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Voting Behaviour and Political Contribution of Scheduled Caste Women in Telangana State

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to discuss about the voting behavior of scheduled caste women in the state of Telangana. It discusses with the role of women in politics after the independence followed by the review of literature, objectives of the study, hypothesis of the study and research methodology was adopted by the researcher to collect the data.

The second part discusses with the age group of respondents their membership in political party and also discuss about the people who are participated effectively in the politics.

Key Words: Voting behavior, Medieval period, Westernization, Discrimination, Social justice

The modern political systems are the result of tremendous upheavals that have taken place from time to time. Various experiments have been made to accelerate the process of socio-economic change through different political institutions. Historically speaking from primitive stages to the modern systems, all are the outcome of active participation of man in politics. The changes are the outcome of longstanding struggle by the oppressed against the privileged. The point here is that the struggle to change the socio-economic system of a nation could be taken up only in political arena. Hence an active mass behaviour in day to day political affairs of the country is inevitable to achieve the desired changes. In a democratic polity, participation of people in electoral politics is an essential precondition.

This is also true even in the case of women. Voting behaviour of women in politics is not a new phenomenon. The historical evidence tells us that during the new Vedic Age, women enjoyed considerable freedom and equal status with men in different spheres of life¹. We find from Kautilya's Arthastra that women were also soldiers armed with bows and arrows. In course of time due to several factors women's status was lowered and her position deteriorated day by day.

During the medieval period, many limitations were imposed on women. From the beginning of the 19th century, social reformers had provided leadership to the women's movement, emphasizing the point that women in ancient India had participated equally in all aspects of the family, community and political activity. Such a rationalization was used by almost all the reformers to mobilize women into political activity.

The concept of westernization which has been dealt with by M.N. Srinivas describes the changes in Indian institution, ideology, values and beliefs during the British colonial rule. Westernization created an awareness of the oppressed situation of women in Hindu Society and the need for changing traditional customs and conventions concerning them².

The National movement had mobilized women as Congress members and executives. The nature and extent of women's participation in the national movement can be categorized into three levels. Women used to participate actively in 'Sathyagraha' movement and also a small group of women took part in "Social reform activity" launched by Gandhiji. The next category consists of those who participated in all aspects of national activity i.e., elite group of women³.

After Independence, the Government of India has adopted a policy of planned or directed social change in order to provide socio-economic justice to the weaker sections, especially to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Castes belong to the poorest sections of Indian society. Not only they are economically poor but they have also been subjected to several socio-economic and religious oppression by the superior castes who constituted the "dominant culture".

The Scheduled Castes are the most exploited group in Indian society and characterized by poverty, illiteracy and misery. It was this background of social injustice and economic exploitation of the Scheduled Castes that prompted the Indian Government to adopt the policy of Protective Discrimination. Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy says that the "State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation"⁴.

Studies related to women in general are touching various aspects of women's life and activities. Most studies discuss the status of women in general are concerned mainly with the urban working women or women in general in India. The University Grants Commission, the ICSSR/CSIR and many National and International agencies are supporting research on women. The research unit on women's studies at the SNDT University, Bombay, Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) Delhi, Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) are some of the pioneer organizations focusing on research on women's issues. Individual women scholars like Vina Mazumdar, Neera Desai, Maithreyi Krishna Raj, Gail Omvedt, Leela Gulati, Ila Pathak did splendid service in highlighting various issues related to women's problems and development⁵.

Review of Literature: For the purpose of gaining a greater insight into the topic of research, a survey of literature on the score touching various issues such as conduct of elections, the role of the electorate, changing trends in the electorate, voting behavior and political culture, impact of various forces on the electorate, role of the political parties and the general trends during every successive elections has been undertaken. Such a survey would not only provide a suitable background to the study but could also highlight the existing gaps in the sphere of elections in India as a whole.

D.L. Sheth throws light on the nature and extent of man's involvement and participation in electoral and day-to-day politics, his sense of political efficacy and the nature of his allegiance to democratic norms. Focus on voting preferences and party identifications of citizens across elections, party affiliations and its implications for the electoral process and the representative system have also been dealt with⁶.

