

CHAPTER – 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The status of women in the Indian context cannot be understood without studying the gender basis of inequality. The existing inequalities and imbalances have resulted in creating differences among different groups of women. In order to understand the nature of the constraints and disabilities that affect women in the performance of their multiple roles in society, the economic and political dimensions play a vital role. Thus, women have to be seen, not as a homogeneous group, but as members of different sections of the population according to the differences in their levels of social existence. Keeping this in mind, the present study seeks to examine comparative features of women belonging to dalit and non-dalit categories. In the present study, we propose to analyze women's status in a comparative manner.

Three main aspects related to women's status i.e. social, economic and political have been the central concern of our study. To examine social aspects we have selected sex ratio, education, health, violence against women and marital status of women. For analyzing economic aspect we have selected work participation rate of women in organized or unorganized sector. To assess the political aspect we have identified the political participation of women in local bodies.

Three important communities belonging to scheduled caste groups in Haryana are Balmikis, Chamars and Dhanaks. Other communities like Brahmin, Jat, Bania, Khatri/Aroras are considered upper caste category while Jogi, Kumhar, Nai, Luhar, Jhimar belong to other backward class (OBC) category. In the present study, scheduled castes and backward castes have been considered under dalit category and Brahmin, Jat, Bania Khatri and Arora are treated as non-dalit category.

The present study has been carried out in Sonepat district of rural Haryana. The idea behind selecting rural sector for the empirical study, was that we wanted to collect the information and make observations from a large segment of the society representing dalit and non-dalit category. The Census records of 2001 show that the maximum population of the Haryana State dwells in rural areas (i.e. 71.00 per cent of the total population), its urban population accounts for 29 per cent only.

The main objective of this study has been to analyze the social, economic and political status of dalit and non-dalit women in a comparative manner. It is expected that socio-economic and educational development may bring about changes in the attitudes and beliefs of women in terms of equality, individuality and independence. The analysis pertaining to demographic and socio-economic variables in Haryana's social structure described the women in a highly disadvantageous situation. The factors that prevent women from assuming active role in social, economic and political field are due to certain institutional bottlenecks such as patriarchy, and traditional mindset which are still prevalent in rural society of Haryana. Taking into account these factors, we have tried to observe whether there is congruence between the structural factors and value pattern. Keeping in view the above analysis we have considered the following **objectives** for the present study.

- 1) To study the socio-cultural and demographic features of dalit and non-dalit women in Haryana**
- 2) To evaluate the nature of work participation rate of dalit and non-dalit Women in Haryana**
- 3) To examine the nature and extent of dalit and non-dalit Women's political participation in local bodies.**

In view of the objectives mentioned above we have tried to examine the following **hypotheses**:

- 1) Upward mobility of women in economic and political field has no correspondence with their improvement in social position.
- 2) Economic prosperity has promoted consumerism which has not removed gender inequality and disparity.
- 3) Educational improvement has not changed the child sex ratio in Haryana.
- 4) Reservation of seats for women in local self-government has not made inroads into strong patriarchal values.
- 5) Dalit women's status remains relatively unchanged inspite of political reservation.

- 6) Formation of SHGs have distinguished women's role as an active agent of awareness and social changes. It has also provided a platform for debating gender issues.

The present study is divided into six chapters excluding the conclusion. The **First Chapter** deals with the conceptual and theoretical issues related to status of women. It provides a detailed analysis of concepts relating to status in general and women's status in particular. The concept of gender and sex has been analysed keeping in mind the sociological focus and feminist discourse associated with it. The context of women empowerment in relation to the position of dalit and non-dalit women has also been highlighted.

The **Second Chapter** consists of review of literature, wherein position of women and its historical backdrop has also been discussed. Studies related to dalits' position has also been reviewed. How skewed sex ratios affect women's status has been discussed in the context of declining sex ratio. Studies related to women's education, health, economic aspects and political aspects have also been covered in this chapter. Besides reviewing studies available in the form of books, reports, the chapter has also reviewed the findings of NFHS Survey – I, II and III exclusively conducted for Haryana.

The **Third Chapter** deals with providing a detailed profile of women in Haryana. This chapter is divided into four parts, **Part one** deals with the social profile of women in Haryana, wherein the impact of declining sex ratio and its relation with education have been examined with reference to available macro level data from Census 2001 and other reports. The chapter also analyses health status of women with important health indicators such as infant mortality rate, fertility rate and the extent of anaemia that women suffer from. The crime against women has also been examined keeping in mind the sex ratio. The incidence of domestic violence and the salient character of honour killing in case of Haryana has also been analysed in this chapter. **Part two** of the chapter covers the economic profile of women in Haryana, wherein work participation rate and its impact on women's status has been discussed. **Part three** of the chapter deals with the analysis of women's political profile. The participatory role of women in electoral politics has also been examined.

Finally, the **Fourth part** of the chapter provides profile of dalit women with a view to examine the extent of exclusion from the inclusive focus of development.

The **Fourth chapter** deals with the methodology, wherein the aims and objectives of the study have been highlighted and the methods and procedures of data collection have also been discussed.

