

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter a brief review of various research studies conducted in the areas related different issues of status of Dalit women are presented.

Sudha Umashanker (The Hindu 26th July 2011). Is it easy being a Dalit in India? And a women at that? Have things changed for the better for the Dalits who constitute roughly 16.23 per cent of our population, since the Constitution of India “caste a special responsibility on the State to promote with special care for the education, economic interest of the Scheduled Castes and promised to protect them from all forms of exploitation and social injustice (Article 46)”.

Ask Ruth Manorama, relentless crusader and rallying point for Dalit women, and she tells it like it is, without mincing words, in a no-holds barred conversation.

“Dalit women in India are the Dalits among Dalits and suffer from three-fold oppression – on account of gender as a result of patriarchy, caste ‘the untouchable’, and class – as they hail from the poorest and most marginalized communities. Eighty per cent of Scheduled Castes live in rural areas, are dependent on wage employment and have to contend with high rates of under employment which results in greater incidence of poverty,” argues Manorama forcefully.

A grassroots person with her ear to the ground, Manorama is well aware that discrimination is indeed a regular and daily experience for Dalit women. “Less than equal wages at the work-place, beings force into dehumanizing jobs like manual scavenging and garbage picking, pushed back by the grueling cycle of generational poverty, landlessness and hunger, facing threats to their personal security and a lifelong cycle of indebtedness including religious prostitution and the Devadasi system, are the major

hurdles. It is this linkage that makes Dalit women a vital and special concern for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) and the UN Committee on Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Human Rights Council.”

Silent abuse

Yet another issue that deeply angers her is incidents of violence against Dalit women and the silence that surrounds this. “Studies have shown that rape against Dalits and tribales are among the highest. Structural violence like caste and communal violence are deep-rooted in our psyche. It is often used to suppress women in countering Maoist attacks, organized rape and sexual violence (she refers to the Uttarakhand State rape) wherein police suspected women to be informers, are all such inhuman acts.”

Bhupendra Yadav (The Hindu, 19th July 2011). Caste is inlaid in a pre-determined hierarchy. It is something one cannot choose, but inherits. Caste matters a lot in everyday life, and marriages are negotiated on that basis. It plays a decisive role in elections and, as the saying goes, ‘Indians do not cast their vote but vote their caste’

Dalits, as is known, are a bloc of castes in the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy that stand condemned as ‘untouchables’. If every sixth person in the world is an Indian is a Dalit. In spite of the constitutional guarantee of civil rights and the special law enacted (in 1989) to prevent atrocities against them, the Dalits continue to be the victims of social discrimination and oppression across the country.

While the ‘outcaste’ is abhorred, there is, ironically, a craze for acquiring the ‘Scheduled Castes’ tag. In fact, the demand is so high that producing fake SC certificates has become a small-scale industry of sorts. In the current era of liberalization, governments are gradually relinquishing their role as service providers and taking on the role of facilitators or policy initiators. As a result, governments have been tightening their

fists in some crucial segments of social sector. But they extend small tokens of help to the SCs, and the reasons are obvious. In a sense, the ‘lust’ for SC certificates is a pernicious fallout of the spasmodic pleasantness shown by governments for their self-preservation.

Irony

In this book, Anupama Rao examines the irony of the Dalits having no security of life or dignity, despite all the legal protection they enjoy. She has based her work on a study of Madras, a socially oppressed group of western India. Members of this community rebel against the discriminatory practices, individually as well as collectively – both as a caste group and as a constituent of the SC bloc. The strategy they adopt included the demand for recognition and separate political representation as a ‘minority’, apart from embracing Buddhism.

Dalit history is the “history of India’s political modernity”, Rao reminds us and adds, thoughtfully, that ‘Dalit democratization’ – a term that refers to a democratic process which recognizes and works for the collective rights and group emancipation of Dalits – happened not because of the expansion of liberal individualism or of any violent subaltern revolution. For the ‘liberals’- those who believe in individual autonomy and least regulation by state – separation from community will mean emancipation. For Dalits, however, individual freedom can be achieved only by removing the ‘caste stigma’ that attaches to the community. Hence, unlike any liberal assertion, the movement for ‘Dalit democracy’ lunged forward seeking group recognition and minority rights. Similarly, unlike subaltern militants, Dalit leaders (including B.R. Ambedkar) invoked constitutional and political rights to seek social and religious emancipation.

Vulnerable

A question of worth investigating is whether Dalits are more vulnerable to violence after Independence than they were earlier? And if ‘yes’ – as indeed it seems – is it because they have become more assertive now? Previously, religion and tradition could be blamed for Dalits’ vulnerability and discriminatory treatment. But now, for all the help they are getting from government, Dalits seem to have become more vulnerable and much less self-reliant than earlier. Instead of enhancing the level of self –confidence in them affirmative action by the state would appear to have rendered them unwilling to resist domination by the upper castes. The terms of Dalit enfranchisement and forms of governmental help have increased “conjunctural violence” against Dalits, says Rao. If the literature of Dalit Panthers is replete with ‘warnings’ and ‘threats’, it is because Dalits as a class meet with so much of violence in their lives these days.

V. Sridhar 2011. A series of papers presented at the national seminar on Dalit households in village economics painted a grim picture of deprivation among Dalits in rural India. These papers, based on a series of village studies since 2004, pointed to Dalit relatively poor access to official sources of credit, their lack of command over assets and amenities, and lower levels of employment and income.

Commenting on the papers, Abhijit Sen, member, planning Commission, pointed out that the value of these village studies conducted by the Foundation of Agrarian Studies (FAS) and other researchers was enhanced by the fact that they were not aimed at finding out how Dalits were faring exclusively in socio-economic terms. Instead, the extent and nature of deprivation among Dalits was being demonstrated as a part of a study of agrarian relations in the country, in which caste played an important role.

Drawing on data from all the villages' surveys conducted by the FAS, Vikas Rawal, Associate Professor, Jawaharallal Nehru University, and New Delhi, pointed out that ownership of land accounted for an overwhelming proportion of the value of assets among Dalits as well as non-Dalits. There is "a huge disparity" in the levels of landholdings between the two social groups, he observed.

Madhura Swaminathan, Professor-in-charge, Social Sciences Division, Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata and Shameshr Singh, a research scholar at the ISI, demonstrated the inequality, in terms of access to basic amenities such as housing, water, sanitation and electricity, faced by Dalits. Based on "pooled data" from surveys of 12 villages in five states, they pointed out that about one-fourth of Dalit households lived in kutcha houses and 30 per cent lived in "single-room structures".

"There appears to be a strong statistical association between caste and access to the basic amenities," Prof. Swaminathan Observed. Pointing out that public intervention "(did) make an impact" she said the provision of homestead plots for Dalits was "central" to any programme aimed at improving their quality of life.

Venkatesh Athreya, advisor, M.S. Swaminathan research Foundation, pointed out that the village surveys filled a serious gap in the data required for studying agrarian relations in India. V.K. Ramachandran, Professor at the Sociological Research Unit ISI, Kolkata, said, "Caste not only matters, but is right up there as a major explanation for inequality."

Another paper, drawing on official data sources, provided on account of how Dalits' access to official credit sources has declined since liberalization. The seminar, which concluded on Saturday, was organized by the Sociological research Unit at the ISI.

It was supported by the ISI, the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Foundation of Agrarian Studies.

The Navsarjan Trust and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, 2010.” It was carried out over three years in randomly selected 1,589 villages in the State. Their compiled report of the findings was released here on Wednesday by University Grants Commission Chairman S.K. Thorat.

