

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF DALIT WOMEN IN TUMKUR  
DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY****DR. DODDA HANUMAIHAH B H\***

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**Abstract:**

Dalit women are placed at the very bottom of Indian caste hierarchies. The majority of the Dalit women suffer from several discriminations as women, as Dalits, as untouchable, and as poor. The Indian society and Hindu religion declare women to be impure. Most of the Dalit women are poor; they are landless labourers and illiterate people. They are controlled by a patriarchal social system. Inhuman treatment serves as a social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society. They are targeted by dominant castes. In many cases, the judiciary fails to enforce the laws that protect Dalit women from discrimination. Dalits are officially known as Scheduled Castes in India. In this paper, I wish to present the educational, social, and economical status of Dalit women in the Tumkur District of Karnataka.

**Key Words:** Dalit, Empowerment, Karnataka, Scheduled Caste, Tumkur, Women.

**Introduction**

Socioeconomic status is a difficult thought covering of two different aspects, the social aspect that includes status or position within a social stratification and the economic aspect that includes resources such as income, occupation and wealth. Even though there is no generally accepted definition of the term "socioeconomic status", it was defined heterogeneously by writers and scholars. A socioeconomic status is a construct that reflects one's access to collectively desired resources, be they material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities. (Oakes and Rossi, 2003). Furthermore, it has been defined as the position that an individual or family occupies with reference to the prevailing average standards of

cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions and participation in the group activities of the community (Chaphin, 1928). Very often it is measured as a combination of various factors such as education, income and occupation. Therefore, it can be said that a socioeconomic status is not a unitary concept and with this notion in mind, for the present study a socio-economic status is measured by using some of the prominent factors such as social factors, demographic factors and economic factors.

The socio-economic profile is an important role in characterizing the social life and behavior of an individual. It is, therefore, essential to analyze the socio-economic background of Dalit women and to understand the pattern of

relationship between Dalit women and the local environment. In Indian society, caste and kinship have been influencing the social life and acute disparity in terms of standard of living and sub-culture among various groups and regions exist, a study of the socio-economic conditions of a leader would help to reveal the sociological significance. At the same time, socio-economic stratification determines the structure of political power (Manjunatha, 2017)

### **Review of Literature**

There are a good number of studies, explaining the causes and consequences of backwardness and the low socio-economic status of Dalit women. Such studies are related to a general enquiry on women's exploitation and dependency. These studies have identified lack of education, absence of skills and training, lack of property rights, social isolation and segregation and male control over resources and reproductive rights as responsible for women's disempowerment.

According to Sonia Mahey (2011), Women have no right to study the Vedas. That is why their Sanskaras are performed without Veda Mantras. Women do not know about religion because they have no right to know the Vedas. The uttering of the Veda Mantras is useful for removing sin. As women cannot utter the Veda Mantras, they are as unclean as the untruth. (Manusmriti IX.18) A Brahman, Kshatriya, or Vaishya Man can sexually exploit any shudra woman. (Manusmitri IX.25) Even the killing of a Dalit woman is explicitly justified as a minor offence for the Brahmins: equal to the killing of an animal (Manusmitri). If the killing of an untouchable was justified as a minor offence, you can imagine the treatment they received throughout their lives.

In Ancient India (3200-2500 B.C.), the caste system was non-existent since even the most learned men were good householders and had varied occupations. The women of ancient India were just as superior as men in learning, education, and intellect. The choice for her mate was according to her own wishes and marriage was practiced after the coming of age. She attended parties, competitions, and religious functions as

she wished. The remarriage of young widows was also common practice (Thind).

According to Masoodi (2018) The average age of death for Dalit women is 14.6 years younger than for higher caste women, according to the report, Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, which cites a finding from the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies in 2013. According to that finding, the average age at death for Dalit women was 39.5 years against 54.1 years for higher-caste women.

According to Smita M Patil. (2021, August 15). Constitutional rights and caste-based violence do contradict the day-to-day lives of Dalits and, in particular, Dalit women. Dalit women such as Bhanwari Devi, Surekha Bhotmange, Priyanka Bhotmange, Manisha Valmiki, and numerous other Dalit women across the country have never got any social justice. The statue of Manu set up in the Rajasthan High Court symbolizes the Brahminic nature of the legal institutions. Such Brahminic mentality still looms in the mindset of upper-caste Indians. Caste ideology and power thus have appropriated educational and legal institutions and hampered the social justice for the most oppressed Dalit women. Valmiki's family faced a certain usurpation of their constitutional right that led to their fight for her dead body.

