CHAPTER VII

MOVEMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU

The position of Dalits, in particular Dalit women in Tamil Nadu is pathetic as historically they are subjected to all types of discriminatory practices and they are treated as inferior human beings. Dalits generally live in colonies with no electricity, far away from the nearest water source, and segregated from all non-Dalits. They are forbidden by higher caste persons from entering places of worship, drawing water from public wells, or from wearing shoes in the presence of higher caste persons. They dig the graves, dispose of dead animals, and clean human waste with their bare hands. They are deemed polluting and therefore "untouchable." Any attempt to defy the social order is met with violence or economic retaliation. According to a report, in 120 villages in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu, all 120 villages have segregated Dalit colonies.¹

According to R. Balakrishnan, Chairman, Tamil Nadu Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the caste system is an economic order, which prevents someone from owning land or receiving an education; it is a vicious cycle and an exploitative economic arrangement; landowning patterns and being a high-caste member are co-terminous and also there is a nexus between [being] lower-caste and landlessness... Caste is a tool to perpetuate exploitative economic arrangements.²

Lack of access to land makes Dalits economically vulnerable and their dependency is exploited by upper and middle caste landlords, subjecting them to many abuses that go unpunished. Economic liberalization has adversely affected Dalits and their livelihood as the public sector shrinks due to privatization and the jobs reserved

¹ Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s “Untouchables”, 1 April 1999, also available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a83f0.html.
² Ibid.
for them are drastically reducing. Globalization has also led to lands increasingly being acquired for industrialization, which throws them out of jobs.

In India, powerful interest groups and political parties, which ruled states emerged among middle and low caste groups. Dalits could not get the benefit although a Dalit was elected as the President of India in the year 1997. Although the rise of Mayavati in Uttar Pradesh is a milestone for the Dalit movement in sharing power, in Tamil Nadu, Dalit interest groups and political parties could not play any significant role.

According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, whenever Dalits tried to organise themselves or assert their rights, there has been a backlash from the feudal lords resulting in mass killings of Dalits, gang rapes, looting and arsoning, etc. of Harijan (Dalit) basties (villages). As Dalit men migrate to cities in search of jobs, women are left to work as agricultural laborers in rural areas. Women bear the brunt of attacks because they are stuck in these feudal arrangements. As a result of escalating caste clashes, attacks on Dalit women, by state and private actors, have also escalated.

The Brahmanical literature degraded Dalits and talked about the pre-birth theory. The Dalits are described as varna-sankara i.e., people "outside the system"; therefore, inferior to other castes and they are deemed polluting, therefore, "untouchable." Dalits have generally been confined to the occupations of the caste into which they were born.

The emergence of British rule brought relief to the downtrodden people. They brought a sense of liberty for the marginalized communities. Pune’s Chtpawan

Brahmins did not allow any Dalit and backward to join schools. Women and particularly of Dalit community could never dream of going to school. Jyoti Ba Phule realized that unless the community gets educated they would not be able to emancipate themselves. So he started a movement to impart education to Dalits by starting various schools in and around Pune. The Brahmins opposed education movement among Dalits which they had denied for years.

A report published by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the year 1997 states that "untouchability" – the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes – was still practiced in many forms throughout the country. The discrimination prevailing in the 1990s were, scheduled-caste bridegrooms were not permitted to ride a horse in villages, they could not sit on their charpoys (rope beds) when persons of other castes passed by, they were not permitted to draw water from common wells and hand-pumps and in many tea-shops and dhabas (food stalls), separate crockery and cutlery were used for serving them.\(^4\)

The early centre of the Dalit movement in India was Maharashtra, since the pre-Independence period. Ambedkar and the Maharashtra Movements were the source of inspiration for the Dalit movements elsewhere. Taking inspiration from Phule, Ambedkar also highlighted the importance of education for the upliftment of Dalits. In Tamil Nadu, The founder of the Self-Respect Movement and the Dravidar Kazhagam, ‘Periyar’ E.V. Ramasami Naikér was among the early champions of the Dalit cause. He laid emphasis on educating the downtrodden, including Dalits.

