



CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBALISED ERA: THE CASE OF DALIT GIRL CHILDREN IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract-- Development of children, besides providing security against violence and exploitation, is one of the most important priorities of all the efforts, policies and programmes of governments the world over, and even in India, particularly from the 90's onwards (UNDP 1997). Girl children among the Dalits suffer not only from economic backwardness and poverty but also from a variety of health-related deprivations. Early marriage, frequent childbirth, absence of proper medical care, access to nutritive food and immunization, high rates of Infant and Maternal Mortality rates are common among them. The National Rural Health Mission and National Population Policies have specifically targeted the children among SC and ST categories to take them towards better health care and quality living. Besides ill health, the Dalit children also suffer from a number of other deprivations such as lack of education, access to basic needs for quality of life etc. Globalization was expected to solve these problems with its policies of liberalization and other economic measures by reducing inequality and providing opportunities for all. This paper is based on a study carried out in Karnataka on the status of Dalit children, selecting four districts, taluks and Grama Panchayats (GP) in them based on Human Development Indicators.

The study found that Dalit children continue to be most backward and exploited and lag behind other children both in the rural and urban areas, even in the Globalized era, in terms of access to literacy and schooling, suitable gainful employment and to socio-economic and political resources and citizenship, institutional finance and continue to suffer deprivation and backwardness. However, in the case of Dalit children from upper classes, the benefits of Globalization have reached but even for them, the impact of reservation system is single most in protecting their interests and development.

Key Words: *Globalization, Dalit Children, Social Exclusion, Poverty and Caste-based Oppression*

INTRODUCTION

In a developing economy like India, the development of the marginalized and oppressed communities like the Dalits, as the most poor and backward sections of the society, was suboptimal till independence, because of a number of factors like extreme underdevelopment or poverty and lack of visibility, caste based and menial, low paid occupations, practice of untouchability against them by the rest of the society leading to denial of opportunities for Basic needs, like drinking water and freedom of mobility, educational backwardness, marked social inequalities and administrative shortcomings. This situation was addressed only because of the strong and revolutionary thinking of Bharata Ratna Dr. B R Ambedkar in the pre-independence period when he launched a number of movements to liberate the dalits. But the most fitting contribution by him was when he drafted the Indian Constitution and provided constitutional guarantees to enable educational and occupational mobility to the hitherto deprived, oppressed, suppressed and depressed community of the Dalits in India. The triple processes of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) introduced during the initial years of the 1990s were expected to bring in all round development, opening up several channels of socio-economic opportunities. Introduction of electronic media along with the LPG was further expected to further speedy growth, erase disparities caused by region, religion, caste, class, gender and other traditional obstacles that hindered such social mobility, particularly to the socially excluded communities like the Dalits.

DALITS AS A SOCIALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITY AND DALIT GIRL CHILDREN AS THE MOST OPPRESSED

The Dalits are a numerically dominant community composed of several castes, sub castes besides being found in every state and region on Indian subcontinent. It is estimated that they form about 18.2% of the total population of India (census 2011). They have been exposed to a variety of socio political changes in the past 150-200 years and a large proportion of these changes have been initiated by social reformers who stood against caste system. A large number of economic, cultural, administrative, legal, religious and political forces have affected the Dalit men and women and their families. Everywhere they are the most disadvantaged groups in terms of their socio-economic conditions and marginal status. Their occupation, health, education and public participation are all governed by caste-based economic and societal factors.

When this is the case with the Dalit population, women and Girlchildren among Dalits are those with higher incidence of backwardness and poverty-both economic and socio-cultural poverty couples with exploitation from both within (from own families) and from the outside Society. It is sad to note that development and empowerment policies and programmes have not yet completely reached them and saved dalit communities from exclusion and marginalization; hence, successive plans and programmes have laid more and more emphasis upon the need to fill this gap in dalit upliftment by concentrating attention on especially the women and children among them. The

situation of Dalit Girl Child is very pathetic who are made to continue with patriarchal standards within their own households and oppressions and exclusion by the outside society.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The present paper is based on a study conducted in the state of Karnataka to understand the status and living conditions of Dalit Girl Children (DGC) in the context of the impact that Globalization and associated processes would have caused on their lives. The objectives of the study were to highlight the status and living conditions of the above groups in both rural and urban contexts by selecting sample households from a cross-section of Grama Panchayats (GPs), Taluks and Districts in different regions of the state of Karnataka¹.

