CHAPTER-VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social geography is an analysis of social phenomena as expressed in space. The term ‘social phenomena’ encompasses the whole framework of human interaction with environment, leading to the articulation of social space by the diverse human groups in different ways. Social geography has genetic relations with other social sciences, particularly with social anthropology, sociology, social history, archaeology and socio-linguistics. Social geography deals with the spatial distribution of social groups. Social groups can be distinguished with reference to ethnic, religious, professional and other features. These social groups have greater influence on landscape in terms of type and deployment of houses, land use pattern etc.

It is a fact that the problem of regional disparities is almost universal. Its extent may differ in different regions but in India, regional disparities have remained a major unsolved problem. Problem of regional disparities, however, vary both spatially and socially depending on a range of historical and ecological factors and the prevailing socio-economic and cultural practices of the region. Different regions of a nation are generally endowed with different climate and natural resources. These coupled with historical and sociology differences and differences in political set up and conditions lead to different rates of regional disparities in socio-economic development.

The regional disparities in socio-economic development of scheduled castes and non-Scheduled castes households in an economy are extremely bad. These disparities are mainly due to the
low rate of development as well as unequal distribution of small gains of development which are influenced by both geographical and economic factors. This leads to the disparities in the distribution of income, assets, landholdings, occupation and educational attainment and hence causes variations in the development of the different sections of the society. One of the most striking experiences of planned development in India has been that economically backward and socially oppressed people among the different socio-economic groups have gained little.

The benefits of successive five year plans have been passed more to the already developed regions. Even within such regions benefits accrued proportionately more to the already rich and socially privileged sections of the society, perpetuating social inequalities and disparities of the land holding, occupational structure, Income level, educational attainments and modern assets-distribution. The continuance of such a process is bound to enhance disparities in regional development and income distribution in the society. The benefits of planning accruing to selected regions and selected people are undesirable from the point of view of balanced regional development and distributive justice. Most backward regions and most needy people within such regions benefit the least even in planned development efforts in India.

Inequalities accentuated even among the continuation of intra as well as interclass wise disparities in the distribution of assets, income, employment, consumption and thereby in the level of living within the region as between the regions among the different section of the society is widely believed to be an important cause of prevailing social tensions and unrest. The prevalence of poverty, inequalities and unemployment constitutes a major problem in any developing economy. It is commonly believed that inequalities in the distribution
of assets, income and consumption expenditure are growing and this trend, if unchecked, would aggravate tensions and endanger the country's stability. The development policies of the government are increasingly judged not merely by their success in achieving a fast development of real output but also in terms of how the fruits of development are distributed between different classes and regions. The gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' has not been reduced in India, even after more than six decades of political freedom. One of the most striking experiences of planned efforts in India is that economically backward regions and socially oppressed people in both developed and backward regions have gained little.

Caste is a basic attribute of the Indian social structure. For centuries it has served as a major reference point in social interaction and continues to do so in some form or the other even today. Social hierarchy is based on caste and it is this philosophical vision that determines the behavior of millions of Indian people in whichever walk of life they are. Thus caste in independent India has become a volatile issue. The existence of untouchability has been justified within the context of Hindu religious thought as the ultimate and logical extensions of Karma and rebirth. Hindus believe that persons are born untouchables because of the accumulation of sins in previous lives. Hindu texts describe these people as foul and loathsome, and any physical contact with them was regarded as polluting. Untouchables in urban India are crowded together in squalid slums, while in rural India, where the vast majority of Untouchables live, they are exploited as landless agricultural laborers and ruled by terror and pressure. As evidence of this, several cases from 1991 can be cited: On June 23, 1991 fourteen untouchables were slaughtered in the eastern state of Bihar. On August 10, 1991 six Untouchables were shot to death in the northern state of Uttar
Pradesh. On August 16, 1991, an untouchable woman was stripped in public and savagely beaten in the southern state of Andra Pradesh. On September 6, 1991, in the western state of Maharastra, an untouchable policeman was killed for entering a Hindu temple. Official Indian figures on violent crimes by caste Hindus against untouchables have averaged more than 10,000 cases per year, with the figures continuing to rise. The Indian government listed 14,269 cases of atrocities by caste Hindus against untouchables in 1989 alone. However, Indian human rights workers report that a large number of atrocities against untouchables, including beatings, gang-rapes, arson and murders, are never recorded. Even when charges are formally filed, justice for Untouchables is rarely dispensed.

