**SC / STs Population Growth in Tamil Nadu,1971-2011
(In Lakhs)**

Census	Population			
	Total	SC	SCA	ST
1971	412	73.1	8.2	3.1
1981	484	88.8	7.1	5.2
1991	558	107.1	8.8	5.7
2001	624	118.6	11.3	6.5
2011	513	102.3	16.2	4.5

Source: Compiled and calculated from various Report of the Census of India -1971 - 2011Government of India, New Delhi.

The Weakest Section of the Society The "Scheduled Castes", the description given to the untouchables in 1930s is a broader term which includes within itself hundreds of castes and sub-castes which constitute a hierarchy among themselves and in relation to make the picture more complex and complicated. The institution of caste and the practice of untouchability have been subjects of serious thinking and research area over the past few decades. These have also provided opportunity historically for reformists and revolutionary social movements. The Scheduled Caste population is widely spread out and is essentially a minority in almost all the villages in India. These people can hardly hope to assert themselves to avail of the constitutional benefits.

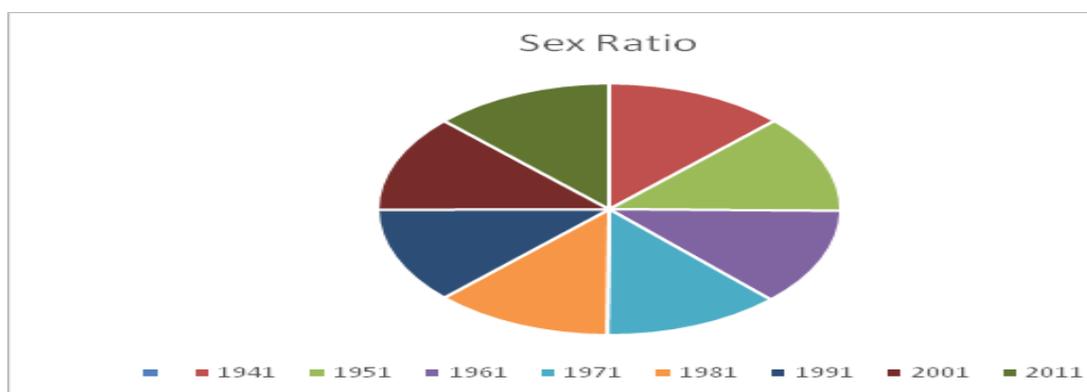
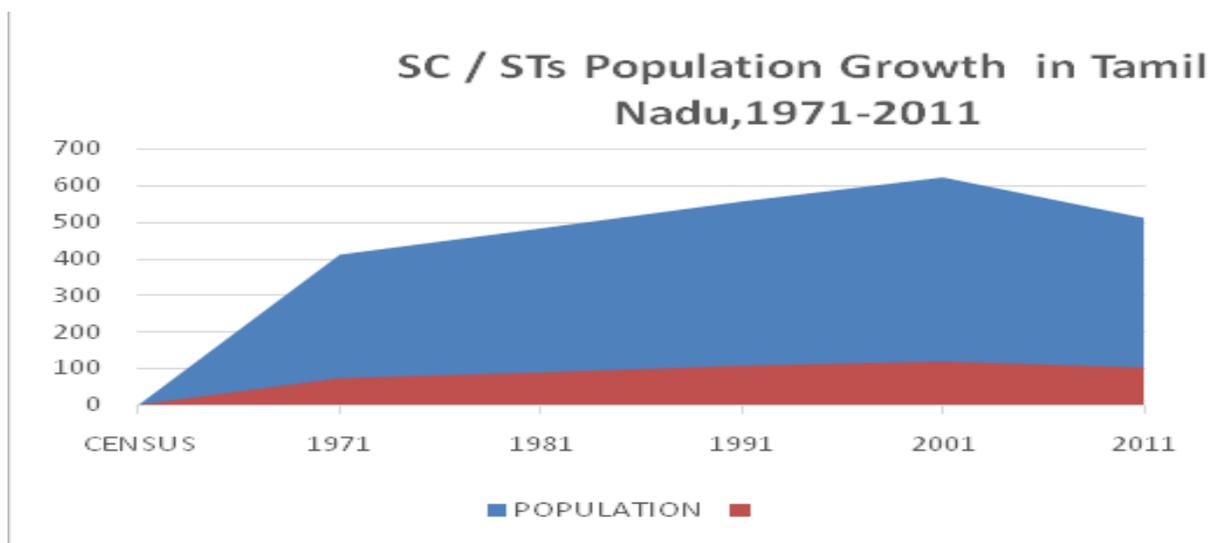


