Case Studies of Rural Scheduled Caste Women

This chapter deals with case studies of rural Scheduled Caste women who have received land or who have claimed land as well as some women who worked as agricultural labourers. It focuses on the problems they faced during the process of claiming land or because of not having land. It also deals with those cases where the condition of women has improved due to the possession of land. They are all SC women, belonging to the various castes like Bhagat, Batwal and Chamar in the selected villages in R.S Pura Block of Jammu district.

Case- I

Respondent name – Raj Kumari
Age- 40 years
Marital Status- Unmarried
Educational Qualification- 8th Standard
Caste - Bhagat

Raj Kumari resides in village Chak Agra. She has two brothers namely Raj Kumar and Sat Paul and both are married and have two sons each. She is an unmarried woman of 40 years age. Her parents met with an accident and died a few years back. She narrated her sad story that till her parents were alive, her life was great. She never bothered about anything. Though she was unmarried but she did not care about that much. The behaviour of her brothers was also fine with her. But suddenly after her parents death the conduct of her brothers changed towards her. Her sisters-in-law (bhabis) started criticising her of being unable to get married and considered her as a burden (bojh) on them. On the very small pretext they blamed and abused her. She suffered the taunts and venom of her bhabis on every other day.

Getting fed of all these nok- jhonk (arguments) her elder brother ousted her from their house. She has been deprived of her share both in her parental land as well as other property. Now she has taken shelter at her cousin sister’s house. Whenever she asked for her share in the parental property her brothers and their wives quarrelled with her and beat her mercilessly and refused to give her anything. With the help of her cousin sister’s husband she has filed a written complaint before the police.
Raj Kumari also approached the village panchayat for the distribution of her parental land and other property for getting her share but the concerned panchayat also did not pay any heed to the request of the poor woman. The panchayat instead favoured the brothers of Raj Kumari and tried to dissolve the issue. The panchayat advised her to make compromise with her brothers. But she never gave up.

Finally Raj Kumari filed a case in the court against her two brothers and their wives. All the accused faced trial before the court of JMIC R.S Pura. They had been facing the trial for the past three years.

The judgment came in favour of Raj Kumari and the court decided that Raj Kumari should be given share in her father’s land. She got 6 Kanals of land. She is very happy that justice has been done to her and she can live independently on her own without the mercy of her brothers.

This case study shows that till date the daughters are being deprived in the property of their parents as share holders. This reflects the patriarchal mind set of Indian society which discriminates against women with respect to their share in the property.

**Case- II**

**Respondent name** – Shanti Devi  
**Age** - 35  
**Marital Status**- Married  
**Qualification** – 12th  
**Caste**- Batwal

**Shanti Devi** is a 35 year old woman. She has been married in the village Chak Agra, tehsil R.S Pura District Jammu and her natal village is Chakroi of R.S Pura tehsil. She has one brother and three sisters. All her sisters are elder than her and brother is younger to her. Her brother and all sisters have been married. But her one sister who had been married in the far flung area met with an accident and died along with her husband on the spot. She left her eight years daughter namely Priya behind her. There is no body in Priya’s grandparents’ house to look after her well. Priya’s **Chachi** (father’s brother wife) treated her like a servant and asked her to do the
household chores. So the mother of Shanti Devi was not ready to keep her granddaughter in that house and took her granddaughter along with her. Now Priya is residing with her maternal grandmother in her house.

But the brother of Shanti Devi and his wife were totally against this decision of her mother. They had fear in the inner core of the heart that when the girl grows up then they have to manage dowry for her and other expenditure on her marriage. That is why they always picked quarrels with her mother on the point that why she has kept her granddaughter in their house without their consent. They threatened the mother of Shanti Devi that it would be better for her to send her granddaughter in her own parents’ house otherwise it would not be good for her also. But the mother of Shanti Devi was not at all ready to send her granddaughter back.

The mother of Shanti Devi is an old lady and felt very upset and insecure with the behaviour of her own son and daughter-in-law. Her son’s wife could not take care of her well. Her behaviour with the little girl Priya was also not so good. She was not ready to spend even a single penny on Priya. The mother of Shanti Devi got widows old age pension and herself pay Priya’s school fee every month. But this thing is also not tolerated by her daughter-in-law.

