

**Empowerment of Rural Scheduled Caste Women of Meerut District in Western (U.P): An Educational and Occupational Perspective**

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**Abstract**

The Empowerment of the scheduled caste women depends on many things. The first and the most important source of power for the scheduled caste women are in their depressed ness, the very nature of being scheduled caste. They belong to the original community which settled in India long before the influx of outsiders. That is why they are known as scheduled caste (untouchables), people who have been inhabitants of the soil from the beginning. This gives the scheduled caste women have a real power, a pride, and a sense of authority over things they have been using for centuries. Besides historical and ethnic identity other sources of empowerment for scheduled caste women are the increasing ratio of education, development works through government welfare programme and scheme of scheduled caste women's authority over forest products and legal safeguard from educational and occupational perspectives, scheduled caste women get their power and authority from articles 14,15,and 16 of the Indian constitution and the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment which provides them reservation of 1/3 seats in the three tier system of panchayati raj and local government institutions.

**Keywords:** Government, Welfare scheme and measures, Development programme, Scholarship for Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and loan facilities etc.

**Introduction:**

Empowerment is a multifaceted, multi dimensional and multi-layered concept. Scheduled caste women's empowerment is a process in which scheduled caste women gain greater share of education, occupation of control over resources – material, human and intellectual like education, knowledge, information, white color job and financial resources like money access to money and control over decision making in the home, community, society and nation and to gain power.

Disadvantages against scheduled caste women are commonly practices in the opportunities of educational and economic development, participation in different activities, availing educational facilities and various other development programmes associated with improving the life style and the quality of life because of several social and cultural backwardness besides, this scheduled caste women are also denied the rights in the decision making process in their family affairs on account of social and cultural constraints imposed by their family and the continuation of traditional system of civilization. Restrictions are also imposed in the participation of scheduled caste women in certain education and economic programmes and to move outside households for certain purpose. Due to these underlined problems imposed by our traditional society against Dalit women their participation in different activities, education, occupation, employment and political system etc has been very poor even after sixty seven years independent of the nation.

The condition of scheduled caste women in rural areas is far behind and more dissatisfactory than in urban areas on account of greater backwardness and the prevalence of traditional social and economic system of society. The traditional form of society is keeping open different types of opportunities for their male family members only while the women are marginalized. In fact the women are seriously

exploited by men for certain purposes although most house hold related activities are performed by scheduled caste women in rural area.

### **Constitutional Provisions and Protection of Scheduled Castes Women:**

The constitution of India not only grants equality to scheduled caste women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of scheduled caste women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. Article 14 confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in the education, socio-economic and political spheres. While the Article-15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion caste, sex etc. Article 15(3) makes a special provision enabling the state make affirmative discrimination in favour of scheduled caste women. Similarly, article-16 provides for equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens. Article 39(A) further mentions that the state shall direct its policy towards securing to all citizens' men and women, equally, the right of means of livelihood, while article 39(C) ensures equal pay for equal work. Article-42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Above all, the conditions impose a fundamental duty on every citizen through Articles -51(A), (e) to renounce practices derogatory to dignity of scheduled caste women.

### **Empowerment and Development of Scheduled Caste Women:**

After Independence of nation, provisions were made in the Indian constitution to provide equal rights and opportunities of socio-educational and economic development and betterment of living for men and women, including different disadvantaged segment of population to establish an egalitarian and prosperous society. In view of bringing improvement in the educational and economic conditions of women efforts were made to economic conditions of women efforts were made to maximize the participation of women in different educational levels, with the nation that education is the most important instrument to bring awareness about their right, social status, as a prime element to maximize participation in different categories of remunerative employment etc.

During the women decades the scheduled caste women were promised that various development schemes reforms would be introduced at the policy level to provide more respectable status to Dalit women in Indian society. Most Important law and status of scheduled caste women were equal remuneration act, Marriage law Amendment act, and the child marriage restrain (Amendment act). Amendment to the criminal law which made crime against scheduled caste women a punishable offence. Initiatives were also carried out in different fifth five year plans to maximize the participation of Dalit women in different development programme.

