Chapter - VI
Conclusion
CHAPTER-VI
CONCLUSION

Fifty years of independence have gone by. Nearly 40 to 50 per cent of the population of India are in Poverty. This is a deplorable condition of India. Among the poor, in India, the landless agricultural villagers are the worst victims, and in particular the rural unorganised Dalits. Through the constitutional measures and policy formulations, systematic efforts have been taken to improve the bad socio-economic conditions of the rural Dalits, who were through centuries of the Indian history had got accustomed to the institutional legitimisation of their ascribed low status. Therefore it is of foremost importance to know the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the Dalits who were supposed to be the main beneficiaries of any government in promoting their welfare. The present micro level primary data study has been made to reveal the real socio-economic conditions of the rural unorganised Dalits who are having in large numbers in Indian villages. Here the main findings of the study are given after having made a scientific analysis of the primary data collected from 12 villages of the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

The main objective of the study is to study the socio-economic conditions of the Unorganised Rural Dalit (SC/ST). For executing this study, Tirunelveli District was selected. The requisite data were collected from the Collector Office at Tirunelveli. In order to study the objectives as well as to verify the hypotheses, some 250 beneficiaries were randomly selected in 12 sample villages from three Taluks of Tirunelveli, and then the required data were collected. These data were pertaining to the year 1997. It is appropriate at this juncture to highlight some of the major findings and offer some suggestions.

This concluding chapter is divided into two sections. In section one, the findings are derived from the analysis of the survey. In section two, the suggestions or policy recommendations are proposed.
6.0 Section One: Main findings

The age of the workers:
As the age of the workers is important in the family, details of age were collected. Nearly 74 per cent of the workforce belong to the active population in the age group of 25-55 years. As an exception some 3 per cent of the workers are below 25 years. Therefore the workers are found to be young and energetic.

Sex-wise analysis:
87 per cent are male workers and 13 per cent are females. The trend of the participation of women workers in the economic activities seems to be encouraging and increasing. It is a reassuring trend that women workers also compete as breadwinners in a domain of men.

Language:
All speak Tamil though some of the elder Sakkiliars speak Telugu.

Caste-wise analysis:
The study of sub-castes becomes important because of the differences in their economic conditions. Among the Dalits there are so many sub-castes. In this sample study only the predominant sub-castes of Dalits viz Pallar, Parayar and Sakkiliar were taken for study. 51 per cent of the sample are drawn from the Pallar caste and other two castes constitute the other 49 per cent Parayars (36%) and Sakkiliars (13%).

Religion-wise analysis:
In the religion-wise study, it is found that Dalit Hindus are numerically larger, which is (86 per cent) compared to Dalit Christians, who are 14 per cent. This study throws some light on the impact of religion on the socio-economic conditions of the respondents. Though some have the opinion that after embracing Christianity, the Dalit Christians are
slightly better than their Hindu counterparts. However, their socio-economic conditions are of the same of the Dalit Hindus.

**Size of family:**

In the analysis of family size, the number of members in the family, earning members, dependency ratio, per capita income etc have been found out. A negative correlation is established between the size of the family and economic conditions. For example, the smaller the family, the better the economic conditions and vice-versa. Out of the 250 families surveyed, the modal families are 69 with 4 members, while the number of families above 4 members are 79, those below 4 members are 102. From this study, it is gathered that as many as 102 families have limited the family size to 3 or less. However, the fact that 79 families have more than 4 members would mean that the message of family planning has not effectively reached these families.

**Education:**

Though education is to be made available to all in India, only certain groups have been enjoying the benefit. In the past, the basic human right of education was denied to sudras and the Dalits. In the name of the division of labour, they were kept illiterate to do unorganised poorly paid and seasonal works like pasturing of animals, sowing, harvesting, thinning, stone cutting, beedi making etc. Therefore, the illiterates were preoccupied with searching for work daily for their very survival.

The literacy aspect has been analysed with respect to the educational status of the households, the workers and the respondents. What is notable is that out of 1058 members, 693 could read and write; this number indicates a literacy percentage of 66. This figure is equal to the overall average literacy of India. Further, among them there were 21 people with college and professional education, 132 had received higher secondary school education, 198 people had got middle school education and 342 members had finished primary education. Education in general has been within the reach of most of the members of the Dalit families.
The worrisome feature is that illiterates constitute 34 per cent of the sample, which is an obstacle for human development and progress. And if literacy is a parameter of the economic and social standing of a community, then the present sample indicates a high proportion of labour ardness. It is distressing to note that such a high rate of illiteracy stems from poverty and backwardness.

The location of the village is another cause for the illiteracy of some people of the villages. Villages near the main roads and with schooling facilities have higher rates of literacy than interior villages. Among the causes hindering literacy, poverty is the main one.

**Education among the work force:**
The total Scheduled Caste work force was 651, of which only 277 were illiterate, while 374 members were able to read and write. This group was 57 percent of the total Dalit workers. Sizable number of the sample respondents are illiterate. Even though there was a high literacy rate in the sample, still 43 percent of the people, that is 277 members, remained illiterate in modern times. This is a negative aspect of human and social development.