On getting angry with the misbehaviour of her brother and his wife with her mother, Shanti Devi decided to claim her share in the land of her father. According to her if a son is not able to take care of his parents in their old age then he has no right to get the whole property of his parents.

Her relationship with her brother and his wife has gone bad and she asked her brother to give her and other sisters share in the land. But he refused to give any share from the land by saying that only sons have the right over any sort of property and not the daughters and how dare she is asking for the land.

Shanti Devi initially filed a case before the court of Tehsildar for the division of land of her deceased father in six equal shares. But she could not get any kind of relief from that respective court.

But she never lost hope and filed a civil suit in the court of law for the partition of land in six equal shares and the case is subjudiced in the court of law. Till now she is waiting for the judgement.
According to the Jammu and Kashmir Hindu Succession Act 1956 daughters have equal rights like sons in the parental property. It is likely that she will get her share. But the case study shows that there are Acts for the property rights of women, but they are not implemented properly. It also suggests how important it is for women to have land or any other property in their name and also how difficult it is to claim their right in the patriarchal society.

Case - III
Respondent name- Kaushalaya Devi
Age- 75
Marital Status- Widow
Qualification – Illiterate
Caste- Chamar

Kaushalaya Devi (name changed) is an old lady of 75 years residing in the village Parlah. She got married at the age of 15 years with Kura Ram, a farmer. She was very happy with her married life in her husband’s house. Though her husband earned less but she also worked very hard with him in order to make their condition financially better. She gave birth to two sons and two daughters. But unfortunately after ten years of marriage her husband expired. The sudden death of her husband made her psychologically and physically weak. She did not find any way to feed her small children because the only source of income for the family was the small farm which she and her husband both cultivated. In order to meet the daily requirements of the family she started working as a casual labourer in the house of Rajputs for some years. She used to clean the sheds of the cattle, made cow dung cakes and did other similar menial jobs.

She took the help of her brother-in-law in order to cultivate the land because she herself was involved as labourer in others house. During some initial years her brother-in-law was very cooperative. He cultivated her land well and gave her share of crops but with the passage of time he became very greedy. Though the land was only divided verbally and not legally in the family, her brother-in-law with the help of his father-in-law got allotted that piece of land in his own name. He stopped giving her any share of crops. But when she rebelled her in-laws threatened her that if she approached the panchayat or other authority they would also snatch the room from her in which she was living and throw her and her children out of the house. That act of
her in-laws made her life more miserable. As she was helpless and there was no body to help her she remained quiet because she thought that if her in-laws snatched that room from her then where would she go.

Then she decided to seek help from her own brothers. She requested them to give her a small piece of land as she was having no source of income to feed her small children. On seeing her miserable condition her mother agreed to give her a small piece of land but her brothers and their wives started feeling jealous and insecure about the property. Her brothers were not in favour of giving anything to their sister. This thing led to the troubles in her natal family from her brothers and their wives. But her mother took the stand and decided to give her a small piece of land from her own share. She asked her sons to divide the land and keep her share separate as she wanted to give her share to her daughter. Finally she got a piece of land from her mother but her brothers boycotted her totally.

**Case- IV**

**Respondent name – Kimti Devi**

**Age – 62**

**Marital Status- Widow**

**Qualification- Illiterate**

**Caste- Bhagat**

Kimti Devi is a resident of village Badyal Brahmana in R.S Pura tehsil of Jammu District. She is a widow of 62 years. She is totally illiterate. She narrated her sad story by saying that she got married at an early age of 15 years. She was living a very happy married life and after the first year of her marriage she gave birth to a baby boy. Then after that she did not have any child. When her son became five years old, one day while he was playing in the fields he was bitten by a snake and died on the spot. One of the neighboured women gave her the sad news. This was shocking news for Kimti Devi and she became mentally and physically weak with the passage of time. She started behaving abnormally. Her husband became very sad with the condition of Kimti Devi as it got worse day by day.

Then the elder brother of her husband advised him to adopt one of his children in order to improve the condition of Kimti Devi. Earlier he did not agree but when he
saw that the condition of her wife was getting worse he adopted a son of his elder
brother.

