Chapter- 5

EMPOWERMENT OF DALIT WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

As per the Oxford Dictionary, Dalit is relatively a new term, while scheduled caste is a statutory term used for those castes, which have been included in a particular schedule in the constitution. In Punjab they have been known as Sudras—who were considered backward socially and economically and have been listed in this category.¹ This term originated from Hebrew Language word dal, which means trampled under the feet. In the context of Indian society it means trampled under the feet of upper caste. The term Dalit in Sanskrit is both noun and an adjective. As a noun it may be used as three genders, masculine, feminine, neutral. It is used as a noun or adjective it means burst, split, broken, down trodden, crushed and destroyed.²

According to Gait, in the Encyclopedia of Religion, Caste is an endogamous group or collection of such groups bearing a common name, having the same traditional occupation, claiming descent from the same source and commonly regarded as forming a single homogeneous community?³ The Dalits are also considered as “untouchables,” “outcastes,” “and most recently slum dogs, “comprising nearly one quarter of India’s society, with population estimates of 250 million people. The term “Dalit” also means “those who have been broken and ground down, deliberately by those above them in the social hierarchy.” Dalits live at risk of discrimination, dehumanization, violence, and enslavement through human trafficking every day. According to reports, the Dalits constitute the largest number of people categorized as victims of modern-day slavery.⁴

The traditional Hindu Society was generally divided in accordance with the Varnashram Dharma, into Chaturvaranas. The four categories were Brahmins, Kshtriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. It was believed that Dalits were lowest of the four varnas and were outside the Chaturvarna.

The Dalits were discriminated in every sense. They lived in Hindu villages, hence did not have advantage of geographical isolation like tribes. They were not given a respectable status. Manu asked the householders of the Brahmans, and Kshtriyas Vaishyas with regard to Shudras.

“Let him not dwell in a country where the rulers are Shudras,”

Manu also enacts, “A Brahmin shall never beg from Shudra, property for performing a sacrifice for religious purpose.”

Dalit is not a new word. It was used in the 1930 as a Hindi and Marathi translation of depressed classes. The Dalits are the persons within Hindu society, who belong to a caste which Hindu religion considers, to be polluting by virtue of hierarchical occupation. The present common use of term Dalit goes back to the 19th century, when the Marathi Social reformer Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule used it to describe, the out castes and untouchable as the oppressed victims of the Indian caste system. “Dalit” is a designated name for a group of communities in India who were historically considered to be “untouchable” as they either held jobs that were considered to be very menial in India society, such as shoe making/repair, butchering, washing, sweeping, waste and animal carcass disposal, manual scavenging, cremation work and so on. These people were considered socially inferior and faced economic, political and social discrimination. B.R. Ambedkar popularized the term during the 1970’s when the member of Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra gave significance to the term Dalit, as a constant reminder of these age old oppressions.

The present Hindu community may be divided into 3 sections, (i) the orthodox, who follow the caste system more or less strictly; (ii) those who have ignored the restrictions of inter-dining, but still adhere rigidly to the limitations prescribed for marriage; and (iii) those who have given up both. That the restrictions of caste are fast dying out, is obvious enough, but it will not be correct to ascribe this to the theory, that birth was not originally the essential of caste.

---

Since independence other castes were also recognized as Scheduled caste, in which besides Dalits many other backward castes were included. It is a fact that all the Scheduled Castes were not Dalits or untouchables and were not given the same treatment by caste Hindus, which they gave to Dalits. The definition of untouchables or Dalits as given in the census report 1911, actually laid down ten tests to mark off the untouchables from those who were touchable. Under these tests, the census superintendents made a separate enumeration of castes and tribes who:

- Denied the supremacy of the Brahmins.
- Did not receive the Mantra from Brahmins or other recognized Hindu Guru
- Denied the authority of Vedas.
- Did not worship the great Hindu gods.
- Were not served by good Brahmins.
- Have no Brahmin priest at all.
- Have no access to the interior of the ordinary Hindu temple.
- Cause pollution.
- Bury their dead.
- Eat beef and do not reverence low.

Though it was the first attempt to define Dalits in an official government document, it however did not give a clear picture.\(^9\)

**Position of Dalit Women**

Dalits usually live in separate areas, away from the caste Hindu communities, and they are often forbidden to access public wells. Caste and untouchbility have been much studied subjects in the Indian social sciences. The position of Dalits in the state of Punjab is quite different from that of Dalits in other parts of India. Given our concern with the context of social reality as it exists in Punjab, the term Dalit is being used mainly, as an alternative for the constitutional category of scheduled castes.

---

There were many villages in Punjab, where the population of SCs exceeds 50 percent. There are total of 37 castes communities registered as SCs in Punjab. The Punjab government has recently indentified 13 communities as Depressed Scheduled Castes. In the context of Punjab, among the Dalits the Chamars, constitute a majority.\textsuperscript{10} They are economically and politically more influential as compared to other categories of Dalits which include such as, Balmiki, Bazigar, Charmakar, Ravidasi, Mazhabi, Megh, etc However large majority of them belong to two caste communities, traditionally known as ‘Chamars’ and ‘Chuhras’.\textsuperscript{11}

The gender discrimination starts at a very early stage in the life of the Dalit girl. Caste, class and gender discrimination prevents Dalit women from enjoying their basic human rights, particularly dignity, equality and development. Dalit women are one of the most marginalized segments in the society. The condition of Dalit women is more vulnerable than non Dalit women. Dalit women are suffering from multi disadvantages: - Of being Dalit i.e, socio-economically and culturally marginalized part. Being women and sharing the gender based inequalities and subordination.\textsuperscript{12}

Ruth Manorama, an active member of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and the National Alliance of Women, once stated that in a male dominated society, “Dalit women face a triple burden of caste, class and gender” in which, she sums up the plight of Dalit women, highlighting the fact that Dalit women are a distinct social group and cannot be masked under the general categories of “Women” or “Dalits

It is often argued that the poorer section of other backward castes and religious minorities had been as severely oppressed by poverty and subjected to indignities as the untouchable castes. There was considerable weight in that argument. However the stigma of impurity because of lowly birth, which has cast them aside as permanently inferior and subjected to insults and atrocities, had made the untouchable a distinctive category.\textsuperscript{13} A Brahman, Kshatriya, or Vaishya man can sexually exploit any Shudrawoman, (Manusmitri IX.25) even the killing of Dalit women is explicitly

justified as a minor offence for the Brahmans, equal to killing an animal. If the killing of an untouchable was justified as a minor offence, you can imagine the treatment they received throughout their lives. The laws in the Manusmriti and other Vedic scriptures closed all economic, political, social, educational and personal channels through which the Dalit women could be uplifted. The laws of the Manusmriti have a deviating effect on the level of education reached by Dalit women.\textsuperscript{14}

