



A
PROJECT WORK ON

***SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN IN
PATTAMUNDAI MUNICIPALITY***

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REPORT

A project on "**Socio-Economic status of Dalit Women in Pattamundai Municipality**" prepared by the students of the Department of Political Science during the session 2019-2020. Total 18 numbers of students participated in the project work. It focused on extensive study of secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from Governments reports, census report, reports of world conferences, books, journals, newspapers, workshops, experts, parents, guardians, neighbours, observations, web sites, etc. Further, the primary data was collected from the scheduled caste women working in different departments in Pattamundai Municipality. The primary data was collected using questionnaire and questionnaire was circulated among the Dalit women working in different departments. The objectives of the study were to find out the economic and social status of Dalit women with respect to important indicators of human development, to look into the discrimination and inequality faced by Dalit women in family and society. The socio-economic status of Dalit women has been examined in terms of work participation rate, unemployment rate, occupational pattern, wage earning, literacy level, educational level in Pattamundai Municipality. It is found from the study that Dalit women need group and gender specific policies and programme to address the issue of multiple deprivations. Though India has various affirmative policies for the socially marginalized groups and women and also ensures the right to education for all, SC women and girls are still facing the curse of illiteracy and underage marriages. Dropout rate is higher among the SC girls in the higher secondary schools and underage marriage is more prevalent among them. Dalit women require comprehensive policies on health, especially on the maternal and child health because infant and child mortalities are higher among them. Economic data reveals that though Dalit women have higher Work Participation Rate, they are mostly concentrated in low paid jobs, and unemployment rate is the highest among SC women with graduate and above degrees. Similarly, political participation is low in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. The departmental faculties guided the students to conduct this project and project is original.

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CONTENT

SL NO	SUBJECT	PAGE
CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION	1-8
CHAPTER II	HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF DALIT EARLY DEVELOPMENT	9-19
CHAPTER III	SOCIO – ECONOMIC STATUS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	20-40
CHAPTER IV	MAJOR CHALLENGES AND CONSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGE	41-52
CHAPTER V	CONCLUSION	53-54
CHAPTER VI	BIBLIOGRAPHY	55-56

REPORT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTON

In all states across the globe, there are communities which continue to be marginalized and deprived of their rights due to their location within the society determined by class, race, ethnicity, gender and skin colour. In India, caste determines one's social status and Dalit or untouchables remain as one of the most oppressed and exploited community in the country. Though the constitution of India has enshrined several provisions for Dalit communities to safeguard and promote their socio-economic status in order to bring them back in the mainstream of population, the exclusionary mechanism of entrenched hierarchical social relations have brought differential outcome for the Dalit, especially the women. They have to bear the triple burden of deprivation in terms of caste, gender and poverty. Dalit women are forced to enter the labour market at a very early age in order to sustain their families. Traditionally allocated menial and stigmatised works are generally assigned to them. In between societal hierarchy and patriarchy, Dalit women stand at the lower most strata of the society and bear multiple deprivations not only in terms of poverty and lack of autonomy, but also untouchability which keeps the miles away from the mainstream population.

As a result of untouchability and caste hierarchy, Dalit women stand as the lowest achievers in the socioeconomic development process of the country 'Progress of any society should be measured in terms of the degree of progress which women have achieved' as once said by Dr.Ambedkar, will not be attained unless and until the status of Dalit women improves in the society. In India, women cannot be treated as a 'single' unit. Caste-gender intersectionality plays a crucial role in determining one's status in the society, and the status is maintained for the life-time through the process of 'caste endogamy'.

The situation of Dalit women in India needs special attention. They are one of the largest socially segregated groups anywhere in the world, and make up 2 per cent of the world's total population. Dalit women constitute half of 200 million Dalit populations, and 16.3 of the total Indian female population. Dalit women are placed at the absolute bottom of the social hierarchy as they face systemic and structural

discrimination threefold: as Dalits, as poor, and as women. The caste system, estimated to affect 260 million people globally, declares Dalit women to be intrinsically impure and 'untouchable', which sanctions social exclusion and exploitation. The vast majority of Dalit women are poor; they are landless wage laborers and lack access to basic amenities and entitlements. They are subjugated by patriarchal structures, both in the general community and within their own family. Dalit women are discriminated in economic, socio-cultural, political and legal spheres. Such deprivation and discrimination against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and violence against these women subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste.

There are about 250 million Dalits in India. There is meager improvement in the social economic condition of dalits in the past 50 years. Which that is not enough when compared to non-dalits. Of course, much more needs to be done. The urgent need is to have a national sample survey on dalits. Every fourth Indian is a dalit. There is no proper survey to give the correct number of dalit women in India. They are generally scattered in villages and they are not a monogamous group. About 75% of dalits live below poverty line. Economic backwardness of dalits is mostly due to injustice done to them by the high castes and also due to exploitation. From the time immemorial they worked like slaves, sold as commodities resulting in their social discrimination, economic deprivation and educational backwardness. To assess the position of dalit women in India this chapter is divided into various heads. Dalit women are one of the largest socially segregated groups anywhere in the world, and make up 2% of the world's total population. Dalit women are discriminated against three times over: they are poor, they are women, and they are Dalits. Dalit women constitute half of the ca. 200 million Dalit population, and 16.3 of the total Indian female population. The traditional taboos are the same for Dalit men and Dalit women. However, Dalit women have to deal with them more often. Dalit women are discriminated against not only by people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. Men are dominant in Dalit communities. Dalit women also have less power within the Dalit movement itself. Women are active in large numbers in the movement but most leadership positions in the organizations, local bodies and associations have until now been held by men. Even after reservation policy, positive changes and a constant support of the political machinery in the country towards

eradication of discrimination against the Dalits, it is still not easy being a Dalit. So the question that comes to one's mind is - if being a Dalit is so tough, how tough will it be to live a life of a Dalit woman? Women in any caste are considered lowly creatures. So how does a lowly creature among the alleged lowly creatures live? The Constitution of India "cast a special responsibility on the State to promote with special care the education, economic interest of the Scheduled Castes and promised to protect them from all forms of exploitation and social injustice (Article46)."

BACKGROUND OF THE LITERATURE

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are the two historically disadvantaged population groups recognised in the Indian Constitution. During the colonial time (since 1885), they were known as Depressed Classes who faced multiple deprivations on account of their low position in the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system. Since time immemorial, Indian society is divided into four castes. In this hierarchical system, Brahmin or priestly castes and Kshatriyas or warrior caste occupied two top most positions followed by Vaishyas or

business community and Shudras or the service caste. Shudra or the service caste occupies the lower most position in the Indian caste hierarchy. Mahatma Gandhi's fast unto death and Poona Pact (1932) between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Pundit Madan Mohan Malviya. According to the agreement, the demand of separate electorate was replaced by reserved constituency for the depressed classes and in this way, the scheduling of castes took place. In 1936, The Government of India, Scheduled Caste Order (Article 26 (i) describes the Scheduled Caste.

" Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief crusader against untouchability as well as the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, moved two important resolutions. The first one was the prohibition of untouchability and the second was the proper scheduling of castes as well as tribes. Two statutory commissions (National Commission for Scheduled Castes and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes) were set up for successfully implementing the protective measures against SC and ST communities. Scheduled castes are often termed as Dalit. The term Dalit is extensively used in North India and its etymological root is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dal' which means broken or downtrodden. Punjabi dictionary "The Mahan Kosh" defines "Dalit as one who belongs to the lowest caste (HiniJati) and has been trampled down by or broken under the feet of the upper castes (UchiJati)." The term

was first used by Jotiba Phule in nineteenth century and Ambedkar defined the word in Bahiskrit Bharat: Dalithood is a kind of life condition which characterizes the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalit by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper caste Brahminical order² (Gopal Guru, 1998). In 1973, Dalit Panthar Movement incorporated the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Neo and Buddhists, working people, landless and poor peasantry, women and other socially, politically and marginalised people into the term 'Dalit' (Gopal Guru, 1998).

Dr. Ambedkar was the first social reformer who identified caste issue from a gender point of view and propagated that annihilation of caste is only possible through women empowerment. The tradition of caste endogamy maintains caste hierarchy in the society. Therefore, he encouraged women's participation in political as well as social movements (Singariya, M.R 2014; Dhanvijay Vaishali; 2012; Gunjal 2012)). He was the chief architect of the Hindu Code Bill (156), which legitimised divorce, inter-caste marriages and adaptation in the Indian society.

Though Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, has encouraged women across all social groups to be educated, mobilized and participate in public life to put an end of caste hierarchy (Zelliot, 2005), after the Independence, neither the women organisations nor Dalit activists addressed the caste and gender intersectionality (Vimal Thorat, 2001). Dalit movement became 'masculinised' and women activists started treating women as a homogenous group (Sharmila Rege, 1998, page: 42). "Women's lives in India and the world over are circumscribed by what can be termed as five 'P's: Patriarchy, Productive resources access inadequacy, Poverty, Promotion advancement insufficiency and Powerlessness." (HemaLataSwarup, 1993).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The focus of the paper is to analyze the phenomenon of the socio-economic status of women. The justification is that women of all communities are facing violence but Dalit women are facing Different forms of violence in domestic and social fronts besides their lower socio-economic and educational status. India is a multi-religious, multiethnic and multi-cultural country. In terms of human development indicators, it ranks 127 out of 177 countries (UNDP 2004). However, patriarchal system norms are also deeply embedded and women still face discrimination at various levels. The constitution of India states that no citizen shall be discriminated or deprived of the

right of equality and equal protection of law. But, the fact remains that this is an illusion for many socially excluded women who are victimized by society. Incidents of violence against women are a normal feature of life. Rape incidents have also increased and witch killing in indigenous communities are also another form of violence against women in India (Kelkar 1992). The Indian government has reported that from dowry harassment nearly 6,000 women a year die and many more are mutilated in India (Reddy 2002). Studies show that women are vulnerable especially widows, single, poor and socially marginalised women. The absence of specific laws to address this social evil has made it impossible to punish the perpetrators and seek justice for the victims of such abuses.

In this backdrop, the work aims to provide a systematic understanding of the status of Dalit women in India through a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature, analysis of secondary data and content from various relevant documents to depict the multiple deprivations of Dalit women in the broad framework of caste-gender intersectionality.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND GAP ANALYSIS

Before beginning to work on any particular concept it is always advisable to review the existing literature pertaining to the proposed concept directly or indirectly. In this regard an attempt was made to find out whether any literature exists on socio economic status and major challenges and recommendation for dalit women in India. A brief account of literature review and gap analysis as presented in the Diverse issues relating to different status of dalit women in india touched upon by different researchers to serve the different objectives.

Amar Kumar Singh and Rajyalakshmi (1993) "Status of Tribal Women in India" discussed the status of tribal women in terms of their demography, health, education and employment. Despite constitutional protection and assurances, even after four and a half decades, . It is characterized by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market forces in tribal society, illiteracy, subhuman physical living conditions, high fertility, and high malnutrition and near absence of modern health care facilities.