The report said that not only was untouchability practiced against Dalits by caste Hindus, it was practiced by the relatively ‘upper’ sub-caste Dalits against the ‘lower’ sub-caste Dalits. It said that while 98 forms of untouchability were practiced by caste Hindus against the Dalits, 99 forms of caste discrimination were found within the Dalit sub-castes.

Giving example, the report said a Dalit woman was “assaulted” for trying to take part in a village “garba” dance organized by caste Hindus. Even the sarpanch, if he happened to be a Dalit, was expected to sit on the ground while caste Hindu panchayat members sat on a pedestal. The Dalit passengers were required to vacate the seats in government-owned state transport buses for non-Dalit passengers.

Reprimand; It said inter-caste marriage was strictly prohibited in 98.4 per cent of the colleges and such marriages within the Dalit sub-castes was found banned in 99.1 per cent of the colleges. Any violation of the “rule” would invariably attract a violent reprimand against the defying couple, who were often forced to leave the village.

Separate cup; Even in tea kiosks, cups and saucers were kept separately for the Dalits and such customers were required to clean their own utensils before putting the same back in the rack meant for the Dalits. In schools, separate sitting arrangements were made for caste Hindus and Dalits for mid-day meal schemes. Dalit students were not

served water in schools. They were expected to go home or carry their own water with them. “The report shows that the existing legal system has failed to address the problem of untouchability and it is time for human rights activists to act strongly” Navsarjan Trust executive director Manjula pradeep said.

Meera Velayndhan 2010. Action Aid, 2000 A study of 555 villages in 11 States, including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat, held that in 36 per cent of the villages, Dalits were denied casual work in agriculture. Denial of use of water sources (well, pond and tubewell) and restrictions on access to common property resources (grazing land, fish ponds and other resources) in 21 per cent of the villages affected Dalit women’s entitlement to medicinal and food plants and increased their burden of household tasks. Also, Dalits were denied the right of sale of vegetables and milk in the village cooperatives or to private sellers.

S.Viswanthan 1st November 2010 the Hindu News Paper. “The Plight of Dalits and the news media” (October 25th · 2010), has generated a lively and interesting response from several readers. The column was about the prioritisation of the tasks before the National Commission for the Scheduled Caste (NCSC) by its new Chairman, P.L. Punia (not P. J. Punia as erroneously mentioned in the column.) The concern of most who wrote was over the failure of successive governments to achieve the empowerment of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, the most vulnerable of the country’s poor, 63 years after Independence. This reveals not only their awareness of the pain of these victims of anti-human oppression, but also of official and bureaucratic indifference to their predicament. Readers are also aware of the lack of political will among those in power to help find a way out of this shameful situation. This is a far cry from the situation prevailing, say, 15-20 years ago, when reports that untouchability was still being

practised in many parts of the country as harshly as ever carried little credibility among readers.

As recently as in 1990 Political leaders tended to deny that discrimination was practised against Dalits in tea shops, where the beverage was served to Dalits and non-Dalits in two different sets of tumblers. These leaders asserted that it might have happened in one or two remote villages. It was as though they believed, and wanted others to believe, that the constitutional ban on untouchability had abolished it on the ground. The atrocities against Dalits were depicted by most political parties and much of the media as ‘inter-caste clashes’ and the outcome of some needless provocation, usually from the Dalit side. Further, there was a marked tendency to equate the perpetrators of oppression and violence with the victims. Policemen, the overwhelming majority of whom were ‘caste-Hindus,’ almost always threw their weight behind their kin. Dalits thus became the victims of both caste oppression and hatred and the custodians of law.

I was only during the first decade of the present century that large numbers of newspaper readers apparently began to see the Dalit question in fact-based perspective. In turn, there was a perceptible improvement in the media’s approach to , and coverage of, what may broadly be termed the Dalit Question, a critical challenge facing rising India. Unlike the previous decade, when reader ratings of Dalit-related reports were generally poor, the past decade has seen a spurt of lively responses to reports and editorial articles on poverty, caste-based oppression, and social injustice. Young men and women entering the field of journalism after being sensitized to the issue by good teachers in serious journalism schools or departments began writing on Dalit issues boldly and with élan. At least a few of the mainstream newspapers turned their focus on the plight of the poor and

the oppressed. This is a heartening trend in agenda building, which in turn has sensitized and influenced readers.

The responses to last week's column on Mr. Punis's appeal to the central government to provide job reservation came from readers with different backgrounds. Almost all of them showed great concern for the victims. The NCSC has prioritized the tasks ensuring reservation for Dalit in the private sector and maximizing the benefits of such plans to Dalits.

Speedy and effective action called for : A former Governor of Mizoram, Dr. A Padmanaban, who now lives in Chennai, pointed out in his comment on the column that reservation for Scheduled Castes in the private sector had been discussed and debated over a long period: "The Bill introduced in Parliament some years ago was deferred and not dropped on the assurances and promises given by leading industrialists led by Mr. Ratan Tata in the form of a statement for affirmative of Mr. Ratan Tata, to the Prime Minister of Social Justice and others on 25/5/2005. This proposal includes training, scholarship, reservation in private sector companies etc". He added that it was on the basis of these assurances and in good faith that the Government of India deferred the Reservation Bill. Dr. Padmanaban's assessment is that "the measures taken by private sector to implement their affirmative action plan have been tardy and unsatisfactory". He has been in correspondence with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Social Justice, Mr. Ratan Tata, and organizations such as CII-Assocham and FICCI on this matter. "Speedy and effective action is called for. The Indian industrialists have to be more liberal and discharge their social responsibility effectively", Dr. Padmanaban concluded.

The Bill on Reservation, pending before Parliament, seeks to provide job reservation for the weaker sections of society in view of privatization of several public

units in the country. The assurance was part of the electoral commitments made by UPA (2004-2009) in its National Common Minimum Programme. According to some newspaper reports, the representatives of the industry chambers recently conveyed their “inability to implement” the suggestion made to these organisations by the Union Commerce and Industry Ministry to reserve five per cent of jobs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In turn, Mr. Punia has recently at a meeting with the press at Hyderabad served notice on the private sector that it “will...have to do something for the disadvantaged sectioned,” failing which he would press for legislation to bring this about.

Another reader, Mr. Punitha Pandiyan, who edits a popular Tamil magazine, Dalit Murasu, referred in his letter to the diversion of funds meant for Dalit welfare projects under the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan to the commonwealth Games. He regarded this as a notable omission in this column. A report in The Indian Express of August 26th 2010 cited by Mr. Pandiyan said that the government admitted in the Rajya Sabha that over Rs.670 crore meant for Scheduled Castes welfare projects was diverted to CWG work by the Delhi Government. Explaining the diversion of funds, Home Minister P. Chidambaram told the House that from 2006-2007 to the current fiscal, out of Rs.7,062 crores (under indivisible funds) Rs.678.91 crores were given for CWG projects such as building stadiums, bridges and flyovers. In Mr. Pandiyan's view, this diversion of funds amounted to a breach of trust.

This reader also cited a report dated October 15th, which said that Mr. Punia took serious note of the Delhi Government's alleged diversion of funds meant for the welfare of the Dalits to the commonwealth Games and “demand refund in case it had happened”. He was quoted as saying: “As a Chairman of the Commission, I would not allow any government whether of the Congress-ruled States or the Opposition-ruled State, to divert

the funds meant for the Dalits to other purposes.” Mr. Pandiyan wanted Mr.Punia to take action to get the money refunded, in the light of the August 26 statement of the Union Home Minister.

Another reader, M.N. Sanil from New Delhi, contended in his e-mail the “reservation in the private sector is linked to the cultural capital (in the Bourdieuan sense) of Dalits, which they acquire from education and families. The oppression they face in the education system and outside the system discriminates and excludes them in a conscious-brutal fashion”. He expressed optimism in his belief that “contemporary Dalit struggles that are non-ngoised in nature can challenge the diverse and existing ideological forms of caste.”