The Dalits were unevenly spread over the three regions of the state. The largest concentration was in the districts of Bist Jalandhar Doab or Doaba region with 39 percent, in district of Nawanshahar 38.15 percent, In the smaller Majha region. In the area of Akali Sikh domination the proportion of Dalits was lower. The Dalits of Jalandhar remained aware of their rights since the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. They set up organizations, like BalmikiSabha, Ad DharamMandal and MeghUdharSabha. The Dalits on the platform of these organizations started their struggle for socio-political rights. R.P.S.Gosal gives a graphic account of the widely variant rural-urban caste/jati spread of the SCs in Punjab. Out of the total 38 percent SCs, the two major groupings as Chuhra and Chamar together constitute 80 percent of the total SC population. Ad DharmiChamars were on the top of virtually every parameter education, urbanization jobs, occupational change, cultural advancement, political mobilization, etc.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Chhut-chat or Chhua-Chhut} in the form of physical touch demanding purificatory bath was observed by only a small section of the orthodox Hindus, and the castes that caused pollution by contact were primarily the Bhangis and those Chamarsub-castes, who were engaged in removing skinning, and tanning the dead cattle. The condition of most of untouchable groups was, in fact, inseparable from those who were socially and economically backward. Many factors were responsible for the relatively backward condition of untouchables. Off all the factors, two have played the most dominant role. Firstly the Punjab had always been in turmoil. It served the foreign invaders as a gateway to India, and there were persistent attacks on its frontiers. As such, its inhabitants have been hardier, and less servile in their disposition. Secondly, in their social tendencies and religious bent of mind the people of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh were cast in the mould of democratic

\textsuperscript{14}“Unheard Voices-Dalit Women”, for the 15\textsuperscript{th} - 19\textsuperscript{th} periodic report on India, for the 70\textsuperscript{th} session of Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Geneva, Switzerland, 2007, p.2.


In North Punjab Dalits had to struggle for existence. They therefore needed help compared from their women. The position of women was better than those of higher castes. One of the important reasons for Dalit women having better position, than those of higher caste was that, Dalit women had to go for wage earning, due to high rate of poverty. As wage earners they were better respected. In some cases like \textit{dai}, helped in delivering a child and were often considered a lady doctor. But there were obvious ambiguities and contradictions. The mid-wives who helped in all deliveries of the high caste women, were all Dalits. So the exceptional physical contact with the mother and the new born was accepted as normal. They were permitted to enter the inside of the houses at the time of the child birth. After the job was over they were reverted back to untouchable status. Ironically, the maternal and infant mortality was the highest in the community of these mid-wives.\footnote{Harish K. Puri,“Understanding Change in the Lives of Dalits of East Punjab Since 1947,” http//www.apnaorg.com/research paper, 3/6/2014.}

Dalit women are compelled to go for various economic activities primarily due to their economic condition. They go for hard labour, even the work which is supposed to be done by men. But they get less-wages compared to their male counterpart. \textit{Chandal}women have the duty to keep the burning ghat clear. On the whole, a Dalit woman has a low position in Indian Society as well as in Punjab. Even today, though the rigidity of untouchability has been relaxed, but the status remains almost same. Women are compelled to go for hard labour with discrimination of wages, sexually abused frequently and have to do dirty and odd jobs. There is exploitation and corruption. Due to poverty in fact, it is found that exploitation of Dalit women and children was comparatively higher than that of caste Hindus. It is also a fact that illiteracy among Dalits and backward classes was much more therefore the women and children succumbed to exploitation.\footnote{G.K. Ghosh, ShuklaGhosh, \textit{Dalit Women}, New Delhi: APH Publication Corporation, 1997, pp. 19-20.} Many Dalit women performed manual work, and some worked as bonded laborers, essentially slaves who worked to pay of
them debts. Traditionally, Dalit women have been kept away from Knowledge. They were also discouraged from venturing out of their homes.

The patriarchal structure of families was still the norm, for the vast majority of Indians. Women’s positions and roles are still considered to be different, and inferior, to that of men, although this is changing, especially amongst middle classes in the urban areas. In general, Dalit women are perceived to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy of Indian society. Manual scavenging continues as an occupation of India and most of the manual scavenging is done by Dalit women. A Dalit woman’s testimony speaks eloquently of their desperate plight, “when I got married my husband told me to clean lavatories, which involved cleaning human farces all morning by my bare hands. After a few days, I refused to carry on because it was making me ill.......I could not bear the foul stench and appalling conditions of lavatories. My husband called my father and told him that I am refusing to obey him ........My father sent my brother who told me that I have to obey my husband because this is our custom. Now I have to do it. Every day I feel sick and do not want to eat anything in the morning.” In the 1950s most of the high caste people would use fields for calls of nature, as is the custom in most Punjabi villages. There were four families including two retired public school teachers, who paid cash to Dalit women, to clean their lavatories. Dalit women did clean farm sheds of farming families, for which they were paid in kind, such as half a ton of wheat and maize, shakkhar annually, and fodder for their cattle. Dalit women in the village did odd jobs for farmer families where their husband worked as laborers. These included cleaning houses and courtyards, grinding and sifting corn, winnowing, fetching and carrying things and other small errands, they were not allowed in kitchens and whenever they were given cooked food, it was always in special utensils which were kept separately for them. Some men from the farming families took Dalit women as free and handy sexual partners and thought it was their right to do so. On the whole, Dalit woman have had a very poor position in Indian society even today. Though rigidity of untouchability had been relaxed to an extent, the status remains almost same. To conclude a stanza from a song of Tagore

---

“Hey more durbangadesh,
Jaderkorechhoapaman,
Apamanehote hope
Tahadersabarsamaan........
(=oh my unfortunate country,
Those whom you have insulted
The insults shall bring you down,
to their level. ...............)

It is an appropriate song that reflects condition of the Dalit.

