CHAPTER – II
DALITS CONDITIONS IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE
AND POST INDEPENDENCE

2.1 HISTORY OF THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE:

It is clear from the discussion in chapter two, the complier between
the two major groups of people took place around the middle of the second
millennium (1500 BC) this possible is the point and movement in History
from which the History of the people known as Dailts begins, this section is
divided into two parts: the first deals with early growth of the Dalit
problem; and second, with the period beginning with the period A.D. 700. ¹

2.2 EARLY DEVELOPMENT:

“It should be clear from the discussion above that the history of the
Dalits began almost 3,500 years ago. H.G. Wells Tells now at that point of
History, on group (the nomad folk) defeated the other groups (the settled
folk) and now as a result the history of the both the groups was completely
changed. He wrote

“Down pour the united nomads on the unwarlike unarmed plains;
there ensures a war of conquest. Instead of carrying off the booty,
the conquerors settle down the conquered land which becomes all
booty for them, the villagers and townsmen are reduced to
servitude and tribute paying, they become hewers wood and
drawers of water and the leaders of the nomads become kings and
princes, masters and aristocrats”.²

A number of other writers have also made the same point the Dalit
have been reduced to their present State. “By centuries of exploration and
servility”. This is corroborated besides, the Rig Veda, by other later literary
soirees. A few references are given below to show this development. ³
In the Rig Veda, when is supposed to be the oldest literary source available to us; the famous Purusasukta hymn mentions the existence of four castes when it says”. The Brahman was his mouth of both his arms was the Rajanya (Ksatriya) made, his thighs become the Vaishya, from his feet the Sudra was produced on the basis of this hymn, orthodox people believe that the four fold division of Indian society exists from the earliest times, but according some scholars, this hymn was composed at a later time and therefore, does not represent the State of the Rig Vedic period. This may be true but it is also true that the Dalit problem took root right in the Rig Vedic times a result of the conflict between two hostile peoples. 4

The two great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, explicitly tells us how for condition of the Dalits had deteriorated by the time these were composed.

Among the literary sources which throw light on the degraded State of Dalits is the manuscript (the ordinances of raw) which was possible composed during the period A.D.-I-700 and against the supremacy of Brahmans even the revolt of Mahavira (540-468 B.C.) and Gautam Buddha (563-483 B.C.), the founders of Jainism and Buddhism more or less failed. Later development, the period which the discussions here is concerned from A.D. 700 till date, can be divided broadly into three periods; Muslim period, A.D. 700 to 1700, British period from A.D. 1700 to 1947, and post-independence period, 1947 date.
2.3 MUSLIM PERIOD:

As seen above, by the time the Manusmriti (A.D. 700) reached its final literary form with its strict social and religions discipline to govern the graded Indian society, the religions of prophet Mohammed also came into existence in the Arab World. The Arabs, first conquest of was in A.D. 712; but only in A.D. 1206 the slave Dynasty established its rule in Delhi. The Muslim was in leader continued to come and go with their leaders like Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghali. After the Slave Dynasty, India was ruled by different Muslim rulers and dynasties, such as Khiljis, Sayyids, Suris and Moghuls till the death of the last Mughal King Bahadur Shah 1862. During this long period of Muslim dominating in India, one would have expected some changes in the lot of the Dalits as Islam upholds the Principles of equality of all human beings. But after going over the social and religious conditions of the Muslim period one sees that more are less the State of the Dalits continues before. 5

2.4 BRITISH PERIOD:

The most important period of Indian History is the British Technology this period began with the inauguration of the East India Company (London) in A.D. 1599. But for the first 150 years the East India Company showed interest only in business and trade. It was only from A.D. 1744 onward that Lord Robert Clive turned into Military Power, in 1857 for the first time a major revolt took place in the Indian (British) army dominated mainly by upper castes. The main reason for this revolt as it was
a threat to the caste system and its practices. After crushing the revolt the British with a proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858 transferred political authority from the company to the British crown. During the British period a number of events took place, which finally led the country to freedom in 1947. As per as the religious and social practices were concerned the British maintained the status quo and followed a policy of non-interference, “actively upholding and supporting the caste”. Even the protection of caste was decreed by an Act of Parliament. In an order, it was declared “due legend may be had to the civil and religious usages of the nation.”