Table 2**Census-wise literacy among Women**

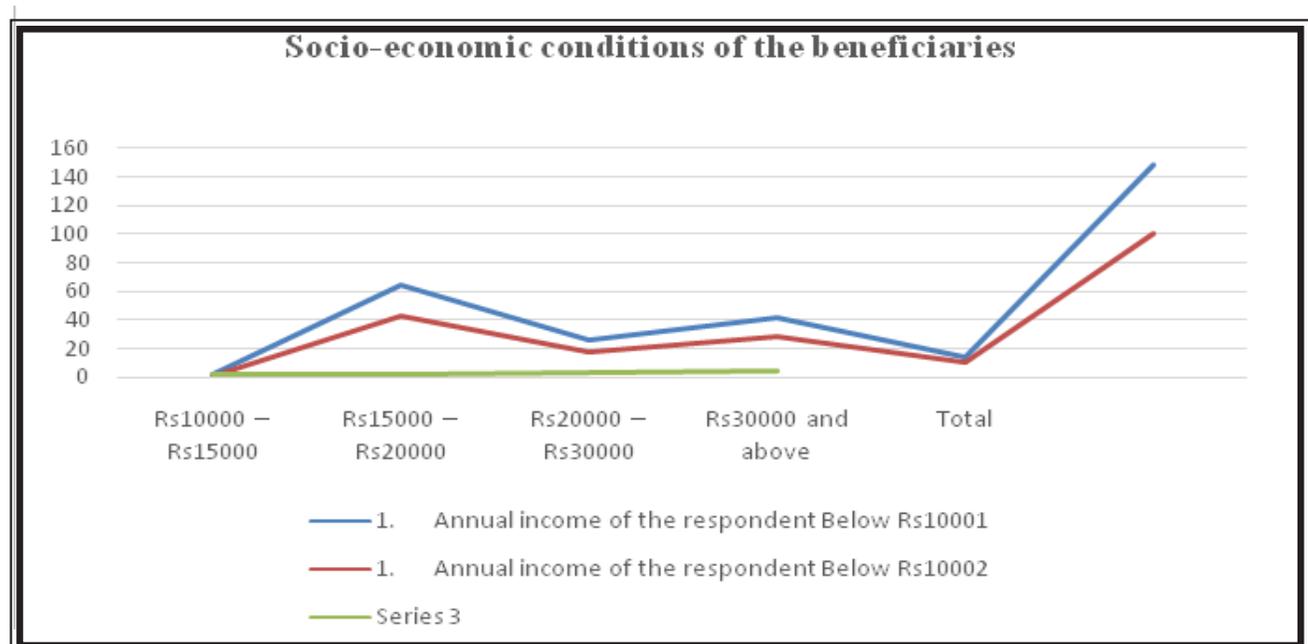
Year of census	Sex Ratio	Literacy Rate %	
		Male	Female
1941	945	24.90	7.30
1951	946	27.16	8.89
1961	941	40.40	15.34
1971	930	45.95	21.97
1981	934	56.50	29.97
1991	927	64.13	39.29
2001	933	75.85	54.16
2011	946	74.9	72.4

Source: Census report, Govt. of India, New Delhi

The literacy gap between male and female is still quit high, through during 1981-2011 there is significant change in literacy rates among females, as compared to their counterparts.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE BENEFICIARIES

Socio Economic Conditions of Beneficiaries: Age, education, marital status, type of family, size of family, family income, employment and decision making in family etc. are some of the important variables that affect women in their empowerment and development. Table 1 shows the socio economic profile of the beneficiaries.



