

CHAPTER – 7

CONCLUSION

One can see that district Jalandhar has undergone a transition in the 20th century. The colonial struggle has awakened the Dalit of the region who first launched a vigorous campaign not only against the colonial masters but also against the dominant castes. The Dalit assertion, however, was not matched equally by the Dalit women assertion. In most of the first seven decades of the 20th century, the Dalit women remained marginalized. They were suffering dual oppression; first owing to their caste and secondly due to their gender. However, one can discern some consciousness of their right in the last quarter of the twentieth century when the Dalit women founded their *Mahila Mandals*. The religious symbols of Dalit movement are closely aligned with religious icons which influenced the singing of the *bhajans* of these *Mandals* where castes and gender oppression were discarded in favour of devotion and *Bhakti* that was considered superior to any other identity. At the same time, Dalit identity is used not as degradation but as a significant spiritual elevation of the true inhabitants of the region. The *Mandals* gave voices to the Dalit women. With the rise of the 21st century, the presence of the Dalit women in various political and social spheres can be witnessed with a marked increase. The entrance of young women with their reclaimed identity through the ideologies of religious and political icons made them a force to reckon in the region.

The government has also introduced various schemes to alleviate the problems of the Dalit. Some of the significant policies which have tremendously helped the Dalit women of Jalandhar are as follow:

- a) **Five Year Plans:** Five Year Plans are made to make the Indian economy strong. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) includes welfare schemes for women. Under this plan, Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established in 1953 to deal with the problems of women which later on realized the need for organizing women into *Mahila Mandals* as an approach to community development. In the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) the main focus was on intensive agricultural development. But the welfare approach to women's issues was determined to recognize women as workers. It also tried to provide the women protection against injuries at the workplace, maternity benefits and even crèches for their children. The most significant suggestion

made under this plan was to implement the principle of equal pay for equal work and provision for training to enable women to compete for higher jobs. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) made an effort to provide education facilities for women which have been a major welfare strategy for women. This plan allocated the largest share for expanding social welfare services and condensed courses of education. Such a sincere approach for women education was continued during the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974). It tried to promote women's welfare as the base of operation. The outlay on family planning was stepped up to reduce the birth rate through education. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979) stressed upon the need for training women in respect of income generating activities and their protection. This plan also emphasized on providing more avenues for education to women to equip them with the skills and knowledge to perform the functions as good housewives too. This Plan was happened to be in the decade of International Women's decade and a Report of Committee on the status of women in India (CSWI) was also submitted. This report referred to the dynamics of social change and development that have adversely affected a large section of women and had created new imbalances and disparities. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985) included women development as one of the developmental sectors and included a separate chapter for women and development. It also endorsed the need for economic independence educational advance and access to health care and family planning for women's development. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985- 1990) was initiated to generate awareness among women about their rights and privileges. In this plan, an effort was made to enhance the social and economic status of women in order to bring them into the mainstream of national development and recognized their importance in contributing to various social, economic, cultural and political activities. Under this plan, new avenues of work were opened for women to perceive them as a crucial resource for the development of the country. A new scheme with the name of 'Women's Development Corporation' was taken up under this plan for promoting employment generating activities by supporting schemes for women's group and women from poorer sections of society. A cell was also set up for women's development planning and monitoring to collect data for better implementation of policies. Many new programmes

were initiated to extend direct benefits to women. In the course of this plan, the Indian Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education 1986 which included separate chapters on Education for Women's Equality and Education of SC/ST and other Backward Sections. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) made an extra effort to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors did not bypass women and some special programmes were initiated to complement the general programmes. This Plan aimed to extend the reach of services to women both qualitatively and quantitatively. Now Panchayati Raj institutions are involved in the designing and implementation of women's programmes. This made a definite shift from development to the empowerment of women as we may see a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the time of the eighth five-year plan. It was just Rs. 4 Crores in the First Five Year Plan which had gone up to Rs. 2000 Crores in the Eighth Five Year Plan. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) added an approach paper which included special stress on the empowerment of women and people's participation in planning and implementation of strategies. In this plan, the empowerment of women means choices for women and opportunities to avail these choices. The government tried to provide a supportive environment to women at all stages at home, school, religion and even at the workplace. The women were facing problems like feminization of poverty, inadequate investment in social sectors, increasing violence against women and stereotyped portrayal of women in private and state media especially television. The special efforts were made on involving women in policymaking. Increasing this move further, 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 ensured reservation of 1/3 of seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies, in rural and urban areas. Such efforts made a strong passage for women empowerment in India. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) aimed at empowering women through translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women into action. All the measures were taken to guarantee women's equal access to all the facilities and full participation in decision making institutions at all the levels even at legislative, executive, judicial, statutory bodies etc. During this plan, women-friendly policies were drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)