When India became a democratic republic in the year 1950, under constitutional provisions and various laws, the state granted Dalits a certain number of privileges,

\(^4\) Ibid.
including reservations (quotas) in education, government jobs, and government bodies. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was enacted to prevent abuses against members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and punish the offenders.

In the 1990s, the Dalits started to resist the discrimination by organizing peaceful protests and also by arms struggle. Dalit organizations started organizing marches against human right violations suffered by them, which was not liked by the higher caste groups, who saw in it economical and political threat to them. In some states like Bihar, groups such as Naxalites which attracted the support of a section of Dalits started attacking and killing landlords and seized their property. The caste Hindus by organizing private war groups such as Ranvir Sena started attacking the Dalits.

The Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu has long history. Iyothee Thass, Erattaimalai Srinivasan, M.C.Rajah, N.Sivaraj and L.Elayaperumal Vai, Balasundaram are some of the leaders associated with the movement at various stages. The plight of Dalits in the modern days in the state is highlighted by the incident that happened on 25th December, 1968, in which 44 Dalits were burnt to death by upper caste landlords in Kilavenmani village, in the then undivided Thanjavur district for demanding higher wages.

Dalit women face the triple burden of caste, class and gender. Sexual abuse and other forms of violence against Dalit women are inflicted by landlords and the police. Dalits are kept away from their land and employment during social boycotts, Dalit women face physical attacks, and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

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5 R. Sivakumar, *A Study on Dalit Women Movement in Tamil Nadu*
(Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is rarely enforced. According to a Tamil Nadu Government official, the raping of Dalit women exposes the hypocrisy of the caste system as ‘no one practices untouchability when it comes to sex’.6

According to one report, in rural areas, women are induced into prostitution (Devadasi system), which is forced on them in the name of religion. The prevalence of rape in villages contributes to the greater incidence of child marriage. Early marriage between the ages of ten years and sixteen years persists because of Dalit girls' vulnerability to sexual assault by upper-caste men. If once a girl is raped, she becomes un-marriageable; therefore, early marriage is resorted to, which also gives parents greater control over the caste into which their children are married.7

In some cases Dalit women are raped as a matter of retaliation. Women of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are raped as part of an effort by upper-caste leaders to suppress movements to demand payment of minimum wages, to settle sharecropping disputes, or to reclaim lost land. They are raped by members of the upper caste, by landlords, and by the police in pursuit of their male relatives who are wanted by them.8

One of the earliest organized Dalit movements in Madras Presidency started with a memorandum submitted to the Governor of Madras Presidency in the early 1890s on the horrifying living conditions of Paraiyars, one of the two principal social groups among Dalits, in the then Chengalpat district. Following this, Paraiyars and other sections of Dalits were given certain lands known as ‘Panchama land’. Over the years, this land was changed into the hands of higher caste Hindus in violation of the

6 Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s “Untouchables”, 1 April 1999, also available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a83f0.html.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
stipulation against the transfer of its ownership. In the year 1994, a movement was launched in Chengalpat district for restoration of the land to Dalits. This agitation, in which two people died in police firing, marked the beginning of the present phase of the Dalit movement in the state.

In the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, clashes between Pallars (a community of Dalits) and Thevars (a marginally higher-caste non-Dalit community) have started occurring in the rural areas since 1995. New found wealth among the Pallars, whose male family members could go to work in Gulf states and elsewhere abroad, has triggered clashes from the Thevars as the Pallars have been able to buy their own lands or look elsewhere for employment. At the same time, a growing Dalit political movement has provided the Pallars with a platform for resisting the still-prevailing norms of "untouchability." Some Dalits have joined militant groups in Tamil Nadu and such groups have started engaging in public protests and other political activities. The Thevars have responded by assaulting, raping, and murdering Dalits.