Chapter five provides a detailed profile of the district and its special character highlighting the demographic variables relating to the district. The district profile also deals with analyzing education as a vital infrastructure. It also deals with review of different welfare schemes of the government and its impact on improving women's status.

The **Sixth chapter** deals with the data analysis. Based on the field based study conducted for the present study we used interview-schedule, formal interviews and focussed group discussion. The data pertained to social, economic and political dimensions of women's status in a comprehensive manner including both dalit and non-dalit women.

The last chapter i.e. the **Seventh chapter** is the conclusion, wherein the findings of the present study have been summed up.

Data for the present study was collected through both the methods of data collection i.e. qualitative and quantitative. In quantitative method the Interview Schedule was used for collection of data from the field. In qualitative method we have used observation method for collection of data for the present study. Some of the informal interviews were also conducted besides conducting focused group discussion (FGD) in the sample villages.

A structured schedule was prepared for collecting information on variables identified for the study. Besides socio-economic background of the respondents, the schedule contained questions relating to status indicators. Before finalizing the schedule, it was pre-tested in a pilot study conducted among dalit and non-dalit women in rural community. On the basis of pilot and the pre-testing of the questions pertaining to the subject, the schedule was finalized.

The data was collected both through primary and secondary sources. The secondary data have been collected with the help of published documents of government and research reports. The documentary evidence mainly from the

published materials, such as, Census Reports, reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, Haryana state and other official records relevant to the area of the study were also consulted. The newspaper clippings were also used as per requirement. The records from various centers of villages like, Health Center, Aanganwari Center, Welfare Department, schools and Panchayats were also taken into account.

The data collected was classified and given tabular representation. The data was codified and tabulated into simple and cross tables for enabling detailed analysis and for deriving the pattern of relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The demographic, socio-economic and political variables in Haryana's social structure portray women in a highly disadvantageous position (see table 3.1). The broad trends show that the economic changes in last four decades after the formation of state has not yet brought the desired changes in socio economic and political dimensions.

Sonepat district represents the similar trend. The face of Sonepat district has changed drastically in material terms. The changes were also noticed in the proliferation of educational institution and availability of medical facilities, pucca roads and public and private transport system etc. There has been significant change in the material culture. But when it comes to social development the district is still lagging behind in socio-cultural indices of development.

District Sonepat has the lowest child sex ratio in Haryana that is next to Kurukshetra and Ambala (which is 738 out of 1000 male). The female literacy rate is 61.65 per cent which is much above the state level female literacy of 56.31 per cent.

It is pertinent to discuss the numerical strength of dalit population in the district. The percentage of schedule caste population representing the district is 18.02 per cent, which is just below 1.00 per cent of the state average that is 19.34 per cent.

To study the "Status of Women in Haryana" we have selected four villages from Sonepat District. A cluster of four villages, two villages from each block were selected on random basis for intensive study. These four villages are ***Barwasni*** and ***Lehrara*** from ***Sonepat*** block, ***Bhalgarh*** and ***Rasoi*** from ***Rai*** block respectively.

From these four villages, we have selected total number of 286 women (i.e. 2.5 per cent of the universe) for the present study through stratified random sampling method. We also tried to include the key informants from the village. Therefore, we also considered those women who were the members of panchayats, employees in anganwaris, member of self-help group (SHGs) members of Mahila Mandal and Sakshar Mahila Samooh (SMS) etc. It is important to note that only married women have been included in our sample for the present study.

One of the most telling expression of inequality of well being has been noticed in the low female-male ratio in India. The high proportion of missing women has been attributed to several factors. It has now been recognized that development has to be gender sensitive. Therefore, there is a need to ensure participation and community engagements of women, so that they have an access to economic, political and legal machinery. Access these resources may enable them to overcome the century old impediments hallowed by traditions of patriarchy which accounted for their subordinate status. Unequal sharing within the family has been the prominent feature of gender relations in India. It is in this background that the present study was conducted to analyse the nature and dimensions of subordinate position in Haryana.

Chowdhry (1994) rightly pointed out the paradox of women in Haryana, when she observed that in rural Haryana veiled women is an ambiguous sight. The paradox of this sight is somewhat innocuous as her high visibility is noticed in all sort of work in the fields, working along side men, preparing the fields, to irrigating and harvesting the crop, processing agricultural produce at home, tending the animals, fetching and carrying water, with heavy loads of earthen water pots on their heads and involved in numerous other domestic chores. It is in this backdrop that the present study found the Census data of 2011 quite palatable with the present study. The recent research published by the **Lancet** (2011) a research journal provides useful insights into the phenomenon of missing women. There is a bias against having a second female child when the first is already a girl. The findings of our study also pointed out that nobody having first child as daughter ever risks getting the second child go undetected. The obsession with having a male child is so paramount that invariably they go for sex detection test and female foetus is aborted. Thus the second order birth where the first child is a female led to a sharp decline of sex ratio in

several districts of Haryana. In our sampled villages of Sonepat district. The sex ratio was found to be depressingly low. It was 716 in Barwasni, 664 in Lehrara, 685 in Rasoi, and 712 in Bhalgarh.