aimed to raise the female sex ratio. It had the vision to eradicate the multifaceted exclusions and discriminations faced by the women. In this plan, first time, the women were recognized not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth. It tried to ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels and to strengthen existing institutional mechanism and create new ones for gender mainstreaming and effective policy implementation. The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) aimed to empower women in all the spheres of life. This plan is focused on women's economic empowerment, social and physical infrastructure, participation in governance and engendering national policies. The strategies for inclusion of vulnerable women such as those belonging to the Dalit, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, differently abled, migrant and trafficked women have been identified in this plan.

- b) **The National Perspective Plan for Women** was brought out by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources Development. In this plan, special attention was paid towards the women in the rural area who suffers from double discrimination. The provisions required to be addressed under this plan were education, employment, a special women's cell in every ministry and government department, social consciousness in the country, strategic change in national media, to review and strengthen law drafting technologies and enforcement mechanism to provide equality and justice for women, to secure the participation of women in the decision-making process at National, State, and Local levels, and also to provide 33% reservation for women at Panchayat and at the district level.
- c) **The National Commission for Women (NCW)** was constituted on January 31, 1992, under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to encourage and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of women. The major activities of this Commission are, investigation, examination, and review of all the matters related to safeguards provided to them under the Indian Constitution; review of the implementation of women-specific and women related legislation and to suggest suitable amendments wherever needed; keeping surveillance and facilitating redress of grievances of women and many more.

- d) **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)** aims to bring forth socio-economic policies for the welfare of women to enable them to realize their full potential. It worked to ensure all accessibility to women in terms of education, health, and career. It also rocks to provide a legal safeguard to women in distress.
- e) **Central Social Welfare Board (1953)** was founded with an objective to channelize the government resources to some voluntary organization at grassroots and also to function as a mediator between the government and voluntary sector to use dynamic skills of this sector. Later on, State Social Welfare Boards were also founded in 1954 to mobilize and monitor the programmes funded by the central government through the Central Social Welfare Board.
- f) **Short Stay Home for Women and Girls (1969)** was launched to protect and rehabilitate those women and girls who were facing social and moral insecurity due to family problems, mental stress, exploitation or some other causes.
- g) **Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas: (1982)** was aimed to improve the socio-economic status of poor women and their children in rural areas through creating some groups of women for income generating activities on a self-sustaining basis.
- h) **Swawlamban (1982-83)** was funded with an objective to provide training and skills to women to facilitate them to obtain employment or self-employment on a sustained basis. The target groups under this scheme were the poor and needy women and women of the weaker social section such as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. In order to ensure more effective implementation and for better evaluation, this scheme was later on transferred to the State governments on 1st April 2006 by Planning Commission.
- i) **Support to Training and Employment Programme (1986-87)** was aimed to provide skills to the women to help them to become self-employed entrepreneurs. The women beneficiaries are organized into viable and cohesive groups. They were provided the services like health care, elementary education, crèche facility and market linkages with access to credit.
- j) **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1993)** extends microcredit to the women in the informal sector through a client-friendly manner and even without collateral

and in a very simple manner for income generation activities. The significant objective of this organization was to initiate activities for the promotion of credit as an instrument of socio-economic change and development for the important organizations working for the upliftment of the women.

