

# Women Empowerment and Habitation of Land for Landless: An Empirical Analysis

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**Abstract:** This paper empirically analyzes the association between women empowerment and land question in urban localities in Andhra Pradesh in general and Ongole town in particular. I find a tentative congruence between women empowerment and habitation of owning land for landless at the extremes of the emerging Scheduled Caste Women empowerment notion in urban localities and slightly weakening in this association over time. Though the Scheduled castes in the urban localities have low upward mobility, higher castes are not entirely protected from down ward mobility.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Habitation, Social Mobility, Scheduled Caste And Ongole

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines the relationship between women empowerment and habitation of own land, especially how they relate to social disadvantage, in Andhra Pradesh<sup>1</sup>. Despite the “centrality of women empowerment” in Andhra society,<sup>2</sup> and debates on the relation-

1 The term empowerment has diverse meanings in different sociocultural and political contexts, but in local terms the meaning is very clear that is self strength, control, self-power, self reliance and own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one’s values, capability of fighting one’s rights, independence, one decision making, being free, awakening, and capability-to mention only few these terms are locally used very frequently. I focus specifically on the caste groups that are constitutionally recognized by the Indian government for preferential policies, while comparing them to these that receive no preferential benefits. Habitation of own land refers to an objective socio-economic positions based on employment relations, rather than any subjective identity. The habitation scheme uses occupational information, with the preferential women groups at one end of the scheme and then non-land owning lower caste groups on the other end. By social disadvantage, I imply access to government social welfare schemes for the betterment of women groups.

2 For a general discussion, see most definitions focus on issues of gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determine the quality of one’s life. Most also take into account structural inequalities that affect entire social groups rather than focus only on individual characteristics. The UNICEF Women’s Equality and Empowerment Framework emphasizes women’s access, awareness of causes of inequality, capacity to direct one’s own interests, and taking control and action to overcome obstacles to reducing structural inequality (UNICEF 2001). The United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Empowerment Measure focuses on inequalities in economic and political participation and decision-making power and power over economic resources (UNDP 1995). Other writers explore empowerment at different levels: personal, involving a sense of self-confidence and capacity; relational, implying ability to negotiate and influence relationship and decisions; and collective (Rowlands 1997). The definition used by the International Fund for Agricultural Development includes both access to productive resources and the capacity to participate in decisions that affect the least privileged (Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty 1995). In an extensive exploration of the term empowerment, Kabeer (1999, 2001) focuses on three dimensions that define the capacity to exercise strategic life choices: access to resources, agency, and outcomes. Amartya Sen

ship between women empowerment and habitation of land<sup>3</sup> and whether women empowerment than habitation of land is the crucial factor in social disadvantage,<sup>4</sup> few studies have empirically analyzed this relationship and how it changes over time, especially at the national level.<sup>5</sup> I argue in this article that there is significant conceptual leverage to be gained by understand habitation of land for women empowerment, and analyzing their association and its evolution over time in an urban locality of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh in India. This allows us to isolate possible periods of change.

Although no habitation of land ever been theorized with regard to Scheduled Caste women empowerment criteria, congruence between the two has often been highlighted. But few studies have gone beyond proposing or criticizing gender and land rights dichotomy; attempts to empirically study an *interaction* between the two have been limited. This paper provides a test of the Scheduled Caste women empowerment and habitation of land association at the urban localities of district head quarters of Prakasam, Andhra Pradesh and whether this association has declined over time (using case studies approach). It also analyzes the separate and combined impact of habitation of land and Scheduled caste women empowerment on one possible outcome-intergenerational of social mobility.<sup>6</sup>

Analyzing of the Scheduled caste women empowerment and habitation of land is important for conceptual reasons: certain castes/*Jatis* have historically associated with particular occupations. But exploring this association is also merited because it is believed by some to be eroding due to empowerment,<sup>7</sup> economic liberalization, and India's resulting

(1985, 1999) has written extensively on the importance of substantive freedoms and the individual freedom to choose and achieve different outcomes.