The role of local police, drawn predominantly from the Thevar community have come under cloud for their anti-Dalit activities. During the raids the local police have assaulted residents, particularly women, and detained Dalits under preventive detention laws. With the tolerance or connivance of local officials, police have also forcibly displaced thousands of Dalit villagers. During one such raid, Guruswamy Guruammal, a pregnant, twenty-six-year-old Dalit agricultural laborer, was stripped, brutally beaten, and dragged through the streets naked before being sent to jail.9

Since 1960s, Dalits have taken part in struggles against the state and the upper caste to claim their rights. During this period, the Dalit Panthers, and several groups with a Marxist/Leninist or Maoist orientation, emerged outside the framework of

9 Ibid.
recognized political parties. The *Dalit* Panthers were formed in the state of Maharashtra in the 1970s, ideologically aligning themselves to the Black Panther movement in the United States. *Dalit* Panthers visited places in which atrocities were committed against *Dalits*, organized marches and rallies in villages, and raised slogans of direct militant action against the upper caste. In Tamil Nadu, the *Dalit* Panthers of India have thrived since the 1980s as a nonviolent awareness-raising and organizing movement concentrating primarily on women's rights and issues related to land and claims. They are currently led by Tirumavalavan under the banner of a political party of the nomenclature *Viduthalai Chiruthaigal*. The present day *Dalit* movement in the State centres around K.Krishnasamy and Thirumavalavan, who have given leadership to the *Dalit* Movement in the State. Dr. K. Krishnaswamy leads *Devendra Kula Vellalar* Federation (DKVF), which later in 1998 was converted into a political party with the name *Puthia Tamizhagam*. These *Dalit* movements have provided a platform for the growing resistance of *Dalits* to the still prevalent "untouchability" in the state. *Dalits* in Tamil Nadu demanded equal treatment in temple festivals, refused to carry out menial tasks, demanded greater access to public water sources, and claimed an equal share of public and village properties.

Between July 1995 and June 1996, clashes between *Thevars* and Pallars resulted in large-scale destruction of property, loss of life on both sides, and the arrest of many *Dalit* youths under preventive detention laws like the Tamil Nadu *Goondas* Act and the National Security Act, 1980.

In April 1997 the Tamil Nadu government announced the creation of a new transport corporation in Virudhunagar district in the name of the *Veeran* Sundaralingam Transport Corporation (VSTC), a *Pallar* community member. Thevars opposed the proposal. On May 2, *Dalit* leader Dr. Krishnaswamy was arrested and accused of
sparking violence. Spontaneous protests erupted as news of his arrest spread through the region. Two Dalits were killed in police firing. On May 7 three Thevars were killed by the police at Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district while protesting the arrest of two Thevar youths.

In protest against police action on Thevars at Sivakasi, Thevars in Mansapuram village attempted to introduce coconut shells at tea stalls for Dalits to keep them from sharing tea tumblers used by caste Hindus. When Dalits resisted, Thevars torched and looted Dalit houses in Amachiyarpatti village.

In the following months of Dr. Krishnaswamy's arrest, the districts of Theni, Madurai, Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, and Tuticorin witnessed periodic violence resulting in the forced displacement of thousands of Dalits from their homes. Women remained the primary victims.

In addition to attacks by members of the upper castes, women were attacked by the police, security forces, and private militias or armies hired by higher caste people. C. V. Shankar, director for the Adi Dravida Tribal Welfare Department, of the state government of Tamil Nadu, stated as follows:

“We found that women are put in front in both communities and act as a buffer. This has resulted in police action against women. They are taken far away from their homes. Unless they were directly involved in violence, they should not be arrested. In some cases we felt that the arrests could have been avoided.”