Data depicts the socio economic and demographic profile of the respondents in the study area. The details are,

- Most of the families (51 percent) are living below the poverty line or belong to income level of Rs20000 – Rs30000 per annum (i.e.) low. Interestingly, most of the families belong to income level of Rs10000 – Rs15000 per annum

Table 3

Socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
<25	22	23
26-35	30	48
36-45	18	26
45 and above	2	3
Total	70	100
Education		
Illiterate	18	12
Literate	16	11
Primary	20	38
High school	12	28
Higher secondary school	6	10
Graduates	2	1
Total	70	100
Marital status		
Married	40	80
Un married	24	16
Widow	6	4
Total	70	100
Type of family		
Nuclear	54	56
Joint	14	44
Total	70	100
Size of family		
Less than 4	20	20
4 – 6	48	73
7 – 9	08	7
Up to 10 and above	-	-
Total	70	100
Ownership of house		
Own	28	19
Rented	42	81
Total	70	100

Employment of respondent		
Housewife	30	46
Employment	-	-
Self - employment	20	33
Professional	8	6
Labour	12	15
Total	70	100
Annual income of the respondent		
Below Rs10000	02	1
Rs10000 – Rs15000	34	43
Rs15000 – Rs20000	16	28
Rs20000 – Rs30000	12	18
Rs30000 and above	06	10
Total	70	100
Decision making in family		
Yourself	10	7
Husband	34	52
Both of them	26	41
Total	70	100

Table – 4

Savings Details of the Respondents

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Present Savings rate of respondents		
Below Rs50	40	64.1
Rs50 – Rs100	16	33.1
Rs101 – Rs200	4	2.7
Total	70	100
Purpose of savings		
Food security	20	44.3
Social security	14	27.3
Education	11	11.9
Medical	13	5.6
Marriage	6	4.3
Festivals	4	8.4
Emergency	5	3.2
Agriculture	2	5.6
Asset building	7	9.2
Self respect	3	5.2
Total	70	100

Source : Primary Data

that is low. However, these women are contributing significantly to the family income.

✓ Most of the selected beneficiaries belong to age group of 26 – 35 years (48 percent) and 36 – 45 years (26 percent).

✓ Most of the beneficiaries were found poor in terms of education and literacy development. Even, 12 percent women respondents were reported to be illiterate. But educated women respondents were reported high (76 percent).

✓ Most of the women were reported to be married (80 percent), proportion of unmarried girls was reported (16 percent) and widow beneficiaries has been reported only 4 percent.

✓ The majority of the respondents were found living in joint families (64 percent) while more than one third respondents accepted that they are living in nuclear families

✓ Overwhelming majority of respondents (73 percent) reported that their family size is large one, comprising of more than 4 members.

✓ A majority of the respondents (81 percent) were living in rented house.

✓ More than one third respondents were housewives. It was found that self employed women were 83 percent and 15 percent respondents were labourers.

THRIFT PERFORMANCE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Thrift performance of the Respondents reveals that, the significant increase in savings has been recorded by the beneficiaries. The savings amount of Rs. 50 – Rs. 100 and Rs. 101 – Rs. 200 during the initial and present stage.

The respondents were asked to reveal the important purposes of savings. The prominent factors reported were self respect, emergencies, medical, social security, festivals, marriages, education of children etc. The most important purpose among the factors

was cited to be self respect (100 percent) and emergencies (100 percent) of the women

MAJOR AREAS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SCHEDULED CASTE ARUNDHATHIYAR WOMEN IN THE STUDY AREA

Malnutrition

India has exceptionally high rate of child malnutrition because tradition requires that women eat last and least throughout their lives even when pregnant and sick. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle.