Introducing depressed caste women specific and related programmes which can bring improvement in the Socio-economic and educational condition of scheduled caste women. Further the eight five year plan introduced a variety of development programmes specially for Untouchable women and the present five year plan main objective is to increase skill in youth, and agriculture GDP rate 4-6 per year to ensure a broader spread of benefits raise to sex ratio for age group 0-6 to 935 by 2011-12 and to 950 by 2016-17, lower gender gap in literacy to 10 percent points reduce anemia among women and child girls by 50% end of the plan. Under the national perspective plan for depressed women provision is made to maximize the participation of Dalit women in ongoing national employment rojgar guarantee programmes at provide to self-employment opportunities.

**Review of the Relevant Literature:**

Before Preceding the research paper, it is always penitent to thoroughly review the relevant literature on the topic. This exercise improves and upgrades the research standards, good findings & result etc. Author has conducted studies on various aspects of empowerment of scheduled caste women and their role in education and occupation changes and development. The main findings of some of these studies have been discussed in this study.

**Vagiswari (1973):**

Studied 800 household Dalit's and 197 non household Dalit's from ten villages of Tamil Nadu. The result showed that there still existed a great deal of latent and over discrimination against Dalit's; but when constructed with the discrimination embodied in social and religious belief of the war past, the trend towards social equality is definite through very slow moving.

**Savitha Mehra (1982):**

Studied 'social mobility in Rural Haryana' the study made it clear that educated respondents have enhanced their occupational status respondents have enhanced their occupational status through education by shifting towards urban occupation. The study concluded that higher the education of the respondents, higher was their father's and grandfather's education, and lower the education of the respondents, lower was their father's and grandfather's education. The advanced regions provide more occupational opportunities to the respondents in enhancing their occupational status.

Inter and Inter-generational occupational mobility showed that persons were occupationally mobile in two ways; firstly they adopt the occupation which exists in the village itself, secondly they turn to urban market for getting better employment. The study pointed out that the high occupational mobility among untouchables may be due to various governmental welfare measures and special job provisions.

**Soran Singh (1987):**

He studied about the changing socio- economic conditions of scheduled castes with special reference to Jaunpur distt, in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The sample size was 400 scheduled castes respondents. The findings of this study broadly point out the position of scheduled caste in social hierarchy has considerably improved. Similarly, there was change is areas like social contact, proximity and social outlook, occupation, economic condition, education, health and sanitation and housing. Among the respondents, aspiration of children's jobs is quite high and points to an urge for social climbing.

**Tapan,Neeta(2000):**

The study revealed that certain hindrances that come in the way of women literacy are poverty, early marriage, household work, social traditions, distantly located schools etc. These impediments are responsible for non-enrolment and dropouts of girls from school. Empowerment of women would not be possible unless they are properly educated.

**Methodology and objective:**

This study belongs to Meerut Distt of western Uttar Pradesh. The Meerut Distt 12 Block viz: Sarurpur Khurd, Sardhana, Daurala, Mawana, Hastinapur, Parikshitgarh, Machra, Rohata, Jani Khurd, Merrut, rajpura, Kharkhoda. The economy of Meerut district is mainly based on men and women among the both of

the family. Also, women have been actively participating in different social, political movements organized in the past.

The data for this study collected from 225 respondents for the required fulfillment of the information. The data will be collected by using the interview schedule and observation methods. The respondents selected by using the purposive. I will collect the information from scheduled caste women. Data analyzed by using the chi square test of statistical method.

**Objectives:**

The main objectives of this study are following as.

1. To find out whether there is the educational empowerment of scheduled caste women.
2. To identify improve socio- economic status among scheduled caste women.
3. To assess the areas where empowerment is clearly pronounced.
4. If there is empowerment to identify, factor responsible for it.

**Tool of Data Collection:**

Data for the empirical study is collected mainly through interview schedules. The scheduled are prepared for scheduled caste women of young generations. The schedule elicited information on empowerment in society and family education, occupation, political participation, caste status, and change way of life. Most of the questions are pre coded for easy tabulation and analysis. The interview schedule consisted mostly of opened questions, and very few questions are closed.

**Literacy level of Scheduled Caste Person in Meerut District:**

In Meerut district the state government took special steps in extending free education to all scheduled caste people's at primary to college level. The sociological studies revealed that Meerut district has relatively more facilities for education, as a split over effect, scheduled caste also got education. In Meerut district educational facilities are so many as compared to many regions in Uttar Pradesh.

