

Gender and Caste: Position of Dalit Women in Punjab

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of the Master of Philosophy*

SONU



**Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067
2003**



CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Date: 21 July 2003

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “ Gender and Caste: Position of Dalit Women in Punjab”, submitted by Sonu, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is her own work and to the best of our knowledge has not been submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Sudha Pai
(Supervisor)

Prof. Zoya Hasan
(Chairperson)

Dedicated to

MY PARENTS

&

In Remembrance

Of Sweet Memories That I Shared With My Sister

RITU

Acknowledgements

It gives me immense pleasure to acknowledge the support of all those who made it possible for this study to acquire the present shape. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. SUDHA PAI under whose supervision this work has been made possible. I shall always be obliged to her for enormous contribution in the study and to allow me to draw upon her precious time. I express my sincere thanks to my respondents who gave their valuable time without being impatient.

I owe a lot to my mother Ms. Gurbax Mehmi and father Shri Harbans Lal Mehmi for their cooperation during my field survey. My utmost thanks are due to my friend Murli Dhar for his full cooperation and critical reflections. I am grateful to my cousin Jaswinder Singh who helped me every time I visited the study village.

Dr. Ujjwal Kumar Singh [Fellow Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi], Dr. Anupama Roy [Faculty on Leave, P.U. Chandigarh] provided immense help, motivation and guidance whenever I approached them. I must express my gratitude to Dr. Surinder Singh Jodhaka [Faculty, CSSS/JNU] and Anshu Malhotra whose works I relied upon a great deal. My special thanks are due to my friend Jatinder for giving me constant support.

Lending me books rather promptly by Meren is unforgettable and he deserves special thanks. I express my sincere gratitude to the staff members at JNU library and Nehru Memorial Library. Finally, I thank my sister Neelam, brothers Shekinder Singh and Mohit and my lovable niece Ishita for their consistent support, love and motivation.

Dated 21 July 2003

SONU

SONU

Room No.341,
Ganga Hostel,
JNU, New Delhi-110067

PUNJAB ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS 1991

0 10 20 30 40 Km



BOUNDARY, INTERNATIONAL ————
 " STATE/U.T. - - - - -
 " DISTRICT - - - - -
 " TAHSIL - - - - -
 " C.D. BLOCK - - - - -

HEADQUARTERS:
 " TAHSIL C.D. BLOCK

Pocket for Kapurthala K
 Pocket for Patiala P
 Pocket for Patli PT
 Pocket for Sunam S

The Administrative Headquarters of Chandigarh, Haryana and Punjab are at Chandigarh
 The Headquarters of Ludhiana I and Ludhiana II C.D. Blocks are at Ludhiana
 The Headquarters of Jalandhar (East) and Jalandhar (West) C.D. Blocks are at Jalandhar
 The Headquarters of Hoshiarpur I and Hoshiarpur II C.D. Blocks are at Hoshiarpur
 The Headquarters of Moga I and Moga II C.D. Blocks are at Moga
 District Headquarters are also C.D. Block Headquarters except for Amritsar
 Tahsil Headquarters are also C.D. Block Headquarters except for Feroz Bakola,
 Khanna and Fatehgarh Sahib
 Where a C.D. Block name differs from its headquarters the former is shown with brackets

Contents

Acknowledgement

Map

Page No.

<i>Chapter-One</i>	Gender and Caste Debate: An Introduction.	1-23
<i>Chapter-Two</i>	Dalit Women in Punjab: A Contextual Exploration.	24-53
<i>Chapter-Three</i>	Socio-Economic Profile of Study -Village Ramdaspur.	54- 67
<i>Chapter-Four</i>	Position of Dalit Women in the Study -Village.	68-96
<i>Chapter- Five</i>	Conclusion.	97-103
<i>Appendices</i>		104-109
<i>Bibliography</i>		111-116

CHAPTER- ONE
GENDER AND CASTE DEBATE: AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

The significance of gender in understanding the caste system and the way caste impinges on women's lives is increasingly drawing the attention of scholars of various hue. A plethora of writings has emerged in the recent years that attempt to understand the intricacies of operation of caste, patriarchy and gender in interaction to one another. The context of this academic shift is manifold. On one hand, scholarly parlance of caste has changed a great deal leading to questioning of dominant models of caste system. On the other hand, upsurge of identity movements, the articulations and claims put forward by the hitherto marginalized sections for inclusion and autonomy has posed challenges to various "universal" claims.

The rise of dalit feminism and the considerate challenge it put to the dominant gender discourse has eventually placed the gender-caste debate in the centre stage. The present venture is a modest endeavour to map out the intercourse of caste and gender distinctions and their operation in determining position of dalit women in the context of Punjab. The questions that have been attempted to address are: How does the complex traffic between caste and gender work against dalit women? In what way does dalit patriarchy operate? Do dalit women experience womanhood as well as dalithood differently? Do the conditions of social mobility engendered by democratization, the affirmative policies of the state and opening up of opportunity structures trickle down to dalit women? Etc.

On the basis of case study of a village in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, we have observed that while the position of dalit women is more vulnerable in comparison to their counterpart men as well as non-dalit women, there are differences in experience of dalit women as well. The operation of patriarchy, sexual control and caste discrimination against dalit women vary depending upon their position in [sub] caste and class hierarchy within dalits. While looking at the trajectory of women's movement in India, the way in which feminists have raised gender issue in various phases and the critique of dalit feminism of all these preceding attempts, our aim in this chapter is to highlight the major issues of the gender and caste debate.

I

Women's Movement in India: A Brief Analysis:

Feminist scholarship has attempted to understand the complex history of women's struggle in India by classifying the feminist movement in certain broad patterns on the basis of ideology, forms of mobilizations and orientations. Three broad phases of Indian women's movement can be identified viz. colonial period, post-colonial period mainly in 1970s, and finally 1980s and 1990s. In the pre-independence period, a number of social reformers starting with Raja Ram Mohan Roy took up issues concerning women such as abolition of sati, widow remarriage, child marriage, seclusion, women's education and so on.

However, in retrospect many recent writings point out that these issues

were taken up not as part of the women's movement. Social reformers whether revivalists or modernists acted to cope up with the challenge posed by the colonial powers. The latter, under the influence of established belief of Victorian age that the position of women was measure of the advancement of a civilization, put a scathing attack on Indian society¹. The revivalists sought to meet this challenge by creating the "myth of golden age". The gist of their argument was that once upon a time Indian society was at the highest stage of civilization and women's position was much better. They talked of reviving the past.

On the other hand were modernizers who put emphasis on modernizing the society and favoured the opening up of means of modernity even for women. However, by the end of 19 century, these issues of reform had taken a backstage when the Hindu nationalist leaders contested that these issues were linked to the issue of cultural identity of India. In late 19 and early 20 century emerged what can be called 'the first wave of feminists' in India. In this phase women related to the reformers or the nationalists upper caste middle class families spearheaded women's movement.

The major issues concerning women continued to be female education, abolition of evil social customs, such as child marriage, dowry, and neglect of widows. These women participated in the national movement in large number. However, after independence, with the constitutional adoption of the equality principal, the women's question disappeared from the public arena for over twenty years.² Though in the period immediately after independence there was not much

¹ In this context, one can quote J.S.Mill, who derided Hindu society for degraded status it accord to women. According to him, "[A] state of dependance more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex.... Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt, which Hindus entertain for their women... They are held in extreme degradation, excluded from the sacred books deprived of education and [of a share] in the parental property... That remarkable barbarity, the wife held unworthy to eat with her husband, is prevalent in Hinduism." Quoted in Chakarvarti, Uma [1989] 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi?' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid [eds] *Recasting Women*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. p 35.

² Majumdar, Veena (1985) "Emergence of Women's Question in India and the Role of Women's Studies", *Occasional Paper 7.Centre for Women's Development Studies*, New Delhi. p4.

women's activity at national level, yet participation of women in localized struggles continued.

In 1960s, women participated along with men in struggles and revolts originating in the rural and tribal areas in different parts of India. For example, Naxalbari and Tehbaga movement in Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, Telengana arms struggles and Warli tribal revolt etc. These movements did take up women's issues, but they were not exclusively women's movements. Their focus was on class solidarity. The gender specific questions of patriarchy and oppression when articulated by women in the movement were seen as issues that were divisive of the class struggle³.

The period of 1970's brought women into other important mass movements like Chipko Andolan that linked the issues of environmental degradation to women's increasing toil for fuel and fodder, the anti price campaigns of the 1970s, mobilizations for water by the Vasai-Virar women's struggles of Thane district etc. These movements emerged as a challenge to the development policies and misplaced priorities of the Indian state.

After a lull for almost two decades, women issues once again came to acquire centre stage in 1970s and early 1980s when several autonomous women's organizations (that is, organizations not affiliated to any political party) emerged which adopted the issue-based "protest politics" for mobilizing women and affecting change. This was the beginning of what is called 'second wave' feminist movement in India. These groups were mainly city based and they raised issues of violence against women. Initially, their major focus was on the state that was seen as the agent of

³Lingam Lakshmi (2002) "Taking Stock: Women's Movement and the State" in Ghanshayam Shah (eds) *Social Movements and the State*. New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications. p.313.

violence. Two incidents that played a catalytic role were Mathura and Maya Tyagi rape cases. Both were cases of custodial rapes.

In late 1970s and 1980s, however, the direction of the movement began to shift from the more visible state violence exercised by agencies like the police and the judiciary to the rather invisible violence perpetuated within the four walls of the family. The emergence of different forms of violence in various parts of country called for an examination into private realm of women's lives, and linkages of the private and public realms. The slogan that 'personal is political' determined this journey from 'beyond to within'.

Consequently, the issues of dowry deaths, murders of young brides, female foeticide, the representation of women and their bodies in the media, sexual harassment of women at the work place, mass rapes of women identified on the basis of religion and caste, child sexual abuse, trafficking of women and girls, sex tourism and so on, enlarged the inquiry into a range of venues, agents and expressions of violence on women. As a result of several such campaigns, the law against Rape and Dowry Prohibition Act were amended. Women's movement also raised the issue of Universal civil code on a nation wide scale.

In late 1980s and 1990s, women movement in India entered into third phase. Though a spate of new women's organizations was born by the nineteenth eighties, indicating increasing awareness among women, this phase of women's movement was accompanied by the heightened awareness of the innumerable inequalities in India, both between men and women and between women themselves, which stemmed from a series of different power structures, feeding into each other, based on caste, tribe, language, religion, class and region etc.

As a result, during 1990s the question related to various identities and their interaction with gender acquired significance. Religion-based mobilizations on one hand and the rise of dalit feminism on the other have challenged the 'universal' category of 'woman'.⁴

The formation of the *All India Dalit Women's Forum* in 1994, the *National Federation of Dalit Women and Dalit Solidarity* in 1995, the emergence of various regional dalit women's groups and the *All India Democratic Women's Association's Convention Against Untouchability and Dalit Women's Oppression* held in December 1998, all gave the critiques of Indian feminism by seeking to link caste relations to gender exploitation. These groups underscored the fact that women movement has either ignored or taken lightly the issues concerning dalit women. Most of the issues like dowry deaths, issue of sati etc. are upper caste issues⁵. Thus the issues that dalit feminists raised and the debate that followed are discussed below.

Gender and Caste Debate:

The various views on the interaction of gender and caste can be clubbed into two categories⁶. One school of thought holds that all women, irrespective of their ethnic identities, are subjugated and oppressed, and the caste and communal identities work against them. Though scholars taking this line of thought do believe that various kinds of power structures operate upon women, they tend to stress upon a shared experience of 'womanhood'⁷. While rejecting the politics of identity, these

⁴Rege Sharmila (1998) "A Dalit Feminist Standpoint" in *Seminar*. No.471. p 47.

⁵ Rege Sharmila (1995) "Caste and Gender: The Violence Against Women in India" in P.G.Jogdand *Dalit women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. pp 24-25.

⁶ Jondhale, Surendra[1995] "Theoretical Underpinning of Emancipation of Dalit Women" in P.G. Jogdand (ed) *Dalit women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. pp.106.

⁷Kumar, Radha [1993] *A History of Doing: An illustrated History of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. p.124.

scholars make a case for talking of and for all women as undifferentiated category. On the other hand, dalit feminists do not treat the category of 'woman' as a 'universal'. According to them, as the conditions of upper caste women and the dalit women are different from each other, the latter need to talk differently⁸.

The role of caste and communal identities in regulating the control over women's sexuality has been underlined by a number of scholars. While pointing out the relationship between gender and caste, Ambedkar as early as in 1930s argued that the absence of intermarriage or endogamy was the essence of castes.⁹ Thus it is the superimposition of endogamy on exogamy and the means used for the same that hold the key to the understanding of the caste system.

He argued that the practices of sati, enforced widowhood and child marriage came to be prescribed by the Brahmanism in order to regulate and control any transgression of boundaries. He underlines the fact that the caste system can be maintained only through the control over women's sexuality. In this sense, according to Ambedkar, women are the gateways to the caste system.

Nur Yalman in his essay on caste in Ceylon and Malabar shows that the sexuality of women, more than that of men, is the subject of social concern¹⁰. Yalman argues that a fundamental principle of Hindu social organization is to construct a closed structure to preserve land, women and ritual quality within it. The three are structurally linked and it is impossible to maintain all three without stringently organizing female sexuality. Indeed neither land, nor ritual quality, i.e. the purity of caste can be ensured without closely guarding women who form the pivot

⁸ Guru Gopal (1995) "Dalit Women Talk Differently" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.29. No.32. Oct 14-21. pp .2548-2550.

⁹ Rege Sharmila [1995] "Dalit women Talk Differently: a critique of Difference and Towards a dalit Feminist Stand Point Position" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Oct. pp .ws 42..

¹⁰ Chakravati,Uma [1993] "Conceptualizing Brahminical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.XXVIII. No. 16. pp 579.

for the entire structure because the honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through their women.

The appearance of puberty thus marked a profound dangerous situation and is the context for major rituals, which indicates the important relationship between female purity and the purity of the caste. It is in order to stringently guard the purity of the castes that pre-puberty marriages were recommended for the upper castes especially Brahmins. He links the sexual purity of women with the purity of caste, suggesting that women's sexuality presents a threat because of the danger of her introducing impure or low caste blood into lineage. According to him:

It is through women and not men that the purity of the caste community is ensured and preserved... The danger of low quality blood entering their caste... only exist with women. The male seed they receive should be best available... The danger is ... the low caste men.¹¹

Veena Das(1976) takes Yalman's analysis a stage further, by stating that:

Women were literally seen as points of entrance, as gateway to the system. If men of ritually low status were to get access to woman of higher status, then not only the purity of women but also that of the entire group would be endangered. Since the main threat to the purity of group came from female sexuality, it becomes vital to guard it.¹²

¹¹ Liddle, Joanna and Rama Joshi (1986) *Daughter of independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. p 60.

¹² Quoted in Ibid.

According to her, it was maintained that the most polluting castes are those, which are the products of reprehensible unions between women of a higher caste and men of a lower caste. Thus the lower caste male whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity is institutionally prevented from having sexual access to women of the higher castes by restricted movement of women or even through the female seclusion.

Liddle and R. Joshi argues that in the Brahminical social order, the caste based and sexual divisions of labour are intermeshed in such a manner that elevation in caste status is preceded by the withdrawal of women of that caste from the productive processes outside the private sphere. Such a linkage operates on presumptions about the accessibility of the sexuality of lower caste women because of their participation in social labour. Brahmanism in turn locates this as a failure of lower caste men to control the sexuality of their women and underlines it as justification of their impurity. Thus gender ideology legitimizes not only structures of patriarchy but also the very organization of caste.¹³

This point has further been illustrated by Kannabiran and Kannabiran who point out that gender within a caste society is structured in such a manner that the manhood of the caste is defined both by the degree of control men exercised over women and the degree of passivity of women of the caste. By the same argument, humiliation of women belonging to another caste is a certain way of reducing the 'manhood' of those castes.¹⁴ Furthermore, an encounter between a woman and a man of different castes is resolved by a truce between men of two castes and this truce results in the demarcation of boundaries for women of both castes despite the fact that

¹³ Ibid. pp 68-69.

¹⁴ Kannabiran, V and Kannabiran, K [1991] "Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence," in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXVI. No. 37. Sept 14. pp. 2131-32.

they are not directly involved in the conflict. Thus the caste relations are mediated by the redefining of the gendered spaces.

While linking gender and caste, Leela Dube emphasized this point by arguing that despite the regional variations, the occupational continuity an important principle of the caste depends on the women. In every region there are specific “Untouchable” castes whose women work as midwives. These women, along with the men of their caste, share the essential task of removing pollution of upper and clean castes. In many parts of the country, the bond or contract, which ties laboureres to their masters, is understood to include the services of both the husband and the wife.

Moreover, women have been focal signs and subjects in processes of social mobility and efforts towards raising the status of caste groups¹⁵. It is well known that in the system of hierarchically graded birth- status groups, change has often taken the form of collective efforts on the part of a caste group to raise its ascribed status through the adoption of practices and beliefs of a ritually higher group. Women have been made to adopt the symbols of higher caste status by middle and lower castes and a simultaneous discarding of practices and customs that are signifiers of a low ritual status.

The symbols of higher caste status include: the imposition of seclusion and restrictions on the freedom of movement of women, the forced withdrawal from productivities outside the home, severe restrictions on divorce and remarriage and a shift towards dowry from bride wealth and the mutual exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and the groom.¹⁶ These mechanisms of social mobility impose

¹⁵ Kapadia, Karin [1995] *Siva and Her Siva: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India*. Boulder: West view. p.169-70.

¹⁶ Dube Leela (1996) op.ct. pp. 24.

restrictions and constraints on dalit women and make them socially and economically more dependent on men.

It is argued that the opposition between purity and impurity is seen to at the heart of the ideology of caste. The pure is superior to the impure. It is also vulnerable to the latter and has to be kept separate from it. Any involvement in the biological aspects of life is a source of pollution. All individuals go through periods of temporary impurity from which they emerge purified through suitable rites. But some groups, such as women and lower castes are associated with a permanent and hereditary impurity incontrovertible by cleansing actions. The purity level of each caste is transmitted from parent to offspring and is its prized attribute, to be carefully maintained by avoiding contact with impure castes.

Two areas of intercaste interaction are considered to be especially sensitive to pollution: (1) the ingestion of food, an intimate biological act. Hence the complex rules regarding cooking, handling of food, and inter dining. (2) Sexual relations, since the offspring carries the coded ritual status of both his parents.¹⁷ An offspring of the intercaste marriage endangers the ritual status of all members of the superior caste.

Hence appropriate sex and marriage are areas of great anxiety in the Hindu social order. Thus women are regarded as more directly concerned agents of purity and impurity than that of men, and the kitchen may be described as the heart of the purity-impurity system it is women who have to prepare and serve the food, and among many castes they have to be ritually pure while handling food. Women are expected to know the special foods that need to be preparing for each important ritual, and women are the de facto custodians of tradition.

¹⁷ Ganesh, kamala [1989] "Seclusion of women and the structure of Caste" in M. Krishanaraj and K. Channa (eds) *Gender and the Household Domain: Social and Cultural Dimensions*. New Delhi: Sage 12 pp.80-90.

In case of marriage and sexuality, this that the cultural schemes, which underlie the caste system, are based on a fundamental difference between male and female bodies in respect of their vulnerability to incur impurity through sexual intercourse. Sexual involvement is a much more serious matter for a woman since the act affects her internally while it affects a man only externally. In a case of inter-caste sexual relations a man incurs external pollution that can be washed off easily, but a woman incurs internal pollution that pollutes her permanently.

This contrast is expressed culturally by linking a woman to an earthen pot which is easily and permanently defiled if used by a polluted person within the caste or by a lower caste person or a person of a different religion. On the other hand, man is linked to a brass pot which is not polluted and in any case, can be resorted to original state by scrubbing, washing and if necessary, by putting it through fire, a purifier par excellence.