Datta and Sinha (1997) conducted a review of the literature "Gender Disparities in Social Well-Being: An Overview" published in 'Indian Journal of Gender Studies'. It reveals two main explanations for women's lower status, one stressing women's lack

of economic independence and value. Early research on gender disparities centered on education and employment, whereas the current trend focuses on other indicators of social well-being, including health, nutrition, and empowerment.

Ghosh and Ghosh (1997) "Dalit Women". The book defined the term 'Dalit' and described the historical background to the castes and the status of Dalits since ancient days. The position and status of Dalit women is vulnerable as they are deprived by their gender and caste. The authors discussed the position of Dalit women in Dalit society and general Indian society.

Sharmila Rege (1998) "Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of 'Difference' and Towards a Dalit Feminist stand point Position" in 'Economic & Political Weekly'. The assertion of autonomous Dalit women's organizations in the 1990s threw up several crucial theoretical and political challenges, besides underlining the Brahmanism of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices of dalit politics.

Kuldeep Singh (2009) published his research paper "Dalit Politics and Leadership after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" in 'The Indian Journal of Social Work'. This article attempts to shed light on Dalit politics and leadership after Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar by evaluating the role of Dalit oriented parties and leaders in leading the Dalit Movement in the postAmbedkar era. Attention has been more sharply focused upon the Bahujan.

Vivek Kumar (2009)²"Locating Dalit Women in the Indian Caste System, Media and Women's Movement" in 'Social Change'. Dalit women in Indian society are triply exploited on the basis of caste, class and gender. In this context after defining the term Dalits sociologically this paper attempts to establish that Dalit women are different from general caste women on the basis of their structural location, occupations they perform and treatment meted out to them by society in general.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study will be carried on with the following objectives

1. To present the economic and social status of Dalit women with respect to important indicators of human development.
2. To study the age group of Dalit working women in Pattamundai Municipality.
3. To look into the discrimination and inequality faced by Dalit women in family and society.

4. To find out whether there is increase or change of status of Dalit women due to employment.
5. This analysis also includes the demographic profile of Dalit women in terms of population growth, sex ratio, rural and urban percentage and concentration of Dalit in various Indian states.
6. The socio-economic status of Dalit women has been examined in terms of work participation rate, unemployment rate, occupational pattern, wage earning, literacy level, educational level in Pattamundai Municipality.
7. An analysis of health status has been done in terms of maternal and child mortality, access to health care systems.
8. To study the Impact of Developmental Programmes on the Dalit Women.
9. To make necessary suggestions for effective implementation of developmental programmes for the Empowerment of Dalit Women.

METHODOLOGY

Pattamunndai Municipality is located in Kendrapara of Odisha state. The term 'Dal- its' is used as synonymously to 'Scheduled Caste' in the present study. Further, the primary data was collected from the scheduled caste women working in different departments in Pattamundai Municipality. Depending on the availability, total 500 Dalit working women are surveyed and of which, 250 Dalit women are State Government employees, 150 are Central Government employees including autonomous organizations and 100 are Local Government employees. The primary data was collected using questionnaire and questionnaire was circulated among the Dalit women working in different departments. The collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under.

For this study, we have followed certain research methods to collect information and data from the different General Reports, News Papers, Articles and text books etc. It is purely based on secondary literatures and various relevant data for this project. Data has been collected purely through the secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from Governments reports, census report, reports of world conferences, books, journals, newspapers, workshops, experts, parents, guardians, neighbors, observations, web sites, etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

We spent near about two months to complete this work, but still, I could not cover all factors of the Status of dalit women in India. Therefore, I had taken Books and some Articles. I was able to gather much more information that includes secondary data, books, reports and web sites. In the short span for period it is very difficult to access all the literatures. The research was done qualitatively than quantitatively. Thus, the findings of this study would be helpful for initiating a step to make the dalit women aware about their different status, major challenges and constitutional privileges.

CHAPTER PLANNING

In this project we discuss three chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion or recommendation. This is the concept of Socio economic Status of dalit women in contemporary india, I was discuss to the study of different status, major challenges and constitutional privilege of dalit women. The thesis has three chapters along with Introduction and conclusion.

The Three chapters are as under: -

1. Historical perspective of the term dalit and present position of Dalit women
2. Socio economic status and demographic profile of Pattamundai Municipality
3. Major challenges and Constitutional privilege

First, I was discuss to the study of historical perspective of dalit in early development , ,chaturvarnas and Dalits ,10 point of law by manu ,then study the present position of dalit women India. Secondly, chapter two titled socio economic status and demographic profile of dalit women in India . In this chapter discussed about social, economical, political, education, health And occupational status of dalit women. Third chapter titled major challenges and policy initiatives, Constitutional privileges and protection for dalit women, then recommendation and suggations for the better implementation of the scheme of dalit women.

Then I was wrote on the project lastly Conclusion or Reference.

CHAPTER –II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF DALIT EARLY DEVELOPMENT

• THE CHATURVARNAS AND THE DALITS

The Hindu scriptures state very clearly about the origin of caste system. The Rigveda describes the creation of the four Varnas from the limbs of Purushasukta. The Samhita not only gives the origin of Chaturvana from the limbs of the creator, but also interprets this origin theologically and gives divine justification of their functions and their status in society (Mandal Commission Report, 1980: 19). The famous Purushasukta hymn in the Rigveda (Rigveda, 10:97) explains the creation of human beings into four Varnas, or castes: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. It states:

“The Brahmin was his mouth;
His two arms were made the Rajanya (Kshatriya);
His thighs became the Vaisya;
From his feet the Sudra was produced.”

In the Geeta Lord Krishna says: “The four-fold order was created by me, according to the apportionment of qualities and duties.” (Kashi Nath Trimbak Telang, 1990, IV: 26). The Mandal Commission observed that according to the Dharma Shastras, if man does good deeds during his life he will be re-born in a high caste while if he does evil acts, he will be born in a low caste, or even as an animal, a pig, a donkey, etc. (Mandal Commission, 19).

Thus, we can notice that the Hindu scriptures claim the creator’s hand in the origin of the four-fold caste system of the Hindu society. From the very beginning, the social unit of caste, the jati, was kept up as it served as a primary source of identity for the individual as well as a means of identifying others. The criterion for ranking in hierarchical order was not just ritual purity, but also the land ownership, wealth and political power. Thus, it developed as an exploitative structure.

However, the social structures as expounded by Dr. Ambedkar, is different from the traditional Hindu presentations. In the classification below, those in classes I formed the privilege classes of the Hindu society. Next, in the Social ladder are those belong

to Class II, the Shudras. They are born to serve the Class I. Though there are a number of social and economic discrimination, they are not untouchables. They have certain degree of honours and dignity and during passage of time a number of Shudra communities to acquire social as well as economic status. To name a few: Kayasthas of North India, though originally belonging to Shudra category, could achieve social status. Vaishya Shahas and Telis of Bengal could achieve economic status. Class III and Class IV belong to Avarna category i.e., outside Chaturvarna. Primitive tribes dwell in forests and hills normally; they are in any case different class of people; whether untouchable or not it does not really affect them. They are now included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. The criminal tribes or castes are of low status due to their deeds. Some time entire caste or tribes were declared criminals like Lodha and Kheria Savaras tribes, Meena tribes or Gujjar caste. They are certainly not untouchables and were never socially discriminated. The problem remains with Class IV, the Dalits. They were discriminated in every sense. They live in Hindu villages hence do not have advantage of geographical isolation like tribes. They are to serve all classes of people around and shall have to do all the dirty jobs. There is not a single instance found when any caste from this community had been elevated. In fact, present reservation policy did not help them to acquire good job since it was shared by certain Shudra caste that already had social economic and literacy status.

•LAW OF MANU ON DALITS

Manu, the Hindu law giver described the untouchables as Varna Bahayas and thus kept them out of Chaturvarna. Regarding these people Manu ordained separate set of law given below.

The ten-point law of Manu on Dalits is given below:

1. All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from the community of those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet of Brahma, are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlechhas (Barbarians) or that of the Aryans.
2. Near-well known trees and burial ground, on mountains and in groves, let these tribes' dwell, known by certain marks and subsisting by their peculiar occupations.

3. But the dwelling of the Chandalas and Shwapakas shall be outside the village, they must be made Apapatras and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys.
4. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead. They shall eat their food in broken dishes, black irons shall be their ornament, they must always wander from place to place.
5. A man, who fulfils a religious duty, shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions shall be among themselves, and their marriages with their equals.
6. Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns.
7. By day they must go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at the king's command, and they shall carry out the corpses of persons who have no relatives, that is a settled rule.
8. By the king's order they shall always execute the criminals in accordance with law and they shall take for themselves the clothes, the beds and the ornaments of such criminals.
9. He who has a connection with the women of the lowest castes shall be put to death.
10. If one who (being the member of Chandalas or some other low caste) must not be touched, intentionally defines by his touch (as a member of a twice born caste) may be touched (by other twice born persons only) he shall be put to death (G.K. Ghosh, 1997:7)

Therefore, from above point of law and law connected with Shudra, it is very clear that Dalits or untouchables are different from Shudra's, though either of them is lowly placed in comparison to three upper categories like Brahmin, Khatriya and Vaishya. Nevertheless, Dalits are placed much below than Shudras for whom even touching a higher caste is a crime.

• THE UNTOUCHABLES OF THE SOCIETY

One of the essential characteristics of this caste system was the concept of purity and pollution. Over the years the line of pollution became the clear basis of the division of the Indian society into the clean touchables and the polluted untouchables. The

untouchables were those whose jatis were at the very bottom of the hierarchical society because of their traditional jati occupations like disposing of dead animals or rubbish, scavenging, etc. This kind of work was considered polluting. According to some, in the beginning these people were regarded as Sudras but gradually they were marked out as a separate and distinct community lower than the Sudras.

As the year passed, the condition of these untouchables became deplorable. They became poorer and powerless and discriminated against at every step of their life. People thought that one is born into an untouchable caste because of the heinous sins of one's previous life. Those of the high caste kept their distance from these untouchables lest they should be polluted by their contact.

Over the years these untouchables have been given a number of titles, many of which indicate a kind of contempt towards these people. Those who were outside the fourfold varna system are called Avarnas and had no place within the Hindu religion. Hence they are called by contemptuous names like Dasa, Dasya, Raksas, Asura, Avarnas, Panchamas, Chandalas, Achuts, Exterior castes, depressed classes, Harijans, Schedule castes, etc. (James Massey, 1991: 6, 7). The name to a person matters a lot, for it gives identity, personhood and pride in oneself. Varna ideology teaches and propagates that humans are born unequal from different parts of the divine body. This inequality and hierarchy of human is justified by Karma-samsara theory. If I am a Dalit, I have done something wrong in my past life.

Your very nature of birth is determined. You have no choice. Your svad-karma is intrinsic to you. Your salvation lies in your faithful observance of your varna (Jati). There is no mobility in this system. Stay where you are till you die (P. G. Jogdand, 1995: 125).