**Educational achievements among the respondents:**
Among the respondents that out of the total 250 respondents, 147 respondents had education not beyond fifth standard. That means that 58 percent of respondents were literate. It implies that a substantial amount of educational development has to take place in these regions.

**Between the total workforce and the respondents:**
Between the total workforce of the sample area and the respondents of the sample area, the literacy and illiteracy rates are more or less the same, that is 57 per cent and 58 per cent of literacy, and 43 percent and 42 percent of illiteracy. But there is a difference too. Among the workforces there is a slight increase in the status of education from the middle school level and one could see that people have higher education. But among the respondents there is a stagnation. They have not crossed the primary education.

Another point to be noted is that the area surrounding the selected villages did have some influence on the selected villages. All the villages are situated near Palayamkottai,
Tirunelveli and Sankarankoil towns and similar educationally developed places and these not only gave the accessibility but also influenced the people to have the desire for education. There was thus a kind of demonstration effect on the poor Dalits.

The accessibility of the educational institutions to the sample respondents is the major reason for the satisfactory level of education to a considerable number of persons. Moreover, the sample villages are surrounded by villages where affluent and educated people reside. These had developed their educational facilities along with modern amenities of good living and accessible roads. These were provided by public and Government agencies, which meant that their use was available to members of all castes, high and low.

The cumulative effect of all the above influences did play its role in changing the attitude of the people of the sample villages to achieve some measure of educational qualification, though not to a very great extent. This literacy achievement has not paved the way for getting employed.

The average years of education for all the members of the sample households were 5.05; the average years for the workforce household members were 4.47 and the average years of education of the respondents of the households were 4.35 years. This indicates that they had not reached beyond the primary level of education in all the categories. While analysing the educational status of the Dalits in all three classifications, one truth emerged that they had mostly primary education, that is from the first standard to the fifth standard. These results indicate that there was a high level of backwardness in all these three groups.

_Education among the sub-caste groups:_

The average years of education among the sub-castes indicate that more than 40 per cent of the Pallars, the Parayars and the Sakkiliars were illiterates. Though in all the castes there was some representation at all the educational levels, one could see that there was a declining tendency. That is after the higher secondary school level, there was no representation from the Sakkiliar caste. Probably this might due to the small sample size
of the Sakkiliars. Though there was representation in all the educational levels from the Pallars and the Parayars, there was a higher quantum of representation from the Parayar group rather than from the Pallar group.

The Parayars are a shade better than the other two sub-castes. The z-test carried out for the average years of education confirms that the Parayars have an average of 4.44 years, against the Pallars with 3.8 years and the Sakkiliars with 3.87 years. The educational standard of the Pallars seems to be lower than that of the other two groups, which is very much surprising. But there is a clear indication that the average education of the Dalits has not crossed even primary schooling.

**Education between the religious groups:**

By comparison, the Christian group had 23 per cent illiteracy as against the Hindu group with a high 45 per cent illiteracy. Though the average years of education is below the primary level, among the religious sub-groups, the Dalit Christians had better educational attainments than the Dalit Hindus. With the help of Chi-square test, the influence of religion on literacy was analysed and the test has confirmed the influence of religion on education. The z-test also confirms that religion has influenced education a little bit though not much. But the Dalit Christians could not gain much though there are several Christian educational institutions in and around Tirunelveli which is the study area.

**Occupation:**

An analysis of the occupation of the sample villagers indicates that the majority of the respondents are agricultural coolies. They form 67 per cent of the total. It is nearly two thirds of the total. Out of the remaining one third, 79 cases are unemployed that is 13 per cent of the total. The rest work in private companies. There are also one or two cases of self-employment and a few are rural artisans. Since work in agriculture is seasonal they remain unemployed during some unspecified periods. A silent segment of workforce comprises the housewives. Occupational distribution of the sample households shows that practically all of them carry on with low level and low paid jobs and practically all of them are poor.
Employment:
The central occupation was agriculture. It suffered from certain peculiarities. Ploughing, sowing seeds, transplantation, weeding, and harvesting, each had its peak days of work. In between, there would be many days of "no work". Hence in the first two seasons actual working days accounted for only one-third of the man-days available. For two-thirds, the workforce remained with no work or engaged themselves in some other occupation. In the other two seasons the situation was worse. Generally speaking, the workforce in the sample households was very much underemployed in all the four seasons.

The study of the employment pattern reveals that agricultural coolie work is available on an average for 50 to 90 days in a season. But a season-wise break up shows much less average work. In season I, the average man-days of work ranges between 41 and 51 days; in season II the average man-days of work ranges between 26 and 34 days; in season II the average man-days of work is 60 and in the IV season it is only 17 days. So for a total of 365 days in a year, a worker gets work for an average of 134 days only. Hence in the first two seasons actual working days account for one-third of the man-days available. It also indicates that the workforce in the sample households remain underemployed in all the four seasons.

The concentration of all the sample villages as a whole was seen mostly in chronically unemployed and underemployed status. These two status classes covered more than 80 per cent of the total workers. By a definition of employment classification, these workers come under the category of the underemployed. They are working on others' lands in the village.