This metaphor distinguishes between men and women in terms of their respective vulnerability to pollution through sexual intercourse. Thus the emphasis on arranged or negotiated marriages and the proper organization of space and time for young girls after puberty derive their justification for this concern with boundary maintenance, which means the maintenance of the ritual purity of the caste.

Thus the cultural apprehension of the vulnerability of women and the emphasis on their purity and restrained behavior, which entail limited interaction with the opposite sex, are important components of management of female sexuality in a caste society. The availability of the sexuality of the dalit women is taken for granted because of her entrance in the public sphere, which signify her lack of character and, in turn of her low caste status. It is generally emphasized by the dictum that:

“Superior seed can fall on an inferior field but inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field”.

Recent writings attempt to illustrate the linkages between historical construction of caste and communal identities and reworking of patriarchy. Charu Gupta, for example in her seminal work on sexuality, obscenity and communalism shows that the construction of homogeneous community identity operated within and through a reworked updated patriarchy, whereby it became crucial to control Hindu women¹⁸. The author shows how in colonial Uttar Pradesh the reproductive functions of women, including widows, were significantly tied to constructed anxieties about declining Hindu numbers, simultaneously picturing ‘the Muslim other’ as rapist and abductor.

Drawing upon somewhat similar lines Anshu Malhotra shows that various identity movements in the colonial Punjab, including apparently egalitarian Singh Sabha movement, addressed the concerns of newly emerged middle class in Punjab. One of its repercussions was redefining of women’s role. Following from this understanding, these scholars adopt a highly critical view of identity politics. For them insistence on women’s rights is possible only when ‘women’ identity is separated from other identities because the latter obstructs women’s access to their rights¹⁹.

Dalit feminists seem to be in agreement with feminist scholars that identity movements tend not to address women’s issues, yet they insist upon

¹⁸ Charu Gupta [2001] *Sexuality, Obscenity, community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black. pp1-10.

¹⁹ This impression is most vividly articulated in two recent writings. Moghdam Valentin[ed][1994] *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*. Boulder, San Francisco: Westview Press. Moghdam asserts, “One answer to identity politics which seeks to control women is to disarticulate “woman” from “culture”, deconstruct women as human beings, and problematize women’s rights as human rights”. P 22. In a similar vein, Hasan suggests that ‘identity assertions subordinate women’s material interests’. Hasan Zoya[ed] [1994] *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*, New Delhi: Kali for Women. P.x. All cited in Pappu, Rekha[2001] “A Question of Identity” in *Seminar*. No.505. 14 September. pp 68-69.

addressing dalit women's issues separately. As Vimal Thorat comments, "Both the dalit movement and the women's movement have consciously ignored the dalit women's issues... We have been kept out, left behind, denied by our own movement [dalit movement] and also by the women's movement"²⁰.

Writings by dalit feminists and some other scholars tend to illustrate that experience of dalit women is different from that of upper caste women. The following discussion sheds light upon this. Dalit feminists argue that the social conditions prevailing in the country generate different nature of disabilities for different women, which stemmed from a series of different power structures based on caste, tribe, language, religion, class and region. The dalit women are downtrodden among the downtrodden; a victim of the basis of caste, gender and class.

They hold that the interaction of caste and gender has different repercussions for the upper caste women and the dalit women. For example, the maintenance of purity of the caste in upper caste families leads to strict control over the sexuality of their women. Upper caste women have been kept within the families, as rights for women outside the family would pose a threat to the caste system and thereby to the hegemony of the upper castes.

However, in case of the dalit women the fact that their labour outside the family is crucial for the survival of the family, leads to lack of stringent controls of their labour, mobility and sexuality and this renders them 'impure' or 'lacking in virtue'²¹. This is one of the reason that the rape of the dalit women may not be considered as rape at all because of the customary access that the upper caste men have had to Dalit women's sexuality. In the majority of the cases of rape, the questions about the virtue of these women are raised and it is assumed that their

²⁰ Thorat Vimal[2001] 'Dalit Women have been left behind by the Dalit Movement and the Women's movement' in *Communalism Combat*, 69, May 12. p 12. cited in *ibid*, p.70.

²¹ Rega Sharmila (1995) *oc.ct.* p.30.

character is questionable. Thus, while upper caste women experience systematic family violence, the dalit women face the collective threat of rape, sexual harassment from upper caste forces over and above domestic violence.

Dalit feminists assert that though it is true that the Brahminical treatises treat all women on equal footing, some treatises make distinction between upper caste women and dalit women. According to Sharmila Rege, these treatises (particularly Manusamriti) began to make a definite division between the upper caste women and the dalit women by invoking the ideology of the 'pativrata' (one who worships the husband and his kins without any grievances). Becoming a 'pativrata' was posed as an alternative for the upper caste women to rise above their sinful birth and an access to salvation. Where as upper caste men prescribed control on the sexuality of the upper caste women, the failure of the lower caste men to control the sexuality of their women was projected as a major root of their impurity, thus, of their low caste status.

Kannabiran and Kannabiran shows that the recent caste based violence against dalits is the result of resentment of the upper castes against the growing assertion of dalits in different arena of life through education and political empowerment, and the rejection of traditional markers of status and caste by them. In these caste confrontations, women, and in majority of cases, the dalit women bears the brunt of interface of the caste and gender. By giving instances of violence against the lower castes in some parts of the southern India, they point out that where as the agency of upper caste women is invoked to persecute dalit men who are usually hacked to death when they are suspected of the indecent behavior towards the upper caste women, the agency of dalit women, when they are assaulted by upper caste men,

is used to undermine 'manhood' of dalit men.

They further added that streets are also gendered spaces that are mediated by caste. When dalit women step onto the streets in protest, they are transgressing their limits. When upper caste women take to the streets to protest, their sense of wrong and their appropriation of public space are immediately legitimatised. Parading a women in the streets with the use of force, signals her availability. It is also a statement made about the character of women and therefore, the character of her caste; women being seen as the bearers of tradition and the protectors of the honour of the caste

Even the visibility of dalit women in power structure as Sarpanch or member of the panchayat and in the new knowledge making processes (such as Bhanwari Devi 's intervention through the Saathin programme) has led to increased backlash against the dalit women. Even for demanding higher wages they are subjected to the caste based violence. The provocation for the upper caste men who rape dalit women are two fold: Firstly, in demanding higher wages, she is clearly overstepping the limits of her caste status, which is defined by passivity and submissiveness.

Secondly, in making a public demand she is overstepping her limits and asserting herself in a gendered space- in this sense caste functions within a rigidly gendered space. This is the ultimate punishment for the women certainly, but more importantly and symbolically for the men. In this way, the social relations of caste and gender are based on the exercise of power through the use of force.

This school of thought points out that in the lower castes, the dalit women share the burden of the continuity of the caste occupation. This arrangement

affects the dalit women in several ways. Firstly, it becomes important to socialize them from childhood to accept this 'polluted' work as their destiny on the expense of their education. Secondly, when men give up their traditional occupation on account of its low ritual status or inadequate returns, the entire burden of occupational work often falls on the women.

They contribute to occupational continuity by carrying it out within patrilineal limits and under the imposition and control of the caste. Where as the dalit men generally consider it below their dignity to do menial tasks, in difficult times the women of these castes do the domestic as well as the outside work related to their caste status.

Dalit feminists maintained that a major reason of differentiation between an upper caste women and the dalit women is that the upper caste women has been ahead of dalit women in education and other spheres for last many decades. The emancipatory movement for the women has so far been a prerogative of upper caste women. Since 1990s several independent and autonomous dalit women's organizations such as National Federation of Dalit Women, All India Dalit Women's Forum, Maharashtra Dalit Mahila Sangathan, Bhartiya Republican Party and Bahujan Mahila Sangh have been asserting the autonomous dalit women's identity. Two days Seminar on Dalit women Talk Differently was organized by Alochana-Centre for research and documentation on women in June 1996 in which the issues of dalit women were debated.

Gopal Guru underlined the need of dalit women to talk differently by pointing out certain external and internal factors²², in a discourse of descent against the middle class women's movement, dalit men and the moral economy of the peasant

²² The external factors include non- dalits forces homogenizing the issue of dalit women such as upper caste, middle class feminist movement, peasant movements, the caste politics and the internal factors include the patriarchal domination within the dalits. Guru, Gopal . op.ct. pp.2548-50. 18

movements. It is a note of descent against their exclusion from both the political and cultural arena. He further underlined that the social location determines the perception of reality and therefore representation of dalit women's issues by non-dalit women was less valid and less authentic.

Similarly, Sharmila Rege pointed out that the 'Savarnisation of womanhood' and the 'Masculinisation of Dalithood' has led to the classical exclusion of the dalit women²³. She pointed out that the Left party based women's organizations made significant contribution towards economic and work related issues as the autonomous women's groups politicized and made public the issues of violence against women. Though serious debates on class v/s patriarchies emerged, both parties however did not address the issue of Brahmanism.

While for the former caste was contained into class, for the later the notion of sisterhood was pivotal. All women came to be conceived as 'victims' and therefore dalit; so that what results is a classic exclusion. Thus a feminist politics centering around the women of the most marginalized communities could not emerge. Similarly, Dalit Panthers underrated the participation and contribution of the dalit women in their writings and programmes. Dalit women remained firmly encapsulated in the roles of the mother and the victimized sexual being. They are reproducing the same mechanisms against their women, which the higher castes had used to dominate them. Thus, all dalits are assumed to be males and all women savarana.

It may be argued that the categories of experience and personal politics were at the core of the epistemology and politics of the Dalit Panther movement and the women's movement. Such a position resulted into an universalisation of what was

²³ Rege Sharmila [1995] "Dalit women Talk Differently: a critique of Difference and Towards a dalit Feminist Stand Point Position" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Oct. pp. ws 42-44. 19

in reality the middle class, upper caste women's experience or the dalit male experience. Thus the exclusion of dalit women in women's movement, Dalit Panther movement and the disregard of their contributions and interventions of dalit women in the non-Brahminical movement led these organizations to propose a movement for emancipation of the dalit women as a separate voice i.e. Dalit Feminism.

However the agent of dalit feminist's standpoint is multiple, heterogeneous and even contradictory, i.e. the category dalit woman is not homogeneous²⁴. Besides ideological differences among dalit feminists, there are marked sociological differences in the position of dalit women. Moreover, there seems to be regional variation in operation of the structures of caste, class and gender. In case of Punjab, for instance, scholars point out that Brahmanism has been quite weak and the notion of purity and pollution do not operate as rigidly as elsewhere in India. This urges us to probe how caste and gender operate in the context of Punjab. In the following chapters we shall probe the question of interaction of caste and gender in determining the position of dalit women in Punjab.

Review of Literature :

The writings of Radha Kumar (1993), Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah (1992), Nivedita Menon (1995), Lakshmi Lingham (2002), Gail Omvedt (1998), have made an attempt to trace the history of women's movement in India by focusing on various issues taken by the movement during the last two decades, its structure, strategies, campaigns, strengths, limitations and challenges before it.

²⁴ Sharmila Rege identifies three main positions taken by Dalit feminists- (1) Marxist / Phule / Ambedkarite position of the Satyashodhak Mahila Sabha (it critiques the Vedic Brahminical tradition and seek to revive the bahujan tradition of the 'adimaya'); (2) The Dalit Mahila Sangathana (It critiqued the persistence of the Manuvadi Sanskriti among the dalit male who otherwise traces his lineage to a Phule/Ambedkar ideology); (3) The Christi Mahila Sangarsh Sangathan is a dalit Christian women's organization. (They highlight the marginalisation of 20 Christian dalits in the hand of state level Christian organizations).

While the relation between gender and caste during colonial India has been explored by Kumkum Sangiri and S. Vaid (1989) and Partha Chatterjee (1990), Anshu Malhotra (2000) and Charu Gupta (2001) discover the interaction between gender and caste during the colonial period in the regions of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh respectively

The studies of Joshi Liddle and R. Joshi (1986), Vasanth kannibaran and Kalpana Kannibaran (1991), Leela Dube (2000), Sharmila Rege (1996), Ambedkar (1982-1990) while focusing on the debate between gender and caste, examine the way caste impinges on women's lives and explores the role of women in maintaining and reinforcing the caste system.

The image of dalit women as a victim of caste, class and gender has been presented by the studies of Sharmila Rege (1995), Gopal Guru (1998), Karin Kapadia (1995), P.G.Jogdanand (1994), Sumitra Bhawe (1988), Viramma, Josiane Racine and Jean Luc Racine (2001). Similarly, in Punjab, the position of dalit women, particularly in the post green revolution period is explained by the work of Kamlesh Jhurani (1985), K.P.Singh (2001), H.K. Sandhu (1976), Leela Gulati (1975).

The investigation of question of caste and untouchability in Punjab is carried out by studies of Surinder Singh Jodhaka (2000; 2001; 2002), Satish Saberwal (1973) and Paramjit Singh Judge (1997). Apart from probing the caste question, the studies of Mark Juergensmeyer (1982), Pimpley and Sharma (1985), Surinder Singh Jodhaka (2000) focus on the emergence of dalit identity through various socio-religious movements such as Ad-dharma and Shuddhi movement in Punjab.

To the best of our knowledge there is no researched work that tries to explore the interaction of gender and caste in the context of Punjab. This is modest

TH-10894



DISS
305.480954552

So599 Ge

21

9



TH10894

attempt to fill in the gap.

Research Methodology:

The present study relied upon an analysis of primary as well as secondary sources. It also relies upon the empirical fieldwork. For the present study one village was selected from the Hoshiarpur district in the state of Punjab. The selection of the village was done after the preliminary survey of the district Census. The selection was purposive. Study-village was selected because it is located in the region where Ad-Dharm movement was strong in 1920s. Moreover, the village as well as its surrounding area has substantial population of Ad-Dharmi dalits.

A sample of 50 dalit respondents in the study village was chosen by random sampling method. Our sample was consisted of female respondents only as our objective was to probe their position. An interview schedule was prepared in English language and was communicated to the respondents in Punjabi. All respondents were interviewed extensively.

Chapterisation: The present study is divided into five chapters.

First Chapter gives an introduction of the objectives of the study focuses on the debate on gender and caste.

Second Chapter deals with the a contextual exploration of the socio-economic position of dalits, the gender relations, particularly dalit women in the contemporary Punjab.

Third Chapter gives the socio-economic profile of the study village.

Fourth Chapter analyses the conditions of dalit women in the study village by focusing on the identities of Gender and Caste.

Fifth Chapter sums up the findings of the study.

CHAPTER - TWO
DALIT WOMEN IN PUNJAB: A CONTEXTUAL EXPLORATION

Introduction:

Located in the neighbourhood of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jammu-Kashmir, Punjab is a small state with an area of 50,362 sq. Km (a little more than 2 percent of India's total area) and a population of 202.82 Lakhs (2.42 percent of India's total population according to 1991 Census). Punjab is one of the most agriculturally prosperous states in India where the green revolution was successful. It became a separate state on 1 November 1966. Historically, Punjab has been the most important region of the sub-continent as, apart from its active involvement in the freedom movement, it was site of the most important identity movements during the last century.

While discussing caste and gender relations in Punjab, in this chapter we shall lay down the broad contours of socio-economic profile of dalits in general and dalit women in particular. Attempt has been made to explore as in what way(s) the various identity movements in the colonial period and the conditions of economic prosperity as well as democratization ensued in post-colonial period have affected these groups.

Our main argument is two fold: A) Though in Punjab, owing to economic development, the standard of living for women in general and dalit women in particular has improved in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere in the country, there are marked differences between two in terms of socio-economic attributes. B) Yet, their overall position is characterized by powerlessness, control and multiple exclusions, determined primarily by the patriarchal cultural ethos that have further been strengthened by various social reform movements as well as the economic development. It seems that

concern for communitarian identities in the colonial period, sharpened by various reform movements, reworked patriarchal relations.

The chapter is divided into four sections. First section gives a brief sociological introduction of Punjab. Second part deals with the position of dalits in Punjab. We have also discussed in this section various identity movements that emerged during colonial period. Third section gives a brief account of gender relations, popular culture and position of women in Punjab. The socio-economic position of dalit women is discussed in the last section.

I

Punjab: A Brief Sociological Introduction:

The population of Punjab can be divided into many sociologically significant groups viz; religious groups, linguistic groups, division between rural and urban population and the caste groups. Majority of population is composed of Sikhs (62.9 percent), followed by Hindus (34.46 percent), Muslims (1.18 percent) Christians (1.11 percent) and other religious communities (0.38 percent)¹. Significantly, Punjab is one of the few states of India where Hindus, who constitute more than 80 percent of India's population, are in minority². Linguistically, most of people speak Punjabi. Only a small proportion of population is Hindi speaking. Though 29.77 percent of state's population lives in the urban area, Punjab is predominately rural as proportion of rural population is 70.23 percent.

¹ Calculated from *Statistical Abstract of Punjab* (2000) Economic and Statistical Organisation. Planning Department. Government of Punjab. Chandigarh. 2001. pp 84-87.

² Jodhka, Surinder. S (2000) "Prejudice without Pollution? Scheduled Castes in Contemporary Punjab" in *The Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*. July-Dec. Vol.12. No.384. p 383.

Caste has been a significant social as well as political category in India. However, in the context of Punjab, scholars always make qualifications while understanding the role of caste³. It is often argued that Dumontian model⁴ of caste, where by Brahmins are at the top and 'untouchables' are at bottom, is unable to capture the sociological reality of Punjab. There seems to be a consensus that Brahmanism, in form of an ideology as well as practice, had little or no presence in Punjab⁵.

Yet, the significance of caste in Punjab is not ruled out completely. In fact, the politics of caste, along with that of marking out religious differences, has come to play an important role in defining identity since the late nineteenth century⁶. Recent scholarship asserts that there did exist indigenous notion of caste and the status derived thereof⁷. Jats (along with their internal differentiations), Rajputs, Khattris, Brahmans, Baniyas and Scheduled Castes are the major caste groups in Punjab. Writings on Punjab suggest that Sikh Jats are the dominant group as they are not only numerically strong but also hold prominent economic and political positions.

In agrarian economy of Punjab, it is argued, power relations are balanced in favour of Jats and other peasant castes as a greater proportion of land is under their control. Green revolution seems to have further exalted their position. However, in last two decades rapid urbanization and out and in-migration has created conditions of influx.

³ Malhotra, Anshu (2000) *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp18-20.

⁴ Dumont views caste as a fourfold Varna based system, organized around the central axiom of purity and pollution, whereby Brahmins are on the top followed by Kashatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras or Untouchables at the bottom.

⁵ This can be seen in Prakash Tondon's often quoted observation that he discovered the exalted position of Brahmins in society when he went to live outside Punjab. It is apposite to mention that the multiple foreign invasions from time to time, influence of Islam and Sikhism, all led to curbing the spread of Brahminical practices. Historians have pointed out 'the flatness of Punjabi society, with a few mercantile castes on top, a flat, undifferentiated Jat peasantry in the middle, and a bunch of menial castes at the bottom'. Quoted in Malhotra. Op.ct. p.18-20

⁶ Anshu Malhotra mentions how chiefs of various sections were attempting to acquire religious sanctions to claim of Kashatriyas status. Ranjit Singh used to pay regular obedience to learned Brahmins, Muslim holy men and Sikhs of various orders. The Sidhu Jat Sikhs of Patiala traced their descent from Phul who was said to be a scion of the royal Rajputs of Jaisalmer. Ibid.

On one hand, migrant labour from Bihar has increasingly been replacing indigenous agricultural labourers in the villages. On the other, agrarian rich are moving away from agriculture to the non-agrarian occupations in the urban centers and even abroad. The urban middle class in contemporary Punjab looks far more diverse in terms of caste than what it was three or four decades back⁸. One wonders what implications these changes have for the women in general, dalits and dalit women in particular. In the following sections we shall deal with some of these issues.

II.