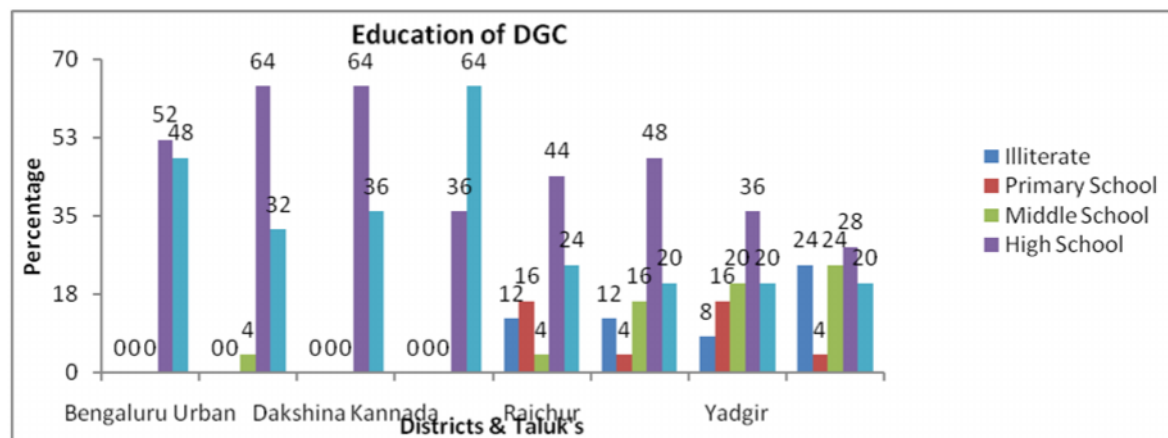
Findings

1. **Age:** Of the sample, 27.5 per cent of the total girls from all districts were in the 15 years of age group; 16.5 per cent are in the 16 years of age group, 27 per cent in the 17 years of age group and 29 per cent in the 18 years of age group.

2. **Education:** The backwardness of DGC in terms of their education is clear from the chart below. The data varies across field sites. The extremely bad and pathetic situation is in the northern districts, where we find illiteracy among a large number of girls, even today, in the 21st century, in the midst of so much of development all around and umpteen efforts of the state and central governments to introduce the benefits of education to the girls.

As far as the girl children from developed districts are concerned (Bengaluru and DK), we find that there are no illiterates (0.0%) than in the north (12 % & 16 % respectively). When this is the situation with schooling of girl respondents, then the finding about their college education is still more alarming. Only 3.3 per cent of the respondents have college education, that too stopped at PUC. They are mostly from the districts of Bengaluru and DK; and they are drawn from only the urban centres of the other two districts (40 % & 50% respectively).

Chart 1 Education of DGC in the Study Area



Source: Field Data

This holds mirror to the fact that girls' education is encouraged by Dalit families only when they are urban residing and when parents had stable income and were in formal jobs/employment. They consider educating their daughters a very expensive issue, despite that the government has a lot of special benefits/provisions and subsidies meant for them. Upper caste hatred over such Dalit parents who try to send their daughters (and sons) to higher education is no less harmful. To the question if they went to, or were studying in, government or private schools or college, 68.5 per cent of respondents replied as 'government' institutions. There is a clear cut divide between urban and rural dwelling respondents here: those who were studying in or went to government institutions were from the rural part of our study area, including the DK district which is advanced. The poor Dalit families where the father was illiterate and a wage earner himself, was found to have sent his daughters to local government school. Needless to say, the continuation of school education by daughters was hardly up to 5th standard and then eventually drop out was the recourse they have taken. The attraction of mid-day meals, free uniforms, scholarships and books were the added attraction to continue in school as far as was possible. Going to private schools and colleges, as

¹ Bangalore (Urban) District (highest HDI) and its East Taluk with one GP, Dakshina Kannada (DK) district (second highest HDI) with Mangalore taluk and one GP in that taluk, Raichur and Yadgir districts (Lowest HDI) and the taluks of Devadurga and Shorapur respectively, and one GP each from each respective districts - formed the universe of the study. Both secondary and primary data were collected to arrive at the findings discussed in the paper. Primary data was collected from a sample of total 200 Dalit Children @ 25 girls from each GP and taluk respectively. Only those DGC aged between 15-18 years were selected for the study.



noted earlier, is found to be true of Dalit parents in the sample, who were employed in formal sector jobs, or those who had somewhat better income.