There is little interest in Dalit women. In the general literature of Dalits, usually no special attention is paid to women and their specific problem.\(^{20}\)

**Reasons for lack of Dalit Education**

Education as”the key to liberation from caste backwardness”-became a distinctive feature of Dalit aspiration. “Putt dab keparhlai, daliddarchukk ho joo jattan di gulaminakarnipao” (Son, work hard for education, we would be lifted out of the wretchedness, you will not have to work as a slave to the jatts)was a commonly repeated advice of the parents. Women were not educated and there was little scope for the social- economic transformation of this section of society.\(^{21}\)

A brief review of the educational progress during the post independence period indicates the gaps and shortcoming of policy. The following are some dichotomies that have emerged out of the progress of Education:-

- The literacy levels of the people in general and females in particular were still very low as compared to development of countries.

---


• The literacy gap between males and females, between forward castes and scheduled castes, and between males and females among their communities were very high.\textsuperscript{22} P67

Nearly 90.36% of the Scheduled Castes were illiterate in 1961. Of the total 3.99% lacs literate without a level, whereas 39.54% were illiterate up to Primary level and 5.028% were Matrics and above. Even the picture of the Scheduled Castes living in urban areas was not much different. Out of the total urban Scheduled Caste population of 4.80 lacs, i.e. 11.6% only 15.44% was literate. Of those Scheduled Castes who were classified as literate, 52.61% were without any level; 40.65% were literate up to primary level; 6.22% up to Metric; 0.11% held technical diploma; 0.07%, non-technical diploma; 0.32% held university degree and 0.026% technical degree.\textsuperscript{23}

Dalit women were ill treated and educationally backward in spite of the facilities for free education. The reasons for the high rate of illiteracy among Dalit women were:-

• Resistance from the family to send girls to school.

• Fear of insecurity in village.

• Lack of physical facilities like accommodation, a school, transport and medical facilities.

• The girls were forced to take care of siblings when the parents were away at work.

• Girls were forced to do domestic chores, which prevented them from attending school.

• Working with parents to earn their livelihood in beedi-factories or other unorganized sector made them illiterate.


• Because of the sick and unemployed parents girls were forced to work.

• Many were forced to get married at young age, which stopped their schooling.

• Social restrictions are that the girls should stop education after marriage.

• In some areas there are complaints from Dalit women teachers’ of misbehavior, blackmail and exploitation by the male staff of other high caste people.

• Distance of school from home.

• Irrelevant content of the education system.

Fears of alienation of girls from their environment as a result are some of other factors for low literacy level among SC girls. Even if the education improved the marriage prospects of the girls, the minus point is the increase in dowry. Therefore many parents wish to withdraw the girls from school. It seems that Dalit women suffer from dual disadvantage, being Dalit and being women.24 Today, five out of every ten Indians, six out of ten women and eight out of ten tribal and scheduled caste people still cannot read and write. (Human Development Report, 1997) Education is an important means to uplift population or a section of it. It provides capability to individuals to be partners in development, through imparting of information, knowledge and skills. It is widely understood that education creates awareness. The state therefore provides special facilities to Dalit students in the form of fee concession, stipends, free books and clothes.

In Punjab, one of the notable features of literacy is that female’s lag behind males. Here 75.9 percent males are literate, while only 54.2 percent females can read and write. This gender gap in literacy was much wider in case of Dalits, where only 31.03 percent females were literate against 49.89 percent males.

As an impact of education they have received there is more respect for Dalit women. An elderly Dalit woman gave a detailed account. There was change now in social miming and interacting. When my granddaughter was married we invited

selected Jat families. They all came and joined in performing Shagun ceremonies and then they ate with us. We were invited to their wedding and we are happy to attend and were treated with respect...Gone were the days when we had to stay out of their houses and were the last to receive leftover food .we had to bring our own plates as we were supposed to defile/pollute their plates....Things have changed for the better now.25

Awareness of Dalit Women

Several social and religious movements in the state spanning the last few centuries, have had a major impact on the Dalit women. The growth of the Sikh religion has played a very important role in changing the status of Dalits in Punjab. Sikh Gurus provided a vital leadership to the oppressed and suppressed people and their contribution in spiritual, moral, social, cultural and political fields. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism unequivocally held that God had no caste, nor did,26 he give any consideration to such restrictive social ordering. The teaching of Sikh Gurus, the religious institutions of Sangat and Pangat, there was absence of caste based priesthood. There was no place for untouchability in Sikhism. Sangat (Congregation) and the Pangat (community kitchen or practice of cooking and eating together, seating in row irrespective of caste distinctions).Sangat, Pangat and Langer became the pillars of Sikh faith, Guru Nanak set a mission to reform the norms, focusing on equality and recognized the universality of God as the father figure of the entire human race.

First God created light, from these all creatures are created, the whole world is a product of the same light, good or bad.


Recognize all humanity as one at in spirit

In DasamGranth, Guru Gobind Singh has said:

ChakarChihanaruvaranjanjatiarupattinahinjih.

Sarbat da bhalla became central to the daily ardas.

Some members of the Sikh KhalsaDiwan tried to create their own ‘depressed class movements’ to encourage Scheduled Caste support. 27

Swami Dayanand had launched the AryaSamaj in Bombay in 1875, when he visited Lahore for the first time in 1877; he stayed in Punjab for nearly eighteen months and set up branches of the Samaj in almost all the big towns of the province. However, it found its best field for fruitful work in the North particularly the Punjab. While crusading against untouchability. He brought out a collection of original Sanskrit texts called SatyarthPrakash in support of many of the reforms he advocated, in which he condemned caste based on birth and proclaimed the right of the Dalits to Vedic-Education. He also vehemently declared that untouchability was alien to Vedic culture. His mission was to instill in the minds of the people, ideas of toleration and unity and to have a humanitarian approach, towards the unfortunate untouchables. 28 The AryaSamaj launched a frontal attack against untouchability and emphasized that not birth but one’s karma, gun, Svabhav, determine caste. They worked for upliftment of lower castes and open the portals of education for them, and for women. The Aryasamaj offered the Dalit a form of technical education which in fact was no different from the occupations they were accorded earlier as out castes and which still equated them to their previous low castes status. For example the Megha were a community of weavers, therefore, they were provided special training in weaving, so that they could make use of it in earning a proper livelihood. 29