Employment among the sub-caste groups:
An analysis of employment among the sub-castes shows that the Parayar group seems to get a better deal. Chronic unemployment is only 24 per cent. But the Pallar group has 31 per cent chronically unemployed members and the Sakkiliars 41 per cent. Therefore from the analysis it seems that the status of employment of the Sakkiliars was low and the status of employment of the Parayars was high. The seasonality of work is the main reason for the poor wage and living conditions. The employment available only during a
particular season is the major cause for the poor wage and living conditions of the sample respondents.

*Employment between the Religious groups:*

The adoption of Christianity by some Dalits does not give them any privilege or better opportunities in the case of employment. On the contrary, the Dalit Christians suffer due to chronic unemployment. Dalit Hindus get higher employment opportunities. In brief, it may be said that the Dalit Hindus get better employment opportunities than the Dalit Christians. Hence, Christianity does not confer any special benefits on the Dalits.

*Property ownership and Asset holdings:*

**Land:**

Property empowers both the individuals and households. Land holdings empower agricultural coolies. In local economics the wealth and status come from the land. The disadvantaged Dalits are typically landless and are highly correlated with landlessness in India. Possession of lands by the Sudras and the Dalits was considered blasphemy in the beginning. Even when the poor Dalits buy land after much trouble, it is often unproductive and frequently lies outside the irrigated areas. They have to depend upon the mercy of rain. The poor are usually unable to improve such plots, since they lack income and access to credit. If there is no rain for some years, then they have to sell the land at throw away prices for their daily bread.

In the survey it is found that the Dalits have very little areas of land. Out of the total 250 families 193 families, that is 78 per cent, were found to be landless and for them their day to day life mainly depended upon their daily earnings through coolie work though some families earned salaries from non-agricultural occupations also. Secondly only 7 families (2%) come under the type of farmers owning less than 2 hectares, that is coming under the lowest category of the category of farmers. The other 243 families (98%) could not be considered farmers though some 50 families (20%) owned meagre cents of land holdings which could not yield sufficient income even for
their subsistence. The average value of land works out to Rs. 5180 only, the highest value being Rs.24333 at Melapattam.

**Land among the sub-caste groups:**
In the category of land ownership, the Pallars enjoy a higher average value of land than the other two sub-castes. In the z-test carried out, the result was that the average value of the lands of the Pallars and the Parayars are higher than the average value of the land of the Sakkiliars. The average value of the lands of the Sakkiliars seems to be very low.

**Land between Religious groups:**
The average value of the lands of the Dalit Christians seems higher than that of the Dalit Hindus. The z-test also proves that there is no difference in the average value of the lands of the Dalit Christians and that of the Dalit Hindus. Hence both the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus are in the same position in holding lands, though they hold very limited amounts of land.

**Houses:**
Next to the ownership of land, houses become important as assets. The notable feature of housing is that all Dalits do have houses either tiled or thatched (46 per cent tiled houses, 37 per cent concrete and 20 per cent thatched,) and have electricity facility.
The average value of the sample houses was Rs.14394, meagre by any standard. The average value of the concrete houses was only Rs.25, 255.43 because the government under the National Rural Employment Programme built these houses. The houses were very small ones, covering an area of a few cents. The average value of the tiled houses was Rs.9635.78 and that of huts was Rs.3209.18.

**Houses among the sub-caste groups:**
The average value of the houses of the Parayars and that of the Pallars is almost equal. Secondly the average value of the houses of the Sakkiliars was lower than that of the Parayars and of the Pallars.

**Houses between the religious groups:**
In the comparison of the average value of the houses owned by the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit Christians the z-test shows a significant difference and therefore it is inferred that the average value of houses of the Dalit Hindus is higher than that of the Dalit Christians.
Livestock:
Livestock is wealth to the family of agricultural coolies and it is found that all coolies
have a total livestock value of Rs.2, 64,770 including 71 cows, 12 buffaloes, 108
sheep/goats and 96 chickens. While calculating the average value of the livestock, it was
found to be just Rs.1016.25. Only the Pallars possess the 10 work bullocks, for, they
have wet lands.

Livestock among the sub-caste groups:
A caste-wise break up shows that the average value of the livestock of the Pallars is
Rs.1303.94 which is greater than that of the Parayars at Rs.746.923, which again is less
than that of the Sakkiliars at Rs.975. The z-test confirms the finding that the Pallars
possess greater average value of livestock than the Parayars.

Livestock between the religious groups:
In the religion-wise distribution of livestock the Dalit Hindus have more cattle than the
Dalit Christians. By a z-test the significant level is worked out. It shows insignificant
difference in the average value of livestock between the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit
Christians.

