



PROBLEMS OF DALIT CHRISTIANS IN GUNTUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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The Dalit Christians suffer the same socio educational and economic disabilities like the SC of the other faiths. The change of religion does not change their social, economic and educational status. It is evident that the Dalit Christians are subjected to atrocities, violence and disabilities solely because they have been suffering from the stigma of “untouchability”. Untouchability practices still exist in the church and the positive changes have not taken place. Most of the SCs whether they are the Hindus or the Christians, they often live together side by side, while the other caste people, the Hindus or the Christians live separately. Whenever there is any killing or violence, the caste people do not discriminate between the Hindus and the Christians. Even the Caste Christians do not treat the Dalit Christians as equals. Though the Dalit Christians undergo the same unjust Caste discrimination as the other religious SCs, the Dalit Christians are deprived of the privileges of protection of Civil Rights Act and Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989.

The Government of India too has been discriminating Dalit Christians on the basis of religion, ignoring the undisputed evidences of their social, educational and economic backwardness which naturally qualify them for state protection and statutory rights. It is a sad commentary on the Indian policy that the state which claims to be secular disqualifies Dalit Christians from getting their rights and privileges on the basis of religious disqualification. “No person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste”, says the Constitution (Scheduled Castes Order, 1950).

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of Dalit Christians in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.
2. To understand the different kinds of the problems faced by the Dalit Christians in the study area.

Hypothesis:

1. **H₀**: There are no significant difference of awareness on loss of SC status by their gender
2. **H₀**: There is no significant difference of affected caste problems by their place of residence.

Universe and Sampling:

For selection of the respondents, a three step wise process was used to draw the sample respondents of Dalit Christians. In the Guntur district four Revenue Divisions are existing i.e, Guntur, Gurajal, Narasarao Pet and Tenali. Among four revenue divisions four mandal of each one was selected. In the second stage, the villages are selected 1000 below population of Scheduled Caste Community. From the four mandals 12 villages of each three villages are from selected. In all the twelve villages, 561 Dalit Christians households families are living in the study area. The study concentrated in the respondents of household setting is being selected for the study.

Finally, from every village 25 Dalit Christians are being selected randomly in household setting by using simple random method. The total of 300 respondents from all the 12 villages selected as a sample for the purpose of study.

Findings of the study

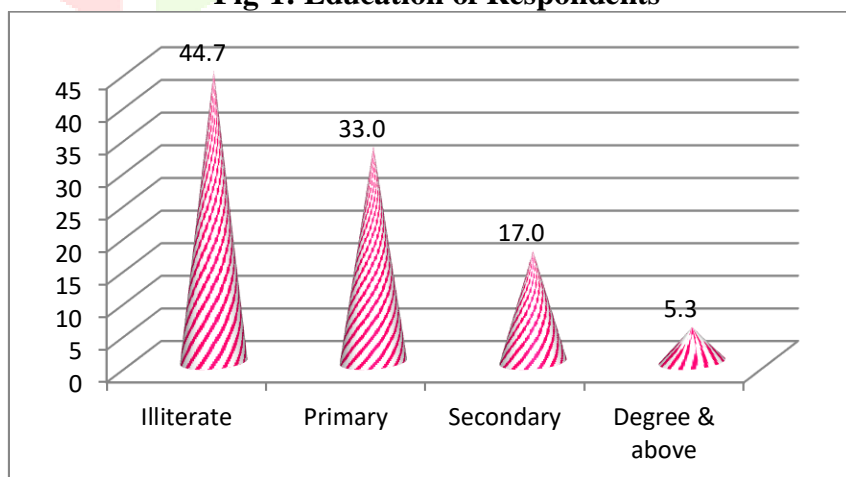
The findings of the study presented based on empirical data which was collected from the field area.