Christian missionaries took the lead in adopting the cause of the Depressed Classes, seeking to provide welfare for them. Christian Missionaries played an important role in spurring up reform movements in north India during the 19th and 20th centuries. Their biggest achievement was that they attempted to reach all classes of Indian Society, including the Dalits by setting up English and vernacular Schools throughout the country. The Sat–Sabha the society of truth was a reform organization, focused specially on Punjabi Society, and was organized in 1866 at Lahore by LalaBihariLal and others. It was dedicated to Socio- Religious causes and endeavored to remove untouchbility.30

The Ad-Dharam movement took off with the arrival of Mangoo Ram on the scene. Mangoo Ram was the son of a rich Chamar, but his family had to bear the stigma of untouchbility. To send boys and Girls to get education in schools they demanded fee concession and scholarships. To stop too much expenditure and develop habits like cleanliness. All the members of the community should attain compulsory education. The scriptures which showed the untouchables, as slaves should be boycotted. The minister of school education of Punjab government, Lahore should give special scholarships and education for the Ad Dharmas, because they were poor, and they were not in the position to bear expensive education. For the upliftment of the Ad Dharmas some special schools were made to be opened, as the upper caste people were not willing to give education to their children.31

**Efforts by Central and Punjab Government**

Child marriage Restraint Act of 1930 increased the age of marriage of girls. This indirectly enabled the parents to send their female children to schools and colleges especially in Brahmin and non-Brahmins communities. The social outlook of people towards the education of girls underwent a remarkable change, due to the efforts of social reformers. According to Phule, women’s education was the key, not only to their awakening and freedom from

---


patriarchal servitude, but to other fundamental changes in patriarchal structure. It would be vital to the development of women as person and as citizen. The Central Province Social Conference was instituted in 1907 as a part of the National Social Conference programme. It specially emphasized the need to improve the condition of the low castes and backward communities. For many people education of girls did not seem to be a necessity for a long time. Their percentage was nil in 1921-22. The system of education introduced by the British in Punjab enabled the Dalit women to benefit from it in order to improve their social position. From 1926-27 onwards percentage shares showed an increasing trend. But slowly their opinion was changed and their outlook became brighter for instance. Miss T.S. Kanthamma was the first girl in the Vellala community to pass B.Sc. (HONS.), in 1937, as far as Muslim community was concerned.  

In the Constitution of India, there are number of Articles like Article 15(4), 16(4), 335, 338, 341, 342, 366(24) and 366(25) which deal with compensatory ‘discrimination against any citizen on ground only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.”

Progress of girls’ education after independence took place only at the primary stage. Provincial autonomy in 1947 education began to be reorganized in every province. It initiated an era of educational renaissance, under which the adult education movement, education of women and specially Dalit women were launched with great zeal. Girls’ enrolment however, increased at a faster rate than boys. Gender inequality existed at all levels, but it was most pronounced at higher levels. In 1971 the literacy rate for the Dalit women was 13% as compared to 37% of Dalit men a gap of 24% that indicated women’s great educational backwardness. In the same year, the general women’s literacy rate was 26% and male literacy rate 51%. Separate educational data for Dalits was available from the mid seventies.

---


33 Ibid., p. 15.

On December 20, 1978, the Prime Minister Morarji Desai announced in Parliament that under provision of Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, the Government had set up a Commission to probe the condition of socially and educationally backward classes. The Commission submitted its report to the President of India on December 12, 1980. The Commission recommended as:

- All men are equal, although their conditions of work differ. He was in favour of removal of superiority and inferiority among sections of the population. The problem could not be solved merely by creating reservations in services. Only proper education could be helpful in self-employment.

- He will be deemed to be educationally backward, if neither his father nor his grandfather had studied at the primary level.

The Report stated that merit was ignored many times. The Report stated a student belonged to scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and OBC could get a seat in professional colleges or job while a candidate getting 70 per cent marks failed to get a job or a seat in professionals colleges as he belonged to a higher caste.35

Some recommendations were implemented by the congress government, headed by Shri P.V NarsimhaRao then Prime Minister of India in 1994. The reservation policy has definitely benefited the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes in these five decades.

The National Policy on Education, 1986, and the Programme of Action 1992, is very clear about the Educational Development of SCs and STs. A separate chapter is devoted to the educational development of STs and SCs, where in the status for school education of Dalits is described. The New Education Policy introduced in Punjab is aware of the right of Dalits as previously they were always reminded of their menial duties by the upper castes. This development enabled them to participate in the new pattern of economy. It also created such a situation under which they were in the position to even join new occupations. It provided a base for the transition from the stricture, caste-bound, pre capitalist social structure to a more egalitarian and

The Dalit women initiated their struggle for equal educational, occupational and economic opportunity and Society is a part of the long and unequal struggle for a more just and equal society. The government also took certain measures of protective discrimination in legal, political and educational spheres.\textsuperscript{36} The situation of women varies across the country. But Punjab is acknowledged to be one of the states where women status is not particularly low. The state is influenced by the preaching of gurus and saints who had particularly stressed the equality of women and preached against child marriage, female infanticide, sati and illiteracy among the women.

**Table No 5.1**

**Population and Literacy amongst Scheduled Caste in Punjab, 1991**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total population of scheduled castes</th>
<th>Scheduled castes as % of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>701444</td>
<td>28.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathinda</td>
<td>456596</td>
<td>29.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faridkot</td>
<td>589898</td>
<td>34.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firozpur</td>
<td>350461</td>
<td>21.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurdaspur</td>
<td>433827</td>
<td>24.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>484876</td>
<td>33.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>792098</td>
<td>39.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapurthala</td>
<td>190484</td>
<td>29.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>611399</td>
<td>24.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patiala</td>
<td>447607</td>
<td>23.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rup Nagar</td>
<td>224982</td>
<td>24.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangrur</td>
<td>458856</td>
<td>26.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punjab</strong></td>
<td><strong>5742528</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.31</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 5.2

Percentage literacy of Scheduled Caste in Punjab, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>42.12</td>
<td>23.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathinda</td>
<td>20.68</td>
<td>27.42</td>
<td>12.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faridkot</td>
<td>24.27</td>
<td>31.59</td>
<td>15.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firozpur</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>32.49</td>
<td>15.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurdaspur</td>
<td>47.60</td>
<td>56.89</td>
<td>37.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>63.82</td>
<td>74.48</td>
<td>51.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>56.61</td>
<td>65.52</td>
<td>46.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapurthala</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>56.84</td>
<td>37.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>50.48</td>
<td>59.52</td>
<td>39.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patiala</td>
<td>38.53</td>
<td>48.38</td>
<td>27.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rup Nagar</td>
<td>57.38</td>
<td>68.09</td>
<td>44.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangrur</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>35.82</td>
<td>17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>41.09</td>
<td>49.22</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1961 the SC female literacy was just about 2 percent. It rose to 31 per cent by 1991, with a high of 51.8 per cent in district Hoshiarpur.\(^37\) To empower the scheduled caste girls/women in the state various programmes have been implemented by the state government.