Dalits in Punjab:

Dalits constitute one of the major caste groups in Punjab. According to 1991 Census, their population is 28.3 percent of the total population in Punjab, a proportion that is higher than the proportion of dalits in any state of India. However, as elsewhere, dalits in Punjab are not a homogeneous category. There are 37 different communities⁹. A large majority of them belongs to two sub-castes traditionally known as 'Chamars' and 'Chuhras'. Though they are currently registered under diverse names (such as Ad- Dharmis and Ramdasias in case of Chamras and Mazhabis in case of Chuhras¹⁰), together they make up around three- fourth of the entire dalit population of the state.

⁷ *ibid.* p.25.

⁸ Jodhka, Surinder S. [1999] "Return of the Middle Class" in *Seminar*. April. No.476. pp 21-26.

⁹ These communities are: Ad-dharmis, Balmikis, Bhangs, Bararas, Baiwals, Bararias, Bajigars, Bharzras, Chamars, Chanals, Dagis, Darains, Dchas, Dhanaks, Dongris, Dumans, Gagrars, Gandhilas, Kabirpanthis, Khatiks, KoriKolis, Mazhabis, Meghs, Nats, Ods, Pasis, Phemas, Pheeras, Sansis, Sapelas, Saretas, Sikligars, Sikribands, Marijas, Sanhars, Sanhaleand Sansors.

¹⁰ It is important to point out the distinction between Ramdasias and Ad-dharmi and Balmikis and Mazhabis. Ramdasias and Ad-dharmis were traditionally 'Chamars'. They were engaged mainly into the job of leather works. In 1920s, a section among Chamars were mobilized by Mangoo Ram. This section began to call to itself as Ad-dharmis. Initially, Ad-dharmis asserted that they were original inhabitants of the land and were a separate religious community. However over a period of time, they have come to be regarded as Hindus. Dalits[Chamars] who converted to Sikhism began to call themselves as Ramdasias. Balmikis, also known as Chuhras, were traditionally sweepers and scavengers. Mazhbis are their Sikh counterparts.

A section among dalits, which is very articulate and conscious of self-pride, has emerged due to enabling opportunity structures opened up by colonial as well as post-colonial modernity. In fact, dalits of Punjab are better placed in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere in India due to their peculiar history and overall economic development, a point that is discussed below in detail.

A.) Colonial Period:

It is apposite to mention here that though preoccupation with the purity and pollution was not much pronounced in Punjab, several disabilities were imposed upon dalits during colonial period. Dalits houses were on the outskirts of the main village settlement and were located on the side where the sun sets ('Lahindey Passe' as it called in Punjabi)¹¹. The village wells, temples and schools were not open to them. Jats retained some of the discriminatory customs directed against Chamars and other "untouchable" castes. The latter were not allowed to enter the Gurdwaras despite a symbolic promise of egalitarianism by Sikhism¹².

Dalits were also oppressed economically. The Alienation Act of 1901 had deprived them of the right to be 'agriculturalist caste'¹³. Apart from it, other factors also rendered them economically disabled. These were: the proprietary body of village exacted cesses¹⁴ known as 'kodi- kamini' for them, they were compelled to render customary

¹¹ Jodhka, Surinder. S (2000) "Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. xxxvii, No.19, May11. p1815.

¹² Verma, Archana. B (2002) *The Making of Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. According to author, " Upon reaching a zamindar's house a menial or untouchable person was made to wait outside the house before performing the service. For food or eating they had to carry their own utensils, which would not be touched by anyone else. On marriage occasions or at any other festival or celebrations, they would be the last to eat and only after they had cleared away the dirty dishes." p46.

¹³ Juergensmayer, M (1998) *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications. p 29.

¹⁴ Sharma, Harish. C (1996) *Artisans of the Punjab: A study of Social Change in Historical Perspective (1849-1947)*. New Delhi: Manorma Publishers.p.33.

begar, the landowners kept the wages of the agricultural labourers determinedly low¹⁵. Consequently, they were compelled to borrow money from landowners and thus remained indebted to them.

Although the socio-economic disabilities of dalits, as else where, persist in Punjab even in the post-colonial period, their conditions began to improve as early as in the beginning of 20 century. During colonial period, the conditions of mobility were created on one hand by introduction and development of urbanization, industrialization, canal colonies and modern education, on other by inauguration of Caste-Census and communal award, proselytization by Christian missionaries and Indian response to this. Dalits, who were traditionally engaged in the occupations¹⁶ of shoe making, sweeping and scavenging, started to take on new jobs that were relatively free from dependence¹⁷.

Apart from this, the role of socio-religious movements in enabling dalits during colonial period is also noteworthy. Christian Missionaries, who came to India for spreading Christianity by proselytisation, started their activities around 1870s in Punjab. Along with other welfare activities, they opened up educational institutions for dalits. A significant number of dalits in Punjab converted to Christianity¹⁸.

¹⁵ *ibid*; p37.

¹⁶ Besides these occupations, they used to render 'customary services' to the landowners. These 'customary services' were termed as 'customary Begar' by the British officials operated in various forms. Some of them were providing assistance in reaping of harvest, clearance of fields before ploughing, cutting or gathering of fodder, tending of landowner's cattle, digging of the village ponds and rendering of domestic services by their womenfolk. Pettigrew, Joyce (1991) "Jats of Punjab" in Dipankar Gupta (ed) *Social Stratification* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp.170-171.

¹⁷ Jurgensmeyer illustrates that the leather industries and cantonments set up by Britishers opened up job opportunities for dalits and the latter started to settle around these centers. In fact one town known as Boota Mandi populated substantially by dalits emerged during this period. Jurgensmeyer, Mark [1988] *Religious Rebels in Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications. p. 117.

¹⁸ The first conversion is reported to have taken place in 1873 when a man named Ditt Singh was baptized in Sialkot. By 1890 there were 10,171 Christians living in 525 villages of Punjab and by 1911 their number had gone up to 1,63,944 and by 1921 to over 3,00,000. *Ibid*.p.388.

In 1920s, Singh Sabha movement was launched for de-hinduisation of the Sikh religion¹⁹. The insistence of Sikh reformers to distance the community from the Hindus and the legal recognition to wedding through the Sikh rituals, 'the *Anand Karaj*' made the Brahmin priests redundant. It is only after this movement that a low caste Sikh was appointed a priest in Gurudwara and began to share equal treatment with other castes of the village. Equally important was the role of Arya Samaj, a reform movement of Hindus founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati²⁰ in 1875.

Starting from Lahore, it spread to the entire Punjab. Initially, its membership was mainly drawn from the upper castes²¹. However, in later years, Arya Samaj started to focus upon dalits also. Among other things, it started educational institutions that were open to dalits²². In fact, many dalits who attained education in these institutions became leaders of dalit movements in the following decades. Arya Samaj also started shuddi programme to uplift dalits²³. It was presumed that untouchability emanated

¹⁹ Jodhka, Surinder.S (2000) Op.cit; p390. In fact, Sikhism emerged as a reform movement during the fifteenth century. Sikh gurus were against Brahminical orthodoxy and the caste system. In contrast to hierarchical values of Brahminical Hinduism, they advocated equality of human beings in relation to god. They emphasized the need of sharing and community living through the institutions of the *kirtan* (the corporate singing) and *langar* (the community kitchen and eating together). The Sikh holy book '*Adi Granth*' contains writings of many Saints and Sufis who came from shudra (such as Kabir; a weaver, Dhanna; a Jat peasant, Navdev ; a tailor) and untouchable castes (such as Ravidas; a cobbler, Sadhan; a butcher and Sain, a barber). Of the five beloved who were the first to baptized as Khalsa on the day of Baisakhi in 1699 by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, four belong to the shudra castes. However, hold of Brahmin priests in the management of Sikh affairs undermined these egalitarian tendencies. The objective of Singh Sabha movement, at least in principle, was to revive the egalitarian character of Sikhism.

²⁰ Dayanand Saraswati belonged to Kathiawar (Gujarat). He established first organization of Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1857. In Lahore, organization of Arya Samaj was set up in 1887.

²¹ 1901 Census report gives the caste-wise break up of Arya samaj. Where as the number of khatris, Aroras and Brahmin members was 3394, 1627 and 1293 respectively, the menial castes like jhinwar, and kumhar had only 110 and 69 members .As about dalits ,the report says "it may be doubted whether 24 chamars who profess to belong to sect are really member of it."

²² Although Arya Samaj and Dayanand Salvation Mission, a sub-organisation of Arya Samaj opened up educational institutions for dalits, the maximum number of educated individuals belonged to certain Aryan castes such as Aroras, Khattris, Brahmins, Rajputs, Aggarwals and even Ode . The education among the untouchable and illiterate section of society was limited. The number of educated among the above-specified Aryan castes in year 1911 stood at 3613, 5212, 2077, 421, 474 and 542 respectively. Census of India. 1911.Punjab.Vol.xiv. Part-I. Civil and Military Gazette Press. Lahore.

²³ Total number of person purified in the province of Punjab during 1901-1911 was about 60,000 to 70,000, the details of which is as follows; Rahtias (3000-4000), Ramdasis (200), Meghs (3000), and many lower castes among Hindus in Kangras, Dalhosie, Hoshiarpur. Chowdhary,Rambhaji. B.A.President of All India Shuddhi Sabha. Quoted in *Census of India. 1911.Punjab. Vol.xiv. Part -I. Civil and Military Gazette Press. Lahore. p149.*

from ritual impurity, therefore, a ritual for removing impurity could render the untouchable castes pure and would raise the status of lower caste within Hinduism²⁴.

However, recent scholarship illustrates that philanthropic work by Arya Samaj was only a camouflage to stop Christian missionaries from initiating dalits into Christianity, and that its shuddi programme did little to improve their social position²⁵. Alongside the above-mentioned movements, 1920s also witnessed identity mobilization among dalits of Punjab who sought to redefine themselves as *Ad-dharmi*²⁶. Led by Mangoo Ram, Ad-Dharmis asserted that they were a separate quam like Hindus and Muslims and were original inhabitants of this land. Significantly, leaders and pracharks [preachers] of Ad-dharm movement were all benefited by the above-mentioned enabling opportunities. Ad-Dharam movement was strong in the central regions like Jullundhar, Hoshiapur and Layallpur.

The number of Ad-Dharmis in these districts swelled in 1931 up to 1135809 (27.12 percent) 11829 (26.70 percent), 50718 (12.11 percent) respectively²⁷. At later stage, it was absorbed into Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation. After independence, Ad-Dharmis were listed as one of the Scheduled castes of Punjab and were clubbed with the Hindus once again²⁸. They constitute socio-economically, relatively, better off and politically conscious sections among dalits in the post-colonial period.

Though these religio-cultural movements did not put an end to socio-economic disabilities of dalits, they did contribute in mitigating conditions of

²⁴ Sharma, Satish.K (2000) "Arya Samaj Movement in Punjab" in Harish.K .Puri and P.S.Judge (eds) *Social and Political Movements: Readings on Punjab*. Jaipur and Delhi: Rawat Publications.p 140.

²⁵ To project a separate identity, they created all sorts of different symbols, for example, red colour was made symbol of Ad-dharma. It was made compulsory for followers to wear red turban or red armbands. "Jai guru dev" and "dhan guru dev" were their greetings. Ravi Das was their guru. Ad-dharmis had their own holy book that they named as "Ad-Prakash". See Jurgensmeyer, op.ct.p. Also, Pimpley,P.N and S.K.Sharma (1985) "De-Sanskritisation of Untouchables: Arya samaj Movement in Punjab" in P.N.Pimpley and S.K.Sharma (eds) *Struggle for Status*. New Delhi: B.K.Publishing Corporation. p 54.

²⁶ Mangoo Ram belonged to Chamar caste and lived in the village of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab.

²⁷ Census of India. 1931. Punjab. Vol.xvii. Part -I. pp 278and 294.

discrimination and exclusion. A significant number of dalits, particularly Ad-dharmis, who could uplift themselves under these favourable conditions, and whose number has further swollen up in the post-colonial period, started to assert for their self-respect.

B. Post-Colonial Period:

In the post-colonial period, the most important initiative taken by Indian state for the benefits of dalits was the policy of 'reservation'. Though it does not lead to eradication of poverty or unemployment among them, it has created an influential group of elites among them. The available figures for Punjab show that dalit population in the state did indeed avail the benefits of reservation. Till January 2000, whereas dalits were over represented in Class IV jobs [42.23 percent of total population of SC government employees], their proportions, though not insignificant, declined as one moved up in the job hierarchy. [Class I- 16.50 percent, Class II –18.14 percent and Class III-19.22 percent]²⁹.

Study by Yadav and Sharma shows that dalits, particularly Chamars and Ad-dharmis have also done well as entrepreneurs in some towns. For instance, they control nearly the entire surgical industry in the town of Jalandhar that included big units as well as medium and small units³⁰. However, majority of dalits are primarily agricultural labourers. It is important to mention that Punjab is one of those regions where Green revolution has been very effective. The new farm technology was labour intensive. As a consequence, demand for agricultural labour enhanced manifold³¹. Dalits who were earlier constrained by lack of jobs in agriculture, switched to the agricultural labour.

²⁸ Jodhka, Surinder .S (2000) op.cit. p 392.

²⁹ Statistical Abstract of Punjab. 2000. p 449

³⁰ Yadav and Sharma quoted in Jodhka 2000. op.ct. p. 393.

³¹ ibid

Thus, the green revolution benefited dalits in two ways: by offering them alternative jobs and enhancing their earnings. Another important repercussion of green revolution was transformation in the agrarian social relations. During colonial period, relations between labourers and landowners were governed by the customary law of land and were highly oppressive from the point of view of the former. However, the introduction of new technology left the old practices less beneficial for the landowners. They preferred formalized contractual relations with their labourers to the old structure of patronage and clientele. Thus the relations of bondage and dependence are weakened³².

Nevertheless, on many accounts, dalits lag behind than other sections of Punjabi society. While the literacy rate for the total population of Punjab in 1991 was 58.12 percent, it was only around 33.35 percent for the scheduled castes population which is quite lower than the scheduled castes at all India level [37.41 percent]. This shows that educationally, dalits of Punjab have not fared well. Their access to land has also been poor as only 0.4 percent of the land holding occupying 0.72 percent of the total cultivated area in the state is controlled by the dalits³³. In a backward state like U.P., land access among dalits is much better as they control 24.50 percent of total land holdings. As mentioned earlier, exclusion of dalits in Punjab from land ownership continued since the colonial period when they were legally debarred to own land by the Land Alienation Act 1901.

In spite of these exclusions, dalits in Punjab, particularly in the regions where Ad-dharma movement was strong, are very assertive. One of the consequences of growing assertion among dalits is the burgeoning caste conflict in recent years³⁴. The total

³² ibid

³³ Ibid. p395.

³⁴ According to Mendelsohn and Viciziany, the sharp increase in incidents of violence against dalits is mainly a manifestation of jealousy among the dominant sections of the society due to upward mobility of dalits, their growing socio-political awareness and assertion. Mendelson and Vicziany (1998) *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and State in Modern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp 44-48.

number of cases registered as atrocities against dalits in Punjab had gone up from 14 in 1995 to 41 in 1998 and again to 56 in 1999. The most significant fact is that the number of cases registered under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989 had gone up over the last two years. While in 1995 only 1 case was registered under this act, the number had gone up to 17 by 1998 and further to 19 in 1999³⁵.

In fact, in Punjab atrocities against dalits are still high. However, the majority of cases goes unreported or is resolved through a compromise at the village level or in police station. One of major source of conflicts has been rupture in the power structure caused by the inclusion of dalits into local level government. Besides this, control over Gurudwaras, inter-caste love affairs, conflict over wages, fodder for cattle, and use of land belonging to peasant castes by dalits for answering nature's call are other factors of Jat-Dalit clashes. Significantly, many times these conflicts intertwine the caste and gender issues, a point that shall be taken up in the following sections.

III.

Position of Women, Gender Relations and Popular Culture of Punjab

As mentioned earlier, Punjab has been agriculturally prosperous region with a higher per capita income and low incidence of poverty. One generally expects that the conditions of economic prosperity might have exalted position of women in Punjab. Studies have shown that women in Punjab fair better in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere in terms of literacy rate, infant mortality rate and health care facilities available

³⁵ *ibid.*

to women³⁶, indicating better infrastructural opportunities available to women due to overall development.

In India, Punjab ranks fifth in female literacy. Among the states of the northwest, Punjab has the second highest rural female literacy rate [25 percent]³⁷. Female participation in state level politics, though still very low, has gone up from 2.2 percent in 1952 to 6.0 percent in 1997, which places it after Kerala and West Bengal³⁸. Yet in terms of sex ratio and participation of women in labour Punjab lags far behind than many states. In 1991, sex ratio in Punjab was 882 that declined further in 2001 [874]. Similarly, though women constitute 47 percent of total population of the state as per 1991 Census, the proportion of female workers is only 6.78 percent [As against 53.74 percent male workers]. This is much higher in other states³⁹.

Notwithstanding the mis-match between two kinds of socio-economic indicators, some scholars while differentiating between Punjabi Hindu women from Sikh women suggest that Sikh women are relatively 'liberated'⁴⁰. It is argued that the Sikh Gurus were refreshingly liberal in their thinking, especially in their attitude toward women. They propagated that in a vibrant and progressive society there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and sex. Far from being seen as a threat to men the two were seen as complementary to one another. The gurus considered a women's place in the society a true barometer to measure whether a culture or civilization is genuinely progressive. The following passage from the sacred text in the 'Guru Granth Sahib' highlights this:

³⁶ Rustagi, Preet [2000] "Identifying Gender Backward Districts Using Selected Indicators" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.XXXV. No.48. pp 4276-4285.

³⁷ Mentioned in Kaur, Ravinder and Amrit Srinivasan [1999] "The Better Half" in *Seminar*. April.No. 476. p 29.

³⁸ Chandrika Parmar [1997] "Fact File 1952-1997" in *Seminar*. No. 457. pp 50-52.

³⁹ Singh, K.P. [2001] "Women, Work and Inequality: A Case Study of Punjab" in Abha Avasthi and A.K. Srivastva [eds] *Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications.p.184.

⁴⁰ Kaur, Ravinder and Amrit Srinivasan [1999] "The Better Half". *Seminar*. April.No. 476.p.26-31.

“ All who live are born of a woman,
It is by woman that order is maintained
Then why call her evil from whom
Are great men born,
And without woman none could exist”.
(Guru Granth Sahib. P 473)⁴¹.

However, recent scholarship argues that the portrayal of Sikh women as ‘liberated’ was a colonial construction⁴². Britishers would time and again assert that ‘no people in India treats its women better than do the Sikhs as a body. Sikh women have considerable liberty and received a measure of education’⁴³. In fact, gender relations underwent significant changes during the colonial period. According to Anshu Malhotra, the question of redefinition of class/caste status had assumed importance for newly emerged middle class among Upper Caste Hindus as well as Sikhs. This concern for caste/class identity often mediated through the question of women’s sexuality and chastity⁴⁴.

Though the movements like Singh Sabha and Arya Samaj⁴⁵ took up some symbolic steps to improve women’s conditions, they underlined the need for control over

⁴¹ Quoted in Sekhon, Harinder Kaur [1999] “Women in Sikhism”. *Seminar*. April. No. 476. p 34

⁴² Malhotra asserts that the attitude adopted by the British towards Punjabis and the latter’s response to the colonial situation led to reformulation of picture of three aspects of Punjabi society viz. it was an agrarian society, it was divided primarily by religion and finally it was divided along the lines of caste. The position of Punjabi women being liberated was portrayed by Punjabi elites in response to the colonial situation. Malhotra, Anshu. (2001). op.ct. pp 25-26

⁴³ H.S.A.Rose. British Officer. quoted in Malhotra, op.ct.

