



PROPERTY RIGHTS OF DALIT WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS

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Introduction:

In the recent times there is a lot of demand for lands and homes due to globalisation and commercialisation processes in India. When there is land boom across the country, land mafias or goons or landlords are even dare to murdered brutally the people in general and Dalit in particular in India. In this context the study of Dalit women property rights has a socio - economic and political relevance which suggest policy implications regarding property rights of Dalit women. The media and mass communication widely raises the lands scams across Indian states and deeply interrogating the land issues. On the other hand India had cross more than one billion population which affects the land /property issues drastically.

Property rights of Indian women have evolved out a continuing struggle between the status quoists and the progressive forces. Property rights of Indian women are unequal and unfair: While they have come a long way ahead in the last century, Indian women still continue to get less right in property than the men, both in terms of quality and quantity. Home to diverse religions, till date, India has failed to bring in a uniform civil code, therefore, every religious community continues to be governed by its respective personal laws.

The property rights of the Hindu women are highly fragmented on the basis of several factors apart from those like religion and the geographical region which have been already mentioned. Property rights of Hindu women also vary depending on the status of the woman in the family and her marital status: whether the woman is a daughter, married or unmarried or deserted, wife or widow or mother. It also depends on the kind of property one is looking at: whether the property is hereditary/ ancestral or self-acquired, land or dwelling house or matrimonial property. There is a notion that it is very difficult for women in general and Dalit women in particular to enjoy the property rights in the Indian scenario as we have pluralistic and diverse culture, beliefs, values, social customs, patriarchal and hierarchal values. Hence there is a need to analyse critically the property rights of Indian women in general and Dalit women in particular in Andhra



Pradesh. The present study has made an attempt to study the property rights of Dalit women in West Godavari and Vishakhapatnam Districts in the background of Agricultural and industrial dominance of these areas under the globalization processes.

The SCs constitute 16.4% of India's population. In the past, they have been socially ostracized, economically exploited and denied human dignity and a sense of self-worth. The socio-economic development and protection of SCs from discrimination and exploitation has been a high priority from the very start of the planning process. People belonging to SC communities are spread all over the county, with 80% of them living in the rural areas. They constitute more than a fifth of the population of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Punjab has the highest proportion of SCs to the State population. More than half of the SC population is concentrated in the five States of Uttar Pradesh (35.1 million), West Bengal 918.4 million), Tamil Nadu (11.8 million), Andhra Pradesh (12.3 million) and Bihar (13.0 million).

The objectives of the present paper are to discuss the definition of property rights and relevant acts, to analyse the status of Dalit women property rights in Visakhapatnam and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh and to suggest some measures for policy implications.

Research Methodology:

For the purpose of the study, the situational profile of Dalit women in India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular is based on the secondary data as well as other research studies. But the geographical area covered under the study is limited to two Districts of Andhra Pradesh and emphasis in selection of Mandals and villages are purely based on the **development index criteria** with the parameters like the SC total population, sex ratio, percentage of SC female literacy and SC female agriculture labour. By considering these variables, the study has used ranking system based on the ranks of the above variables. The study has selected two mandals from each District one which ranks high and other low rank. The present research study has selected two villages from each mandal based on multi stage - stratified random sample.

Methods of Data Collection:

This study is designed to analyse to understand the status of Dalit women with respect to property rights and globalization and social justice on



the impact of Dalit women. Hence the following methods were employed for data collection.

- ✓ Sample Survey of selected Dalit Women Respondents: Multi stage - stratified random sample survey is adopted as the method for data collection in the present study as shown in the road mapping. The study has been carried out in North Coastal Districts of Andhra Pradesh, from each district two mandals and from each mandal two villages were selected to collect the primary data. We have covered nearly 410 households during the survey. We have collected primary data from -----
 - 190 households in Visakhapatnam district,
 - 220 households in West Godavari district,
- ✓ The primary data has been collected through a well structured schedule with interview method. The Survey has been collected during September 2009-January 2010. The study has used both qualitative and quantitative data methods like **Interview Schedule, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and regression analysis**. However the qualitative data will be analyzed logically using case reports, studies and rhetoric examples related to Dalit women.