Through considerable progress has been achieved in educational field among certain sections of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the progress is very better than past. This sections which have achieved remarkable progress are those which were in the lowest rank of the social system in the past. It may take a longer time for these sections to be free from the disabilities and handicaps to which they were subjected to and to become equal to higher. The Table No.-1 shows the literacy level in Meerut district.

**Table No.-1**

**Literacy Level of Depressed Caste Parsons in Meerut District:**

Persons	Education Level in Rural Urban Both		
	Rural	Urban	Total
<b>Males</b>	127,188 (81.2%)	104,828 (82.0%)	<b>232,016 (81.6%)</b>
<b>Females</b>	78,010 (57.2%)	71,921 (64.3%)	<b>149,931 (60.4%)</b>
<b>Total Persons</b>	<b>205,198 (70.0%)</b>	<b>176,749 (73.7%)</b>	<b>381,947 (71.7%)</b>

Census = 2011, U.P. & Uttarakhand at a glance.

According to census 2011, the percentage of male literacy was 81.6% of total population of schedule caste people, but female literacy was 60.4%. It was found that rate of progress for a male was higher than the level of progress of female in Meerut District.

**Traditional occupation and scheduled castes:**

An occupational classification of Scheduled castes would be necessary to know the changes in scheduled caste's occupational pattern. The present study we had nine scheduled caste's viz. Chamar (Jatav), Valmiki (Bhangi), Nat, Kanjar, Dhusia, Bansfor, Habuda, Kori, Khateek. Traditionally all these scheduled caste's were engaged in following occupations: it made clear table No -2

**Table No.- 2**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Caste</b>	<b>Traditional Occupation</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Chamar (Jatav)</b>	Labour, Leather work, Agriculture, Meson
<b>2.</b>	<b>Valmiki (Bhangi)</b>	Scavanger, Sweeping and Drum beating
<b>3.</b>	<b>Nat</b>	Traditional Marshall art and singing
<b>4.</b>	<b>Kanjar</b>	Hunting and Drum beating
<b>5.</b>	<b>Dhusia</b>	Labour
<b>6.</b>	<b>Bansfor</b>	Bow and arrow making, Hand Fan Making
<b>7.</b>	<b>Habuda</b>	Tattoos printing and traditional Medical treatment
<b>8.</b>	<b>Khateek</b>	Labour work, meat sellar
<b>9.</b>	<b>Kori</b>	Weaving

It can be assumed that there is scope for occupational change only in a society where new occupations and modern job emerge. The occupational changes are due to the impact of industrialization, format education and specialized nature of skills on occupation etc. It can be regarded as measure of social change, if the scheduled castes have been able to gain a change of occupations.

In this study, the classification of occupation has been made under following categories:

(i) White collar (ii) Professional (iii) Traditional (iv) Agricultural labour (v) Other labour work.

A word of explanation about each one of these categories will be very relevant. In over study White collar include: bureaucrats leader's Honor of industries, Business persons professional occupation includes – Professor's, Doctor's, Engineer's, Nurses.

Traditional occupations refer to the polluted or defiling occupations such as that of scavenger's cobblers, skinning, drum beating, etc, with which the scheduled caste have been traditionally associated. These occupations are ranked the lowest in status. Agricultural labourers are persons who are engaged in operation connected with cultivation. Their working includes ploughing, tilling transplantation, weeding, harvesting, manuring, carrying manures and any other

work connected with agriculture other labourers include persons working on daily wages in work other than agriculture i.e., collier, loading labourers, construction worker etc.

**Role of Education in empowerment of social status:**

The scheduled castes most of which had been subjected to various social disabilities of extreme nature were exploited and kept subservient mainly because they were illiterates. Their mass illiteracy was in turn, due to religious and social sections imposed on them by caste Hindus. Education is a dynamic agent of social change and social mobility. Education has a major role in enabling a person to acquire modern occupation leading to higher economic status, and thus socio-economic empowerment. **“The role of education as a catalyst or agent of social empowerment has been well recognized. Education is said to determine the level of aspiration, technology, productivity, efficiency etc”**. Which constitute some of the basic factors in the process of empowerment. **Oommen** has argued in favour of ‘Education’ being the strategic point for initiating social change. According to him it enables members of the society to play new roles.