• **ROOT AND MEANING OF THE TERM DALIT**

The Dalit is derived from Sanskrit language where it is used both as noun and adjective. As noun, Dalit stands for all three genders: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter. It has as its root dal, which means to split open, to crack, etc. when used as a noun or adjective, it means burst, split, broken down-trodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed etc. (The practical Sanskrit, English dictionary Delhi, 1989); There is also a word dal in Hebrew language, which means broken, crust, down-trodden, split etc.,

(M.E. Prabhakar, 1988), and may be used in two senses: it may refer either to physical weakness or to a lowly insignificant position in society (Elsa Tamex, Bible of the Oppressed, 1983: 70). In other words, Dalits are people who are broken, crushed and torn apart. They are extremely poor and lowly. The term Dalit can be used for any oppressed group or people who are marginalized and dehumanized .

- **USAGE OF THE WORD DALIT**

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890), a Marathi social reformer belonging to the backward caste, was the first to use the term Dalit to describe the outcaste untouchables as the oppressed and the broken victims of Hindu Society. The young intellectuals of the Dalits Panther Movement, who used the term to name and define their movement, however, popularized the term Dalit, during the 1970s. They included in their definition of the word all Scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, workers, landless labourers, poor peasants, women and others who have been exploited politically, economically and on the basis of religion not all of whom are drawn from the Scheduled Castes. The word Dalit denotes all sorts of oppressions, i.e., social, economic, religious, political and cultural. Hence, the Dalit means all oppressed people of society.

In our discussion too, the term Dalit is used broadly to refer to the Scheduled caste or depressed classes of India and the outcastes, politically powerless, economically indigent discriminated both religiously and culturally and who are not included in the four-fold Varna structure of Hindu society. The term Dalit is not merely a label or name. In the real sense, it describes the condition of a people and it also represents a struggle for their self-identity and recognition in society.

- **PORTRAYAL OF DALIT WOMEN IN HINDU EPICS**

The society often treated women as an object of sex and sexual exploitation. It was an established fact that women were looked down in all aspects of life. Discrimination is shown towards them in all spheres, in the disguise of tradition and culture.

According to reports issued by the present Ministry of Welfare, over half of the rape cases officially registered in India concern women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. On average, one thousand such cases of rape are reported each year and

they are often not investigated and difficult to prove. The use of torn-true and other forms of cruel behaviour towards poorer and oppressed sections are not new in Indian society.

The Indian literature gives controversial statements regarding the status of women in the society. At some point it says that the mother should be respected highly more than the father and Guru (teacher). And elsewhere it advises not to trust woman. One of the ancient scriptures says that if father is bad, the son can abandon him. If Guru is bad the disciple can leave him but one should not leave one's mother though she is of bad character. It says one should respect one's mother. The son should obey the mother. But later Manu dharma Shastra says women should not be given freedom. She should be kept under the control of man at every stage of life.

In the earlier days of civilization, women enjoyed a superior status. The matriarchal system of society placed the control in the hands of woman. They were the owners of wealth and enjoyed power and freedom. This is in Pre-Vedic and Vedic period. In the pre-historic society people lived in-groups. Group marriages were common system of society. Women because of their productive functions enjoyed superior status.

Children were identified with the names of their mothers. The family was known after the mothers. This is the symptom of matriarchal society. Mahabharata depicts this type of system.

In later days the structure of the society has undergone several changes and it slowly moved towards patriarchal system. Mother's right was overthrown and property came into the hands of men. This overthrow of the mother's right was the time where caste evolved. Transition from group marriage to single marriage is for private property. This system gave way to class and caste structure in the society. One can see this transition in Ramayana and „Mahabharata“.

POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD AND THE PROBLEM OF DALITS:

The problem of the Dalits and the struggle for liberation is continuing in the post-independence period with equal favour, because even India's political freedom in 1947 was notable to help them in getting out of their condition. Prior to independence, the British rulers used the policy of "noninterference" in local,

cultural and religious practices in order to rule the people of India and for that they even created a new vocabulary. The new rules of independent of India have continued to use the same vocabulary and expressions which in no way have helped the masses, particularly the Dalits. This was perhaps the reason why most of the Dalit move results and their leaders were not supportive of the freedom movement led by the upper castes under the Indian National Congress.¹⁷ While piloting the Constitution of Independence India on November 4, 1948. Dr. Ambedkar did say it was “workable” and “flexible” but even this character of the construction has been used only to maintain the status quo of the set rules of life in Indian society because it has only gone in favour of the powerful not the mass of powerless people the Constitution itself as Dr. Ambedkar said is not “bad” it is the use of its flexibility which has proved bad, it is because of this truth, that the condition of the Dalits even after independence, has not improved.

•Present position of Dalit women

The present position seems to be better with reference to the rate of literacy among dalits. The literacy rate is 31.48% for boys and 10.93% for girls. Dalits women belonging to the creamy layer of the society are better with good education and socially and economically they are well off like other high castes. They are fully aware of the welfare schemes provided by the Government and their percentage is very low when compared with the total dalit population. In rural areas, the first generation girls from SC need the attention of Government and other organization. Mostly the teachers of the locality provide information to them about the welfare schemes. In many Dalit associations executive positions are occupied by male members whereas very poor representation is made by women in their pasts. The women are not properly informed about the Government schemes and there is an urgent need to get a feedback about the welfare schemes where lot of money is spent for the development of Dalits. The funds are not utilized properly for their upliftment. Many of the schemes go unnoticed because they are not popularized properly. The coaching programmes conducted by the Government for Dalit women are beneficial in training many women to compete in the competitive exam. These programmes also do not reach the needy Dalit women because they are cornered by

the very few creamy Dalit women. This should be monitored properly and the schemes should be reached by the most deprived and constantly struggling dalit women. Because these Dalit women are neglected by socially advanced communities and also by the better off among the Dalits, which leads to an unhealthy socio-economic condition. There should be some scientific basis to pick up the poorest and they should be equipped with facilities.

The present position is better because of education, literacy rate for boys 31.48%, girls 10.93%. Now they have lot of self-respect, aware of their rights, organizations to voice their feelings. The creamy layer is well aware of the Government welfare schemes. Among SC Dalits executive positions in associations are occupied only by men, very poor representation by women. Feedback about the welfare programme is very essential.

The 1992-93 Annual report from the Ministry of Welfare shows 1,236 reported cases of rape on Dalit women and the National Commission for SC/ST shows that approximately 10,000 cases of human right violations on Dalits are reported every month. But what is even more disturbing, is that only one out of ten of the cases are reported annually whilst, nine go unreported. In addition to this, according to the Human Right watch Report, approximately 115 million children are in slavery and 2.6 million children are held as bonded labourers (Narula). After fifty-five years of India's independence and despite the excellent laws in place to protect Dalit women, they are still suffering unimaginable atrocities from the high caste Hindus. It is believed that thousands of these cases go unreported and unpublicized because the poor Dalits that live in rural areas, who are the worst victims, have no control on power, wealth, justice, police and the media (Thind n.pag). The only way these Dalit women can escape the viscous cycle of poverty, abuse and oppression is through education. Through education more Dalit women can come to know their basic human rights and they can then raise an even stronger voice against abuse and exploitation from the upper castes (Thind; Agarwar).

1. Gender Equality

Female infanticide is more prevalent among the uneducated dalit families. Educational development among SC women is very marginal because only girls were

not sent to school because of the responsibilities at home. Therefore the gender discrimination starts at the very early stage in the life of a dalit girl. Normally girl children are retained at home to look after the siblings. Another thing is the compulsory marriage of the girls at very early age after which the education is stopped. Generally in the male-dominated society, polygamy is allowed and more so in many dalit families. Because of this the position of the women deteriorated. Joint family system, polygamy, property structure, early marriage, and permanent widowhood were hurdles for the development of all women in early period. But in the twentieth century, after the Mahatma Gandhien movement to educate women, slowly changes occurred in the position of women. But here, rural women were more blessed than urban women because divorce and remarriage were allowed for them. Mainly Sudras (i.e. low caste people) allowed divorce and remarriage for their women.

2. Family Role

Because of the girls remain uneducated, they got married very early. Marriage in the high reproductive stage with high fertility rate, children care more. Because of the unlimited family, the burden fell on the young girls which affected their health. They were not able to assist in family matters to their husbands. But now the situation is different. The girls manage to plan their family, educate the children, assist the husbands in family matters and office going and professional girls improve the economic conditions. On the whole the family becomes socially developed because of the education of the girls. Education among women increased inter caste marriages, which is definitely a sign of development. Government also encourages inter caste marriages among dalits and high caste by incentives.

3. Dalit Women Atrocities

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 severely 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. Violence against Dalit women is to deny them opportunities, choices and freedoms at multiple levels, undermining not only dalit women's dignity and self-respect, but also their right to development. Twelve major forms of violence constitute the basis of this study, nine being violence in the general community – physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction, forced incarceration and medical negligence – and three being violence in the family – female feticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence from natal and marital family members.

Dalit women are victims of social, religious and cultural practices like Devdasis and Jogins. In the name of these practices, village girls are married to God by their helpless parents. These girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men and directed in to trafficking and prostitution. They don't own any land nor are they aware of their rights on land. 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.

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. In the year 1993, 73rd amendment in the constitution granted reservation to dalits, tribal 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. An important obstacle is the

noconfidence 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.

CHAPTER – III

SOCIO – ECONOMIC STATUS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

It is divided into two categories, one is in Pattamundai Municipality which is the study site and second is the comparison of the present work with demographic profiles.

(A)SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF DALIT IN PATTAMUNDAI MUNICIPALITY

1. Age of the Respondents:

Information on age of the respondents helps to know about their level of knowledge and understanding about different aspects in their family life as well as their work life. Age is also important while assessing the work experience at their work place. Hence, the collected primary data on age of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 1. Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Dalit Women Working Under							
	Central Govt		State Govt		Local Govt			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Below 25 Years	07	4.6	12	4.8	13	13.0	32	6.4
26 to 40 Years	68	45.3	63	25.2	32	32.0	163	32.6
41 to 50 Years	60	40.0	116	46.4	43	43.0	219	43.8
51 to 60 Years	15	10.0	59	23.6	12	12.0	86	17.2
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

2. Education of the Respondents:

Comparatively education is source of knowledge. Where there is more education, there is more knowledge and vice versa. As such, information was collected from the respondents on their level of education and the collected primary data is tabulated as under.

Table No. 2. Education of the respondents

Particulars	Dalit Women Working Under						Total	
	Central Govt		State Govt.		Local Govt			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Up to Primary	08	5.3	19	7.6	42	42.0	69	13.8
Secondary	11	7.3	34	13.6	23	23.0	68	13.6
PU/ Under Graduate	33	22.0	76	30.4	11	11.0	120	24.0
Graduate/ Post- Graduate	98	65.3	117	46.8	24	24.0	239	47.8
Any Other	--	--	04	1.6	--	--	04	0.8
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

3. Faced Discrimination and Exploitation in Life:

As discussed already, the Dalit women have faced and are facing discrimination and exploitation at different stages in their life. In this regard, it was asked to the respondents whether they have faced any types of discriminations and exploitations in their life and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 3. Faced Discrimination and Exploitation in life

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Yes	112	74.6	196	78.4	89	89.0	397	79.4
No	28	18.6	41	16.4	06	6.0	75	15.0
Can't Say	10	6.6	13	5.2	05	5.0	28	5.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

4. Nature of Exploitation and Discrimination:

As discussed above, totally 397 of the respondents have faced cases of exploitation and discrimination and the nature of these cases are discussed as under.