Visakhapatnam District:

Nakkapalle Mandalam	Mukhondarajupeta	47
	Nakkaplle	72
Sabbavaram Mandalam	Legisettipalem	26
	Sabbavaram	45
	Total	190

West Godavari District:

Bhimadole Mandalam	Polasanipalle	52
	Gundugolanu	74
Mogalthur Mandalam	Kalipatnam	34
	Perupalem	60
	Total	220

Definition of Property Rights:

Property is any physical or intangible entity that is owned by a person or jointly by a group of persons. Depending on the nature of the property, an owner of property has the right to consume, sell, rent, mortgage, transfer, exchange or destroy their property, and/or to exclude others from doing these



things. A title, or a right of ownership, establishes the relation between the property and other persons, assuring the owner the right to dispose of the property as they see fit.

A property right is the exclusive authority to determine how a resource is used, whether that resource is owned by government or by individuals. There are three basic elements of private property are (1) exclusivity of rights to choose the use of a resource, (2) exclusivity of rights to the services of a resource, and (3) rights to exchange the resource at mutually agreeable terms.

Hindu social order provides no economic rights or access to information to the deprived castes, including property rights, whereas gives multiple privileges and rights to the higher castes. This lack of access to assets strongly inhibited their chance at economic mobility.

The Government of India after independence in line with its commitment to socialism took steps to redistribute land and therefore came up with Agriculture Land Ceilings Act. The land reforms succeeded, however, in providing land to poor but touchable castes. There has been relatively little redistribution to those with very small holdings and to those with no land at all. Dalits had much lower landholdings than the population as a whole and more often than not represented the class of landless agricultural workers. Therefore they also did not reap the benefits of the green revolution.

With liberalization there has been a reactionary change in the state's policy. Most governments are now relaxing land-ceiling and tenancy laws in order to develop the land market. Most states are allowing land leasing and allowing both agriculturist and industrialists to own land and removing land ceiling for various activities. With the coming of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) the balance has tilted more against the Dalit whereby large landholdings are taken away and given to industries at 100% tax exemption. Dalits who anyways had small landholdings are now losing even that.

Attempts at promoting agriculture were made by making credit easily available, but here too we find that Dalit are unable to access it. Now with the privatization of the banking sector there has been a reduction in agricultural lending which has a negative impact on the poor more so for dalits. Prakash (2007) reporting on a survey of SC businesses in several



states in the middle belt of India details the extent of discrimination in the availability of credit and the terms on which credit is available to DALITS. NSS Employment and CSDS data quoted by McMillan (2005) show an increase in the total number of Dalit in non-agriculture skilled workers and professional employment as well as non-agrarian unskilled employment. However, much hasn't changed -more than 75% of the dalits workers are still connected with land; 25% being the marginal and small farmers and balance over 50% are landless labourers (J.S. Sharma). Of these landless labourers main source of income is either cultivation wage labour, non-farm employment or some kind of non agricultural self employment. Access to agricultural land for cultivation and capital for undertaking non-farm self employment is critical.

Unemployment Survey (1999-2000) estimates that 75% of SC households, 46% of ST, 56% of OBC, and 53% of 'Other' (non-SC/ST/OBC) owned 0.4 ha (approx.1 acre) of land or less. The proportions increased between 1987-8 and 1999-2000, among SCs slightly more, among STs slightly less, than among the population as a whole. The NSS (1999-2000) also estimates that 1% of SC households, 3% of ST, 4% of OBC, and 6% of 'Other' owned more than 4 ha. The proportions decreased between 1987-8 and 1999-2000, the SC at roughly the same rate as that of the population as a whole, the ST at a higher rate than that of the population as a whole. It should be borne in mind that the land owned by SCs is of poorer quality, and a lower proportion is irrigated as well.

SCs also have much lower non-land asset holdings than the population as a whole. This despite all the (relatively small-scale) programmes designed to get assets to SCs. Thus, owned per SC household was estimated to be less than half in rural areas, and considerably less than half in urban areas, of the average for the population as a whole. This affects SCs in non-agricultural business as well as in agriculture.

