

EMPOWERMENT OF DALIT WOMEN THROUGH APNREGS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Dr. T. Hanumantha Rao

Selection Grade Lecturer in Economics

G B R Degree College

ANAPARTHI - 533 342

East Godavari district, A.P.

Introduction

In India, as per 2011 Censuses about 65 per cent of population is living in rural areas. It is not the situation in only 2011 Censuses but also time immemorial. In spite of rapid urbanization, Indians are still living in Agriculture based society in rural India, different sections of people have been fighting for survival. Among these sections *Dalits* which are called *Scheduled Caste* or *Panchamas* or *Sudras* or *Harijans* are sub sections of Indian society. The problems of rural India reflect in these sections of people. They are far-away from the development, income and etc. On the other side *dalit* women in rural areas have no role like others. Still she has not enough strength to act as a human being in spite of several steps taken by the Central and State Governments as well.

After Indian Independence the Government of India recognized the problems of rural India in particular the problems of depressed sections and continuously introducing policies and programmes for building up and strengthening rural India. The main aim of these policies and programmes is to eradicate the problems which are involved in the rural society. These rural development programmes definitely affect on the life of all sections of rural India in particular on *dalits*. Hence the study analyzes the impact of these rural development programmes on *dalits* in particular *dalit* women and suggest suitable measures for better implementation of the rural development programmes.

In order to alleviate the lot of the rural problems the government – the Central Government as well as State Government operates various programmes before and after independence of India. The programmes are: Community Development Programme, Food For Work Programme, National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojana and etc. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Programme is one among these schemes.

Dalit Women in India

The root word of this word *Dalit* is *Dal*. The adjective of *Dal* is *Dalit*. We found this word *Dal* on page 471 of the prestigious Oxford Sanskrit English dictionary new addition, 964, edited by the world famous Sanskrit scholar *Sir Monier Williams*. *Dalit* is found in many Indian languages and even a Dravidian language. The meaning given to *dalit* in the dictionary is; burst, split, scattered, dispersed, broken, tom as under, destroyed, crushed. All these English words sum up the exact position of the Indian untouchables and also tribes. The name *dalit* has Arabic and Hebrew origin and it is usually used as a girl's name those previously known as untouchables, depressed classes and Harijans. *Dalit* refers to one's caste rather than class.

The present usage of the term '*Dalit*' goes back to the 19th century, when a Marathi social reformer and revolutionary, Mahatma Jotirao Phule (1826-1890) used it to describe the out casts and untouchables as the oppressed and the broken victims of a caste ridden society. Under the charismatic leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) this term gained greater importance and popularity.

The *Dalits* are called by different names in different parts of the country. They include *Dasa, Dasyn, Raksasa, Asura, Avarna, Nisada, Panchama, Harijan, untouchable* etc. each of these names has a history and background. Besides these names there are names which have been given to them at the level of regional language. For example, *Chura* in *Punjabi*, *Mahar* in *Marati*, *Mala* in Telugu. By the British the *Dalit* were named 'the depressed classes and the Scheduled Casts in the Scheduled Cast act of India, 1935. Mahatma Gandhi named them Harijans which means '*Children of God*'.

Dalit women are one of the largest socially segregated groups any where in the world, and makeup 20 per cent of the total population. *Dalit* women are discriminated against three times over they are poor, they are women and they are *dalits*. *Dalit* women constitute 16.3 per cent of the total female population in India. The traditional taboos are the same for *Dalit* men and women. *Dalit* women are discriminated against not only by the people of higher casts, but also with in their own community. Men are dominating in *dalit* communities.

Situation of *dalit* women in India is unexplainable. They are one among the worst suffers of socio-cultural, political and economic exploitable in India, oppression and violence. Their worries are bound less. They are the ones who form real teeming millions in India and are affected by all kinds of social and economic oppression.

Andhra Pradesh National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APNREGS)

The Government of India passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (Central Act No.42 of 2005). This Act gives legal guarantee of at least one hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. The Act is applicable in the Districts notified by the Government of India.