- 3 Agarwal, Bina (1994), *A field of one's own: Gender and land rights in South Asia*, Cambridge university press, p 576, Agarwal has stressed the need to maintain "as as consistently as possible" the distinction between women and land rights , see Agarwal, Bina (1997) "'Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household" in *Feminist Economics* v.3 (1)
- 4 For a discussion, see Ramesh Babu Para, "Education Policy and Dalits: A comparative study on Dodderu and Talluru villages of Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh," unpublished M.Phil, Dessertation, University of Hyderabad, 2005.
- 5 Pradeep, Panda and Bina Agarwal (2005) "Marital Violence, Human Development and Women's Property Status in India" in *World Development* v.3 (5)

6 This paper focuses primarily on Scheduled caste women (discussed further in data section); however, we also present empirical results for non-Scheduled Caste women groups such as STs, OBCs because it is of interest to see how these groups fare with regard to the Scheduled caste women groups.

7 The term "empowerment" is used in this essay in the restricted sense of the changes that are expected to occur in an industrializing, or economically liberalizing, society with respect to trends and patterns of social mobility. Under the "empowerment thesis" one would expect the expansion of asserts and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that effect their lives. One would also expect to see changes in the occupational structure with a contraction of workforce engaged in urban manual and professional occupations. One would expect to find an increase intergenerational social mobility rates. Further, educational attainment rather than ascription (e.g., scheduled caste women empowerment includes asserts; refers to material asserts, both physical and financial, such asserts-including land, housing, livestock, savings and jewelry capabilities, on the other hand, are inherent in people and enable them to use their assets in different ways to increase their wellbeing. Human capabilities include good health, education, and production or other life-enhancing skills. Social capabilities

urbanization<sup>8</sup>. The importance of ascribed characteristics such as empowerment access to secure resources, for instance, jobs, is expected to decline with further empowerment of scheduled caste women in urban localities.<sup>9</sup>

Using the individual-level habitation of land beneficiary house Patta records, 2009 data set from the revenue department in Ongole Tahsildar office, with approximately 250 respondents, we find a tentative correspondence between habitation of land for Scheduled caste women and empowerment at the extremes of the political dogma. We observe a manual/non-manual employment divide, with non-scheduled caste group women dominating white-collar work and avoiding (to an extent) manual work. We also observe a slight weakening, rather than a steady decline, in the association between scheduled caste women and non-scheduled caste women over time. Finally, with regard to social mobility opportunities, we find that although scheduled castes (SCs, which include the ex-Untouchables) have a difficult time gaining upward mobility, non-scheduled castes are not entirely cushioned from the forces of downward mobility.

These findings indicate that in Andhra society the empowerment argument has not played out entirely as expected. On the other hand, there is a weakening of Scheduled Caste women empowerment and habitation of owning land for landless association between Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled Castes, at least in the middle of the state government empowerment schema. On the other hand, the manual/non-manual work divide persists among the women groups. These results further emphasize the need for a more nuanced analysis to capture the impact on Andhra society of empowerment.

Our findings also highlight the wider implications of the need to separate habitation of land for landless women groups' information from that pertaining to state government empowerment schemes, and the importance of analyzing the interaction between the two. Although this article uses social mobility as an example of why such a separation between women empowerment and habitation of land for landless may be useful, the concept can be extended to the study of other areas, for example, political representation and participation. Although the political mobilization of the assembly election in 2009, and mid-term elections in 2012, in Ongole assembly segment seemed outwardly to run along the habitation of land for landless lines, it can be argued that in fact it was the

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include social belonging, leadership, relations of trust, a sense of identity, values that give meaning to life, and the capacity to organize. Political capability includes the capacity to represent oneself or others, access information, form associations, and participate in the political life of a community or country) assumes more important with regard to attaining advantaged class positions or for social mobility.

8 No assertion is being made in this paper that empowerment in any way implies the replacement of habitation of land with Scheduled Caste women empowerment. Rather, it is expected that with empowerment, the importance of *all* inherited characteristics, whether gender and land rights as a dichotomy, we emphasize the interactions between them.