In urban areas we find that Dalit mostly engaged as workers and the disparity in access to capital is well reflected in the lower proportion of self employed workers. The low proportion of dalits as self employed in agriculture, non agrarian rural and urban area, as compared to others, revealed perpetual lack of access to ownership of agricultural land and capital.

Prior to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 'Shastric' (Hindu Canonical) and customary laws that varied from region to region. The Hindu Succession



Act enacted in 1956 was the first law to provide a comprehensive and uniform system of inheritance among Hindus and to address gender inequalities in the area of inheritance – it was therefore a process of codification as well as a reform at the same time.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956:

The main features of the Act are:

1. The hitherto limited estate given to women was converted to absolute one.
2. Female heirs other than the widow were recognized while the widow's position was strengthened.
4. In the case of the Mitakshara Coparcenary, the principle of survivorship continues to apply but if there is a female in the line, the principle of testamentary succession is applied so as to not exclude her.
5. Remarriage, conversion and unchastity are no longer held as grounds for disability to inherit.
6. Even the unborn child, son or daughter, has a right if s/he was in the womb at the time of death of the intestate, if born subsequently.

Under the old Hindu Law only the “streedhan” (properties gifted to her at the time of marriage by both sides of the family and by relatives and friends) was the widow's absolute property and she was entitled to the other inherited properties only as a life-estate with very limited powers of alienation, if at all. Section 14 of the Hindu Succession Act removed the disability of a female to acquire and hold property as an absolute owner, and converted the right of a woman in any estate already held by her on the date of the commencement of the Act as a limited owner, into an absolute owner. This section is of great importance and goes a long way in improving a woman's position.

While the Hindu Succession Act may be said to have revolutionized the previously held concepts on rules of inheritance, it has its own flaws while dealing with property rights of women since it still does not give the right to the daughter of a coparcener in a Hindu joint family to be coparcener by birth in her own right in the same manner as the son or to have right of claim by birth.

Also, there is a provision in Section 23 which states that “when the coparcenaries property includes a dwelling house, the rights of a daughter to



claim partition of the dwelling house shall not arise until the male coparceners choose to divide their respective shares and the daughter shall be entitled to a right of residence therein". This fails to take into account that the right to claim partition of dwelling houses is one of the basic incidents of ownership by women. Under this provision in its present form a daughter has to wait till the male members seek a partition.

Thus one finds that position of Dalit and women in India are that of unequals. A dalit woman finds herself even more discriminated against. Various provisions are made by the Constitution, legislature as well as policies of the government to correct this. While measures were undertaken to do away with the historical injustices done to the Dalit, measures were also undertaken to improve the position of women in India, property rights being an important component. However, the ground reality leaves a lot to be desired and while some women have fought such injustices many more need to be educated about their rights as well as empowered to seek justice.

The latest census (2001) figures indicate an increase both in number and percentage of SC and ST in Andhra Pradesh (Table 1). In 2001, there were about 12.3 and 5 million SC and ST comprising 16.2 and 6.6 percent of the total population in Andhra Pradesh. The percentage of SC in the population was marginally lower while ST population was nearly 2 percentage points lower in A.P. as compared to all-India. The SC/ST population and their proportion in the total population have increased over time in the state as well all-India.

Table:1: Percent of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Total Population in A.P

Year	Andhra Pradesh					India (%)	
	Population (in M)			Percent in TP		SC	ST
	SC	ST	All	SC	ST		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1961	4.9	1.3	35.9	13.8	3.7	14.7	6.9
1971	5.8	1.6	43.5	13.3	3.8	14.6	6.9
1981	7.9	3.1	53.5	14.9	5.9	15.8	7.8
1991	10.6	4.2	66.5	15.9	6.3	16.5	8.1
2001	12.3	5.0	76.2	16.2	6.6	16.4	8.2

Note :1. Figures in percentages : 2. TP-Total Population

Source: Govt of AP And CESS, Human Development Report 2007, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2008, p.132



SC and ST categories are not homogeneous and there are a number of sub-castes/groups within each category. There are about 59 Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh of which the important ones are Mala, Madiga, Relli, adi Andhra and others. Within the Mala and Madiga castes there are about 25 and 18 sub-caste groups. Similarly, there are about 33 Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh, and the important among them are Gonds, Koyas, Konda Reddies, Savaras and others. As a matter of fact, the surge in the size of ST population in the state during the 1970s is attributed to the inclusion into ST in 1977 of a community called Lambada/sugali, which mostly lives in the plains. When lambadas in Andhra Pradesh were notified as ST, many lambadas from the neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Karnataka migrated to Andhra Pradesh to claim ST status. The lambadas are, in fact, the single largest tribal group and constitute about 40 per cent of the ST population in Andhra Pradesh.