Scheduled Castes (Dalits) in India have been socio-economically oppressed, culturally subjugated and politically marginalized for centuries. After six decades of independence, it is evident that the roots of this system are encompassing the economic structure of the society. The deprived castes are far behind the other sections of Indian society. The proportion of self-employment persons among scheduled castes population is extremely low and as a result the level of unskilled (manual) wage labour is surprisingly high. High incidence of wage labour among scheduled castes population, however, is not matched by a favorable employment rate and wage earning. The unemployment rate among them is more than double that of the other castes. Added to this, the daily wage earning generally tends to be slightly on a lower side, particularly in the rural non-farm sector. With a high level of dependence on wage labour, coupled with higher unemployment rates and lower daily wages, low consumption expenditure is an obvious outcome, and hence the poverty level is very high compared to the rest of the population in the country. It is thus beyond doubt that the historical impact of
traditional caste based restrictions on the ownership of property, access to employment opportunities and freedom of occupation are visible in significant measures even six decades of political freedom.

One of the main goals of government policies shall promote with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. The scheduled castes contribute to the sustenance and growth of the production system of the country and the nation's economy. Experience of first four decades of planning has revealed that the process of economic development and modernization has not benefited the weaker sections to the extent it did the other communities, though growth with social justice has been accepted as the main objective for the planned economic development. The fruits of progress and flow of benefits have not reached the majority of scheduled castes to the extent these should have been. They have suffered from the dual disabilities of severe economic exploitation and social discrimination. They have very few assets and are totally dependant upon agricultural pursuits and the low income generating occupations like shoe making, sweeping bamboo basket making, black smithy, weaving, poultry, piggery etc. It is obvious that the development efforts for the scheduled castes must be assigned a central position in the national endeavor for growth with social justice. Accordingly, a state committed to a policy of growth with social justice has got to adopt policies and programmers in such a manner that it should minimize the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The benefits from all sectors of development should flow in equitable and just manner to all groups and communities for reducing socio-economic cleavages.
In view of the above, concerted efforts have been made through the planning process to maximize the growth with distributive justice to narrow down the inequalities in pursuance of the objectives laid down in the preamble of the constitution and directive principles of State Policy. By the end of the fifth five year, it became apparent that attempts to quantify financial and physical benefits to scheduled castes have not achieved the desired results. Realizing the need for special development which can directly benefit the scheduled caste families, earmarking provision from the sectoral plans in proportion to the scheduled castes population in the target groups; providing institutional credit and marketing facilities and extending adequate social amenities to the scheduled castes families particularly to those below the poverty line, were considered to be the operational made of making the benefit of development reach this relegated section of our society. All these activities were obviously required to be undertaken in an integrated manner so that each scheduled caste beneficiary family receives a package of development assistance.

Although the Government of India is very much interested in improving the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes, the results of these have yet to be seen in rural areas of the country and more especially in the area of Himachal Pradesh. Survey yielded that the socio-economic condition of scheduled castes, in general, and untouchable castes in particular, was very pitiable in the interior villages of Himachal Pradesh. Untouchables are socially, educationally, economically and politically backward. Although government has given all facilities to the Scheduled Castes, i.e. free education up to high School classes, scholarship facilities, reservation in services, free legal facilities and entry into religious places, observation reveals that these facilities could not be practically availed by Scheduled castes in the interior parts of Himachal Pradesh. It is because they have either no knowledge of
their rights or they are forcibly deprived of the rights and privileges that belong to them. Under such a state of dealings, it is necessary to conduct an empirical study in order to be conversant with the actual conditions of the scheduled castes. The contemporarily of Indian culture can be better prescribed, if in stead of confining our social researchers in historical or religious perspective, we may divert our studies towards more realistic and suitable secular values of the present age.

A number of attempts have been made at the national level to study the level of regional disparities in socio-economic development of castes i.e.-general castes and scheduled castes, but not such detail and comprehensive study has so far been conducted in the field of geography in the state of Himachal Pradesh. In this study an attempt has been made to explain regional disparities in socio-economic development of scheduled castes and non scheduled castes in Himachal Pradesh in context of the inequalities in the distribution of assets, income land holding, occupational structure, educational level and modern amenities etc. The impact of existing government policies and programmes on the upliftment of the different socio-economic groups has been worked out. The findings of this study will prove helpful to the planners and policy-makers for the effective implementation of programmes aiming at the betterment of the weaker sections as well as to the academicians and researchers to carry out further research on the levels of living and inequalities among the different socio-economic groups of Himachal Pradesh. The present study deals with the regional disparities in socio-economic development among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in physiographic region of Himachal Pradesh namely Trans Himalayan region, greater Himalayan region, middle Himalayan region and Shivalik region. The study is more contemporary in nature.
Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic Profile of Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled castes.