COMMUNITY CENTRES (SCA):- The Scheme of Community Centers was started in the year 1956-57. The main aim of the scheme is to remove the social stigma of untouchability and to bring a change in the living condition of scheduled caste women/Girls. There is one lady Social Worker in each centre, who is responsible for developing an urge for better living in Scheduled Caste village Women. By providing an opportunity to get-together with the other high caste women of the village, by holding Sewing and Adult Classes. One Lady Attendant (who is also trained Dai) assists the Lady Social Worker. In addition to this, Balwadi Classes are held to impart non-formal pre-school education to children, up to the age of six years. At present there are 108 Community Centers, working in the State. This Scheme has proved to be very useful. Under the Scheme 20 SC trainees, living below poverty line, of each community centre who has completed their one year training successfully would be given Sewing Machines free of cost. Besides this the trained girls and women who have been imparted training in the centres, desirous of setting up of Self Help Group shall also be given Sewing Machines, to earn their livelihood to the desired extent.

Hostel for Girls and Boys in Schools and Colleges: - The Scheme for providing hostel facilities to Scheduled Caste girl and boy students was started in the year 1967-68 and 1990-91 respectively. Under this scheme, the grant-in-aid is given to the Educational Institutions, willing to expand their existing hostel buildings or for the construction of new Hostels for the benefit of Scheduled Caste girls/boys students. The objective of this scheme was to increase the birth rate of girls, increase the enrollment of girls and decrease the dropout rate of girls.  

State Harijan (Educational) Welfare Scheme: - Under this scheme stipends examination fees are awarded to other backward classes students on roll of affiliated Arts Training College and other Professional Institutions in the state. No tuition fee is charged from Scheduled castes/other backward classes’ students studying in Government and privately managed (affiliated) Arts and Training Colleges etc., in the state. However, privately managed (affiliated) Arts and Training Colleges are required to forego the full fee concession given to first 2% Scheduled castes/backward classes students on their rolls. The tuition fee of such students in excess of 2% over

---

their total enrollment is re-imbrued by the government to these colleges in lieu of the free ship granted by them.39

**Training-Cum Production Centers:** - This scheme was started in the year 1977-78. The main aim of the scheme is to make the scheduled caste women/girls, living below poverty line trained in technical trades and to enable them supplement the income of their families and awakening them for a respectful living.

**Special Grant to Scheduled Caste Girl Students Studying Post-Metric and Post Graduate Classes:** - Female literacy among Scheduled Castes in the state is considerably low as compared to female literacy among Non-Scheduled Castes in the State or at the National Level. To promote literacy among these sections, this scheme was introduced in 1980-81. Under this scheme, grant@ Rs. 50/- and 60/- Per Month is given to the girl students studying in Post-Metric and Post-Graduate classes respectively, whose parents annual income is less than Rs. 60,965/-. This grant is in addition to the stipend given at Post-Metric level. This scheme is being implemented through the Education Department. 40

**Attendance Scholarships to Scheduled Caste Girl Students Studying in Primary Classes:**- It has been observed that the number of Scheduled caste girls in educational institutions is much less than their population, it is because of the fact that the parent guardians of these girls are usually very poor and they do not pay any heed to female education. If at all these girls are admitted in the schools, they leave their studies to assist their parents for the augmentation of the family income, by taking up menial jobs. Keeping these circumstances the state government decided to adopt some ways and means to solve the dropout tendency and check it at primary stage. Consequently the scheme namely Attendance Scholarship to Scheduled Caste girls studying in primary classes was introduced from the year 1992–93 as district level scheme. Attendance Scholarship of 50 rupee per month to girl students, for 10 months in a year is given to those Scheduled caste girls students studying in primary classes. Minimum of 75% attendance was required for awards of scholarships at the middle and high level classes. Due to this schemes dropout rate among scheduled caste

---

girls declined and more began opting for higher education. Awards are given to SC sports students. Award is also given to a brilliant SC student for coaching for stenography. Pre-metric scholarship, grant to SC students studying in Medical Engineering Colleges etc., helped in the educational development of SC girl students. Besides, there are programs like free books, incentive scholarships to SC girl students etc. On the non plan side also help is being given to improve the educational standards of SC girls. With the result, SC women have not lagged behind in illiteracy rate than dropout rate has declined. The dropout rate among SC girls is even less from the first to fifth and a little more as compared to SC boys from first to tenth.  

Table No. 5.3  

SC Population Literacy-Rate and a drop-out rate among the SC Boys and Girls in Punjab  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC population census 2001</td>
<td>70.28 lacs</td>
<td>27.14 lacs</td>
<td>33.14 lacs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC literacy date census 1991</td>
<td>41.09</td>
<td>49.82</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-out rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First to fifth</td>
<td>31.66%</td>
<td>33.06%</td>
<td>30.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First to eight</td>
<td>45.86%</td>
<td>44.95%</td>
<td>46.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First to tenth</td>
<td>63.14%</td>
<td>62.66%</td>
<td>63.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Social Welfare Department, Punjab  

Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalaya Scheme: -  

The Government of India has approved a new scheme called KGBV for setting up 750 residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls, belonging predominately to the SC, ST, OBC and minority in difficult areas. The scheme would be coordinated, with the existing schemes of Department of Elementary Education & Literacy Viz. SarvaShikshaAbhian (SSA), National Programme of Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and

41Ibid., p. 445.
MahilaSamakhya (MS). The scheme would be applicable only in those identified educationally Backward Blocks (Ebbs) where, as per census data of 2001, the rural female literacy was below the national average. The scheme would be implemented by state government, through the MahilaSamakhya society in MS states and through the SSA society in case of other states. Funds would be released as per SSA pattern to the state SSA societies. The MS State Resource Center’s would undertake the monitoring and evaluation, at the state and district level and in Non–MS States, through the committee, created for the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level in the SSA Society. Training for teachers and staff at the residential schools would be co-ordinate by the district Institutes of Educational Training. Block Resource Centre and the MahilaSamakhya Resource Groups.