The recent preliminary data of Census 2011, revealed that the sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 was 914 which is worse now since independence. The corresponding figure for Haryana as reported has improved from 819 in 2001 to 830 in 2011. This figure enumerated for Haryana has raised an eyebrow of a noted social demographer **Bose (2011)** who suggests that his own empirical study conducted in several districts of Haryana had revealed an alarming decline in child sex ratio. The present study also supports the contention of **Ashish Bose**. The new research that was published by the **Lencet** has rightly pointed out that the distressing trend is the result of more people having easier access of medical technologies resulting in to large scale sex selective abortions. The study pointed out selective abortions of girls in India between 1980 to 2010. It prevented about 4.2 million to 12.1 million girls from being born between 1980 to 2010, with the largest number of girls being aborted in the 1990s. Thus, it is implied that 90 per cent people in India live in a state where selective abortion of girl is common.

The 2011 Census has also revealed that there were about 7.1 million fewer girls than boys aged 0-6 years, a substantial increase over 6 million fewer girls recorded in the 2001 Census. The study has found that the girl-boy ratio fell from 906 girls per 1000 boys in 1990 to 836 in 2005. This showed an annual decline of 0.52 per cent. Another startling fact that was pointed out by the **Lancet** study which was carried out by Centre for Global Health Research (Dalla Lala School of Public Health and Colleagues from India, including the former Registrar-General of India, **Jayant and Banthia, 2011**) is that the decline in girl-boy ratio were larger in better educated and richer households. The empirical study which we conducted revealed that when the first child had been a boy there was no concern to go for either sex detection or abortion. Thus the discrimination is noticed only when the first born child is girl. In that case irrespective of economic status, there is a tendency on part of family member to get the sex detection test conducted and they go for repeated abortion of the female foetus till some such time that a desired male foetus is found to be there. In our study, it was found that educated and the wealthier lot belonging to non-dalit

section had opted for aborting girls. What was surprising to note in our field study was that even the wealthier section from within dalits had preferred to selectively abort girls if their first born child was a girl

The response of the state to assert such a tendency by reinforcing pre-natal diagnostic techniques (Regulation and Misuse) Act, even its amended form has not paid desired result. It has also been suggested by planners and demographers for a multipronged strategy to remove the prejudice against the girl child. Commenting on the role of state, the editorial of a leading newspaper had observed that “the level of involvement of laggard states in implementing the PNDT Act can be gauged from the fact that in Haryana, a crucial notification on setting up appropriate authorities was not published in the gazette for 12 years from 1997 and it had to be reissued as an ordinance with retrospective effect” (See *The Hindu*, Editorial, Missing Daughters, May 28, 2011)

The rigid attitude is reinforced by the dominant popular culture prevailing in Haryana which is not only the characteristic features of upper caste groups normally called the dominant caste group but is also found to be astonishingly conspicuous among the affluent and educated sections of dalit communities Recalling the discriminatory practices **Chowdhry** has also observed that such mindset has accounted for low health status of women in Haryana. She observed the discrimination faced from infancy onward in all matters including food, nutrition and use of medical facilities, combined with a heavy workload – both productive and reproductive – is responsible for their poor health. Frequent pregnancies and the demands of motherhood also takes a heavy toll of women’s actual appearance and physical well-being, speeding up the ageing process.

The findings of our study makes it clear that so far as the parameters of economic and educational aspects are concerned the situation of dalit respondents is quite precarious. Dalit women have lower educational background which reflects in their occupational and income attainments as well. In comparison to this non-dalit women had higher educational attainment and by virtue of that their corresponding status in income attainment was also higher. It was also striking to note that the dalits do not have an access to land whereas non-dalit had access to land. It would not be an exaggeration to state here that by virtue of educational and economic deprivation the

dalits suffer from cumulative disadvantage that accounts for their low status in society. In fact dalits suffer from multiple deprivations, first, due to their low ranking in caste, second, due to their low income status and third due to the deep mindsets of patriarchy.

The study pointed out that 67.5 percent women admitted that the ideal family should constitute one girl and one boy (see table 6b.6). The percentage of non-dalit women having this norm was reported to be 79.9 as against dalits i.e. 50.8 percent. It was striking to note that none of the respondents admitted that the presence of only daughters would constitute an ideal family. No wonder, there is local proverb that reinforces the obsession with male child which states: ‘Fortunates are those whose daughters die and unfortunates are those whose sons die.’

Our study further revealed women’s attitude towards PNDT Test. It was found that 90.8 percent of non-dalit women admitted foeticide to be widely prevalent practice whereas 57.4 percent dalit women accepted this to be widely prevalent. Even the educated section of dalit women admitted that in modern times the practice is becoming common among them. Paradoxically it was noticed that women belonging to dalit section admitted that sex detection test and subsequent abortion of female foetus was not a common practice among the educated in the village.