Jotiba Phule (1827-1890), the founder of the Satyashodhak Samaj, a non- Brahmin movement a social reformer and revolutionary, used this term to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and broken victims of the Indian caste-ridden society. Dalits were known as “untouchables” and “outcaste” for a long time until the British administration changed it into “Depressed Classes” in 1919. Gandhiji coined the term “Harijan”- people of God to counter the pejorative allusions of caste names. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar instead proposed the usage of the term “Protestant Hindus”. In 1935 the term Scheduled Caste was used by the British administration. It was during the 1970’s that the followers of the Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra gave currency to the term Dalit. Over time it has emerged as a political category which advocates social transformation in the direction of a more just society. According to Gangadhar Patawane, a Dalit writer, ‘Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. Dalit believes in humanism.....he represents the exploited man in his country (cited by Das and Massey 1995). For Gopal Guru (2001) the term conveys their aspirations and struggle for ‘change and revolution’. However the globalization process has great impact on the lives of dalits in general and Dalitwomen in Particular.

The economy of Dalits is simply related to that of being powerless and resource less, both socially and politically. The very historical status of Dalit is continued and perpetuated by the new models of capitalism. They are landless. With the dramatic saviour like entrance of new economic policy through the structural adjustment programme the minimum substantial livelihood that they have is also diffusing. Their social disabilities, largely



reinforced by and sustained on the economic deprivations, are bound to get accentuated with these policies (Goldy George).

Status of Dalit women:

Inclusive growth in the Eleventh Plan envisages respecting the differential needs of all women and children and providing them with equal access to opportunities. This can only happen when women are recognized as agents of socio-economic growth with autonomy of decision –making and the rights of children are respected.

The Eleventh Plan proposes a five-fold agenda for gender equity. This includes economic empowerment; social empowerment; political empowerment; strengthening mechanisms for effective implementation of women-related legislations; and augmenting delivery mechanisms for mainstreaming gender. For dalit women, it adopts a rights frameworks based on the principles of protection, well-being, development and participation. Recognizing that women in general and dalit women are not homogenous categories, the Eleventh Plan and 12th Plan aims to have not just general programmes, but also special targeted interventions, catering to the differential needs of different groups.

Dalits stand at the bottom of the hierarchy and impact outside the Varna system. The term Dalit is derived from the Sanskrit tem “dal” which means to split, broken, but it has acquired a new cultural connotation to mean ‘those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in deliberate and active way’.

Dalit women are twice discriminated against, ‘Dalit amongst dalits’ as many like to refer to them as, firstly for being a Dalit and more so for being a woman. Mary Grey (2005) refers to them as ‘thrice Dalits’, as they suffer from the triple oppression of poverty, being female and being female Dalit .The various constitutional steps aimed at bringing about justice and equality and are especially important for Dalit women. They were discriminated against in access public places, they were not allowed to access wells used by other castes and thus had to travel further to get drinking water, as task assigned to women. The Dalit were also not allowed to stay in the village and thus used to live on the outskirts.

The problems faced by Dalit women are discussed below in respect to education, work, violence faced by them and their property rights. According to the Census Report of 2001, they form 16.23 % or slightly more



than 169 million population in India and Dalit women constitute almost half of them, comprising about 16% of India's total female population, and 8% of the total population. One out of every six Indian belongs to Dalit Category. In the state of Andhra Pradesh Dalit constitute 16.2% of the population or 12.3 million persons.