Horst Hartman concludes that in India the democratic idea is threat ended by the forces of the extreme left, what-ever their practical approach may be. They function at different levels of the system, eventually to change the system itself. The Naxalites even openly disclosed their intension to overthrow democracy in the country⁷.

Angus Campbell and others endeavoured to reflect the character of the collective vote and strove to expand the understanding of the part played by the elections in the functioning of the total political system⁸.

Gopa Kumar explains that due to the operation of multivaried groups, emotional importance of caste, region and religion could broadly be focused on the basis of the genetics behind the regional parties and that the dynamics of state politics add further dimension to this canvass⁹.

Suresh K. Tameri analysed the causes and consequences of the fateful happenings that were a prelude to the 1971 elections. He recorded the crucial developments, the images projected and promises made by parties and individuals and the results thereof¹⁰.

Hence, the present study has been undertaken to fill up the gap in the existing literature and to examine the voting behaviour of Scheduled Caste Women in Telangana at micro level by using both primary and as well as secondary data is imperative.

Objectives of the study: The main objective of the present inquiry is to examine the factor that determines the Voting and Political Contribution of Scheduled Caste Women in Telangana State- A Micro Level Study.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To explain the age group and membership of political party of selected Scheduled Caste women voters;
- ii. to examine the trends in the change of voting behaviour of Scheduled Caste women in Assembly as well as local elections and

- iii. to compare the administration better either in congress (I) or TDP of selected Scheduled Caste women in selected district.

Hypotheses of the study:

The hypotheses of the study are formulated as follows:

- i. It is assumed that Scheduled Caste women voters will not take independent decisions on to whom to votes;
- ii. There is a positive relationship between voting behaviour and rational factors.

Limitations of the study: It must be mentioned here that the present study in no way should be considered as an exhaustive study providing a complete and clear picture of Scheduled Caste women voting behaviour. The constraints of finance and manpower have also been responsible for the limited scope of the study as well as area selected for the study.

Methodology: The present study depends upon both the primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data have been collected from the literature available in the form of various books and journals on the topic. Further, the data related to Scheduled Caste women have been elicited from various Census Reports. The data have also been collected from the Office of the District Collector, Chief Planning Officer of the selected districts. To examine the influence of various factors in the determination of voting behaviour of selected Scheduled Caste women, a structured questionnaire is prepared and administered. In addition, observation method is also adopted to understand the inner realities about voting behavior and contribution of selected Scheduled Caste women.

Research Design: For the selection of study Telangana was selected. A sample of one district namely Warangal in Telangana region was selected. In the selected district two mandals were selected on the purposive sampling basis. In each selected mandal a sample of two villages which possess Scheduled Caste women was selected on the purposive sampling basis. In each selected village 25 women respondents were selected on the basis of proportionate sampling which covers a total sample 100 Scheduled Caste women respondents.

Data Analysis: The data had been analysed with the help of simple variable tables. Statistical tools such as averages had also been used to analyse the data.

The term 'voting behaviour' is used to describe certain areas as study and types of political phenomena which previously either had not been conceived or considered irrelevant. Voting records compilation of voting statistics and computation of electoral shifts. The term has vast coverage and entails an analysis of individual or group's psychological processes, perception, emotion, motivation and their relationship with political action. It also enters into the institutional patterns such as the communication process and their impact on elections. The term 'voting behaviour' has expanded in

meaning and is construed as one area of study within the broader field of political behaviour.¹¹

The theoretical framework with which the researcher has proceeded for the study of Scheduled Caste women's voting behaviour is not an alternative to any other theoretical perspective. It may be mentioned that this theoretical perspective like any other perspective is not totally flawless. But the researcher has found that this perspective is of more use contextually.

The active voting behaviour of the Scheduled Caste women of Telangana can be properly assessed only when we understand their socio-economic conditions. Studying the socio-economic conditions of the entire Scheduled Caste women population of Telangana would be a difficult proposition. Hence, Warangal district from Telangana Region of Andhra Pradesh have been chosen for a close examination of the problem.

Although one may include a number of variables for describing the age group and membership of political party, we have taken up a selected few for our description for the purpose of delimiting the scope of enquiry and highlighting source of the characteristics which are considered relevant for a study of this kind.