H. Hanumanthappa, the then Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, stated as follows:

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10 People’s Union for Civil Liberties, “Final Report of the PUCL- Tamil Nadu Team that inquired into Caste Disturbances in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu”, 1997, pp. 3 - 4.
11 Statesman, Delhi, 2 July 1997.
12 Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s “Untouchables”, 1 April 1999.
“Once the police start raiding, the men-folk run away. Then they [police] make women the victims. The procedure they adopt is to take the child or wife so that the men come back. They feel that they are the masters of the situation. It has resulted in mass rapes.”

The common practice of the police of taking family members as hostages in order to force their relatives to turn themselves in, is a common occurrence in Tamil Nadu and other parts of the country.

At a conference on women's rights, held on April 28 and 29, 1995 in Chennai, a number of Dalit and tribal women publicly came forward to testify about their experiences of custodial rape at the hands of Tamil Nadu police. The conference was sponsored by the Tamil Nadu Women's Forum and Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development. Women claimed that the police were searching for their male relatives when they first came upon them. Pursuant to Section 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code, police conducting investigations are prohibited from questioning female witnesses at any place other than their residence. Women are often unaware of these laws, and their ignorance is exploited by the police.

In recent years the economic relationship between Thevars and Pallars (Dalits) has shifted notably. Like most Dalits in rural India, the Pallars traditionally were employed as agricultural laborers. In recent years the economic relationship between Thevars and Pallars (Dalits) has shifted notably. In the early 1990s, Pallars began to enjoy upward economic mobility, which reduced their dependency on Thevars. For the first time, the Pallars began to resist their traditional mistreatment, by contesting elections, and by responding to violence with violence.

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Tamil Nadu Dalit women movement was launched during the year 1997 by the Society for Rural Education and Development (SRED), a human rights organization which worked among women for 20 years to promote their rights. They organized women into groups and thereafter those groups were brought under a federation and later under one forum called Tamil Nadu Women’s Forum that concentrate on promoting rights among common grassroots women. They realized the need for separate movement for Dalit women to protect their rights. With the help of certain NGOs in Tamil Nadu they organized Dalit women and started highlighting their issues. Thirty voluntary leaders from 30 districts of the state constitute a coordinating body to take this movement to the grassroots. This movement is open for Dalit women who can bring up issues and atrocities and this movement fights for their right and justice. This movement is active in 16 districts of Tamil Nadu and takes up issues of violence against Dalits, practice of ‘untouchability’, atrocities against them and the denial of livelihood rights.

Tamil Nadu Women’s Forum (TNWF) is a state level initiative, started in 1991 in order to train women on leadership, also collaborates with some of the Dalit parties like Viduthalai siruthaigal lead by Thirumavalavan (earlier known as Dalit panthers of India- DPI).

Sexual abuse and other forms of violence against Dalit women are used as tools by landlords and the police to inflict political "lessons" and crush dissent and labor movements within Dalit communities. Dalit women were being arrested and raped in custody as a means of punishing their male relatives who are hiding from the police. Young Dalit women are forced into prostitution in temples under the devadasi system.

The National Federation for Dalit Women is a secular, democratic organization with representatives from twenty-seven Indian states and union territories. It represents
the first major effort to nationalize the Dalit women's movement. About the plight of Dalit women, Ruth Manorama, President of the National Federation for Dalit Women observed as follows:

“Dalit women are at the bottom in our community. Within the women's movement, Dalit issues have not been taken seriously. Within the Dalit movement, women have been ignored. Caste, class, and gender need to be looked at together. Dalit women have contributed to this discourse... Women's labor is already undervalued; when she is a Dalit, it is nil... The atrocities are also much more vulgar.”\(^{16}\)

Police and the upper caste militias also punish Dalit voters. In February 1998, police raided a Dalit village in Tamil Nadu that had boycotted the Parliamentary elections. Women were kicked and beaten, their clothing was torn, and police forced sticks and iron pipes into their mouths. Kerosene was poured into stored food grains and grocery items and police reportedly urinated in cooking vessels.\(^{17}\)