And whereas, the objective of the Act is to enhance the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by generating wage employment. The choice of works suggested addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion. Effectively implemented, the employment generated under the Act has the potential to transform the geography of rural poverty.

And whereas the implementation of the Act calls for the formulation of Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme by the State Governments. Accordingly, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has formulated the Scheme called Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to provide not less than one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas covered under the Scheme and whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work subject to the conditions stipulated in the Act and notified in the Scheme. This scheme may be called the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.(APREGS). This Scheme shall come into force with effect from 2nd February 2006.

The Scheme shall be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) on cost sharing basis between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 90:10. The primary objective of the Scheme is to provide livelihood security to the households in rural areas of the notified districts by providing not less than 100 (one hundred) days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. The other objective of the scheme is to creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of rural poor.

At the village level the Gram Panchayathi shall be the principal authority for planning and implementation of the Scheme. At the Mandal level, the Mandal Parishad shall be the principal authority for planning and implementation of the Scheme. The Mandal Parishad Development Officer shall assist the Gram Panchayathis and the Mandal Parishad in carrying out its functions under the Scheme. The Mandal Parishad Development Officer shall be provided with additional support of three Technical Assistants.

At the District-level, the Zilla Parishad shall be the principal authority for planning and implementation of the Scheme. The District Collector shall be the District Program Coordinator for the implementation of the Scheme in the District. At the State level, the Commissioner, Rural Development shall be the State Programme Coordinator. The Managing Director, Andhra Pradesh

Scheduled Castes Cooperative Finance Corporation Limited, shall ensure the involvement of District Scheduled Castes Service Cooperative Societies Limited in enabling the Scheduled Castes households to access their rights and entitlements particularly in development of their lands with irrigation facilities.

Any adult person of a household may on behalf of the members of the household apply to the Gram Panchayathi, in the jurisdiction of which they reside, for registration of their household for issuance of a Job Card. A Job Card (Form 3) with unique ID number will be issued by the Gram Panchayathi to the household that has been registered. The Panchayathi Secretary shall also maintain these details in the 'Employment Guarantee Scheme Job Card Register'.

Individual/ Group of wage-seekers having Job Cards shall give individual or group application, (Forms 4 and 5) as the case may be, on a plain paper or in a printed form. The Gram Panchayathi shall direct the applicant or group of applicants in writing in Form 7, to work in any ongoing work or by starting a new work, within fifteen days of receiving applications seeking work or from the date of work being sought in case of advance application, whichever is later. If it is not possible to provide work within the Gram Panchayathi area the Gram Panchayathi Secretary shall forward the applications for work to the Programme Officer. The Programme Officer shall coordinate with other Gram Panchayathis within the Mandal and issue letter of employment to the applicant in the Gram Panchayathi where work is available, by marking a copy to both the Panchayathi Secretaries concerned and the Mandal Parishad Development Officer.

If an applicant is not provided employment within fifteen days of receipt of the application seeking work or from the date on which the employment has been sought, in case of advance application, whichever is later, he/ she can apply to the Panchayathi Secretary for unemployment allowance. The Panchayathi Secretary shall forward such applications to the Programme Officer who shall, after due enquiry, sanction the unemployment allowance or reject the application as the case may be.

Equal wage shall be paid to both men and women. The payment of wages shall be made at least once in a fortnight. The Programme Officer, the District Programme Coordinator and the State Programme Coordinator shall keep a watch on the average wages earned. If necessary, the schedule of rates may be revised to ensure that the wage per day is equal to the minimum wages notified by the Government under Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Significance of the study

The empowerment of rural *Dalit* women is crucial for the development of rural India. Bringing rural *Dalit* women in the main stream of development, the ministry of rural development has been introducing various rural development programs. They include SGSY, JGSY, IAY,

DWACRA, IRDP, JRY, MGNREGS etc. The government of Andhra Pradesh state has also implementing various programs to upliftment of rural *Dalit* Women they include DEEPAM, INDIRAMMA etc. All the programs will affect directly or indirectly the rural *Dalit* Women. The project report is to study these impacts.