In research from Pushpalatha N and Ramesh B (2018) Globalization, instead of bringing a halt or ban on such practices, which are a blot on the country's name in the outside world, has only led to the increased richness of the already rich and affluent people, while the poor and asset less (like the Dalits) have been crushed under the wheels of socio-economic power by the non-Dalits. The blame is put squarely on the introduction of the privatization process and lessening control and hold over the market or economy by the government (state). The Globalized world is dominated by privatized sectors of the economy where finding a job or means of survival are very tough and scarce for the resource less and semi-literate like the former untouchables. They felt that only government policies cannot help because they take a lot of time to result in structural change. Thus, the study brings out that more than the positive impacts, globalization and associated

processes have led to the continued social exclusion of the Dalits. A large majority of the Dalit population is even today pushed to the margins of society and is socially excluded.

Gopal Guru (1995) argues that the situation of Dalit women is different from that of the non-Dalit women and they have to simultaneously confront the problem of caste as well as patriarchal domination. Therefore, they should talk differently. Hence, Dalit women were become neglected in their families, community, and society at large. Due to the increase in educational opportunities and employment, gradually the Dalit women are working in different types of employment.

According to Natekar and N.H. Patil (2012). Among Dalits, women are not decision-makers for their castes or communities and men arrange their marriages. They are expected to be committed and loyal to their husbands. They have to earn wages like their men besides taking care of the children, kitchen, and guests. Widowhood does not entitle them for remarriage and their sexuality is controlled under strict surveillance, while men can remarry and flirt around.

### Objectives of the Study

- To assess the socioeconomic conditions of Dalit women in women in Tumkur District of Karnataka
- To study the Literacy and educational Level of Dalit women in Tumkur District.
- To give proper suggestions for the improvement of Dalit women.

### Methodology of the study

Tumkur district is the study area for the present study. Dalits are residing in all taluks of the district. But Madhugiri and Pavagad Taluks have been selected for the present study. 100 sample respondents were selected for primary data collection. Snowball sample method used for sample selection. The main tool of data collection was the used interview schedule and observation method. Apart from this Secondary data was collected from various books, thesis, journals, reports and etc. SPSS software used for data analysis.

### Study area

Tumkur is one of the districts of Karnataka in India. There are 10 Taluks, 2715 villages, and 12 towns in the Tumkur district. it was formerly a part of the old Mysuru State. It is the fourth largest district of Karnataka with an area of 10,598 km<sup>2</sup>. According to the 2011 census Tumkur district has a population of 2,678,980. The district has a population density of 253 per square km. the sex ratio of the district is 984 females for every 1000 males and the literacy rate of 75.14%. Scheduled Castes 18.92% of the total population of the district.

**Table No-1: Dalit population of Tumkur district by sex (2001 and 2011 Census)**

Particulars	2001	2011
Male	241177 (50.88)	254535 (50.21)
Female	232867 (49.12)	252366 (49.79)
Total	4,74,044 (100.0)	5,06,901 (100.0)

Source: Census report 2001 &2011

According to the 2011 census, Adikarnataka and Adidravida are the major scheduled caste communities of the District. Out of the total population, 5,06,901 people are scheduled caste (Dalit) in the district, Thus, they account for 1.92 percent. Among the ten taluks, the taluks of Pavagada, Madhugiri, Koratagere, and Sira have more than 30 percent of the SC population. SC population is highest in rural than the urban district of Tumkur.

### Result and Discussion

The condition of the house reflects the status of the individual. Housing is a basic necessity for all households irrespective of their social and economic condition. The nature of housing facilities prevailing among Dalit could be considered as an indicator of standard of living. But No basic amenities in the Dalit house.

**Table 2: Details of Rooms in Dalit houses**

Number of rooms	Frequency	Percent
No rooms	76	76.0
1 to 2 Rooms	12	12.0
3 and more rooms	02	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Most of the Dalit Houses are small, Most of the houses are do not have a single room and few are having 1 to 2 rooms. This shows the living area is highly congested. 76 percent of the houses are not having separate rooms; all family members are sleeping together. The kitchen is separated by using old cloth or plastic cover. Everything is hidden or stored in a tiny place of a small house. 12 percent are having 01 or 02 rooms. And 2.0% of houses have more than three rooms. Dalit houses are not ventilated properly in Rural areas.

**Table 3: Family type of Dalit women (Respondent)**

Type of Family	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear	92	92.0
Joint	08	8.0
Extended	-	-
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Family is the basic unit of society, which assigns social status, roles, and social responsibilities to every individual. Table 2 shows that 92.0% of the respondents belong to Nuclear families and 8.0 % of the respondents are living in a joint family. Thus, the data indicate that nuclear families are more than Joint families and extended families.