Table – 1 : Age of Respondents

Sl.No	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	< - 25	59	19.7
2	26 - 35	75	25.0
3	36 - 45	122	40.7
4	46 - 55	29	9.6
5	56 - >	15	5.0
Total		300	100.0

The table 1 clearly indicates that 19.7 per cent of the respondents are within the age group of below 25 years old, 25.0 per cent of the respondents are within 26-35 years old, 40.7 per cent of the respondents are within the 36-45 years old, 9.6 per cent of the respondents are within 46-55 years old and remaining 5.0 per cent of the respondents are within 56 years and above age old years in the study area.

Fig-1: Education of Respondents



The table Fig. 1 revealed that among the total respondents majority 44.7 per cent of the respondents respectively are illiterate, 33.0 per cent of the respondents are primary school educated, 17.0 per cent of the respondents are secondary educated, 5.3 per cent of the respondents are under graduate educated and above.

It shows that lack of education opportunities in the state and poor family condition of the respondents in the study area not pushed them to continue to get education. More over tough competition in public employment recruitment matters, caste biased recruitment system in private sectors in the country, family burden of respondents, early marriage of Dalit's men and women and unaffordable educational fee structures in the private educational institutions of the state to avail quality education in order to compete in job markets and lack of awareness are the main reasons which are prohibiting the Dalit's for continuing higher education. These are the reasons mainly for high rate of illiterate and primary school drop outs among the Dalit's respondents in the study area.

Table – 2 : Occupation of Respondents

Sl.No	Occupation	Frequency	Percent
1	Cultivation	76	25.3
2	Agriculture labour	107	35.7
3	Wage Labour	78	26.0
4	Employee	33	11.0
5	Any other	6	2.0
Total		300	100.0

The table 2 clearly depicts that among the total respondents 35.7 per cent of the respondents are working as agriculture labourers, 26.0 per cent of the respondents are working as wage labourers in various non-farm sectors, 25.3 per cent of the respondents are having own cultivation land for farming activities. About 11.0 per cent of the respondents are working as employees in government sector and private sectors and remaining 2.0 per cent of the respondents are belongs to any other category such as scavengers vendors, auto drivers etc.

The study finds that majority 35.7 per cent of respondents are working as agricultural labourers even educated also. The study clearly shows that Dalit's are mainly working as casual labourers in agricultural and unorganized sectors washer men, sweepers, manual scavengers and auto drivers in the study area. Less number of respondents are enjoying the status of marginal farmers and employees status in the study area. The study also find that Dalits are deployed by local self-government institutions as manhole cleaners without following any safety measures for poor wages in the study area.

Table- 3: Aware loss of SC status**Ho: There are no significant difference of awareness on loss of SC status by their gender**

Occupation	Are you aware of your loss of SC status		Total
	Yes	No	
Cultivation	47	29	76
	15.7%	9.7%	25.3%
Agriculture labour	74	33	107
	24.7%	11.0%	35.7%
Wage Labour	58	20	78
	19.3%	6.7%	26.0%
Employee	24	9	33
	8.0%	3.0%	11.0%
Any other	5	1	6
	1.7%	.3%	2.0%
Total	208	92	300
	69.3%	30.7%	100.0%

$\chi^2=3.666$, $df=4$, $P < 0.453$, Not Significant at 0.01 level

The table 3 depicts that aware of loss of SC status after conversion to Christianity. The majority (69.3 per cent) of the respondents are aware on loss of SC status and only 30.7 per cent not aware on the loss of SC status.

The chi-square table revealed the relationship between occupation and aware loss of SC status. There is no relationship in between occupation and aware loss of SC status and statistically no significant association at 0.01 level. The research hypothesis was rejected and null hypothesis was accepted.

Table - 4:

Ho: There is no significant difference of affected caste problems by their place of residence.