The significance of formal education in social mobility had been pointed out by **M.S.A.Rao**, **“Education helps in promoting values and achieving new goals. It is widely recognized that formal education plays a vital role in social mobility, both horizontal and vertical. If formal education is seen as a socializing agency preparing individuals for a style of life associated with a stratum, it is at the same time an agency helping individuals to overcome prejudices, and promoting values and behavior of a more universalistic nature.”**

Both the government of India and the state have been convinced of the crucial role of education and have placed great emphasis on it so as to improve the conditions of the depressed castes. Accordingly, they have used education as the prime mover in the welfare policies and programmes intended for the scheduled castes. This is reflected in the concessions and facilities being provided for the education of scheduled castes.

**Scheduled Caste Women Advantage from Education:**

When the asked about their opinion about the advantages of education, they expressed three advantage viz. education helps to get a job, helps to improve status, helps to get a good alliance in marriage.

The opinion in this regard is seen to be influenced by age and education. As age increased the desire to achieve status improvement also increased. Both  $X^2$  (chi square) value and contingency co-efficient showed-significant relationship. The table No.-3 will be make it clear:

Table No. – 3

Scheduled caste women and advantage of Education:

Women's	Advantages of Education			
	Helps to get a job	Helps to improve status	Helps to get a good marriage alliance	Total
<b>Below-20</b>	40 (70.18%)	10 (17.54%)	7 (12.28%)	<b>57</b> <b>(25.33%)</b>
<b>20 - 29</b>	47 (61.84%)	20 (26.32%)	9 (11.84%)	<b>76</b> <b>(33.78%)</b>
<b>30 - 39</b>	22 (48.89%)	17 (37.78%)	6 (13.33%)	<b>45</b> <b>(20.00%)</b>
<b>40 - 49</b>	13 (43.33%)	15 (50.00%)	2 (6.67%)	<b>30</b> <b>(13.33%)</b>
<b>50 +</b>	3 (17.65%)	11 (64.70%)	3 (17.65%)	<b>17</b> <b>(7.55%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b> <b>(55.56%)</b>	<b>73</b> <b>(32.44%)</b>	<b>27</b> <b>(12.30%)</b>	<b>225</b>

$X^2 = 41.68$

Degree of freedom = 8

Table value at 0.01 level=20.090

C=0.395

From the above table it is found that the majority of the young women below -20 age group, (70.18%) said that the most important advantage of education is that it helped them to get a modern job. At the same time, majority of the elder women above 50 age group. (64.70%) expressed the advantage of education as a status raising factor. It can be noted that the younger age group is having a clear idea about the advantage of education for getting nontraditional jobs. But the elder age group felt that the factor which is responsible for their backwardness is lack of education, so they thought that education could raise their status in society.

**Table No-4**

**Scheduled Caste Women's Occupation and opinion on Education and Acceptance from other castes:**

<b>Women's occupation</b>	<b>Whether education contributes to acceptance from other castes</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Professionals</b>	18 (85.7%)	3 (14.29%)	21 (9.33%)
<b>White collars</b>	5 (35.71%)	9 (64.29%)	14 (6.22%)
<b>Agriculture</b>	22 (56.41%)	17 (43.59%)	39 (17.33%)
<b>Other Labourers</b>	36 (48.65%)	38 (51.35%)	74 (32.89%)
<b>Traditional</b>	2 (100%)	-	2 (0.88%)
<b>Unemployed</b>	52 (69.33%)	23 (30.67%)	75 (63.33%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b> <b>(60.00%)</b>	<b>90</b> <b>(40.00%)</b>	<b>225</b>

Table No- 4 illustrates the association between occupation and the response that education helps to get more acceptances from the members of higher castes. 85.7% of professional works and 35.71% of the white collars agreed that education helped them to get more acceptances from the other castes. In the case of traditional workers only cent percent thought so; It seemed that the white collars and the professionals had higher status in society and are getting acceptance from the other caste.

**Scheduled Caste Women: Occupational Preference**

After the Analysis, it is found that traditional are in hands of the older generation, and non-traditional or modern occupations are in the hands of the younger generation.

While asking the old women about their preference occupation, it is found that 64.89% preferred modern occupation to traditional occupation. Only 35.11% preferred traditional occupation. In the case of young women, it is found that 90.67% of them preferred modern occupation to traditional ones. This might be because, the younger generation preferred to do modern jobs that brought higher status and higher remuneration to them. But traditional work is causal and low paid and it offered only a low status. Here we observed the difference in the preference for modern occupation between two generations. The table No-5 made dear the direction of change in the preference of occupation.