As per the census of 2001, 41.9% of Dalit woman are literate, but if you look at the real perspective and keep in mind the definition of literacy, it is only 10-20% women that are literate. However, as per the 2001 Census, all India Literacy rate for women was 64.8% for the general population but stood at 54.69% for Scheduled Caste. Thus we find that though the literacy rate for Dalit has increase from 10.3% in 1961 to 54.7% in 2001, the gap between the literacy rate of the general and Dalit population has not reduced. The literacy rate for Dalit women in the State of Andhra Pradesh showed an increase from 17.1% in 1991 to 43.4% in 2001. The non-literacy rate in rural SC female adults stood at 89.6% in 1991 and it reduced to 71.5% in 2001.

According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 2000, approximately 75% of the Dalit girls drop out of primary school despite the strict laws of the Government of India, which hold reservations for Dalit children (*National Commission*). Despite showing keen academic aptitude, reasons for early drop outs from the education system is poverty or to escape humiliation, bullying and isolation by classmates, society, and even their teachers (Thind). The school drop-out rate is an important indicator of lack of education, it stood at 63.88% for classes I-X was for the girls from the general population, while it was 74.17% for Dalit girls. The difference increases with higher education. The gross enrolment ratio for the country as a whole in 2000 was about 10%. For SCs, however, it was significantly lower at 6.4%.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh (NSSO 2006), percentage of children in the age group 5-14years attending school during 2004-05 amongst Dalit was 86.6% in rural areas and 90% in urban areas. Gender disparity in school attendance rate across these communities was 11.1% for the Dalit community (Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report 2007).

It is also found that Dalit women engaged in non-agriculture sector is very low as compared to the upper caste women, this happens due to the low education level found amongst Dalit women. Women are traditionally assigned the role inside the household, expected to look after the house, cook, taking care of the children and other aligned activity. Economic



necessity makes it important for the lower caste women to step out and assist in the domestic economy, their income plays a very important role in many a households. This does not hold true for the upper caste women and this explains greater participation of lower caste women in the workforce.

According to India's Ministry of Labour, 85% of the Dalit women have the most formidable occupations and work as agricultural labourers, scavengers, sweepers, and disposers of human waste. Jadhav in his paper- "Dalit amongst Dalits: Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Women" groups Dalit women into four categories of workers- domestic and home workers doing household work, cooking, washing, cleaning home a, looking after children: servicing type workers in agricultural and cottage industries; manual and unskilled labourers in factories, mines, plantation, construction and building work; skilled and professional workers in legal, medical, administration, managerial, military and other professions. In urban area, most of the household work is done by SC/ST women and very few are professional workers. In rural area, SC/ST women work on agricultural field. Thus we find Dalit women mostly in unskilled, manual jobs.

Jadhav in his paper found that Dalit women were often discriminated against wage employment programmes; they do not get continuous assured work. The labour market too is biased towards men and the division of labour is highly sex biased. Women in general are paid less for the same work as their male counterparts, and this holds especially true for Dalit women who are even more discriminated against. Moreover the terms and conditions are often not in favour of Dalit women (A.S.Jadhav, 1995).

The unorganised sector does not provide facilities of social security as found in industries and other organised sectors. They do not get benefits of leave, medical support, P.F., gratuity, etc. all this makes it difficult for a woman to work. Women engaged in profession, small entrepreneurs or self employed Dalit women too face problem of marketing their produce, procuring loan facility as well as consistent supply of raw materials.

Reservation policy was introduced with the intention of correcting the historical injustices done to Dalit and increasing the proportion of Dalit in the public sector. A review of the Planning Commission report 2005 shows that Dalit tent to occupy lower level of the administrative body or the Classes III and IV such as office boys and janitors, or clerical staffs. Most disturbing is the fact that the category of sweepers, an occupation traditionally associated with SCs, has an overwhelming preponderance of



these groups, suggesting a reproduction of persistent patterns of social dominance in public institutions (CRISE Working paper Feb 2009). The percentage increase in the number of SCs in Central Government Posts in Class I category is of 1.64% in 1965 to 11.4% in 2001 and in Class II from 2.82% in 1965 to 12.8% in 2001.