- k) **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (1995)** was aimed to give financial assistance of Rs. 400 per month to all the identified pensioners who are widows of the age group of 40 years to 64 years and from the below poverty line families.
- l) **Swa Shakti (1999)** was aimed to bring out socio-economic development and empowerment of women through the promotion of women Self Help Groups, micro-credits, and income-generating activities.
- m) **Swayamsiddha (2001)** was an integrated woman empowerment programme initiated by merging *Mahila Samriddhi Yojna* and even recasting *Indira Mahila Yojna*. This scheme had been able to provide a platform for the women empowerment, united action, and collective reflection. This scheme was culminated in March 2007.
- n) **Janani Suraksha Yojna (2005)** was started under the umbrella of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and started to modify the existing national Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) which was linked to provide a better diet for pregnant women from Below Poverty Line families. *Janani Suraksha Yojna* integrates the fiscal assistance with special overall care during the pregnancy period, institutional care during delivery and the immediate postpartum period in a health center by establishing system while specific care by Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA).
- o) **Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan (2007 and was revised in 2010)** traced the background of this scheme. The provision of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, for the reservation of seats for women in all the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, was a revolutionary change.
- p) **Mother and Child Tracking System (2009)** ensured that all mothers and their children had access to a range of services which include care during pregnancy, medical care during delivery and even immunizations. This system consisted of a database of all pregnancies registered at health care facilities since December 2009.

- q) **Kanya Jagriti Jyoti Scheme (1996)** was a scheme launched by the government of Punjab which is admissible to the girl child born in below poverty line (BPL) family. In this scheme five hundred units of LIC worth Rs. 5000/- are purchased and at the age of 6 years, the child starts getting a scholarship of Rs. 1200/- per annum up-to the age of 12 years, which will be increased to Rs. 2400/- per annum up-to the age of 18/21 years.
- r) **Balri Raksha Yojna (2005)** was a scheme launched by the Punjab Government under the supervision of the Health and Family Welfare department. This scheme was provided to those couples who were with the age of not more than 45 years of age for male and 40 years for a female.
- s) **Bebe Nanaki Ladli Beti Kalyan Scheme (2011-12)** was launched with an objective to improve the sex ratio in the state and to curb the female feticide and also to provide better education to the girl. In this scheme, the girls born after January 1, 2011, were eligible. The parents of the girl should be a permanent resident of Punjab state.
- t) **Mahila Jagriti Yojna (1999)** was to empower and uplift the status of women to make them economically independent. The main objective of this scheme was to strengthen the position of women in socio-economic sphere and also to spread awareness about the schemes implemented by the different departments for the welfare and development of women and to help them to increase their family income through finance generating activities.
- u) **Mai Bhago Istri Shakti Scheme** was initiated to strengthen the women in rural Punjab in the individual capacity or clusters or groups. The main aim of the scheme is to give strength to the activities of the women through training at convenient places without any big problem and also to provide them with easy credit and assistance.
- v) **Shagun Scheme (1997)** was launched to provide financial help of Rs. 5100/- to the girls of Scheduled Castes at the time of their marriage. This scheme was launched for those families whose annual income was not more than Rs. 16000/- but later on this scheme was also extended to the girls of Christian families. In 2004, the name of this *Shagun* scheme was changed to *Aashirwaad* scheme. Now the amount was also increased to Rs. 6100/- and in 2006 the amount was raised to 15000/-. In 2007, the limit of annual income of the family was also increased to 27500/- on personal affidavit only.