**Table 4: Age of respondent**

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 years	03	3.0
19-24 years	28	28.0
25-44 years	42	42.0
45-60 years	16	16.0
Above 60 years	11	11.0
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork

Table No 4 shows the age of Dalit women. according to table 3.0% of respondents are in the age group below 18 years, 28.0% of respondents are in the age group of 19-24 years, 42.0% of the respondents come from 25 to 44 years age group, 16.0% of the respondents have come under 45-60 years age category, and only 11.0 % of the responded Above 60 years.

**Table 5: Marital status of Dalit women (respondent)**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	71	71.0
Unmarried	19	19.0
Widow	8	8.0
Divorced/separated	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Marital status is also one of the indicators of social and economic status, the above table shows that the majority of them (71.0%) Dalit women are married. 19.0% Unmarried, 8.0 widowed, and only 2% of them are divorced.

**Table 6: Educational status of Dalit Women**

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	48	48.0
Primary	22	22.0
High school	14	14.0
PUC/College	06	06.0
UG and Above	08	08.0
Technical Course	02	02.0
total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

There is a close correlation between occupation and level of education. The majority of the Dalit women are working as agriculture laborers who have illiterate and primary level education. The above table shows the majority of the Dalit women are (48.0%) illiterates. 22.0 percent studied up to primary level, 14.0% are studied up to high school, 6.0% are studied up to Pre-university and 8.0% are studied Undergraduate and above and only 2.0% Dalit women studies professional/technical course.

**Table 7: Occupation details of Dalit women**

Type of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Cultivation/Agriculture	19	19.0
Agriculture labour	52	52.0
Private sector	18	18.0
Govt. sector	3	3.0
Any Other	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Occupation is measured as the main source of revenue it denotes the socio-economic status of people. Dalit women in India contribute positively to the local economy and participate along with men in subsistence activities. Most Dalit Women also work as laborers, Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but their role in non-economic activities is equally important. Above Table 7 shows that out of 100 respondents 19.0% of women engaged in agriculture, 52.0% are working as agriculture labor, 18.0% engaged in the private sector like garments. And only 3.0% are in government service, and 8.0% of respondents are engaged in other occupations like business, tailoring, selling livestock products, grazing cattle, handicrafts, etc.

**Table 8: Type of land owned by Dalit women family**

Size of Land holdings	Frequency	Percentage
No Land	44	44.0
< 2 acre	36	36.0
2 to 4 acre	15	15.0
Above 4 acre	5	5.0
total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

The land is the most valuable economic indicator. But most of the Dalit families don't have any land. Table 8 shows that out of 100 respondents, 44.0% of respondents have no land, 36.0% less than 2 acres, 15.0% hold up 2 to 4 Acre, only 5.0% family hold up Above 4 acres.

**Table 9: Annual income of respondent family**

Income in RS	Frequency	Percentage
< 10000	18	18
10,000 to 20,000	52	52
20,000 to 30,000	17	17
30,000 to 40,000	5	5
40,000 and above	8	8
total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork

Annual income shows the economic status of the respondent's family. They have low annual

incomes. The assessment of annual income is very difficult because they are seasonal laborers. not getting work the whole year. They participate in a wide variety of jobs and tasks. They do not have a stable regular income. Any money they earn is invariably spent to meet the basic day-to-day needs. Table 9 shows that 18.0% of the respondents have an annual income of up to Rs. 10,000, 52.0% respondents annual income is from Rs.10, 000 to 20,000, 17.0% of the respondents annual earning is Rs.20, 000-30,000, 5.0% of the respondents are earning is 30,000 to 40,000 and only 8.0% respondent annual income of above Rs. 40,000.

**Conclusion**

Out of the total Dalit women approximately three-fourths live in rural areas where they face systematic oppression, social exclusion, and direct and structural violence from within their community as well as from 'upper' castes. The socioeconomic status of Dalit women is very low compared to general male and non-Dalit women. Dalit women are suffering from so many problems like tiny land, small housing, no electricity, bathroom, separate rooms, transport, medical facility, portable drinking water, roads, low education level, unemployment and lack of basic amenities, etc. The sample population analyzed and interpreted in the preceding pages reveals, among other things; drawn mainly from the Dalit pockets live a hand-to-mouth existence. They don't have any other source of income except wages. Only a few Dalit women have land ownership and house ownership. Most of the Dalit women have to work more in agriculture but have comparatively less decision-making power than their male counterparts. But the decision-making role of men is superior in most of the variables. So, policymakers and local development practitioners to design appropriate and effective policies and programmers in this regard. Efforts are necessary to be made to develop women's social esteem, confidence, and feeling of equalities by educating them.

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