The first generation learners amongst Dalits have realized the importance of education and have started to encourage their children to go for higher education. The government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Shri AtalBihariVajpai with Mukesh Ambani and Aditiya Birla as members in the year 2000. The Committee gave the report recommending the privatization and corporation of higher education. There was no mention about the interest of Dalits.42

Except in schools established by the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha, sending a Dalit child to school during those days was for most untouchable rural families commonly not thinkable. Viewed as an affront to the status of upper castes, the Harijan child invited the wrath of the school teacher and the village elders. Lal Singh Dil, recalled his experience of contempt and ridicule during the early Sixties:” If the school was meant mainly to remind you of your lower-caste status every day, there was little meaning in going to school.” 43


Table No. 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-V</td>
<td>2,33,121</td>
<td>2,86,531</td>
<td>36,5121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-VIII</td>
<td>20,005</td>
<td>62,822</td>
<td>87,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX-XII</td>
<td>9,247</td>
<td>21,270</td>
<td>65,144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the better implementation of the schemes of Dalit women some steps can be taken such as:

- Competitive spirit should be installed in the girls.
- Selection and identification of the talented girls should be done correctly.
- Identify the candidates at college level for coaching.
- Result oriented teaching is necessary.
- Group discussions, quiz and seminars to instill confidence.
- Teacher: student ratio 1:20 or below.
- Monitoring by the teacher after class hours.
- Loan facility
- Financial aid for uniform for girls, maps, charts, examination grant, laboratory facilities, and library facilities should be provided for them.
- Special coaching should be given for meritorious Dalit girls to compete for IAS and IPS exams.
- Hostel facilities for Dalit girls at all levels of education starting from primary school up to higher education should be provided.
- Reservation policy especially for girls should be allotted in both admission and employment.
• The communication gap between the educational institution and the Social Welfare Department should be reduced.

• District wise computer database of the male and female Dalit students is very essential to provide necessary facilities to them.

• Pamphlets with details about the welfare schemes should be distributed to the students.

• Supply of books to the Dalit students.

• Incentive scholarship should be given to deserving and meritorious girls to encourage them for higher education.

There is an increased awareness in recent years among Dalit women about their rights and of all the government welfare schemes about higher education. This should be augmented by information technology, which should reach even to the remote rural areas.\(^44\)

Table No. 5.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Literacy %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>42.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Census of Punjab, India.

Education and Political Impact on Dalit women

Looking specifically at Dalit woman, the current Indian lower house of parliament has only 12 Dalit woman MP’s, a mere 2.2% of parliamentarians. The

\(^{44}\) Trilok Sharma, *Dalit women: Issuess and Perspective*, New Delhi: Sonali Publication 2011, pp. 5-6.
simple reason is that this is the largest political space open for Dalit woman today to participate in public affairs. Moreover, at this level, there are separate quotas for Dalit woman, aside from quotas for woman in general, meant to facilitate their inclusion in local governance. It is true that the quota system has resulted in over 100,000 Dalit women elected representative across the country. Unfortunately, however, political representation through quotas has not led to effective political participation, for the majority of Dalit woman. The main obstacle is the multiple discrimination these woman face arising from the entrenched caste hierarchy, chronic poverty and patriarchy. In term of exercising authority when successfully elected to local governments, while around one-third of woman are able to freely and independently exercise their right to participation against tremendous odds, the majority are made to effectively act as proxies for primarily dominant caste men. Most elected Dalit woman feel they are treated different from other local government representative primarily due to being female and Dalit. Dalit women sitting on chair is seen as threat to social hierarchy, so Dalit Women faced many problems in performing their duties, due to illiteracy, lack of information and dependency on the male members of their families. An important obstacle is the non-confidence motion against Dalit women as pradhan by the dominant parts. Extensive reading of available literature can be done by young generation to understand the profile and problems of Dalit women. Special exposure visits to Dalit localities can be organized for school and college students to assess basic amenities accessible to Dalit women, namely water electricity health and hygiene.45

(1) Efforts should be made for effective political participation, implementation and monitoring strictly, government sanction against proxy candidature as well as gender and caste discrimination. (2) UN bodies should request states for information on the political participation of Dalit woman, separately in all relevant reports. 46

The latest development in this direction is the constitutional Amendment 73rd and 74th, envisages the establishment of uniform three tier system-village Panchyats at village level, PanchyatSamities at block level and ZilaParishads at District level. Reservation of seats in favour of Scheduled Castes in proportion to their population

and reservation of one third seats for women at all level (Including SC women). The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provides that seats be reserved for SCs, BCs and women. Within the seats reserved for SCs, one third of the seats are further reserved for SC women. In Punjab the total PanchayatSamitis are 141 having 2715 members. Out of the total members 1187 belong to General 592 are women, 896 Dalits, 307 Dalit women and 33 are backward castes. The Dalit elected members represent 21.95 per cent of the total members. Percentage of the Dalits in PanchayatSamitis is 33.25, percent if we include the Dalit women members. In the context of Dalit politics, Punjab is an important state, because it has the highest proportion of Dalits in its total population. They are elected but not able to exercise their power. However Dalit women have become militant and fighting for their political power within the caste system. There are instances where Dalit women have been elected into local governance and through the reservation policy nominated as the President of the local governing unit called Panchayat. But when these women have endeavored to exercise their role, it has met with resistance even to the extent of physical violence.⁴⁷

Women were responsible for looking after the needs of the entire family, maintaining the cattle and sheep, and contributing time for social reproduction. They contributed substantially to the family labour and household income and found it difficult to take time out for political activities. Dalit women did not have the surplus time to effectively participate in political activity or carry out their responsibilities as representatives. The success of the BSP in Punjab is attributed to the emergence of a new class of government officers belonging to the Scheduled castes. Mayawati, Dalit women, headed the government all three times. In the political progression of BSP, women’s participation has been minimal and no specific measures have been taken to improve their status. The participation of women in the activities and in the decision-making bodies of the Dalit organizations is minimal. There is need for critical thinking on the response to dalit women issues within the women’s movement which has been one of extending sympathy, without providing adequate space for politics of difference.⁴⁸

The position of Dalits in Punjab is different from the rest of the country. They are more educated, conscious, liberated and empowered. Sikhism is supposed to have been one of the liberalizing influences on the lives of the Dalits of Punjab, which has also provided enormous scope for Dalit identity formation and assertion. The Sikh Gurus’ opposition to Brahminical orthodoxy and caste reduced the oppressive nature of casteism in Punjab. In Punjab, Dalit leaders have not been able to mobilize Dalit people politically on the basis of caste, because the question of untouchbility is not so strong as in other north Indian states.49

**Education and Socio-Economic Impact on Dalit Women**

The impact of the changes was uneven between regions, the rural and the urban segments, between the people of one SC community and another and between the men and women. The situation in urban areas was vastly different and better than in rural areas. In rural area Dalit women performed hard domestic labour which was unpaid and as agricultural labourers or casual labourers they continue to toil under the burning sun with no protection for benefits. The women work on construction sites, getting heavy load of construction material. They also work in brick kilns for long hours, as casual labourers to lay roads with hot tar in the burning sun, without sandals and any other protective gear.