The obsession with male child is considered to be quite pronounced among the respondent (95.4 percent). When inquired about the reasons for it the usual answer was that the male child carries family lineage (see table 6b.8). The prevalent folk idioms confirmed the obsession with the male child when they stated

‘Ghar mein Diya Jalta Rehh Sai’

(The lamp remains ignited in the house forever.)

Ghar main chandna reih sai

(light prevails in the house.)

Ghar ke kiwar khule pa ja sai

(The door of house remains open.)

Over a period of time some family members have begun to realize the importance of girl child in family as well. However, the way the arrival of male child is celebrated, the same is found to be conspicuous by its absence when female babies are born. For example the usual jubilation that marks the arrival of son in the family

with the clang of brass plate is not noticed when daughters are born in the family (see table 6 b 10). However, in exceptional situations some family members do celebrate the occasion with distribution of sweets and jaggery, music and dance and observing namkaran sanskar. Thus it clearly establishes the fact that the arrival of a girl child is not a matter of joy for family members. The fact is that the birth of a girl child invariably becomes a matter of sorrow and grave concern which finds its expression in local sayings:

*Mahre janm mein baje thekre bhai ke mein thali
budha bhi rowe budhiya bhi rowe,
rovern hali pali*

(My brother's birth is announced with the clang of brass, my own with the sound of broken shares, the old folks weep, the plough boys laments and even the hardsman cries.)

Local proverbs and folksongs reflect this dominant social ethos by showing marked preference for boys over girls. In very real terms this preference manifested itself in a skewed sex ratio. Another famous folklore and sayings treats a male child as essential as the life giving rains. A popular local saying goes:

*Meehin aur betty ate koon dhappaya sai
(who can have enough of rain or sons).*

Even one male child per family continues to be considered neither safe nor sufficient:

*Ek ankh ka ke sulakhshana
Ek put ka ke sapoota.
(How can a one-eyed man be called lucky ?
How can a man with one son be called a father)*

The status of women was found low as they remain dependent on their male counterpart for their economic support. It makes their situation all the more precarious. They often admit the physical violence that they suffer in silence. There are women who do not find it to be odd and therefore they treat wife beating to be fait accompli.

The cultural system which considers '*Lugai admi ki Juti ho sai* (women is no better than a man's shoes) and that she is inferior to him. Women's advice, if acted upon cannot be anomalous and disruptive. In fact, the most frequent advice is '*Lugai*

ne sir pen a dhora karein' and *Lugai ki akal te Kaam na chale'*, both saying that a women's advice should not be heeded. Any women who even slightly asserts herself and voices an opinion meekly accepting the male advice or orders, invites ridicule and denigration. Taken as a challenge, the man's sarcastic comment is found in the proverb; '*nangi boochi sub te oonchi*' (a shameless, literally a naked women is always superior, as you cannot shame her any further). The one remedy recommended for an argumentative female is "*bhonkne do*" (literally, let her bark); what is implicit is, ignore her. The other one being '*rand ke marr*' (beat up the shameless hussy). Thus beating of women is a part of rural culture, accepted by women as a matter of natural order of things. To understand this, the ideology summed up in a very popular proverb is useful;

Joru khasam ki larai keya

(A quarrel between a married couple is of no consequence).

This proverb common throughout Haryana, shows the acceptance of *larai* (quarrel), as innocuous but actually and not infrequently, it means physical violence.

When inquired about the wife beating about 43 percent of respondents admitted wife beating as a normal practice (see table 6b.11).

The situation of dalit women was found to be more vulnerable as 53 percent of them admitted physical torture as natural. While 34.8 percent of non-dalit women considered it to be natural. A gradual change has begun to set in this trend as 57.3 percent treated wife beating as pathological condition. From within non-dalit women percentage of those having negative attitude about wife beating was higher (i.e. 65.2 percent) as against dalit women (i.e. 47.0 percent).

The findings of our study revealed that the majority of the women i.e. 73.1 had percent admitted that consumption of alcohol was a critical factor for wife beating (Table 6b.12). Among dalit women 79.5 percent admitted that their husbands beat them up under the influence of alcohol. The percentage of wife beating under the influence of alcohol among non-dalit was reported to be 68.3 percent. Other factors which were attributed as contributory factor were lack of education, lack of legal knowledge, dependency on male members and norms of patriarchy. It was also noticed that for not giving birth to a male child also becomes a factor for their physical torture. Thus the vulnerability of women associated with her not being

economically independent not possessing legal knowledge and not having entitlement of property.

Norms of patriarchy find its expression in many ways. When we wanted to enquire about the respondents' attitude towards marrying their daughters in a family, 37.4 percent women stated (See Table 6b.14) that they would like to marry their daughter's to a family where husband's brother is also there. What was surprising to note was the fact that about 47 percent respondents stated that they would marry their daughters to a family in which husband has two brothers. However more than two brothers' family was not favoured by them.

