



Inter-Relationship Between Educational Level And Political Awareness Among Dalit Women In Bihar: A Sociological Study

Ravi Kumar

ICSSR Doctoral Fellow

Division of Sociology and Social Anthropology

A N Sinha institute of social studies, Patna (Bihar) India

Abstract: This paper has been tried to examine various aspect of the Inter-relationship between educational level and Political awareness among Dalit women in Bihar. Political participation is also an important factor for individual development. Dalit women are traditionally untouchable and depressed class in India According to Verna system they are bottom on the line and are excluded from educational system and property. before independence Dalit women are also excluded from political participation. After Independence; Indian traditional society has undergone a change due to various factors, e.g., urbanisation, changing occupational structure, rising literacy, democratic value system, Constitutional and legal measures for protective discrimination. Government started socially desirable and economically viable developmental measures to protect equality of opportunity of every individual. But all social groups have not benefited equally in last seven decades. Scheduled Castes (Dalit, used in exclusive sense of the term) is designated as 'disadvantaged group' even today. In Bihar, Dalit women are kept away from traditional political process as well as from modern political institutions. The paper is descriptive and analytical in design, based on primary and secondary both sources of data.

Index Terms - Education, political awareness and Dalit women

Introduction

Education is basic component and means of social mobility. Education is the process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits and personal development. In the modern era, Education is most important institution that socializes the individual as well as all-round development. Present education has not only contributed to industrial development in the form of specialization and division of labour but also has a useful role in need of social and economic development. "Education socializes the new generations but its form has always been changing according to the social needs and organization" (Bottomore, 2009: 132).

According to French sociologist Emile Durkheim, "Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life" (Durkheim, 2011: 52). Its objective is to develop in the child those physical, intellectual and moral characteristics which are necessary for him to adapt to the whole society

and environment. Education fulfils the basic social needs of the society. John Dewey views on education “Education transmits culture, reduces inequality, as well as brings social mobility and social change in the people of the society” (John Dewey, 1997: 5). “Mahatma Gandhi had realized that education is the most powerful tool that can reshape society and Indian society needed it much. Gandhi’s idea of education was mainly focused on character building, moral values, ethics and free learning.” (Gandhi, 1921: 87) Mahatma Gandhi also said about women education “Educate one man, you educate one

Dalit women are traditionally untouchable and depressed class in India According to Verna system they are bottom on the line and are excluded from educational system and property. before independence Dalit women are also excluded from political participation. After Independence; Indian traditional society has undergone a change due to various factors, e.g., urbanisation, changing occupational structure, rising literacy, democratic value system, Constitutional and legal measures for protective discrimination. Government started socially desirable and economically viable developmental measures to protect equality of opportunity of every individual. But all social groups have not benefited equally in last seven decades. Scheduled Castes (Dalit, used in exclusive sense of the term) is designated as ‘disadvantaged group’ even today.

Women are an integral part of society. According to parsons “Educate a girl and you educate a family.” Even in modern society, socialization of the young is still one of the basic functions of family and within the family, women is primarily responsible for socializing the children. Similarly, argument given by Aggrey “If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family.” (Jacobs 1996: 47)

It is an universal fact that education is an important tool for improving the status of women. Women's education and literacy play an important role in the social, economic, cultural, and political development of the individual, family, community and nation. Education is also a means of reconstruction of social order. In Indian society, some castes are privileged and some are not in terms of economic resources, social status, political participation, and educational opportunities. In the context of Bihar, Dalit women who are deprived of privileges are at the bottom of the traditional structure.

Political participation is also an important factor for individual development. To participate in decision making process ultimately means of individual’s empowerment. According to David Easton, “when the set of people living in exacting area get some group decisions, then the participation of people in that decision making is called as political participation”.