Feudal foundation

S.V. Venugopalan of Chennai was clear about the root of the problem: “The feudal foundation of this vast nation is too deeply entrenched and the roots of social discrimination lie embedded in our genes...When people of various social strata play an equally important role in building a nation and nourishing it (the) casteist perspective has no place in any modern society”. Another reader, S.Raghavan of Chennai, commented: “If only our governments had organized a massive education programme for Dalit solved by now “. This progressive observation has some truth in it but the challenge is clearly not as single-track or as simple as this assertion suggests.

Thorat & Lee, 2010. A survey conducted in 531 villages in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu exposed patterns of caste-based exclusion and discrimination in the government’s MMS and PDS. In Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, the MMS is predominantly located in dominant-caste localities.

In Uttar Pradesh, the distribution of dry grain to children of government schools takes place in dominant-caste localities in 90 per cent of the respondent villages, while in only 10 per cent of the villages the distribution is conducted in Dalit localities. Access can also be conditional and depend on the state of inter-caste power relations. Often, Dalit children's access to the MMS is cut off by dominant castes to assert their domination. The opposition to Dalit cooks, mainly women, also represents a power struggle over livelihood rights, that is, Dalit entry into new livelihood domains such as government employment as MMS cooks at the village level.

Dr.A.G.S.Rao & G. S. Rao 2010. The Development and empowerment of women is one of the most crucial issues of today. It is universally accepted that there have not considerable governmental efforts, on one of the sections of women namely Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women lag woefully behind others in development and they continue to be among the weakest and the exploited. Moreover, women in transition economics are finding that their specific skills are becoming absolute. In weaker sections women play a major role, especially in economic field. In spite of the development taking place all around, it has to be conceded that the bulk of the Scheduled Caste Women will continue to live and earn livelihood in their own environment.

The Hindu. 20th Oct 2010. Dalit women attending a State-level conference of the Centre for Dalit Rights at Dholpur in Rajasthan over the week-end demanded utilisation of resources of the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan for ensuring their welfare and economic development, besides rendering social justice to them.

About 600 Dalit and nomadic women, mostly from eastern Rajasthan districts of Bharatpur and Dholpur, attended the day-long conference, which was inaugurated by National Federation of Indian Women general secretary Annie Raja. While Ms. Raja

called upon the Dalit women to organize themselves and wage a battle against “patriarchal practices” prevalent in villages, National Federation of Dalit Women president Ruth Manorama exhorted the women to fight for dignity and equal status in the society.

Shri Mukul Wasnik 2009. He was addressing the Conference, Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment, Shri Mukul Wasnik stressed on education and better health facilities for Dalit women. He said NGOs should work among the Dalit women to promote education and awareness against social evils like female feticide and dowry. The Minister announced that by March 2010, all scavengers will be rehabilitated. Shri Wasnik said that his ministry has successfully started capacity building programmed for scavengers for self-employment.

The Ministry of Women & Child Development 2009. The one-day Dalit women’s Congress organized by the Ministry of Women & Child Development was attended by a large number of groups of Dalit women, NGOs and civil societies. The Congress had breakout sessions on different issues related with Dalit women including economic upliftment of Dalit women, crèche, short-stay homes and help line services for Dalit women. It also had discussions on research, innovation and opportunities for Dalit women.

Major Recommendations of the Dalit women’s Congress with regard to programmes run by Central Social Welfare Board

Short Stay Home: More Stay Home to be opened in J.J Colonies where the population of Scheduled Castes is more. The percentage of SC beneficiaries to be decided in each Short Stay Home.

Women Help Line: More Women Help Line to be opened in areas where SC

population is more and also in local police stations. Special training to be given to staff of Help Lines.

Creches: More crèches to be opened in SC dominated areas and special budget allocation to be made for these areas. Free books, writing material and uniform to be provided to SC children. Special nutrition as per ICDS Scheme to be given to children of SCs.

Irudayam, Mangubhai, Sydenham, 2009. Another study on women's role in panchayats in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat shows that only one-third of the 200 women researched were able to, with support, act with freedom to win panchayat elections. Eighty-five per cent were pushed into panchayat politics by dominant castes or husbands (as proxy), and only one-third of the 119 panchayat presidents were able to work with freedom, with only 35.3 per cent of them calling panchayat meetings, 31.9 per cent chairing the meetings, and 27 per cent voluntarily signing resolutions. Only 21 per cent voluntarily authorised panchayat payments and only 23.5 per cent approved contracts for panchayats. Among the representatives who served as proxies, about 59 per cent served as proxies to husband/male relatives, and others to people of the dominant castes and political parties. Over 52.4 per cent of the 166 panchayat presidents and members attended many or all meetings, while only half of them raised development-related issues. In the case of over half of the 90 women who raised issues, the issues were not discussed or approved. Dominant-caste members used abusive language or refused to share information with Dalit women representatives and prevented them from speaking. Separate seating arrangements and pressure to stand up before dominant-caste members and use separate utensils for tea or food during meetings were the other discriminatory practices. The status of being a proxy, fear, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge, poor

level of education, and traditional caste and gender roles were cited as related issues that led to low political participation, according to 120 Dalit women (72.3 per cent) members.

Venkitesh Ramakrishna and Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashasta 2009. Dalit women face the worst atrocities as both women and Dalits. A seminal study conducted by the NCDHR (“Dalit Women Speak Out”, 2006) enumerating the experiences of 500 Dalit women from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh presents a shocking picture of the conditions they live in. The study records the violence – physical, sexual and mental – inflicted on Dalit women. The study reinforces calls for comprehensive preventive measures to be put in place to eradicate caste discrimination and violence against Dalit women, in conjunction with measures to help Dalit women achieve their rights.

Valjibhai Patel says that though the Act mentions punitive measures against negligence, to date not a single official in India has been punished despite serious violations of the Act all over the country. He says the judiciary should also be made accountable, not just the police and the district administration. “There are many cases of atrocities where the accused has been punished under the IPC but has been acquitted under the S.C./S.T. Act. In Gujarat, one of the professors who raped his Dalit student got life imprisonment but was acquitted under the S.C./S.T. Act. The Khairlanji case is a big example where the people now serving the death penalty were acquitted under the S.C./S.T. Act. How is this possible? This means there is some problem in investigation and pursuance of the Act,” he says. The CSJ has filed a petition in the Supreme Court regarding the violation of the Act, the first hearing of which will be on December 3.

The International Labour Organisation Report 2007. According to the International Labour Organisation Report “Equality at Work – Tackling the Challenges”, with limited

access to education, training, and resources including land and credit, Dalits are generally not considered for any work involving with food and water meant for non-Dalits. They also face discrimination in a wide range of work opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

Hindustan Times 18th Feb 2006. (Dalit women tortured in jail –Punjab) There Dalit women from Muktsar district in Punjab have accused the police of torturing them, including administering electric shock to their “private parts” and confining them illegally. Talking to reporters at the BJP headquarters in Chandigarh on Friday, Amarjit Karur, Virpal Kaur and Rani alleged they were picked up by the police after they rejected the overtures of two drug traffickers to join the flesh trade. Amarjit alleged she and Virpal were detained for five days at the police station. “We were tortured in the presence of the SHO. We were stripped and electric shock administered to our private parts,” she said, adding that she suffered a miscarriage due to this. Virpal said their families were silenced with threats. Both claimed they were let off without registration of any complaint or FIR after five days. They alleged the SHO was acting at the behest of the drug traffickers. Rani’s claims were similar. The district BJP unit are not buying the DSP’s claim that the women were picked up for trafficking poppy husk and plan to approach the Punjab Human Rights Commission, National Women’s commission and SC/ST Commission.