Table - 1
Age group of the respondents

(Total Number of Respondents 100)

	Age group				
	18 – 25	26 – 35	36 – 45	Above 46	Total
Number of respondents	19	28	27	26	100.00
Percentage	(19.00)	(28.00)	(27.00)	(26.00)	(100.00)
Total:	19 (19.00)	28 (28.00)	27 (27.00)	26 (26.00)	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 1 shows the analysis of respondents on the basis of scheduled caste women and age. As far as the age of the respondents is concerned, out of 100 respondents, 28 of them (28.00 per cent) are between the age groups of 26 and 35 years. The respondents of this age group were found in the villages. On the other hand there were 27 respondents (27.00 per cent) in the age group of 36 and 45 found at common places and at residences. There were 26 respondents (26.00 per cent) in the age group of above 46 years found in the same villages. Similarly there were 19 respondents (19.00 percent) in the age group of 18 and 25 years. However, it is noted from the table that an attempt is made to record the perceptions of respondents of all age groups. In rural areas caste always dominates the politics, administration and development aspects. With this intention the respondents have been asked to express their castes.

Table - 2
Age group and membership of political party
(Total Number of Respondents 100)

Age group	Membership of political party							
	No	Congress (I)	BJP	TDP	CPI CPI(M)	TRS	Others	Total
18 – 25	16 (72.72)	2 (9.09)	1 (4.55)	1 (4.55)	-	2 (9.09)	-	22 (100.00)
26 – 35	18 (62.07)	3 (10.35)	1 (3.45)	1 (3.45)	-	6 (20.68)	-	29 (100.00)
36 – 45	13 (50.00)	2 (7.70)	-	2 (7.70)	1 (3.84)	8 (30.76)	-	26 (100.00)
Above 46	12 (52.18)	1 (4.34)	-	2 (8.70)	-	8 (34.78)	-	23 (100.00)
Total:	59 (59.00)	8 (8.00)	2 (2.00)	6 (6.00)	1 (1.00)	24 (24.00)	-	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 2 explains the age distribution of the respondents as against the member of a political party. The Scheduled Caste women did not come out openly to identify themselves as members of any political party membership. Of the total respondents, it is evident that 59 respondents (59.00) per cent did not identify themselves as a member of any political party, 8.00 per cent have membership in Congress (I) Party, 1.00 per cent have membership in CPI, CPI (M) and 24.00 per cent have membership in TRS. However the respondents membership in a political party is found to be higher in TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samithi), than the Congress (I) Party. Among the age groups 34.78 per cent have highest membership in TRS party in the age group of above 46 years, 9.09 per cent have lowest membership in TRS party in the age group of 18 and 25 years. 10.35 per cent have highest membership in Congress (I) Party in the age group of 26 and 35 years and 4.34 per cent have lowest membership in Congress (I) Party in the age group of above 46 years. 3.45 per cent have lowest membership in TDP in the group of 26 and 35 years and 3.84 per cent have membership in CPI, CPI (M) in the age group of 36 and 45 years. In all the age groups, there are members committed to political parties, but the percentage is higher among the 45 and above age group holding that old people have a higher commitment than youth.

Table - 3
Age group and vote for which party in the Assembly elections
(Total Number of Respondents 100)

Age group	Vote for which party in the Assembly elections								
	No	Congress (I)	BJP	TDP	CPI CPI(M)	TRS	PRP	Others	Total
18 – 25	-	16 (72.73)	-	2 (9.09)	-	2 (9.09)	2 (9.09)	-	22 (100.00)
26 – 35	-	18 (62.06)	2 (6.90)	3 (10.35)	1 (3.45)	5 (17.24)	-	-	29 (100.00)
36 – 45	-	12 (46.15)	2 (7.70)	4 (15.38)	2 (7.70)	6 (23.07)	-	-	26 (100.00)
Above 46	-	11 (47.82)	2 (8.70)	4 (17.39)	1 (4.35)	5 (21.74)	-	-	23 (100.00)
Total:	-	57 (57.00)	6 (6.00)	13 (13.00)	4 (4.00)	18 (18.00)	2 (2.00)	-	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 3 indicates the age and vote for which party casted in the recent Assembly elections. The respondents voting behaviour is tested with a question whether or not they voted in the recent Assembly elections, if so, to which party. Of the total respondents, 57.00 per cent respondents voted for Congress (I), 18.00 per cent respondents voted for TRS and 2.00 per cent respondents voted for PRP. Among the age groups, an overwhelming majority of voters 72.73 per cent irrespective of the age group of 18 and 25 years have voted for Congress (I) and the remaining voted for TRS, 46.15 per cent respondents voted for Congress (I) in the age group of 36 and 45 years, 23.07 per cent respondents voted for TRS in the age group of 36 and 45 years, 17.39 per cent respondents voted for TDP in the age group of above 46 years, 8.70 per cent respondents voted for BJP in the age group of above 46 years. 9.09 per cent respondents voted for PRP in the age group of 18 and 25 years and 7.70 per cent respondents voted for CPI, CPI(M) party in the age group of 36 and 45 years.