Thus the idea of social security circumvents their desire to choose the family for their daughter's marriage. Here they want to use patriarchal norms as a safety measure for their daughters. The family in which they give their daughter must not have many sisters in law as that would not provide social security to their daughter. Thus, to marry a daughter in a family where the son in law has at least one and more than one brother is a preferred norm. The attitude is aptly summed up in the local proverb which states :

Aje beti lele phere, yoh margay to aur bhatere

(come daughter, get married, if this one dies there are plenty more).

The mindset of patriarchy is reinforced by several customs which are widely prevalent in Haryana. One such custom is called the practice of '**Karewa**'. The peculiarity of Haryana's social structure is that a woman who is rendered widow is not allowed to remain in seclusion. Immediately after the death of her husband, she is attached with deceased husband's brother. That means the practice of levirate marriage is quite common. A girl is remarried either to a deceased husband's brothers who could be either senior or junior to her. This also is a tenuous practice of ensuring social security of women. Needless to mention that women in Haryana are treated as property and therefore, she is not allowed to remain unattached after her husband's death. This practice in Haryana is known as **Chader Udhana, Chaddar, Andaji** and **Latta Udhana**.

When asked about respondents to express their views in favour of widow remarriage about 41 percent of them stated that it provided social security but they also suggested that the decision should be that of female who is to marry (see table

6b.18). It was found that 32.5 percent respondents felt that the practice of widow remarriage ensures better future for the dependent children. Hence they prefer it.

It is pertinent to mention the fact of hierarchy of remarriages. **Dumont (1980)** has suggested that the first marriage must distinguish from the subsequent marriages. He writes that the ceremony which effects this transition is especially important for the women, and one must distinguish the case of a male from that of female. He stated that the first marriage in case of a woman is called **primary marriage** and the subsequent marriage is called **secondary marriage**. In the hierarchy of marriages the first marriage is considered most auspicious while the secondary marriage in case of female is less auspicious. Hence secondary marriage has lower status. For male however ‘first marriage’ becomes the principal marriage. A man has the option for second marriage either with full right or with secondary right. Thus for men there are supplementary or subsidiary marriages with a corresponding hierarchy of wives. In other words it is conclusively proved that when a female marries second time there is less Jubilation where as when male marriage second time it does not lower his status.

In focused group discussion (FGD) quite a few dalit women respondents stated that the educated sections demand dowry. They agreed that dowry has acquired a scandalous height among the educated lot. The usual phrase expressed in this regard is “Paidhe likha kai Ghne Mooh paat re sai” i.e. the educated persons have shown loud mouthed opportunism in demanding dowry.

Thus the dowry is still considered the financial burden for parents. Considering women to be burden in the family, most of the parents prayed god for daughters’ death in the childhood. There is a popular saying:

*Chhora mare nirbhag ka
Chhori mare bhagwan ki*
(The son of unfortunate dies,
The daughter of a fortunate dies.)

The enormous increase of this financial burden in the form of dowry has given added relevance to the local sayings :

beti bhali Na Ek
(To have even one daughter is not good).

Thus, there is a wide gap in what is called lived in reality and the situation that is considered ideal.

Boserups (1970) stimulating book ‘Women’s Role in Economic Development’ provides a perceptive observation about the practice of dowry in South Asian countries. She links dowry in South Asia to the loss of women’s agricultural role. Thus it is clear that dowry at microlevel is perceived to be exchange in lieu of women not engaged in productive activity. The paradox of her domestic role is that her performing domestic activity in family is considered natural and therefore it is not recognized as productive work. The Census of India recognized work to be productive only when work is remunerated in the form of wages against the labour time.

The study revealed positive attitude towards girl having higher education. Majority of them i.e. 44.4 percent admitted that girls higher education meant acquiring graduation level knowledge (see table 6b.31). The preference for doing post-graduation in case of girls was also favoured by about 22 percent of our respondents. The rural women felt that girls’ education is necessary. This is also proved by the local proverb:

*Eb Chhoriya Kai Kadha hoente kaam na chalta,
Unka pathola hona bhi jarooi sai
(The girls should have both the quality;
education as well as expert in domestic work).*

In Haryana, the crucial factor for women, is that the women eat in Haryana after the male members have consumed their food. Our data reveals that 84.6 per cent respondents felt that such a practice was widely prevalent in rural Haryana. Only 15.4 percent felt that this should not be the case. Generally in Haryana, where men were present the women invariably would eat almost furtively, with their backs turned towards them (Chowdhry, 1994). As an ideal, women are frequently told:

*Mard ka dikhaya Na Khaiye
Mard ka laya Khaiye
(Eat not in your husband’s presence)
But eat what he bring you
Mard ka nahana aurat ka khana barabar hai
(A man’s bath and a women’s meal are soon over)*

The rural male is generally notorious for making short shrift of his bath which, if taken, gets over in the twinkling of an eye. The same is considered to hold true of a women's meal. Infact, it may not really be the speed of her eating being implied in the above saying but the meager portion left for her to eat. The traditions of eating meal after their male counter part also seem to have remained unchanged. It was found that majority of the respondent i.e. 84.6 percent admitted that they preferred to take their meal after their husbands had taken meals. Needless to mention that such a cultural practice born out of customary sanctions may have adverse implications for those women who conceive and are required to supplement the food intake for carrying the child. Even for lactating mother this may have adverse effect on their health. It was only a marginal section of respondents i.e. 15.4 percent who admitted that the practice was not good. In case of dalit women 20.5 percent had shown negative attitude while among non-dalit it was 11.6 percent.