A conscious effort was made by a large number of scheduled castes, to move away from such traditional occupations as alleged stigma. Number of them had shifted to other callings such as trade goldsmith shopping, construction-work or working as, carpenters, masons, hawkers etc.

The work of Dalit women as domestic helps in upper caste homes, including kitchens, came to be viewed as more or less normal in a village community. There was appreciation for the deliberate effort for personal cleanliness and hygienic living. As the author observed at several wedding parties of the “upper castes”, nobody seemed to bother, that most of the waiters serving food(including cooks in many cases) were from the Scheduled Caste. That meant a less noticed severing of the link between caste and its material base.

An input from a cross section of SCs showed that over 90 per cent of the SCs had a brick house today. Education has been a key to liberation from caste backwardness became a distinctive feature of Dalit aspiration. “putt dab keparhlai, daliddarchukk ho joo; jattan di gulaminakarnipao” (Son, work hard for education, we would be lifted out of the wretchedness you will not have to work as a slave to the jatts) was a commonly repeated advice of the parents.

Awareness of women through media like newspapers, television and pamphlets will go a long way in the real empowerment of Dalit women. Unless Dalit women are made aware of the government sponsored schemes, meant for their wellbeing, this section of the society cannot reap the dividend of progress. Dalit women need to shed the fear in their minds and wage a relentless struggle for their rights. Dalit women need to strive for education despite all odds. Women empowered with education, can also put a stop to the evil practices like child marriage. Baba Saheb, BhimRaoAmbedkar, had said that education is an important weapon for Dalits, using which, women can demand the rights conferred upon them by the Indian Constitution. The challenges faced by Dalit women are different, more so because they are mostly concentrated in the rural areas. Their work is mostly related to agriculture, but they do not have much knowledge about various things, related to their development.

From the point of reusing the economic condition, technical education for the scheduled castes was more important than literary education. But the technical education is very costly and difficult for children of the Dalits to acquire. However without Technical Education their economic condition cannot improve. The Dalit in times of prosperity are the last to be employed, and in time of depression he is the first to be discharged. This of course is as a result of the social prejudices of the Hindus, which operate against them. Dalit women belonging to the creamy layer of the society are better off socially and economically. They are fully aware of the welfare schemes provided by the government and their percentage is low as compared with

---

the total Dalit population. In rural areas, the first generation girls from SC need the attention of government and other organizations. Mostly the teachers’ of the locality provide information to them about the welfare schemes. In many Dalit associations, executive positions are occupied by male members, whereas very poor representation is given to women to these posts.

After the census operations of 1961, another independent survey of the condition of the Scheduled Castes of Punjab was conducted in 1966. In the rural Punjab, 3243 Scheduled Caste households with an average family size of 5.7 members, were surveyed in 100 selected villages and 8 cities and towns (Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Yamuna Nagar, Panipat, Faridabad and Bhiwani) By I.P.Singh. A large majority of Dalits have consciously disassociated themselves from their traditional ‘polluting’ occupations.53

The results of the survey reveal that in the past, ‘most of the families were following hereditary professions, like shoe-making, leather tanning, weaving, scavenging, and so on, but had now taken up cultivation of land as regular tenants or as agricultural laborers’. However, in the mid 1960s in the rural Punjab, only 13.3% of Scheduled Caste families were engaged in cultivation and 40.3% in agricultural labour. The remaining 46% were carrying on non-agricultural occupations like non-agricultural labour, (22%), government and other services (5.9%), and shoe-making (5%). In order to determine their precise economic status in monetary terms, the data relating to the income of earners and earning dependent was elicited. In 1971 Total SC female population was 1,544,659 in which 1,319,188 in rural and 225,471 live in urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Non Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Punjab, India, 1971.

---

Table No 5.7

Sector Wise Employment of SC Women in Punjab in 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of employment</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivator</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>5279</td>
<td>4974</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry, fishing plantation orchard</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing house hold industry</td>
<td>2093</td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than house hold</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and commerce</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport communication</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>8020</td>
<td>2748</td>
<td>5272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Punjab, India, 1971.

Awards of scholarship, grant of subsidy free purchase of agricultural land, training Facilities in Industrial Training Institutions are provided by the social welfare department. They have established 119 Community Centers for the Participation of Women in different activities. The women are not properly informed about the government schemes and there is an urgent need to get a feedback about the welfare schemes and the money spent for the development of Dalits. The funds are not utilized properly for their upliftment. Many of the schemes go unnoticed because they are not popularized properly. The coaching programs conducted by the government for Dalit women are beneficial in training women to compete in the
competitive exams. These programs, do not reach the needy Dalit women because they are used by the creamy Dalit women. These should be monitored properly and the schemes should reach the most deprived and struggling Dalit women. Since these Dalit women are neglected by socially advanced communities and also by the better off among the Dalits, it leads to an unhealthy socio-economic condition. There should be some proper basis to pick up the poor and they should be equipped with facilities.54 In spite of these facilities and better economic condition of Dalit women, many Dalit women faced problems to obtain these facilities.