Income Pattern:
Income being the basis for living, its analysis is very important. The wage employment
from non-agriculture seems to be the main source of income. (42 per cent); income from
land provided 21 per cent and from livestock 3 per cent. However inter-village variations
of income are significant. For example in one analysis, Reddiarpatty’s non-agricultural
wage income is as high as Rs.173200 and the lowest income is found from
Nellaiyappapuram at Rs.12000. The consistency of income level for the various sources
is tested by the co-efficient of variation. The test confirms that the income from the
agricultural coolie works is more stable and consistent because the C.V. was 40.124,
which is less than non-farm income with 71.327, land with 118.5 and livestock with
96.618. Therefore, these sample villagers always have to depend upon agricultural coolie
income.
In the ranges of income, the researcher has fixed a maximum of Rs.21000 and more. All the other incomes are brought within the range and the modal income seems to be Rs.3000-6000. The frequency is 74 families. The families with incomes between 1-300 are 20 and they live in abject poverty. They come under the poverty line. By a comparison, 207 families are under poverty line, which works out to 70 per cent which is much higher than the percentage of poverty line given by the Government agencies like the Planning Commission. So these families are pockets of very low income, undernourishment and starvation. This is the sad story of the Dalit coolies.

The first point is, taking into account the above estimation the study clearly tells us that most of the families are in a deplorable position having incomes much lower than Rs.12000/-. This income range is further classified into four groups in order to focus the attention even among the poor sections. The first group between 0-3000 is considered 'Destitute'; it is a mystery how they survive at all. The second group between 3000-6000 is considered 'Very Very Poor', the third group 6000 - 9000 is called 'Very Poor' and the fourth group between 9000-12000 is classified as 'Poor'. It is a cruel reality that shatters the dream of the administrators and the policy makers of the Indian Government. Low income is not an accident in the Indian Economy, but it is concomitant with the structure of Indian social economic and political structures and it indicates the failure of the programmes of the Indian Government in uplifting the Dalits, particularly the rural Dalits. With the prices of the commodities in daily use soaring higher day by day, the families in abject poverty can only learn to live without them. A forced starvation is a daily occurrence in the lives of the rural Dalits who are mainly dependent upon coolie income from the agricultural sector.

The second point is the reason for the continued spell of low income among the rural unorganised Dalit families. The major reason seems to be the total neglect of this rural section both by the Government and the Voluntary Agencies. Their total dependence on agricultural seasonal employment coupled with the absence of assets makes their living conditions precarious. An assured wage employment will make things better for them. Chances of providing an assured wage employment are therefore considered necessary to make a break from the vicious circle of poverty.
Another conclusion is that the many programmes of the government have never reached these families. As ill luck would have it, these families are isolated in rural pockets and do not get a fair share in the increasing national income. Although today there is an increasing wage payment for every type of labour, including agricultural labour, such increase in wage payment is neither orderly nor universal and remote interior villages do not enjoy such increased payments.

**Income among the sub-caste groups:**

In the study of income among the sub-groups, though the annual average income of the Pallar household is higher than that of the Parayar household, the z-test shows that there is no significant difference between the annual average income between the Pallars and the Parayars. But they are better than the Sakkiliars. While comparing the average income of the Parayars and the Sakkiliars, there is no difference between them.

**Income between the religious groups:**

A comparison between religious groups when made with the help of the z-test indicated that the Dalit Christians are not getting more annual income than the Dalit Hindus though their average income is more.

**Expenditure:**

With so much uncertainty around, the expenditure pattern of very low-income groups cannot be worked out on scientific lines. Yet from the available statistics it is found that the entire income is spent. Adding up all the necessary items like food, education, clothing and medicine, one would find that nearly 83 per cent of the income is being spent on these items. By a C.V. test it is confirmed that there is consistency in the spending on food.

The practice of spending on clothes, festivals and food has taken such deep roots among the rural Dalit workers. No wonder that the average family expenditure is more on clothing and festivals than on other items. This speaks volumes on the behaviour of these families during festivals. Festival times are the special occasions for spending and rejoicing by inviting their relatives and friends.
It is found that Keynes Psychological Law of Consumption operates with the families under this investigation. People of low income tend to spend more on food and sometimes Y becomes equal to C. Marginal propensity to consume becomes equal to 1, which is true of low-income groups.

So on all counts, on the expenditure front these families live on the verge of starvation. Their staple food consists of rice, mostly in kanchi form with no vegetables to go with it. In terms of calorie also, the people suffer from malnutrition and under-nourishment. Any good food or clothing is only seasonal or occasional and no wonder, they eagerly wait for such occasions.

**Expenditure among the sub-caste groups:**

In computing the annual average expenditure, expenditure on food, clothing, electricity, education, medicine, festival, drinks, beedi and recreation etc are added. The annual average expenditure of the Pallars and the Parayars and the annual average expenditure of the Parayars and the Sakkiliars are not statistically different. But there is an evidence of a difference in the annual expenditure between the Pallars and the Sakkiliars. Hence in spending too the Sakkiliars are the lowest because as it was mentioned earlier the income of the Sakkiliars was low.

**Expenditure between the religious groups:**

There is a significant difference between the average expenditure of the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit Christians. Here the annual average expenditure of the Dalit Hindus is higher than the annual average expenditure of the Dalit Christians. A z-test confirms the finding.

