

## ADAPTING COMMUNICATION TO EMPOWER DALIT WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF DALIT STHREE SAKTHI

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The word Dalit has been originated from Sanskrit word ‘dal’, which means broken, ground-down, downtrodden, oppressed, persecuted, or exploited. The roots of the term Dalit can be traced back to the *Purusha Suktam* of *Rig Veda* (see notes) where we find the first reference of the caste system. The people who were formerly referred as untouchables or *harijans* (see notes) are today increasingly adopting the term Dalit as a name for themselves. It is worth mentioning here that Dalit refers to one’s caste rather than class. Since long, in India, a few menial castes associated with the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupations has born the stigma of untouchability. The so called Dalits are the people falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system in India: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Dalits form the outcastes of the society and are considered tainted and polluting. Therefore, Dalits have been both physically and socially excluded from the rest of society. It has been 67years since India gained independence. But even now, in most parts of India, Dalits are exploited in various forms. As a result, many organizations have mushroomed in all corners of India to address the issues of Dalits. The purpose of this study is to examine the key role played by communication to empower Dalit women with the help of a case study of *Dalit Stthree Sakthi* (DSS), the only organization in Andhra Pradesh that works exclusively for the empowerment of Dalit women.

**KEY WORDS:** Dalit, dalit women, communication, empowerment, Dalit Stthree Sakthi, untouchable, India

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