The work of Christian missionaries in many ways influenced the situation in India, particularly in challenging the various religious traditions to evaluate and rethink their approach to the poor and various Dalit groups. But they also uphold the Varna system. They even accepted it in the Christian church, which this was the case with both the British rulers and Christian missionaries in general one could explicit very little from them which could be of help to the Dalits.

During the British Period number of small movements came into being which showed concern for the Dalits. Before the British, during the Muslim period, the Bhakti movement helped the cause of the Dalits, particularly in the spiritual sphere. This happened mostly through the Bhakti saints who either were Dalits. But there well some personalities, who were involved directly in the struggle either changes or regular, who deserve mention here, because they certainly left their impact on the present
Dalit movement. They include Jotiba Pule, Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhi. Among these, two first, two were for the total upliftment of the Dalits, Gandhi’s work was limited to certain reforms, more within the Hindu Society.

During this period new titles and phrases were coined to denote the Dalits. For examples for the first time the existence of the “depressed classes” was recognized in the text of the Act of 1919. In 1931 the census superintendent of Assam made a suggestion to change this title the depressed classes to the “Exterior Castes”, the argument for this suggestion was that it is a broader title, because its connotation does not limit itself to “out case” people (which means people who are outside the cast system) on the other hand, Exterior castes would include those who had been caste out because of same breach of caste rules. More pertinent to our discussion and the struggle of the Dalits is the term “Scheduled Castes” which was the first coined by the Simon Commissions (appointed by the British Government) and embodied in the Government of Indian Act 1935, in Section 305.

Prior to this coinage, the term depressed classes was used in Government circles and also used by members of various reforms movements. But till 1932 the later expression was used more or less for all kinds of “Depressed” people including the “untouchables”, also till than no effort was made to define this term on a religious basis. It was in 1932 that for the first time the expression “Depressed Classes” was used exclusively for people with an untouchable back ground. The British Government,
which was at that time also trying to help all other minority communities such as Muslims, Christians, Anglo-Indians and so on, excluded them from the definition of Depressed Classes while bestowing on them special benefits. Such as giving them separate communal electorates. In 1931 a special committee was also got up to draw a “Schedule” of the castes and classes covered under the Depressed Classes. Also at that time in 1931, the Round Table Conference, was called in London. At that conference, Gandhi and Ambedkar were key members. Dr. Ambedkar demanded a separate electorate for the Depressed classes, at this conference he also proposed that the untouchables be called “Protestant Hindus” or “Non-Conformist Hindu”. But Gandhi objected to Ambedkar’s demand for separate electorate. By that time, of course, Gandhi had also introduced his favorite term “Harijan” to be used in place of untouchable, which was not accepted or liked by the untouchable themselves.

As Gandhi and Ambedkar did not agree with each other at the Round Table Conference, no final decision was taken. Finally, the whole matter of a separate communal electorate was left to the chairman of the conference Prime Ramsay Macdonald, who in 1932 issued communal Award. In this way he also replaced the expression “Depressed classes” with “Scheduled Castes” (from then on the untouchables of India were known as “Scheduled Castes”), later the same expression was included in the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, Gandhi opposed the communal award in the case of the Scheduled Castes because of the fear of their getting separated from
Hindu society in general. Therefore, he went on a last unto death for which nobody was willing to take the responsibility. Even Ambedkar had to bow and agree to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Gandhi. According to this agreement in a place of a “Separate electorate”, “joint” electorate for the Scheduled Castes with caste Hindus majority was accepted.11

This, according to Upendra Baxi, was a defeat for the Political Liberal, Dr. Ambedkar by his shrewd opponent Gandhi. “Gandhi gambled on Ambedkar’s self-restraint and won”, says Baxi and the costs of the victory would have to be recorded by the untouchable historians of future India.12 In this way one more chance of effective liberates and freedom was lost by the Dalits. But Dr. Ambedkar at least got a large number of seats for the Dalits, which of course was an achievement.