⁴⁴ ‘Jhagra jatti te Khatrani Da’, an altercation between women of two castes, imagined and expressed by man points towards a social world view whereby women’s sexuality and chastity began to be considered as symbols of caste/class honour. In this altercation, Khatrani asserts that she was like a pearl, best kept hidden away rather than exposed. Jat woman on the other says that Khatrani was like a white chadar that was vulnerable unlike Jat woman who was like a brown chadar. Singh Sondha [1974] “Jhagra Jatti te Khatrani Da” in Piara Singh Padam, *Punjabi Jagrre*. Patiala. pp 72-75. Mentioned in Malhotra. op.ct. p 22.

⁴⁵ Arya Samaj introduced many social reforms including programmes for widow remarriage, abolition of child marriage, programmes for educating people including women. In eradicating the practice of child marriage, Arya Samaj met with success when a bill entitled Sarda Act was passed on 23 September 1929. H.B. Sharda, after whose name the bill was passed, was an Arya Samaj activist who took up this case. Various Arya Samaj organizations were established to further the cause of women. One such organization was Dalitdhar Mandal, whose programmes included protection of Hindu girls and widows from goondas. Another organization known as Bhartiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha had reportedly protected 1,451 women and 3,155 orphans from getting into the hands of anti-social elements. They opened many educational institutions known as Dayanand Anglo Vedic (D.A.V) institution. See Pimpley, P.N. and S.K. Sharma (1985) “Arya Samaj and the Untouchables in Punjab” in *Punjabi Journal of Politics*. p 84.

sexuality and reproductivity of women. To quote Dayanand, 'They should... marry persons of their own class, namely, a Brahman a Brahman woman; Kshatriya a Kshatriya woman; Vaishya a Vaishya woman: a Shudra a Shudra woman.' One can see in the Singh Sabhaites' writings on the desired reforms for women, and on the role that they were expected to fulfill, how the control over women's sexuality was central among Sikhs in maintaining social privilege. Thus the restraint over physical mobility of women by confining them to the four walls of households, re-construction of the ideal of pativrata and pristine woman began to take root not only among Hindus families but also among Sikhs⁴⁶.

That Punjabi culture celebrates masculinity and maintains control over women sexuality is further proved by the proverbs⁴⁷, folk songs and cultural practices. A glance at some of the popular proverbs makes it clear.

"Andar Baithi Lakh Di, Bhar Gahi Kakh Di"

[A woman who stays at home is worth a lakh and who wanders out is worth a straw. So a woman who stayed at home had always been the preference.]

Another popular proverb is:

"Tin Kam Kharab, Murd Nun Chaki; Sandhe Nun Gah, Ran Nun Rah"

[Three things are bad, grinding for man, threshing for a buffalo and traveling for a woman.]

Proverbs⁴⁸ exhorting women to yield a son are many. Here are two:

"Gur Khaien, Pownee Kutteen, Aap Na Aieen, Bhaiya Ghulleen"

[Eat your gur (jaggery), And spin your thread, But go and send a boy instead]

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp.1-14. In fact recent scholarship abounds which argue somewhat similarly in different context. See Charu Gupta for reworking of patriarchy in context of UP Hindu women.

⁴⁷ Chhabra, G.S (1974) *Social and economic History of Punjab*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. Pp 84-85.

⁴⁸ Malhotra, Anshu . op.ct. pp. 50, 174.

“Putan Bajho Jama Khali, Phal Lavo Suki Dali, Main Sadaman Putan Vali,

Gharri Aave Rang Di “

[My body (jama literally refers to a garment) is empty without sons, make this dry branch bear fruit, so that I will be called one with sons, let that colourful moment arrive.]

These local proverbs are the social statements that expose the patriarchal attitude of Punjabi people. In such a cultural context, economic modernization did not exalt women's overall position, though it did improve their living standard. The mechanization of agriculture and inflow of migrant labourers from Bihar further marginalized women labourers, forcing them to withdraw from agricultural sector. It also reproduced the sexual division of labour. It is pertinent to repeat here that in last one decade a section among peasant castes have migrated to the urban centres and are getting engaged into non-agrarian sectors. In such a context of “dying of agrarianism”⁴⁹ and making of new middle class one need to explore how patriarchy is working.

Till now we have discussed that an upward mobile and assertive section among dalits, in spite of the existence of various disabilities and exclusions, has emerged in Punjab due to identity mobilizations in the colonial period and opening up of opportunities structures in the post-colonial period. We have also seen that though some of economic indicators do point towards better position of women in Punjab, others attributes indicate the persisting gender discrimination. It is obvious that popular culture of Punjab celebrates masculinity and degrades women. This urges us to discuss the position of dalit women.

⁴⁹ This phrase is used by Prof. Surinder S. Jodhka and refers to a shift of mindset whereby agriculture is no longer favorite among new generation.

IV.

Position of Dalit Women in Punjab:

Most of the literature on dalit feminism, as we have seen in the previous chapter, stresses that distribution of deprivation, exclusion as well as the benefits of modernity has been uneven within dalits. One of the most important social variables that differentiate the experience of dalitness is that of gender. Dalit women are doubly oppressed on the basis of caste as well as gender. It is important to mention that during colonial and postcolonial period in Punjab, the various social reforms movement had focused on the upper caste women as the only object of the historical concern. The dalit women who also represent one aspect of womanhood remained disappear in their historical discourse.

Even the Ad-Dharam movement among dalits ignored the plight of dalit women. Dalit women in Punjab, as the following discussion shows, lag behind than general women and dalit men not only in terms of various socio-economic indicators but also in terms of their accessibility to the benefits of economic and political modernization. Yet, they score better than their counterparts elsewhere in the country on many accounts.

A. Literacy-Rate Among Dalit Women:

The literacy rate among dalit women in Punjab has varied over the years. Table.2.1 shows that in 1961 it was 2.16 percent. It increased to 8.16 percent in 1971, 15.67 percent in 1981 and 31.03 percent in 1991. Yet, it is quite lower as compared to literacy rate among dalit men [49.82 percent] as well as among all women [50.41 percent]. (Table.2.2). Thus dalit women lag behind than rest of the population in terms of literacy. Even among dalit women, rural dalit women are less educated than urban dalit

women. In 1991, only 29.20 percent of rural dalit women were literate as compared to urban dalit women i.e. 38.14 percent.

Table 2.1

Literacy Rate Among Rural And Urban Dalit Women In Punjab

YEAR	RURAL DALIT WOMEN	URBAN DALIT WOMEN	TOTAL
1961	1. 82	4. 86	2. 16
1971	7. 36	12. 86	8. 16
1981	14. 86	20. 43	15. 67
1991	29. 20	38. 14	31. 03

Source: Journal of Indian School of political economy. Vol.12, No 3 and 4. (July- December . 2000). P. 622.

Our field observations, which we have discussed in detail in Chapter four, suggest that one of the main reasons of low literacy among rural dalit women is gender bias prevailing in dalit homes. It is pertinent to mention here that literacy rate among dalit women in Punjab is better than many states in Northern India. In U.P, for instance, dalit female literacy rate in 1991 was merely 8.31 percent.

Table 2.2

Literacy rate Among Dalit Men And All Women In Year 1991

Dalit Men	49. 82
All Women	50. 41

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab 2001. No.70 and 71.

In addition to this, their access to different levels of education also varies. As one moved up from lower to higher standards, the proportion of dalit women decreases. Table 2.3 shows that nearly 80 percent of dalit women (783/1000 in rural area and 669/1000 in urban area) are illiterate. In rural area at per 1000 dalit women, 176 are literate up to primary level, 22 up to middle, 18 up to secondary and only 1 up to graduate level and above. The urban dalit women fare relatively little better.

TABLE-2.3

Per 1000 Distribution of Dalit Women by Education (July 1987 to June 1988)

	Not-Literate	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Graduate
RURAL	783	176	22	18	01
URBAN	669	257	38	32	04

Source: Journal of Indian School of Political Economy Vol.12 No3&49 (July-December). P. 646.

Even among those who are ever enrolled to schools, drop out rates are quite higher. Table 2.4 shows that at primary level 64.88 percent rural dalit girl students discontinue their studies. This proportion is little lower (58.72 percent) among urban dalit girl students.

Table.2.4

Percentage of Distribution of Ever-Enrolled Dalit Female students over level at which Discontinued (from July 1986-June 1987)

Level At which Discontinued	Rural Dalit Female Students	Urban Dalit Female Students
Primary	64.88	58.72
Secondary	34.23	40.96
Others	0.89	0.31

Source: Journal of Indian School of Political Economy. Vol. XII. No. 3 and 4. (July-December 2000). P 679.

Table 2.5 indicates that the general reasons behind the drop outs among rural as well as urban dalit girl students are due to lack of interest in further studies and because of economic reasons. However, as we shall illustrate in the next chapters, it is the complex interaction of caste-gender that forces dalit girls for dropping out of the schools in early stages.

Table 2.5

Percentage Distribution of Drop-out Reasons for Discontinuance among Dalit-Females Students in Rural and Urban Punjab in July 1986 to June 1987

REASONS	RURAL DALIT STUDENT	URBAN DALIT STUDENTS
Not Interested In Education	37.02	19.74
For Participation In Household Economic Activity	5.11	6.47
For Other Economic Reasons	30.72	54.39
Busy In Attending Domestic Chores	8.18	4.98
Failures	5.15	6.38
Other Reasons	13.83	8.05

Source: Journal of Indian School of Political Economy Vol. XII. No. 3 and 4. (July to December 2000). P 689.

B. Sex Ratio:

We have already seen that Punjab is among the states having poorest sex ratio. According to 1991 Census, it was 882 as against the national average of 927.

Among dalit population in Punjab it is 873 that is less than over all sex ratio in Punjab. However the sex ratio among dalits varies according to their sub-castes and location. Table 2.6 shows that among Chamars it is 857, but among Balmikis it is 892. Even among the latter, urban Balmikis are better as there are 903 females per 1000 males among them.

Table 2.6

Sex Ratio among Various Sections in Punjab as in 1991

		TOTAL	RURAL	URBAN
1	Punjab (Whole population)	882	888	868
2	Scheduled Caste (Total population)	873	873	873
	Chamars	857	856	859
	Ad-Dhamis	885	889	865
	Balmikis	890	887	903
	Majhabis	868	868	869

Sources: Statistical Abstract of Punjab. 2000. p 52 .
Census of India 1991, Special Tables on SC (VOL-1). pp 6-8

The low sex ratio, even among dalits, point out the fact that Punjabi culture celebrates masculinity and puts a high premium on having a male child. The growing demand for dowry is also a significant reason for devaluing of the girl child. While in the past it was the practice of female infanticide that caused an adverse sex ratio, it is the method of sex determination and selective abortions of female foetus that keeps the number of girls lower than boys.

The patriarchal value system has a direct influence on the way a family treats its members. In times of scarcity, families tend to invest more on the upbringing of boys than the girls. Even in terms of allocation of food, parents discriminate against the

girl child. Despite the prosperity ushered in by the success of green revolution, women's average consumption of calories is only two-third of that of men in the state of Punjab⁵⁰.

It will not be out of context to discuss infant mortality rate among dalits in Punjab in comparison to other states. Whereas female infant mortality rate projected for 1996-2001 was 51 in Punjab [For boys, it was 44], it was very high in states like U.P. [74], M.P. [101] and Bihar [55]⁵¹. This again points out that though dalit women are far behind than their counterpart men and women in Punjab, they are better placed than dalit women in many of Northern states.

C. Occupational Diversification:

According to 1991 Census, only 3.07 percent dalit women were main workers. (Table 2.7). However, the percentage of marginal workers among dalit women was 25.09 percent that is quite higher than the percentage of dalit male marginal workers i.e. 0.18 percent (Table 2.8). It is apposite to reiterate here that land ownership among dalits in Punjab is insignificant. Consequently, dalit females have to work in the fields belonging to other caste groups. However, very less proportion of them have been shown as main workers in the Census report. Scholars tend to suggest that this is due to discrepancy on part of Census officials and work participation among dalit females is much higher.

⁵⁰ Kishwar, M and R. Vanita (1991) *In Search of Answers*. New Delhi: Horizon India Books.

⁵¹ Census of India. 1991. Population Projection. Series-I. P.43

TABLE- 2.7**Percentage Proportion of Workers Among Dalits by Gender and Location to Total Population of Dalits in Rural and Urban Areas(in percentage)**

	Rural		Urban	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total Main Workers (I-II) (All Ages)	53.39	3.07	49.7	4.35

Sources: Census of India 1991, Punjab Series. P 58.

TABLE- 2.8**Percentage Proportion of Major Categories of Workers (All Ages) among Dalits by Gender and Location to Total Proportion of Dalits in Rural and Urban Areas (In Percentage)**

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cultivators (All -Ages)	2.98	0.08	1.03	0.11
Agricultural Labourer (All-Ages)	37.2	2.07	10.13	0.52
Marginal Workers (All-Ages)	0.18	25.09	0.06	0.31

Sources: Census of India 1991, Punjab Series. p 58-59 and 284.

It is important to notify that the position of dalit women in the agrarian social structure has always been different from that of dalit male agricultural laborers. As a rule, they are never employed as regular farm servants, such as siri or sanjhi. The siris are always men and women used to help them. This might be the reason that the percentage of the dalit women workers is reportedly very less in Census reports.

Even after the success of green revolution, which transformed the traditional structure of dependency and patronage between the laborers and employers, the pattern of treating dalit women as marginal workers continues to be the same. Farmers

now employ *naukers* on annual contractual basis .The contractual nature of relationships means that only the male labourer is obliged to work with the farmers.

In fact, green revolution has different outcomes and consequences for dalit female agricultural labourers as compared to the dalit male agricultural labourers. During this period, the female participation in the workforce was reduced to 1.18 percent⁵². Women have remained within their traditional jobs and better jobs have gone to men. The manual jobs that were once performed by women have been mechanized and have been taken up by men.

Consequently, dalit female worker's jobs are increasingly been shifted from the formal to informal and low waged work. Two most important occupations of dalit women are either agricultural labourers or cleaning the cattle shed in the homestead of rich landowners. The women labourers, who are mostly from Balmiiki/Majhabi caste background, work for an annual wage, which is generally paid in the form of a fixed amount of grain. They also collect the leftover food from their employer's houses.

The land owning class prefers to employ more women as agricultural labourers or workers in the unskilled and lowly paid works as they can be easily paid much less when compared with their input in terms of work. The principal of equal pay for equal work is not equally adhered to in the fixation of wage rates for male and female agricultural labourers. Irrespective of the nature of the work and the number of working hours, women are paid lesser than men. While men are paid between 70 to 80 rupees as daily wages, the rates for women work are only between 40 to 60. Apart from working for the daily wages, women also worked on hourly basis. The wage rate for such labour varied from 6 to 10 rupees per hour.

⁵² M.Billing and Arjun Singh (1970) "Mechanization and the Wheat Revolution: Effects on Female Labour in Punjab" in *Economic and Political Weekly. Review of Agriculture*. Vol.V. No.52. December 26. p. 172-A.

In terms of employment prospects, during peak seasons, female labour is in maximum demand and when the demand for labour decreases, it is the women who have to face unemployment crisis. Furthermore, the growing participation of migrant labour, mostly male, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, particularly, during peak seasons, has also played its role in reducing the seasonal demand for local dalit women labourers. In many parts of Punjab, migrants do most of the seasonal work. Availability of abundant labour supply also decreases wages. In this way their lives are one of the continuous insecurity of employment within the village in the primary sector i.e. agriculture.

Another source of employment that engages at least 10 to 12 dalit women in almost every village of Punjab is that of domestic help. Though the rich farmers of Punjab live in the villages, they have all the modern amenities of urban living available in their homes. These households tend to employ dalit women to help in domestic work. Dalit women do all kinds of domestic work such as sweeping and swabbing, washing of clothes and in some cases, even wash the kitchen utensil.

In contemporary times, apart from shouldering the household responsibilities, dalit women help their husband and brothers in their work. The wives of agricultural labourers are expected to give free service to the houses of upper caste landowners. They sweep the courtyard, make cow dung cakes and collect vegetables for cooking. They work for 10-11 hours in a day in the agricultural fields.

D. Political Empowerment:

Politics has played an important role in India and is well accepted by Indians. At different times, different strata's of our society has used politics as a mean to empower themselves. If in the initial years, it was the upper castes, in 1971's intermediate

castes and in last two decades dalits have looked to the politics with hope. This is evident in their increased electoral participation. Even the state seems to have realized the importance of political empowerment. It is this realization that has led certain measures aiming at empowerment of dalit women.

Through the 73rd Amendment Act, the Indian government has introduced the provision of reserving 1/3 seat for scheduled castes women in the local self-government institutions. However in these institutions, dalit women found themselves at the disadvantaged position. Dalit candidates are prevented from contesting elections through violent means or efforts are made to influence them to favor other interest groups. If these efforts also fail and elections do take place, they look for candidates who can be coaxed to carry out the whims and fancies of the dominant castes. On the other hand, if somebody out of favor of the dominant castes manages to get elected, they do not cooperate with the person concerned.

Even after getting duly elected in local bodies, the dalit women members have to face double oppression. The absence of strong economic base and social recognition on the part of dalit women made them powerless in the statutory bodies at the village level, like village panchayats. They are seldom encouraged to attend any panchayat meetings or consulted in decision-making processes. There are many cases where the dalit women sarpanch sit on the floor during the course of panchayat meetings, while upper caste members sitting on the chairs. Disillusionment arises when the dalit sarpanches are forced to give priorities to the activities favoring upper caste members. If they raised any issue of the plight of dalit women, they are dealt with physical violence and sexual abuse. Lady sarpanches are being stripped naked, gang raped, tortured and even beaten up⁵³.

⁵³ Mathew, George (2003) 'Panchayati Raj institutions and Human Rights in India' in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXXVIII. No.2. Jan.11-17.P.160.

On the other hand, a new class of sarpanch “patis”⁵⁴ has also emerged where the husband of a woman sarpanch managed the affairs of the panchayat, while the woman acted only as a rubber stamp. Kamlesh Jhurani in her study of Punjab region pointed out that in village panchayats, the women from well off Jat peasantry class have come forward and capture the leadership only to reinforce the status of their families⁵⁵.

These few women maintain parochial attitude towards majority of the weak and oppressed women. They initiate and promote the activities suited to women of their caste groups. Even the government officials are responsible for maintaining the status quo by helping the women from upper castes to capture leadership rather than protecting and nurturing the numerically strong women from landless and dalit families.

The Jats dislike to visit the houses of a dalit sarpanch unless they urgently needed his /her favor. In most of the villages, the upper castes strongly resent the reservations of seats for dalits in the village panchayats. In one case in a village of Gurdaspur district, a local Jat launched a campaign against a dalit woman sarpanch and got her suspended on charge of appropriation of panchayat money. In place of her a Jat appointed himself as a sarpanch even when the seat in the village was reserved for a dalit woman⁵⁶.

This explains that even after being given the space in a democratic process women belonging to traditionally marginalized groups are at the receiving end of upper caste atrocities as well as dalit patriarchy.

E. Atrocities Against Dalit Women

Reported cases of atrocities on dalit women in Punjab is quite less than that on their counterparts elsewhere. In 1991, in Punjab, rape cases against dalit women were

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p159.

⁵⁵ Jhurani, Kamlesh(1985) *ibid.* P.5.

5, it increased to 7 in 1996 and 16 in 1999⁵⁷. In U.P. it was quite higher for the same period [242]⁵⁸. Yet scholars have found instances of sexual abuse of dalit women. For example, study by Surinder Singh Jodhka reveals that caste atrocities in Punjab appear in different patterns. According to him, though most of the time, such cases are not reported to police, but the cases of, what could be called “consented rapes” of dalit women by the upper-caste men are rather common. The primary reason for this is the dependence of dalits on the upper caste in various ways.

Rural dalit woman’s travails begin with her day. With lack of toilet facilities available in the villages, they have to go to Jat landowner’s fields to answer the call of nature. They are often beaten and stoned while they are in the process of answering nature’s call. With regard to work, dalit agricultural labourers are paid fewer wages. Jat landowners misused dalit women whenever they got an opportunity. If there is any resistance, they threaten dalit labourers that they would deprive them from the right to take sugarcane and spinach from Jat fields and fodder for their cattle⁵⁹.

