

Problems Perceived by Scheduled Caste Women in Haryana

Shalini Asrani and Sushma Kaushik¹

Department of Extension Education & Communication Management, College of Home Science, CCS HAU, Hisar 125004, Haryana, India

KEYWORDS Atrocities. Problems Social Neglect. Untouchables. Poverty

ABSTRACT About one- fifth of the population in Haryana belongs to scheduled castes, who are reported to be victims of social neglect and atrocities. Data were collected from 300 scheduled caste women from six villages through structured interview schedule with the major objective to explore the problems faced/ perceived by them. Findings revealed that some socio- cultural problems still exist in villages such as untouchability, not being allowed in public places etc. However, economic problems were the most serious problems perceived by majority of respondents followed by educational problems.

INTRODUCTION

Out of roughly 3000 'Castes' estimated to exist in India, as many as 779 have been designated, as per Article 341 of the Constitution of India, as Scheduled Castes who occupy the lowest rank in the ritual hierarchy of Indian society and constitute bulk of agricultural labourers with minuscule land holdings. Scheduled Castes included communities who were untouchable and suffered from many social restrictions. The untouchable in Hindu Society was a person who worked in what were seen as unhealthy, polluting work which society considered disgusting and even dangerous. These occupations were considered unclean and polluted the individual, and such polluted individuals were considered unfit for physical or social contact with the non-polluted, "purer" sections of society. They were not allowed temple worship with others, nor water from the same sources. Misra (2007) reported that "The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are disadvantaged both socially and economically although they have been well-protected and secured by constitutional provisions and enactment and state governments have implemented several poverty alleviation programmes during different plan periods. Sometimes there are violent clashes which, are connected to caste tensions.

Deeply concerned by the discrimination and other human rights violations faced by the Scheduled Castes, the National Human Right Commission has taken several initiatives to am-

eliorate their situation and protect their rights. They include the redressing of individual complaints; constitution of a Dalit Cell in 2003 headed by a Member of the Commission with the aim to monitor implementation of programmes; research studies on the socio-economic conditions of the Musahars, and the political and cultural status of *dalit* women in Haryana; and the preparation of a handbook on discrimination in order to sensitize teachers (NHRC 2010). Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is also working for social inclusion of *dalits* in developmental programmes in three states of India (Rajasthan, Haryana and Bihar), supported by DVV International (Deutschen Volkshochschul Verbandes) adult education development cooperation. In Haryana, the project activities are spread across five districts, and are aimed towards engaging *dalit* women in the development process as active change agents. The program facilitates the creation of a network of Dalit women (focusing on young *dalit* girls) who can assume a leading role in grassroots action and interface with government officials for policy level advocacy, thereby contributing towards the overall development of Scheduled Castes in the state (PRIA 2010). Presently about sixteen percent of India's population is Scheduled Caste (SCs). The population of Haryana, as per 2001 Census, is 21,144,564, of which, 4,091,110 (19.3 per cent) are Scheduled Castes (SCs). A majority of the SC population (78.5 per cent) of the state is residing in rural areas. Literature reveals that despite abolishing untouchability, prejudice against SCs and STs (Scheduled Tribes) persists in some form or the other - be it overt, covert or subtle in expression (Census of India 2001). Therefore, present study

1Corresponding author:

Phone: 09896394882 (M)

E-mail: sushmakaushik1@rediffmail.com

was conducted to assess the problems faced/perceived by rural SC women.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana State during 2009. Six villages having predominately large number of Scheduled Caste population were selected randomly. From each selected village, fifty SC women were selected randomly, thus making a total sample of 300 women. The data were collected personally through self-structured pretested interview schedule. For measuring general problems faced by them, an inventory of various socio-cultural, educational, economic and communicational problems was developed after consulting literature and experts. As per the occurrence/perceived occurrence of problems they were divided into three categories, that is, always (more than 67%) sometimes (33-66%) and seldom (less than 33%). Total obtained scores were divided into high, medium and low extent of the problem

RESULTS

Background Information of Respondents

Background information of respondents included their socio-personal and economic profile. Each of these is described below:

1. Socio-personal Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-personal profile of respondents. It is clear from the table that in aggregate more than half of respondents (54%) belonged to middle age group (between 26 to 50 years) followed by young (34%) and old (12%) age group. Village wise data also reveal that majority of respondents in all the villages belong to middle age group except in Shahpur village where half of respondents were of young age group.