3. *Occupation of the House Hold:*

The DGC in the study area have hailed from families where the parents were engaged in agriculture, private services, casual labour and government service. The average monthly income of the majority of households of girls was Rs. 15,000. The earnings varied depending on the type of work and the number of days of employment.

4. *Basic Amenities (Drinking Water, Source of Fuel etc):* Source of water for drinking, cooking and other domestic use were the bore wells and mini water scheme in the city of Bangalore also, where the women from Dalit background collected the required amount of water for cooking and drinking purposes from the bore wells. Only a few of them had private tap connections upto/till the entrance of their house. They collected their daily requirements of water from this source. Firewood and LPG were the two main sources of fuel used by the households of girl respondents in the study. Firewood is popular among the rural dwelling families and also those from the backward region while they and the others use LPG gas stoves for cooking.

5. *Jobs Preferred:* Job security and related aspects have forced the girls to favor government job (69.5 %) as against 14 per cent favouring agriculture. Private service is the least opted one (2.5 %) and 6.5 per cent were interested in working in private firms. Their employability later in life depended much upon their educational accomplishments. But as they are not even literate the chances of obtaining a job in the government were remote. But all of them aspired for government jobs in the future.

6. *Preference for Treatment for Ill Health:* A few of respondents have stated that they try home remedies first and then go to the hospital only when the sickness fails to be cured or when it gets aggravated. Going to the primary health centre is true of those girls who are in the rural areas, i.e., close to a Public Health Centre (PHC). Private hospitals are resorted to only out of convenience or when the disease aggravates, or when the government hospital fails to treat properly. Going to temples and religious shrines for treatment purposes was not a common practice among any one of them. There were only 1 per cent of girls (respondents) who said that their parents or they themselves purchased medicine from a drug store or pharmacy without even consulting a doctor.

7. *Use of Modern Gadgets:* Coming to modern gadgets, still a large majority (77 %) did not own cell phone. Those who owned were also the girls who were in an advanced age of adolescence - say 16-18 years. The mobile phone that they owned were of ordinary type (70%) and only 2 per cent accepted to be having complete knowledge of how to operate it. 19. 5 per cent of girls had internet facility on their mobile phone. 'The global age provides many opportunities for education and later on employment also' according to Susheela and her friends. 'Cell phone is a necessity to go up in life - jobs, lifestyles and even to question and fight against injustice of any kind - caste, class or gender based. The phone is recharged once a month by all the 23 per cent of our girl respondents (who possessed a cell phone). The maximum amount spent for such a recharge was Rs. 250 pm or even less.

8. *Opinion of DGC about Electronic Media and Portrayal of Women:* Nearly 81.5 per cent of respondents felt that women are shown as only Home Makers on the TV and films. This was affecting the young girls. It was affecting their own self respect. But at the same time, the girls felt that the media also portrayed women and girls as independent and as achievers and positive doers. Most of them felt that the mass media projects women and girls as weak and objects of sex. The worst projection was by showing an ideal girl or woman to be thin (not hefty) and as fair, young and well dressed to qualify to be an ideal girl/woman. 62 per cent and 37 per cent of girls strongly agreed and just agreed to this opinion, respectively, about the portrayal of women on the TV. These projections are affecting poor households where girls influenced by the TV where such role models are shown, tried to imitate them.