Although the upper-caste women no longer mind Dalit women entering into their houses or even in the kitchen, the latter are served eatables in utensils apart from the utensils used by the former. Despite the fact that Sikhism has been anti-caste religion, caste prejudices have not been completely absent among the Sikhs. This has been so particularly among the dominant castes of landowning Sikhs of rural Punjab. Jat Sikhs do not appreciate dalit participation in the daily activities of local Gurudwaras.

They are not allowed to participate in the cooking and serving of the *Langar*. They are often told to sit outside the main door of the gurudwaras and are served *Langar* only after the upper caste Jats had finished eating. Dalit women often complain

⁵⁶ Jodhka, Surinder.S (2000). Op.cit. p 1822.

⁵⁷ ibid. p 397.

⁵⁸ Prasad Mata, 1995 *Dalit Jatton Ka Dastavej* (Hindi) Kitab Ghar, New Delhi. Mentioned in Pai|2000|.p419.

that the upper caste boys often treated them differentially while serving *Langar*. For instance, they avoided touching their plates while serving them food.

Conclusion:

Above discussion indicates that despite the gender indicators in Punjab being better than many of north Indian states, women's position is that of powerlessness with all sorts of control operating upon them, of course with variance depending upon their socio-economic context. Though there is huge gap between general women and dalit women in the state in terms of literacy, calorie in-take and other socio-economic indicators, the position of dalit women in Punjab seems to be relatively better than their counterparts in many states of India.

Notwithstanding this relative improvement, their overall position is characterized by powerlessness, control and multiple exclusions, determined primarily by the patriarchal cultural ethos that have further been strengthened by various social reform movements as well as the economic development. Though movements like Singh Sabha and Arya Samaj took up some symbolic steps to improve women's conditions and stressed egalitarian philosophy of casteless society, they underlined the need to control over sexuality of women and reproduced caste hierarchies and sharpened caste identities.

Significantly, a section among dalits, particularly Ad-dharmis, has been benefited both by the colonial modernity as well as affirmative policies and overall democratization in the postcolonial period. This section has been very assertive and mobile in Punjab. Though not insignificant, this constitutes a small minority. Moreover, in spite of this change, dalit women continue to face exclusion and discrimination in all walk of life.

⁵⁹ Petitgrew, Joyce (1991) Op.cit. p.171.

Not only have the benefits of enabling policies of the state not percolated to them, as is visible in low presence of dalit girl students in the higher education and the jobs, the provisions of empowerment of dalit women at local levels have also been distorted by the forces of dalit patriarchy and caste prejudices of the dominant castes. Studies have pointed out that newfound technology introduced in the late sixties further contributed in it.

A section among dalit women has to suffer on account of these forces. This may explain lower percentage of dalit women as main workers. Mostly, they are marginal workers. Those who work in the agricultural farms have to face discrimination and sexual assault by upper caste men. The character of dalit women is taken for granted. There are of course very less reported cases of sexual abuses against dalit women, yet studies do point of existence of a large number of "consented rapes". It can be concluded, thus, that dalit women constitute the most vulnerable section in Punjab as elsewhere. In the next chapters, we shall look how dalit patriarchy and caste disabilities work differently on different categories of dalit women.

CHAPTER-THREE
SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF STUDY-VILLAGE -RAMDASPUR

Introduction:

This chapter aims to provide a profile of the study village Ramdaspur and that of the respondents. Located in Bhunga block of Dasua Tehsil in district Hoshiarpur, the village is situated at a distance of about 4 km from the sub-Tehsil Gardiwala. It is spread in an area of 213.00 hectares. According to 1991 Census, the total population of the village was 909 with 154 households. At present, the total population of the village is 935 with 180 households. The selection of the village was purposive and done after a preliminary survey of the district Census.

Study-village was selected because it is located in the region where *Ad-Dharm* movement was strong in 1920s. Moreover, the village as well as its surrounding area has substantial population of *Ad-Dharmi* dalits. Historically, Ramdaspur is associated with Baba Manjh Singh who was disciple of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjun Dev. It is believed that Baba Manjh Singh had four cousins in Kang Mai, a neighbouring village. The narrative goes on to suggest that they established the Ramdaspur village.

Thus, the origin of the village is linked to the Sikh religion. Significantly, Ramdaspur falls in the “Doaba region” of Punjab, an agriculturally advanced region. Besides being one of the regions where Green Revolution has been successful, there has been a high incidence of out migration to some western countries, particularly USA, U.K. and Canada since 1950s. Scholars argue that the standard of living of Scheduled Castes population in this region, mostly consisting of *Ad-dharmis*, is much better than that of their counterparts in other regions of the state. In fact, many among these castes have migrated to Middle East as contract labour to Indian construction companies.¹

¹ . Brar, J.S. & Sucha S Gill. (2001). “ Tenancy Reversal and Operational Enclosures: A Study of Doaba Region” in *Land Reform In India* by Sucha S.Gill (ed.). New Delhi: Sage Publications. P:222

I.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY VILLAGE:

The General Layout and the Residential Pattern:

Village Ramdaspur is a nucleated type of settlement as the houses in the main habitation are built contiguous to one another and open to the narrow lanes. The village habitation lies on the plain ground. There is one primary government school. For further education, the village students go to nearby towns of Dasua or Gardiwala. The village has a panchayat ghar also. Most of the households belonging to the upper castes are well-furnished *pukka* houses, which speak of their prosperity. However, dalit households and those belonging to Other Backward Castes are mostly *kutcha* or *semi-pukka* type.

It is important to note that with one or two exceptions, majority of dalit households are located in the periphery of the village. The location of their houses is in what is popularly called “lahindey passe”, i.e., the direction in which the sun sets. Besides this, migrant labourers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have also settled in the corner of the study village. They live in mud huts. It is important to mention that there are two separate gurudwaras in the study village. While the Jat community owns one, the other belongs to the dalit community. These details point towards the exclusion of dalits not only in the settlement pattern but also in the socio-economic and cultural spheres.

(2). Caste Structure in the Study Village:

Ramdaspur is a multi-caste village. Dalits form the numerically largest caste group followed by Jats, Brahmins, and Backwards castes like Lohar, Jhinwar, Chimbe and

Tarkhan. Table 3.1 shows the caste wise distribution of the families and population in the study village.

1. Brahmins:

There are 8 Brahmin families in the study village with population of 30. Known as *Bahmans*, they are numerically smaller group and do not enjoy their traditional privileges and respect among other castes. As pointed earlier, Brahmins do not enjoy pre-eminence in the Punjab. In spite of this, there is a sense of superiority in them. However, Jats do not regard them superior to themselves. Only 3 Brahmins families own land in the study-village. Rests are either agricultural labourers or runs shops.

2. Jats:

Jats forms the second most numerous caste group in the study village. There are 74 families of Jats with a population of 350 (37.4 percent). Most of the Jats in the study village own land. In fact, they control a substantial proportion of land under cultivation. At present, their economic power and political influence has accorded them status of the dominant caste group in the village. Being the principal landowners, they also enjoy high social position in the village community.

3. Backward Castes:

These include Lohars, Jhinwars, Chimbe and Nais. There are 2 Lohar families in the study village with population of 12. They are engaged in their traditional occupation of blacksmith. However, at present, it does not fulfill their needs. So they are shifting to other occupations such as agricultural labour or government services. There are 2 Jhinwar families with population of 12. The 2 Chimbe families with population of 8 are engaged in the tailoring

occupation. They also work as agricultural labourers. There are 3 Tarkhan families with population of 11. They are carpenters as well as engaged in agricultural labour.

TABLE 3.1
Caste-Wise Population in the Study Village

S. No	Name of the Caste	No of Families	Population
1	Brahmin	8	30 (3.2 %)
2	Jats	74	350 (37.4%)
3	Lohar	2	12 (1.28%)
4	Jhinwar	2	12 (1.28%)
5	Chimbe	2	8 (1.9 %)
6	Tarkhan	3	11 (1.7%)
7	Balmikis	3	15 (1.6%)
8	Ad-Dharmi	86	497 (53%)
TOTAL		180	935 (100%)

4. Dalits:

There are 89 Dalit households in the study village with population of 512 (54.7 percent). Dalit population is largely constituted of two sub-caste groups, i.e., Ad-Dharmis and Balmikis. The latter has just 3 families with total strength of 15 whereas the former has a population of 497. It is important to note that dalits have their own separate gurudwaras, which are generally associated with Sikhism and some of their rituals resembles to that of Sikhs.

Though we have discussed this point in the earlier chapter, it is worthwhile to reiterate that dalits have separate gurudwaras, a fact that narrates the story of both their exclusion as well as assertion. Many dalits reported that they were happy with this arrangement as it ensured that their self-respect is not compromised. To remind, in Sikh gurudwaras, Ravidas, whom Ad-dharmi dalits regard as their *guru*, is not recognized as *guru* but is merely

considered a *bhagat*. Moreover, dalits are never given important positions in the management affairs of gurudwaras.

Although the dalits are in a majority, they constitute the most marginalized section in the village. Mostly, they are agricultural labourers. Though Dalits, particularly Ad-dharmis, are highly conscious of their self-pride and do not tolerate any denigration, a sense of prejudice against them prevails among the upper and peasant castes. While the benefits of affirmative actions to uplift dalits have not trickled down to a majority of them, social mobility among many has been triggered off. We found that some dalits mainly Ad-Dharmis had migrated from the village to the Middle East. Significantly, socio-economic conditions of Balmikis are more appalling.

(3). Occupation, Land Holding and Caste:

The economy of the village is agrarian. There is no organized industry in the village. The principal crops grown during Rabi (winter crops) season are wheat, sugarcane, potato and rice while groundnuts, maize and sunflower are the principal kharif (summer) crops. In fact, land is the main source of wealth in the study village. It carries high prestige. The villagers acquire money by other pursuits and aspire to invest in land to raise their social status. Table 3.2 shows the percentage proportion of population holding land in the study village. It is clear that out of 180 households, 57.2 percent are landless, 24.4 percent are marginal farmers, 3 percent are medium level farmers, 6.6 percent are rich farmers and only 3.3 percent are landlords.

TABLE 3.2

Percentage Proportion of Population Holding Land in the Study Village.

Caste	Landless	Marginal i	Medium ii	Rich iii	Landlord iii	Total iv
Brahmin	5	-	3	-	-	8
Jat	2	42	12	12	6	74
Lohar	2	-	-	-	-	2
Jhinwar	2	-	-	-	-	2
Chimbe	2	-	-	-	-	2
Tarkhan	3	-	-	-	-	3
Balmiki	3	-	-	-	-	3
Ad - Dharmi	84	2	-	-	-	86
Total	103	44	15	12	6	180

(i) Less than 0.5 hectares land - Marginal Workers.

(ii) Land between 1.0 hectare to 1.5 hectares - Medium Level Farmers.

(iii) Land between 1.5 hectare to 2.5 hectares - Rich Farmers.

(iv) Land more than 2.5 hectares - Landlords

Among 8 Brahmins families, 3 own medium size land holding. Out of 74 Jat families, the 8 percent are landlords, 16.2 percent are rich farmers, another 16.2 percent are medium level farmers, 57 percent are marginal farmers and only 2.7 percent are landless. No one from among Lohars, Jhinwars, Chimbes and Tarkhans holds land in the study village. Among 89 Dalit families, 98 percent are landless and 2.3 percent are marginal farmers. These statistics illustrate that majority of cultivated land in the study village is owned by Jats and the majority of dalit population is landless.

Table 3.3 that gives caste wise occupational distribution of population further makes it clear. The village population is engaged in almost 11 different occupations such as owner cultivation, shop keeping, government service, carpenter, military services, tailor, cobbler, sweeper and job in foreign land. Statistics shows that 37.5 percent Brahmins are owner

cultivators, 12.5 percent are agricultural labourers and 25 percent are in government services. Among 74 Jat families, 92 percent are owner cultivators, 4.05 percent are engaged in governmental services, 1.35 percent is in the military jobs and 2.7 percent are settled abroad.

TABLE 3. 3

Caste and occupation of population in the study-village

S. No	Caste	Land Owner	Agri labourers	Shop Keepers	Blacksmith	Government Services	Carpenter	Armed Forces	Foreign Jobs	Shoe Maker	Tailor	Sweeper	Total
1	Brahmin	3	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
2	Jat	68	-	-	-	3	-	1	2	-	-	-	74
3	Lohar	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	Jhinwar	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
5	Chimbe	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
6	Tarkhan	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
7	Balmiki	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
8	Dalit	3	76	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	-	-	86
Total		74 (41%)	83 (46%)	2 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)	6 (3.33%)	2 (1.1%)	3 (1.7%)	5 (2.8%)	2 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	180 (100%)

Between 2 Lohars families, 50 percent are engaged in traditional occupation and 50 percent are agricultural labourers. 2 Jhinwar families (100percent) are agricultural labourers. Between 2 Chimbe families, 50 percent are agricultural labourers and 50 percent are engaged in tailoring occupation. Whereas among 3 Tarkhan families, 33.3 percent are in engaged in agricultural labour, rest (67 percent) are in their traditional carpenter occupation.

Among 3 Balmiki families, 67 percent are agricultural labourers, and 33 percent are sweepers by occupation. Out of 86 Ad-dharmis families, 3.4 percent are owner cultivators, marginal farmers, 88.3 percent are agricultural labourers, 2.3 percent are in armed forces, 3.4 percent are in foreign countries and 2.3 percent are in cobbler or shoe making occupation.

These statistics prove that Jats, and to some extent Brahmins also, not only have experienced maximum occupational diversification, but also are in control of most of power-lending jobs.

II.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY VILLAGE:

We took a sample of 50 dalit respondents in the study village by random sampling method. Our sample consisted of female respondents only, as our objective was to probe their position. An interview schedule was prepared in English language and was communicated to the respondents in Punjabi. All respondents were interviewed extensively. Besides this, we talked to a number of people in the village including women and men of different caste groups. Information about caste, age group, marital status, class, or economic status, education and occupation of the respondents is given below.

(1). Caste and Age of the Respondents:

All the 50 respondents belonged to “*Ad-Dharmi*” sub-caste among dalits. Some of them also identified themselves as “*Ravidasi*” and even as “*Chamar*”. Table 3.4 shows the age group of the respondents. Sample population was selected from all age groups. Whereas, 17 respondents (34 percent) belonged to age group between 18-30, 27 respondents (54 percent) belonged to age group between 31-49. The number of the respondents belonging to the age group between 50 and above was 6 (12 percent).

TABLE-3.4

Perception on the Age of Respondents in the Study Village

Age Group	18-30	31-49	50 and Above	Total
	17 (34%)	27 (54%)	6 (12%)	50 (100%)

(2.) Educational Status of the Respondents in the Study village:

We have divided the sample population in three educational categories viz; low, middle and high. The respondents who did not go to school beyond the middle standard are included in the educational category of “low”. The respondents who had studied above the middle standard but did not go to school beyond Senior Secondary level are included in the educational category of “middle”. The respondents who had completed their graduation are included in the educational category of “high.” Table 3.5 shows the educational status of the respondents. While 16 (32 percent) are not literate, 20 respondents (40 percent) have had education up to primary level. The number of those who studied up to middle standard is 12 (24 percent). 2 respondents (4 percent) are educated up to 10+2 level.

TABLE-3. 5

Educational Status of the Respondents in the Study-Village

Educational Level	Educational categories	Number of Respondents	Total
LOW	Not Literate	16	16 (32%)
	Below Primary and Primary	20	20(40%)
	Middle Standard	12	12(24%)
	TOTAL- I	48	48(96%)
MIDDLE	Senior Secondary	2	2(4%)
	TOTAL-II	2	2 (4%)
HIGH	Equivalent to Graduate	-	-
	TOTAL-III	-	-
	GRAND TOTAL I+ II+III	50	50 (100%)

Statistics shows that majority (96 percent) of respondents belongs to the educational category of “low”. Rest have education below senior secondary. There was no single respondent in the sample population whose educational level was high. This makes clear that majority of dalit women are deprived of education. We shall discuss factors behind low educational level of dalit women in the next chapter.

(3) Marital status of the respondents:

Our sample included married as well as unmarried respondents. Table 3.6 shows their marital status. Out of 50 respondents, 4 (8 percent) respondents were unmarried, 41 respondents (82 percent) were married. 4 respondents (8percent) were widows and 1 respondent (2 percent) was separated.

TABLE 3. 6

Marital Status of the Respondents in the Study Village

Unmarried	Married	Widow	Separated	Total
4 (8%)	41 (82%)	4 (8%)	1((2%)	50(100%)

4. Class Category/Economic Status of the respondents:

We have divided the sample population into three class categories viz; low, middle and high based on an assessment of their monthly income and condition of their houses. In the class categories of “low”, we have included those who earned less than Rs.2000 per month and lived in *kuccha* accommodation. In the class category of “middle”, we have included those who earned between Rs.2000 to Rs. 5000 per month and who lived in *kuccha-*

pucca accommodation. The category of “high” class included those who earned more than Rs. 5000 per month and who lived in *pucca* houses.

Table 3.7

Distribution of the respondents according to Class

Low*	Middle**	High***	Total
25 (50%)	19(38%)	6(12%)	(50%)

* Includes respondents whose income was less than Rs.2000 Per month and who lived in kuccha accommodation.

** Includes respondents whose income was between Rs.2000 - Rs 5000 per month and who lived in kuccha-pucca accommodation.

*** Includes respondents whose income was more than Rs. 5000 per month and who lived in *pucca* accommodation.

Table 3.7 shows that out of 50 respondents, 25 respondents (50 percent) belong to the class category of “low”, 19 respondents (38 percent) come in the class category of “middle”, and 6 respondents (12 percent) belong to the class category of “high”.

5.Occupational Status of the respondents:

Table 3.8 gives occupational distribution of the sample population. Out of 50 respondents, 14 (28 percent) were engaged in agricultural labour and 10 respondents (20 percent) were involved in both agricultural labour and cattle shed cleaning. 7 respondents (14 percent) were engaged in cattle shed cleaning. 6 respondents (12 percent) worked as domestic servant in upper caste household. 10 respondents (20 percent) were housewives and 3 (6 percent) respondents were students.

TABLE-3.9

Distribution of the Respondents according to their Occupation

S.No.	Occupational categories	Number of Respondents
1	Agricultural Labourers	14 (28 %)
2	Agri. Casual Labour & cattle shed cleaning	10 (20 %)
3	Only Cattle shed cleaning	07 (14%)
4	Domestic servants	06 (12%)
5	Housewives	10 (20%)
6	Students	03 (6%)
	Total	50 (100%)

Conclusion:

The profile of the study-village makes it clear that despite the weaker social position of Brahmins and prevalence of Sikhism that preaches egalitarian principals, exclusion and prejudice against dalits persists in Punjab. Majority of them are excluded as appear from the distribution of land ownership as well as occupational diversification among various caste groups. Whereas majority of dalits are landless agricultural labourers, Jats and Brahmins not only enjoy disproportionate ownership of land but also control most of first-rate occupations.

Yet, owing to factors like governments' preferential treatment policies, overall development of the region in which the village is located, conditions of equality promised by democracy and finally existence of legacy of identity movement i.e. Ad-dharm movement, a section among the study village is upwardly mobile. It is visible, among other things, in their willingness to migrate to Middle East to improve their conditions. Consequently a sense of confidence prevails among them as is visible from their investment in the alternative cultural resources.