Kumar, N and Raj, M 2006 Traditionally, leadership in the village was confined to ‘rural elites’, who were aged and belonging to higher castes. In the year 1993, 73rd amendment in the constitution granted reservation to dalits, tribals and women in local government. This amendment made it compulsory that one third of the seats are reserved for dalits is filled by dalit women. In some states, there has been little or no acceptance

for reservation for the lower castes and dalit women by upper castes. This has resulted in atrocities against Panchayat members including women. Dalit who stood for election were beaten, and dalit women were raped and ill-treated. The members of the higher castes, who are not prepared to relinquish power to the lower castes, grabbed their land. An easier method to retain power is to put-up proxy candidates but keep the control in the hands of the dominant castes, always men.

The Hindu 5th June 2006. The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights has demanded a CBI enquiry into the death of a Dalit woman in Chomu police station of Jaipur district on Thursday. The woman, kamla, who was brought to the police station to meet her son who was in police custody on a charge of murder, had died of mental shock and agony due to police misbehavior, and enquiry report by NCDHR and Center for Dalit Rights said. The main opposition in the State, the Congress party had made a similar demand. Pradesh Congress Committee president B.D. Kalla in a statement on Friday demanded a judicial enquiry into the case. The party has alleged that the death had taken place at the police station following the ill treatment of the victim. The Chomu police last week and arrested Kammla's son Sumit on a charge of murdering a history sheeter Sikandar Khan. Kamla, a schoolteacher was taken to the police station on Thursday last by five constables, including two women constables to meet her son in the lock up. The police version is that the woman, apparently depressed over the act of her son had consumed poison at home before leaving for the police station. She gave a dying declaration to this effect but her family members had challenged this. The NCDHR team, which visited the spot, found the role of the police and administration "doubtful".

Hindustan Times 28th Feb 2006. (Dalit women denied passport) Girija Devi, a Dalit woman who was scheduled to attend a UN seminar in US, failed to get her passport.

Opposition parties in the state have threatened to take up the issue in the assembly, Girija Dev, a 59 year old mother of four from the Musahar community, was scheduled to address a seminar on 'Women Environment and Development Organization' in Bhojpuri. "It was the state government's fault. This was done to stop her from attending the UN convention to present her views" said RJD leader Shauam Rajak. Musahar Vikas Manch leader Amar Kumar Majhi said red-tapism was to blame. "the old Dalit women was forced to run from one office to another. She would had Bihar proud by speaking at an international convention" he said Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "I will take action. Let me collect the facts".

Soni, Jayashree, 2006. A study of water accessibility in eight villages in Gujarat Soni, Jayashree, 2006 indicates the hardship and humiliation Dalit women face in the collection of water. Dalit women wanted separate water spots or sumps to avoid quarrels at the time of collection and over the location of collection. Considering food security as an entitlement, the public distribution system (PDS) and the midday meal scheme (MMS) assume significance for Dalit women in ensuring the survival of their households and education for children, in particular to daughters.

Irudayam, Mangubhai, Lee, 2006. Intrinsic to these denials and exclusions is violence, in particular against Dalit women and girls. A study of 500 women from 32 panchayat unions/blocks/mandals in 17 districts of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, and Uttar Pradesh showed that the most frequent forms of violence included verbal abuse (62.4 per cent), physical assault (54.8 per cent), sexual harassment and assault (46.8 per cent), domestic violence (43 per cent) and rape (23.2 per cent). Other forms of violence included forced sex work, kidnapping, medical negligence, sexual exploitation and child sexual abuse.

The multiple sites of abuse included public spaces, home, workplace, the perpetrator's home and government offices. Those who inflict violence included dominant-caste landlords, police and forest officials, business persons, goondas and thugs, professionals, those involved in politics, other dominant caste members and other Dalit persons. The issues included Dalit women's perceived sexual availability, rejection of sexual advances and attempt to leave forced sex work; women breaking caste norms, accessing resources, speaking up, and participation in religious and cultural life; arrest of family members; and women's assertion of their rights to land/wages/forests/common property resources, indebtedness, upward social mobility, exercise of political rights, failure to be dutiful wives, failure to bear sons, control over earned income, inheriting marital property, or showing the spirit of independence.

In 40.2 per cent of the cases, women were unable to secure justice from the law and the community. Women were also prevented from seeking justice by the perpetrators, the police and sometimes even by family members. Only in 1.6 per cent of the cases were women able to secure informal form of justice. The study highlighted the need for government policy that understood the intersection of caste and gender.

Asian Age 21st, June 06. (Doctor robs Dalit women of Kidney) In a bizarre incident a Dalit woman has been robbed of her kidney by an Uttaranchal-based. The woman has been waging a line battle to get a case registered against the doctor but the police has, so far, refused to lodge her complaint. The victim has now written to the President of India and the National Human Rights Commission for justice and is also preparing opt to go to the court. According to Phool Singh, a resident of Akbarpur patti village in Jyotibe Phule Nagar, his wife Maya, 45, had been diagnosed as having stones in the uterus in December 2003.

Kumar, 2006. Traditionally, leadership in the village was confined to ‘rural elites’, who were aged and belonging to higher castes. In the year 1993, 73rd amendment in the constitution granted reservation to dalits, tribals and women in local government. This amendment made it compulsory that one third of the seats reserved for dalits be filled by dalit women. In some states, there has been little or no acceptance of reservation for the lower castes and dalit women by the upper castes. This has resulted in atrocities against panchayat members including women. Dalits who stood for election were beaten, and dalit women were raped and ill-treated. The members of the higher castes, who are not prepared to relinquish power to the lower castes, grabbed their land. An easier method to retain power is to put-up proxy candidates but keep the control in the hands of the dominant castes, always men.

Asian Age 24th Sept 06. (Dalit women in UP protection force) In a move that will lead to empowerment of Dalit women in Uttar Pradesh, the Mulayam Singh government has decided to enroll dalit women in the Prantia Rakshak Dal. The Prantiya Rakshak Dal (PRD) is a state level protection force that is usually deployed to maintain law and order in villages, in large congregations like the Kumbh Mela in during elections. The strength of the PRD force UN UP is 24,000 and PRD jawans are sent for refresher training every three years. This will be the first time that women will get a chance to be a part of the PRD which, till now, is an all male force. The state government has now cleared the way for enrolment of more than 500 Dalit women in the PRD and recruitment will begin shortly from the district to the block level. Talking to this newspaper on Saturday, a senior official of the PRD department said, ” This is being done for the first time to empower Dalit women in the age group of 20 to 30. Under the gender budgeting programme, nearly 30 per cent of the PRD force will comprise of women. In the coming

assembly elections, people will see Dalit women dressed in khaki PRD uniforms deployed at Dalit women but will also take them away from traditional menial jobs. Once the PRD enrolment begin, we see Dalit women moving away from menial jobs and becoming increasingly aware of the need for education”, the official said. According to sources, the state government has decided to encourage women to seek enrolment through a massive publicity campaign next month. “We will convince the women in the SC/ST categorize to step out of their homes and join the PRD which will give them financial independence, dignity and status in society,”