Table No. 4. Nature of Exploitation and Discrimination

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Discrimination & Alienation in Education	46	30.6	112	44.8	18	18.0	176	35.2
Caste based Discrimination	62	41.3	131	52.4	27	27.0	220	44.0

Gender based Exploitation & Harassment	31	20.6	34	13.6	12	12.0	77	15.4
Suppression in Work place	27	18.0	31	12.4	41	41.0	99	19.8
Social Alienation from Village	19	12.6	25	10.0	21	21.0	65	13.0
Public Humiliation	11	7.3	12	4.8	14	14.0	37	7.4
Any Other	05	3.3	08	3.2	03	3.0	16	3.2
Not Applicable	38	25.3	54	21.6	11	11.0	103	20.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

5. Status Gained Due to Job:

The Dalit women is suppressed and depressed in their families as well as in society. After getting education and employment, as proved by many studies, Dalit women gain social respect and status to a greater extent. As such, it is assumed that the respondents in the present study may have gained social status and respect and the collected primary data in this respect is tabulated as under.

Table No. 5. Status Gained due to Job

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.			
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Socio-economic Status & Respect Improved	63	42.0	75	30.0	28	28.0	166	33.2
Improvement in Economic Status	41	27.3	103	41.2	34	34.0	178	35.6
Decreased Economic Status and Respect	06	4.0	09	3.6	15	15.0	30	6.0
No Change in Any Aspect	30	20.0	52	20.8	23	23.0	105	21.0
Enhanced Social Respect	10	6.6	11	4.4	--	--	21	4.2
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

6. Attitudes of Society towards Family:

Historically, the Dalit people were suppressed and depressed in society. Now due to the Constitutional principles, the Dalits have gained equality in all aspects of society. But the social traditions have not changed completely to accept the Dalits as equal and as

such, still few of the Dalit families are depressed, discriminated, exploited and even alienated in many of the places. But in urban areas, to a greater extent, the Dalits are treated equal. It was asked to the respondents to spell the attitudes of society towards their families and the collected primary data is presented in the following table.

Table No. 6. Attitudes of Society towards Family

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.		No's	%
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%		
Socially Discriminated & ill treated	52	34.6	73	29.2	24	24.0	149	29.8
Alienated from Forward Castes	04	2.6	10	4.0	07	7.0	21	4.2
Increased Social Status due to Economic Status	63	42.0	102	40.8	36	36.0	201	40.2
No Differentiation	31	20.6	65	26.0	33	33.0	129	25.8
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

7. Satisfaction in Work Life:

As discussed above, the Dalit women are deprived from many aspects and even facing challenges, obstacles and barriers in their family as well as in their work place. Hence, their satisfaction in their work life may be lower. Hence, the information was collected from the respondents on their satisfaction in work life and presented in the following table.

Table No. 7. Satisfaction in Work Life

Particulars	Dalit Women working under						Total	
	Central Govt.		State Govt.		Local Govt.		No's	%
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%		
Fully Satisfied	38	25.3	87	34.8	14	14.0	139	27.8
Satisfied to a Greater extent	82	54.6	120	48.0	61	61.0	263	52.6
Not Satisfied	30	20.0	43	17.2	25	25.0	98	19.6
Total	150	100	250	100	100	100	500	100

(B)DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

According to the 2011 Census, SC population constitutes 16.6 percent of the total Indian population. Punjab ranks first in the concentration of SC population (31.9%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (25.2%) and West Bengal (23.5%). Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have nearly 20 percent SC population to their total population. States which have SC population above 15 to 20 percent are Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Delhi, Tripura, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Puducherry. Very low concentration of SC population is found in Goa, Lakshadweep, Andaman-Nicobar, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, North Eastern states except Assam and Tripura. Two major western states like Maharashtra and Gujarat record 11.8 and 6.7 percent SC population in 2011.

Overall population of India records a steady decline over time. During 1961-71, it was 2.24 percent which slightly declined to 1.96 percent in 1971-81 and again increased to 2.34 percent in 1981-91. After 1991, the overall population growth records a sharp decline. It has declined from 2.06 percent in 1991-2001 to 1.64 percent in 2001-11.

In 2011, SC population records a very high growth (1.91%) compared to the non-SC/ST population (1.53), and the highest growth is found among the STs (2.15%). Growth of SC population overtime shows that the population growth was always higher than the non-SC/ST population. During 1971-81 and 1981-91, the growth of SC was 2.73 and 2.81 percent, and it recorded a steady increase up to 1981-91 periods. Population growth of SC has declined after 1981-1991. It became 1.89 percent in 1991-2001 and now it is 1.91 percent (2001-2011). There is a slight increase in SC population in 2001-11. Non-SC/ST population records a steady decline over period, and it remains always lower than the SC, ST and overall population. During 1961-71, non SC/ST population had a growth rate of 2.23 percent. It declined to 1.70 percent in 1971-81, and slightly increased over two percent during 1981-1991 and again recorded a declining trend. Recently in 2001-11, it is 1.53 percent (0.38% lower than the SC population).

• Population Pyramid -

Population pyramids provide information on birth rate, death rate for each age-group, life expectancy and future growth of a community. Both Scheduled caste and Non-SC/ST population show a triangular shaped population pyramids with huge base and declining summit, but SC population pyramid records steep sides between 10-14 and 15-19 years of age group, denoting high death rates in between these two age groups. Sides are steeper in case of SC population pyramid as compared to the Non-SC/ST one.

Largest number of population is found in the age group of 10-14 years. Birth rate is declining for both the social groups because 0-4 year population is shrinking. However, in case of Non-SC/ST population, younger age groups (0-4; 10-14; 15-19 years) record more males than that of the females.

With the increasing height, the SC population pyramids become narrower at the top than the Non-SC/ST population pyramid. SC population records lower life expectancy, especially the women. More than 80 years old SC women are less than 1%, but the percentage is higher for Non-SC/ST population. Therefore, the birth rate is declining for both SC and non-SC/ST groups, but in case of SC community, death rate is still higher in all age groups, especially in the age group of 10-14 years and the life expectancy is lower than the Non Sc/ST counterpart. Life expectancy is lower in case of SC women than non Sc/ST women. Thus, in spite of fall in fertility, demographic dividend is not applicable for SC population. This social group is still experiencing higher death rate in all age-sex groups.

Sex Ratio :

India records 943 overall sex ratio. The highest sex ratio is recorded among ST population (990), followed by SC (945) and non-SC/ST (937). Therefore, SC/ST population always records a better sex ratio than the non-SC/ST Population. The child sex ratio always remains very high among the SC population compared to the national average as well as Non-SC/ST population. It has increased steadily over time. In 1991, the child sex ratio of SC population was 921 compared to 927 in national average and 923 for Non-SC/ST population.

It raised to 936 in 2001 which is higher than the national average (929) as well as Non-SC/ST population (923). further increased to 945 in 2011 which is much higher

than Non-SC/ST population (937) and national average (943). In all age groups, SC/ST population always records better sex ratio than the GY non-SC/ST social group. However, the sex ratio of youth and adolescent population exhibits that the age group of 15-19 years records the lowest sex ratio for SC population (872) compared to the other social groups.

Fertility :

In 2005-06, SC population records a TFR of 2.92 which is very high compared to the Non-SC/ST/OBC population (2.35), but lower than the ST (3.12). TFR of SC population has been slightly decreased over time. It was 3.92 in 1992-93, and became 3.15 in 1998-99 and 2.92 in 2005-06. The Non-SC/ST/OBC population records a sharp decline. It was 3.30 in 1992-93, and became 2.66 in 1998-99 and 2.35 in 2005-06. Therefore, SC population has a very high TFR. It is higher than the national average (2.68) which indicates that the fertility rate is still very high among the SCs.

Mortality :

NFHS 1,2 and 3 data reveals that infant mortality rate (IMR) has declined for all social groups across the years. However, SC population always records the highest IMR compared to the other social groups. In 2005-06, IMR for SC population is 66 whereas others or Non-SC/ST/Obc record 49.

Child Mortality :

Child mortality always remains higher for SC social group compared to others. In 2005-06, SC records 88.1 child mortality rate, and others (Non-SC/ST/ OBC) records 59.2. Therefore, In India, demographic transition varies social group wise. SC population is still experiencing high fertility and mortality rates, especially for lower and upper most age groups. Life expectancy at birth is lower than the non-SC/ST social group and female life expectancy is lower than the male life expectancy. However, non-SC/ST social group records greater female life expectancy at birth. Sex ratio of SC population records high female deficit, especially in adolescent age group. Both SC and non-SC/ ST population records low sex ratio for female population, and only ST social group records a balanced sex ratio for both male and female population. According to NFHS-3 data, SC records the highest IMR (66.4) followed by

ST (62.1), OBC (61.1) and others (55.7). Neo-natal Mortality is also highest among SCs (46.3) and second highest for OBC (42.1). Child mortality and under five mortality rates are the highest among STs. All these rates are lowest for others (even lower than the total). Thus, marginalised communities not only record high fertility, but also record high infant and child mortality.

Marriage :

In India, marriage is an important indicator to understand fertility due to the universality of marriage and social acceptance to marital fertility. Thus, marriage is a demographic as well as social indicator. The Mean Age at Marriage in 2010 is 21 for females and the legal minimum age

for marriage is 18 years. However, a considerable number of women get married before 18 years and it varies across states. Over the year, India has recorded a slow but steady rise of Mean Age at Marriage. It was 15.4 years in 1951 and now it is 21.0 years .

Census 2011 exhibits that 14 percent women and 4 percent men get married before the legal minimum age. This percentage varies across social groups and it has been found that SC/ST women are more prone to marriage before the legal age. In all social groups, 3 or 4 percent men get married before 18 years; but 14 to 16 percent women get married before this age.

Regional Variation: Mean Age of Marriage is lowest in Rajasthan (17 years), Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (17.5), but Mean age of Marriage is above 20 in Jammu and Kashmir (23), Kerala (22), Karnataka, Delhi, north-eastern states (Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland). In North India, the Mean age at Marriage is low for all women.

Social group wise segregation reveals that higher percentage of women from SC/ST social group get married before 18 years. Rajasthan, where lowest Mean age at marriage is recorded, reveals that 23 percent SC and 24 percent ST women get married before the age of 18. In Bihar, SC population records the highest number of currently married women under 18 year age group, and more than 30 percent SC women are married before the legal age of marriage. Some states with high mean age at marriage also record higher incidence of underage marriage for SC population.