In the elections to the Panchayats after reservation was provided to Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes and women, certain section of the society challenged the reservation and Dalits were prevented from filing nominations in several villages where Panchayat presidentship were reserved for them. A large number of elected Dalit and women Panchayat presidents suffered humiliation at the hands of the Vice Presidents and members of Panchayats. In September 1996, the village of Melavalavu, in Madurai district, was declared a reserved constituency for Scheduled Castes. The elections, scheduled for October 1996, could not be held, as all three Dalit nominees withdrew their candidature for fear of sanctions by people of higher caste. When polling took

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
place in February 1997, the election was suspended after several incidents of booth capturing. A Dalit by name Murugesan won the election which took place under heavy police protection and was boycotted by the higher castes. He was, however, unable to perform his tasks as the elected president of the panchayat as he was prevented from entering his office at the panchayat building by the people of higher castes.\footnote{The Times of India, dated 15 February 1998.} Subsequently, members of a higher-caste group murdered six Dalits in June 1997, including the elected president, whom they beheaded.\footnote{Ibid.}

Dr. George Mathew of the New Delhi Institute of Social Sciences visited the area along with two other researchers, soon after the murders and published his conclusions in an article in The Hindu\footnote{Melavalavu violence due to shift in power equations, The Hindu, dated 16 August 1997.} which reads as follows:

"The murders of the Dalit leaders of Melavalavu Panchayat were clearly because "{
untouchability}" was still ingrained in the social system. The economic conditions in the village were abysmal, but the power was concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. These people had hitherto enjoyed a hold over the common properties such as fish ponds, temple lands and forest produce and did not want to relinquish these privileges to the Panchayat Raj system run by the downtrodden... the violence was basically a result of a shift in the power equations from the haves to the have nots."

In the aftermath of clashes in the southern districts, under the guise of recovering firearms and arresting militant activists, police forces conducted raids in Dalit villages. During the raids, arrests and assaults on Dalit men and women were made and properties of Dalits were looted and destroyed frequently. Studies conducted by the Tamil Nadu Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in various
southern district villages concluded that attacks on these villages were motivated by a desire to cripple Dalits economically by targeting their newfound wealth.21

On August 31, 1995, a 600-member police force attacked Kodiyanthukal village, in Tuticorin district, an all-Dalit village, benefited from the flow of funds from family members employed in Dubai, Kuwait, and the United States, in the presence of the superintendent of police and the district collector and destroyed property worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. In what appeared to be a premeditated attack, police destroyed consumer durables such as televisions, fans, tape-recorders, sewing machines, bicycles, agricultural implements, tractors and lorries, and also demolished food grain storages. They made a bonfire of clothes and burned the passports and testimonials of educated Dalit youth.22

On February 26, 1998, in the village of Gundupatti, Dindigul district, some one hundred policemen and thirty policewomen, along with four truckloads of unidentified men thought to be affiliated with the ruling party, attacked Dalits and bonded laborers residing in two villages in Kookal Panchayat, a remote area of the Kodaikanal hills. Attackers reportedly looted and destroyed property and assaulted residents, including women, children and elderly persons. According to a local human rights organization, women were kicked and beaten, their clothing was torn, and police forced sticks and iron pipes into their mouths. The police attack, whose victims were predominantly women, was apparently in retaliation for a decision made by residents of the Kookal Panchayat to boycott the parliamentary elections. After conducting its own investigation into the incident, the National Commission for Women in its report concluded that the police "took sides with a political faction," that the criminal force

21 Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s “Untouchables”, 1 April 1999.
22 Viswanathan, S., A Village Ruined: In Tamil Nadu, when the police went berserk, Frontline, 20 September 1995.
used against women was unwarranted, and that the actions of the police "ha[d] not advanced beyond the colonial concept of power and the subjects." According to the report, the police had a field day, breaking-open houses, pulling out people, beating them up and even violating their modesty, using criminal force on women and girls, pulling out their mangla sutras and abusing them with filthy language. They allegedly dragged women and arrested sixteen of them along with nine men. One woman's baby was thrown while they were starting off with their truck. The whole village pleaded to the police and then alone the child was allowed to be taken by the mother. In this state of terror and panic, one of the young pregnant women had a miscarriage on the road itself.\textsuperscript{23}