The Pioneer, 28th April 2005. Finally, in only 13.8% of instances of violence in this study is *appropriate, police or judicial action underway*. The majority of these cases are all pending: investigations are being carried out, charge sheets are yet to be prepared, cases are currently before the courts, etc. Hence, leeway still exists for the cases to be scuttled by the police and/or perpetrators and their community. Notably, only 3.6% of all instances of violence have actually reached the court, and of those, only three cases (that is, less than 1% of total instances of violence) have ended in convictions. Eight other cases have been dismissed by the courts or ended in acquittals of the accused, due to either a forced “compromise” dictated by the accused while the case was under trial, or the perpetrator pressurising the woman victim-survivor or witnesses into turning hostile, or the victim-survivor being unable to obtain the requisite evidence for her case, or the perpetrator dying before the end of the trial. Hence, the long process to obtain justice for Dalit women victim-survivors of violence is too often effectively stymied by different actors – the perpetrators, their caste community, police, the traditional village panchayats or formal elected panchayats. The brahminical patriarchal discourse of “honour” and fear of further dominant caste reprisals, moreover, influences Dalit women, their families and

their communities, not to seek justice where violence takes place. Impunity for violence, therefore, is an intrinsic factor in the maintenance of the caste system and caste-and-gender based norms circumscribing Dalit women's fundamental rights and freedoms. The overall performance of the Indian State, therefore, comes into serious question when measured against the standard of due diligence to prevent violence against Dalit women. This is true for violence at the hands of both non-state actors, as well as state actors themselves. Giving effect to Dalit women's rights requires not only building structures of protection - including investigation, prosecution, fair punishment and compensation for violence - but also rigorously implementing laws and policies designed to facilitate the enjoyment of equal citizenship rights for the 80 million Dalit women in the country today. Taking into account the situation of rising rates of crimes against Dalits, combined with failure of the state machinery to check this rise with stringent action, the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has stated that atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes constitute an internal disturbance under *Article 355 of the Indian Constitution*, and has called for Central Government intervention under various provisions to take strict action against offending states. The Committee has also castigated the Home Ministry for using "police and public order" being "state subjects" as an excuse for absolving themselves of the responsibility implied under *Article 355*. Finally, the Committee recommended taking "extreme steps" wherever warranted to protect the Dalit community and punish perpetrators of violence against them.

Nanivadekar, Medga 2005. In India, women are given equal civil and political rights, including universal adult franchise under the Indian constitution. Right from its inception, the principle of affirmative action has been instituted in the Constitution of

India in articles 15(1), (3) and (4), which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex, caste and place of birth and also provides for the state making special provisions for women, children and the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India that were made in 1993 provided for 33% of the seats to be reserved for women in local self-government institutions in rural and urban areas respectively. This created a landmark situation which enabled more than a million women to enter the political field for the first time.

One of the standard assumptions behind the landmark amendment was that if women entered politics in large numbers, they would change the whole texture of present-day politics since they were expected to bring different values, preferences and perspectives into the political arena. It was expected that they would ensure women's issues were given a high priority on the agenda of political parties and that their presence in decision-making positions would lead to the elimination of discrimination against women.

Chitnis 2005. With the realization that violence is one of the potent threats to the peaceful existence of human beings, whole hearted and all round efforts are made at international, national and local level. The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) serves as a foundation and philosophy of Human rights. There are a host of international conventions including those for prevention and punishment of genocide and elimination of all forms of racial and gender based discrimination.

Thorat, 2005 Social acceptance and the multilayered nature of the caste system inform not only the social but also the economic and occupational aspects of the lives of Dalit women. Their occupational pattern is impacted by resource rights such as land and credit,

access to education and modern skills, and restrictions on labour mobility. Several village studies (Thorat, 2005) have pointed to exclusion in the hiring of labour and low wage rates, the discrimination being greater in the case of Dalit women than men.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004. In a study on Panchayats in the Indian states of West Bengal and Rajasthan. They found that women pradhans in reserved GPs were less likely to be literate they were less educated and less politically knowledgeable, and they were younger and poorer than women pradhans in unreserved GPs. Women pradhans coming into the system through quotas are more likely to be socially and economically disadvantaged and the researchers hypothesized that they were likely to be controlled by dominant local elements.

Thorat and Umakant, 2004. The World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) related to racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance held in Durban, South Africa in 2001, brought the issue of caste and untouchability based discrimination on the agenda of UN Conference in Durban. Among the several organisations, the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) – a collective of dalit NGOs, other NGOs, academicians’, activists and large number of supporters spearheaded the national campaign in India for inclusion of the issue of caste and untouchability based discrimination in the Durban Conference.

Tirmare, 2004. A prominent researcher and sociologist while sharing her experience from a research on gender and land issue, informed that, when she enquired with dalit women about land owned by them in their names, they wondered about permissibility of owning land in their name. This indicates that neither do they own any land nor are they aware of their rights on land. When enquiries were made with Stri-mukti sanghatana and Prerana, Mumbai based organizations working on the issue of rag picking and

prostitution respectively, to ascertain the proportion of dalit women in these occupation, it was learnt that NGOs usually do not keep record of caste.

National Human Rights Commission report 2004. The National Human Rights Commission has summed up recommendations from the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, national conferences and various non-state organisations such as the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights vis-à-vis protection of Dalits' rights to life and security of life: sincere and effective implementation of the law to protect Dalits against "untouchability" practices and atrocities; capacity building within government to protect and promote Dalit human rights; capacity building of statutory watchdog bodies; strict enforcement of Supreme Court guidelines on treatment of persons in custody; convergence of regulatory and development programmes; information for social change in civil society; code of conduct for state agencies; overcoming procedural handicaps to Special Courts taking cognisance of atrocity cases without prior committal by Magistrates; right of separate settlement for Dalits; enhanced central share in schemes for Dalits; and the setting up of independent, non-official monitoring agencies to review cases of atrocities against Dalits.

Report of the Special Reporter on Violence against Women 27th February 2003. Any case of violence against a Dalit woman has to pass through the hands of the local police and the judiciary in order for the woman to receive justice under the law. Safeguarding the impartiality of this process, the Indian Constitution stipulates in *Article 14* that all Indian citizens have the right to equality before the law. However, deeply ingrained normative values of appropriate gender and caste roles and behaviour patterns influence government officials, police and even judges who have the power to interpret and actualise rights. These socio-culturally-religiously rooted biases enforce the

discriminatory status quo to the detriment of Dalit women's right to justice where violence takes place. As the United Nations Special Report on Violence against Women has noted with regard to the situation in India, "constitutional and legislative provisions that have been enacted to protect women from discrimination have not proved to be an effective deterrent."

Bandhu P. 2003. Dalit women's daily diet is the leftover of family meals, inadequate in quantity and quality. Health services are either not available in case of illness or unaffordable even if available. In addition to that, due to early marriage and too many pregnancies their health is always at risk. If birth control is practiced at all, 5 91% cases of tubectomy are performed on the women who have to carry the burden of family planning. In an overall situation where dalits are prone to ailments in general, women suffer from more serious and more varied kind of sickness. More than 80% of women in reproductive age group (15 to 45) are anemic. Poor health status of dalit women pushes her then into more vulnerable situation.

Dietrich in Rao 2003. Under conditions of grinding poverty and severe exploitation at work place, Dalit women also suffer caste specific ban on water access from upper castes and may be beaten up in their own houses as well. A poem by a dalit poetess Teressama, a teacher from Guntur puts the situation in the following words: "*We go to work for we are poor But the same silken beds mock us, While we are ravished in broad daylight Ill-starred our horoscopes are Even our tottering husbands Lying on the cots in the corner Hiss and shout for revenge If we cannot stand their touch*".

Sainath Rao. P 2003. The incapacity of women, particularly Dalit women, to assert their rights is at the root of the problem. The reservation for dalits, particularly for women, is accepted in form but seldom in substance. Any change in the status quo is resisted. Dalit

women's sitting on chairs is seen as threat to social hierarchy. So, the upper castes in the village vetoed chairs in the panchayat office.