**Savings:**

It is found that there is no saving in any of the sample villages. In fact dis-saving is a common feature of the sample households. Out of 250 families, saving is found in 35 families. The saving is channelised through hundials, banks, the postoffice, LIC etc. 32 per cent save through banks, 23 per cent do it with the post office and 14 per cent save through the LIC. The motive seemed to be use in emergency, education and special occasions.
Savings among the sub-caste groups:
A caste-wise study of saving and dis-saving shows that both the Pallars and the Parayars save 14 per cent and dis-save 86 per cent. But the saving of the Sakkiliars group is only 12.5 per cent and dis-saving 87.5 per cent. The notable feature is that among the 18 families reported to be saving, 6 belong to the lowest income receivers (below Rs.3000). Saving becomes automatic with higher income levels. In this analysis, there is dis-saving in families with incomes above Rs.21000. It is a contradiction.

Among the Parayars, saving is reported from 6 families (out of 13 families) below the income level of Rs.3000. As against this, there is no saving from families getting incomes exceeding Rs.21000. Again with the 4 families reported to be saving from the Sakkiliars group, three families belong to the low-income brackets (Rs.3000 and below). Precaution and sacrifice may be prompting these families of very poor means to save. The propaganda by the Government agencies like small savings organisations might also have prompted them to save.
In the overall picture of both saving and dissaving, the order is always the Pallars, followed by the Parayars and lastly the Sakkiliars.

Savings between the religious groups:
A religion-wise study of saving indicates that the Dalit Hindus are better than the Dalit Christians and a chi-square test conducted for the sample revealed a significant difference between the two religious groups. Confirming the previous finding 44 per cent of Dalit Hindu savers are from the poor income range of Rs.3000 and below and 6 per cent of savers are from the range of Rs.21000 and above.
Out of the 4 saving families among the Dalit Christians one each belonged to the Rs.3000, Rs.9000 and Rs.21000 income ranges. In order to test the relationship between income and saving, a chi-square test was conducted which showed that income does not influence saving or income and saving are not dependent factors.

Indebtedness:
In the survey households, it was found that borrowing became a means of livelihood in the day-to-day life of the villagers. In order to meet the daily needs and social needs or demands like education, marriage, death, ear boring, medical treatment and for other
urgent needs, most of the people depended only on borrowed money. The constancy of
debts is a phenomenon they have learnt to live with. A study of the family budgets of the
sample families showed that out of 250 families surveyed some 68 per cent of the
families (169) managed to live without debts, the other 32 per cent families incurred
debts (81). It means that either these households had income equal to expenditure and
adequate to meet their daily and social needs or they had other sources coming their way
adequate to pay back the loans with the interest. If that is true the sample villages are not
that highly burdened with debts and the sources of borrowing are mainly from are
landlords, relatives and banks and co-operatives.

**Indebtedness among the sub-caste groups:**
The debt position among the sub-groups is again a pointer to the continued indebtedness.
Though the Sakkiliars account for 37.5 per cent in debt followed by the Pallars at 34 per
cent and the Parayars at 28.5 per cent, a z-test shows no significant difference in their
liabilities position. All are in the same debt position. But comparing the status of these
communities, the Pallars and the Parayars were very much dependent on landlords which
is a dangerous situation.

**Indebtedness between the religious groups:**
The position of the liabilities of the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit Christians is more or less
equal. Because of the privileged position, the Dalit Hindus borrow more from
Government banks and the Dalit Christians borrow mostly from landlords. The z-test
statistic between the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit Christians shows no significant
difference in the average quantum of liabilities. Both are in the same debt position.

**Awareness of the Panchayat benefits:**
Planned development benefits usually got deferred through various administrative
intermediaries with hardly a trickle reaching the villages and the rural poor. The
government launched the Panchayats administration so that funds could flow directly to
the Panchayats, and the villages could easily plan their development and poverty could
be eliminated. Even here, the Dalits and Dalit villages came to be discriminated and
neglected.
Among the 250 villages surveyed, 101 families, that is 40 per cent, of the sample villages had known about the benefits from the Panchayat; and 149 families, that is 60 per cent of the sample households were not aware of the benefits from the Panchayat. Factors that helped awareness were: laying of roads and providing electricity connections only. Reasons given for lack of awareness were a) not knowing anything at all, that is 79 per cent and b) very far from their villages that is 21 per cent. Therefore the benefits of the Government through the Panchayat programmes have not fully reached the Dalit people whose annual income was below the poverty line.

Awareness of the Panchayat benefits among the sub-caste groups:
The average of awareness of Panchayat benefits in the Sakkiliars and the Parayars and that in the Sakkiliars and the Pallars are not statistically different. But there is a significant difference in the average of the awareness of Panchayat benefits in Parayars and Pallars.
The average of the lack of awareness of Panchayat benefits in the Pallars is higher than that in the Parayars. But there is no significant difference between the Pallars and the Sakkiliars and the Parayars and the Sakkiliars. Therefore, the Pallars seem to be worse in the lack of awareness of Panchayat benefits when compared with the Parayars.

Awareness and lack of awareness of the Panchayat benefits between the religious groups:
The awareness of Panchayat benefits in the Dalit Hindus and in the Dalit Christians is equal and the lack of awareness of Panchayat benefits in the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus seems to be equal.