Regarding type of family, more than half of respondents (58%) belonged to joint families while 42 per cent were from nuclear families. As far as the family size is concerned, majority of respondents (60%) belonged to medium family size and 38 per cent women were from small family size, whereas only 2 per cent belonged to large families.

As regards education of respondents, twenty-two percent of respondents were illiterate, most of respondents (27%) were having primary education level, followed by below primary (18%) and equal number of respondents (15%, each) having middle as well as higher secondary level of education. Negligible numbers of respondents (2%) were graduates who belonged to Kharkhara and Gabipur villages.

Regarding family education, more than half of respondents' family education was medium (57%), followed by low (31%) while 11 per cent respondents had high level of education. It is

Table 1: Socio-personal profile of respondents (N=300)

S. No.	Variable	Category	No. of respondents						Total
			Luda.	Shahp.	Mang.	Balaw.	Gabip.	Khark	
1.	Age	Below 25 years	16(32.0)	25(50.0)	18(36.0)	11(22.0)	17(34.0)	15(30.0)	102(34.0)
		Between 26 to 50 years	34(68.0)	23(46.0)	24(48.0)	34(68.0)	24(48.0)	23(46.0)	162(54.0)
		Above 50 years	0(00.0)	2(4.0)	8(16.0)	5(10.0)	9(18.0)	12(24.0)	36(12.0)
2.	Family Type	Nuclear	26(52.0)	16(32.0)	27(54.0)	28(56.0)	14(28.0)	15(30.0)	126(42.0)
		Joint	24(48.0)	34(68.0)	23(46.0)	22(44.0)	36(72.0)	35(70.0)	174(58.0)
3.	Family Size	Small	17(34.0)	14(28.0)	23(46.0)	20(40.0)	19(38.0)	21(42.0)	114(38.0)
		Medium	31(62.0)	36(72.0)	27(54.0)	30(60.0)	27(54.0)	28(56.0)	179(60.0)
		Large	2(4.0)	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	4(8.0)	1(2.0)	7(2.0)
4.	Education of Respondents	Illiterate	15(30.0)	9(18.0)	12(24.0)	15(30.0)	9(18.0)	5(10.0)	65(22.0)
		Belowprimary	11(22.0)	7(14.0)	8(16.0)	11(22.0)	7(14.0)	12(24.0)	56(19.0)
		Primary	16(32.0)	18(36.0)	16(32.0)	12(24.0)	10(20.0)	11(22.0)	83(28.0)
		Middle	5(10.0)	12(24.0)	6(12.0)	5(10.0)	9(18.0)	8(16.0)	45(15.0)
5.	Family Education	Matric/higher secondary	3(6.0)	4(8.0)	8(16.0)	7(14.0)	13(26.0)	11(22.0)	46(15.0)
		Graduate	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	2(4.0)	3(6.0)	5(2.0)
		Low	10(20.0)	18(36.0)	10(20.0)	29(58.0)	14(28.0)	11(22.0)	92(31.0)
5.	Family Education	Medium	35(70.0)	26(52.0)	32(64.0)	16(32.0)	31(62.0)	36(72.0)	176(72.0)
		High	5(10.0)	6(12.0)	8(16.0)	5(10.0)	5(10.0)	3(6.0)	32(11.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

because now SC (Scheduled Caste) families are educating their children.

Thus, it can be concluded from the table that majority of respondents belonged to middle age group, joint families of medium size. Majority of them had primary level of education and their family educational status was medium.

2. Economic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 depicts the distribution of respondents according to their economic profile viz. occupation, income, type of house, land holding, material possession and herd size.

Regarding occupation of respondents, it can be discussed from the table that majority of women (68%) had agricultural labourer as their major occupation. Only 1.7 percent women were doing service and 28.7 percent were housewife, while less than one per cent was engaged in household industry.

Regarding family occupation, it is clear from the table that agricultural labourer was the major family occupation (75%) in all the villages, except in Mangali village where main occupation was 'beads making' as household industry (70%). In aggregate 5.7 percent were associated with independent profession, 4.3 per cent in service and only 2 percent respondents were associated with farming.