Of the different age groups, voters in the age group of 18 and 25 years had shown greater preference to Congress (I) than other political parties. After Congress (I) age groups of 36 and 45 years have shown their preference to TRS. Though the Constitution of India has declared that the practice of caste in any form is an offence, yet its indirect and invisible role has not been eradicated from the Indian society. Casteism began to play dominating role in electioneering and voting behaviour in the recent Assembly elections.

Table - 4
Age group and administration better either in Congress (I) or TDP
(Total Number of Respondents 100)

Age group	Administration better either Congress (I) or TDP				
	Congress (I)	TDP	Both are good	Both are bad	Total
18 – 25	8 (36.36)	7 (31.82)	4 (18.18)	3 (13.64)	22 (100.00)
26 – 35	14 (48.27)	10 (34.48)	3 (10.35)	2 (6.90)	29 (100.00)
36 – 45	12 (46.15)	9 (34.61)	2 (7.70)	3 (11.54)	26 (100.00)
Above 46	10 (43.47)	9 (39.13)	2 (8.70)	2 (8.70)	23 (100.00)
Total:	44 (44.00)	35 (35.00)	11 (11.00)	10 (10.00)	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 4 shows the analysis of respondents on the basis of age and administration either in Congress (I) or in TDP. The table denotes that of the total respondents, 44.00 per cent respondents feel that Congress (I) is better other than any political party, lowest percentage (10.00) respondents expressed that both are bad. Among the age groups, 48.27 per cent respondents feel Congress (I) is better in the age group of 26 and 35 years and lowest percentage respondents (36.36 per cent) feel Congress (I) is better in the age group of 18 and 25 years. 18.18 per cent respondents expressed that both are good in the age group of 18 and 25 years and lowest per cent (8.70) respondents expressed that both are good in the age group of above 46 years, 13.64 per cent respondents expressed that both are bad in the age group of 18 and 25 years and lowest percentage (6.90 per cent) respondents expressed that both are bad in the age group of 26 and 35 years.

It is confirmed to reiterate that voting was not on the basis of caste but it was on the basis of voter's preference and the benefits of the welfare schemes are indeed instrumental in extending their support to the Congress (I) Party.

Table - 5
Age group and the women's active participation in politics
(Total Number of Respondents 100)

Age group	Women's active participation in politics		
	Yes	No	Total
18 – 25	18 (81.82)	4 (18.18)	22 (100.00)

26 – 35	22 (75.86)	7 (24.14)	29 (100.00)
36 – 45	19 (73.07)	7 (26.93)	26 (100.00)
Above 46	18 (78.26)	5 (21.74)	23 (100.00)
Total:	77 (77.00)	23 (23.00)	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 5 indicates the age and women's active participation in politics. Of the total respondents, 77.00 per cent respondents expressed that they are participating in politics and 23.00 per cent respondents expressed that they did not actively participate in politics. Among the age groups, it is clear from the table that 18 and 25 years age groups are matured mentally and accepted that women's role in politics is on the increase. 81.82 per cent respondents expressed that women are also participating in politics recently in the age group of 18 and 25 years, 18.18 per cent respondents expressed that they did not actively participate in politics recently in the age group of 18 and 25 years. Also the 36 and 45 years age group (73.07) accepted women's active participation in politics recently from above 46 years (78.26 percentage). Hence, women's participation in politics is on the increase.