Awareness of the Concessions of the Government:
It is found that the negative replies of "unaware" were 58 per cent and positive replies of "aware" were only 42 per cent. Out of the 12 villages surveyed, eight gave more than 56 per cent negative replies. When the respondents were asked the reasons for their knowledge of the concessions, they indicated a) Reservation in education (19 per cent), b) getting credits (16 per cent) and c) getting loans (65 per cent) only. The reason for lack of awareness for the concessions was that they "were not aware of the concessions at all". Most of the Dalits (58%) were not aware of the concessions given by the Government, which are due to them. The people were not aware of the concessions from the government due to their illiteracy.
and due to the attitudes of the government officials. According to the people in the study, officials in the administration are either apathetic or are not sincere in implementing the programmes.

**Awareness among the sub-caste groups:**
The z-test confirms that though the average awareness of the concessions given by the Government in the Sakkiliars seems to be a little higher than that in the Parayars, there is no significant difference between them. In the same way, though the average awareness of the concessions from the Government in the Sakkiliars seems to be higher than in the Pallars, there is no significant difference between them. Also, though the average awareness of the concessions given by the Government in the Parayars seems to be higher than in the Pallars, there is no significant difference between them. Therefore, the awareness of the concessions from the Government is the same for all the sub-castes. All are in the same level of awareness of the concessions given by the Government.

**Lack of awareness of the concessions given by the Government:**
The z-test reveals that though the average lack of awareness of the concessions given by the government in the Pallars seems to be higher than in the Parayars, there is no significant difference between the Pallars and the Parayars. Similarly though the average lack of awareness of the concessions from the Government in the Pallars seems to be higher than in the Sakkiliars, there is no significant difference between them. Also, though the average lack of awareness of the concessions given by the Government in the Parayars seems to be a little higher than in the Sakkiliars, there is no significant difference between them. Therefore the average lack of awareness of the concessions from the Government among the sub-castes remains the same for every sub-caste.

**Awareness of the concessions from the Government among the religious groups:**
The z-test shows that the average awareness of the concessions from the Government between the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus is not statistically significant. Therefore the awareness of the concessions given by the Government in the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus is equal.
Lack of awareness of the concessions from the Government:
The z-test shows that the average lack of awareness of the concessions from the
Government in the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus is not statistically significant.
Therefore the lack of awareness of the concessions given by the Government in the Dalit
Christians and the Dalit Hindus seem to be equal.

The awareness of the Government schemes:
Efforts were made to find out whether the Dalits were aware of the special schemes of the
Government. The study reveals that there are 80 positive responses while there are 170
negative responses that is 68 per cent against 32 per cent positive responses. Of the 12
villages which responded 10 villages gave negative responses. They seem to say that the
awareness came when they were implemented in each one’s area: 33.75 per cent through
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) implementation; 58.75 per cent by the
implementation of Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY); 6.25 per cent through National Rural
Employment Programme (NREP) and 1.25 per cent by the implementation of Rural
Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The reason given for negative
reply was that they were totally ignorant of special schemes. Such a response leads one to
conclude that either these schemes were totally mishandled or hardly any action was taken.

From the above study, the following points can be gathered. 1. Most of the Dalits (68%)
were not aware of the special schemes of the Government, which were meant for them in a
special way. 2. The people were not aware of the special schemes of the Government due to
their illiteracy and due to the attitudes of the government officials. According to the people
in the study, officials in the administration are apathetic and were not sincere in
implementing the programmes. 3. The elected representatives of the people failed to visit the
villages and did nothing for their people. 4. The households of the sample villages did not
benefit by the special rural poverty eradication schemes of the Government at all.

Awareness among the sub-caste groups:
The study shows that the percentage of awareness of the special schemes of the
Government extended to all the sub-castes together was overwhelmingly negative. The z-
test reveals that though the average of the awareness of the special schemes of the
Government in the Sakkiliars seems to be a little higher than in the Pallars, there is no significant difference between them. In the same way, though the average of awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Sakkiliars seems to be higher than in the Parayars, there is no significant difference between them. Also, though the average awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Pallars seems to be higher than that of the Parayars, there is no significant difference between them. Therefore, the awareness of the special schemes of the Government is the same for all the castes. All are at the same level of awareness of the special schemes of the Government.

Lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government:
It is found, that though the average lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Parayars seems to be higher than in the Pallars, there is no significant difference between them. In the same way though the average lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Parayars seems to be higher than in the Sakkiliars, there is no significant difference between them. The z-test also confirms that though the average lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Pallars seems to be a little higher than that of the Sakkiliars, there is no significant difference between them. Therefore, the lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government is the same for all the castes. All are in the same level of lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government.

Awareness of the special schemes of the Government among the religious groups:
The z-test shows that the average awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Dalit Hindus and that in the Dalit Christians is statistically significant. The result naturally indicates that the special schemes of the Central Government did have some impact on the Dalit Hindus though only to a very small extent.

Lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government:
The z-test shows that the average of the lack of awareness of the special schemes of the Government in the Dalit Christians and that in the Dalit Hindus is statistically significant. The result naturally indicates that the special schemes of the Central Government had no
impact on the Dalit Christians because they do not enjoy the constitutional guarantee for promoting their welfare.