9 For various discussions on empowerment, see Kabeer (1999, 2001) focuses on three dimensions that define the capacity to exercise strategic life choices: access to resources, agency, and outcomes. Amartya Sen (1985, 1999) has written extensively on the importance of substantive freedoms and the individual freedom to choose and achieve different outcomes.

economically upwardly mobile segments of these women groups that initiated the surge in participation (which was not restricted to voter turnout alone). We can test the proposition, empirically, that the impetus for the rise in political participation of the Scheduled caste women, called “second democratic upsurge,”<sup>10</sup> was provided by the upwardly mobile segments of the lower women groups. These led consecutively, or would lead, to the greater participation of the “backward” sections of these groups, as discussed in the literature.<sup>11</sup> Getting a handle on this phenomenon is possible only through a study of the *interaction* of women empowerment and habitation of land for landless, i.e., by isolating which state government empowerment policies in urban localities *within* a scheduled caste women driving the surge. This article, while presenting a preliminary discussion on the need for a more nuanced approach, does not attempt an exhaustive summary of the literature on the women empowerment and its defining characteristics vis-a-vis habitation of land for landless, other than discussing the link between women empowerment and occupations.<sup>12</sup> Nor does it explore the underlying the mechanism leading to the creation or preparation of gender and land inequality –or those that may be driving change or influencing persistence in the patterns we observe.

The present article divided into following parts: part 2 outline the literature in the Women Empowerment and habitation of land for landless, part 3 lists the primary questions posed, part 4 discusses the data and measures, part 5 explains the methods employed, part 6 provides the results and analysis and part 7 concludes with a wider conceptual discussion.

## 2. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HABITATION OF LAND FOR LANDLESS ASSOCIATION

According to Beteille, the significant characteristics of empowerment have been context driven rather than theory driven. What is context that brings the idea of empowerment so insistently to the attention of Indians? In a nutshell, that context is the contradiction between a hierarchical social order and democratic social order<sup>13</sup>. The most deep rooted forms of inequality, built into the structure of traditional Indian, society, are those based on caste and on gender. Thought the inequalities of caste and gender both run very deep, they also cut across each other since women as well as men are members of every caste,

10 According to Yogendra Yadav, the “second democratic upsurge” of the 1990s saw the further broadening the “participatory base of Indian democracy,” with the increased political participation of scheduled castes. Yogendra Yadav, “Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge: Trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics in the 1990s,” in *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, eds, Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hassan, Rajeev Bhargava, and Balveer Arora (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.120-45.

11 Palshikar and Kumar observe the more privileged backgrounds of the ‘active participants’ in politics in Suhas Palshikar and Sanjay Kumar, “Participatory Norms: How Broad-Based Is It?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 39:51, (December 18-24, 2004), pp-5412-417.

12 Among others, some examples of these studies are Agarwal, Bina (1994), *A field of one’s own: Gender and land rights in South Asia*, Cambridge university press, p 576, Agarwal has stressed the need to maintain “as as consistently as possible” the distinction between women and land rights , see Agarwal, Bina (1997) “‘Bargaining’ and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household” in *Feminist Economics* v.3 (1)

13 Andre Beteille (1999) *Empowerment*, Economic and Political Weekly, March 6-13, pp 589.

from the lowest to the highest, and there are men in the lowest of caste just as there are women in the highest<sup>14</sup>. In practice, however, many of these relations between women and habitation of land for landless may be considered to be at similar levels for the purpose of social interaction between state and women empowerment.