In 1999 there were 481 Judges in High courts of India out of which only 15 were SCs while there were 21 judges in the Supreme Court and there was not a single judge from Scheduled Caste background (M.C.K. Dalvi 2010).

Violence against women in India has never been uncommon phenomenon. Women in the Indian society have been victims of humiliation, torture and harassment as long as one can observe from written records and newspaper reports. Dalit women have been the object of violence in greater degree from their own men folk, and also from higher caste men. They have been subjected to rape, molestation, kidnapping, abduction, homicide, physical and mental torture, immoral traffic and sexual abuse.

The worst exploitation of Dalit women involves a lifetime of suffering, torture, and Rape. Justified by the Vedic scriptures, the *Devdasi system* (also known as temple prostitution) though banned by law still exists in some parts of India (Thind; Agarwal; Narula). According to the *Human Right Watch Report* in 1992, an estimated 50,000 girls were sold every year to Hindu organizations that are involved in the Devdasi system (n.pag). These girls are called the “female servants of god” and are sexually exploited (Thind n.pag). After a lifetime of living as a prostitute and servant, the women in their later years are sold to brothels, where they are further tortured and often die of neglect or AIDS (Thind; *News Archives*). “Caste-based discrimination is illegal in our country. But we see that men from upper castes always treat lower castes like inferior human beings,” said Right to Food Campaign State (M.P.) Convener, Sachin Jain. “Gang rape is one of the easiest means for men to attack a woman in the villages. Women belonging to Scheduled Castes and tribes are also coming forward through NREGA (India’s Ministry of Rural Development) and the panchayats (local governing bodies) in the state. The upper classes take revenge by committing gang rape.” A majority of the rape victims are minors that belong to India’s lower classes. Political analyst and writer Rasheed Kidwai feels that rape is, for the members of India’s rural upper classes, a means to show power rather than sexual gratification. “It is easy to create dominance through rape on the lower castes” (WNN Jan 2008).



According to the National Crime Statistics (India: 2001) there were 37,841 registered cases of violence against Dalit Women in the year 2001 alone. It should be noted that in India about 90 percent crimes against Dalit women are not reported to the police for the fear of social ostracism and threat to personal safety and security. Also the legal proceedings are so complicated, tardy, time consuming, costly and unfriendly to Dalits that usually they do not approach courts or other law enforcing agencies to be redressed.

The 1992-93 Annual report from the Ministry of Welfare shows 1,236 reported cases of rape on Dalit women. The National Crime Records Bureau 2005 data shows that the incidences of rape against Dalit women has come down slightly from 1316 and 1331 in 2001 and 2002 to 1157 and 1172 in 2004 and 2005. 74 incidences of rape were reported for the state of Andhra Pradesh for the year 2005. The National Commission for SC/ST shows that approximately 10,000 cases of human right violations on Dalits are reported every month. Moreover, according to the Human Right watch Report, approximately 115 million children are in slavery and 2.6 million children are held as bonded labourers (Narula).

Property rights of Indian women have evolved out of a continuing struggle between the status quoits and the progressive forces. Property rights of Indian women are unequal and unfair. While they have come a long way ahead in the last century, Indian women still continue to get less right in property than men, both in terms of quality and quantity. The position of Dalits and women in India are that of unequal. A Dalit woman finds herself even more discriminated against. Various provisions are made by the Constitution, legislature as well as policies of the government to correct this. While measures were undertaken to do away with the historical injustice done to the Dalits, measures were also undertaken to improve the position of women in India, property rights being an important component. However, the ground reality leaves a lot to be desired and while some women have fought such injustices many more need to be educated about their rights as well as empowered to seek justice.

India after independence had followed an inward looking policy. The socialistic approach concentrated on building up domestic industries, with a large role assigned to state-owned enterprise. Although private ownership of industry was allowed, competition was curtailed by a licensing permit raj. This economic system was supposed to bring faster industrialization than a free market economy and hence to reduce poverty faster.



In social terms, all Dalits irrespective of their economic standings in rural areas, but in urban areas they have made significant progress. They celebrate all hindu pujas. Now during the time of marriage, they are invited in order to beat drums or dholos, to play *Madhuries* (flute) and so on. Today, modernization has however, changed one of the major occupation of Dalit in india i.e., the job of scavengers - Chitra Prabhat (2010). However, their social status still leaves a lot to be desired. The reform measures result in reduction of fiscal deficit, reduction in subsidies, devaluation of rupee, export orientation and reduction of agricultural credit.