However, this change exists alongside continuities. Most vulnerable is the conditions of dalit women. A look at the educational status of our respondents indicates that most of them are deprived of education. A pertinent question at this juncture is: What

repercussions do the social mobility of dalits, conditions of development and democracy entail for dalit women? We shall discuss it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER – FOUR

POSITION OF DALIT WOMEN IN THE STUDY VILLAGE

Introduction:

This chapter aims to understand the position of dalit women in the study village Ramdaspur. We have previously seen that Ramdaspur is located in the Doaba region of Punjab and the condition of dalits, particularly Ad-dharmis, is relatively better in this region. It is worthwhile to reiterate that the sense of self-pride that crystallized among Ad-dharmis in 1920s, endures even today. This exists despite the persistence of exclusion and prejudice against them. Equally marked is the case of upwardly mobile dalits, some of whom have even migrated to abroad. The questions at this juncture are - Does the relatively improved conditions of dalits in the study-village prove enabling for dalit women?

Do the conditions of social mobility engendered by democratisation, the affirmative policies of the state and opening up of opportunity structures trickle down to dalit women? Or does their exclusion in both private as well as public life continue? If yes, why does their exclusion persist? Is it the complex web of interactions between caste and gender that work against dalit women¹? We have also discussed in the second chapter that the Punjabi culture, as reflected in the local proverbs, folk songs etc., celebrates masculinity. So in addition to the above raised questions, we can ask - To what extent Dalits reproduce the patriarchal culture of Punjab²? For this purpose we have divided this chapter into two parts.

¹ Recent scholarship has illustrated in different contexts that construction of new social identities function through redefining the gender roles and relationship. It is argued that caste, class and religious groups, whose boundaries were marked by relative fluidity and dynamism in pre-colonial period, re-discovered and sharpened their identities leading to their rigidity. Among others, this led to two things. On one hand, patriarchy was reworked and updated. On the other, caste and class distinctions were maintained and celebrated by controlling women's sexuality. The case of Punjab acquires importance in this regard as this region witnessed fierce competition between various groups in the colonial period, particularly in the first four decades of 20 century. It is in this period only that Ad-Dharmi dalits sought to redefine their social position. See Gupta, Charu: 1994, Malhotra: 2001.

² In fact one of the major debates in the dalit discourse is related to the question of replication. As Dalits too observe the principle of hierarchy among themselves, it is maintained that they replicate the dominant popular culture. We, in a sense, intend to extend the question of replication to understand position of dalit women.

In this section we shall study the position of dalit women as a category of gender. For this purpose, we have analysed the socio-economic position of dalit women in the study village. Besides this, attitudinal indicators like decision-making power in the home, child preference, and educational opportunities, work patterns and labour production and political participation are undertaken and analysed. We have argued that the complex web of interaction of caste and gender influences the position of dalit women. This complex interaction, on one hand, works to exclude her from educational, occupational and other opportunities. On the other, it reproduces patriarchal³ bias and attitudes against, of course even through, dalit women.

A). Socio-Economic Conditions of Dalit Women

(1) Educational level:

Though the government has initiated several policies and schemes to improve the educational status of women, there benefits seem not to have trickled down to dalit women. A look at the educational status of the respondents corroborates this fact. As pointed out earlier, 96 percent respondents in the study- village have “low” educational status. Only 4 percent can be put in the category of “middle” level

³ Patriarchy literally means ‘rule by the father’, the domination of the husband-father within the family, and the subordination of his wife and children. However, the term is usually used in the more general sense of ‘rule by men’, drawing attention to the totality of oppression and exploitation to which women are subject. The use of the term patriarchy thus implies that system of male power in society at large both reflects and stems from the dominance of the father in the family. Radical feminists emphasize that gender inequality is systemic, institutionalised and pervasive. Patriarchy refers to this systemic and institutional exclusion of women. Socialist feminists, in contrast, highlight links between gender inequality and private property, seeing patriarchy and capitalism as parallel systems of domination. See Heywood, Andrew [1997] *Politics*. Hampshire and London. Macmillan Press Ltd. P 92.

of education and there is not even a single respondent who falls in the educational category of “high”.

Interestingly, the proportion of dalit girl students at primary level is relatively better. However, sharp decline in their number at higher levels indicates the higher rate of dropouts among dalit girl students. At first instance, several reasons can be accounted for the low literacy rate among dalit women like economic hardships, need for girls in domestic work, lack of interests among girls etc. However, the most convincing reason appears to be the bias against girls that operate at many levels and in many manifestations. In first place, this reflects in the preference given to boys over girls for getting education even if the former are less interested in studies. As one respondent who was doing her matriculation reported:

I want to study further. But my parents are looking for a suitable match for me. They say, they have to look after other children also⁴.

Moreover, girls are supposed to be suited to domestic work. Many respondents were of the view that as girls had to take care of household activities in their in-laws home, formal education was of no use for them. This is the reason that right from their childhood, girls are advised to give more attention to household work rather than educating themselves.

Furthermore, general impression is that if a girl becomes highly educated, it is difficult to find suitable match for her. Even if the parents find one, they are asked for huge dowry that is usually proportionate to the educational as well as class status of the bridegroom. To pay huge sum of dowry, however, is not possible for everyone. So either she has to remain unmarried or to compromise with a bridegroom who is less educated than her. We found that out of 50 respondents, 10

⁴ Ravinder Kaur [19 years] interviewed on 12 March 2003.

respondents (20 percent) were more educated than their husbands. Thus, even education does not enable dalit women.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the question of education among dalits, particularly dalit women, has acquired another dimension. In the recent times reports of college going dalit girls “eloping” with Jat or Upper Caste boys have been ample. Though we did not find any such case in the study village, many respondents referred repeatedly about one such incident in the neighbouring village. Although dalit men in the study-village were not against dalit girls getting higher education, they talked of moral and sexual disciplining them. A great number of them felt that Jats and Upper Caste boys did not marry their girls. Rather they sexually exploit them. In fact, early marriage, even to a less educated groom, as appeared from the statement of a respondent, is part of such controlling exercise.

(2). Employment Pattern and Occupational Burden:

As the economic conditions of dalits in the study- village vary, there are different patterns of employment and nature of work among dalit women belonging to different dalit families. A few dalit women whose men are in the government jobs rarely go out for any kind of work. They can thus be put into the category of housewives. Yet, some among them have to take care of other activities besides routine domestic work as their families own cattle. A good number of dalit women are engaged in the agricultural and other kinds of labour work. Majority of them, thus, have multiple occupational engagements and their routine activities are centred on a continuous round of domestic and field labour.

Their working day and, hence occupational burden, is much longer than that of their men. 37 respondents (74 percent) who were mainly agricultural labourers or domestic servants work for 10 to 13 hours daily. Apart from spending 4 -5 hours a

day on domestic work, they have to spend 6-8 hours in the fields when job is available. Thus they hardly get any leisure time. Rest of 13 respondents (26 percent) who were housewives and students revealed that they worked for 7 to 8 hours a day at home.

One may point out that at least these women enjoyed the relative material respite and leisure time, as they do not go to fields. Our findings, however, suggest that there is often a concern for control over their sexuality. Our conversation with a dalit man in government service revealed that there is always a concern for dignity that is defined through woman. He said: 'Jats boys keep bad eyes on our women folk. We tell them to avoid their localities'⁵.

The cases of dalit women whose husbands are settled abroad reflect different trends. Some of them are not allowed by their in-laws family to work outside the home. Others have to share burden of household activities as well as labour work as their husbands do not send them money, a point that will be taken in detail little later. Thus not only is there a sexual division of occupational burden among dalits, one also finds the dichotomy of public – private⁶ operating particularly in upwardly mobile dalit families.

Furthermore, the presence of migrant labourers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the study- village has further, reduced the availability of agricultural labour to the dalit female labourers as the migrant labour provides cheap labour. The female respondent reported that they have only 2-4 months in a year when labour work in the fields is available more or less regularly. When adequate work is not available in the fields, dalit women take-up the task of cattle shed- cleaning. In the study-village,

⁵ Joginder Pal, [42]. Clerk. Interviewed on 15 March 2003.

⁶ Our finding does not match with Kanchaiah's observation: "Within Dalit-bahujan patriarchy woman is an agent of both production and reproduction. The domains of man and woman are not completely bifurcated at home and in the field. A man does the cooking while the woman goes to work in the field and woman does the man's

Among 50 respondents, nearly 28 percent of dalit females are engaged in both casual-agricultural labour as well as cattle shed cleaning.

It is very striking that in case of no employment, mostly, it is only dalit women and not men (dalit) who do the cattle shed cleaning or domestic service. The reason might be the “polluted” nature of work. One finds caste division of employment and occupational burden in the village in other ways also. While there was one Jat woman employed in the government service, there was none from among dalit women. This shows that the benefits of reservation have not trickled down to dalit women. Though there were very few Jat and other upper caste women engaged into agricultural labour, they did not do certain jobs like cattle shed cleaning and the work of domestic help.

(3). Sexual Division of Labour and Wages:

Besides sexual and caste division of employment pattern and occupational burden, we noticed sexual division in the agricultural labour in the study village. While men do the activities of sowing and ploughing, females were given the jobs of transplanting, weeding, potato seeding, cutting of grass and harvesting⁷. This sexual differentiation extends to the payment for agricultural labour. For daily work, which consisted of 6 to 8 hours, women are paid Rs. 40. For the similar 6 to 8 hours daily work, men are paid Rs. 70. Thus, men are paid more than women.

work when the man is away. In these spheres specialisations are not gender specific.” Ilaiah, Kancha [2001] *Why I am not Hindu?* Calcutta: Samya.p 46.

⁷ Karin Kapadia in her study of Tamilnadu, argues that a fairly explicit symbolic parallel is set up between the Tamil ideas of sexual intercourse and procreation, on the one hand, and agricultural activities on the other. A typical image of sexual intercourse (particularly stronger in upper caste discussions) was that of the male ‘seed’ that entered the female field to germinate and develop into a baby. Thus, the sowing of seed both in sexual intercourse and in agriculture seen as a quintessentially male activity. Digging or the braking of earth was a similar activity, identified with the invasive male, while the female is identified with the dormant but nurturing earth. Kapadia, Karin (1995) *Siva and Her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural India*.Oxford: Westview Press.p.211.

Many reasons were cited for it. Firstly, it is considered that men could handle harder work. Secondly, the females are considered unsuitable to operate machines, which have been increasingly used particularly after the green revolution. Besides these, there is a general tendency to consider some works like ploughing, handling of tractor machines and spraying of pesticides etc. as “*manly*” and some as “*womanly*”⁸. The former are considered more demanding in terms of expertise as well as industry than that of latter. It is how the different wage- structure is justified.

Three conclusions can be drawn from above discussion. Firstly, the socio-economic conditions of dalit women continue to be vulnerable. Low level of education, little access to opportunity structure mainly in the government jobs and a hard routine life with no leisure time point out that their exclusion in various walks of life persists. Secondly, their position is determined by a complex web of caste and gender identities that go into making of dalit patriarchy. Though dalit women go out of home for labour, a point that is cited as an indicator of their freedom, a look at their occupational burden and employment pattern tends to suggest otherwise.

On one hand, there is sexual division of occupational burden among dalits, which shows discrimination against dalit women on the basis of gender. On the other, there is a concern mainly in the economically better dalit families for caste identity that operates through tightening the control over women’s mobility. Thirdly, upper caste patriarchy also affects their position as is visible in sexual division of labour and wages.

In the following discussion, we shall look at attitudinal indicators such as decision-making power, child preference etc.

⁸ One respondent put very candidly: “Har kam Zananiyan de bass da nahin hunda, tractor chalana, jyan dawai da chhirkav karna, ch ta sade bas da hi hai [Womenfolk can not do all the work, there are some works like ploughing by tractor that can be skilfully performed by men only.] Joginder Singh, Jat Sikh 34, Landowner, interviewed on 13 March 2003.

B). Decision Making Power

By decision making power in a family we mean the relative power of family members in deciding the family matters such as how money earned by family members will be spent, how many children they will have, when the children will get married etc. This is an important indicator to spot out the balance of power in the family. The respondents were asked as to what extent they enjoyed the decision making power in the above mentioned matters. Their responses are analysed below.

Table 4.1 shows the decision-making power as reported by the respondents. Out of 50 respondents, 25 respondents (50 percent) said that they enjoyed no decision making power in the family matters. While 20 respondents (40 percent) reported that they mutually take family decisions along with their family members, only 5 respondents (10 percent) reported to have actively participated in the decision-making for only some matters.

TABLE 4.1
Decision-making power in the family as reported by the respondents

No	YES	SOMETIMES	TOTAL
25 (50%)	20 (40%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)

However, even those who have decision making power are just asked to give their opinion on the decisions already taken by the head of the family who is generally male whether father, brother, husband, or son. Few respondents reported that their in-laws even determine the number of children born by them and size of their family. This trend reveals the relative powerlessness of dalit women in the family decision-making affairs. Do the dependent variables like age, occupation and class

make any difference in decision-making power of dalit women? The following discussion throws light on this.

Table 4.2 shows the perception on the decision making power according to the age of the respondents. It is clear that the proportion of those who have say in the decision making, who are consulted sometimes and who are never consulted has been almost same in all the age categories. Thus, age does not influence the decision making power of dalit women.

TABLE 4.2
Decision making power in the family according to the age of the respondents

Age groups	18-30	31-49	50&Above	Total
Responses				
No	8	15	2	25
Sometime	1	2	2	05
Yes	8	10	2	20
Total	17	27	6	50

Table 4.3 shows the perception on the decision making power of the respondents according to their class categories. Out of 25 respondents who reported that they have no decision making power in the family affairs, 17 respondents belonged to low class category, 5 respondents to middle class category and 3 respondents belong to the category of 'high' class. Among 20 respondents who reported that they are consulted in family decision-making, 5 respondents belong to the low class, 12 respondents belong to the category of middle class and 3 respondents belonged to the high class.

TABLE 4.3
Decision Making Power According to Class

	Not Consulted			Consulted			Sometime Consulted			Total			Grand Total
	i	ii	iii	i	ii	iii	i	ii	iii	i	ii	iii	
Classes	Low 17	Middle 5	High 3	Low 5	Middle 12	High 3	Low 3	Middle 2	High 0	Low 25	Middle 19	High 6	50
TOTAL	25 (50%)			20 (40%)			5 (10%)			50 (100%)			

Of the 5 respondents who are sometimes consulted in family decisions, 3 respondents among them have low class status and 2 respondents have middle class status. Table 4.3 shows that majority of respondents who have no decision making power in the family belong to the low class category. Among those who enjoy decision-making power in the family, majority of respondents are from middle class families.

TABLE 4.4
Decision making power according to occupation of the respondents

Agricultural labourers			Casual agri & cattle shed cleaning			Cattle shed cleaning only			Domestic Servant			Housewives			Students			Grand Total		
Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes	Not consulted	Yes	Sometimes
8	4	2	8	1	1	1	6	-	1	4	1	4	5	1	3	-	-	25	20	5
14 (28%)			10 (20%)			7 (14%)			6 (12%)			10 (20%)			3 (6%)			50 (100%)		

Table 4.4 shows the perception on the decision making power in the family according to the occupation of the respondents. Out of 25 respondents who do

not enjoy any decision making power in the family, 8 respondents are agricultural labourers, another 8 respondents are engaged in both casual agricultural labour and cattle shed cleaning and 1 respondent is engaged in cattle shed cleaning only. At the same time, 1 respondent work as domestic servant, 4 respondents are housewives and 3 respondents are students.

Among the 20 respondents who take mutual decisions with their family members, 4 are agricultural labourers, 1 respondent works in both agricultural labour and cattle shed cleaning and 6 respondents are engaged in cattle shed cleaning alone. Where as 4 respondents working as domestic servant, 5 respondents are housewives. Of the 5 respondents who reported being consulted sometimes in family decisions, 2 among them are agricultural labourer and 1 is engaged in both agricultural labour and cattle shed cleaning. Another respondent is working as a domestic servant and 1 is a housewife. It is clear that the majority of respondents who enjoy no decisions making power in the family are working as agricultural labourers.

(C) Child Preference

By this we mean preference of sex of child by parents. In the era of technological revolution when it is possible to determine sex of foetus, bias in the child preference may lead to gender discrimination at an early stage. A cursory glance at the sex ratio, which informs about the number of females per 1000 males, gives us preliminary idea about the gender discrimination. In the study village, the sex ratio among dalits is 988. However among upper-caste Hindus and Sikhs, this is 801, which is far lower than that among dalits.

Does this imply that dalits tend to behave differently than other communities in matter of child preference? Our findings suggest that this difference is not due to behavioural distinctions. Rather, it is due to a reverse trend of reproduction

of girl child for want of a male child, a point that we shall discuss in a little while. Whereas the respondents preferring son constitute a significant number (31 i.e., 62 percent of total sample), the number of those who prefer girl child is negligible (3 i.e., 6 percent). Rest reported to like both sons as well as girls.

Table 4.5 shows that the preference for male –child is higher in all age groups. Out of 17 respondents who belonged to the age group of 18-30, 53 percent respondents preferred son, 12 percent preferred daughter and the percentage of those who preferred both son as well as daughter is 35 percent. In the age group between 30-40, 67 percent respondents give preference to the son; 7 percent to the daughter and 27 percent respondents preferred both son and daughter.

TABLE 4.5
Perception on the child preference according to the age of respondents

	18 - 30			30 - 40			40 - 50			50 and Above			Total		
Total	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both
		9 53%	2 12%	6 35%	10 67%	1 7%	4 27%	8 67%	-	4 33%	4 66%	-	2 34%	31 62%	3 6%
	17 (34%)			15 (30%)			12 (24%)			6 (12%)			50 (100%)		

Between the age group of 40-50, 67 percent respondents favoured son and 33 percent respondents favoured both son as well as daughter. Among the respondents who give preference to the son and the percentage of those who preferred girl child belonged to the age group between 50 and above, 66 percent respondents preferred son and the percentage of those who preferred both son and daughter is 34 percent.

It is clear that the apparently equal population proportion of males and females is not self-evident in form of equality of treatment of them. Girls are still considered as inferior to male children. Even their mother's own experience and the pattern of their lives, makes women averse to producing another sufferer like them. They give birth to more and more daughters for having a son. Their health also suffers. As distinct from the mother's own interest, the family as an economic unit see daughters as burden because of dowry and limited opportunities for women in every field of life.

Table 4.6 shows the perception of the respondents according to their class category. Among the 31 respondents who preferred sons, 49 percent respondents belonged to the low class category, 42 percent to the middle class category and 9 percent respondents belonged to the higher-class.

TABLE 4 .6
Perception on the child preference among respondents according to according to the category of class

	Son			Daughter			Both			Total		
	Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High
	15 49%	13 42%	3 9%	2 66%	1 34%	-	8 50%	5 31%	3 19%	25 50%	19 36%	6 12%
Total	31 (62%)			3 (6%)			16 (32%)			50 (100%)		

Out of 3 respondents who preferred a daughter, 66 percent respondents have low class status and 34 percent respondent belonged to the high class. The 16 respondents who show their preference for both son as well as daughter, 50 percent among them belonged to the low class, 31 percent to the middle class and 19 percent

to the category of high class. Statistics shows that majority of respondents who preferred son have low class status.

Table 4.7 shows the child preference of the respondents according to the occupation of the respondents. Out of 14 respondents who work as agricultural labourers, 78 percent respondents preferred son, 7 percent respondents preferred daughter and 14 percent respondents preferred both son as well as daughter. Among 10 respondent who are involved in casual agriculture labour and cattle shed cleaning, 50 percent wants son, 10 percent daughter and 40 percent prefer both son as well as daughter. 7 respondents who are involved in cattle shed cleaning alone, 43 percent respondents preferred sons and 57 percent preferred both son as well as daughter.

Table 4.7

Perception on the child preference of the respondents according to their occupation

Agricultural labourers			Casual labourers & cattle shed cleaning			Agri. shed cleaning only			Domestic Servant			Housewives			Students			Grand Total		
Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both	Son	Daughter	Both
11 78%	1 7%	2 14%	5 50%	1 10%	4 40%	3 43%	- 0%	4 57%	3 50%	1 17%	2 33%	7 70%	- 0%	3 30%	2 66%	- 0%	1 34%	31 62%	3 6%	16 32%
14 (28%)			10(20%)			7 (14%)			6(12%)			10 (20%)			3 (6%)			50 (100%)		

Out of 6 respondents who work as domestic servant, 50 percent respondents favour son, 17 percent daughter and 33 percent both boys as well as daughter. Out of 10 housewives, 70 respondents favour son and 30 percent preferred both son as well as daughter. Among the 3 student respondents, 66 percent respondents preferred son and 33 percent preferred daughter.