Table 2 further illustrates that average monthly income of majority of respondents (71%) was less than Rs. 2000. Twenty-eight per cent women were not having any income, while only one woman was earning between Rs. 2,001 to 5,000.

Regarding family income, most of respondents (81%) had monthly family income between 'Rs. 2,001 to 5,000', followed by 'Rs. 5,001 to 10,000', (10%). Only one percent respondents fell in the category of 'more than 10,000' income per month.

Regarding type of houses, most of respondents (66.7%) lived in a *kucha pacca* houses, followed by *pacca* houses (24%). Less than one per cent (0.7%) respondents lived in *pacca* big houses.

As regards land holding, most of respondents (87%) had no land followed by less than 5 acres of land (12%), while only 1 per cent had land between 5 - 10 acres.

The material possession of respondents was measured by combining the scores for possession of household equipments, means of trans-

port and agricultural implements, as described in methodology. It is clear from table that majority of respondents (89%) had low level, followed by medium level (11%) of material possessions.

As regards herd size, majority of respondents (91%) had low and only 8.7 per cent of respondents had medium number of herd size.

It can thus be concluded from Table 2 that majority of respondents had agricultural labourer as their own and family occupation. Average monthly income of the respondents was less than Rs. 2000 while their family income per month was Rs 2001-5,000. Majority had no land, low level of material possession and herd size. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of respondents had low economic status.

General Problems Perceived by Scheduled Caste Women

Table 3 depicts general problems of SC women. A list of various problems as per literature was prepared and categorized into socio-cultural, educational, economic and communicational problems. Socio-cultural problems further were divided into two viz. untouchability and atrocities against scheduled caste families.

As regards untouchability, Table 1 reveals that more than 80 per cent respondents seldom face the problem of untouchability except in inter caste marriages where 94.3 per cent respondents stated that they will 'always' face problems in 'inter caste marriages with higher class'. Fourteen per cent reported that they were sometimes not allowed in public places. Similarly, untouchability was observed 'sometimes' in temples (13.3%), water resources (10.7%), marriages (8.3%), social functions (6%) and festivals (5%). Less than 2 per cent respondents, however, reported that they 'always' faced untouchability in various respects.

Regarding atrocities almost all the respondents reported that they seldom face atrocities like 'being beaten in public places', 'burn houses', 'forced out of the village' 'rape/ bad behavior with women'. However, 12 per cent reported that sometimes they are not allowed to vote or forced to vote for particular candidate.

Regarding educational facilities, majority of respondents did not face the problems such as lack of educational institutions (48%), unequal

Table 2: Economic profile of the respondents (N=300)