9. *Awareness about Child Rights:* Amazingly, majority of girl children and their mothers knew about the anti child labour law. But complete details about the child labour laws, rights of children and policies about relief and rehabilitation of children who were working - were known to only a marginal portion of total girl respondents (13.5% had 'more' awareness; 67 % had 'some' awareness). Surprisingly only 1 per cent mentioned newspaper as the chief source of such knowledge while for 75 per cent of girls, it was the TV that formed the major source of information on such laws and rights. Friends and Neighbours and Social media stood next high with 65 per cent and 7.5 per cent of girls acknowledging their support in creating awareness regarding issue of free medicines and paying attention, emergency services by the local hospital (PHC) were still not available to them in this Globalized era.

10. *Lifestyles:* Regarding changes in girls' lifestyle practices as a result of the impact of Globalization and other processes, most of the girls (all one could say) stated that they continued to wear traditional dress (98%) and sometimes a chudidhar (58%). From 10 - 18 years, the dress code is the chudidhar, and in some villages, as the girl is married off when she is 18 years old, saree becomes the pattern of dress. Jeans and T Shirts were stated to be worn by the very rich among the respondent households and in the urban areas including in Raichur and Yadgir (3.5 % and 1 %).

Face powder and lotions were the common cosmetics used by the girls. Sprays and perfumes were more common among the slightly rich, but even among those Dalit girls living in the rural areas. Varieties of hair clips, ear studs and other jewelry were used by the girls, but the quality and design went with what they could afford. In very poor households, the girls wore a faded one for years to go. The girls stated that they apply these cosmetics 'sometimes' (73.5%) while 18.5% use them 'always'.

Visiting a beauty parlour today is very common. Altogether those patronizing a parlour for facial, haircut etc, formed 33% of the total sample who were using the parlour services 'sometimes'. The parlours are also costly or expensive to patronize 67% who felt so and were not using them.

11. *Practice of Untouchability:* Not just caste, but even gender discrimination is at its glory. This is clear when we look at the responses of 62.5 per cent of girls that they were 'always' not respected by the non-Dalits. 36 per cent felt that it is so only 'sometimes'. The girls told us that they don't even go that side where the non-Dalits lived because of this caste based discrimination. But there was a difference: the girls in the upper caste or non-Dalit locality were not practicing untouchability against them as their elders did. The girls told us that 'there was an impact of globalisation on the behaviour of youngsters who do not respect caste rules and dis-

crimination etc. But they (the upper caste girls and boys) are afraid of their elders/parents; so they keep a distance from us'. 'They call us home while returning from college or school to drink water etc, but we don't go because their mother or grandmother practices untouchability.

Table 1 Practice on Untouchability

District	Taluk & GP	Access to all sources of drinking water like non-dalits				Treatment to Dalit children on par with non-Dalit children in schools & colleges				Treatment on par with non-Dalit children in seating arrangements, plates for MDM, Participation in extra-curricular activities				Treatment on par with non-Dalit children in hotels, temples & religious functions etc			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Bengaluru Urban	Bengaluru East (MC)	25	0							18	7	0		18	7	0	
	%	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	72. 0	28. 0	0.0	0.0	72. 0	28. 0	0.0	
	DB Halli	22	3							9	16	0		0	25	0	
	%	88. 0	12. 0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	36. 0	64. 0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	
	Total	47	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	23	0	0	18	32	0	
	%	94. 0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	54. 0	46. 0	0.0	0.0	36. 0	64. 0	0.0	
Dakshina Kannada	Mangaluru (MC)	25	0							25	0	0		25	0	0	
	%	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	
	Haleyangadi	25	0							25	0	0		25	0	0	
	%	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	
	Total	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	0	0	
	%	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10 0.0	0.0	0.0	
Raichur	Devdurga (TMC)	23	2							3	11	11		1	24	0	
	%	92	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	44	44	0	4	96	0	

	Kirabgera	25	0							1	14	10		1	23	1	
	%	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	56.0	40.0	0.0	4.0	92.0	4.0	
	Total	48	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	25	21	0	2	47	1	
	%	96.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	50.0	42.0	0.0	4.0	94.0	2.0	
Yadgir	Shorapur (CMC)	23	2							8	8	9		7	18	0	
	%	92.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.0	32.0	36.0	0.0	28.0	72.0	0.0	
	Geddalamari	20	5							3	11	11		1	24	0	
	%	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	44.0	44.0	0.0	4.0	96.0	0.0	
	Total	43	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	19	20	0	8	42	0	
	%	86.0	14.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.0	38.0	40.0	0.0	16.0	84.0	0.0	
TOTAL		188	12							92	67	41		78	121	1	
Percentage		94.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	46.0	33.5	20.5	0.0	39.0	60.5	0.5	