Respondents informed that male child is given preference not only for carrying forward the patrilineage and for performing funeral rites but also that it is the parameter that determines the 'high' or 'low' social status of a woman in the family. Yet, many remarked, they have to prefer a son because of family pressures⁹. Some respondents even told that they were ill-treated by their in laws for giving birth to daughters¹⁰. We have seen in the previous chapters that the proverbs, folksongs of Punjab and Punjabi culture celebrate masculinity and birth of a male child. Dalits seem to be replicating this aspect of popular Punjabi culture.

(D) Domestic Violence:

Table 4.8 shows that out of 50 respondents, where as 30 percent respondents reported that they do not face any kind of domestic violence, 70 percent respondents reported to be victims of various forms of domestic violence. Even those who say that there is no domestic violence against them agreed that wife beating is the normal behaviour of their husbands

TABLE 4.8
Domestic Violence in the Study Village

YES	NO	TOTAL
35(70%)	15 (30%)	50 (100%)

⁹ It is very well recognised that giving birth to son is regarded as successful procreation. In such a context, repeated birth of girl-child undermines the position of mother in the family and could alter the future relations of power within the households. This contextual restraint often results in participation of mother in maintenance of patriarchal structures. See Malhotra, Anshu, op.ct. P 173.

¹⁰ Her mother-in-law often scolds, told one respondent who had daughters, by commenting that she was like her mother who also had only daughters. One respondent told that her in- laws threatened that if she bears more girl child, she will be divorced. Many, in fact, considered themselves "lucky" as they had only sons. For them having daughters carry extra responsibility and burden. One unmarried girl told that they are 7 sisters and one brother. Her mother has died. She reported that the girls are highly discriminated in her family and the boy gets more love and caring.

In majority of cases, dalit women face domestic violence because of their inability to bear sons. Out of 50 respondents, 12 reported that they are scolded and beaten up daily for giving birth to daughters. Their parents are also scolded. Another main cause of vulnerable conditions of women is liquor consumption by male members of family. In the study- village, violence related to dowry is also practiced.

Apart from the violence, dalit women in the village have to undergo other kind of sufferings. A respondent¹¹ whose husband is settled in Dubai reported that he is having extra marital affairs. He pays least attention to their children and rarely visits his home. All the burden of their family is upon her. The other two women respondents, whose husbands were settled abroad, face different problems¹². They are not allowed to talk to anybody or to go outside by their parents-in-laws. They work for longer period of time in the household.

Their life is confined to the four walls of house. One girl respondent¹³ reported that her mother had committed suicide because her father is involved with some other women. Being the older one she could not get married because of household responsibilities. Though no one reported case of sexual violence within family, there was a general perception that such cases are never publicised and are buried within four walls of households.

It is clear from above discussion that dalit women enjoy little decision-making power in their homes. The preference for male-child is also very high among them, showing how dalit women themselves become an agency of patriarchy. Though the sex ratio among dalits in the study village was higher than that of rest of population, this was due to reverse trend of reproduction of girl child for want of a

¹¹ Kulwant Kaur, 35

¹² Surinder Kaur, 29 and Ranbir Kaur, 35

¹³ Darshan Kaur, 18.

male child. Apart from these behavioural discriminations, dalit women also face domestic violence. Upward mobility of dalit men does not prove to be enabling for dalit women. Many dalit women whose men were settled abroad are living in conditions of pain and penury.

So far, we have discussed the position of dalit woman in the domestic sphere. In the subsequent sections we shall discuss their position in the political sphere.

(E) Political Empowerment and Participation

It is important to mention here that since the 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution a significant number of seats at local level of government have been reserved for dalit women. This provision has been seen as an endeavour leading to political participation as well as empowerment of dalit women.

Table- 4.9

Composition of Panchayat in Study-Village

	Upper Caste		Dalits		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Sarpanch	1	-----	-----	-----	1
Panch	2	1	1	1	5
Total	3	1	1	1	6

As is evident from Table 4.9, there is one dalit woman panch for last 3 years in the study village. On being asked whether she was ever discriminated in the panchayat meetings on the basis of gender and caste, she reported that she rarely attends the Panchayat meetings. She has never raised any issue related to women. It is her husband who participates in panchayat activities and takes decision on her behalf.

She has just a *token* presence and her access to political power does not make any difference in her life as well as lives of other dalit women.

We asked the respondents whether their issues are better dealt by dalit panchs. Almost all women respondents reported that no male or female panchayat member has raised their issues and problems. They come only during election time in a year. These women only act as vote banks. It seems that political awareness among dalit women in study-village is very low. They have never attended a meeting, rally or demonstration of any political party. They are not even familiar with names of the panch members of Village Panchayat. Though most of the respondents reported that they participated in the elections, voting decision was not their own.

TABLE 4.10
Voting Pattern Among Dalit Women in the Study-Village

VOTE		NOT VOTE	TOTAL
OWN	FAMILY		
19	23	8	50
45%	55%	16%	
42		8	
84%		16%	100%

Table 4.10 shows the percentage proportion of the voter turn out among the respondents. Out of 50 respondents, 84 percent respondents reported that they cast their votes regularly. However the percentage proportion of those who never cast their votes is 16 percent.

Table 4.10 also shows that out of 42 respondents, who cast their vote, 45 percent respondents cast their vote according to the choice of their family and only 55 percent respondents cast their vote according to their own choice. Thus majority of respondents do not decide the candidate themselves rather their family members decides on their behalf.

It is clear from above discussion that provisions of political empowerment have not enabled dalit women in the study village. Whereas in local government their men represent them, reducing their status to a mere token, their voting choice is also pre-determined by family-elders mainly men. Significantly, though few among dalit homes had both T.V. as well as other means of communication, women either do not have access to them or they would watch popular TV serials or films.

When asked that whether they watch T.V. or listen to the radio, 10 (20 percent) pointed out that as they do not have electricity facility in their houses, T.V. and radio is a big dream for them. 5 respondents (10 percent) reported that they do not have a TV set. 5 respondents (10 percent) watch T.V. serials because whole day they stay at home. 30 respondents reported that they watch T.V. very rarely only if they have free time.

II

In the previous section we have seen that gender specific exclusion and discrimination of dalit women in the study village. This sections deals with the caste-specific disabilities imposed upon them. To reiterate, the question of caste and untouchability has generally been seen to be of lesser significance in Punjab as the ideas of purity and pollution have certainly been weak here. In the following sections we shall analyse whether dalit women in the study village are discriminated against. What kind of problems makes dalit women more vulnerable on the basis of caste as compared to dalit men?

(A) Forms of Discrimination

In the postcolonial period, untouchability in any form has been abolished by the Constitution. Empirical evidences suggest that discrimination against dalits particularly in the public domain has been declined considerably. However, the recent studies show that it persists in the private domain¹⁴. We asked the respondents few questions on caste-based discrimination. The questions were whether they were denied free access to gurudwara, whether they were discriminated against in sitting arrangements or in any other form when they visit upper caste home.

Table 4.11 shows that out of 50 respondents, 18 respondents (36 percent of total sample population) said that some among the upper castes in one way or another way discriminated them against. 22 respondents (44 percent) however said that they are not discriminated against. 10 respondents (10 percent) reported that they are rarely discriminated against by upper castes.

Table-4.11
Perception on discrimination/prejudice in the study village Ramdaspur

No. Of Respondent	Discriminated Against		Not Discriminated against	Somewhat or rarely Discriminated against	Total
	Directly	Indirectly			
	18		22	10	50
	13	5	22	10	50
Total	18		22	10	50

Among 18 respondents (36 percent) who said that they are discriminated against on the basis of caste, 13 respondents (26 percent) said that they

¹⁴ Ghanshyam Shah finds that untouchability or discrimination seems to have declined considerably on the public domain but continues in the private domain. See Shah Ghanshyam (2000) 'Hope and Despair'. A study of untouchability and Atrocities in Gujrat in Journal of Indian School of Political Economy. Vol XII Nos. 304 pp459-72. Surinder Jodhka has made some observations in the context of Punjab. See Jodhka, Surinder (2002) 'Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab' in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XXXVII No. 19 May 11 PP 1813-1823.

are discriminated directly and 5 respondents (10 percent) reported that they are discriminate indirectly by upper castes. . However, Overall around 28 respondents (56 percent) agree that discrimination on the basis of caste operates directly or indirectly, regularly or rarely against dalits in the study village. .

However, the perception on caste based discrimination varied among the respondents on study village. Table 4.12 throws a light of various forms of discrimination that seem to be more frequent. It shows that discrimination against dalits in the public domain has declined considerably. Statistics shows that no one in the sample population said that they are denied free access to utensils used by upper castes and to common source of water. The main factor behind it may be that in study village, every household has its own source of water and the dalits settlements are located at a distance from upper castes localities The percentage proportion of those who said that they are discriminated against by upper castes in sitting arrangements in Jat Gurudwaras is high.

Table-4.12
Perception on Forms of Discrimination in the Sample village

S.No.	Types of forms of Discrimination	I		Total 1 + II
		Some Do	No one Does	
1	Use of different utensils	0	50	50
2	Discrimination in sitting arrangements in Gurudwaras	25	25	50
3	Discrimination in upper caste homes	0	50	50
4	Access to common source of water	0	50	50
5	Access to village chaupal or street	0	48	50
6	Discrimination against dalit children in school	3	47	50
7	Discrimination during marriage of social functions	0	50	50

Out of 50, 25 respondents (50 percent) reported that they are discriminated against in Jat Gurudwaras. They are discriminated during cooking and serving or eating langar. Some times they are make to sit in separate *Langar* lines. This may be the reason that Jats and Dalits have their own separate Gurudwaras. They reported that dalits rarely visit Jat Gurudwaras because Jats consider themselves as superior 'Zat' (caste). Respondents said that sometimes upper caste people address them as 'Chamaris'. So they rarely visit to Jat homes.

Respondents further reported that children play only with children of their own castes. Upper caste children never mix with them. 3 respondents out of 50 reported that in school Jat teachers sometime use caste names. They gave them very less attention. They say that 'if chamars' will get education, who will work as agricultural labourers in Jat fields. The upper castes never give donations or do they attend the birthday celebrations of 'Ravidas' or 'Ambedkar'.

The dalit respondents said that because dalits are economically dependent on upper castes for fulfilling their basic needs, the cases of caste discrimination are never publicised by dalits due to the fear or social as well as economic boycott. They said that though Jats do not behave like Brahmins, yet they tend to maintain distance from the lower castes. However, the respondents who said that they are not discriminated against by upper castes and share good and friendly relationships with Jat families and are always helped by them in time of need.

Table 4.13 indicates perception on discrimination according to class category of the respondents. Out of 28 respondents who said that they are discriminated against, 18 (64.2 percent) belonged to the low class, 9 (32.14 percent) belonged to the middle class and 1 (3.57 percent) to the high-class.

Table 4.13
Perception on Discrimination According to class of the Respondents

Total Population in sample	Low		Middle		High		Total	
	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not
	18	7	9	10	1	5	28	22
	25		19		6		50	

In fact, out of total low class population in the sample, 72 percent said that they are discriminated against. Among the middle class 47.3 percent said that they were discriminated against. The respective figure among the high-class respondent is 16.6 percent. Statistics point out that dalit women belonging to low class category are more vulnerable to the caste discrimination. Yet dalit women belonging to other class category may also be discriminated against. The factor behind it may be that dalit women belonging to middle and high-class category are economically sound as compared to dalit women belonging to low class category.

Table 4.14 shows perception on discrimination according to education of the respondents. Out of 28 respondents who said they are discriminated against, 89.2 percent are those whose educational level is low. The respondents whose educational status is middle are 10.7 percent. Not a single respondent whose educational level is high argue that they are discriminated against.

Table-4.14
Perception on Discrimination Accordingly to Education of the Respondents

Total population in sample	Low		Middle		High		Total	
	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not
	25	11	3	9	0	2	28	22
	36		12		2		50	

In fact, out of 36, 25 respondents (69.4 percent) whose educational level was low said they were discriminated against. The respective figure was 25 percent among the respondents belonging to educational category of middle. Not a single respondent whose educational level is high reported that they are discriminated against. Thus statistics indicate that less educated among dalits are more vulnerable to the caste discrimination.

Another variable that shows the discrimination is the occupation of the respondents. Table 4.15 shows perception on discrimination accordingly to the occupation of the respondent. Out of 14 respondents who are agricultural labourer, 10 (71.4 percent) reported that they are discriminated against by upper castes. Among 10 respondents who are involved in cattle shed cleaning as well as casual Agricultural Labour, 6 respondents (60 percent) said that some among upper castes discriminated against them. Among the cattle shed cleaner, this proportion is 71.4 percent. They reported that the upper castes discriminated against them in giving them employment, the first preference is always given to the upper caste men and women, agricultural labourers or dalit men. They are given less wages than other labourers.

Out of 4 respondents working as domestic servant reported to be discriminated against. They said that if upper caste women give them something in the form of help, they took more work from them, which is more than double price of that thing. 2 housewives out of 10 reported to be discriminated against. 1 girl student respondent reported that upper caste teachers discriminated against them in the schools. These respondents reported that if something wrong happens with dalit women, their cases are publicised but those of upper caste women are buried as soon as possible.

Table-4.15
Perception of Discrimination on the basis of occupation

Total No. Of sample Population	Agricultural labour		Agricultural/ casual & Cattle shed cleaning		Only Cattle shed cleaning		Domestic servant		Housewives		Students		Total
	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	Yes	Not	
	10	4	6	4	5	2	4	2	2	8	1	2	
	14		10		7		6		10		3		50

Thus statistic shows that respondents who are engaged in Agricultural, casual agricultural and cattle shed cleaning among dalits are more vulnerable to the caste discrimination.

(B). Caste based Atrocities against dalit women

Though no one reported of sexual abuse of dalit women by upper caste men, verbal abuse hurled upon them was not uncommon. Respondents reported that they are always afraid and insecure during their work and never indulged in conversation with men. In fact, as women they are always vulnerable to sexual assault. Their sense of insecurity seems to be augmented by two more factors i.e. a sense of powerlessness of their caste group in juxtaposition of Jat Sikhs, caste-gender-stereotypes prevalent among Upper caste men. Where as 13 respondents told that they always felt insecure in the fields, 26 respondents told that they often face verbal abuse by upper caste men as well as women.

Table-4.16
Perception on the Atrocities against dalit women

Sexual violence			Total	Verbal abuse			Total
Practice	Not	Fear		Practice	Not	Very rarely	
0	47	13	50	26	22	2	50

Out of 13 respondents who are insecure due to fear of sexual violence, 8 respondents belonged to low class status and 5 belonged to middle class status. Education-wise all 13 respondents who fear of sexual violence belonged to low educational status. Occupation-wise, out of 13, 6 respondents are agricultural labourers, 3 are involved in casual agricultural/cattle shed cleaning, 2 respondents are in cattle shed cleaning and 2 are in domestic service. Thus statistics shows that the respondents who are agricultural labourers and belonged to low class as well as low educational status are more afraid of sexual violence against them at their work place. It is because they are more exposed than those who remain at home.

Table-4.16 further shows statistics on perception of caste based verbal abuse against dalit women. Out of 50 respondents, 26 respondents reported that they are verbally abused by upper castes, 22 respondents said that they are never verbally abused, and 2 respondents said that they are sometime verbally abused by upper castes. Among them, 16 respondents are from low class, 8 from middle and 2 respondents from high class. Education-wise out of 26 respondents, 21 respondents from low educational status and 5 respondents from middle educational status. Occupation-wise, out of 26 respondents, 10 agricultural labourers, 7 involved in casual agricultural / cattle shed cleaning and 2 respondents in cattle shed cleaning, 3 respondent are domestic servants and 4 are house wives.

Dalit women in the study-village told that they are generally abused when they go to collect fodder or to answer nature's call in the fields belonging to Jats and other upper caste. Few told that they were abused during work. Following table throws a light upon this aspect.

Table-4.17

Perception on verbal Abuse among sample population

During fodder collection	Nature's call	During work
21	21	5

Table-4.17 shows that out of 26 respondents, 21 respondents stated that whenever they enter upper caste fields to collect fodder, they scold them. So they have to go in dark to collect their fodder. The dalits enter upper caste fields because they themselves have no land. Table 2.17 shows out of 26 respondents, 21 reported of abuse during respond to nature's call in upper caste fields. They are attacked with stones. The dalits have no private toilet facilities so they have to suffer a lot. 5 respondents reported that the upper caste people called the 'chamaris' during work.

Conclusion

Dalit women in the study village are victims of gender as well as caste prejudices. On one hand, as a gender category, their exclusion from education, government jobs persists and they have to share much more occupational burden on the other, as a caste category, they have to face verbal abuse and behavioural prejudice from the upper-caste. In fact, it is the interaction of caste as well as gender identities that fixes the position of dalit women.

Dalit patriarchy operates at many levels and in forms. As we have seen, dalit girls are rarely sent for higher education. While apparent reason for this is poverty and lack of interest, as one finds in the Census report, it is the gender bias and concerns informed by community pride that work against dalit girls. Many women are

married to less educated men. In fact, male child is given preference over female child. In this respect, dalits seem to be replicating dominant popular culture of Punjab that celebrates the birth of son. Though it is often pointed out that dalit families are more liberal and power sharing between males and females is more balanced in dalit homes, our findings in the study village suggest to contrary.

Not only dalit women do not enjoy decision-making power in household activities, there is a sexual division of labour, occupational burden and leisure time. As there is sexual division of wages in the village, dalit women are always paid less than their counterpart men. It is interesting to note that some among that upward mobility of dalit men does not necessarily enable dalit women. Dalit women whose men were in the government services remained confined to household only. Though they enjoyed material security and ease was relatively better than others, their life was controlled as upper caste women.

On the other hand, the upper caste men and women subject dalit women who go out for the labour to verbal abuse and derogatory remarks. Though there was no report of sexual abuse in the study village, some dalit women told that they never felt secure. The condition of those dalit women whose men have migrated abroad is not better either. Even the opening up of political space by state through constitutional provisions seem not have made any change in their lives. Though dalit women get elected into village panchayat, they remain mere token as their man utilises their authority.

Thus, our study of Ramdaspur village in Punjab shows that interface of caste and gender work together in a complex manner in conditioning the position of dalit women.

CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to probe the intercourse of gender and caste identities in the context of Punjab. Based on a locale specific empirical work in the Ramdaspur village in Hoshiarpur district, as well as survey of primary and secondary sources, we sought to explore how the position of dalit women has been conditioned by traffic between patriarchy, caste and class identities. Using age, class, education and occupation of the respondents as dependent variables, we have also attempted to understand how dalit women have been excluded in different walks of life.

Dalit feminists have underlined the need to take up the case of dalit women differently. It is believed that the category of 'woman' is not universal, as it is intersected by various kinds of hierarchies. Different identities conditioned by different power structures like caste, class etc. go in the making of gender identities. Dalit women, for instance, are triply oppressed as besides the patriarchy, the structures of caste and class operate to exclude them in both public as well as private spheres.

In our study, we have found that the position of dalit women seems to be conditioned by a complex web of interaction between patriarchy, caste as well as class structures. However, our findings also suggest that operation of these power structures vary within dalit women depending upon their location in various hierarchies. Not only are there marked differences in terms of gender indicators between dalit women in Punjab and their counterparts in other northern states in India, but also within the study village the experiences of dalit women seem to vary. Yet, in

comparison to dalit men as well as general women, dalit women lag behind in every sphere of life.