Chakrvarti Rao 2003. The focus on education of low caste women is one of the important factors responsible for the emerging identity of Dalit women. Reformist intervention by Savitribai and Mahatma Phule of opening school for untouchable girls way back in 1848 was a turning point for changing status of dalit women.

Rege Rao 2003. After independence in 1960's and 70's, the dalit movement and women's movement emerged to demand their rights against caste and gender respectively. However, specific problems of dalit women were not acknowledged by these movements. Hence in 1990's there were several special, independent and autonomous assertions of dalit women's identity; a case in point is the formation of National Federation for Dalit Women (NFDW) and All India Dalit Women's Forum (AIDWF) at the state level. The Maharashtra Dalit Mahila Sanghatana (MDMS) was formed in 1995. A year earlier, the women's wing of Bhartiya Republican Party (BRP) and the Bahujan Mahila Sangha (BMS) was set up the Bahujan Mahila Parishad. In December 1996, at Chandrapur, a Vikas Vanchit Dalit Mahila Parishad (VVDMP) was organised and a proposal to commemorate 25th December (the day on which Ambedkar had set Manu smriti on fire) as Bhartiya Smriti Divas was advanced. The Christi Mahila Sanghatana, an organisation of Dalit Christian Women was established in 1997. These organisations have come together on several issues such as celebration of Bhartiya Stree Mukti Divas and on the issue of reservation for OBC women in parliament bodies. Indian Association of Women Studies (IAWS) network with dalit feminist across different regions had brought special issues on problems and identity of dalit women.

Zelliot Rao 2003. Dr. Ambedkar's thought and action made important differences in the lives of dalit women. His movement and especially his organisations encouraged many dalit women to become educated to be active in public life and to gain leadership, self respect in the contemporary period encouraged women to participate in organisation for dalit women at regional, state and national level.

Chandra Ramesh & Mitra Sangh 2003. The situation of Dalit women in India is just unexplainable. They are one among the worst sufferers of socio-cultural, political and economic exploitation, injustice, oppression and violence. Their woes and miseries are boundless. They are the ones who form 'real' teeming millions in India, and are affected by all kinds of social and economic oppressions. They are mainly employed in unorganized sector of the Indian economy as daily wagers and marginal workers. The lack of adequate employment opportunities, limited skills and illiteracy have made their mobility extremely limited and prevent them from achieving independent status. The persistent gap between consumption and expenditure leads them to perpetual indebtedness. The proportion of Dalit women living below the poverty line is just enormous. They do not enjoy any social security, maternity benefits, pension schemes or any other kind of economic protection. With the adoption of policies of globalization in India, their employment opportunities are likely to be further reduced as they will have to suffer from competition from foreign technology and modern methods of agriculture.

They are oppressed by the broader Hindu society, their own community's men and also their own husbands. Thus, they are triply disadvantageous. The issues of Dalit women are different from that of other Indian women. They have been deprived from all kinds of human rights, education, income, dignity, social status, religious rights, etc. They have to face outside world necessiated by economic deprivation, and an urgent need

to earn for livelihood. Thus, their subjugation is more acute- being Dalit they are treated with great contempt by upper caste men and women alike, and their own menfolk. Despite that they have hugely contributed to the development of India by their seer hardwork and labour. But, their contributions have never been recognized. Their voices and protests are almost invisible. In fact, when we talk of marginalization of women in the development process, or feminization of poverty or woman's contribution to the unorganized sector in India, we are referring to them without even being conscious about their specificity.

Dhital 2003. For a large majority of Dalits livings in rural India has only been a disabling structure, affecting entitlements, capabilities vis-à-vis their functionings. Decentralized governance initiatives due to strong hold of caste culture and the agrarian structure have proved to be exclusionary for Dalits. They have benefited neither socially nor economically from emerging participatory initiatives. The participation of Dalits in current development initiatives is rightly termed as inferior participation

Bilgrami 2003. Observes, 'the social psychology of the Hindu caste system consists of an exclusionary attitude. For each caste, there is a lower caste which constituted the other and which was to be excluded from one's way of life, again by the most brutal physical and psychological violence. Caste in India-without a doubt the most resilient from of exclusionary social inegalitarianism, in the history of the world-its hard to avoid the conclusion that even the most alarming aspects of religious intolerance is preferable to it. To say, "You must be my brother", however wrong, is better than saying, 'You will never be brother'.

Meenai, 2003. It is seen that gender inequality retards economic growth. There is growing evidence to suggest that several aspects of gender relations, the gender based

division of labour and disparities between males and females in power and resources and gender biases in rights and entitlements act to undermine economic growth and reduce the well being of men, women and children (E of SC Women by s.k singh and s.p pandy)

The Hindu, 29 June, 2003. The concepts of Social Capital and Common Property Resources dominate most of the discourse in development; however the former is neither social nor the latter common in a caste society. For instance, Dalits of Kanganaickenpatti in Namakkal district were forced to live as refugees in their village because they made a claim for a share in common village resources. The demand from Arunthathuyars for a share in the proceeds of sale of sand, which was being mined, provoked a strong reaction from caste Hindu, who imposed a series of restrictions on the 50-odd families of farm labourers. Piqued by the persistent demand, the panchayat comprising 10 caste Hindu, issued a 'diktat' banning the Dalit from participating in any village function. The local shopkeeper was instructed not to supply groceries to the Dalit and various basic amenities including water and important source of livelihood like farm work were checked.

National Federation of Dalit Women 2002: It is the institutionalised inequality of the caste system that underpins and reinforces gender inequality in India, rendering marginalised Dalit women particularly vulnerable to violence with impunity. Therefore, an understanding of the intersection of gender and caste discrimination incorporated into government policies is vital to ensuring that Dalit women's rights to life and security of life are respected and protected. This also throws open the challenge to Dalit and women's movements, as far other social movements across the country, to incorporate a gender-and caste perspective in their work, in recognition of the specific identity and corresponding unique intensity of Dalit women's subordination by gender and caste. By fulfilling its national and international obligations to protect Dalit women from violence,

complemented by adequate focus on improving the socio-economic conditions of Dalit women, the Indian State could contribute to enlarging the choices and agency of Dalit women. Increased Dalit women's agency, in turn, would contribute to social change not only for their families and their communities, but also for the wider Indian society. As the National Federation of Dalit Women has stated in its *Declaration of Dalit Women's Rights 2002*, Dalit women have the right to life and to freedom from oppression and violence, the right to expression, conscience and autonomy.

Paswan and Jaidev, 2002. In 1991, literacy among the dalit women was indeed quite low. In rural areas only 19.46 percentage women were literate. A report published by Ministry of Welfare, Government of India in 1998 showed that there is much difference in the literacy rate of dalits and non-dalits in general, and gender specific. Literacy rate of non-dalits is 64.13 % and literacy rate of women is 39.29 %, where as dalit women's literacy rate is only 23.76 %. There is a large disparity in the literacy rate due to wide spread prejudice based on casteism and patriarchy against dalits and women in general and dalit women in particular.

Jodhka, 2002. Indian races have been familiar with representative institution from the time immemorial..... The word panchayats is household word throughout the length and breadth of Indian and it means a council of five elected by the class of the people whom the five belong, for the purpose of managing and controlling the social affairs of the particular caste.

Narayanamoorthy and Kamble 2002. Education is one of the factors in human development. It can play a vital role in enhancing capabilities of individuals especially in oppressive social structure. A study by Narayanamoorthy and Kamble (2002) reveals that literacy rate of the Dalit rural population though has been increasing; it is much less

compares to non-Dalit population. Literacy amongst the rural Dalits is 33 per cent compared to 45 per cent amongst the non-Dalits. The condition of Dalit women is said to be worse. International human rights group Amnesty International condemned the Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan governments for the poor literacy rate among Dalit women in their domain, saying it directly violated their rights. The poor educational status of Dalits is attributed to the intense socio-economic deprivation of Dalits.