Mizoram records 33 percent currently married SC women in the age group of 17 years. Northeastern states may have lower number of SC women, but underage marriage is higher among them. West Bengal and Jharkhand record 25 percent currently married women in the age group of 17 years. In terms of underage marriage, West Bengal stands next to Rajasthan, but in case of West Bengal, under age marriage is acute among SC women. Jammu and Kashmir records the highest Mean Age at Marriage (23), but ST population records 11 percent currently married women under the age group of 17 years.

Therefore, the overall Mean Age at Marriage cannot express the picture of child marriage or underage marriage properly. It not only varies across region, but also varies across social groups. States with high Mean Age at Marriage record the highest number of underage currently married women in SC community.

• THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF DALITS

The Dalits in India, wherever they are, suffer the stigma of untouchability and the violation of human rights. Society does not treat them as human beings. The basic human dignity, self-respect and freedom to live as human beings, freedom to speak, freedom to choose any occupation and freedom to develop their talents – have been totally denied to these people for centuries. They (Dalits) are considered to be polluted beings. The pollutions – purity principle operates so strongly that their touch, their mere shadow, and even voices are believed to pollute the caste Hindus. They (Avarnas) are not simply human beings. No need to talk about them. They exist either, as objects of pleasure for the high caste or means for their welfare and luxury. They are caste out and left. The Dalits were denied the comfort of good clothes and even footwear. Besides, some most perverted practices existed in the Indian society. For instance, the Dalits were forced to hang an earthen pot around their neck to collect their spit, and a broom had to be tied behind them to erase their footsteps as they walked on a public road. When a Brahmin came by, the Dalits had to lie at a distance on their face, lest their shadow should fall on the Brahmin and pollute him. In some places the Dalits were not allowed to go out on the road or to a public place between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. because before 9 a.m. and after 3 p.m. their bodies cast long shadows. (B. R. Ambedakar, 1971: 39). By birth and occupation the Dalits are

considered to be polluting and morally defiling and hence they are segregated as much as possible. According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 2000, approximately 75% of the Dalit girls drop out of primary school despite the strict laws of the Government of India, which hold reservations for Dalit children (National Commission n.pag). Despite showing keen academic aptitude, reasons for this early drop out from the education system is poverty or to escape humiliation, bullying and isolation by classmates, society, and even their teachers (Thind). There are large numbers of reported atrocities on Dalit women that can be found recorded in various newspaper articles, journals, and government reports in India many of which can be viewed on www.ambedkar.org. The majority of the stories we read and hear are of bright young Dalit girls who are punished by the upper caste teachers in rural area of India, for daring to score good grades. Feeling rejected most girls in this situations drop out of school and have nowhere to turn but towards manual scavenging and other repulsive jobs (News Archives). According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the majority of the educated people are of the upper caste, many of which may practice caste-based discrimination. Therefore, Dalit girls feel discouraged to enter education and we see the lowest literacy rate for Dalit girls compared to the Total population of educated upper caste girls (National Commission n.pag). The Annual Report of University Grant Commission for 1999-2000, shows that Dalits in general have very low participation rates in higher education (Annual Reports of University n.pag).

ECONOMIC POWERLESSNESS OF DALITS

Income of an individual or a society is usually considered an indicator of his or its economic class. The term class is based on economic resources. Needless to say, untouchability is not only a religious system but also an economic system. In a caste-ridden society like India, competition is not on the basis of talents and natural aptitudes but on the basis of the caste in which one is born. 82.8 percent of the land of our country is owned by the caste Hindus. It is said that only a 7 percent of the land is owned by the Dalits and among them nearly 70 percent have less than one hectare (Seminar on Ambedkar, New Delhi, 1991). They are assetless, being mostly

landless agricultural labourers or small artisans. They stand no chance in the battle for livelihood; the contest is unequal. There is equality only among equals. To treat unequal as equals is to perpetuate inequality. The greatest injustice is to divide equally among unequals. Most of them are underemployed. Wages are arbitrary and pitifully low. All this drives the Dalits into indebtedness, the result of which is bondage to which even death brings no end. They are denied access to drinking water; by the powerful and the upper castes, is the worst form of dehumanization. They are left with no voice and face. They are the victims of violence and atrocities both at home and outside.

Reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1977-78 admit that the Scheduled Caste in many parts of the country are humiliated, insulted, manhandled, assaulted, burnt alive, tortured and their womenfolk molested. The miseries are aggravated when they are boycotted socially and economically.

There is a character in the novel "Gana Devta" of Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, a Gyan Pith Awardee, in which a young Dalit woman who was asked by her mother to serve by cleaning the house of the Zamindar of the village but in the process she was raped and as compensation was paid large sum of money. In spite of knowing the background how she earned, her mother expressed her happiness. Later, it was noticed that other nobles frequently used to visit her and enjoy her with sexual intercourse. But during the day she was treated as an untouchable, and her very sight was considered as pollution.

Not only women alone, Dalits irrespective of sex were considered as untouchables by caste Hindus. In fact, if a caste Hindu touches a Dalit by mistake, the Dalit was usually punished. Women were no exception.

Dalit women are compelled to go for various economic activities primarily due to these economic conditions. Even they go for hard labour, even the work that is supposed to be done by men. But they used to get fewer wage in comparison to their male counter part. Women work as daily labour for threshing paddy, transplanting seedling or even as labour in road or building constructions, mostly of higher caste Hindu, Muslim or Christian, many-a-time raped. Though normally considered as untouchables, these Dalit women were permitted to enter in inside of the houses at

the time of childbirth. After jobs are over they are reverted back to the untouchable status.

The following points have been emphasized on the life of Dalit women:

1. Dalit family system is patriarchal.
2. Dalit women's place in the family is secondary even if she earns.
3. She does not take any independent decisions.
4. She can be some times quite firm.
5. She is a little more "free" than other women as remarriage and choice of husband is possible she has economic independence but spends all the money for her family. She can go out to work.
6. She still does the menial and dirty work that Manu ordained.
7. Economic standard is low.
8. Food-inferior state, etc.
9. Clothing -50 percent women had torn clothing.
10. Houses, usually in very bad area of the village dirty and mud constructions "Kachha".
11. Marriage and other social occasions they tend to follow caste restrictions.
12. During all rituals tendency is to spend more than what they can afford due to what people will say.
13. Better awareness of health.
14. Though all women understand importance of education only the Boudha Dalit women understand the importance of education particularly girl's education.
15. Political awareness is quite a lot.
16. Boudha Dalits and Christian Dalits more advanced than Hindu and Muslim Dalits in their living and way of thought.
17. The Boudha women seem to have matured more and more conscious of their rights than even the Christian. (P.G. Jogdand 1995: 167)

On the basis of these points one can draw certain conclusions. The life of Dalit women is governed by certain rules and taboos as prescribed by Manu. Consequently, the Dalit women are subjected to inhuman behaviour and acute

discrimination. They are not being treated as human being. For those who converted to Buddhism or Christianity, the life of women have undergone change. They are more conscious and are trying to establish their own identity in society. On the contrary, the Hindu Dalit women are still Different Aspects of Economic status on Dalit.

•Poverty:

Incidence of poverty among the SCs has declined over time. It was 48.6 percent in 1993-94 which declined to 37.9 percent in 1999-2000 and further reduced to 30.3 percent in 2009-10. Others or upper castes record a better picture. Incidence of poverty among the upper caste was 30.7 in 1993-94 and it declined to 27.5 percent in 1999-2000 and in 2009-10, it was 17.7. SC population records very high incidence of poverty in 2009-10 compared to the upper castes as well as higher than the national average (21.0 in 2009-10). Therefore, it can be said that though incidence of poverty has declined among the SCs, more than 30 percent SC are still poor. In 2011-12, incidence of poverty is more than 29% for SC population and 22 percentages.

• work Participation :

Gender gap in work participation rate is striking in India. For male population, it always remained above 50 percent whereas for female population, it always remained below 30 percent. Female WPR records fluctuations. It was 28 in 1961 and sharply declined to 11.9 in 1971 and again increased to 19.8 in 1981. 1991 onwards, WPR is increasing and currently it is 25.51 in 2011.

Female WPR is the highest among ST women. It always remained above 40 percent among ST women and lowest among the non-SC/ST women. In 2011, it is 22.76% among the non-SC/ST women. SC women record lower WPR than ST women, but higher than the non-SC/ST women. In 2001, SC women's WPR was 29.4, and it slightly declined to 28.3% in 2011.

Wage :

SC female earns Rs. 90 per day on an average while upper caste females earn Rs. 251.2 per day and SC males earn RS. 145.5 per day. The wage gap between SC females and upper caste females is Rs. 161.2 per day and wage gap between SC

males and upper caste male is Rs. 150.7. Therefore, in spite of high WPR, wage gap between SC and non-SC/ST females is large.

More than 31 percent SC and 28 percent ST female workers are engaged in elementary occupations. Only 2.6% SC women work as professionals whereas 7.34 percent non-SC/ST women are professionals. In technicians and Associate Professions, more than 11 percent non-SC/ST women are found, but only 5.61 percent SC females are found there. Unemployment for SC women always remained near around 8 to 7. It increased in 2004-05 and 2009-10, but again declined in 2011-12. There is very little gender gap in unemployment for SC population. Unemployment rate for Non-SC/ST population is 6.6 in 2011-12 which is slightly lower than the SC female. Unemployment rate is the highest among SC women with Graduate and above degrees. Nearly 29 percent SC and 20.3 percent ST women with Graduate and above degrees are unemployed whereas 12 percent Non-SC/ST/OBC and 23.2 percent OBC women are found in this category.

Near around 30 percent SC population lives below the poverty line and the figure has not changed in the last few decades. Though SC women record relatively higher Work participation Rate compared to the non-SC/ST women, most of them are engaged in low paid elementary jobs and very few are found in professional or technical jobs. Wage gap between SC and non-SC/ST women is also very high. Unemployment rate is the highest among SC/ST women with graduate and above degrees.

POLITICAL STATUS

Direct political participation of Dalit women in local governance (Panchayati Raj) is a central human right in itself and enables the realisation of a host of other human rights. Political voice and decision-making power concerning basic services, economic development and social justice are critical factors in challenging and transforming structural caste-class-gender discrimination, and enabling Dalit women to realise their fundamental rights. Political participation also demands accountability from state and non-state actors to guarantee and respect these women's equal political voice and development. This requires a transformation of power

relationships both within institutions of governance and in the women's social environment.

Recent legal and policy reforms in India to ensure the representation of marginalised social groups in decentralised governance, including Dalits and specifically Dalit women, through constitutionally mandated reservations (affirmative action quotas) in Panchayati Raj institutions bring these issues to the fore. They demand analysis to determine how Dalit women are enabled to claim their right to political participation in local governance, and the extent to which this participation is an effective tool for empowerment and realisation of human rights for excluded social groups. Annammal³ quoted above, calls on Dalit women to persevere with the 'social revolution' that the panchayat system and reservations therein have started in India. At the same time, the more tempered words by the Dalit women panchayat representatives from Ahmedabad district are an assessment of the present political situation and indicate where change is required: formal authority does not equal political power.