Thus it is clear that the practice of eating meals after their male counter part has not changed. There is still no acceptance of males and females eating together, mainly because the ideology of the male eating first as befitting his role of **Karamdata** (doer) has not changed. The woman on the other hand, is expected to be satisfied with whatever she gets. An ideal, women are frequently told:

Dekh biranni chaupari, keyon lalchawejee,

Rukhi sukhi khake, thanda pani pee

(Be content with your dry crust

Don't think for another's feast).

Thus, the conducive social climate is a critical factor in improving the status of women. Be it the case of asymmetry of gift exchange, social recognition of female's marriage for the second time, her begetting sons in the family, her choice of marriage, her lack of financial independence and even school and transport as infrastructure – she is found to be vulnerable. There is a need for initiating a debate on the issue of granting social justice and freedom to women to breath the chains of servitude.

In urban centres, the platform exists for positive discourse on the issues of gender inequality but in rural areas of Haryana, whatever little space that has been created by the progressive legislations in granting one third representation in the gram panchayat has been denied accesssto them due to overpowering and dominant role

played by resurrecting the negative features of khap panchayats. The khap panchayats have earned notoriety for initiating repressive legal sanctions in cases of denying couples the freedom of choice for marriage. The strict Supreme Court ruling against the unilateral decision of Khap panchayats may go a long way in improving the social climate provided a social campaign and a sustained awareness on issues of female foeticide, declining sex-ratio, increasing graph of crime against women and enlightened response from civil society organization find favour with the established democratic institutions.

When we examine the women's work participation rate we find that their economic role is not considered a productive activity. The household work such as rearing and caring of the children, housekeeping, looking after the old aged and handicapped members within the family, washing utensils, cooking meals and taking care of daily work are not considered productive role.

In this context, respondents were asked to give a rough estimate of time that they spent on doing daily work. To our utter surprise the findings of our study revealed that 66.0 percent of women stated that they spent more than 10 hours per day doing their daily work (see table 6c.1). In fact 30.2 percent of them stated that total hours consumed doing daily work ranged between 5 to 9 hours.

Needless to add that the work of a housewife is not considered a productive activity. No wonder **Bernard (1976)** observed in a ponderous note that, "in truth, being a house wife makes women sick." **Bernard's (1976)** view has been endorsed by another feminist **Oakley (1974)** who suggests that the housewife role in modern family centres around following characteristics:

1. It is exclusively allocated to women
2. It is economically dependent on men.
3. It has the status of 'non-work' compared to 'real' or economically productive work.
4. It takes precedence over all other roles as the role for women

What is all the more disgusting is the fact that her unpaid work does not receive any recognition in the society. There is another feature of the work she does is the fact that she cannot take a break from the drudgery of domestic work and the chain of work may further be added in case the guests visit the household. Therefore,

Oakley (1974) concludes that women, suffer from more monotony, social isolation and pressure of time than even assembly line workers who are often seen as the most alienated workers in the labour force. The role of house wife is a dead-end job with no chance of promotion and little or no opportunity for job enrichment or personal development.

The findings of our study further revealed respondents' own assessment of work that they perform as a housewife, 94.7 percent women felt that their work was non-productive (See table 6c.20). They are not remunerated for domestic work. The views of dalit and non-dalit women were found to be not much different in this respect either. In fact 83.6 percent stated that there is a lack of recognizing domestic work as a productive work. About 68.7 percent also admitted that their domestic work does not add to any respect to them in the society. Women belonging to non-dalit category felt this to be the case (i.e. 88.4 percent) more than the dalits (i.e. 40.9 percent). Paradoxically the excessive domestic work had made them more dependent on their male counter parts. About 74.5 percent expressed their views on this matter suggesting that their involvement in domestic work has increased their dependency. In this respect the opinions of dalit and non-dalit women showed remarkable contrast while 93.3 percent non-dalit women felt that it had increased their dependency on male folk whereas 49.1 percent of dalit felt that it had increased their dependency on male folk.

We also observed during the field work that the women who are working and earn money, get more respect in the family. There is a famous phrase which used very commonly in rural area.

Dhood Aali Ki tei laat Bhi Autija

(We can bear the kick of an animal who provide us milk). That means the work for which they are remunerated are considered productive.

Our findings revealed that the concept of property entitlement of girls was not dominant in their mind as it was reported that only 32.9 percent had positive attitude while 67.13 percent had negative attitude about it. Majority of non-dalit women (i.e. 84.4) have negative attitude about claiming property for girls. This was so primarily due to the fact that the bonds of family reciprocal ties has an overwhelming consideration on this matter. So far as dalit women's response on this matter was

concerned 43.4 percent had negative attitude. Since, dalits are mostly landless therefore, the questions of their being recognized as co-parceners have no relevance. Still they had positive attitude about having a share in parental property.