2. To study the prevailing inequality and social disparities.

3. To study the comparative picture of different regions of the study area with respect to the socio-economic development of the two section i.e. schedule and non-scheduled castes.

4. To study the impact of government policies on the caste question in Himachal Pradesh.

The present study is an attempt to investigate the regional disparities in the socio-economic attainment of the two communities viz., scheduled castes & non-scheduled castes. Primary survey of 28 villages in seven blocks of different regional locations of Himachal Pradesh provides unique findings which have been discussed in the present study. A total sample of 280 households of scheduled castes and 280 households of non-scheduled castes were surveyed.

The Present study reveals that there were wide differences in land holding, occupational structure, income level, educational attainment and modern facilities among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in the study area. Socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes were very poor in comparison to non-scheduled castes even after more than six decades of political freedom of the country.

Agriculture is the backbone of rural economy and the same is true in case of Himachal Pradesh. There are 8.63 lakh cultivators in Himachal Pradesh owing an operational area of about 10.10 lakh hect. Out of which about 1.89 lakh holdings (22.36 per cent) are in respect of scheduled caste farmers. Out of 1.89 lakh scheduled caste farmers about 78.81 per cent and 14.52 per cent belong to the
category of marginal and small farmers respectively. Average size of the holdings of Scheduled caste farmers is about 0.73 hect. The most of the scheduled caste families fall under the category of cultivators and agricultural labourers and some of the Scheduled castes families are marginal and small farmers who are at the lower fade of economic strata of the people earn their livelihood through agriculture and labour. A sizeable part of scheduled castes cultivated land is un-irrigated besides the fields being narrow, sloppy and tiny, farming being subjected to vagaries of weather and wrath of nature. The average size of land-holdings of scheduled castes in the study area has been found at 3.45 bighas per household, which is much lower than that of the land holdings size of non-scheduled castes population (i.e.) (12.35 bighas). There were marked variations in this regard at the physiographic level of Himachal Pradesh, in case of both the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes.

The largest size of land holding in case of scheduled castes was found in the Shivalik Himalayan Region where it was recorded at 4.6 bighas followed by Middle Himalayan region where it was 3.9 bighas and greater Himalayan region where it was 2.5 bigha. The lowest size of landholding was found in Trans Himalayan region where it was just 2.2 bighas (for detail see Table 7.2 in Chapter VII). As noted above the average size of land holding of Non-Scheduled Castes was found to be 12.35 bighas, a figure which was almost three times the land holding of the scheduled castes. Moreover, the average size was not uniformly distributed in all the regions of the study area. It varied between as low as 9.9 bighas in Trans Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh and as high as 13.9 in Shivalik Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh (Table 6.2). The second highest average size was found in Middle Himalayan Region (13.5 bighas) followed by Greater Himalayan region (10.9). Where it was recorded lowest in Trans Himalayan region (9.9 bigha). Thus there was a glaring inequality in
the size of landholding between the two communities. Even the largest average of the scheduled castes almost equaled the lowest of the non-scheduled castes.

As noted above, the percentage of marginal farmer among Non-Scheduled Castes was found to be 6.07 per cent. A figure which was almost very low to the percentage of marginal farmers among the scheduled castes. Further average percentage of marginal farmers however were not uniformly distributed in all the regions of the study area. The second highest per cent was found in greater Himalayan Region (6.25 Per cent) followed by Shivalik Himalayan region (6.25 Percent).

Thus there was a glaring inequality in the percentage of marginal farmers, Small farmers, medium farmers and large farmers between the two communities. Most of the scheduled castes were recorded in the categories of marginal farmers (86.42 Per cent) and followed by categories of small farmers (13.57) whereas most of the non-scheduled castes were found in the category of small farmers (73.57 percent) and followed by the categories of medium farmers (13.21 Per cent), Large Farmers (7.14 Per cent) and Marginal Farmers (6.07 Per cent).

The social and economic well being of a community depends largely upon the nature of activities in which its members are engaged. The nature of activities in turn depends upon a variety of physical, economic, demographic and cultural factors operating in an area. An analysis of occupational composition, therefore, unfolds a variety of economic, cultural and demographic aspect of a society. The nature and variety of physical resource also, lays down the foundation for the nature of occupational composition in any area. Broadly various occupations can be classified into three categories namely, primary, secondary and tertiary. The scheduled caste from
region of Shivalik and Middle Himalaya especially the district of Hamirpur and Mandi of Himachal Pradesh have been found as serving in the army. Probably due to the effect that their ancestors also served in armed forces.