Source: Field Data

1=Always; 2= Sometimes; 3= Never; 4= Can't Say

Speaking of drinking water, one observation that the girls made was that the Dalit colony where they live has a separate bore well or mini water supply point from where alone they collect their daily quantum of water. It resulted in their responses being influenced by this practice and majority of girls (94 %) responded that they 'always' had access. The remaining 6 per cent stated that they 'sometimes' had access. This is one example, the best example, to prove that the practice of untouchability is not yet erased from the society - mainly in the rural areas. The girls felt bad but asserted that they had to collect water only from the sources that are available in their colony. While water is not yet free from the shackles of the caste based untouchability and other practices, the expectation was that it is not that easy to practice it in the secular areas - like in the educational institutions. The girls in the sample districts were asked if they suffered from the heinous practice of untouchability (as they did in the case of collection of water that we just now discussed) in the educational institutions also? 100 per cent strongly disagreed to it. But what is worrisome is that 20.5 per cent of responses which leaned towards a positive reply - i.e., the present day practice of untouchability in schools and colleges of the study area where the children never sit together in mid-day meals etc. The sad information given by girls was that they were aware of the anti-untouchability Act and other related legal enactments condemning untouchability practice in any form. There were 46 per cent and 33.5 per cent of girls, respectively who stated that there was 'always' and 'sometimes' equality in the school, in the seating arrangements, plates given for mid day meals and participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school. Those who were strongly aware hailed from the developed districts of Bangalore and DK (in the latter the response for equality was 100 %). In some villages, we could even see that the plates in which the children partook the mid day meal were segregated and in those the Dalit children ate, were kept separately. The seating arrangements in a few villages of the north were separate based on Dalit and non-Dalit background. In other spheres too, the practice of untouchability was visible to a great extent. The girls were questioned that if they were treated on par with non Dalit children in hotels, temples and religious/cultural functions such as entry, invitation, sitting arrangements and



discrimination in providing plates and glasses, serving meals etc. First of all the girls told us that they don't go to temples where they are humiliated on caste basis. They go to far off shrines like Tirupathi or Mantralaya but not to local temples. They do not want to face any humiliation by the priests in known places and prefer to go to places where people do not know who they are. Their brothers and in some cases, fathers have taught them and their mothers this. Secondly, regarding hotels too the girls told us that they opt to go to the taluk headquarters and eat in roadside shops and restaurants, where the question of untouchability does not arise because, they do not enter the hotels. This means that the practice of untouchability is still strong and active in these villages. 39 per cent of the girls have stated that this was practiced 'sometimes' and that they don't have equality in these public places even. Even in extra curricular activities like dancing or singing, they are not treated equally - was the strongly agreed upon opinion of the respondents.

12. *Violence on Girls and Women:* Violence at public places (as a question) was considered to be happening sometimes (according to 34.5 per cent) and as a negative impact of globalization on their economic lives. The elderly girls stated that it has impacted them profoundly but were not able to elaborate how. The positive responses to the question have come mostly (66 % from Raichur and 42% from Yadgir) - from the two Hyderabad Karnataka region's districts, while the strong and simple disagreements are the opinions of the girls from the developed districts. They also agreed that caste-based atrocities have increased in the wake of globalisation. The girls added that the situation after globalization has led to lesser bargaining power among their parents to seek good employment (69.5%) besides causing forced migrations and the consequent result is increasing poverty, which have made health situation become worse. Questioned if promotion of better educational opportunities for Dalit girl children acts as one of the forces shaping their educational status and lifting them out of poverty and illiteracy, the responses here too were far from being entirely positive. The opinions were divided between agreeing (6.5% strongly and 42 % agreeing) and a higher number of them (46 % disagreeing and 5.5% strongly so) not accepting the statement. The agreement is almost total in the case of the respondents from Bangalore Urban district and nearly so in DK. The regional variations in responses are interesting here. According to a majority of girl respondents, globalisation has not made any difference in the lifestyle or living conditions of Dalits and they are not consulting a doctor even when sick because of the prohibitive cost of medicines, doctor's fees and treatment, although the treatment and medical services in the government hospitals was not good or up to the mark. Cost of travel, loss of wage work on that day and the expenses of fee, medicines and more than all, the need to take rest at home - were costly. "Doctors are also not trustworthy who do not care for the poor; if it is a Dalit they would not even place the stethoscope and examine properly. Only the rich Dalits get such diagnosis as they know the rules and can pay money to the doctor and other staff" were the remarks of Kamala of Geddalamari GP in Shorapur taluk of Yadgir district. To the question if the EM has enhanced the living conditions and opportunities for them, if it has enabled their access to participation and control over certain resources that upper caste and class children use, 71 per cent of the Dalit girls in the study area gave a negative response.