S. No.	Variable	Category	No. of respondents						Total
			Lud.	Shahp.	Mang.	Balaw.	Gabip.	Kharkh.	
1.	Occup. of Respondents	Housewife	13(26.0)	20(40.0)	8(16.0)	9(18.0)	18(36.0)	18(36.0)	86(28.7)
		Agri. labourer	36(72.0)	29(58.0)	36(72.0)	38(76.0)	31(62.0)	34(68.0)	204(68.0)
		Independent profession	1(2.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	1(2.0)	0(0.00)	3(1.0)
		Household industry	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2(4.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2(0.6)
		Service	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	1(2.0)	2(4.0)	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	5(1.7)
2.	Family Occupation	No work	0(0.00)	2(4.0)	0(0.00)	2(4.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	4(1.3)
		Agri. labourer	43(86.0)	38(76.0)	10(20.0)	44(88.0)	45(90.0)	45(90.0)	225(75.0)
		Independent profession	3(6.0)	5(10.0)	2(4.0)	4(8.0)	2(4.0)	1(2.0)	17(5.7)
		Household industry	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	35(70.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	35(11.7)
		Service	4(8.0)	5(10.0)	3(8.0)	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	0(0.00)	13(4.3)
3.	Monthly Income of Respondents	Farming	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2(4.0)	4(8.0)	6(2.0)
		No income	13 (26.0)	20(40.0)	8(16.0)	9(18.0)	18(36.0)	18(36.0)	86(28.7)
		Less than Rs 2,000	37(74.0)	30(60.0)	42(84.0)	41(82.0)	32(64.0)	31(62.0)	213(71.0)
		Rs 2,001 -5,000	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	1(0.3)
		More than 5,000	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
4.	Family Income per Month	No income	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
		Less than Rs 2,000	0(0.00)	2(4.0)	14(28.0)	2(4.0)	0(0.00)	5(10.0)	23(7.7)
		Rs2,001-5,000	41(82.0)	39(78.0)	33(66.0)	45(90.0)	43(86.0)	43(86.0)	244(81.3)
		Rs 5,001-10,000	9(18.0)	9(18.0)	3(6.0)	3(6.0)	4(8.0)	2(4.0)	30(10.0)
		More than 10,000	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	3(6.0)	0(0.00)	3(1.0)
5.	Type of Houses	Kucha	8 (16.0)	12 (24.0)	0(0.00)	4(8.0)	1(2.0)	0(0.00)	25(8.3)
		Kucha pacca	29 (58.0)	23 (46.0)	42(84.0)	38 (76.0)	33 (66.0)	35(70.0)	200(66.7)
		Pacca	13 (26.0)	15 (30.0)	8(16.0)	8(16.0)	14 (28.0)	15(30.0)	73(24.3)
		Pacca big house	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2 (4.0)	0(0.00)	2(0.7)
6.	Land Holding	No land	50 (100.0)	49 (98.0)	42(84.0)	50 (100.0)	27 (54.0)	44(88.0)	262(87.3)
		Less than 5 acre	0(0.00)	1(2.0)	8(16.0)	0(0.00)	20 (40.0)	6(12.0)	35(11.7)
		Between 5-10 acre	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	3(6.0)	0(0.00)	3(1.0)
		low	40 (80.0)	49 (98.0)	43(86.0)	48 (96.0)	42 (84.0)	45(90.0)	267(89.0)
7.	Material Possession	Medium	10 (20.0)	1(2.0)	7(14.0)	2(4.0)	8(16.0)	5(10.0)	33(11.0)
		High	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
		Low	48 (96.0)	43 (86.0)	49(98.0)	50 (100.0)	44 (88.0)	40(80.0)	274(91.3)
8.	Herd Size	Medium	2(4.0)	7(14.0)	1(2.0)	0(0.00)	6(12.0)	10(20.0)	26(8.7)
		High	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

treatment in schools (96%), poor environment for girl students in school (95%) and reservation benefits (91%). However, 77.3 per cent respondents always had the problem of financial scarcity for higher education and 87.3 per cent respondents 'sometime' reported that schools were not providing the benefits under government schemes.

As per economic problems, these were always faced by majority of respondents such as 'Lack of finance for any economic activities' (84.7%), 'Lack of knowledge regarding provision of bank loans to SC women' (82.7%), 'Less wages' (78.3%), 'High rate of interest on bank loan make unable to bank loan' (76%), 'Barrier in availing loans by rules and bank officials' (72%), 'Lack of

Table 3: General problems perceived by scheduled caste women/families (N=300)