It is very much evident to state on the strength of the available information both age and caste wise that women are active in politics during recent times.

Table - 6
Age group and opinion about the present political leaders
(Total Number of Respondents 100)

Age group	Opinion about the present political leaders				Total
	Good	Very good	Bad	Very bad	
18 – 25	3 (13.64)	2 (9.10)	8 (36.36)	9 (40.90)	22 (100.00)
26 – 35	2 (6.90)	5 (17.25)	12 (41.37)	10 (34.48)	29 (100.00)
36 – 45	4 (15.38)	2 (7.70)	16 (61.54)	4 (15.38)	26 (100.00)
Above 46	2 (8.70)	3 (13.05)	14 (60.86)	4 (17.39)	23 (100.00)
Total:	11 (11.00)	12 (12.00)	50 (50.00)	27 (27.00)	100.00 (100.00)

Source: Field study

Note: Figures in brackets denote percentages.

Table - 6 denotes the analysis of the respondents on the basis of age and opinion about the political leaders. Of the total respondents, 50.00 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are bad and 11.00 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are good and it is a lowest percentage. Among the age groups, 61.54 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are bad in the age group of 36 and 45 years, 8.70 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are good in the age group of above 46 years. 17.25 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are very good in the age group of 26 and 35 years. 60.86 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are bad in the age group of above 46 years and 40.90 per cent respondents expressed that the present political leaders are very bad in the age group of 18 and 25 years. The table denotes that most of the political leaders are bad, very lowest percentage respondents expressed that the present political leaders are good. Thus it is established that the present voters feel that political leaders should imbibe the qualities of honesty, competency and capacity to solve their local problems.

Conclusion: The present study into voting behaviour of Scheduled Caste women unveiled that illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and lack of leisure time are the root causes of active political participation of Scheduled Caste women. The respondents are aware by their increasing participation in politics. They are also not ignorant of the developmental activities taking place in the society. These women are also aware of the atrocities on women taking place in general in India. A look into the socio-economic is desirable to assess the active behaviour of the Scheduled Caste women in Warangal District. The communities in these areas are finding it difficult to make their both ends meet which affected their political participation. In spite of several variables to describe the socio-economic conditions of the respondents are selected for our study. Age of the respondents selected was between 18 and 46 and all their perceptions were recorded by the researcher. The study has identified some attributes of voting behaviour of Scheduled Caste women like campaign, party attachment, voting, reasons for voting, reasons for not voting, shift in loyalties, party identification, influencing others to vote and influenced by others to vote.

The analysis also uncovers that with an increasing frequency of election, political consciousness and awareness has grown and SC voters do not remain a political. A new political culture has evolved in which single party dominance has collapsed and in all the age groups members are committed to political parties. However the percentage of political commitment is higher among the 45 and above age group proving that the old people have a higher commitment than youth. It is also significant to note that most of the rural respondents participated in the party programmes.

It was observed from the study that in the age group of 18 and 25 years respondents had shown greater preference to Congress (I) than other parties followed by TRS in the age of 36 and 45 years. Casteism is evident in electioneering and voting trend reveals that the respondents voted for leaders with charisma, party theory, activities of party and good character of the contestants whereas a few of them voted for the history of the party. An

analysis of preference of Congress (I) to T.D.P. unfolds forty four per cent of the respondents have preferred Congress (I) to T.D.P. and ten per cent felt that both are bad. It is reiterated that the benefits and welfare schemes are behind supporting the Congress (I) Party. Another observation both age and caste wise is that women are active in politics in recent times. An investigation into the age and voting independence unravels that thirty per cent respondents voted independently and meagre eight per cent voters are influenced by the friends, relatives and caste leaders to support the candidate or the party. It is therefore confirmed that the caste appeal was effective.

A study of women participation in political discussion and public meetings of political parties shows that forty nine per cent respondents participated and attended public meetings and political discussions which establishes that women are actively participating in politics in recent times and that local leaders influenced the voter choice. They also opine that majority of the political leaders are bad and that only a few political leaders are good which necessitates leaders to imbibe the qualities of honesty, ability and capacity to solve their problems.

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