Habitation of land for landless in urban localities is one of the less debated concepts in the social sciences. In contrast to migration, and women empowerment has generally been “defined primarily by access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, local organizational capacity.” We use an appropriate allotment of housing sites by the government in urban localities to the landless scheduled caste women beneficiaries schema (discussed later) for the analysis. The other possible determinants of empowerment such as social, economic, cultural and political are beyond the scope of this paper. It is necessary to emphasize that here empowerment is context/subjective measure, rather than objective/theory driven. That is to say that it is based on the notions of particular identities located in urban localities.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

First I ask: what is the empirical relationship between women empowerment and habitation of land for landless scheduled caste women in urban localities? This question allows us to test whether there is more congruence of women empowerment and government schemes for the advancement of scheduled caste women in urban localities<sup>15</sup>. I ask: has the congruence between women empowerment and origins of government schemes in urban locality increased over time? Finally, to analyze the interaction of women empowerment and origins of government schemes in urban locality (Ongole) on specific outcomes, e.g., *women empowerment destination*, I ask: Do SCs find it harder to move up than members from other communities/castes from the same urban localities<sup>16</sup>.

### 4. DATA AND MEASURES

I use data from the individual-level habitation of land beneficiary “House Pattas” records, 2009 data set from the revenue department in Ongole Tahsildar office, with approximately 120 respondents out of total 309 beneficiaries in the locality. The major advantage of the beneficiary “House Pattas” record for our study is its inclusion of detailed individual-level information; with this we also used civil supplies department records for the information of their caste and income levels.

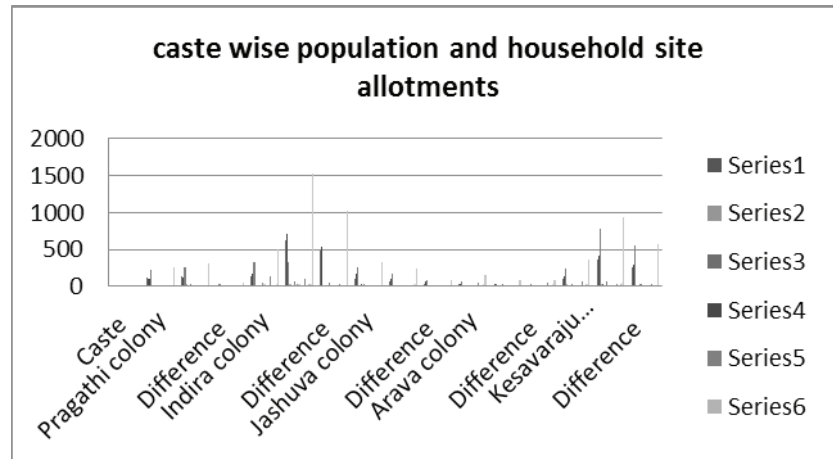
### 5. METHODS

We employ two techniques used to analyse classified tables to study the association between methods women empowerment and government schemes. First we analyzed the

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p590

<sup>15</sup> Sessa Kethineni, and Gail Diane Humiston (2010) “Dalits, the “Oppressed People” of India: How are Their Social, Economic, and Human Rights Addressed?” *War Crimes, Genocide, & Crimes against Humanity*, volume 4, pp-99-140.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp-99-140.

**Table1: Household Pattas and Caste, Occupation wise list in urban locality**

Source: 30<sup>th</sup> July: 2010, house patta beneficiary list from revenue department,

revenue beneficiary records with public distribution system (ration cards), later analyzed the standard municipal taxation on the habitation of house for landless scheduled caste women in the locality under study.

The second technique we employed is the case study method where we recorded the full details to analyse the women empowerment and government schemes.

## 6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As specific previously, this paper poses three questions on the relationship between women empowerment and government schemes in urban localities for the habitation of houses for homeless. We now answer these questions using the aforementioned methods.