The impact of rural development programmes on *Dalit* women is comparatively an unexplored area in India. There is a need for a through investigation of the impact of rural development programmes on *dalit* women is indeed by very since. Rural development programmes is a never experiment in the history of rural development. Though more than six decades elapsed rural development programmes has been introduced a through investigation into all aspects of impact of rural development on SC Women has not been rectified.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to analyse the impact of rural development programmes on *dalit* women in Andhra Pradesh state. The following are the some other objectives of the study.

1. To study the participation of *dalit* women in various rural development programmes.
2. To examine the employment and assets generation through APNREGS to *dalit* women.
3. To suggest suitable measures for better implementation of APNREGS for all-round development of *dalit* women.

Review of Literature on Rural Development

Dr. I. Satyasundaram¹ (1997) in his book *Rural Development* explains importance of people's participation in various rural development programmes. He opined that rural development is three dimensional in nature. As a method it seeks people's involvement in all programmes. As a process, it seeks to modernize, through the application of science and technology, the additionally, oriental rural culture. Its major objection is to bring about improvement in the quality of life of rural people.

Dr. K. Venkata Reddy² (2001) in work *Agriculture and Rural Development* explains the importance of agriculture in rural development. The author felt that the importance of rural development was recognized long back and the origins of rural development in India may be traced to the several isolated experiments in rural reconstruction which were pioneered by different individuals and organizations during the past several years.

S.P. Singh³ (2003) in his work *Planning and Management for Rural Development* explains importance of Panchayathi Raj Institutions in the development of rural areas. He remarks that 'decentralized management of rural development through Panchayathi Raj Institutions provides better perception of needs and aspirations of rural people.

Binony, N. Verma and Madhuri Nath⁴ (2004) in their book entitled '*Women and Rural Development*' explains the role of women in rural development programmes. They opined that in the orientation of more systematic approach to training and employment planning for rural women is needed particularly in view of changes in pattern and process of production due to introduction of technology at all levels.

Gupta, K.R.⁵, (2004) in his book entitled '*Rural Development in India*' gives a statement that Rural Development is the main pillar of nation's development. He analyzed Panchayathi Raj System in India besides different rural development programmes like, SGRY, PMGSY etc.

Vasant Desai⁶, (2005) in his work entitled '*Rural Development in India, past, present and future*' analyzed meaning and content of rural development. He explained different rural development programmes consists of early programmes and preset programmes besides future of rural development.

Rural Credit and Co-Operative Development edited by Dr. S.B. Verma and others⁷ (2006) is one of the notable works on rural development. The authors felt 'in a predominantly agrarian country like India, rural development is a sine qua non of national development.

S.B. Verma and others⁸ (2006) in their work *Rural Based Development Strategies* has given a remarkable note on importance of rural development. The authors felt that the rural economy of India thrives of farmers and artisans. The rural artisans constitute on important segment of the non-farm sector.

Review of Literature on Scheduled Castes Welfare

Economics of Welfare by Professor Pigou, A.C.⁹ (1952) welfare is a mental phenomenon and consists in a particular state of consciousness

Duncan, B and Forrester¹⁰ (1974) in their work entitled *Initial Occupational Patterns of Scheduled Caste Graduates in India* studied the position SC people on the social scale index comprising items like poverty, social status, health life expectance, literacy and education and found them at the bottom of the scale. Similarly, Singh, H and Malik, A¹¹ (1989) in their work entitled *Scheduled Caste and Development: Structure, Process and Performance* found that the implementation o the scheme for SC is very poor.

Nancharaiah, G¹² (1990) in his work '*The Changing Position of SCs as Agricultural Labourers in Indian Market*' analyzed the economic development of the SCs since independence with reference to access to land, occupational distribution, access to education an incidence of poverty. He is of the opinion that though there is cognizable improvement in the development of the SCs, it is however not substantial s the community remained as agricultural labour.