2.5 LEGAL INITIATIVES AGAINST UNTOUCHABILITY:

Though a number of reformers from different parts of India attempted to eradicate untouchability and even devoted their entire life to this cause, desired to change could not be delivered owing to the fact that the notion of untouchability had got deeply ingrained in the Dalits Socio-cultural milieu and there was no formal efforts to abolish untouchability legally. However, the effort of Dr. Ambedkar and few others did result in enactment of a number of laws to protect the interests of the Dalits in the British India. For Instance, in British India, Lord Ellenborough, prohibited the legal recognition of slavery in India. Following these Act, “the caste
Disabilities Removal Act XXI of 1850” was also passed aiming at remaining disabilities arising out of Dalits lower caste back ground. However, it is was only at the turn of nineteenth century the “Depressed Classes” because an important focus of concern with the reformers. It was only 1909, that fears of threatened Hindu majorities and proposals for special Legislative representation for “untouchables” shifted “untouchability” from realm of Philanthropy into political arena. In 1917, the Indian National Congress reversed its longest standing policy of excluding “social reforms” from its programme in passing a resistant anti disabilities resolution. And in 1923 the Bombay Legislative council resolved that the untouchables be allowed to use all public watering places, wells, schools dispensability etc. National Congress Annual Meeting at Karachi in 1931 concluded that (a) no disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his of her caste in regards to public employment, office of power of honours and in the exercise of any trade or calling (b) Equal rights of all citizens in regard to public roads, well schools and other place of public resort. 13

On September 25, 1932 a conference of caste Hindus which was held to rectifying the Poona pact adopted the following “the congress resolved that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchables by reason of his birth and that those have been so regarded will have the same right as other Hindus is regard to the use of public wells public scholars public roads and another public institutions. This shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest
of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before. That time, it is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all kind leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means an early removal of all shoal disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchability classes including the bar in impact of admission to temple".  

Beside a number of temples entry and anti-disabilities bills were introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly and in the Madras and Bombay Legislatives during 1932 and 1936. But these bills enjoyed only limited support within the congress and met with stiff resistance from the orthodox and a decidedly cool reception from the government. It may also be noted that none of these bills contained any penal provisions. In 1938 “the Madras Removal of Civil Disabilities Act 1938 (Madras Act XXI of 1938) came into operation, it was in 1938 when Bombay and Madras had passed the temple entry Acts that for the first time in British India did the government intervene to secure the opening of temples for the untouchables. Between 1943-1950, 17 such laws were exacted by different princes of India. But these laws brought no significant change about caste untouchability continued as major social evils in India. The British established Legislative Bodies as early as 1861, it did give due importance eradicate these social evils".  

It is therefore necessary to understand the extent to which the Dalits were protected from untouchability and atrocities through these laws?
It may be noted that most of the laws passed in the British India, it were mainly region-specific, operating at the regional or provincial levels. And there was no law, which could cover the entire nation. Enactment of such laws because a possible reality only after India’s Independence.

Consequently a new organization was formed by the name “All India Scheduled Caste Federation” which was formally announced by Dr. Ambedkar at Nagpur 1942. The federation demands for the guarantee of minimum representation in the Legislative, Executive and Public Services and Reasonable Protections to the untouchabilities in the future Constitution. Besides, the consciousness of the Harijans rose up as a result of the Gandian movement and the work done by the many voluntary organization with Ramakrishna Mission servant, the servant of India society the Harijan Sevak Sangh. All India Scheduled Castes Federation, Dr. Ambedkar being the Chairman of the Drafting committee for the future Constitution of Indian managed to introduce a provision, for the removal of untouchability and other safeguards to protect the interests of untouchables in the Constitution of India, the struggle of Dr. Ambedkar continued with his mission to make Scheduled Castes a political factor to reckon with

“The use of political means to change the condition and status of the Scheduled Caste was first made by Ambedkar. Though his writings and speeches he emphasis the fact that political power was the key to all progress and that the Scheduled Castes could achieve salvation, if they captured power by organizing that schedules with a separate party. He believed that only which they believed political power, the social and economic conditions of the schedule castes and schedule tribes improved through political action he wanted to force the hands of the caste Hindus to ameliorate the conditions in which the schedule caste and schedule tribes were living”.
The fact remains that, the contributions made by both Ambedkar and Gandhiji towards the upliftment and protection of Scheduled Castes can be understood as complementary to each other. Their profound contributions also shaped official policy in the subsequent years after independence.

2.6 POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD AND THE PROBLEM OF DALITS:

The problem of the Dalits and the struggle for liberation is continuing in the post-independence period with equal favour, because even India’s political freedom in 1947 was notable to help them in getting out of their condition. Prior to independence, the British rulers used the policy of “non-interference” in local, cultural and religious practices in order to rule the people of India and for that they even created a new vocabulary. The new rules of independent of India have continued to use the same vocabulary and expressions which in no way have helped the masses, particularly the Dalits.