Question one: *What is the empirical relationship between women empowerment and habitation of land for landless scheduled caste women in urban localities?*

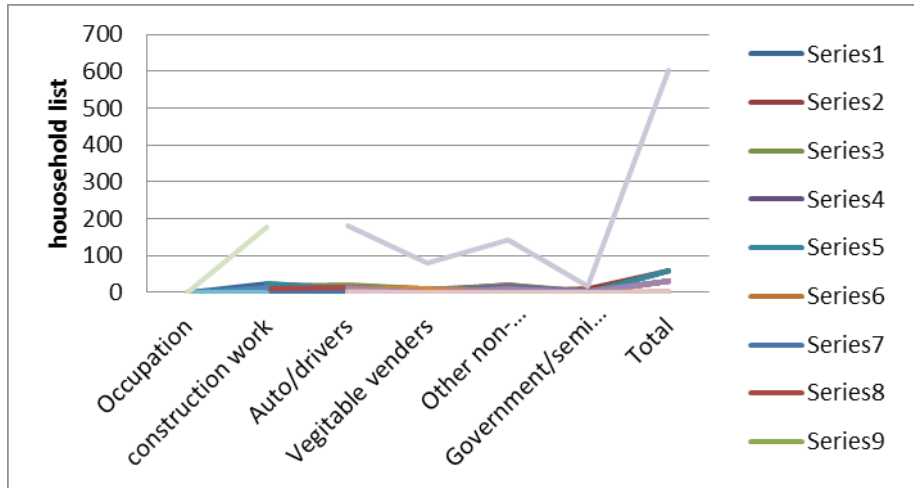
For establishing the relationship between women empowerment and habitation of land for landless scheduled caste women in urban localities

Every urban habitation of house sites in the town has certain common resources. Theoretically, these auctions are open auctions and everyone, including Dalits, is free to participate in these auctions. The oppressed castes, in league with their compatriots in the bureaucracy and political parties, have monopolized these auctions over a long period of time, thus depriving the Dalits of their rightful share in common resources such as water. Socialization process in the urban site between Dalits and Non-Dalits still cannot be tapped for the better. For every social activity of Dalits there is a need to depend upon the other castes for borrowing money for marriage rituals, other ceremonies, and education of the child etc.

Most of the people in the locality seem to be satisfied with what little housing they have.



Table 2: Occupation levels of beneficiaries by caste in Urban Locality, Ongole



Source: 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2010, Laila Cyclone Report, Ongole Tahsildar Office.

It perhaps indicates a very practical outlook of making the best of the available resources. Taking the domestic and occupational needs into account, different occupational groups deployed the space available for their housing in particular patterns.

### 6.1. The Second Question

I ask: has the congruence between women empowerment and origins of government schemes in urban locality increased over time?

The employees, whose economic position is relatively better, have better housing. A common feature of their houses is a room to serve as drawing room, bedroom and kitchen. Sometimes large bamboo baskets are also used for house making. In Dalit houses, where the shops as well as the residence are located, trade is transacted in the front room. Many Dalit houses in locality area as built with no provision for sanitation and hygiene. They are ill ventilated and often lack drainage. In locality, garbage is developed near the dwelling houses. There is also no provision for latrines in the Dalit ‘Wadas’.

There are two kinds of ration cards issued by the state government of Andhra Pradesh. One is white color ration card issued to the people who were below the poverty line. The second type of ration card is pink in color issued to the people whose income is not more than rupees 38,000. To find out economic condition of Dalits in the locality this was used.

### 6.2. Third Question

I ask: Do SCs find it harder to move up than members from other communities/castes from the same urban localities<sup>17</sup>.

When we look at the table 1 which explains the government allotment of the land sites

17 Ibid, pp-99-140.

for the landless communities in urban localities by caste as well by their economic situation tells us that the government has given house sites to the all caste groups but the relationship between the caste groups explains the empowerment levels and access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, local organizational capacity is very low when it compared to other caste groups.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to study the relationship between women empowerment and habitation of household sites for the land less scheduled castes people in urban localities. We find the following: first, although the relationship between women empowerment and habitation of household sites for the land less scheduled castes is not completely straightforward, a tentative picture of congruence between the government allotments of land sites to the landless women and their empowerment. High castes are having more access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, local organizational capacities though they are not residing in the localities.

The second observation through the study is that the lower caste women groups are helping the higher caste women in participating and associating with political parties, in a way the higher caste women are using the lower caste women for their political gains.

## 8. REFERENCE

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