In Bihar, Dalit women are kept away from traditional political process as well as from modern political institutions. Women folk still remain away from politics. Their participation in the political sphere is mostly limited to voting during election. The present scenario questions related to politics were put up and the responses are detailed below in table:

Social Background

Social background of the individual plays an important role in the formation of personality. In this study a set of personal characteristics namely age, education, occupation, sub-caste etc of the 200 respondents have been examined and presented in this paper. The present study reveals that out of 100 respondents in developed block and 100 respondents in under-developed Block, the greater number of respondents are from the age 18-35, i.e., 62 percent in developed block and 46 Percent in under-developed block, of which the next higher is under the age group 36-55, i.e., 32 percent in developed block and 44 percent under-developed block . Of all these age group the lowest population stands at 6 percent in developed block and 14 percent in under-developed block the age group 56 and above.

Caste is another important factor when it comes to the social background of the respondents in this study. From the present study it was found six sub-caste groups from both blocks mostly belong to the dushadh caste group that is 30 percent in developed and 66 percent is underdeveloped. The second chamar caste group in majority is the 18 percent in developed and 20 percent in underdeveloped block. Thirdly caste group Pasi in majority are 22 percent in developed and 14 percent underdeveloped village. Fourth Mushar caste group are 22 percent in developed, 4 percent is Nat caste group in developed and last Dhobhi caste group is 4 percent

in developed block. Mushahar, nat, Dhobhi is not available in underdeveloped block during my field study In this study it has been found that the literacy rate is satisfactory among the Dalit women. Majority of respondents are moderate educated 62 percent 51 percent of developed villages and 73 percent of under-developed villages, respectively. 33 percent illiterate 43 percent of developed and 23 percent of under-developed villages and very few Dalit women only 5 percent 6 percent of developed and 4 percent of under-developed villages, respectively belong to higher education level.

In the study it is found that 31 percent majority of them are engaged in agricultural labour, of which 32 percent is in developed villages and 30 percent in under- developed village. Another significant category is peasants of only developed village 6 percent. 2 percent is in Gov-job and social servicewomen both are equal percent from developed and under-developed village. Only 2 percent Dalit women have business women from the under-developed village. 4 percent of Dalit women are engaged in non-agricultural labour, while 3 percent is in developed and in under- developed village it is 5 percent. 7.5 percent is engaged in animal husbandry in both developed and under-developed villages. Field data show that 41 percent majority of the Dalit women are housewife/ unemployed mainly reasons of the Indian patriarchal system. However occupational mobility has been seen within in this both developed and under-developed village.

Majority of 41 percent Dalit women have no any income due to unemployment/ housewife within in Dalit community. Next majority of them 46 percent are in the range of Rs. 5000- 100000 from developed and underdeveloped village 45 percent and 47 percent respectively. Rs. 100001-200000; is 6 and 5 percent in both categories of village. Third majority category of 4.5 percent Dalit women are in the range of Rs. 200001-300000 from developed and under-developed village. Above Rs 500000 annual income is for 1.5 percent respondents from both villages developed and under-developed 1 and 2 percent. Income of some of the Dalit women has significantly increased in last few decades due to various government program and initiatives. After developed LPG program many impacts of Dalit community with modernization, industrialization and occupational mobility.

Methodology of the Study: -

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data has been collected through non-participant observation and semi-structured interview schedule. Secondary data has been collected through various publications of Census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry and Welfare Department and various report.

Sampling Method

Patna district was selected purposively in this study, because it is one of the most developed districts in the state of Bihar. The study has been carried out in two blocks in Patna district of Bihar. Briefly, following has been sample plan of this study:

In the first stage, two blocks were selected- one developed (Phulwari) in terms of infrastructure and economic indicators with higher Dalit population; and other under-developed (Barh) in the above terms, albeit with a higher population of Dalit.

In the second stage, two Panchayats from each block were selected to capture major sub-castes of Dalits.

In the third stage, following random sampling method, 50 Dalit households were selected from one village from each Panchayats, with the help of Panchayats records and census report. In selection of households' utmost care has been taken for representation of major sections of Dalit sub-castes. Thus, the sample size of this study is 200 households.