Anil Bharadaj¹³ (2002) in his book entitled '*Welfare of Scheduled Castes in India*' pointed out that the Scheduled Caste population, therefore was deprived on the benefits of development, made under both the macro and micro plants.

Parvathi Devi, P (2007)¹⁴ in her Ph.D. thesis entitled '*Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women – A Study of Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh*' discussed demographic and amenities available, socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Caste women in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh. She concluded the thesis by saying that Scheduled Castes a large number of Scheduled Women are landless agricultural labourers working for other as daily wages.

Jagan Karade¹⁵ (2008) in his article '*Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India*' says that the backwardness of SCs will be evident from their unemployment, dependence on agriculture, illiteracy and social segregation. In terms of residence, housing and health conditions, the condition of the SCs is precarious. Even now in many villages they have to suffer residential segregation and direct and indirect social boycott. There are many among them who are too poor to build their houses. On account of their poverty and unhygienic living conditions, they, in large numbers, suffer from malnutrition, physical disabilities and diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria, and general diseases.

Anil Kumar Thakur and Tahkur R.N.,¹⁶ (2008) in their book '*Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Dalit and Weaker Section*' (ed) narrates that as per as economic reforms and Dalits are concerned it would be too simplistic and populist to say that nothing has changed in the last fifty years.

Darsha Singh¹⁷ (2009) in his article entitled '*Development of Scheduled Castes in India – A Review*' gives a statement that the economic growth with social justice has been the major objective of planning process and rural development programmes in India. The government would not only take into account economic goals but also consider social aspects like providing access to deprived sections to participate in the development process.

Shiny Nair¹⁸ in her article entitled '*Women Empowerment Programmes*' explained importance of women empowerment in India. She also explained various schemes that are adopted by the Government to strengthen women empowerment.

Methodology

Geographically, Andhra Pradesh has been divided into three regions. They are Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana regions before bifurcation.. Basing on the proportion of districts two districts were taken as sample from Andhra region, one district from Rayalaseema region and two districts from Telangana region. Out of the sample districts, again 20 villages were selected as sample villages on random basis. A total of 515 house holds have been selected with an

average of 25 families from each village who have been selected randomly while visiting the villages. However, due consideration has been given to their economic background. The following table gives the details of sample districts and villages taken from different regions of Andhra Pradesh.

Statistical data has been collected through primary and secondary sources. The secondary data has been compiled from official records of district DRDA offices, MRO and MPDO offices and Grama Panchayathi offices. Information was also collected from enquiry commissions, reports of various committees etc.

After collecting the data, the whole data has been processed to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. In order to evaluate the data simple statistical tools such as percentages are used the opinions of rural *dalit* women were summarized in marginal tables and cross tables. Pie Diagrams are also drawn for various socio-economic aspects of the selected respondents.

Findings of the study

1. Awareness of APNREGS

Table-1 shows that out of the 515 respondents 54.4% are aware of the APNREGS and 45.6% are unaware of the scheme. The following tables analyze the cross tabulation of awareness of APNREGS on region, district, age, education qualification and annual income of the respondent.

Table-1
Awareness of APNREGS Scheme

Sl. No.	Did you know APNREGS scheme?	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	280	54.4
2.	No	235	45.6
	Total	515	100.0

2. Creation of Employment or Benefits under the APNREGS

'Did you get employment under APNREGS' was posed to the respondents to examine the creation of employment under APNREGS in the sample area Table-2 shows 38.4% of respondents got employment under APNREGS while 61.6% of respondents did not get in any employment under this scheme.

Table-2
Creation of Employment or Benefits under the APNREGS

Sl. No.	Have you benefited from APNREGS scheme?	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	198	38.4
2.	No	317	61.6
	Total	515	100.0

3. Payment of Wages

Two questions, like ‘How much wage is paid per day in working days?’ and ‘Do they pay equally to both men and Women’ were asked to study payment of wages to *Dalit* Women under APNREGS. With regard to the first question 62 respondents get below Rs.60/-, 144 respondents get Rs.60-120 and 22 respondents Rs.122 and above as wage per day in working days according to the Table-3.