In Desikapuram village in Virudhunagar district, following the arrest of Dalit leader Dr. Krishnaswamy on May 2, 1997, Dalits led to a staged roadblock. On May 22 protesters were confronted by some 1,000 police officers, many of whom then proceeded to enter the village and search the houses. Many villagers, including a total of nineteen women, were arrested during the raid: fifteen women were held for fifteen days and four for twenty-nine. Many of the men and women suffered fractured arms and legs as a result of the attack. The police then arrested Muniamal in her house and demanded that she leave her four-year-old son behind. She refused, so they took her son as well. Muniamal spent the night at the Rajapalayam North police station. Thirty-year-old Irulayee was also sent to jail with one of her three children.\textsuperscript{24}

According to a report, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have affected the lives of Dalit women. As these SEZs are established on agricultural lands, the women,

\textsuperscript{23} National Commission for Women Enquiry Report on Gundipatti Case of Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, New Delhi, 1998.

\textsuperscript{24} Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India’s “Untouchables”, 1 April 1999, also available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a83f0.html.
especially Dalit women get displaced rendering them jobless. Jobless Dalit men are forced to leave villages in search of employment, leaving the Dalit women alone in their villages, who suffer the life of a ‘single woman’ who are socially discriminated. They are denied sufficient food, health care, education and dignity.  

Although India legally abolished the practice of "untouchability" in 1950, the practice continues till today, and violence has become a defining characteristic of the abuse. The exploitation of agricultural labourers and the rigid assignment of menial occupations on the basis of caste leaves Dalits in a position of economic and physical vulnerability.

**Initiatives of the Government for Improvement of the Condition of Dalit Women**

With the objective to facilitate a faster socio-economic development of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe and support them with various welfare measures, particularly on education, to end their social seclusion and economic deprivation and speed up the process of integrating them with the national mainstream, the Government of Tamil Nadu implements several welfare programmes. All the departments of the Government earmark specific allocations for the benefit of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe from their plan programmes as special component plan. In addition special central assistance is funded by the Government of India for various welfare schemes.

Among the various social sector programmes implemented by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, education occupies the prime place as it is considered to be a great equalizer. Besides this, various infrastructure programmes like distribution of house site pattas and construction of houses and provision of basic

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amenities like drinking water, burial ground and pathway to burial ground etc. are also taken up as part of the social development programmes. Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation (TAHDCO) implements specific economic development programmes for the benefit of the people of Scheduled Castes. The economic development programmes implemented through TAHDCO are Micro Enterprises development for the poor families, vocational job oriented skill training programmes and individual entrepreneur scheme, which are supported by appropriate training and subsidy programmes.

Wherever Scheduled Caste families do not own house sites of their own, the Government of Tamil Nadu provides them a house site not exceeding 3 cents in rural areas and 1½ cents in urban area free of cost by acquiring lands owned by private persons. These sites are assigned in the name of the elder women member of the family. Apart from this, houses are also being constructed free of cost in the above sites under the group house scheme. The women members are thus given due importance.