The economy of Dalits is simply related to that of being powerless and resource less, both socially and politically. The very historical status of Dalit is continued and perpetuated by the new models of capitalism. They are landless. With the dramatic saviour like entrance of new economic policy through the structural adjustment programme the minimum substantial livelihood that they have is also diffusing. Their social disabilities, largely reinforced by and sustained on the economic deprivations, are bound to get accentuated with these policies (Goldy George).

Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure Index (GEMI) in Andhra Pradesh:

An analysis of gender related indices shown in Table 2 especially GDI, indicate that gender adjusted human development improved across districts during 1991-2001. However, the rate of change in GDI varied across districts during the period. Though a backward district like Mahabubnagar experienced a relatively better rate of change during the period, its relative position remained as it was. In three Rayalaseema districts (Kurnool, Kadapa and Anantapur) the rate of change was the lowest and hence their relative positions were worse in 2001 when compared to 1991.



Table: 2.6: Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure Index (GEMI), Andhra Pradesh

S no	Districts	Gender Development Index (GDI)						GEMI	
		Index Value		% Change	Rank			Index	Rank
		1991	2001		1991	2001	Change	2001	2001
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Visakhapatnam	0.513	0.643	25.3	20	10	1	0.609	13
2	West Godavari	0.601	0.675	12.3	5	3	7	0.651	3
3	Chittoor	0.577	0.643	11.4	8	9	10	0.648	4
4	Anantapur	0.522	0.559	7.1	18	19	19	0.604	17
5	Adilabad	0.526	0.563	7.0	15	18	20	0.597	19
6	Karimnagar	0.581	0.648	11.5	7	7	9	0.607	15
7	Andhra Pradesh	0.553	0.620	12.1	0	0	0	0.618	0

Note: CV-Coefficient of Variation.

Source : Govt of AP And CESS, Human Development Report 2007, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2008, p.17

The experience in GDI across districts is quite different when compared to HDI in which the most backward districts showed greater improvement. More-over, unlike HDI, regional disparities remained almost same between 1991 and 2001 as shown by the stagnant coefficient variation (see Table 2.4). In terms of gender empowerment measure index (GEMI), the district with the best record was Krishna, followed by West and East Godavari Chittoor and Guntur. Many of these districts are located in South Coastal Andhra region. The GEM index indicates that women living in these districts are relatively better in terms of empowerment. Mahabubnagar followed by Warangal, Nalgonda, Kurnool and Adilabad were the districts which were relatively more backward in terms of GEM. Incidentally, many of these districts are located in Telangana region. It is worth noting that Hyderabad district which had the best values in HDI, HPI and GDI was ranked only 16th among 23 districts in GEMI, indicating that it is one of the districts where women are at greater disadvantage. The disadvantage for women in Visakhapatnam district is influenced by the high violence rate against women and low child sex ratio. This indicates that though the process of urbanization has a positive impact on overall human development, it has its own disadvantages in terms of the well-being of women.



Socio-demographic profile of Dalit women Respondents:

The status of women indicate the levels of empowerment of Dalit women in the society. The present study has taken 410 sample based on the multi stage stratified sample.

61% of the respondents belong to the developed districts, of them 53% of the respondents belonged to the West Godavari Districts. The number of respondents was slightly higher in the West Godavari district. In case of sub-caste categories we find that 79% and 60% of the respondents in the developed and under developed districts belonged to category SC 'C', while the remaining 22% and 40% belonged to sub caste SC 'B'.

We find a shift from the traditional occupation in both the districts, the number of people working in the agricultural field goes down from 92% and 98% to 41% and 40.9% in developed and under developed districts respectively under Globalisation process. In under developed areas of both districts the shift has mainly been to labour and a small number to becoming house wives and working in steel plant. In developed district like west Godavari we find that 2 respondents have become government teachers and 3 are working in the Panchayats. Thus we observe a trend of people getting jobs that are usually highly coveted for in the developed district something we do not see in the under developed districts.