This was perhaps the reason why most of the Dalit move results and their leaders were not supportive of the freedom movement led by the upper castes under the Indian National Congress. While piloting the Constitution of Independence India on November 4, 1948. Dr. Ambedkar did say it was “workable” and “flexible” but even this character of the construction has been used only to maintain the status quo of the set rules of life in Indian society because it has only gone in favour of the powerful not the mass of powerless people the Constitution itself as Dr. Ambedkar said is not “bad” it is the use of its flexibility which has proved bad, it is because of this truth, that the condition of the Dalits even after independence, has not improved.
In order to clarify this a few examples are considered and discussed from the post independence (1947) efforts. This discussion will be confined to three major example, which hopefully will help to understand the issue.

2.7 THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULE CASTES) ORDER, 1950:

The Indian Constitution as per Article 341(1) empowers the President of India “by public notification, (10) specify the castes, races tribes or parts or groups within castes races tribes which shall for the purposes of this contribution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes”. Again the Constitution, without defining in Article 366 (24) only refers back to the power given to the President of India in Article 341. But once the President has given such an order, the list prepared on the basis of Article 342 (2) on Scheduled Castes can be changed only through an Act of Parliament. While exercising the powers conferred in Article 341(1) on him, the President of India promulgated an order in 1950, known as the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) order 1950 in the list of the Scheduled Castes. Thus, order almost re-enacted the list of Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1956. 18

Concerning the Scheduled Caste people the Constitution has followed the basis the British Government laid down in 1936. This applies not only the list, but also the criterion which the Britain Government used to define “Scheduled Caste”, because the same is followed for the order of 1950 on that basis the Third paragraph no reads “Not with standing anything contained paragraph 2, no person who profession a religion, different from Hindu shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste” this
paragraph was charged in 1956 by parliament to “Hindu or Sikh” and again in May 1990 to Hindu or Sikh or Buddhist”. So the position of the President and Parliament are the same as that of the British Government in 1932-36 because it has used “religion” as the criterion to define the schedule castes, but a political party like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a still more orthodox and biased criterion in regard to the Scheduled Castes or the Dalits.¹⁹

On June 12, 1990 at Thiruvantanthapuram in South India, a senior leader of the BJP, L.K. Advani stated his party's criterion on this question, which was reported by the Indian Express: the BJP leader, however, said that his party was stoutly opposed to any move by the V.P. Singh government to extend resolution to converts to Islam and Christianity from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It had supported the extension of reservation to SC/ST converts to Buddhism because under the Constitution Buddhists and Sikhs and Jains were classified as Hindus. Reservation to converts to other religious would violate the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly he said. ²⁰

2.8 THE COMMISSION IN SC/ST GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

Report of the first commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the period ending 31st December 1951:-

The Constitution of India also empowers the Government in Articles 338(1) to appoint a special officer for the Scheduled Castes and
Scheduled Tribes. This Articles in the second clause States the duty of the special officer in these words.

It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes and for Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution and report to the president of the working of those safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct and the President shall cause all such reports to be held because each house of Parliament.

Under this article the President of India appointed L.M. Shrikant as the just commissioner (Special Officer) on November 18, 1950 was responsibility Stated in the second clause of articles 338. Thus, work is concerned with the Dalit (Scheduled Castes) and with that part of the report of L.M. Shrikant covering the period upto December 31, 1951, which help in knowing the State of the Dalits in the early period of post Independence. Shrikant open his report with these words, which are worth noting caste in Hindu society is still the most powerful factor in determining a man’s dignity calling on profession. Even a rigid caste system is not found anywhere also outside India. All even professions involve handling of the so-called dirty jobs like tanning and skinning of hides, manufacture of leather goods, sweeping of streets, scavenging etc. allotted to some casts also known as Harijans who are about 5 crores according to the latest figures available. 21

Shrikant as the First Commissioner, undertook an extensive tour to get first hand information about the Dalits on whom he spent space in his
report describing what had observed and had seen personally for examples: about the implementation of the Social Disabilities Removal Acts adopted by various States, he says that very few crimes committed against the Dalits have come to light according to him

“The main reason for this is that Harijans (Dalits) have no courage to come forward either to draw water from the common wells or to go to shops, public restaurants, hotels etc., as they are generally economically developed on Non-Harijans in one way or the other. At places where offences committed under these Acts have not been made cognizable, it is very difficult for the Scheduled Caste people to take any action against culprits because the people are incapable to taken any action if a report is made to them.” 22

Shrikant’s view again gets support from the report of the commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of April 1985, March 1986. This report 35 years after the first report of 1951, proves that these atrocities against the Dalits continue as in 1950-51 on before.23 Even the later commissioner observed that while 15 percent of the posts were reserved for the Scheduled Castes only 2.2 percent were filled.24

These commissioner reports show that historically the development of the Dalits problem continuing on the same pattern as in the past. It is because no effort has been made to change the religious-cum-social-cum-cultural features in which society that the Dalits problem perpetuated.