The Indian Express, 26th March, 2002. A good example of caste culture as culture of fear could be evidenced from Maduri. As part of empowerment of Dalits, positions of power in panchayats are reserved for them. Like upper-caste in various parts of India, the Thevars in Madurai district opposed this move. They ensured that the scared Dalits do not come forward to file nominations, and that they won't serve under a Dalit. The demand of the Thevars was to de-reserve the councillorship for 4 panchayats. Saraswati Dalit woman, filed nomination at Nattarmangalam, one of these four panchayats and had her house stoned.

Times of India, 26th March 2002. Subban, a daily wage earner at Pappatti in Madurai traveled 500 Km to Chennai to file his nominations for panchayat elections. He grieved 'How do you expect me to file nomination there. The Villagers would have killed me'.

V.M Rao 2002. Maintain that a review of the genesis and development of SHG's in India reveals that the existing formal financial institutions have failed to provide finances to landless, marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The origin of SHG/'s could be treated tom mutual aid in; India village community. SHG's encourage saving and promote income generating activities through small loans. The experience available in the country and elsewhere suggests that SHG's are sustainable to have replicability, stimulate savings, and in the process help borrower to come out of vicious circle of poverty.

Jodhka's 2002. Study on Caste in Punjab has interesting findings. In some cases it was found, despite Dalits becoming Sarpanch, the real power remained with the landowning Jat, whose faction had supported his/ her candidature. In a village of Amritsar for example, a Dalit called Surat Singh could get elected because the local Jats did not let any other Dalit contest elections. Similarly Dalits were not treated equally in the Panchayats building. Nearly 40 per cent Dalit felt that they were not treated equally in the Panchayat and that discrimination is also practiced in sitting arrangements. The Panchayat and buildings are seen as upper caste community canters and Dalits have therefore built their own community canters. Even when the seats were reserve for Dalits, dominant castes often had a say in deciding who amongst Dalits should contest elections.

Waghmore 2002. Has brought to light how unparticipatory, participatory initiatives could be. They could well degenerate the existing inequalities; Dalits as people's representatives are mere pawns readily available at the hands of the dominant castes. Even when the seats were reserve for Dalits, dominant castes often had a say in deciding who amongst Dalits should contest elections.

Jodhka 2002. Maintains Ambedkar's thoughts on villages are caste to the anthropologists who have studied caste from below. Due to the rigid structure standing upon the strong foundations provided by the caste culture, the village and the village community infer different things for the dominants and the subalterns. A question that arises then is how exactly the initiatives of decentralized governance promote development of Dalits.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001: The Indian Government has identified in its 10th Five-Year Plan 2002-2007 the empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups such as Dalits and women as priority strategies for development of

the nation. Complementing this development priority is the elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child, which is a central objective of the *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001* in attempting to bridge the gap between *de jure* equal status and *de facto* pervasive gender inequality as the National Policy of states.

All forms of violence against women, physical and mental, whether at domestic or societal levels, including those arising from customs, traditions or accepted practices, shall be dealt with effectively with a view to eliminate its incidence. Institutions and mechanisms/schemes for assistance will be created and strengthened for prevention of such violence, including sexual harassment at workplace and customs like dowry; for the rehabilitation of the victims of violence and for taking effective action against the perpetrators of such violence. A special emphasis will also be laid on programmes and measures to deal with trafficking on women and girls.

Crook and manor 2001. Dalits due to their unequal position are not equal participant. in their study of panchayats in the state of Karnataka observe that despite high level of electoral participation by the historically disadvantaged groups, their influence on Mandal and District council remains minimal.

Satish 2001. In his paper raised certain issues related to the functioning of SHG's adequate care should be taken to ensure homogeneity of socio-economic status of the members, while forming SHG's. The process of SHG formation has to be systematic whether a Bank or an N.G.O forms it. He emphasized that SHG's experiment has to be spread throughout rural India rather than being concentrated in a few pockets of the country. NGO's are more suited for forming and nurturing of the SHG's and therefore, it

is essential to strengthen them and their resources so that they should increasingly undertake this work.

Barbara and Mahanta 2001. In their paper maintained that the SHG's have helped to set up a number of micro-enterprises for income generation. Rastriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi's credit and saving Programme in Assam has been found successful as its focus is exclusively on the rural poor. It adopted a credit delivery system designed specially for them with the report of a specially trained staff and a supportive policy with no political intervention at any stage in the implementation of the Programme.

Puhazendhi and Satyasai 2001. In their paper attempted to evaluate the performance of SHG's with special reference to social and economic empowerment. Primary data collected with the help of structured questionnaire from 560 sample households in 223 SHG's functioning in 11 states representing four different regions across the country formed the basis of the study. The findings of the study revealed that the SHG's as institutional arrangement could positively contribute to the economic and social empowerment of rural poor and the impact on the later was more pronounced than on the former. Through there was no specific pattern in the performance of SHG's among different regions, the southern region could edge out other. The SHG's Programme has been found more popular in the southern region and its progress in other regions is quite low, thus signifying an uneven achievement among the regions. Older groups had relatively more positive features like better performance than younger groups.

Manimekalai and Rajeshwari 2001. In their paper highlighted that the provision of micro-finance by the NGO's to women SHG's has helped the groups to achieve a measure of economic and social empowerment. It has developed a sense of leadership,

organizational skill, management of various activities of a business, right from acquiring finance, identifying raw material, market and suitable diversification and modernization.

K.C. Sharma 2001. Maintained that through SHG's women empowerment is taking place. Their participation in the economic activities and decision-making at the household and society level is increasing and making the process of rural development participatory, democratic, sustainable and independent of subsidy, thus macro-financing through SHG's is contributing to the development of rural people in a meaningful manner.

Johnson 2001. In a detailed discussion on decentralized governance and poverty reduction observes. 'Central states have an important role to play in ensuring the development and implementation of substantive pro-poor policies.... A certain amount of re-centralisation may be needed to ensure that the needs of poor not neglected'. Most of the pro-poor policies implemented at decentralized level run a high risk of being appropriated by the elites or rampant corruption.

Sengupta and Singh, 2001. In India, the plight of women is no better than their counterparts in other developing countries. Despite the honour and reverence accorded to them as deities in mythology and personified tribute paid to them in historical monuments, the ground realities remain opposite. In a patriarchal society like Indian, there exists the unfounded belief that man is the bread winner of the family and hence the male child gets the best of limited facilities and resources within the family. The girl child is under constant risk of being aborted through the misuse of modern technology. She is mostly deprived of schooling for sake of taking care of siblings at home. Since she is to be married off soon, investing in her education is a liability. Despite the fact that women are massively involved in almost all sectors of economy, their work and earnings do not count. Their activities as producers of the household are not reflected in National

Income Statistics, thus, making their contribution unaccounted for. In an effort to uphold cultural heritage, the past is glamorized and with it, the equality of women and enhancement of their role in development gets inhibited.

Meennakshi et.al., 2000. A Study on estimating the poverty for SC, ST and Women headed household observes, 'irrespective of the deprivation measurement, the SC and ST communities have uniformly higher poverty rates' The importance of the landholding as a main source of livelihood in rural areas can hardly be overemphasized. The land distribution pattern ensures that patron-client relationship exists between Dalits and the upper castes sustains. The Dalits account for a sixth of India's population, but of Land. At best, they hold a tiny fraction of a sixth of land owned by Indians. Secondly, irrigation of the India has clear caste geography. Upper castes cultivate at the headwater; intermediate caste at the middle and Dalits cultivate near the tail waters.