S. No.	General problems of SC women	Always	Sometimes	Seldom
A. Socio-cultural Problems:				
1. Untouchability-				
	Do you agree with the view that untouchability occur in the village.	6 (2.0)	41(14.0)	253 (84.0)
	Not allowed for public places-			
	Wells/water resource	6 (2.0)	32 (10.7)	262 (87.3)
	Temples	5 (1.7)	40 (13.3)	255 (85.0)
	Marriages	5 (1.7)	25 (8.3)	270 (90.0)
	Social functions	4 (1.3)	18 (6.0)	278 (92.7)
	Festivals	4 (1.3)	15 (5.0)	281 (93.7)
	Inter caste marriages with higher caste	280 (93.3)	15 (5.0)	5 (1.7)
2. Atrocities- Do you feel or face atrocities in any case in the village?				
	Beat at public places	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	300(100.0)
	Burn houses	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	300(100.0)
	Forced out of the village	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	300(100.0)
	Voting not allowed/ forced to vote a particular candidate	0(00.0)	36(12.0)	264(88.0)
	Rape/ bad behavior with women	0(00.0)	0(00.0)	300(100.0)
B. Educational Problems:				
	Lack of educational institutions	17 (5.0)	140 (47.0)	143 (48.0)
	Financial/time scarcity for higher education	232 (77.3)	45 (15.0)	23 (7.6)
	School not providing the facilities provided under governmental schemes	13 (4.3)	262 (87.3)	25 (8.3)
	Unequal treatment in school	0(00.0)	12 (4.0)	288 (96.0)
	Poor environment for girl student in school	0(00.0)	15 (5.0)	285 (95.0)
	No reservation benefits	7 (2.3)	20 (6.6)	273 (91.0)
C. Economic Problems:				
	Lack of knowledge regarding income generating activities	197 (66.0)	33 (11.0)	70 (23.0)
	Lack of job opportunities	213 (71.0)	37 (12.0)	50 (17.0)
	Lack of awareness about reservation in jobs	215 (71.7)	42 (14.0)	43 (14.3)
	Lack of finance for economic activities	254 (84.7)	43 (14.3)	3 (1.0)
	Lack of knowledge regarding provision of bank loans to SC women	248 (82.7)	42 (14.0)	10 (3.3)
	Barrier in availing loans by rules and Bank officials	216 (72.0)	38 (12.7)	46 (15.3)
	High rate of interest on bank loan make difficult to avail bank loan	228 (76.0)	27 (9.0)	45 (15.0)
	Less wages	235 (78.3)	28 (9.3)	37 (12.3)
	No land rights	213 (71.0)	40 (13.3)	47 (15.7)
D. Communicational Problems:				
	Centralized communication	72 (24.0)	140 (46.7)	88 (29.3)
	Lack of involvement in village decisions	76 (25.3)	104 (34.7)	120 (40.0)
	Lack of modern means of communication	41 (14.0)	79 (26.0)	180 (60.0)
	Lack of awareness about various govt. schemes	36 (12.0)	224 (74.7)	40 (13.3)
	Extension agents/Govt. officials do not reach them	225 (75.0)	41 (13.7)	34 (11.3)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

awareness about reservation in jobs' (71.7%), 'Lack of job opportunities' and 'No land rights' (71%, each) and 'Lack of knowledge regarding income generating activities' (66%).

Regarding communicational problems, majority of respondents (75%) always faced the problem 'Extension agents/Government officials do not reach them'. Sometimes they faced 'Lack of awareness about various government schemes' (74.7%), 'Centralized communication' (46.7%), 'Lack of involvement in village decisions' (34.7%). However, 60 per cent respondents seldom faced the problem of 'Lack of modern means of communication'.

EXTENT OF PROBLEMS FACED BY SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN

The total incidences of all the problems of each category were combined together and divided into three categories of high, medium and low. Table 4 depicts village wise overall extent of problems faced by scheduled caste women. Regarding socio-cultural problems, it is clear from the table that majority of respondents (84.3%) in total had low problems followed by medium (13.7%) and high (2%). Table 4 further shows that only in Balawas village 82 per cent respondents reported medium and some (12%) faced high socio-cultural problems.

Table 4: Extent of problems faced by scheduled caste women (N=300)

S. No.	General problems of SC women	No. of respondents					Total	
		Ludas	Shahp.	Mang.	Balaw	Gabip.		Khark.
A. Socio-cultural Problems								
	High	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	6(12.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	6 (2.0)
	Medium	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	41(82.0)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	41(13.7)
	Low	50(100.0)	50(100.0)	50(100.0)	3 (6.0)	50(100.0)	50(100.0)	253(84.3)
B. Educational Problems								
	High	8(16.0)	5(10.0)	0(0.00)	3 (6.0)	1 (2.0)	0(0.00)	17 (5.6)
	Medium	39(78.0)	37(74.0)	4 (8.0)	30(60.0)	22(44.0)	8(16.0)	140(46.6)
	Low	3 (6.0)	8(16.0)	46(92.0)	17(34.0)	27(54.0)	42(84.0)	143(47.6)
C. Economic Problems								
	High	45(90.0)	42(84.0)	36(72.0)	46(92.0)	42(84.0)	43(86.0)	254(84.7)
	Medium	5(10.0)	8(16.0)	13(26.0)	4 (8.0)	6(12.0)	7(14.0)	43(14.3)
	Low	0(0.00)	0(0.0)	1 (2.0)	0(0.00)	2 (4.0)	0(0.00)	3 (1.0)
D. Communicational Problems								
	High	10(20.0)	8(16.0)	4 (8.0)	20(40.0)	12(24.0)	15(30.0)	69(23.3)
	Medium	40(80.0)	33(66.0)	18(36.0)	30(60.0)	35(70.0)	34(68.0)	190(63.0)
	Low	0(0.00)	9 (18.0)	28(56.0)	0(0.00)	3 (6.0)	1 (2.0)	41(13.7)