Report of the Backward Classes Commission 1980 (properly known as Mandal commission): Marc Galanter helps in understanding the underlying values of the Mandal commission report when he opens his work on competing equalities: law and the backward classes in India. With these words:
India’s system of preferential treatment for historically disadvantaged sanctions of the population is unprecedented in scope and extent. India embraced equality as a cardinal value against a background of elaborated, valued and clearly perceived in equalities. Her Constitutional policies off set these proceed from an awareness of the entrenched and cultivate nature of group in equalities the result has been an array of programmes that I call, collectively a policy of compensatory discrimination. 25

Galanter’s Statement is possibly the best summary of the Mandal Commissions efforts. Mandal and other commissioners reports are part of an array of programmes launched by the Indian government to uplift those people so citizens of India. Who in the history of India, have been kept forcibly and systematically at a disadvantage. To deal with this historical evil which is an ongoing reality in the Indian society, independent India accepted “equality as a cardinal value” for all citizens. The truth has been asked right in the preamble of our Constitution. Also, as mentioned earlier Article 15(1) (3) and 16(1) (3) offer equality as judgemental right to all citizens of India. But in the same Articles, clause 15(4) and 16(4) make a special provision for the care of those citizens who are socially and educationally backward along with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

It is Constitutional remedies that the post independence India had a vision of egalitarian nation. It is “Constitution has emphasized the unity and integrity of the nation as a parliament value and insisted upon equality and dignity as a Constitutional fundamental. In a powerful endeavour to
produce a casteless society, the Constitution has promised equal protection of laws to the lowliest and the lost, forbidden untouchability and made free access to all places of public resort a fundamental right”. More especially, Article 46 of the Indian Constitution unequivocally expresses.

“The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the schedule castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.” 26

Many privileges which were considered as serious offences in the case of the untouchables under Manu’s Law, became the fundamental rights of these caste groups under the Indian Constitution of India. For example, Manu denied them education inter-dinning and inter-caste marriage, but the Constitution has guaranteed them accesses to all these privileges under the various provisions of Constitution a number of programme have been planned and implemented encouraging inter caste marriages and inter-dinning and to protect them the stigma of untouchability and caste based discriminations. For instance, Article 17 of the Constitution declares:

“Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law”.27

According to Article 15(2), no citizens shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restrictions condition with regard to:

a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and place of public entertainment or
b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly art of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

Article 29(2) forbids persons incharge of “any educational institutions receiving aid out of the State funds.” To deny admission to an applicant “on grounds any of religion, race, caste, language or any of them”. Article 23 prohibits be gar and forced labour.

Under these special Constitutional provision number of special practices which was considered proper under Manu’s laws became illegal under the modern laws. With a view to making those wrongs as right and those rights and wrong; a number of enactments were passed. 28

PCR Act, 1955: To give effect to Article 17 and other such provisions of the Indian Constitution, the parliament came out with a special law known “the untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955”. This Act was subsequently amended in 1976 and renamed as the “protection of civil Rights Act 1955” to make the provisions of the Act move stringent. With a view to carrying out the provisions, of this Act the government of India, as provided, under the Act, notified the rules of the Act 13, “PCR Rules, 1977”. 29

POA Act, 1989, since cases of atrocities on SCs and STs well not carried under the provisions of the PCR Act 1955, and atrocities against the SCs and STs continued unabated, the parliament passed yet another important Act in 1989 known as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (POA Act) which came into effect from
30 October 1990, and for carrying out the provisions of this Act, the government of India notified the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules 1995 on 31st March 1995.  

In post independence period, Panchayat Raj assumed greater significance as most of the population was residing in villages and the utmost importance lied in making people participate in affairs of the State. The first systematized community development programme (CDP) started in 1952 with the help of USA. The central objective of CDP was to make people participate in the development process. Block Development Officers, along with gram sevaks and sevikas, were appointed to guide as well as persuade people to participate in the governments programmes. But various factors like lack of consciousness, finances, proper leadership etc. made the success of these programmes very limited.