Mungekar, 2000. the percentage of marginal farmers amongst Dalits is as high as 71, nearly 50 per cent of them are agricultural labourers; out of every 100 bonded labourers 66 belong to the Dalits; their share in industrial employment was as an abysmally low 4 per cent as a consequence of all this the extent of poverty among the Dalits is high as 50 per cent compared to 30 for the population as a whole.

The Opioneer, 30th Jun, 2000. In this study he mentioned briefly, during the period, which India calls Independence, 3 million Dalit women have been raped and one million Dalits have massacred. This is 25 times more than number of Indian soldiers killed during the wars it fought after Independence.

Nagayya 2000. Maintains that an informal arrangement for credit supply to the poor through SHG's is fast emerging as a promising tool for promoting income-generating enterprises. He has reviewed the initiatives arrangements to support this Programme for

alleviation of poverty among the poor, with focus on women. He maintained that NABARD and SIDBI are playing a prominent role at various stages of implementation of this Programme. There are other national level bodies also supporting NGO's/VA/s, viz. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi (RGVN) etc. He called for an imperative need to enlarge the coverage of SHG's in advance portfolio of banks as part of their corporate strategy, to recognize perceived benefits of SHG's financing in terms of reduced default risk and transaction costs.

Gurumoorthy 2000. Maintained that SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development programmes. SHG,s are viable organizational setup to disburse micro credit to the rural women for the purpose of making them entrepreneur and encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Credit needs of the rural women can be fulfilled wholesomely through the SHG's. The women led SGH's have successfully demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift, appraise credit needs, maintain linkages with the banks and enforce financial self discipline. SHG's enhance the equality of status of women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic and social and cultural spheres of life. They encourage women to take active part in the socio-economic progress of the society.

Bhatia and Bhatia 2000. Through few case studies highlighted that recovery of SHG's is higher than other credit extended to borrowers. Moreover, involvement of SGH's had helped the bank branches in recovery of old dues. They observed that there have been perceptible changes in the living standards of the SHG's members, in terms of ownership of assets, increase in savings and borrowing capacity, income generating activities and income levels as well

Rakesh Malhotra 2000. In this study of 174 women beneficiaries, in Rae Bareilly of the state of Uttar Pradesh, drawn and covered randomly from four formal agencies of credit i.e. CB's, PACS, and ARDB's revealed that less than half a per cent of female population against 3.5 per cent of male population in the study area were clients of the banks. Furthermore, only 7.64 per cent of the total quantum of credit extended by RFI 's have gone to women. It was observed that 83 per cent of loan cases availed for the end use of credit.

Dasgupta 2000. Informal journey through Self Help Group observed that micro-financing through informal group approach has effected quite a few benefits viz.: (1) savings mobilized by the poor; (2) access to the required amount of appropriate credit by the poor; (3) matching the demand and supply of credit structure and opening new market for FI's; (4) reduction in transaction cost for both lenders and borrowers; (5) tremendous improvement in recovery; (6) heralding new realization of subsidy less and corruptionless credit, and (7) remarkable empowerment of poor women. He stressed that SHG's should be considered as one of the best means to counter social and financial citizenship not as an end in itself

Datta and Raman 2000. highlighted that SHG's are characterized by heterogeneity in terms of social and economic indicators. The success of SHG's in terms of high repayment is mostly related to the exploitation of prevailing social ties and cohesion found among women members. Social cohesiveness among members spring not only from their diverse background of knowledge base, skills occupations and income levels, but also die to the dynamic incentive system of progressive lending to the groups on the successful completion of loan repayment. However, SHG's are heavily dependent on external financial agencies for their lending operations.

Government of India report 1999. Hence, violence, which serves as a crucial social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society, is the core outcome of gender-based inequalities shaped and intensified by the caste system. This situation exists in India today despite constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination on the basis of caste and gender (*Article 15(1)*), the right to life and security of life (*Article 21*) and the constitutional directive to specifically protect Dalits from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (*Article 46*). Moreover, the Indian State has enacted a series of laws protecting the rights of Dalits and women, acknowledging the prevalence of discrimination and violence against these sections of society. A key law in this regard is the *Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989*. The presence of laws, however, without concomitant implementation to ensure personal security to Dalit women, and without concerted efforts to emancipate the Dalit community and eradicate entrenched gender-and-caste biased notions of inequality and (in)justice, is not enough. The Indian government has itself acknowledged that the institutional forces – caste, class, community and family – arrayed against women's equal rights are powerful and shape people's mindsets to accept pervasive gender inequality

Jogdand, 1999. Women constitute half of the total population, but are unable to get equal share in active politics. Their socio-economic status directly depends on their participation in politics. Political parties in India speak much about equality of women but have totally ignored the dalit women.

Pal and Bhargav 1999. A careful look at the economic situation of dalit women reveals that their work force structure is such that they rarely own any land. A large majority of them are agricultural labourers. The rate of unemployment among them is also quite high.

About 90% of women working in unorganized sector are mainly from lower castes **Jogdand 1999**. In 1991, about 71% of dalit women workers in rural area were agricultural labourers. Only 19% of them owned land.

Pillai, cited in Michael 1999. The main complaints of the poor dalit women are that they have no good houses. In urban areas most of them stay in unhygienic slums and in rural areas their houses are away from main stream of society.

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*). The main reasons for the very low literacy rate among Dalit women could be some or all of the following:

1. The Lack of educational resources especially in rural areas.
2. Privatization of schools and colleges.
3. Extreme poverty, because of which they cannot afford the expensive fees for the private schools.
4. The demand for an increase in the Dowry for educated girls.
5. Humiliation and bullying by the high caste students and teachers.

Rege, S. 1998. If human rights are the legitimation of human needs, then the needs of Dalit women for personal security, socio-economic development and social justice are priority areas for intervention. In order to understand, the reality of Indian society in general, and the Dalit community and Dalit women in particular, an analysis of caste-class-gender dynamics is imperative. It is only by adopting this three-fold lens focusing on the cultural and material dimensions of the intersection of gender and caste discrimination that a true comprehension of key social relations and social inequalities in India emerges.

Human Watch Report, 1998. It is easy for the historically dominating caste and gender to violate human rights of dalit women who are at the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. The type of violence inflicted on dalits is in the form of severest violation of human rights. Dalit and tribal women are raped as part of an effort by upper caste leaders, land lords and police to suppress movements to demand payment of minimum wages, to settle share cropping disputes or to reclaim lost lands.

Manipal, 1998. Dalit women also 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 no-confidence motion against dalit women as pradhan by the dominant sections. Rural elites are unable to accept the power, which has been given into the hands of the poorer and disadvantaged women .

National Commission for Women 1996. Vulnerably positioned at the bottom of India's caste, class and gender hierarchies, Dalit women experience endemic gender-and-caste discrimination and violence as the outcome of everely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Their socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice, when combined with the dominant risk factors of being Dalit and female, increase their exposure to potentially violent situations while simultaneously reducing their ability to escape. Violence against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and discrimination against these women subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. As the National Commission for Women has commented, "in the commission of offences against... scheduled caste (Dalit) women the offenders try to establish their authority and humiliate the community by subjecting their women to indecent and inhuman treatment, including sexual assault, parading naked, using filthy language, etc."

Pandit1995. Article 17 of the constitution provides for removal of untouchability. Based on this article Protection of Civil Rights Act' (PCR), was passed in 1955. However, there was no conviction/ under this Act, hence Thirty-four years after the introduction of PCR Act, the Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 was enacted to bring various forms of atrocities to an end. In this Act the complainant is given more weightage. There are stringent provisions against the police for negligence.