Findings of our study pointed out that about 63.0 percent of the respondents have right to claim property but in case they claim it would cause their total alienation from the native family. The fear of alienation and its perception was found to be more pronounced among non-dalit women (i.e. 82.3 percent). Similarly the fear of criticism in the village (70.1 percent), customary sanctions (i.e. 63.4 percent) and the *Paraya dhan* syndrome (i.e. 53 percent) were reported from non-dalit women as the critical factors for not staking their claims over parental property. In case of dalit women these factors were not found to be so dominant as the pecuniary (i.e. they state their being landless) conditions did not allow them to do so.

Government's affirmative action in helping women to form clusters of 15 to 20 women into SHGs has also played a critical role in economic upliftment of women. When asked about the role of SHG in improving their economic conditions, 65 percent of women expressed positive attitude towards SHGs (See table 6c.6). The findings of our study revealed that the majority of dalit women (i.e. 80.3 percent) had sought membership of SHGs as it had helped them in augmenting their family income and providing them an opportunity to be involved in income generation activity. The response from non-dalit (i.e. 53.6 percent) was not that overwhelming. However, about 35 percent of women had negative attitude towards seeking the membership of SHGs. The percentage of non-dalit women was higher (i.e. 46.4 percent) as against dalit women (i.e. 19.7 percent). Dalit which also included backward caste members found SHG instrumental in improving their economic conditions.

In our study we found that women suffer discrimination at work place by virtue of their belonging to the low caste groups (See Table 6.9). Out of 122 dalit women 41 stated that they felt discriminated at the place of work. The discrimination that they perceived was associated with their low caste background. On many occasions derogatory epithets were used to address them. They felt that they do not enjoy the same dignity and prestige that non-dalit enjoy in this respect. The government has enacted legislations against it but the traditional mindset still prevails in the villages. As a matter of fact due to government's affirmative action, the dalits

who have now acquired government jobs and seek corresponding social status which the non-dalits especially the dominant upper castes are not willing to concede to them. This has resulted into bitter caste rivalries.

In Haryana, the tension between dalits and non-dalits have resulted into the caste war like situation. The incidence of **Gohana** and **Mirchpur** is a sharp pointer to this fact. The same feeling has created tensions between dalits and non-dalits. Thus, the aggressive assertion of dalits have created a bitter caste rivalries in several parts of Haryana and the women are especially targeted whenever such caste tensions flare up.

The findings of our study in the surveyed villages revealed that the scheme of NREGA had not been implemented. No job cards were prepared for women and therefore the employment that has been granted to people elsewhere under the scheme i.e. (employment for 100 days) could have also been a vital source of economic empowerment. Needless to mention that such employment guarantee scheme of government are to be implemented by the gram panchayats. It provides an opportunity to the women elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions to utilize such schemes for their economic wellbeing. The schemes which are meant to improve the economic conditions are not taken up in right earnest by the implementing agency.

It is normally believed that the low political participation of women is the sign of weakness of Indian democracy. It is the social condition that makes politics to be an area, where male members have a major role to play. **Lipset (1973)** in his classical work ‘Political man’ pointed out that, one of political sociology’s prime concern is an analysis of the social conditions making for democracy.” It is indeed surprising that inspite of women having suffrage right at the time of independence they didn’t visualize that they could compete against male members for the ruling position. In rural society of Haryana, the conditions encouraging democratic rights of women have been weak due to strong norms of patriarchy.

In last two decades, the girls voters’ awareness campaign and government encouraging response to provide 1/3rd representation to women in local self-government has created a favourable climate for women’s political participation. The constitutional amendment in the form of 73rd and 74th amendment paved the way of women political participation. It provided an opportunity to women in general to have 33 percent representation in **gram panchayat**, **block samiti** and **zila parishads**.

What was significant to notice here that the Constitutional amendment also insured 1/3rd representation in the form of elected representatives to dalit women. Thus women belonging to SC categories could contest election from the reserve constituency. Besides they also had right to contest for the open seat.

Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 insured the representation of women when the first election was held in the year 1995, the enthusiasm however, to contest election initially by the women members was not that pronounced. Even during the second election (that was held in 2000) the participation of women independently contesting election was conspicuous by its absence. However, after third term election i.e., from 2005 onwards there was a stiff contestation of power even from within the dalit section. Women realized the importance of sarpanch and panch members in articulating the grievances of women in general and dalits in particular. The voters in the villages also realized that the elected representatives must possess leadership quality and be educated to effectively articulate the grievances of the women. Needless to mention here that in our sampled villages the elected representatives showed a distinct courage of conviction by successfully contesting election for the post of panch and sarpanches.

The findings of our study revealed high degree of political awareness among women about having the voters' identity card. It was paramount among dalits (i.e. 95.1 percent) and non-dalit (i.e. 95.7 percent) (See table 6d.1). Only about 5 percent of the respondents admitted that they could not get their voter cards made.