**Table No-5**  
**Old and young women's preference for occupation**

Occupation	Preference in occupation		
	Old women	Young women	Total
<b>Modern occupation</b>	73 (64.89%)	102 (90.67%)	<b>175</b> <b>(77.78%)</b>
<b>Traditional occupation</b>	39 (35.11%)	11 (9.33%)	<b>50</b> <b>(22.22%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>113</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>225</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Many Sociologists have used occupation as a major indicator of empowerment of a caste. They had pointed out that the occupational desire of the old women determined the occupational desire of the young women.

This true in the present study also 64.89% of old women preferred to do modern occupation while 90.67% of young women preferred to do same. While 35.11% of the old women preferred to do traditional occupation, only 9.33% of their young women liked to do the same. It is clear here that those old women who are worried about low socio-economic are anxious about their children's future and hence tried their maximum to provide education for them. As a result young women deviated from the old women's opinion of preference for occupation. It is seen that more young women desired to modern occupation than traditional occupation.

### **Role of Governmental welfare programme and Scheme in empowerment of Scheduled Caste**

#### **1. Awareness about welfare Measures :**

There are many efforts taken by the State government for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes. The major efforts are educational scheme and programmes for Scheduled castes, programme for removing untouchability, housing etc. The educational programmes include fee concessions or return, Scholarship, stipends free books, payment of examination fees, grant in aid maintenance of schools, hostels boarding houses orphanage, reading rooms, libraries intended for backward communities. Education consumed the lion's Share of the expenditure incurred on Scheduled caste welfare.

When we required about the awareness of educational facilities provided to scheduled castes by government during their student days, it was found that majority (66.67%) of mothers were not aware of these facilities. Old age women age has some influence on the awareness of these facilities young age women's group more aware about the welfare measures than old age women's group.

It may be noted that the young women is influenced by modern education. The mass media also have significant role in making them aware of these facilities. Now -a-days even, illiterate old women are aware of these facilities. This may be due to modern means of communication like FM, radio, Television, Internet etc.,

and from other sources like local friends or neighbors giving publicity about the welfare measures specially made for scheduled caste.

In the case of young women they got information from the same sources. The change between two generations is that in the young women even the illiterates are well informed about the welfare measures when compared to old women. Cent percent of young women of our study are aware of welfare measures. Those who are educated got information from mass media and communication. It is found that cent percent of young women are in higher income group, i.e. Rs. 8000 and above.

Old women's levels of education also have influence on the awareness of welfare measures. Our study made clear that the highly educated groups are more aware of educational welfare measures. Among the illiterate old women nobody is aware of the facilities. But as education increased, the number of persons who are aware of the welfare measures also increased. The literate respondents become aware of government's welfare measures through reading newspapers or from other mass media of communications and correspondence with others.

#### **Utilization of welfare Measures:**

The government of India Act-1935, which first identified scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, stressed the need for special attention to the welfare and uplift of these classes. But proper and adequate utilization of the welfare measures can bring about the desired effect. **Shantha Kumari** in her study on '**scheduled caste and welfare measures**' made clear that- scheduled caste are eager to make full use of the facilities given by the government. But because the children fail continuously, they find it difficult to meet their expenses in the absence of lump sum grant and exemption from fees at secondary school and higher education level, and then they are forced to stop their studies. This prevents them from availing the facilities any further. One of the reasons for the inadequate utilization of educational facilities by the scheduled caste is the ignorance about the potential which education holds for improving their life chances.

#### **Conclusion:**

In the present study empowerment of scheduled caste women, the major responsible factors are education. The educational mobility are parental pressure, self motivation, higher level of aspiration of the person, awareness of the advantages of education and government welfare measures. Education of the old women's seemed to be significantly related to educational level of the young women i.e. the higher the old women education, the higher is the educational level of their daughters, and it is known fact that the educated parents are in a better position to provide their children with right guidance and advice and they motivation them for higher education.

The trend in occupational changed showed that there is intergenerational vertical occupational mobility. Analyzing these cases, we could identify certain factors contributing to scheduled caste women's empowerment namely, education, and change in attitudes and in the level of aspiration. Education, modern occupation and the welfare schemes of government are contributing a lot towards changing the socio- cultural attitudes and life – style of scheduled caste women.

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