In the developed areas of both districts out of the total respondents 57% of the respondents were Hindus as compared to 65% of the under developed districts. On the whole the conversion from Hinduism to Christianity is significant at 43- 35 percent for both developed and under developed areas of the districts.

Untouchability though illegal in India is still practiced in various forms, more than 30% and 13.2% of the respondents of the developed and under developed areas respectively said that they had changed their religion from Hinduism to Christianity to avoid the stigma and discrimination of untouchability. Christian Missionaries undertook various developmental activities which aimed to alleviate the condition of the people. Thus we find that the socio-economic benefits associated with converting to Christianity far out-weighed the untouchability cause. Almost 70% of the respondents in the developed areas of both districts said that they had converted for these socio-economic benefits. The percentage is higher in the under developed areas of these districts which stands at almost 87%. Interestingly we find that none of the respondents said that they had converted due to spiritual reasons.



Economic problem was rated as the biggest and the most prevalent problems by the 77% of the respondents. Domestic violence was not considered to be a problem for them, this however, could be attributed to the fact that many people do not take violence at home seriously and regard it as part and parcel of married life. They believe in fate theory and never understand the vicious forms of domestic violence.

Of the small percentage of respondents who recognised domestic violence they said physical violence was the most common. The reason for such violence was mostly attributed to dowry.

Almost none of the respondents knew about the Protections from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Like so many Acts introduced by the lawmakers of the country to safeguard the interests of various vulnerable groups, this law too fails to reach to those who really need it.

11% of the respondents (all from under developed districts) said they had witnessed atrocities against their community and the reason for such atrocities was political. As Dalits are not asserting themselves in the political sphere, which for long have been held by the upper castes, political reasons was the reason.

11% of the respondents from the under developed areas said they noticed the prevalence of Devadasi, joggini and Mathangi system in their area. Thus we find that despite various legislatures and attempts are mobilizing public opinion against such inhuman practises they persist in many areas. Moreover the absence of such in practise in developed districts also shows the close link between economics and such exploitative practises.

Status of Dalit Women Property Rights:

Majority of the respondents owned their own businesses at 57% and 82% in developed and under developed areas in both districts. The next most important assets owned is their own house at 32% in developed areas and this found to be almost half in the under developed areas. Thus we find that the asset ownership in under developed areas is almost half of the developed districts.

We find that in the under developed areas in both districts the government has been active and been providing various assets to Dalits, 26% of the respondents said they received assets from the government, while in the under developed areas in both districts the number was only 8%. The government agency through which they got these assets was usually the Schedules Caste Corporations.



Of the respondents who own land most of them did not have patta in their name, therefore denying them complete ownership of the land. Women for long have been denied the right to own assets, in the study we find that only 28% of the women from the developed districts own assets however, none from the under developed districts.

Women so often are denied property rights in their in laws property is also denied rights to their parent's property, the finding of the study show no difference as we find only 23% of the respondents had inherited any property from their parents.

Jewellery in gold is the most common form of inheritance that a woman receives from her parents, this usually is given at the time of marriage or on some occasions some time later as well, the study reveals the same trend at 11% of the respondents. Land had also been received by some women as is seen at 10% and 4% in developed and under developed areas of both districts. Some received house site and some other assets from their parents. Therefore we see a slow change is coming into our country where women too are being rights to property and especially immovable property such as land and house sites.

Challenges: Though we have Property Right Acts in India as well as Andhra Pradesh the implementation and enforcement of the machinery become a great challenge to achieve gender equality in sharing parental properties or inheritance from fore fathers/parents and parents-in-law.

The general implicit is while the parents are celebrating marriages for their daughters they are spending a lot in the form of gifts, dowry and other rituals. Once the daughter was left from the house how she can claim a right in their parental property? It is a million thousand dollars question.

If there is no equal sharing between sons and daughters of a family, when the daughter is claiming her property right through judiciary is not treated a genuine and legal affair in the attitude of people, community and society hence the poor and illiterate Dalit women have to struggle more to gain the property rights from their parents /parents -in-law.