For the purpose of convenience, the data collected in respect of occupation have been grouped into three major occupational categories, viz., primary, secondary and tertiary. From table 6.3 it is revealed that over two-thirds 72.14 per cent of Scheduled Caste population are still engaged in primary occupation followed by secondary activities where their share is the second highest 17.5 per cent. The tertiary sector accounts for only 10.35 per cent. These values, however, represent a great improvement over the situation obtained in 1991. The corresponding per cent shares of scheduled castes in each of these occupations were 79.1, 11.4 and 9.8 respectively. Although the secondary occupation occupy the second position (17.5 per cent) among the scheduled caste, still they are better in this regard. On the other hand, it was recorded 18.92 per cent among non-scheduled castes. It is due to the fact that majority of the scheduled castes found in the study area were artisans and hence being engaged in many kinds of household-industries resulting increase in the share of secondary sector. Their low participation in the tertiary activities, however, revealed about their socio-economic level. In terms of area wise distribution the per cent share of each major activity varied notably across different region of the study area.

The share in the primary sector among scheduled castes varied between 82.5 per cent in Trans Himalayan Region, 75 per cent in greater Himalayan region, followed by 73.5 per cent in Middle Himalayan region and 62.5 per cent in Shivalik Himalayan Region. These entire regions show high proportion of workers in primary
activities which are entirely settled in rural areas. The low proportion of workers in secondary and tertiary sector in these regions is, therefore, easily understandable. By contrast, relatively low share in primary sector in Shivalik Himalayan region is attributable to its being socio-economically more advanced thereby leading to more job opportunities available in the other two sectors of economy.

Spatially, the distribution of households engaged in different occupations varied across different regions of the study area. Trans Himalayan region and greater Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh have recorded highest percentage of non-scheduled castes households engaged in primary occupations. On the other hand Shivalik Himalayan region has emerged as having a very small numbers of non-scheduled castes households involved in primary occupations. In case of secondary occupation, Shivalik Himalayan region occupied the first position where the proportion of non-scheduled caste households engaged in these occupations was as high as 25 per cent. The Shivalik Himalayan region has forged ahead in the developmental activities, thus, the relatively higher proportion of workers in secondary occupation is easily understandable.

As noted earlier, the tertiary activities occupied second important position among the non-scheduled castes. In Shivalik Himalayan region, the participation of non-scheduled castes in tertiary occupations was 26.5 per cent. The lowest participation in this regard was found in greater Himalayan region where it was only 21.25 per cent among the non-scheduled castes. The relatively higher share of non-scheduled castes in tertiary occupations can be easily understood in view of their higher share of employment in government jobs. But only 10.35 per cent of scheduled castes households were found engaged in tertiary occupation (for detail see Table 7.4). The role of real income in an individual's life hardly requires any emphasis, while on the one hand a certain degree of income is essential for sustenance of life, on the other, it also
determines man's status in the society. The latter operates more strongly at least in the Indian social set up. There is no denying the fact that by and large scheduled castes are at disadvantaged position everywhere in the country in the matter of per household income. The situation in the study area is no way different from this statute.

The physiographic regional distribution of income among scheduled castes was equally varied. Income level below rupees 1000 among scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Trans Himalayan region (45 per cent) followed by Greater Himalayan region (27 per cent), Middle Himalayan region (15 per cent) and the lowest per cent has been found in Shivalik Himalayan region (1.25 per cent). On the other hand, not even a single household of Non-Scheduled castes is found in this level of income group (below rupees 1000). Income level between rupees 5000 to 10000 among scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Shivalik Himalayan region (21.25 per cent) followed by greater Himalayan region and middle Himalayan region (16.25), and lowest percent has been found in trans Himalayan region (7.5 per cent). Income level between rupees 10000 to 15,000 among scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Shivalik Himalayan region (18.75 per cent) followed by Middle Himalayan region (11.25 per cent), and lowest percentage has been found in trans Himalayan region and greater Himalayan region (5 per cent).

Income level between rupees 15000 to 20000 among scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Shivalik Himalayan region (16.25 per cent) followed by Middle Himalayan region (3.75 per cent), and not even a single household of scheduled castes has been found in Trans Himalayan region and greater Himalayan region. On the other hand not even a single household among the non-scheduled castes is recorded in income level below rupees 1000 in study area, where as 18.92 per cent of households among scheduled castes were found in this level of income group. Income level between rupees
10000 to 15000 among Non-Scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Middle Himalayan region (23.75 per cent) followed by Greater Himalayan region (21.25 per cent), Shivalik Himalayan region (18.75 per cent) and the lowest percentage has been found in trans Himalayan region (12.5 per cent).