The responses to the question whether EM plays a dominant role in preventing sex trafficking and violence against Dalit girl children, those who disagreed to the statement were 24.5 per cent and those who strongly disagreed were 75.5 per cent. But the girls agreed that the 'EM is a powerful tool to reckon with and it has enhanced better opportunities for all in general and children in particular. It has certainly opened new channels of living with dignity and new ways of working, interacting and learning for us'.

13. *Impact of Electronic Media on the Lives of DGC:* Questioned if the EM was that powerful to control the occurrence and spread of sex trafficking and violence against Dalit girl children? the girls responded expressing lot of apprehensions and doubts. They felt that 'holding a computer or cell phone will not protect us, but it may harm us more because of thefts; only freedom from poverty and misery can help' (Rekha from D B Halli GP in Bangalore Urban district). If EM plays a pivotal role in promoting education among Dalit girls? was also dismissed as not true (46 % disagreed and 54 % strongly so). The girls were asked if the exposure to Electronic Media earned its reputation to be the key to information flow intensifying sustainable development among Dalit girl children? The statement was not acceptable to many girls (83 % & 8 %). They felt that certainly the Electronic Media has not planted its deep roots (71%). There was not much regional variation either. The electronic media has neither opened up new ways of interaction and learning for them as opined by 86.5 % of the girl respondents across the study area. Their access to participation and control over the electronic media has also been not equal to that of their counterparts among non-Dalits and upper classes. 73.5 per cent of girls felt so, while 26.5 per cent mainly from the backward areas in the study felt that it did provide access. On the one hand, they said EM is a universal phenomenon and it ought to impact all our lives. But there is no special opening for the Dalits to utilise its benefits. In fact, the Dalits find it hard to get a chance to use it (computer and other such gadgets). Only the rich and urban resident among the Dalit girls may have a chance to get impacted and the EM may have deep roots into the day-to-day life of such Dalit girls -those in medical and engineering education, those working in IT companies or in MNC jobs. The girls left a disappointed note as an answer to the question whether EM has been able to increase awareness about Dalit rights among Dalit women. 92 per cent disagreed and remaining 8 per cent strongly so. In their view, more than the EM it is the activities of the Dalit Sangarsh Smith and other Ambedkar Organisations in the taluk and district which have been fighting for Dalit rights. Education and sound knowledge were considered by the respondents and their families as shields to the Dalit girls to progress in the path of social mobility and advancement. Many girls expressed desire to go abroad and continue studies and definitely take up work there, marry someone and settle down there. They have no trust in the politicians in their service of eradicating caste and untouchability, due to corruption and malpractices in beneficiary selection.

CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, the study has shown that the goals of globalization may have been ideal in the sense of creating equality & justice and in eradicating social exclusion for the poor and deprived communities. But in reality, its impact has only been marginal in reaching the most backward and hitherto excluded communities such as the Dalits, and in particular, reaching the children among them. It has also shown that the rich poor divide among the Dalits is clearly visible in terms of the changes that have been accepted by them or which have been



able to impact their lives. Regional differences are the other major dividing force as far as these impacts are concerned. Further, whatever changes have reached the Dalits and girl children, the role of government programmes, mainly reservation of seats and provision of certain benefits to them has played a major and critical role in providing access to basic amenities and opportunities but not yet to social equality.

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