Recognizing the importance of the land for the livelihood of poor Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe in Tamil Nadu, a new scheme called ‘land purchase scheme’ for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes was announced during the Budget for 2003-2004. Under this scheme each beneficiary can purchase and own a maximum of 5 acres of dry land or 2.50 acres of wet land including the land, if any already owned by each beneficiary. The maximum unit cost will be Rs. 2.00 lakhs of which a maximum of one lakh is for the purchase of land and a maximum of one lakh for other components such as land development, minor irrigation etc. The pattern of financial assistance is 50% subsidy and 50% as term loan. In the first year of implementation 6000 Scheduled Caste women and 1000 Scheduled Tribe women will be benefited through this scheme.
Incentives to girl children are provided from the year 94-95 to avoid dropouts and encourage the enrollment of girls, under this scheme, the Government is giving Rs. 500/- per annum as lump sum to 60000 SC girls who are studying in standards III to V in the educationally backward districts and similarly in the entire state. 30,000 girls entering VI standard are given a sum of Rs. 100/- each per month. Both schemes cost about Rs. 6.00 crores per annum. From the academic year 2001-02 free bicycles were provided to all SCs/STs/SC girls students converted into Christianity, studying in standard XI and XII. For this purpose, an amount Rs. 850 lakhs and Rs. 600 lakhs were provided during 2001-02 and during 2002-03, respectively. From the year 2001-02 Free Education Scheme is extended to SC/ST and SC girls students converted into Christianity, students pursuing post graduate courses.26

There are 1018 Adi dravidar schools run by the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department. 212020 students were studying in these schools out of which 105195 were girls. Text Books, note books, plastic slates, uniforms and special guides are distributed to the students free of cost. Special coaching, special orientation training for teachers, library facilities to High/ Higher Secondary Schools, computer education are provided in these schools.27

Hostel facilities are provided to students who study in schools, colleges and Industrial Training Institutions. There are 1076 hostels for SCs out of which 345 are girls Hostels, with a total strength of 24787 boarders. The boarders of the hostels are provided with boarding and lodging free of cost.28

All boarders in school hostels are supplied with note books, text books and uniforms free of cost. The SC students are sanctioned pre-matric scholarship, GoI post-

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
matric scholarship, post-matric state scholarship, free education for under graduation and post graduate levels, higher educational special scholarship, special assistance to law graduates etc. Book bank scheme, reimbursement of tuition fees to universities, overseas scholarship are also the schemes implemented for the welfare of SC students. Various scholarships and awards such as Bright Scholarship, Gandhi Memorial Scholarship, Merit cum Means Award, Chief Minister’s Merit Award, Prize Money award are sanctioned to the eligible SC students.29

With a view to prevent dropouts, especially in higher standards among SC/ST girl students and to increase their enrollment, a scheme of granting cash awards to encourage the headmasters to achieve the above twin objectives has been sanctioned by the Government. Incentives to girl children are provided from 1994-1995 to avoid dropouts and to encourage the enrollment of girl under this scheme, the Government is giving Rs. 500/- per annum, as one lump sum to 60000 SC girls who are studying in Standards III to V in the educationally backward districts and similarly in the entire state. 30000 girls entering VI Std are given a sum of Rs. 100/- each per month. Both schemes cost about Rs. 6.00 crores per annum.30

Job oriented vocational trainings are given to educated Adi dravidar youths for generation of employment opportunities. Funds are provided by TAHDCO for training programmes to law graduates, typewriting and shorthand, executive secretary-ship etc. With a view to help the law graduates (Lawyers) belonging to the SC, the Government has formulated a new scheme for providing training by placing them under senior and eminent lawyers in different fields of law. Special coaching is given to SCs for various

29 Ibid., p. 142
30 Ibid.
competitive examinations conducted by TNPSC, UPSC, entrance examinations for professional courses, banking services recruitments etc.\textsuperscript{31}

The State Government facilitates formation of SC women self help groups. SC women are given training in various trades. They are provided financial assistance through TAHDCO and Nationalised banks. Thus the Government of Tamil Nadu facilitates the socio economic development of SC/ST women. A sum of Rs. 2.00 lakhs is awarded as compensation for the family who lost life in the riots. In addition employment to one member of the family of the deceased or one house is to be given if necessary.\textsuperscript{32}

The tireless work of the women's movement and the \textit{Dalit} women’s movement, and the initiatives taken by both the Central and State Governments are helping to find solutions to the problems peculiar to \textit{Dalit} women although a lot remain to be done for their upliftment and achieving their equality and dignity of life.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 143