Table-3
Payment of Wages

Sl. No.	How much wage is paid per day in working days (In Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
1.	Below 60/-	62	12.0
2.	61-120	114	22.1
3.	122 and above	22	4.3
4.	Not applicable	317	61.6
	Total	515	100.0

4. Wages Paid under the APNREGS

With regard to the question ‘How much wage did you get under the APNREGS?’, Table-4 explains that 107 respondents got below Rs.5000, 35 respondents got Rs.5000-10000 and one respondent got Rs.10000 and above wage under the APNREGS out of the 198 beneficiaries. The remaining respondents (55) said that they are unknown of wages.

Table-4
Wages Paid under the APNREGS

Sl. No.	How much wage did you get under the APNREGS? (In Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
1.	Below 5000/-	107	20.8
2.	5001-10,000	35	6.8
3.	10,001 and above	1	.2
4.	Unknown	55	10.9
5.	Not applicable	317	61.6
	Total	515	100.0

5. Mode of Spent the Wages which was got through the APNREGS

The Table-5 shows out of the 198 beneficiaries of APNREGS, 125 respondents spent the wages which they got thorough the APNREGS on house needs, 39 respondents to pay off their old debts, 15 respondents spent on children education, 5 respondents spent on health, 1 respondent save the wages, 4 respondents spent on creation of employment and 9 respondents spent on other needs.

Table-5

Mode of Spent the Wages which was got through the APNREGS

Sl. No.	How do you spent the wage which is got through the APNREGS?	Frequency	Percent
1.	For house needs	125	24.3
2.	To clear old debts	39	7.6
3.	For children's education	15	2.9
4.	For health	5	1.0
5.	On savings	1	.2
6.	For creation of employment	4	.8
7.	For other needs	9	1.7
8.	Not applicable	317	61.6
	Total	515	100.0

6. Types of Problems in Getting Employment under the APNREGS

To the study the problems that are faced by the respondents in getting the employment under the APNREGS, a question 'if yes, what type of problems are you facing' was posed. It is be observed from the Table-6 that 27 respondents are facing the problems at the time of applying job cards, 19 respondents are facing problems at the time issuing job cards, 11 respondents are facing problems in information about employment, 39 respondents are facing problems in paying wages, 31 respondents are facing problems at work place, 18 respondents are facing problems by political involvement and 1 respondent is facing other problems.

Table-6
Type of Problems in Getting Employment under the APNREGS

Sl. No.	If yes, what type of problems are you facing?	Frequency	Percent
1.	At the time of applying for job cards	27	5.2
2.	In issuing job cards	19	3.7
3.	Not informing about employment	11	2.1
4.	In paying wages	39	7.6
5.	At work place	31	6.0
6.	Political involvement	18	3.6
7.	Others	1	0.2
8.	Not applicable	369	71.7
	Total	515	100.0

Conclusions

1. The study observed that 54.4 per cent of *dalit* women are aware and 45.6 per cent of *dalit* women are unaware of the APNREGS.
2. Data on creation of employment shows that 38.4 per cent of sample *dalit* women did get employment under the APNREGS.
3. Data on the payment of wages under this scheme shows that 62 *dalit* women got below Rs.60/- 144 *dalit* women got Rs.60-120 and 22 respondents got Rs.121 and above as wages per day in working days.
4. Statistics on 'How much wage did you get under the APNREGS?' or income generation under this scheme which shows that 107 respondents got below Rs.5000/-, 35 respondents got Rs.5000-10000 and one respondent got Rs.10000 and above out of 198 beneficiaries and the remaining 55 respondents are unaware of the income received under the APRENGS. Hence, it is concluded that income generation under this scheme is less than expectations.
5. Data on 'How do you spend the wage which you got through APNREGS?' shows that 125 *Dalit* Women spent their income for house needs. 39 *dalit* women cleared their old debts with this income. 15 *dalit* women spent on children's education, 5 *dalit* women spent on health, one *dalit* women saved the income, 4 *dalit* women spend on creation of employment and 9 *dalit* women spend on other needs.
6. Statistics on problems in getting employment under the APNREGS shows that 142 *dalit* women said there were problems in getting employment under the APNREGS of which 27 were facing the problem at the time of applying job cards, 19 *dalit* women were faced a problems at time of issuing job cards, 11 *dalit* women in informing about employment, 39 *dalit* women in paying wages, 31 *dalit* women at work place, 18 *dalit* women faced a problem by political involvement and *dalit* woman with other problems. Hence, it is concluded that most of the *dalit* women faced problems at the time of payment of wages.