Both Kimti Devi and her husband treated the boy as their own child. Soon the
condition of Kimti Devi started improving and getting better. After sometime she
became totally fit and healthy. When the boy became 20 years old they got him
married. The daughter- in- law of Kimti Devi did not like her in- laws much and
forced her husband to get separated from them. She convinced her husband that they
are not his real parents and it was better for them to get separated. Finally they got
separated. Both Kimti Devi and her husband were living alone. But after two years the
husband of Kimti Devi died due to tuberculosis. Kimti Devi became single and
lonely.

Then the son and her daughter-in-law came back by saying that they realised
their mistake now and wanted to live with her in order to take care of her as there was
no body to look after her. Kimti Devi did not realise that they were after the property.
One day her son told her that he wanted to purchase a tractor on loan and for this her
thumb impression was required. The poor old lady believed the words of her greedy
son and gave her thumb impression. After that the behaviour of her son and his wife
changed totally towards her. They did not even gave her two times meals properly.
They usually quarrelled with her unnecessarily and one day they threw her out of the
house. Then Kimti Devi came to know from the village Patwari that she herself
transferred the land to her son’s name. Then only she realised the whole plot of his
son and the daughter in law.

Now the poor old woman is homeless and has taken shelter in the ashram of
some Sanstha (Organisation). She told the researcher that the real blood is real. In this
selfish world everybody is behind money. If you have money or land in your name
then only your children will look after you otherwise nobody is yours.

Case- V
Respondent name – Kartaro Devi
Age- 55
Marital Status- Widow
Qualification- 5th Standard
Caste- Batwal
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Kartaro Devi is residing in Chakroi village alone as her husband has died since long and she is an issueless woman. She has four acres of land which is in her name after the death of her husband. The real sister of the Kartaro Devi is also residing in the same village as both the sisters are married in the same village. Her sister is younger to her and has two daughters and two sons.

Kartaro is a very strong and bold lady. She used to cultivate her land with the help of agricultural labourers. But one day one of the sons of the sister of Kartaro Devi came to her house and asked her to come and stay with him. He would look after her as well as her landed property. Kartaro Devi agreed to stay with him because she had no issue of her own.

Kartaro Devi said that she is living a very happy and satisfied life with the son of her sister. He treats her more than her own real mother. His wife also looks after her well. She gives her three times meal on the bed, washes her clothes etc. She said that all this care and good treatment is given to her only because she is having four acres of land on her name. This shows that possession of land by women makes their position strong and they are treated well by the family members. It was also a good sign that Kartaro Devi knows this well, and most probably would not transfer her land to her nephew in her life time.

Case - VI

Respondent name- Phulan Devi
Age – 42
Marital Status- Unmarried
Qualification- 8th Standard
Caste- Bhagat

Phulan Devi is an unmarried women resident of village Chakroi of tehsil R.S Pura, District Jammu. She is 42 years old. Phulan Devi revealed her critical story that her father and mother expired when she was only 16 years old. The parents of Phulan Devi had no male issue and only two daughters namely Pushpa Devi and Phulan Devi. Pushpa Devi is about 19 years elder to Phulan Devi and she is married. After the death of parents of Phulan Devi her elder sister Pushpa along with her husband and children came to stay permanently in her natal home in order to take care of her younger sister as she remained alone after the death of her parents. Phulan Devi was
brought up by her elder sister. The father of Phulan Devi was an owner of 4 acres of land. As the parents of Phulan Devi had no son ultimately the land got distributed among both the sisters.

According to Phulan Devi, Pushpa treats her worse than a servant and does not give her good food and proper dress to wear. She said that her sister also did not want her to get married and it is because of her she remained unmarried. She became greedy about the whole property of her father. Phulan Devi is not so qualified and aware about the property rights but one day one neighbour woman advised her to get her share from her sister as the land should be equally distributed among both the sisters. Phulan Devi when asked her sister about her share her sister beat her up mercilessly. She said that Phulan has no share in the property of her father because she is unmarried.

Phulan Devi with the help of some villagers approached the village panchayat with the request for getting her share in the parental property but the sarpanch and other members supported her elder sister and declared she cannot get any share from her parental land.

Then she filed a suit for partition before the Tehsildar but she is so poor and helpless that she cannot engage a counsel to fight a case on her behalf. So many years have been passed but the poor woman has not obtained any share from the landed property of her parents. She is leading a very miserable life by working in the shop of other people as a daily wager. This is because of unfortunate and regretful attitude of her own sister towards her.