Mandal	Have you affected Caste problems		Total
	Yes	No	
Peda Kakani	36	39	75
	12.0%	13.0%	25.0%
Machavaram	59	16	75
	19.7%	5.3%	25.0%
Chilakaluripet	50	25	75
	16.7%	8.3%	25.0%
Ponnur	61	14	75
	20.3%	4.7%	25.0%
Total	206	94	300
	68.7%	31.3%	100.0%

$\chi^2=24.107$, $df=3$, $P < 0.000$, **Significant at 0.01 level**

Dalit Christians are affected by caste problems, which illustrated in table 4. It is identified that almost most of the respondents are affected by caste problems. 68.7 per cent respondents confirm that among the converted Dalit Christians have been sufferings from caste discrimination in the society. In other words, caste problems are demolishing these people's self-respect. But few respondents have answered that they are not affected by caste problems. It shows that only 31.3 per cent of the respondents have not been affected by caste problems.

The study reveals the results of the Chi-square test that there is a significant difference between have you affected Caste problems and place of residence ($P= 0.000$) at 0.01 levels. The results show that there is statistically significant difference of problems affected Caste by place of residence. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted.

Table-5: Troubled by caste name

Marital status	Are you troubled by caste name		Total
	Yes	No	
Married	176	99	275
	58.7%	33.0%	91.7%
Un married	9	2	11
	3.0%	.7%	3.7%
Widow	7	7	14
	2.3%	2.3%	4.7%
Total	192	108	300
	64.0%	36.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=2.707$, $df=2$, $P < 0.258$, **Not Significant at 0.01 level**

The table 5 indicates that 64.0 per cent of the respondents are troubled and 36.0 per cent of the respondents are not troubled by their caste name.

It is identified in the study that most of the respondents have been affected by other caste people, when they come to know about the caste (background) of the respondents. The observation of the study extends to point out that Dalit Christians are marginalized, when they are identified by their caste name. As part of disrespect, the Dalits are mostly called by their caste name in the society. The study has found that majority of the respondents are troubled by their caste name. Even the children in high castes call the elder and older Dalits by caste name. All the high caste people, irrespective of their age and sex, never respect Dalit Christians.

The chi-square table revealed the relationship between marital status and troubled by caste name. Marital status wise there are no significant relationship between two groups. Hence, there are no statistically significant in between marital status and troubled by caste name at 0.01 level.

Table- 6: Problems of Dalit Christian

Place of residence	If problems are no similar, what are the problems of Dalit Christian					Total
	Caste discrimination	Wrong approaches from the upper castes	Denial of priesthood	Discriminations from religious authorities	The lack of sincerity from the part of government and political parties	
Peda Kakani	37	22	6	5	5	75
	12.3%	7.3%	2.0%	1.7%	1.7%	25.0%
Machavaram	29	22	12	12	0	75
	9.7%	7.3%	4.0%	4.0%	.0%	25.0%
Chilakaluripet	8	14	10	18	25	75
	2.7%	4.7%	3.3%	6.0%	8.3%	25.0%
Ponnur	2	3	2	6	62	75
	.7%	1.0%	.7%	2.0%	20.7%	25.0%
Total	76	61	30	41	92	300
	25.3%	20.3%	10.0%	13.7%	30.7%	100.0%

$\chi^2=181.70$, $df=12$, $P < 0.000$, **Significant at 0.05 level**

As regards to problems of Dalit Christians, that 25.3 per cent of the respondents reported that caste discrimination, 20.3 per cent feel that wrong approaches from the upper castes, 10.0 per cent are Denial of priesthood, 13.7 per cent are Discriminations from religious authorities and 30.7 per cent reported that the lack of sincerity from the part of government and political parties.

The chi-square table revealed the relationship between place of residence and problems of Dalit Christian. There is a relationship in between place of residence and problems of Dalit Christians and there is a statistically significant association at 0.01 level.

Conclusion:

Dalits are the most oppressed section of people in the caste system. Mobility in occupation or income, and change of religion or region do not effect concrete changes in their condition. The Dalits in Christianity constitute one of the most underprivileged communities in India. They are the victims of

multiple discrimination-discrimination by the governments, by the churches and by the civil society at large.

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