Table 1.0 A Detail of Sampling is Present in Table Below

	Developed		Under-Developed	
Block	Phulwari		Barh	
Panchayat	Alampur Gonpura	Sakraicha	Bhatgawanan	Birhana East, Birhana West
Villages	Gonpura	Sakraicha	Langarpur	Birhana East
	50 Household	50 Household	50 Household	50 Household

Field of the study

field study concentrates around two prominent Villages under the two blocks of Patna districts. Where one developed block (Gonpura village) and another under- Developed block (langarpur). Therefore, for the purpose of location of the work, it is essential to provide a brief account of the state of Bihar in general and of the two blocks of Patna districts that is Phulwari and Barh in particular. Bihar is an important state of northeast India. It has a total area of 94,163 Km² and total population is 104,099,452 (2011, census). The density of population is 1,102/km² i.e. 2850/sq mi. its literacy rate is 69.83 percent. Where male is 70.32 percentages and female is 53.57 percentages.

Objective of the Study: -

Main aim of the study is to explore emerging socio-economic and political sub-structures changes among Dalit women due to educational attainment and its resultant impact on traditional social structures.

Results and Discussion: -

Regarding Participation in Elections

The Below Data reveals that majority of the respondents (88 percent) said that they feel free to cast their vote. Out of total 12 percent of Dalit women reported that they are not free to cast their vote due to unawareness about political participation.

However; regard educational categories, in case of freedom to cast their vote, all respondents from higher educated category (100 percent in both developed and under-developed villages, respectively) and (94.11 percent of developed and 93.15 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) among moderate educated category reported that feel free to do so, even only (69.76 percent of developed and 86.15 percent of under-developed villages) among the illiterate group reported freeness of casting their vote.

Table 1.1 Educational Status-Wise Respondents Regarding Participation in Elections

Details	Developed village						Under-developed village						All (N – 200)	
	Illiterate		Moderate educated		Higher educated		Illiterate		Moderate educated		Higher educated			
	(N- 43)		(N- 51)		(N- 6)		(N- 23)		(N- 73)		(N- 4)			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you feel free	30	13	48	3	6	Nil 1	20	3	68	5	4	Nil 1	17	24

to Cast your vote in elections?	(69.77)	(30.23)	(94)	(6)	(100)		(86.15)	(13.04)	(93.15)	(6.85)	(100)		(88)	(12)
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Note: Illiterate, moderate education (includes educational level of literate without schooling, primary, middle, high school and intermediate) and Higher education (includes education level of graduate and above).

Note: N stands for total sample respondents

Note: Figure in bracket denotes percentage

Source: Field Data

Participation of Dalit women in politics has started in recent years. Above data is related to four villages of Patna district, in which the head of two villages is female. Ward members in its three wards are Dalit women. Therefore, due to educational attainment, women's mobility and their vote casting participation in politics has been seen more in both developed and under-developed villages, respectively.

Factors influencing Voting Behavior

The below data show that important factors which influence voting behavior of the respondents. Majority of (46.02 percent) of both categories of villages said favourite party is the most influencing factor, followed by candidate. Education is the most important factor for way of life. After independence literacy ratio is also high within Dalit women. Out of total (34.09 percent) Dalit women in both categories of villages consider candidate's education is the most influencing factor. Caste is also important factor for influencing voting behavior. Third impact factor (9.65 percent) in both categories of villages is caste.

Table 1.2: Factor Influencing Voting Behaviors

Influencing factor	Developed village		Under- developed village		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Family	2	2.38	1	1.08	3	1.70
Caste	8	9.52	9	9.78	17	9.65
Religion	2	2.38	5	5.43	7	3.97
Candidate's education	27	32.14	33	35.86	60	34.09
Favorite party	37	44.04	44	47.82	81	46.02

Source: Field Data

After implementation of educational programmes by the state government, Dalit women are aware about voting process. As per the above data, second influencing factor for getting influenced is candidate's education.

Meeting of Gram Sabha for implementation of Government Schemes

The Below data show regard meeting of gram sabha for implantation of govt. schemes. Majority of the respondents (60.5 percent) replied that general gram sabha meeting regularly followed in their gram panchayat. But 45 percent respondents of developed and 34 percent of under-developed villages, respectively replied in negation due to main reason that gram Pradhan is not interested and majority of dalit women unaware about gram sabha meeting.