Case- VII

Respondent name – Banti Devi
Age – 80
Marital status- Widow
Qualification- Illiterate
Caste – Chamar

Banti Devi is a resident of village Dablehar, tehsil R.S Pura of Jammu District. Banti Devi is a widow woman. She has two daughters and one son. Banti
Devi’s eldest daughter Pinki (name changed) got married at an early age at a nearby village. She has three daughters and one son. One day the husband of Pinki met with an accident and died due to head injury leaving behind his widow and four children. The life of Pinki became miserable because she was married to a farmer and had no source of income left behind. She started working in the factory in order to earn her livelihood. Pinki approached her mother and requested her mother that there is no earning member in the family to support her and requested to give her some land for the survival of her family. Banti Devi was not able to see the bad condition of her daughter and gave her 5 kanals of land.

Her second daughter who is residing at her in-laws home happily came to her mother and said that she should be also given land because her in-laws were harassing her that since her sister has got land, she should ask her mother to give her land also. Banti Devi in order to save the happy married life of her second daughter gave 5 kanals of land to her also.

But her son got angry with her and told her that why she gave land to her daughters. He told her that she is not his real mother because if she was his real mother she would not have done any injustice with him. He said that only he is the rightful owner of the whole property of his father. No daughter can claim over the property or land of her parents. Then after that her son boycotted her and both his sisters because he considered them greedy and selfish. He declared that they were given their share as a dowry and after marriage the daughters have to take their share from their in-laws house only. They have no right over the property of her parents.

Now the widowed woman cries a lot because her only son has broken all relations with her. She is living in a separate room in the same house and sometimes visits her daughters’ house. She is passing her old days in a very critical condition. She said that only money or property values in this present world. Relations have no value in this present time. It is only the property which brings the relations far and nearer. If the parents have property then only their children look after them.
Mitho Devi is a resident of Chakrohi Village, tehsil R.S Pura District Jammu. She has been married at the age of 19 years. Her husband is a resident of Kotli village. The respondent is the only daughter of her parents and has three brothers. The husband of Mitho Devi is a very bad person according to her. She said that at the time of her marriage her parents had given a fat dowry to her. She had been given fridge, cooler, furniture and jewellery also. Her parents had spent a good amount of money at her marriage because she is the single daughter of her parents and an only sister of three brothers.

The husband of Mitho Devi was 10th pass and worked as an accountant in a private finance company at the time of her marriage. But after 3 years of her marriage he left the job. Mitho Devi had given birth to daughter in the first year of her marriage. Her husband started drinking alcohol and the respondent was beaten by him every other day. One day he tried to burn her alive by throwing kerosene oil on her. Mitho Devi’s parents and brothers got angry with the behaviour of her husband and wanted to send him to jail in case of wife battering. But on the request of her parents in-law they did not file any case. With the passage of time the behaviour of her husband became even worse. He sold off all the items of the house which had been given as a dowry to Mitho Devi. He had also snatched the jewellery of Mitho Devi and lost it in gambling. These things also had bad impression on her daughter as she was growing up. So one day Mitho Devi along with her daughter came permanently to her parents’ house at village Chakroi. Her father when divided all his land among her brothers also kept a share for her. He gave her 3 kanals of land and also 3 marlas plot. She is spending the earnings from that land on the education of her daughter. Now slowly and steadily she is trying to forget all her sufferings. She is very thankful to her father. Her views about the property rights of women are that it is essential for women especially in case of separation because it makes the woman self dependent.
Case- IX
Respondent name- Sheetal Devi
Age- 36
Marital Status- Married
Qualification- 10th Standard
Caste- Batwal

Sheetal Devi is a 36 years old woman resident of village Dablehar, tehsil R.S Pura of Jammu District. She got married at the age of 23 years with Sham Lal who is a tailor. Sheetal is very happy and well settled in her in-laws house. She is a mother of a daughter and a son. Her husband’s family also have suitable land to cultivate.

Sheetal said her father is a gardener (Mali) in the army department. He is also the owner of 4 Kamah of land. She has two elder brothers in her parental family. She said that her father and brothers had arranged her marriage very well. They have given her good dowry also. Sheetal said that her father has given her share in land also because he treated her equivalent to his sons. Though she has not got equal share as her brothers got but she is happy and satisfied with the share she got in the landed property because she said that usually parents do not give their daughters any share in the property (land) but she is very lucky to have such parents. Her brothers are also very kind to her and they did not object the decision of her father. Besides this she also got good dowry.