**Discrimination faced by the Dalits:**

Untouchability is a stigma attached to some people because of their ritually impure status and because they are external source of pollution to another. It is estimated that this practice is rooted in the social and religious life of India for over two thousand years. Though the practice of untouchability is a punishable offence since 1955, it is still practiced in India. The untouchables are treated separately from the rest of the society. Discrimination takes place in many forms.

A study was made to see whether the practice of untouchability was still in vogue in the sample villages. A simple question was addressed to the people “Do you feel discriminated still? If yes, where?” On the whole, the presence of discrimination got 39 per cent only; while 61 per cent replied “no discrimination”. To the question where discrimination was practised tea stalls got the highest score with 48, followed by cemeteries with 35. Hotels and temples had a very low score with 8 and 7 respectively.

By and large discrimination is not as acute in the 12 sample villages as found. These data give an insight into the emerging trend in Tamilnadu villages. Though 39 per cent of the Dalits were facing discrimination or untouchability, there seems to be a slow change of taking place in our society after 50 years of independence. Secondly, nearly four villages among the 12 were free from discrimination and; thirdly, according to the people, the practice of discrimination was very high mostly at teashops where the caste Hindu people were served tea or coffee in a separate tumbler. At cemeteries there were separate places for the Dalit Christians and for the high caste Christians.
The discrimination faced among the sub-caste groups:
The z-test reveals that though the average of discrimination faced by the Sakkiliars seems to be a little higher than that faced by the Parayars, there is no significant difference between them. Both faced discrimination in the same level. But the average discrimination faced by the Sakkiliars is higher than the Pallars and there is a significant difference between them in facing the discrimination. In the same way the average discrimination faced by the Parayars is higher than that faced by the Pallars and there is a significant difference between them in facing discrimination. Therefore the discrimination faced by the Pallars was less than that faced by the other two castes namely, the Sakkiliars and the Parayars. Secondly both the Sakkiliars and the Parayars faced the problem of discrimination and untouchability in the same level.

The discriminations faced by the Dalit Hindus and the Dalit Christians:
Looking into the form of discriminations faced by these two groups is something different. The Dalit Christians faced a lot of discrimination, that is, 96 per cent, at the cemeteries. According to the people, there are two separate hearse to carry the dead and two separate cemeteries to bury them. Secondly, the priests did not go to the cemeteries of the Dalits to bless the body. Regarding the discrimination at hotels and teashops, these people had no difficulty. But the discrimination faced by the Dalit Hindus was in all the forms; the discrimination faced by these at tea stalls with 61.03 per cent is a sad pointer. The z-test shows that the average discrimination faced by the Dalit Christians and the Dalit Hindus are statistically significant. The result indicates that embracing Christianity had not changed the social status of the Dalits. Secondly the discriminating factors applicable to the Dalit Hindus could also be applied to the Dalit Christians.
6.1 Section Two: Suggestions or Policy implications:

Based on the main findings and conclusions, a few suggestions could be offered to improve the socio-economic conditions of the unorganised rural Dalits who are mostly landless agricultural labourers. They are as follows:

1. Education of the Dalits should be given a priority in any major decision the Government takes. Irrespective of any religion, education of the Dalits upto the 10th standard should be made compulsory. The local administrators of the schools and the colleges should be given strict rules to adhere to the proceedings. Each school should adapt at least 5 villages and make them educated. The Government should be ready to sponsor the education of the Dalits completely. Secondly, educational opportunities should be combined with income generating opportunities. Thirdly, vocational education should be enforced among the youth to create employment opportunities among the Dalit youth. Fourthly, measures are to be adopted to give education to all the male and female children of the Dalits removing the barriers and obstacles which stand in the way of their education. Since illiteracy is found at an alarming rate among the Dalits of the area, special attention is to be paid to give them good quality and vocation education so that they could easily find employment opportunities in one sector or other. Finally the educational bureaucracy in charge of implementing the educational policies should be reorganised and sensitised to the needs of the rural Dalits.
2. The main problem of the rural Dalits is landlessness and that is why they are poor. Helping the Dalits create assets which are permanent was meant to generate additional income for their families and thus raise the standard of living. This certainly is an exercise in empowering the Dalits. One such empowerment is making them possessors of landed assets. Providing them land through enforcing land ceiling and distributing the surplus land to the landless Dalit labourers could solve this problem. This measure could be implemented even in a short-term provided the Government is serious about it. The cultivable wastelands should be reclaimed, made suitable for cultivation and distributed to them.

3. Fifty years of Independence have gone by. But the socio-economic conditions of the Dalits are deplorable. Therefore it is the responsibility of the Government to raise the living standard of the Dalits by launching various employment schemes, providing alternative avenues of employment and by making them earn income throughout the year. It is a long-term process involving considerable resources and carefully chalked out long-term planning. A lot of cottage and village industries, handicrafts and other small-scale industries could be started by the Government to make them employed. Even large-scale industries could be set up by the Government to provide them employment opportunities. If the Government tries to employ one member from each family of the rural Dalits irrespective of any religion, it will be good a start for the Dalits to have three meals a day. Efforts are to be made to generate more employment opportunities through agriculture and through tiny cottage and small-scale industries in the rural areas.
4. Another measure will consist of well planned work programmes like road-building, digging of wells, deepening of tanks and extending canals and afforestation during the period of seasonal unemployment.