- w) **Sabla(2010)** has been formulated to address the multi-dimensional problems of Adolescent Girls all across the country. It was launched in 200 districts all over the country in 2010. In Punjab, six districts are selected which are Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Mansa, Patiala, Gurdaspur, and Faridkot. It was a substitute to the *Kishori Shakti Yojna* and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls in these districts however in all other districts *Kishori Shakti Yojna* and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls continued as such. The objectives of this scheme are to enable self-development and empowerment of Adolescent Girls; to upgrade their home-based skills, life skills and vocational skills; mainstream out-of-school Adolescent Girls into formal/non formal education; improve their nutrition and health status; inform and guide them about the existing public service; and spread awareness among them about health, hygiene, nutrition, family, and child care.
- x) **Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students** is sponsored by the Central Government to provide educational facilities to the people belonged to Scheduled Castes. The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to the students of Scheduled Castes to enable them to attain education after Matriculation.
- y) **Special Grant to Scheduled Castes Girl Students studying in Post Matric and Post Graduate Classes (1980-81)** was started to provide financial assistance for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes girls continuing their studies in post-matric and post-graduate level. The Scheduled Caste girls were considered eligible under this scheme whose parents' family income does not exceed Rs. 60965/- per annum.
- z) **Encouragement Awards to Scheduled Caste Girl students for pursuing 10+2 Education (2007-08)** was started to check high dropout rate among the Scheduled Caste girl students. Under this scheme, each Scheduled Caste girl student of class 11th and 12th was given an amount of Rs. 3000/- every year. This scheme was applicable to the wards of non-taxpayer families.
- aa) **Scholarship of Top Class Education for Scheduled Caste Students (2007)** was launched in June 2007 and was revised in January 2012 to promote qualitative educational facilities for Scheduled Caste students while providing them complete financial support to pursue the study beyond 12th class. Initially, 1250 slots are to be granted scholarships every year at 175 notified

institutions of excellence spread all over the country including IITs, IIMs, and NITs. The scholarship once awarded continues till the completion of the course, subject to the satisfactory performance.

- bb) Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship** is specially formulated by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment for candidates of Scheduled Castes to pursue higher studies such as regular and fulltime M. Phil and Ph. D courses in humanities, sciences, engineering & technology and social sciences. Rs. 2000 annually are provided under this scheme. The implementing agency of this scheme is the University Grants Commission.
- cc) Scheme for Construction and running of Girls Hostel for students of Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools (2009-10)** was set to help 14-18 years aged girls of class 9th to 12th belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Minority communities.
- dd) Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna (2008)** was launched by the Central Government to provide Hostels to Scheduled Castes Girls and Boys under Third Five Year Plan. It was initiated to provide hostels to the Scheduled Caste Students as a mean to enable and encourage them to attain a quality education. The preference was to be given to integrated hostels over the standalone hostels. In the case of the girl hostels, the preference was given to the areas with low female literacy rate. Such a hostel was supposed to be constructed within a radius of 200 meters in the close vicinity of the educational institution.

The educated women, from all the religious backgrounds, started establishing their new organizations and associations for the women emancipation. Such organizations made the women of Punjab to come forward to participate in public life and the freedom struggle for India. It increased the public participation of the women. In 1927, All India Women's Conference organized its first session at Poona in which the women from Punjab also participated. This participation of Punjabi women was so much significant that one session of this conference was held at Lahore in 1931. The significant Punjabi participants of the conference were Rajkumari Amrit Kaur of Kapurthala, Lady Abdul Qadir of Lahore and Sarla Devi Chaudharani. The All India Women Conference not only encouraged the women of Punjab to work for social reforms but it also trained them to participate in the national movement. Smt. Lekhawati Jain was the first elected lady member of the Punjab Legislative Council.

After independence, the women in Punjab remained participatory in formal politics. The first election of Legislative Assembly in Punjab took place in 1952. In this election, there were 8 constituencies in district Jalandhar with three dual seats and the total number of seats was 11 in the district. Only one women candidate contested in this election from Jalandhar district and won the election as a candidate of Indian National Congress. In 1985 and 2002 one woman each was successful in the legislative assembly. No woman candidate has ever won any parliamentary election from Jalandhar since 1952. The political and religious survey of the region presented a very complex picture. The Dalit movement, despite being assertive has never shifted into electorate success for the Dalit women in district Jalandhar. No doubt, one can witness increased participation of women in various local *Deras* yet the headship of the same remains in the hands of men.