According to Sheetal as she got land from her father her status at her in-laws house is really good. Regarding dowry and property rights Sheetal’s views are that these are very essential for women. If a woman cannot bring dowry at her marriage she is not treated well at her in- laws house.

Case - X
Respondent name – Geeta Devi
Age – 52
Marital Status- Widow
Qualification- 8th Standard
Caste- Chamar
Geeta Devi is a resident of village Chak Agra. Her natal village is Phinder. Geeta Devi got married at the age of 25 years with Balak Ram who worked as a carpenter. Geeta Devi considered herself as a very unlucky person because only after three years of her marriage her husband died. Her husband left behind her with a two year old daughter.

After her husband’s death Geeta’s life became worse as she faced daily humiliation by her mother-in-law who considered her as very unlucky for her son who died at an early age. But Geeta Devi tolerated all those things only for her daughter. Her in-laws treated her like a bonded labourer. She elaborated that she had to get up at 4.00 am and worked till late in the night. She revealed her painful experience that she used to wash clothes of the whole family, carried the bundles of fodder on her head from the fields to her house, used to clean the wheat, and also carried 25 kg of wheat on her head to atta chakki for grinding it. But She never complained about it to her parents. But after sometime her parents brought her back to her parental home on seeing her miserable condition and her in- laws did not objected to it at all.

Then after some years, Geeta Devi’s parents forced her to get married again. Earlier she refused but at last she agreed because her mother told her to fight back and adjust to difficult conditions. Then she decided to claim her share in the property (land) from her in-laws (her deceased husband). But when she claimed none were ready to give any share to Geeta on the ground that she had remarried to someone else. But Geeta Devi called the panchayat and begged before them for justice. Then the panchayat took the decision that Geeta Devi should be given share in the landed property because her daughter has full right over the property of her father but as she was minor that time so the share remains with Geeta Devi till her daughter grows up. Thus, Geeta Devi was given 5 kanals of land by her father-in-law. Her positive outlook suggests that a woman learns and also look for ways and means to deal with difficult situations in her life. Now Geeta is cultivating the land and the earnings which she got from it gets deposited in the name of her daughter that she can use it in her future.
Case- XI
Respondent name- Sheela Devi
Age – 60
Marital Status- Widow
Qualification- Illiterate

Sheela Devi is a widowed woman resident of village Parlah, tehsil R.S Pura of Jammu District. Sheela Devi wanted her independent share in the land. She said that her husband was the owner of 10 Kanals of land but after the death of her husband, her son had transferred the land to his name. She has two daughters who are married and only one son. She said that when her son had transferred the land to his name she had not object because she was assured that she would be taken care of by her son. He was unmarried that time. But after some time he got married and got busy in his own life. He and his wife did not pay much attention towards her. They did not even provide her proper medicine when she fell ill.

Moreover her son along with his family has migrated to R.S Pura for the education of his children. He did not take her along with him. She was left as a destitute as there was no one else in the family to look after her. She gave an application to the Tehsildar but her application was rejected by the said authority on the ground that the previous mutation was done by her with her own consent. She said that she is helpless and do not know about the legal proceedings where to go or where not to go. With eyes full of tears she said “ Mera apna beta hi mera nhi bna budape main” (My own son did not become my own during old age).

Case - XII
Respondent name- Reena Rani
Age- 35
Marital status- Married
Qualification- 10th Standard
Caste- Bhagat
Reena Rani is a resident of Badyal Brahmana village. She has been married to Gopal Charan who is a fourth class employee in PHE department. The financial condition of her in-laws is not so good. They also do not have much land to cultivate. Reena Devi said that she has inherited the land from her father. Her father has given her 4 kanals of land as a gift in her marriage as he is the owner of 32 kanals of land. She said that income she earns from cultivating the land inherited from her father helps her run her family better and also pay her daughter’s school fees. She has also opened a saving bank account on the name of both of her daughters. She said that as she contributes in the income of the family, this gives her space to voice her opinion too. She said that she is the loving daughter-in-law among all the daughters-in-law in the family of her in-laws.