Poor health

Females receive less, health care than males. Many women die in child birth very often in villages and remote areas for lack of proper medical care and service. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impair their health.

Lack of education

Illiteracy is rampant among the Scheduled Caste women particularly in rural areas. Families are far less inclined to educate girls. They give much priority and preference to boys while providing facilities and good food, clothing such as schooling, not to speak of other things. Therefore, women face and struggle against discrimination right within the family. When they grow up they face discrimination from others. Hence they suffer from discrimination throughout their life.

Overwork

Women work for more hours than men. They have to attend to domestic duties and work outside to eke out their livelihood. They work more than men. Yet their work is not recognised and often underpaid, if not unpaid. Most of the Scheduled Caste women are agricultural workers. Technological progress in agriculture has had a negative impact on these women.

Unskilled

Because of lack of education and skills many Scheduled Caste women take

up low paid jobs, often working as agricultural labourers.

Mistreatment

In recent decades there has been an alarming rise in crimes and atrocities perpetuated on Scheduled Caste women. This trend is much more rampant in rural areas than in towns and cities. Fear of harassment makes them quite often not to report against assaults, rapes, and domestic violence and seek legal remedies. Law enforcing agencies such as police quite often pooh pooh their complaints and in many instances refuse to register cases against the perpetrators of crime against these helpless women.

Powerlessness/Helplessness

While women are guaranteed equality under the Constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Scheduled Caste women lack power to decide whom they will marry and are often married off as children. Despite the Sarada Act, child marriage is prevalent in rural areas particularly among these untouchable castes. Unlike their counterparts in other castes particularly of high castes, Scheduled Caste girls do not have opportunity of falling in love with men of other castes and go for inter-caste marriage, defying their caste customs, tradition, elders, etc.

Woman's position in the family

In Indian society, woman's position in the family is secondary. This is more so in the case of Scheduled Caste woman. Though she may be a wage earner, she has to consult her husband, father, brother or an elder from her family for anything pertaining to her.

CONCLUSION

Arundhathiyar women Empowerment is a process of change by which individuals or groups gain power and ability to take control over their lives. It involves increased well-being, access to resources, self-confidence, self-esteem and respect, participation

in decision-making and bargaining power, and increased control over benefits and their own life.

The women revolution, a recent product of development, ensures the availability of institutional credit and financial inclusion to the poor in general and socially weaker sections such as Arundhathiyar in particular, who were so far excluded from the institutional credit system. The literature review has shown the impact the respondent development and Scheduled Caste Women as a mixed picture, but it is an effective instrument and tool to pull the Arundhathiyar households from poverty in the study area, where it becomes a philosophy and practice of poverty eradication, empowerment and inclusive growth, especially in Ranipet, Vellore and neighbour areas. In Ranipet District of Tamil Nadu as evident from the study that most of the literature on Scheduled Caste revolves around four southern states where Governments and Non Governmental Organisations are taking lead in the spread of them. Studies carried out in India, as evident from the above literature review, indicated that the respondents in the study area, by and large contributed to the development of core poor in terms of economic well-being, alleviating poverty and empowerment leading to overall development of Scheduled Caste Arundhathiyar Women in the study area.

SUGGESTIONS

- In the light of the findings made in this study, the following suggestions are offered to improve the Status, Survival and Current dilemma of Scheduled Caste Arundhathiyar women in the study area.
- The government should come forward to provide some effective measures for the upliftment of the respondents in the study area.
- The Scheduled Caste Arundhathiyar women should be intended

in such manners that members can benefit out of their strengths and overcome their weakness and should provide special assistance for selection of procedure /service, consequently that the respondents can be in a position to perceive and respond to various profitable opportunities.

- The Habit of savings should be encourage and cultivated among the respondent in the study area, because it would help to improve their livelihood strategies and quality of their life. This will lead to a gradual improvement in the quality of their lives and will enable them to identify activities for economic betterment. In this process they will learn fiscal discipline and be ready to take on market oriented economic activities.

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