Paradoxically it was noticed that the unmarried young girl who had attained 18 years of age and above were not enthusiastic about getting their voters identity card made. It was considered against the customs and the prevailing belief of the people. Since the girls migrate to other village after marriage and hence, the native village for them is not considered their permanent place of residence. Therefore they are not encouraged by their family members to get their daughter's voters identity card made. This is yet another nuanced idea about keeping the younger electorate away from the mainstreams of village politics.

The level of political awareness has also changed. There was a time when women either did not vote at all or when they voted they voted as per the choice of their family or male counterpart. We still find that 42.7 percent of our respondents

exercised their voting right as per the choice of their male members. Only 17.1 percent stated that they keep in mind the political party while they vote, 10.9 percent keep in mind the choice of the candidate, and 15.9 percent on the basis of the caste background of the candidate. Only 14.4 percent respondents admitted that they vote as per their own understanding of the candidate. There was no distinct attitude revealed by dalit and non-dalit respondents on this matter.

The findings of our study pointed out lack of education accounted for the low participation of women in politics. About 65 percent respondents stated that they considered lack of education responsible for low participation. Nearly 25 per cent attributed it to the patriarchal system (See table 6d.6) and 5.2 per cent respondents considered the economic dependence and sexuality of women (i.e. 5.2 percent) to be the reasons for low participation. Thus, the main factor for low participation of women in politics is lack of education.

When inquired about the extent of participation during election campaign, it was found that the participation of women in three tier structure of political bodies is quite varied. In local elections, the percentage both from dalit and non-dalit section was 87.4 percent. The situation in this respect of dalit and non-dalit women did not reveal sharp contrast. It was noticed that their interests in election campaign in descending order were reported to be from assembly to parliament. In descending order, the percentage figure for assembly election was reported to be 8.4 percent as against 4.2 percent for the parliamentary seat.

Thus, it is clear from the data collected from the field that the participation of women in politics has yet not become a popular idiom of expressing their opinion. One of the reasons, for the lack of enthusiasm by women in politics is due the century old discrimination that they faced in course of their life. Another fact that acts as deterrent is their being over burden with work in rural areas in doing domestic work that they had to perform. Only handful of women admitted that they had some time to involve themselves actively in mobilizing support of the villagers in favour of the candidate. Thus, it can safely be concluded that the traditions and institutional bottlenecks, still dominate the mindset of people in rural society. One of the collateral advantages of all the factors mentioned above suggest that they consider their political identity through sarpanch and panch. One third reservation of women is presumed to

be one of the remarkable feature of women participation in politics. Back home also, they have lifted the tag of sarpanch *pati* (husband) and are now being recognized as an active agents of change. Ghanshyam Shah, while alluding to the nature of dalit politics, the dilemma and challenges that it faces in contemporary India deals with three different aspects of politics that include-identity assertion, discourse therein and collective action.

A noted economist Amartya Sen (2002) pointed out inequality causing chronic hunger and starvation as closely related not only to deficiency of food intake due to lack of earning but also to deprivation of other kinds, particularly those of education, health care, basic facilities and social environment that cause asymmetry. In each social structure there is an institutional arrangement that enables people's entitlement, legal, political and economic to command bundles of commodities that enhances that person's entitlement. Based on the findings of the present study it may be that women have not only been denied to those entitlements but have been socio-economically oppressed, culturally subjugated and politically marginalized for centuries. They have now begun to articulate their grievances. The state is also realizing the need to provide the crutches to them, so that their centuries old exclusion from the mainstreams of development ends and they break the barriers of patriarchy and their isolation in an era of globalization. The concrete results would emerge only when their endowment is recognized by granting them initial ownership (.e.g., in case of labourer, their labour power and in case of non-labourer their holdings of land and alternative commodity that enhance their purchasing capabilities for economic empowerment and well being.

In remedying these inequalities, the activity of women's organizations and other forms of agency i.e. the civil society organizations may be of crucial importance. The effectiveness of such activities have been well demonstrated by the findings of our study. It also points out that the socio-economic challenges and legal impediments may have to be removed for the improvement of women's status. Based on the findings of our study following observations are worth recording here: **First**, the persistence of gender based inequality may change if women's agency and organizations work for increasing the entitlement over property rights and social justice. Even their economic freedom alone will not improve condition unless

educational transformation, ownership rights, political participation and organized protest finds a democratic base in the family and society. **Second**, women's empowerment not only positively influences the women but visiting disparities among women across caste and class lines whereby malnutrition, hunger, child mortality rate, life expectancy, improve. For this a positive dialogue involving women of all class and caste categories along with men have to join win the social campaign for development with gender justice for a better society. **Third**, the question of women identity, assertion and individuality has to find favour with social and political organisations – The implementing agencies directed for the welfare of women in improving their social security through education, food and nutrition and aspects of social justice. Without proactive approach all the policies, schemes and welfare activities will remain confined to papers only. **Lastly**, women's agency and their mobilization for active involvement in participatory role both in economic and political field on the question of gender based inequality, gender budgeting, empowerment through economic entitlement may go a long way in providing them conducive social, economic and political base for removing the unjust order and their wellbeing for social development.