Reena said that it is only because she is financially independent there is less ‘tu tu main main’ (arguments) or quarrel between her and her husband. He also gives her full respect. She said that it is only the economic independence or the ownership of land/property which gives a woman the right to live with full dignity and honour in the society especially in the in-laws house. Thus the bargaining space for a woman is strengthened if she has ownership rights.

Case -XIII

Respondent name- Shamo Devi
Age – 40
Marital Status – Married
Qualification- Middle
Caste- Chamar

Shamo Devi, a resident of Chak Aslam village has been married to Sundar Lal. Shamo Devi said that she was married at the young age of 18 years as her father was an orthodox type of person. He did not support the education of daughters much. She said that she was good in studies and wanted to study further but due to restrictions from the parents she was able to pass only eighth standard and did not study further.

She said that at the time of her marriage her husband was working in the power department as a casual employee. He used to earn only 2000 rupees per month and spend almost half of the salary on drinking alcohol. She said that she was beaten
by him sometimes. The financial condition of the family started becoming worse. She got only one *kucch* room at her in-laws house. On seeing her in the destitute condition her father gave her some land to cultivate. This land is given legally to her on her name only because her father thought that if he gave the land on her husband’s name then he will definitely sell it off.

Shamo Devi said that she herself cultivates the land. With the income she earns from cultivating the land she is able to construct two *pucca* rooms. Her husband also deters from beating her now as he fears that she can find another way if he harasses her. She said that now she has become financially independent. She said that though she was not as much qualified to join a job but as she is propertied now she is not less than anyone. She is very much confident that her physical material situation is improved with the land ownership rights. She said that it is only having property that led to empowerment of women in real sense. According to her without property her life would have been ruined.

**Case Studies of SC women working as agricultural labourers**

**Case - XIV**

Name: Pushpa Devi  
Age : 50 years  
Marital Status: Widow  
Qualification: Illiterate  
Caste: Bhagat  
Occupation: Agricultural labourer

*Pushpa Devi* is a resident of chakroi village of R.S Pura block. She is a widow and belongs to *Bhagat* caste which comes under scheduled caste category. She is 50 years old and is totally illiterate. She is living in a semi-*pucca* house of two rooms and a kitchen made of mud (*kucch*). Her husband’s name was Mangu Ram. She was married at a young age of 18 years. She has four children, two daughters and two sons. Her first son was born after ten years of her marriage. Her husband was a daily wager and used to earn Rs.2500 per month. He was an alcoholic and used to spend most of his earnings on drinking. Although they were not financially sound even when her husband was alive, she never thought of working outside because her husband had never approved of it because of his orthodox and suspicious kind of nature. She worked with her husband in their own family farm. Her husband inherited
3 kanals of land from his parents. But after her husband’s death she started working as an agricultural labourer in the field of others because she had to feed a family of five members (four children and self).

She narrated that before marriage also she was working as an agricultural labourer with her family in the fields of higher caste (Sainis) because her natal family was also very poor. That is why she is habitual of doing that kind of laborious work. Now she herself with the help of her children cultivates her own 3 Kanals of land which is on her name and also works as an agricultural labourer seasonally i.e during the season of harvesting and sowing to supplement her income. She was paid sometimes in cash and sometimes in kind (crops). The wages are fixed i.e Rs. 400 per Kanal for harvesting and in case of kind 1/10th share of the harvested crop. e.g. if she harvested ten bundles of crop (commonly known as Parri) she gets one bundle. Sometimes she finds work in surrounding villages also and has to commute some distance daily. There is no restriction on her now going out to work. She says that except the stocking and distribution of fertilizers, seeds or insecticides or management of the measured water supply which are a close preserve of the males, all other agricultural operations like sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, grain processing etc are done by women. The wages of the males and females for the similar kind of work are almost the same. The male earnings often go towards liquor and tobacco and the women’s earnings actually support the family.

Her routine activities include looking after her children, cooking, washing, taking care of the domestic animals, milking them, cleaning their sheds, making cow dung cakes (which is used as fuel for cooking the food) etc besides doing agricultural work.