Regarding educational problems majority of respondents in Mangali (92%), Kharkhara (84%), Gabipur (54%) and in total 47.6%, had low problems while majority in Ludas (78%), Shahpur (74%) and Balawas (60%) faced medium educational problems.

The table further reveals that more than 80 per cent respondents faced high economic problems in all the villages like Balawas (92%), Ludas (90%), Kharkhara (86%), Shahpur, Gabipur (84%, each) except in Mangali where 72 per cent respondents faced high and 26 per cent faced medium economic problems.

Regarding communication problems table further reveals that majority of respondents in all the villages (63%) faced medium communication problems except in Mangali village where majority (86%) faced low communicational problems.

DISCUSSION

Dalit issue today is one of the worst examples of discrimination against, and the oppressive living conditions of millions of people in India. This discrimination persists despite government efforts to improve the situation through affirmative action and land reform policies in the last 50 years which were ostensibly directed toward access to education and government jobs and geared towards improving the conditions of bonded laborers. The critical element in discussing the status of *dalit* in India is the question of women within the *dalit* community who face the dual brunt of discrimination - based on their caste

and gender reported (Sainath 2000). Sundaram (2000) and Jain (2005) also reported that the crimes and atrocities against SCs and STs (Scheduled Tribes), particularly SC women are alarming. The number of crimes against SCs and STs were 38,927 in 1994 and 36,413 in 1996. The crimes committed include rape, murder, arson and kidnapping and abduction. Under two special legislations, mobile courts/special courts, special squads were set up and special officers were appointed to deal with crimes against SCs and STs.

The findings of the present study reveal that SC families in Hisar district face only minor socio-cultural problems except inter caste marriages involving higher caste. Honour killings have been reported in northern regions of India, mainly in the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Bihar, as a result of people marrying without their family's acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside their caste or religion (Sharell 2010). Alarmed by the rise of honour killings, the Government of India also planned to bring a bill in the Monsoon Session of Parliament in July 2010 to provide for deterrent punishment for 'honour' killings (Moily 2010).

All the respondents revealed that they had seldom faced atrocities in their village except for a small number of respondents who reported that sometimes they are not allowed to vote or forced to vote for a particular candidate. The low graph against atrocities may be because of the positive policies of the state that several schemes have been targeted for their welfare which might have

raised their attitude and status. Mirchpur incident in Hisar district was an isolated and an exceptional case of atrocity in the recent past. After this incident, Haryana Police decided to constitute a special group of five such 'socially aware' village women who would be instrumental in preventing atrocities and crimes against women like domestic violence, rape, kidnapping, dowry and murder. Police would provide them a toll free number to enable them to contact police to report any crime (Thaindian News, July 21, 2010). Further, their sufficient number (about 40%) in the village might have made them powerful as they had their own panchayat representative, their own temple and so on. However, despite all this positive discrimination policy and changing attitudes, SC communities who were low in the caste hierarchy remain low in the social order even today.

The majority of respondents (96 percent) in the present study revealed that there was no caste based discrimination in the schools as their wards were receiving equal treatment and the environment was good for girls' education in the schools. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents revealed that there were enough educational institutions for the primary and higher secondary classes but for the higher education they have to move nearby cities. Majority of respondents had enrolled their wards in the schools including their daughters. It may be because government is providing free and compulsory education to the girls under the 'Right to Education' Act. It will be helpful to increase the status of women in future. A survey of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan also reported that on the positive side, gender disaggregation of enrolments within SC and ST shows that girls' share in SC and ST enrolments are on par with the general trends in girls' enrolments. The DISE (District Information System for Education) data also shows that Other Backward Classes (OBC), comprise 43 percent of primary school enrolment and 42 percent at the upper primary level (SSA 2009).