Table 1.3: Meeting of Gram Sabha for Implementation of Government Schemes

Details		Developed village		Under-developed village		Total	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Does general body meeting of gram Sabha held for the implementation of govt. schemes?	Yes	55	55.00	66	66.00	121	60.5
	No	45	45.00	34	34.00	79	39.5
Total		100	100.00	100	100.00	200	100.00

Sources: Field Data

Level of Participation in General Body Meeting (G.B.M)

Level of participation of respondents in G.B.M is satisfactory as 54 percent Dalit women said that they always participate in general body meeting organized by the concerned gram panchayat for implantation of Government schemes. But (44 percent) respondents replied in negation.

Further respondents were asked about main reason for not participating in such meetings. Majority of respondents replied that due to lack of information of general body meeting of gram Sabha they are unable to attend.

Regarding educational category of respondents, (39.53 percent of developed and 43.47 percent of under-developed villages) among illiterate reported that they participated in G.B.M of gram sabha. (66.66 percent of developed and 53.42 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) moderate educated and (83.33 percent of developed and 75 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) among highly educated group have reported that they also participated in G.B.M of gram sabha.

Table 1.4: Educational Status-Wise Respondents Regarding Participation in G.B.M

Details	Developed village						Under-developed village						All (N – 200)	
	Illiterate (N- 43)		Moderate educated (N- 51)		Higher educated (N- 6)		Illiterate (N- 23)		Moderate educated (N- 73)		Higher educated (N- 4)			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Participate in G B M of Gram Sabha	17 (39.5)	26 (60.5)	34 (67)	17 (33)	5 (83.33)	1 (16.67)	10 (43)	13 (57)	39 (53)	34 (47)	3 (75)	1 (25)	108 (54)	92 (46)

Note: Illiterate, moderate education (includes educational level of literate without schooling, primary, middle, high school and intermediate) and Higher education (includes education level of graduate and above).

Note: N stands for total sample respondents

Note: Figure in bracket denotes percentage

Source: Field Data

In last few decades, participation in Gram Sabha Meeting has increased among rural Dalit women. Now Dalit women are participating in Gram Sabha in equal percentage in both developed and under-developed villages, respectively. However; this percentage is higher in educated dalit women as compared to illiterate and moderate educated women.

Conclusion: -

Political participation is also important factor for social and community development. In Bihar, Dalit women have been kept away from traditional political processes as well as from modern political institutions. Women folk still remain away from politics. Their participation in the political sphere is mostly limited to voting during election.

In case of freedom to cast their vote, all respondents from higher educated category (100 percent in both developed and under-developed villages, respectively) and (94.11 percent of developed and 93.15 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) among moderate educated category reported that they feel free to do so, even (69.76 percent of developed and 86.15 percent of under-developed villages) among illiterate group reported freeness of casting their vote.

Regarding influencing voting behaviors of respondents, majority of (46.02 percent) both categories of villages said favourite party is the most influencing factor, followed by candidate. Education is also an important factor. After independence literacy ratio is also increasing within Dalit women. Out of total 34.09 percent of Dalit women in both categories of villages consider candidate's education is the most influencing factor. Caste is also important factor for influencing voting behavior. Third impact factor (9.65 percent) in both categories of villages is caste.

After implementation of educational programmes by the government, Dalit women are aware of voting process. As per the above data, second important is candidate's education.

Level of participation of respondents in G.B.M (General Body Meeting) is satisfactory as 54 percent of respondents said that they always participate in general body meeting organized by the concerned gram panchayat for implantation of government schemes. But 44 percent respondents of developed villages and 48 percent of under-developed villages replied in negation.

Regarding educational category of respondents, (39.53 percent of developed and 43.47 percent of under-developed villages) among illiterate reported that they participated in G.B.M of gram sabha. (66.66 percent of developed and 53.42 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) moderate educated and (83.33 percent of developed and 75 percent of under-developed villages, respectively) among highly educated group have reported that they also participated in G.B.M of gram sabha.

In last few decades, participation in gram sabha meeting has increased among rural Dalit women. Now Dalit women are participating in gram sabha in equal percentage in both developed and under-developed villages. However; this percentage is less among illiterate Dalit women as compared to higher and moderate educated Dalit women.

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