She exuded confidence saying that she would bring her children up on correct lines. She enjoyed looking after her children and said she had no regrets over her life. She has a deep feeling of satisfaction that because of her hard work she has been able to overcome the tough times of her life.
Case- XV

Name: Santosh Kumari
Age : 35
Marital Status: Married
Qualification: 7\textsuperscript{th} Standard
Caste: Batwal
Occupation: Agricultural labourer

\textit{Santosh Kumari} is a resident of Dablehar village. She is a married woman of 35 years of age. She was married at the age of 20 years. She belongs to the Batwal caste, designated as Scheduled Caste in J&K. She has passed her 7\textsuperscript{th} standard and after that because of lack of self interest she had discontinued her studies. Also her parents were not interested regarding her further studies. Her natal family was very poor. Her natal village is Bilaspur of tehsil Bishnah. Her parents were landless and used to work in the fields of Zamindars as agricultural labourers of the same village. She also accompanied them during the peak seasons. As she was the elder daughter of her parents she took care of her younger brothers and sisters when her parents were away at work and also managed the domestic chores.

She is married to Ashok Kumar, a resident of Dablehar village who is carpenter by profession. He does not have his own shop and is working on someone else’s shop. His monthly income is about Rs. 3000 only. Santosh Kumari has three children, two daughters and a son. The daughters are elder and the son is younger. She said that with this meagre income it is very difficult to meet the family expenses as her children are studying in private school. In order to supplement her family income and to give good education to her children she is working as an agricultural labourer. She narrated that it is very difficult during the harvesting season carrying bundles of harvested crop to the spot where threshing is done. Each bundle is carried as a head load by her, mostly bare footed, walking over the sharp shrubs of the harvested fields. According to her about 6 hours a day she is working at her place of work and about 8 hours she works at her home. Her daily work includes bringing fodder from the fields, chaff- cutting, preparing feed- mix for the cattle, giving water, bathing and cleaning the cattle, cleaning their sheds, making cow-dung cakes etc in addition to other domestic chores like cooking, washing, cleaning utensils, taking care of children. However, milking of animals is done by her husband.
She said that in addition to these tasks she is also hired by her high caste
neighbourers during the marriage ceremonies for cleaning the utensils and sometimes
for washing the clothes. She never hesitates in doing that task also although this adds
extra workload on her. By doing all these additional works she is able to make some
savings. According to her a poor and scheduled caste woman’s life is full of hardships
and struggle. She narrated that ‘maine to peeche bhi garibi dekhi aur ab aage bhi
garibi hai’(I have seen poverty before and now also).

Case- XVI

Name: Gyano Kumari
Age : 45
Marital Status: Married
Qualification: Primary (5th Standard)
Caste: Batwal
Occupation: Agricultural labourer

Gyano Kumari is a 45 years old woman belonging to Batwal caste and is a
resident of village Chak Agra of R.S Pura block. She is living in a nuclear family with
her husband and four children, two daughters and two sons. She is living in a semi-
pucca house of two rooms. There is no kitchen and no toilet in her house. She is
working as an agricultural labourer in the field of others.

The natal village of Gyano Kumari is Rangpur of R.S Pura block. Father of
Gyano Kumari was a poor labourer. She studied in Government school only up to
primary level. Gyano Kumari got married to Tikku Ram at the age of 19 years. Tikku
Ram was working as a daily wager and earned Rs. 3000 per month. But this amount
was hardly sufficient to make both ends meet for a family of six persons. But
somehow they could manage because Gyano Kumari also worked as an agricultural
labourer in the field of others. Tikku Ram had inherited a farm of 3 Kanals from his
parents. Gyano Devi also helped her husband in the cultivation of their own family
farm. The produce of the farm was used only for their own family consumption.

She narrated her bad times when one day due to an accident, Tikku Ram
became handicap and was unable to do any kind of work. Then the financial condition
of the family also become worse as the children were growing and their demands
were also increasing. This increased the workload on Gyano Devi because then she
was the only earner in the family as her husband was unable to work. Thus she
worked hard as a labourer in the fields of others and also worked in the house of Jats (land owning caste) having dairy farms for cleaning the sheds of the cattle and for making the cow dung cakes. She has also worked in the factory for nearly one year and then left it because it was a difficult job.

Now her children have grown up and help her to cultivate her own family farm. They have also leased-in the land of Khatries (high caste). This supplements their family income. She is now satisfied that because of her hard work she is able to overcome the bad times of her life.