It was Balwantrai, Mehta Committee which was appointed in 1956 to assess as to how far CDP has succeeded in socio-economic changes by utilizing local initiative and in creating new institutions for the same purposes. As the committee was not satisfied with the result of the programme, it recommended the introduction of democratic decentralization in which panchayats were to form the basis of the democracy. The committee also recommended the administrative decentralization under the control of elected bodies for the effective implementation of the developmental programmes.
The emergency was lifted in 1977 and Janata Party came to power. After observing the pathetic condition of PRIs, it was decided to appoint a committee under the chairmanship of Asoka Mehta to revive the interest in Panchayat Raj. The committee observed that weaker sections of the society and most of the institutions are dominated by socially and economically dominant people. Thus, decentralization does not meant only the decentralization of power and people’s participation but supporting rural development.33

The committee recommended the two tier system constituting Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayats consisting the cluster of villages covering almost 15,000 to 20,000 of population. They are elected directly. To protect the interests of weaker sections, provisions of reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population was also made.

Although States like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka experimented with this model, but with the change both in each or and State level governments, the report could not be implemented fully. However, Panchayati Raj assumed importance and became an important issue of debate since beginning of 1980s. The planning commission appointed a working group in 1983 known as the Hanmanth Rao Committee, which stressed the need for public participation at local level. During the six plan, it was proposed to give impetus to decentralization. Afterwards, in 1985, the G.V.K. Rao Committee was set up to study the role of Panchayat Raj bodies
and their relationship. Yet another committee was set up in 1986 under the chairmanship of L. M. Singhvi. 34

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment while reservation to Dalits, has made it compulsory that one third of the seats reserved for them be filled by Dalit women. The conformity legislations in the State have also reiterated this provision. While there is a burgeoning literature on the role played by women representatives in the new panchayats in the attention has been paid to Dalit women elected on reserved seats, specially those elected sarpanchas. Special problems faced by these women have not been the subject of much scholarly or official scrutiny. Existing the studies suggest that the impact of reservations has been differential. In States where the social status of women was traditionally been better and levels of literacy, status in society and participation in the work force are higher, women have been able to take advantage of this measure. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, even prior to the new legislations, women had contested elections and occupied reserved positions and contributed to the following of panchayats.35

In some States, there has been little no acceptance of reservation for the lower castes in village. This has resulted in atrocities against panchayat members including women. Four case studies from Madhya Pradesh reveal that the power structure in villages in these States remains oppressive. Dalit women and men who stood for election were beaten, deal raped and ill treated and their land grabbed by the members of his higher castes who were not prepared to relinquish power to the lower castes. An easier method
to regain power is to put up proxy candidates but keep the control in the hands of the dominant castes, always men; the incapacity of women, particularly Dalit women to assert their rights is at the root of the problem. The study showed that reservation for Dalits particularly for women, is accepted in form but seldom in substance. Any change in the statues quo is resisted some times violently (Mathew and Nayak) this points to the limitations as well as the possibilities of the State intervention without the necessary concurrent social support systems. Similar experiences have been reported from Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Bihar.  

*2.9 CONCLUSION:*

Thus, on the basis of the discussion and various views, it may be said that the Dalits share their historical roots with indigenous people.

First, the Dalits are descendents of the earliest settler of India.

Second, the history of the Dalits present problem began around 1500 BC and for more than 3,500 years they have suffered and continuous to suffer multiple oppressions.

Third because of the long history of oppression the Dalits have now accepted “as a part of the natural order of things on as a privileges” and this is a real sense in the inner captivity of their being from which they need liberation or protection.

During the independence movement Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to end untouchability by raising the value of all work and removing the indignity attached to “impure” work. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is still worshiped
across India for his mobilization and leadership of these oppressed peoples against caste discrimination and all its attended evils and cruelties. Including the unique strategy of mass conversion to Buddhism. After India’s independent from British rule untouchable and other oppressed castes known as the “Scheduled Castes” (SC), since they were listed in a scheduled or annexure, by the first president of India under Article 341 of the Indian Constitution.
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18. James Massey, “Dalit in India” 1st Published, New Delhi, 1995, p. 54.


27. Ibid, 29.


32. Ibid, p. 23.


34. Ibid, pp. 24-25.

35. Ibid, p. 34.

36. Ibid, p. 35.