Based on the above analysis, it is broadly concluded that half of *dalit* women were aware of the APNREGS. But only 39 per cent of them were employed under the APNREGS. Out of this only few of them got 121 full working days and got their wages between Rs.60-Rs.120 per day. Most of *dalit* women beneficiaries earned below Rs.5000/- under the APNREGS. Most of the *dalit* women beneficiaries faced several problems in getting employment under the APNREGS and payment of wages was the main problem to them. Hence, it is concluded that the impact of APNREGS on *dalit* women in rural areas is very less.

Suggestions

1. It is observed from the study that about 50 per cent of *dalit* women are aware of the APNREGS. The awareness of APNREGS is not unique in all regions and districts. Hence, it is suggested that wide publicity should be given to APNREGS in all regions and districts.
2. It is observed from the study that around 40 per cent of *dalit* women are participating and benefiting under the APNREGS. It means most of the *dalit* women have not participated and benefited under the APNREGS. Hence, it is suggested that initiative steps should be made to motivate to participate *dalit* women in the APNREGS.
3. The study found that most of the *dalit* women beneficiaries got employment in between 15-50 working days. As per the norms of the APNREGS scheme 100 days of employment will be provided to a person in a family. But the APNREGS scheme has failed to provide 100 days of employment. It is also opined that income from below 50 working days is not sufficient for survival of *dalit* women. Hence, it is suggested that the government should provide employment throughout the year.
4. It is found that some of the *dalit* women beneficiaries got employment after fifteen days of job cards issued. Hence, it is suggested that all Grama Panchayathis should provide employment within 15 days.
5. It is observed from the study that the Grama Panchayathis are not providing employment to all employment job card holders. Hence, it is suggested that the government should provide employment to all job card holders.
6. The study found that *dalit* women are facing discrimination in payment of wages. They are not equally paid to both men and women. Hence, it is suggested that the government should take necessary steps to equal wages to both men and women.
7. It is observed from the study that all the Grama Panchayathis are not providing facilities like water, shelter and first aid at work places. So, it is suggested that all the Grama Panchayathis should provide sufficient facilities like water, shelter and first aid etc, at work place to all participants.
8. The study found that income generation under the APNREGS was meager. This is due to low wage rate. Hence, it is suggested that wage rate should be hike from Rs.121 to Rs.200 per day as inflation rate has goes up. Also suggested to link this with market wage rate and make changes accordingly.
9. The study found that most of the *dalit* women were employed in clearing irrigation canals under the APNREGS. Hence, it is suggested that the authorities concerned should provide

employment in common places of the village like construction of schools, community buildings, parks etc.

10. It is observed from the study that some of the *dalit* women got wages in cash. But the mode of payment is either post office or bank. Hence, it is suggested that payment of wages in cash should be stopped and it would be end corruption. It is also suggested that the payment of wages made through banks that are better than post offices as they are providing on line and electronic clearance services for speed payment.
11. It is found that most of the *dalit* women faced problems in getting employment under the APNREGS. There are problems at the time of applying job cards, at the time of issuing job cards, problems in informing about employment, problems in payment of wages, political involvement etc. Hence, it is suggested that online facility should be arranged to apply and issue of job cards.

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