"Women's participation, Dalit women's in particular, in the panchayats is necessary so that society can develop. Only women will think about women's issues. Only Dalit women can respond to and take a stand on Dalit issues and particularly on Dalit women's issues. In as much as Dalit women's participation is required, they also need to be given support and guidance. Then only can they become capable representatives... Nothing is attainable without exercising authority, and my desire is to increase the confidence of Dalits to fight and gain authority and power in society for their development. "Ramilaben, taluka panchayat President, Vadodara district, Gujarat

HEALTH STATUS

The high degree of deprivation among Dalit women is reflected in other indicators of wellbeing — under-nutrition and health. About 65 per cent and 56 per cent of ST and SC women respectively suffered from anaemia compared to 47.6 per cent of non-SC/ST women. In 2004-2005, 23.2 per cent of SC and 28 per cent of ST children under four years of age suffered from malnutrition (based on weight-for-age). Of these underweight children, 54 per cent of SCs and 56 per cent of STs were severely

undernourished. There is a significant difference between SC and ST children and non-SC/ST children, 13.80 per cent and 41.1 per cent of whom are malnourished and undernourished respectively. While the Government of India has adopted the national goal of reducing the present infant mortality rate (IMR) to 60 by 2000, the SC's IMR, child mortality and under-5 mortality is 83.00, 39.50 and 119.3, respectively. Compare this with 61.8, 22.2 and 82.6 for non-SC/STs, respectively. Similarly, IMR, child mortality and under-5 mortality are 84, 46.3 and 126 among STs. About 72 per cent of births to SC women and 81 per cent of births to ST women took place at home; the corresponding figure for others is 59 per cent.

Dalit women are excluded from decision-making. They are not in a position to exercise their power. Wherever Dalit women have contested, they have faced stiff opposition and even been brutally attacked. There are instances where Dalit women have been elected into local governance and, through the reservation policy, nominated as the president of the local governing unit (Panchayat). But when these women have endeavored to exercise their role, it has met with resistance, even to the extent of physical violence. 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. A Dalit woman president is not allowed to sit on a chair if the other caste members do not allow this. She is forced to be a mere figurehead, while the functioning of the Panchayat is taken over by uppercaste members. Political parties in India speak much about equality of women but have totally ignored the Dalit women.

Health condition of a social group is intricately interlinked with socioeconomic condition. Thus, health condition differs across regions depending on the economic and social development of a place. In a caste-divided society like India, health condition varies across social groups, and this section provides a comparative analysis of Dalit and non-Dalit women's health outcomes and access to healthcare services. The previous section on demographic indicators has already highlighted the fact that Dalit population is lagging behind in demographic transition. This social group records higher fertility and higher mortality in all age groups compared to the

non-SC/ST population. Infant and child mortality rates are also very high, and the child and adolescent sex ratio of SC population is showing gradual reduction of female population in each age group. At the same time, a considerable number of SC women are facing underage marriage leading to adolescent pregnancy.

ST records the worst BMI for women. Here, 45.52 percent women are underweight or thin and 39.79 percent SC women are thin or underweight. OBC records 34.94 percent and the general or upper castes have only 29.08 percent women under underweight. More than 50 percent women are of normal weight in each category, but OBC has 53.54 percent normal weight women. More than 17 percent women of others or higher caste group are overweight. Prevalence of anaemia is also high among Indian women. More than 55.3 percent women have anaemia and among them, 38.6 percent have mild and 15 percent have moderate anaemia. Though anaemia is prevalent across all social groups, it is highest among the STs.

• **Access To Health Care Facilities -**

Providing basic minimum healthcare facilities to all the citizens is one of the important aims of governance since 2000 when India signed the Millennium Development Goal to combat against poverty, hunger, gender inequality, illiteracy, malnutrition, maternal and child mortality. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal incorporates eight goals which all 191 UN member states have agreed to attempt to reach by the year 2015. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, commits the world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The main hurdle for India in achieving Millennium Development Goal is social group wise disparity in the access to healthcare facilities.

• **Falit Women Access To Maternal Facilities -**

Percentage of women having less than 3 ANC visits has declined over time across all social groups. Among the SC population, the percentage was 63.55 percent in 1992-93, and it became 61.70 percent in 1998-99 and came down to 54.12 percent in 2005-06. The figure shows dramatic decrease in the last period at 7.58 percent. Among the STs, the percentage was 71.48 percent which remained almost unchanged or slightly increased in 1998-99 (71.63%) and declined in 2005-06, but the figure is still higher

than any other social groups. More than 59 percent ST women have less than 3 ANC visits. Among the others or upper castes, this percentage has decreased drastically in the last period. Only 36.41 percent women take less than 3 ANC services. Therefore, ST and SC women are still lagging behind in the access to ANC services. Though in the last period, the rate of change is very high for ST and upper castes, it is relatively lower among the SC women (7.58). This indicates the fact that most of the SC women still cannot access three or more than 3 ANC cares.

Social group wise access to maternal and child health services reveals that ST (59.28%) and SC (54.12%) population records the highest percentage of women who have less than 3 ANC visits. OBC records only 50 percent and others or upper castes record 36.41 percent. Nearly 64 percent upper caste women visit 3 or more than 3 times to ANC centres. The difference between SC and the upper caste is very high (17.71%).

• Post Natal Care -

From NFHS-2 to 3, the percentage of women receiving Post-natal Care (PNC) after the delivery has increased from 31.21 to 42.8, but the social group wise data reveals that SC/ST population has lesser access to PNC compared to OBC and others. NFHS-3 data reveals the gap between SC/ST and non-SC/ ST OBC women in accessing PNC. Less than 40 percent SC/ST woman can access PNC while more than 53 percent others can access it. In spite of the increasing trend in the access to PNC, SC/ST women are still lagging behind. More than 60 percent SC/ST women do not get Post-natal Check-up after the delivery of child. Only 24 percent women get it within four hours while 35 percent non-SC/ST/OBC women receive PNC within 4 hours of child birth. NFHS-3 data shows that in India, only 30 percent mothers receive PNC from doctors, 8 percent from nurses and 3 percent from Dai. Nearly 4 percent SC and 6 percent ST women still rely on Dai. Only 24 percent SC and 40 percent non-SC/ST/OBC women receive PNC from doctors.

NFHS data reveals that institutional delivery in India increases from 26.48 percent in 1992-93 to 41.49 percent in 2005-06. However, access to institutional delivery varies

across social groups. ST women record the least access to institutional delivery (19.34% in 2005-06) followed by SC (35%). OBC and non-SC/ST/OBC women have 40 and 54 percent access to institutional delivery. Thus, more than half of the non-Dalit women have access to institutional delivery while only 35 percent SC women accessed institutional delivery.

• Decision Making Power -

Women do not have the power to make decision regarding their health issues. In more than 30 percent cases, husband alone takes decision and in 6 percent cases, someone else (probably in-laws) takes decisions. This picture is not the same across all social groups.

SC/ST population records higher infant and child mortality compared to the non-SC/ST social group. Women from these social groups have lesser access to ANC, PNC and institutional delivery. They also record poor BMI and high prevalence of anaemia.

EDUCATION STATUS

Lack of educational development is another important problem. In 2001, the literacy rate among SC and ST rural females (aged 15 and above) was 25 per cent and 24 per cent respectively, compared with 41 per cent for non-SC/ST women. The literacy rate among SC women in urban areas was 48 percent, compared with 54 per cent and 70 per cent for ST and nonSC/ST women respectively. The dropout rate among SC and ST women is also relatively high at every stage of education. The high dependence on casual labour, with relatively low earnings coupled with inadequate exposure to education, among SC and ST women induced a high degree of deprivation and poverty among them. (Thorat, 2008).

According to 2011 Census, the overall literacy rate of India is 73.8 percent with a male literacy of 82.1 percent and female literacy of 65.5 percent. The census provided a positive indication that growth in female literacy rates (11.8%) was substantially faster than in male literacy rates (6.9%) in the 2001–2011 decadal period, which means that the gender gap appears to be narrowing. SC and ST record 66 and 59 percent literacy rates while Non-SC/ST population records 76 percent

literacy rate. Therefore, there is a high gap in literacy rates among the three social groups.

Gender gap in literacy is remarkable across all social groups. SC population reveals 48.33 percent female and 64.21 percent male literacy rates. ST population records 57.37 percent male and 41.58 percent female literacy rates, and non-SC/ST population records 72 percent male and 59 percent female literacy rates. Gender gap in literacy rate is highest in Rajasthan as well as the entire north India. It is same across all social groups. Gross enrolment ratio at different level of schooling shows the gender gap across all social groups, but in primary level, there is not much gap. In secondary level, the gender gap in GER is high for all social groups, but SC population shows least gender gap (7.7 for SC and 10 for STs). In primary level, boys' dropout rate is higher than the girls, but in higher level, girls' dropout rate is higher than the boys. This picture is true across all social groups.

Gender gap in literacy rate and educational attainment is remarkable across all social groups and it is wider among the SC/ST population. However, recent data (2009-10) reveals that gross enrolment ratio is equally high for both male and female students, but in the secondary level, dropout rate is higher for the girls.

- **OCCUPATIONAL STATUS**

In 2001, about 57 per cent of SC and 37 per cent of ST women respectively were agricultural wage labour in rural areas, as compared with 29 per cent for non-SC/STs. In urban areas, 16 per cent SC and 14 per cent ST women were daily wage labourers as compared with only 6 per cent from non-SC/STs. Only 21 per cent of SC women were cultivators compared with 51 per cent for STs and 45 per cent for non-SC/STs. SC/ST women also faced differential treatment in wage-earning, particularly in urban areas. In 2000, SC and ST women casual labourers received daily wages of Rs 37 and Rs 34 respectively, compared with Rs 56 for non-SC/ST women; the national average was Rs 42. Besides this, a large number of SC women are engaged in so-called 'unclean' occupations, like scavenging. Because of their association with these occupations, Dalit women face discrimination in the social and economic spheres. (Thorat, 2008)

The Work Participation Rate (WPR) of SC population is said to be for males 22.25% and for females 25.98%. The contribution of SC women to the economic development of our country is significant especially in the agricultural sector. They are exploited by the higher caste landlords. They are paid very marginal salary for the hard work in the field for the whole day. In leather industries the tanning process is considered to be an unclean job which is done only by socially backward class. Traditional artistes get very more benefit because the middleman exploits them. The condition of scavenger and sweepers is very deplorable and they the most vulnerable sectors among SC. The working condition is very poor and the remuneration is also very poor.