5. The nationalised banks should give to the unorganised rural landless Dalits loans without insisting upon security for the purchase of milch animals and bullock carts or even to start petty shops at their villages, which will raise their income through subsidiary occupations. Proper encouragement should be given to develop animal husbandry and poultry farming. The cattle wealth of the village may be better utilised through dairy farming under the Dairy Development Corporation. For this a committee which consists of mostly Dalits should be constituted to help them by getting them funds from the Government.

6. Special care must be given to the landless rural unorganised Dalit labourers by appointing labour officers for each Taluk to regulate the working hours and the working conditions of these labourers.

7. The Minimum Wage Act should be strengthened and the wages fixed by the Government for agricultural work should be paid to the Dalits. Also efforts should be taken to provide employment for most of the days of the year, for, the unemployment for longer period during a year and underemployment are the major problems which make them poor and dependent.

8. As it was observed in the analysis most of the Dalits were not aware of the schemes of the Government. Therefore there is an urgent need for a separate team to announce the benefits from Panchayat programmes, Government concessions and the Government's schemes to the Dalits in the rural areas. The team should consist of members of high calibre, honesty and integrity. The local Dalit members could also
be used while forming the committee. The team should evaluate the implementation of the programmes and schemes by interviewing the villagers.

9. All efforts should be made to attack the problems of poverty and unemployment by sincerely implementing all the development programmes for promoting the interests of the weaker sections in particular the unorganised rural Dalits. Therefore whatever might be the schemes, proper modifications should be made on the basis of the local conditions and the local talents should be roped in to ensure success in specific areas. Follow-up action programmes could be taken up to see whether the schemes have reached the people or not.

10. When the Government allots funds for the implementation of the programmes, most of the funds are misappropriated by middlemen, either the politicians or the bureaucrats. The intermediary system for flow of funds should be abolished and a separate implementing body should be set up which should consist of voluntary agencies, social workers and some philanthropists who work for the upliftment of the downtrodden.

11. It was reported by various commissioners for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes that the amount of funds allotted for Dalit development were often not fully utilised and or remain unspent due mostly due to the apathy and unwillingness of the administrators to see the success of the programmes. The bureaucrats, by and large, are drawn from the upper class or castes. They are not that much interested in the
plans for Dalit welfare. Therefore it would be useless for the Government to attempt changing the attitudes of the bureaucracy. Instead some other system or approach need to be devised to tackle the problems of the Dalits. In this context, the question raised would be ‘who should administer the Dalit welfare programmes?’ The answer to this question would probably be the solution to the problem mentioned above. Instead of fault-finding any group or individual, it would be better to think of positive measures. One such measure would be to delegate the administration of Dalit development and welfare programmes to independent trusts or organisations which showed great interest in such activities and which had motivations other than money profit. Such groups should be made strictly accountable to the government and on a regular basis. Sincere and generous Voluntary organisations are best suited to these activities. The government should control and direct the activities of these groups, and release of the funds periodically should be on the basis of results realised by them.

12. A separate trust should be registered, but manned mostly by Dalit personnel. This trust should be entrusted with the full administration of Dalit development programmes. Their offices should not be housed in cities; but should be set up in district and taluk centres where the ordinary people could have direct access. In this way, dissemination of information would become easier and effective and the funds would flow to their targets.
13. The amounts allotted for the uplift on the Dalit development and welfare have been so meagre. For example in the annual budget figures of the Tamil Nadu Government from 1969 to 1989 showed an increase of only five per cent. In Tamil Nadu the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes constitute over 19 per cent of the population. Since most of the Dalits are poor, they deserve more than the miserly five per cent of the budget. At least 15 per cent of the budget should be set apart annually for the development and welfare of the Dalits. So that the government could do free education at the higher levels and create employment opportunities for the Dalits. It is time that the government changes its attitude of charity towards Dalits and considers allocation of adequate funds as a rightful duty and obligation on its part. This exercise should not be ‘ad hoc’ decision year after year, but a statutory requirement.

14. The benefits of all these measures will, however, accrue to the landless poor unorganised Dalits only if they are able to organise themselves effectively. Organisation of these people and the adoption of collective bargaining, a tried method for improving the condition of employment, are necessary in the case of the unorganised rural Dalit labourers.

15. The Government services should focus more on the Sakkiliars but cannot be at the expense of the Pallars and the Parayars.
16. Both the Central and the State Governments should provide the benefits of their programmes to the Dalit Christians also because they are not in a better position in any of the economic parameters that are mentioned above than the Dalit Hindus.

17. Finally no elected representative is concerned about the upliftment of the Dalits. Therefore, as Dr. Ambedkar voiced and demanded, there should be a separate voting power for the Dalits to elect their own representatives.

18. As the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi and the savior of the underprivileged and depressed class Dr. B.R. Ambedkar wanted that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and the weaker sections of the society are to be empowered through education, employment and social status. In other words, social justice is to be rendered and charity is not the substitute for social justice. There should be true and sufficient upliftment in the case of the above mentioned sections.