A survey carried out by Chandigarh’s Institute for Development and Communication (IDC) found, for example, that Dalits made up just 10 per cent of MahilaMandal members in Jalandhar, and that there was not a single member in Patiala. Programmes such as the State Government’s pet Shagun Scheme paved the way for Dalit Welfare commitments. Some Rs. 45 crore has been given out since the scheme was put in place after the SAD-BJP came to power, in the form of Rs.5, 100-grants to Dalit girls, at the time of their marriage. Misappropriation of funds has been one common complaint. Just three Dalit families in Dhaliyan received the handouts, for example, although 20 girls here had got married over the last two years. But, more disturbingly, the scheme provides incentives to poor Dalit families to marry their daughters of early, rather than subsidies for dowry, and promotes wasteful expenditure. Ten years ago, the state Government provided grants of Rs.60, 000 to MahilaMandals to purchase marquees and cooking utensils. The idea was to allow the MahilaMandals to generate revenue by renting out these assets for weddings and religious ceremonies. In practice, Dalits found access to the utensils. There was no coaching center giving training for Dalits providing vocational training or coaching classes, for competitive exam, in medical, engineering, railway recruitment, bank recruitment, etc. In a village of Punjab Ghawaddi near Ludhiana access to clean drinking water is minimal, and there are no sanitation facilities at all. Most children appear severely malnourished. No families carry ration card, and they must buy food in the market. Sugar sells at Rs.17 a kg, and flour at Rs.8. No family can afford vegetables or milk. Not a single child in Ghawaddi goes to school.55 In January, four

members of the village Panchayat of BhungarKhera village in Abohar paraded a handicapped Dalit woman naked through the village. No action was taken by the police, despite local Dalit protests. It was only on July 20 that four Panchayat members were arrested, after the State Home Department was compelled to order an inquiry into the incident. But the State police are prompt in redressing complaints against Dalits. One 25 year old Mazhabi student told him that the children in their families grew up with the knowledge of the violation of one or the other of their women relatives; hysterical shrieks ,a hush-hush silence ,shame ,sulk and fear.”Just stay silent, this is our fate, “the elders would advise;” nothing will come out of complaint to the police.Strong protest could sometime facilitate a Razinama(compromise) with some material compensation to the victim’s family . The women of the Jat-Zeminder household, as it appeared in Punjab, generally blamed Dalit women for enticing their masculine males through some Jadoo-tona (black magic). ^6 Punjab police chief Sumedh Sing Saini defended six cops, who were caught on camera abusing and thrashing a 25 year old Dalit Sikh woman and her ex-serviceman father after she had approached them to file a sexual harassment case in TaranTaran.

Economic development of poor urban Dalit women has helped them in sustaining themselves. The job for Dalits is either underutilized, because of lack of suitable candidates or there are delays in filling up the reserved posts. The larger issue, however, has not much to do with affirmative action not being utilized, but the scope it presents to Dalits in the context of economic reforms taking place in country. The change in economic policy and expansion of the private sector provides limited scope for Dalits, because of minimal entrepreneurial activity among Dalits. The poor quality of education that they receive, curtails their absorption into the work force in the private sector, since only those who have access to better education fare well. Caste based reservation has also led to differential utilization of benefits between various sub groups among Dalits. The most common perception among Dalits is that the reservation in education and employment is being cornered by a small section of urban-based Dalits, who are well off. These Dalits comprise the creamy layer, while a large section of Dalits lack minimum capabilities, even to make use of any of these provisions.

---

By ensuring proper earning, it shall help to bring down crime rate, since it will draw them away from various criminal activities by getting scope for alternate sources of income. This would also help them to get better accommodation, thereby reducing number of slums, ultimately stopping urban environment decay.

After independence, a number of voluntary organizations, NGOS, women organizations and others had started working in this direction. They are working in all areas including slums irrespective of community, in their efforts for total development, but due to demography character of slums and pavement dwellers, bulk of Dalit women are being benefited. 57

There is meager improvement in the socio-economic condition of Dalits, in the past 50 years as compared to non Dalits. Economic backwardness of Dalit mostly is due to injustice done to them, by the high caste and also due to exploitation. From time immemorial they worked like slaves, and were sold as commodities, resulting in their social discrimination, economic deprivation and educational backwardness. 58

There were devastating effects of the caste system on the educational, social, and economic status of Dalit women in modern India. Dalit women have been exploited due to poverty, economic status, and lack of education, especially as a direct result of the severe exploitation and suppression by the upper classes. According to the national commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes 2000, approximately 75% of the Dalit girls drop out of primary school, despite the strict laws of the government of India, which provide reservations for Dalit children Despite showing keen academic aptitude, reasons for this early drop out from the education system is poverty or to escape humiliation, bullying and isolation by classmates, society and even their teachers). According to the National commission for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the majority of the educated people are of the upper caste, many of which may practice caste- based discrimination. Dalit girls therefore feel discouraged to enter education. There is lowest literacy rate for Dalit girls as compared to the total population of educated upper caste girls. The annual Report of University Grant Commission for 1999, 2000, shows that Dalits in general have very low participation rates in higher education (Annual Reports of University n. Pag). According to India’s

58 Trilok Sharma, Dalit women: Issuess and Perspective, New Delhi: Sonali Publication 2011, p.4
Ministry of labour, 85% of the Dalit women have the most formidable occupations and work as agricultural labourers, scavengers, sweepers, and disposers of human waste. Many of these women work at minimal wages under the upper caste landlords. (New- Archives). When the Dalit women refuse to work for ridiculously low wages or fail to follow their harsh orders it results in open violence, humiliation, beatings, rape, and jail. There are also a number of cases where the houses of Dalit women have been burnt down. 59 Emigration of Dalit families to Australia, Europe, US, and Canada, and large increase of Dalit families have resulted in improved financial position. Remittances from Dalit NRIs contributed to a conspicuous change in the self –image and the aspirations of their families. Construction of big houses was one way of announcing their success. Big Quals- Toyota, sumo cars, TVs refrigerators, motorcycles, gold ornaments and branded clothes and shoes became statements of success. Thus emigration of young farmers and the rise of Dalit population have dramatically altered the power structure and inter-caste relationship in the village. High school and college educated Dalit young men and women are quite radical and reject the old hegemony of farming families.

These families have moved up the social ladder. They are educated and are sending their children to private schools. Their houses are clean and they no longer indulge in rampant smoking and so on. They are of the opinion that, when families do well and have a good standard of living, own pucca houses and their children go to private schools then it is quite natural for people of various castes to mix with them. Several interviews have revealed that equal status of Dalits is backed by law and that there are Dalit senior officers who will see to it that they do not suffer any type of abuse. Due to Dalit movements in the rural areas led by Ambedkhar, Kansi Ram, and Mayawati and the policies and programmes of government, radical political and economic changes have taken place at a macro level in Punjab. Dalit women do not go to the fields, as they did in the 1950s, to collect wood and fodder for their domestic animals. Dalits occupy senior civil and police jobs. 60