CHAPTER -IV

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND CONSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGE

India, one of the largest democracies in the world, needs wider participation of people across caste, cred, gender and ethnicity, but debate around the Women's Reservation Bill in the parliament has focused on the bitter truth that politics has proven to be very inhospitable for women in India. Though government has taken various initiatives in increasing women and SC/ST candidates participation at the Panchayat and Municipal level, at the higher level, very few women especially SC women are found. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1992) ensured that 1/3rd of the total seat should be reserved for SC/ST and women in all Panchayat and Municipalities. It is no doubt a bold step that ensures women's political participation. At the same time, Women Reservation Bill was also proposed which suggested 33% reservation of all seats in the Lower House of the Parliament and all State Legislative Assemblies for women. Unfortunately, in its 16 years' journey, it has not been passed yet. On 9th March, 2010, the Upper House of India's Parliament has passed it, but the UPA government has failed to pass it in the Lower House. Leaders from Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) want to amend the bill for ensuring more political participation from SC/ST women. Currently, in the NDA regime, the Bill has a possibility to come into power. BJP leader and Minister of Minority Affairs, Najma Heptullah, has recently remarked that "it is the will of the men in the Parliament and not the women which is required to pass these Bills".

The available data on the Lok Sabha for the period 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in politics as compared to SC women. The 15th Lok Sabha has a total of 84 SC Members in the Parliament, of which 72 are men and only 12 are women. However, more women parliamentarians have entered the politics since 1971, and there has been a slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians with an SC background though they continue to be under-represented in comparison to SC men. For example, in 1971, Lok Sabha had a total

of 26 women Members of Parliament, of which six were SCs, two were ST and the remaining 19 belonged to non-SC/ST groups.

In 2009, Lok Sabha, which is a UPA led Congress government, has one of the highest number of women members in the Parliament. Further, the highest number of SC women are also seen in the current Lok Sabha (15th Lok Sabha) which consists of 12 SC women members (see Tables 10. and 11.).

The trend in the membership of women in the Parliament over the years is as follows: The data indicates that the membership of women parliamentarians was the least in the 6th Lok Sabha (the 1977 Janata Party Government), none of women from SC group, only one from ST group, and 19 non-SC/ST women members. After the 1984 Lok Sabha, which had 45 women parliamentarians, the share of women's percentage declined in the subsequent Lok Sabha till 13th Lok Sabha, 1999. However, there has been an increase in the number of women parliamentarians since 1999. This has also resulted in a slight improvement in the percentage share of SC women parliamentarians, and currently, in the 15th Lok Sabha, representation of women is the highest in all general elections till now. However, they continue to be under-represented in the Parliament and are only 10 percent in the Lok Sabha, which is below their share in the population and the critical mass of 33%.

• SUPPRESSION OF DALIT WOMEN VOICE -

Though Indian Constitution provides legal safeguards to SC/ST people from the atrocities committed against them, a large number of SC/ST men and women face violence and atrocities. The term atrocity was not clearly defined in the Constitution, but Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of SCs and STs has defined in the 4th Report in para 1.4 in 2004-05 that "Women belonging to SC castes and tribes bore double burden. They were exploited by caste and gender and were vulnerable to and powerless against sexual exploitation." According to the National Crime Record Bureau in India, four states namely Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh account for 66.9 percent of the total atrocities against SCs/STs (1995-2007). Extreme types of atrocities against Dalit include stripping of Dalit and tribal women, forcing SC/ST persons to drink urine or eat human excreta, blackening their faces, shaving their heads and parading them in village streets. Witch-hunt is

another cruel form of atrocity against Dalit and tribal women where poor women are branded as witch by the dominant groups and killed or exiled from the villages. Newspapers reports that 2,556 women were branded as witches and killed in India between 1987 and 2003 (Meena Kandasamy, 2011). In spite of legal safeguards, victims of atrocities especially women hardly get justice due to institutional prejudices and social stigmatization of rape victims. The SC& the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is not strictly followed.

Recently, the horrific news of caste based atrocities in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh has created a wakeup call for the women of socially excluded group. In Badaun, two Dalit cousin sisters were not only killed and raped by upper caste youth, but also hanged from mango trees in the same village. It clearly indicates that the nature of atrocities against SC women and girls has sprung up especially in the rural areas where upper caste people enjoy influence over government machineries. Aam Adami Party (AAP) of Haryana has recently decided to submit a memorandum to the Governor demanding actions to stop the atrocities against Dalit community in the state where four Dalit girls were recently being abducted, raped and killed by some upper caste youth. The incidents of Badaun (UP) and Hissar (Haryana) are not sporadic events, but the bitter picture of a harsh reality still continuing in the twenty first century.

RECENT AMENDMENT AND BACK LOG -

On March 4, 2014, just before the Lok sabha Election, the UPA government has brought some effective amendments to The SC& the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in which sexual harassments against Dalit and tribal women were to be handled in more severe way. The Bill suggests 'touching a Dalit or tribal women in a sexual manner without consent' or 'acts/ gestures of sexual nature' against them would invite stringent provision of the SC/ST Atrocities ACT (POA), 1989.

The Bill also specifies punishment for public servants from other communities who fail to do their duties relating to SC/ST people like registering FIR or arresting the culprits. The Bill also mandates Special Courts at district level to speed up the trial process and atrocities against women would be judged by women judges. Unfortunately, the Bill has not been passed yet. Dalit women in India face multiple

deprivations for their social status as well as gender identity. Four-fold caste stratification of the society exists all across the country.

Demographic data reveals that the Dalit population records high fertility as well as high infant and child mortality rates. Life expectancy is lower among the Dalit and Dalit women have the lowest life expectancy compared to the upper caste women and Dalit men. Though in general, women have higher life expectancy than their male counterparts, Dalit women show a reverse picture. Therefore, the Dalit population is growing without demographic dividends.

Sex ratio of Dalit population reveals low child and adult sex ratio (slightly better than the non-SC/ST), but much lower than the Scheduled Tribes.

Under age marriage is higher among SC/ST population. Nearly 15 to 16 percent girls from these subgroups get married before the legal age of marriage (18 years). This problem is acute in the north, especially in Rajasthan,

Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. States having higher Mean Age at Marriage, (Kerala, J&K, north-east) also record reverse trend among the SC girls. A considerable number of SC girls from Kerala, J&K and north-eastern states get married before 18 years. In West Bengal, under age marriage is very high (above 23%) among the SC population.

Low age at marriage and high fertility has a direct impact on the health outcomes. Dalit women record low Body Mass Index (BMI), higher prevalence of anaemia and low access to maternal health care facilities. Hardly 35 percent SC women get the facility of institutional delivery during the child birth and a large number of them rely on indigenous methods and stay at homes during the delivery. Mainly husbands and in-laws take decisions regarding their health. Economic data reveals that nearly 30 percent SC and 43 percent ST households live Below the Poverty Line (2011-12). However, at the same time, Dalit women record higher Work Participation Rate than that of their non-Dalit counterparts. Higher access to the labour market could be a positive aspect of the community, but high wage gap between SC and non-SC/ST women, concentration of Dalit women workers in agricultural sector and elementary occupations show that most of the Dalit women are ill paid and are deprived of high-

salaried positions. Unemployment rate is higher among the Dalit women with graduate and above degrees and this condition is acute in the rural areas.

Though all social groups record gender gap in the literacy rate, Dalit population records higher gap than that of their non-Dalit counterparts. Dropout rate is higher among the Dalit girls in Secondary and Higher secondary schools. Political participation of SC women is lower in the State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha. Organised crimes and atrocities against Dalit women are alarmingly high, and the problem is acute in some states.

• CONSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGES AND PROTECTION FOR THE DALITS:

Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity are the founding principles of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution grants all the citizens social, economic and political justice, equal status, equal opportunity, equality before law, freedom of thought, expression, faiths, beliefs, worship, profession, organization, action etc. The state constantly endeavors to attain political, social and economic equality. We have attained political justice to a certain extent but have yet to attain social and economic justice, inequality reigns in many spheres of the country's life. The need of the time is to end inequality between man and woman in various fields. Inequality breeds many social and economic problems and these problems are a hindrance to women's liberation and development. Within women too, there is inequality e.g. between Dalit women and non-Dalit women.

Our Constitution gives some specific directives to the government and the rules of this country for the protection of the Dalit's against social discrimination and economic injustice. Some Constitutional privileges are reserved for the Dalit's in order to protect them and to raise their socio-economic status. It contains a number of provisions to safeguard the interest of the weaker sections either by way of imposing duties on the state to enact laws or to promote and protect the interest of the these Dalits. The important provisions of the Constitutions may be counted as follows.

1. Article 15, Clause 1: The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religions, race, caste ...or any of them.

Clause 2: No citizen shall on grounds of religions, race, caste ...or any of them be subjected to any disability, ability, restriction or condition with regard to: (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainments or (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing Ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partially out of state funds or dedicated to the use of general public.

Clause 4, of Article 15: further empowers the state to make "special provisions for advancement of socially and economically backward classes of citizens or for the scheduled castes ...".

2. Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment: clause (2) forbids discrimination on ground of "religion, race, caste, sex descent ... or any one of them in respect of any unemployment or offence under the state."

Clause 4 of same article authorizes state to make "provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the state is not adequately represented in the service under the state."

3. Article 17: Abolition of untouchability: Untouchability has been abolished and its practices in any form forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law.

4: Article 46: Enjoins on the state to promote educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes and other weaker sections. The state has to protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation.

The Constitution has made a very progressive attempt, first to declare the untouchability as an offence and then to promote the interests of the untouchables. It has given them social, economic and religious protection so that they too may enjoy like the others the citizenship of the state. These above mentioned Constitutional protection and privileges are not a concession or extension of privileges, but the concrete way by which justice is to be exercised for them. Felix Wilfred says that reservation is not simply a claim for affirmative action in favour of the Dalits but an affirmation of the fundamental rights of the socially and economically discriminated and disabled (Felix Wilfred, 1991: 58). In a society like India, where everyone cannot have a competition on equal terms, therefore, the socially and economically crippled are protected and some privileges are given (ibid).

But we see in India even after 60 years of Independence that the picture of the Dalits has not changed much. Though untouchability has been abolished, at the Constitutional level yet the dreadful evil is still spreading with full fury (Shetty, 1978:18), and the conditions of the Dalits are going from bad to worse. Several study by Indian scholars have shown that despite the many Constitutional safeguards, and the economic development and special privileges granted to the Dalits, the social and economic gap between the caste Hindus and the Dalits, between the rich and the poor, is still maintained, and which is growing day by day in most part of the country (R. G. Sinha,1986: 197).

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

•THE DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS

With the dawn of the modern age and development of democratic values, social reforms and certain voluntary organization have made bold efforts to improve the lot of the Dalits. The efforts made by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Mahatma Gandhi and above all by B. R. Ambedkar, to improve their social, political, economic and educational conditions, are yielding result now. The twentieth century has given the Dalits a ray of hope and they are fast becoming conscious of the injustice done to them. They are simmering with the indignities and tyrannies inflicted on them for centuries and are becoming

increasingly intolerant of and dissatisfied with the lower status assigned to them in the name of religion.

Today, the Dalits are searching for an identity in the Indian society. The educated Dalits have become conscious of their past — the days when an earthen pot had to be tied to their necks for the spit, a broom or a branch to their waists to sweep their own foot-prints behind, the days when they were forbidden to hear or to recite the scriptures. The Dalits who were considered to be no-people want to assert their place in history and uphold their culture. Oppressed and marginalized so far, they want to build up a Dalit identity.

- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: The Messiah of the Dalits** - In order to understand their present consciousness, movements and uprising, it is important to know about late Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has become the symbol of what can be achieved by the Dalits. By birth Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) belonged to the untouchable mahar caste. Of himself he said: "I am born a Hindu, because I could not help it, but I assure you that I will not die a Hindu.....Ambedkar is a saga of struggles against myriad odds" (H.D. Sharma). He proved this in his life ... long struggles for justice and human right. As a student he suffered heaps of untold humiliation both from teachers and students. In a way this painful and negative experiences helped him to look at Hinduism very critically. Further as a young scholar, he was not allowed to learn Sanskrit, which was meant only for the Brahmins; but with the help of some broadminded teachers, he did learn the classical language, which helped him to interpret the Hindu scriptures. Going into the vulgarity of Hinduism, especially the "divine" origin of caste system and untouchability, he did not enjoy to be a Hindu, but in any way being an insider, his approach was rather intellectual, appealing to reason, reflection and action, and thus to reform Hinduism. As for his dissatisfaction with Hinduism, he was ever on search of which religion to choose. Islam, Sikkism and Christianity failed to appeal to him; at the end he was taken up by Buddhist thought and philosophy. In the end, along with his wife and thousands of followers, Ambedkar accepted Buddhism at Nagpur on October 14, 1956)
- **Conscientization of the Dalits** -

Ambedkar was, moreover, the leader of many mass agitations of the Dalits of Maharashtra. In order to educate his people, he opened schools and colleges and played an important role in conscience his fellow Dalits. It was Ambedkar who made his fellow Dalits aware of exploitative and oppressive caste system of India. This he did not only by his speeches during rallies, but also by his extensive writings. He has left behind a wealth of books, editorials and speeches to his followers. He hammered one point: that caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which has to be pulled down, but a notion, a state of the mind. According to him, it is difficult to walk out of caste, for it is only a class jacket.

Ambedkar is called the Modern Manu and the savior of the oppressed and discriminated Dalit of India. He sharpened the sensitivities of the Dalits and made them outward looking and able to articulate their suppressed feelings, and inspired them to demand their fundamental right as citizens of India. He conscientized them of the fact that only "self-help, self-development and self-assertion will break their bondage. He emphasized on struggle, struggle and nothing else but struggle...." in order to free themselves from the clutches of caste system.

ii) Social and economic freedom for the Dalits -

Ambedkar did yeoman service for the uplift of the Dalits by carrying out a lifelong struggle against the evils of Hinduism. His dream was to lead them to a life of dignity, meaning and self-respect. From the very beginning, he devoted much of his time to bring about a radical social democracy. He fought valiantly to get equal rights for his fellow Dalits. „For him political freedom was meaningless unless it was accompanied by social and economic freedom. Political freedom without social and economic freedom could only create contradictions for the Indian nation. “ His mission to bring about a radical transformation in the living conditions of the Dalits, who were condemned for centuries to live a most dehumanized life in the society.

Ambedkar was not in favour of having just the political transformation of India. But he wanted a total change, especially in the field of social life of the Dalits. According to him without changing the social marginalization of the Dalits, pursuing political and economic goals would not bring about the desired results. He encouraged the Dalits to get involved in the politics so that social and economic freedom may be

achieved gradually. iii) Religion for Ambedkar and His Conversion - Ambedkar upheld that religion which treats a man as human being. According to him, religion is for man and not man for religion. The goal of any religion is to develop man and to teach him how to conduct himself in his relationships with his fellow men. Religions are man-made institutions and therefore, Ambedkar asked his fellow Dalits to accept any religion, which helps them to live as human being with dignity and a new identity.

Ambedkar had started his search for a new religion in 1935 when he publicly rejected Hinduism and finally accepted Buddhism on 14th Oct 1956 (D. Ahir, 1968: 135). About 250,000 Mahars from Maharashtra and 3,000,000 Dalits from other parts of India embraced Buddhism following their leader (B. Paradkar, 1972: 66). This change of religion by Ambedkar, along with thousands of Dalit disciples, was a public demonstration of his protest against Brahmanical religion, which upholds values of graded inequality and purity and pollution as the basis of the caste system and untouchability. He would have no compromise with such a system. The Dalits, he claimed, sought a new identity of dignity and social equality in Buddhism, which stood for egalitarian values.

•RECOMMENDATION FOR THE BETTER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME OF DALIT WOMEN

1. Selection and identification of the talented Dalit girls needs to be done scientifically.
2. Competitive spirit should be instilled in the Dalit girls.
3. Selection of candidate to be done at college level itself for coaching.
4. Result oriented, teaching is essential.
5. Activities oriented towards confidence building needs to be chosen.
6. Loan facilities needs to be made available.
7. Financial aid to be given to the meritorious Dalit girl to compete for UPSC, SPSC.
8. Hostel facilities for Dalit girls at all levels of education should be provided.
9. Reservation policy for Dalit girls should be made available in both admission and employment along with other girls but not as separately created.

10 Government has to be increased awareness among Dalit women about their rights and privileges.

This should be augmented by information technology, which should reach even to the remote rural citizen who form the large majority of Dalit women population in our country. The special programmes for Scheduled Caste have been taken up from the very beginning in terms of their special situation & disabilities of caste on them by nefarious traditions. However, in retrospect it is clear that these programmes are notional and continued to be defunct with low level of participation and achievements of the objectives.

• SUGGATIONS FOR OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF DALIT WOMEN MAY BE CONSIDERED

1. Removal of traditional disabilities suffered by different sections of population of various counts.
2. Elimination of exploitation in all forms and protection of women's rights and interests, with formulation of gender sensitization programmes.
3. Equity for and protection of those engaged in the traditional sectors of economy including artisans and traditional services.
4. 4.The present inequity in the statutory wages should be removed. The minimum Wages Act should contain a provision to the effect that the daily wages of ordinary labourers in all economic activities shall be so determined the following principle that the earnings of one person in a family should be sufficient for the maintenance of the entire standard of the family.
5. 5.. Specific training programmes should be conducted and their recruitment of SC/ST women as an Extension Worker in agriculture, animal husbandry, technology transfer, environment, forestry, waste land development, horticulture, sericulture horticulture, small scale industries, electronics should be ensured.
6. Credit should be made available to SC and ST in all credit schemes. A certain percentage of SC/ST quotas should be earmarked for the women.
7. Raw materials for sustaining economic activities should be made available on concessional rates through effective and efficient distribution channel.

8. Women's cooperation should be strengthened through extending them monetary incentives and sustained monitoring.
9. Their income earning should be raised by providing access to crucial inputs like land and credit.
10. The rural Dalit women working on land should have right to claim equal facilities available to all other workers.
11. Women can be mobilized by promoting self Help Women's Groups, which help them to gain self-esteem and self-worth.
12. Informal education should be imparted to Dalit women.
13. 13. Women should be trained in learning to organize themselves into groups, so that a platform for voicing out their grievances and to demand better utility services and inputs can be established.
14. Considering the number and magnitude of the problems of Dalit women, voluntary agencies must be encouraged in the spheres.
15. Right values and ethics have to be inculcated in the minds of young Dalit children. Human Rights education should be a compulsory component of the school and college curriculum that is respecting every human, whatever be the caste, race, creed or sex.

• **IMPACT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR DALIT**

1. Recognizing women's contribution, women's knowledge.
2. Women fighting their own fears and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.
3. Women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity.
4. Women becoming their self-reliant and autonomous.
5. Women controlling own bodies.
6. Women controlling resources like land and property.
7. Reducing women's burden of work specially with in the home.
8. Women participation in decision making within the family and in the society.
9. Women sharing responsibilities and rights equally.

CHAPTER –V

CONCLUSION

The review of literature reveals the manifold dimensions of deprivations of Dalit women. They are degraded into the level of untouchable objects, but at the same time, a sexually exploited lot. Caste system and its tyranny have contributed a lot into this deprivation process. The emancipation movement of Dalit women, spearheaded by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was therefore attacking the very root of this slavery, namely the caste system of Hindu religion. His advocacy of conversion to Buddhism was to liberate the Dalit women from the clutches of caste system. However even after such religious conversion, the economic deprivation of Dalit women has persisted. The pro-active policies of Government of India for economically empower them through reservations and provisions of subsidies are very significant. Nonetheless, most of such economic policies missed the target of actually empowering the Dalit women. One of the reasons for this failure was the imperfect notion of women empowerment. The second reason lies in the process of implementation, which was highly bureaucratic and hence liable to corruption.

Therefore, in the next chapter, we shall present the meaning and nature of the concept of women empowerment. In the penultimate chapter we propose a better process and medium for the economic empowerment of Dalit women namely SHG mediated economic empowerment. Dalit women need group and gender specific policies and programme to address the issue of multiple deprivations. Though India has various affirmative policies for the socially marginalized groups and women and also ensures the right to education for all, SC women and girls are still facing the curse of illiteracy and underage marriages. Dropout rate is higher among the SC girls in the higher secondary schools and underage marriage is more prevalent among them. Dalit women require comprehensive policies on health, especially on the maternal and child health because infant and child mortalities are higher among them. Economic data reveals that though Dalit women have higher Work Participation Rate, they are mostly concentrated in low paid jobs, and unemployment rate is the highest among SC women with graduate and above degrees. Similarly,

political participation is low in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar's main strategy for women empowerment, 'Educate, Organise and agitate' is far from the completion.

CHAPTER –VI
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**SOCIO- ECONOMICS STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN IN
PATTAMUNDAI MUNICIPALITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
PATTAMUNAI COLLEGE, PATTAMUNDAI, KENDRAPARA, ODISHA
ATTENDANCE SHEET OF STUDENTS**

Sl.No	Name of the Participant	Roll No	Signature
1	Ruspalata Behera	BA17-038	Ruspalata, Behera
2	mousumi priyadarshani Nath	BA17-182	mousumi priyadarshani Nath
3	Ismila SAHOO	BA17-109	Ismila saho
4	Anagayee Rout	BA17-015	Anagayee Rout
5	Sanghamitra Rout	BA17-124	Sanghamitra Rout
6	Gitanjali Rout	BA17-079	Gitanjali Rout
7	Kusum behera	BA17-171	Kusum behera
8	Biswasit Das	BA-17-126	Biswasit Das
9	Prasanta Kumar Sethi	BA-17-167	Prasanta Kumar Sethi
10	Itishree Barick	BA17-033	Itishree Barick
11	Puspapata sethi	BA17-135	Puspapata sethi
12	Supriya bala Behera	BA17-093	supriya bala Behera
13	Kriton Kumar Das	BA17-058	Kriton Kumar Das.
14	Rejareni Biswal	BA17-006	Rejareni Biswal
15	Submitted		
16	Manaswini Biswal	BA-17-059	Manaswini Biswal
17	Purnima Rani Das	BA17-060	Purnima rani Das.
18	anmati Das	BA17-291	anmati Das
19	Dipti puspa Biswal	BA-17-068	Dipti puspa Biswal
20			