Our study highlights that despite the gender indicators in Punjab being better than many of north Indian states, women's position is that of powerlessness with all sorts of control operating upon them, determined primarily by the patriarchal cultural ethos that have further been strengthened by various social reform movements as well as the economic development. Though the reform movements like Singh Sabha and Arya Samaj took up some symbolic steps to improve women's condition and stressed egalitarian philosophy of casteless society, they underlined the control over sexuality and reproductivity of women and reproduced caste hierarchies and sharpened caste identities.

Significantly, a section among dalits, particularly Ad-dharmis, has been benefited both by the colonial modernity as well as the affirmative policies of the state and overall democratization in the postcolonial period. This section has been very assertive and mobile in Punjab since the colonial period. Though not insignificant, this constitutes a small minority. Moreover, in spite of this change, dalit women continue to face exclusion and discrimination.

The present study shows that as a gendered category, dalit women in the study village, not only face exclusion from education, government jobs but also share much more occupational burden. This exclusion as well as deprivation of dalit women varies according to their class and occupation status. The respondents having low class and education status are more vulnerable. Though it is often pointed out that dalit families are more liberal and power sharing between males and females is more balanced in dalit homes, our findings in the study village suggest to contrary.

The present study shows that dalits seem to be replicating dominant popular culture of Punjab that celebrates birth of son. The reverse trend of giving birth to more daughters reflects the desire for having the male child. Owing to failure of reproducing the son to carry on the patrilineage, the dalit women has to face the domestic violence in the form of beating, verbal abuses and discrimination in the household.

Our study point towards the relative powerlessness of dalit women in the family decision-making. The elder family members i.e. mostly men take decisions on their behalf. With regard to education, like the upper castes, in dalit families it is son, and not daughter, who gets higher education and are encouraged to seek salaried jobs. When it is a choice between spending family resources on a daughter or a son, the money is spent on the son. Significantly, this is the case even if the daughter shares the burden of household responsibility more than the son.

In addition to this, the present study shows the blend of gender and caste identities in the field of economic employment, which render dalit women the most marginalised section of the Punjab agrarian society. The introduction of new agrarian technology and success of green revolution that transformed the traditional structure of dependency and patronage between the labourers and employers has not changed the pattern of treating dalit women as marginal workers.

On the contrary, the green revolution has affected dalit agricultural labour unfavourably. On one hand, the female participation in the agricultural economy has decreased, on the other women have remained within their traditional jobs and better jobs have gone to men. Majority of dalit female agricultural labourers in the study village are engaged in unskilled labour such as sowing, transplanting, weeding, levelling and harvesting etc. Even the principal of equal pay for equal work

is not equally adhered to, in the fixation of wage rates for male and female agricultural labourers. Irrespective of the nature of the work and the number of working hours, women are paid lesser than men.

Furthermore, the growing participation of migrant labour, mostly male, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, particularly, during peak seasons, has also played its role in reducing the seasonal demand for local dalit women labourers. Therefore, majority of dalit women in the study village are engaged in the casual agricultural labour, domestic services and the cattle shed cleaning. It is striking that mostly dalit women perform these works. Jat and other upper caste women rarely ever take these jobs perhaps because of their 'polluting' nature.

This points towards the persistence of gender hierarchies as well as the subtle division of purity – pollution among the villagers, including the dalit community, which renders a relatively low status to dalit women in comparison to their male counter parts. Thus the sexual as well as caste division of labour operates in the village.

The present study also highlight an important fact of the devaluation of productive labour of the dalit women in upwardly mobile modernising dalit groups. The interface of gender and caste leads to the imposing control over the sexuality of women in these homes. Within these economically better off families the status of women falls even when it rises for their husbands. In other words, when dalit families improve their economic status, various kinds of controls are imposed on the dalit women as in the case of upper caste women.

The withdrawal of dalit women from agricultural productive labour, even though it is hard and backbreaking, takes away their source of independent income. Even the condition of those dalit women whose men have migrated abroad is

not better either. On one hand, they are ignored by their husbands and on the other, they are confined within the four walls of the household and made to perform the household activities for the longer period.

The present study suggests that though the forces of modernity, electoral democracy, have partially facilitated the upliftment of dalits, the opening up of political space by state through constitutional provisions seems not to have made any change in their lives. Even the provisions of political empowerment have not enabled dalit women in the study village. At the level of local self-government, when a dalit woman gets elected as a *panch* or *sarpanch*, it is her man who usurps her authority, reducing her status to mere a token. Even their voting choice is also pre-determined by family-elders mainly men.

Furthermore, though the question of caste and untouchability has generally been seen to be of lesser significance in Punjab as the ideas of purity and pollution have certainly been weak here, the present study demonstrates the fact that dalit women in the study village are victims of gender as well as caste prejudices in one or the other way. As a caste category, they have to face verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and behavioural prejudice from the upper-caste. Though there was no report of sexual abuse in the study village, some dalit women told that they never felt secure while working in Jats' fields.

Generally, the character of dalit women is taken for granted. There are of course very less reported cases of sexual abuses against dalit women, yet studies do point of existence of a large number of "consented rapes". They are also humiliated when they go to collect fodder or to answer nature's call in the fields belonging to Jats and other upper caste. Apart from this, the Gurudwarwa and the educational

institutions are the important sites where the dalit women have to face the caste prejudices.

This study makes a modest attempt to show the manner in which the interface of gender as well as the caste identities works against the dalit women in Punjab. Following from our analysis above and in the previous chapters, we can conclude that though dalit women fare better in terms of gender indicators in comparison to their counterparts in many north Indian states, they lag behind both dalit men as well as general women. It seems that the claim by dalit feminists that the position of dalit women is fixed by multiple structures of gender, caste and class is valid. However, it also seems that the category of dalit woman is not homogenous one.

Nevertheless, we recognize limitations of our expertise as well as experience. Perhaps a more rigorous and wide study is needed to understand the impact of the interaction of gender and caste on the lives of dalit women in Punjab, which has not been touched upon in the present study.

Appendix- I

	Name of the Respondents	Age	Date of Interview
1	Gurbax Kaur	39	8 March, 2003
2	Jai Kaur	55	8 March, 2003
3	Gurmeet Kaur	30	8 March, 2003
4	Satnam Kaur	45	8 March, 2003
5	Bimla Devi	39	8 March, 2003
6	Harbans Kaur	55	9March, 2003
7	Surjit Kaur	32	9March, 2003
8	Gurbax Kaur	40	9March, 2003
9	Satwinder Kaur	22	9March, 2003
10	Chaman Kaur	50	9March, 2003
11	Ranjit Kaur	48	10March, 2003
12	Kaushaliya Devi	39	10March, 2003
13	Ram Piari	56	10March, 2003
14	Kulwant Kaur	35	10March, 2003
15	Nirmal Kaur	43	10March, 2003
16	Daljit Kaur	29	11March, 2003
17	Tarsem Kaur	40	11March, 2003
18	Kartar Kaur	50	11March, 2003
19	Bimal Kaur	40	11March, 2003
20	Ranjit Kaur	40	11March, 2003
21	Balwinder Kaur	35	12March, 2003
22	Seema Rani	24	12March, 2003
23	Ravinder Kaur	19	12March, 2003
24	Paramjit Kaur	30	12March, 2003
25	Hardeep Kaur	29	12March, 2003
26	Balraj Kaur	32	13March, 2003
27	Inderjit Kaur	23	13March, 2003
28	Kamla Rani	35	13March, 2003
29	Jaswant Kaur	22	13March, 2003
30	Vimaljit Kaur	35	13March, 2003
31	Meena Rani	20	14March, 2003
32	Sheela Devi	45	14March, 2003

	Name of the Respondents	Age	Date of Interview
33	Piari Devi	38	14March, 2003
34	Satwant Kaur	27	14March, 2003
35	Amarjit Kaur	25	14March, 2003
36	Kaushiliya Devi	35	15March, 2003
37	Gurmeet Kaur	27	15March, 2003
38	Jatinder Kaur	45	15March, 2003
39	Kishan Kaur	25	15March, 2003
40	Jaswinder Kaur	35	15March, 2003
41	Radha Rani	50	16March, 2003
42	Surinder Kaur	29	16March, 2003
43	Ranbir Kaur	35	16March, 2003
44	Amarjit Kaur	40	16March, 2003
45	Darshan Kaur	18	16March, 2003
46	Shakuntla Devi	19	17March, 2003
47	Charanjit kaur	35	17March, 2003
48	Anita Rani	48	17March, 2003
49	Tej Kaur	33	17March, 2003
50	Sawarn Kaur	38	17March, 2003

Appendix-II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background Data:

1. Name -
2. Age -
3. Sex -
4. Religion -
5. Caste/Sub Caste -
6. Level of Education-
 - a) Illiterate
 - b) Literate but no Formal Education
 - c) Primary
 - d) Middle School
 - e) High School
 - f) College but no Degree
 - g) College Degree and Above
7. Marital Status:
 - a) Married
 - b) Unmarried
 - c) Widow
 - d) Separated
 - e) Remarried
8. Number of Children:
 - a) Daughter
 - b) Son
9. Type of Family:
 - a) Nuclear
 - b) Joint

c) Extended

10. Occupation of Husband/Wife/Father/Mother
11. Family Income:
12. Total Land Owned:
 - a) No Land
 - b)-----Acres
13. Own a House or not:
14. Type of Residential Accommodation:
15. Own Cattle or Not:
16. Head of the Household (Relation to the Respondent):

FAMILY:

- 1) Do you have any decision making power in the family?
- 2) Have you ever gone for pre- natal Pregnancy test?
- 3) What is your preference in regard to child and why?
- 4) Have you ever experienced any kind of domestic violence?
Explain.
- 5) Do you listen to Radio or watch T.V or Both?
- 6) If Yes which programme you like most:
 - Political
 - Social
 - Entertainment
 - Commercial
 - Religious

Work:

- 1) Do you contribute to family income? Yes/No.
- 2) What kind of work do you do?
*Agricultural labour

*Agricultural casual labour and Cattle shed cleaning both

*Cattle shed cleaning

*Student

*Housewife

*Domestic Servant

- 3) How many hours you work everyday?
- 4) How many working days available in a year or in which season you get more work?
- 5) Have you ever experienced sexual violence at workplace?

Social Relation:

- 1) Do you think dalits are discriminated against in this village?
- 2) Which of the following happens in your village?
 - Dalits are not allowed to fetch water from the common source of water.
 - Dalits do not have access to the village chaupal etc.
 - Dalits are denied free access to religious places.
 - Dalits are discriminated in any other way .If yes explain.
- 3) From where do you get cattle fodder?
 - From fields of your own caste people.
 - From the fields of upper caste people.
 - Any other source.
- 4) If you need money where do you borrow it from?
 - Farmers/Landoeners
 - Shopkeepers/Banias
 - Relatives/Friends
 - Bank
 - Do not need loan

Electoral Participation and Mobilisation:

- 1) Is there any women /dalit organization in your village?
 - 2) Do you participate in the elections?
 - Vote only
 - Attend rally or meeting also
 - Member of a Political Party.
 - 3) Do you vote according to your own or your family's choice?
 - 4) Do you think dalit women Sarpanch or Panch do more work for women and particularly dalit women specific problems than their male counter parts?
 - 5) Do you feel that there is suitable environment for free working with respect of the male counter parts?
-

BIBILIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Census of India. 1911. Punjab. Vol.XIV. Part I. Civil and Military Gazette Press.
Lahore.

Census of India. 1931. Punjab. Vol.XVII. Part I. Civil and Military Gazette Press.
Lahore.

Census of India. 1991. Population Projection. Series I.

Statistical Abstract of Punjab. 1999 -2000. Economic and Statistical Organisation.
Planning Department. Government of Punjab.

Unpublished Dissertations:

Bindu [2000] *Women in Politics: A Study of Political Elite in Chandigarh.*
M.Phil. Dissertation submitted to Department of political science.
Punjab University. Chandigarh.

Dhar, Murali [2002] *Identity Formation and Political Consciousness among
Dalits of Haryana.* M.Phil. Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal
Nehru University. New Delhi.

Vaisishta, Bindu [1981] *Caste, Class and Politics in Haryana Village.* M.Phil.
Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University. New
Delhi.

Books and Articles:

Bhasin, kamla [1993] *What is Patriarchy.* New Delhi: Kali for women.

Chakravati, Uma [1993] "Conceptualizing Brahminical Patriarchy in Early India:
Gender, Caste, Class and State in *Economic and Political Weekly*"
Vol.XXVIII. No. 16. pp.579-585.

- Chandrika Parmar** [1997] "Fact File 1952-1997" in *Seminar*. No. 457. pp.50-52.
- Chatterjee,P** [1990] "The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question" in S. Vaid and K.Sangari (eds): *Recasting Women*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. pp. 233-253.
- Datar, C** [1999] "New Brahminical Renderings of Feminism in Maharashtra: is it a more Emancipatory Force?" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.XXXIV.No.41.Oct 9.pp.2964-2968.
- D'Souza, Victor. S** [1977]"Does Urbanization Desegregate Scheduled Castes? Evidence from a district in Punjab" in *Contribution to Indian Sociology* (NS). Vol.11, No.1.pp.219-239.
- Dube, Leela** [1997] "Caste and Women" in N. Srinivas (ed) *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India. Pp.1-27.
- [2001] *Anthropological Explorations in Gender*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Freeman, James.M**[1993] *Untouchable: An Indian Life History*. New Delhi: Indus.
- Gandhi.N and N.Shah** [1991] *The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Women's Movement in India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Ganesh, kamala** [1989] "Seclusion of women and the structure of Caste" in M. Krishanaraj and K.Channa (eds) *Gender and the Household Domain: Social and Cultural Dimensions*. New Delhi: Sage. pp.75-95.
- Gill, Sucha Singh** [2001] *Land Reforms in India: Intervention for Agrarian Capitalist Transformation in Punjab and Haryana*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Guru,Gopal** [1995] "Dalit Women Talk Differently" in *Economic and Political Weekly*.Vol.29. No.32. Oct 14-21. pp.2548-2550.
- Gupta, Charu** [2001] *Sexuality, Obscenity, community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

- Ilaiah, Kancha** [1996] *Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*. Calcutta: Samya.
- Jeffery, P and R. Jeffery** [1996] *Don't Mary Me To A Plowman! : Women's Everyday Lives in Rural North India*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
- Jhurani, Kamlesh** [1985] *Women, Participation and Development: A Case Study from Rural Punjab*. New Delhi: CWDS.
- Jodhaka, Surinder.S** [1999] "Return of the middle Class" in *Seminar*. No.496. pp. 21-26.
- _____ [2000] "Prejudice without Pollution? Scheduled Castes in Contemporary Punjab" in *the Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*. Vol.12. No.384. July-Dec. pp.381-403.
- _____ [2002] "Caste and Untouchability in rural Punjab" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.XXXVII. No.19.May11. pp.1813-1823.
- Jondhale, Surendra** [1995] "Theoretical Underpinning of Emancipation of Dalit Women" in P.G. Jogdand (ed) *Dalit women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi; Gyan Publishing House. pp.105-114.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark** [1998] *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
- Kapadia, Karin** [1995] *Siva and Her Siva: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India*. Boulder: West view.
- Kannibaran, V and Kannibaran, K** [1991] "Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence." in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.XXVI. No.37. Sept 14. pp. 2130-2133.
- Kaur, Ravinder and Amrit Srinivasan** [1999] "The Better Half" in *Seminar*. April. No. 476. p 26-32.

- Kishwar.M and R. Vanita** [1991] *In Search of Answers*. New Delhi: Horizon India Books.
- Kumar, Radha** [1993] *A History of Doing: An illustrated History of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Liddle, J & R. Joshi** [1986] *Daughter of Independence: Gender and Caste in India*. New Delhi: kali for Women.
- Lingam, Lakshmi** [2000] "Taking Stock: Women's Movement and the State" in Ghanshayam Shah (ed) *Social Movements and the State (Readings in Indian Government and Politics-4)*. New Delhi/ Thousand Oaks/ London: Sage Publications. pp.310-334.
- Malhotra Anshu** [2000] *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities: Restructuring Of Class in Colonial Period*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Mathew, George** [2003] "Panchayati Raj institutions and Human Rights in India" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXXVIII. No.2. Jan.11-17. pp.155-162.
- M.Billing and Arjun Singh** [1970] "Mechanization and the Wheat Revolution: Effects on Female Labour in Punjab" in *Economic and Political Weekly. Review of Agriculture*. Vol.V. No.52. December 26. pp.A-169-174.
- Mendelson and Vicziany** [1998] *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and State in Modern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Omvedt Gail** [1977] "Caste, class and Women's Liberation in India" in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*. Vol.7. No.1.Jan-March. pp. 43-48.
- Pai, Sudha** [2000] "Changing Socio-Economic and Political Profile of Scheduled Cates in UP" in *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*. Vol.12.No.3and4. July-December. pp. 405-422.
- Pappu, Rekha** [2001] "A Question of Identity" in *Seminar*. No.505.Sept. pp. 60-70.

- Pettigrew, Joyce** [1991] "Jats of Punjab" in Dipankar Gupta (ed) *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp.167-78.
- Pimpley, P.N. and S.K. Sharma** [1985] "Arya Samaj and the Untouchables in Punjab" in *Punjab Journal of Politics*. Vol. No. pp.77-91.
- Pimpley, P. Nand S.K. Sharma** [1985] "De-Sanskritisation of Untouchables: Arya Samaj Movement in Punjab" in P.N. Pimpley and S.K. Sharma (eds) *Struggle for Status*. New Delhi: B.K. Publishing Corporation. Pp. 99-112.
- Rege, S** [1995] "Caste and Gender: The Violence against Women in India" in P.G. Jogdand (ed) *Dalit Women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. 18-35.
- _____ [1995] Dalit women Talk Differently: a critique of Difference and Towards a dalit Feminist Stand Point Position in Economic and Political Weekly. Oct. pp. ws39-46.
- [1998] "A Dalit Feminist Standpoint" in *Seminar*. No.471. Nov. pp 47-52.
- [2000] "Real Feminism and Dalit Women: Script of Denial and Accusation" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXXV. No.6. pp.492-495.
- Roy, Anupama** [2001] "Community, Women Citizens and Women's Politics" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXXVI. pp. 1441-1447.
- Rustagi, Preet** [2000] "Identifying Gender Backward Districts Using Selected Indicators" in *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXXV. pp 4276- 4285.
- Sangari, Kumkum and S. Vaid** [1989] (eds) *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Sekhon, Harinder Kaur** [1999] 'Women in Sikhism'. *Seminar*. April 476. p.33-36.

- Sharma, Harish. C** [1996] *Artisans of the Punjab: A study of Social Change in Historical Perspective (1849-1947)*. New Delhi: Manorma Publishers.
- Sharma, Satish. K** [2000] "Arya Samaj Movement in Punjab" in Harish. K. Puri and P.S. Judge (eds) *Social and Political Movements: Readings on Punjab*. Jaipur and Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Singh, Jodh** [2000] *Outlines of Sikh Philosophy*. Patiala: Sikh Heritage Publications.
- Singh, K.P** [2001] "Women, Work and Inequality: A Case Study of Punjab" in Abha Avasthi and A.K. Srivastva (ed.) *Modernity Feminism and Women Empowerment*. Jaipur and New Delhi, Rawat Publications. pp.182-195.
- Srinivas, M.N** [1996] (ed.) *Castè: Its Twentieth Century Avata*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Verma, Archana. B** [2002] *The Making of Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Throat, Vimal** [2001] "Dalit women has been left behind by the Dalit Movement and the Women's movement" in *Communalism Combat* No. 69. May. 12.
- Viramma, Josiane Racine and Jean Luc Racine** [2001] *Virrama: Life of an Untouchable*. Translated by Will Hobson. (UNESCO publishing, Paris). London: verso.
- Viswanath, Leela** [1993] *Social Mobility among Scheduled Caste women in India*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishers.
- Walby, S** [1990] *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford. Basil Blackwell.