The religious participation has also resulted in the cultural assertion in the socio-cultural influx of Jalandhar. Socio-cultural symbols play an important role in redefining the identity of any community. In conflict with the dominant Jat community of Punjab, the Dalit singers of the region have redefined upper caste assertion while claiming the brave nature of the Dalit. The new generation of the Dalit singers thus declares Dalit to be brave and fearful. A Dalit is more dangerous than any weapon, so challenging others not to fight with him as he has firm faith in his Guru, described in the following songs:

*“Hath leke hathiyar
 Jad nikle Chamar
 Pher vekheyo pataka kiven paoo mitro
 Aj dekhde panga keda layoo mitro”*
 And;
*“Na rakhde Fikar na faka,
 Satguru Ravidass ji kahende hai saada rakha,
 Kurban deno darde nai,
 Rehnde hai tayyar,
 Haige asle to wadd
 Danger Chamar”*

Appropriating the symbols of dominant castes, famous Punjabi singer Master Saleem proclaims in a song that without Maharishi Valmiki it was not possible to make the celebrations of significant Hindu festivals in India:

*“Nau Naraate, dasva dushehra
diwali da tyohar na hunda
Ram chandar di Ramayan na hundi
Je Valmiki avatar na hunda
Prabhu Valmiki avatar aa gya
Khushiyan ch saara sansaar aa gya”*

The theoretical findings of the works are complimented with sample collection which 500 respondents were approached from the urban and rural setup. The method employed is an observation to understand the gaps which existed between the women empowerment and patriarchal structure of the region which one can help to observe even under the Dalit narrative when strong masculine symbols are used to assert equality or superiority over the upper caste by singers and other significant icons. The first question wanted to solicit responses regarding the prevalence of untouchability. Out of total responses of 500, 72% respondents denied the same. The second answer regarding the availability of the education to the Dalit children also got 87% positives which highlighted the Dalit aspirations to the education. Interestingly the next question which wanted to know about government awareness programs for the welfare of the Dalit brought only 12% positives which, in a way, demonstrated ignorance on the part of the respondent while surveying government policies for their betterment. It is unfortunate that the government is not undertaking any program even when there is less participation of Dalit women in political and economic spheres of the region. It was good to know that 83% of the respondents accepted that they have never faced any kind of discrimination while availing medical facilities. The next question which wanted to solicit response regarding gender discrimination founded respondents getting hesitant and unwilling to discuss the nature of discrimination. As a result, 84% of respondents replied that no gender discrimination was faced by them. A similar response was entailed while enquiring caste-based discrimination at the workplace or in the vicinity. The Dalit assertion of the region has made Dalit women confident and 85% of the women said they had never faced any caste-related discrimination. Similarly, the respondents were asked about domestic violence, 95% of them replied that they have never faced any domestic violence with some of them claiming that if anyone dares hurt them, they can hurt them back more badly. In terms of government policies when 12% of respondents accepted that government has initiated any welfare program, 81% of them praised the government for its policies

which in the majority was confined to '*atta-dal scheme*' in which they were getting food at subsidized rates. The dichotomy becomes more clear when 52% of the respondent did not know about National Commission for Scheduled Caste and its relevance and 72% of them did not even know how to contact the Commission. When asked about the welfare scheme for the Dalit, only 48% knew of the schemes like '*atta-dal scheme*', '*shagun*', free electricity and school scholarship, which were the only schemes they were aware of because only 38% of them have availed any such scheme. The less availing of the scheme owned to the official status of many respondents as they were working on various government jobs. The confusion becomes stark because only 35% alleged that the government took care of them only around the elections. Coming to the accessibility of religious places 85% responded in affirmative which points towards the better status of the Dalit when compared to other regions of India. Even when comes across news regarding different religious places for different castes in Punjab, in Jalandhar, only 28% in the region pointed to separate Satguru Kabir, Guru Ravidass and Bhagwan Valmiki temples in the region. Similarly, 62% of the respondent finds upper castes respecting their religious places. The responses become more significant as only 28% of the respondents have any family member working abroad. It proves that the cultural assertion among the Dalit is coming from within the region and not from abroad. Coming to the economic status of all respondents 54% of all respondent were earning less than one lakh a year whereas only 27% have access to better economic resources with an annual income of over five lakhs. As a result, the creation of the assets among the respondent was reduced to a mere 17% which bring forth the stark reality of hidden economic squeezes among the Dalit women of Jalandhar.