**Case -XVII**

**Name:** Shello Devi  
**Age:** 35  
**Marital Status:** Separated  
**Qualification:** Middle (8th standard)  
**Caste:** Bhagat  
**Occupation:** Agricultural labourer

*Shello Devi* is a resident of Badyal Brahmana village. She is a separated woman of 35 years of age. She belongs to Bhagat caste. She was married at the age of 20 years. She has studied up to 8th standard. She is now living at her natal home with her daughter who is 13 years old and a son who is 10 years old.

Shello Devi was married to Ashok Kumar, a resident of Pindi village. He was a tailor by profession. However, being an alcoholic he used to spend all his earnings on drinking. He was suspicious of her and used to doubt her every act. He used to come home drunk and beat her, alleging that she was having extra marital relations. After two years of her marriage her daughter was born. She had tolerated all the violence because of her daughter. Her husband criticised her for giving birth to a daughter. Then after three years her son was born. She thought that as her husband wanted a son, may be their relation would become better. But nothing happened like that. She said that she got nothing from her marriage neither love, nor respect, not even any kind of mental peace. The struggle in the family had been too much for her to bear. She used to worry all the time. She left the house of her husband at the very next day when she was badly beaten by her husband. She went back to her parental
home. Her father decided not to send her back to her in-laws house and she started staying with her parents.

Shello Devi knew that her parental family is also not economically sound and she would become a burden on her parents. Then she decided to work because she had to bring up her children. She was aware that with her 8th standard qualification she would not be able to get any better job and therefore decided to do agricultural labour. Now she is working as an agricultural labourer in the fields of others and is able to make her children study. She said that it is not easy to work in the fields because it is a laborious task. She does all kind of work like transplanting the seedlings, harvesting, threshing, winnowing etc. And also the household chores, milking the cattle, cutting grass for them, and making cow dung cakes. She hardly gets any spare time for herself.

Her daughter is studying in Government school and her son is studying in private academy. She makes every possible effort to give good education to her children. She wants her children to study up to higher level and get good government jobs. She said that she is working hard only for her children.

Case- XVIII

Name: Satya Devi  
Age : 40 years  
Marital Status: Widow  
Qualification: Illiterate  
Caste: Bhagat  
Occupation: Agricultural labourer

_Satya Devi_ is a 40 year old widowed woman belonging to _Bhagat_ caste. She belongs to lower income group. She with her two daughters and a son is living in village Chakroi of R.S Pura block. She is totally illiterate. She was married at the age of 20 years. After ten years of her marriage she lost her husband. Her husband, who had studied up to 8th standard was a casual lineman in the electricity department and earned Rs. 3000 per month.

On a fateful day her husband, while working with the electric wires on an electric pole got electric shock accidentally and died immediately. As her husband was a casual employee, she did not get any compensation from electricity department.
Satya Devi’s family consists of five members. This includes her three children—two daughters and a son—and her 80 years old mother-in-law. Before her husband’s death also Pyari Devi worked as an agricultural labourer in the field of others in order to supplement her family’s income. But after the death of her husband the whole responsibility of the family came on her shoulders. She gets work within as well as outside the village. She does all the agricultural tasks like pulling the seedlings, planting them, harvesting, winnowing. She gets wages at the rate of Rs. 400 per Kanal. She said that earlier she preferred wages in the form of kind but now she prefers cash. She also keeps two buffaloes in order to sell the milk because according to her there is a great profit in it. She understands the value of education and wants to give good education to her children.

These case studies of rural Scheduled Caste women show that they suffer as a consequence of their gender, caste and class and as being less educated and less aware about their rights. They own very little land and usually work on the land of others. Most of them are agricultural labourers and are engaged in subsistence agriculture work, animal husbandry and household chores.

Summing Up: The case studies bring out struggle of Scheduled Caste rural women’s everyday life, especially in the crises situation like the separation or death of the husband. In most of the cases, they single handedly bring up their children. It is seen that in such situations, they are not helped by their in-laws family and even their natal family is not very cooperative, except the woman’s mother and sometimes her father who give her a piece of land. Fighting cases in the courts and entering into legal battles have been found to be difficult for them. The overall picture is a sad and unfortunate reflection of the way elders, particularly widows are treated by their own sons and other family members.

However, the case studies have also shown the significance of possessing land and what benefits it gave to women. These case studies reflect the fight of women against the patriarchal casteist structure of the Indian rural society.