The major problems perceived by respondents were economic with 71 percent of the surveyed population reported monthly income less than Rs 2000/- pm while 89 percent revealed their family monthly income less than Rs 5000/-. As 87.3 percent of the respondents did not have any piece of land, hence more income generating activities were needed to be introduced among

SC women/families for increasing their family income. Much more efforts were needed in order to help them stand on equal footing.

Spektor (2010) reported that women's education was very beneficial in increasing women's freedom of movement and participation in decision-making while decreasing domestic violence. Men's education, however, he reported has a mixed impact; increase in men's education lead to decrease in domestic violence against women, but they also restrict women's freedom of movement and participation in decision-making. The income generating activities for working women may not only contribute to their wealth assets on the household level but it may improve their autonomy and freedom of movement, and reduce domestic violence.

CONCLUSION

The profile of respondents revealed that majority of the respondents had poor socio-economic status. Majority had no land, low level of material possession and herd size. Regarding problems faced by SC women, majority of respondents reported that they seldom face socio-cultural problems, though there were some cases (14%) who faced untouchability and were not allowed to enter/ use public places. The cases of atrocities were almost nil except during elections when they are not allowed to vote or forced to vote for a particular party. The most serious problems perceived by them were economic viz. lack of finances, lack of job opportunities, lack of knowledge about various provisions and facilities etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Though Government has initiated several schemes for uplifting the status of this community, most respondents had low knowledge about these rights and provisions. Therefore, there is a need to create awareness among villagers about Govt. welfare schemes so that they can better avail them
- The major problems perceived by respondents were economic, hence efforts need to be done to enhance their income earning capacity so as to make them self reliant and not dependent citizens

REFERENCES

- Anonymous 2008. MP tops SC, ST Atrocities Cases List. *Times of India*, April 22, 2008, P. 5.
- Census of India 2001. Data Highlights: The Scheduled Castes. From < http://www.censusindia.net/scstmain/dh_sc_haryana.pdf> (Retrieved on April, 2007)
- Jain V 2005. *Educating Scheduled Caste Women*. New Delhi: Indian Publishers.
- Moly 2010. Bill in Parliament to Curb Honour Killing. From <<http://english.samaylive.com/nation/676466616.html>> (Retrieved on Feb, 2011)
- Misra SN 2007. *Towards the Development of Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Anmol Publishers.
- NHRC 2010. Dalit Issues Including Atrocities Perpetrated on Them. Human Right Issues. From <<http://www.nhrc.nic.in/hrissues.html>> (Retrieved on Feb, 2011)
- PRIA 2010. Training on Engaging Young Dalit Women for Social Development in Haryana. From < <http://www.pria.org/en/mi-about-pria/mi-divisions/mi-alip/1383>> (Retrieved on Feb, 2011)
- Sainath P 2000. Dalits in India: The Scheduled Castes More than a Half Century after Independence. From < <http://www.asiasource.org/asip/dalits.cfm>> (Retrieved on April, 2007).
- Sharell 2010. Honour Killing in India. Daily life in India. From <<http://www.whiteindianhousewife.com/2010/06/honourkilling-in-india/>> (Retrieved on Feb, 2011).
- Spektor Y Gean 2010. The Uneven Impact of Development: Women's Autonomy in India. From <<http://www.williams.edu/Economics/Honors/2010/spektorthesis.pdf>> (Retrieved Feb, 2011).
- SSA 2009. Improving participation of SC/ST Children. From < <http://www.educationforallindia.com/10thJRM-SSA-July-2009.pdf> > (Retrieved on Feb, 2011).
- Sundaram SI 2000. The Dalits: Rights and Empowerment. *Social Welfare*, 46 (1): 30-33.
- Thaindian News 2010. Rural Women to Check Crimes Against Peers. From <http://www.thaindian.com/.../rural-haryana-women-tohelp-check-crimes-against-peers_100399331.html> (Retrieved on Feb, 2011).