Income level between rupees 15000 to 20000 among Non-Scheduled households are recorded highest in Shivalik and Greater Himalayan region (28.75 per cent) followed by Middle Himalayan region (20 per cent), and lowest percentage has been found in Trans Himalayan region (12.5 per cent), whereas not even a single household of scheduled caste has been found in Trans Himalayan region and greater Himalayan in this group of income level.

Income level above rupees 20000 among scheduled castes households are recorded highest in Shivalik Himalayan region (26.25 per cent) followed by greater Himalayan region (18.75 per cent), Middle Himalayan Region (15 per cent) and the lowest percentage has been found in Trans Himalayan region (10 per cent) on the other hand not even a single household of scheduled castes has been found in Trans Himalayan region and greater Himalayan region of the study area. The inequality in income level among scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes households are the product of cultural, historic, economic and political processes operating in the study area.

Though education by itself do not generate socio-economic progress, but lack of it can certainly be an impediment in the development process in any region. Literacy is essential for eradicating poverty and mental isolation. By contrast, illiteracy takes away from a man his dignity, perpetuates, ignorance, poverty and mental isolation and hampers the social advancement, economic growth and political maturity. There are vast regional disparities among Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled castes in context of educational attainment in the study area. The Highest educational
attainment among scheduled castes has been recorded in Shivalik Himalayan region (78.48 per cent), followed by middle Himalayan region (60.86 per cent), greater Himalayan region (49.3 per cent) and the least educational level among Scheduled Castes has been recorded in Trans Himalayan region (37.71 per cent). On the other hand educational attainment among Non-scheduled castes has been found highest in Shivalik Himalayan Region (88.3 Per cent), followed by Middle Himalayan region (83.24 percent), greater Himalayan region (67.8 per cent) and the least educational level among Scheduled Castes has been recorded in Trans Himalayan region (52.9 per cent).

The situations in case of female literacy among the scheduled castes are even worse. It can also be seen in the table 6.4 that only 12.71 per cent females are literate in Trans Himalayan region, whereas as the highest percentage has been found in Shivalik Himalayan region (28.60 per cent) followed by middle Himalayan region (22.01 per cent) and the greater Himalayan region (16.20 per cent). On the other hand, the highest percentage among Non-Scheduled castes female has been found in Shivalik Himalayan region (34.55 per cent) followed by Middle Himalayan Region (32.07 per cent), greater Himalayan region (25.17 per cent) and the least percentage of female literate has been found in Trans Himalayan Region (21.78 per cent). The females among the non-scheduled castes were much better off in comparison to their scheduled castes counterparts in the matter of educational attainments. The degrees to which people are in position to enjoy the modern facilities are a strong index to the standard of living of the people of an area or a particular community. In order to measure the standard of living of people in the study area the data with respect to as many as ten modern facilities were collected.
The present study is an attempt to investigate regional disparities in socio-economic development of scheduled castes and non-scheduled in Himachal Pradesh. Socio-economic survey of the study area provides unique findings. The foregoing discussion has clearly brought out that there are considerable inequalities between schedule castes and non-scheduled castes with respect to the socio-economic development of the two communities. The scheduled castes have lagged behind the non-scheduled castes in the possession of all those things that are essential for the maintenance of a better standard of living. It is rather surprising to note that despite various efforts by the governments at the state and national level for the upliftment of scheduled castes, a notable degree of socio-economic backwardness among them still continue to persist. There is definitely something wrong either with the delivery system on the part of the government whereby the fruits of the policies and programmes aimed at the upliftment have either not reached the scheduled castes or there is a lack of awareness on the part of scheduled castes themselves to get out of the state of ignorance and backwardness.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to identify the existing pattern of distribution and the relative strength of Scheduled Castes population along with demographic social and economic characteristics. It is evident from the analysis that in spite of special provisions in the form of reservations and other subsides, the general socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled castes has remained very low. Their hopeless condition is a combination of both economic exploitation and social mistreatment. In the light of the historical background of the evolution of scheduled castes and their present socio-economic condition, it becomes very important that they receive an objective understanding from the government and also from the society that will open up views of symbiotic communication. A
realistic social and historical assessment of their situation can only help them and also the entire society to get out of the prevalent caste myopia and integrate the Scheduled castes in the mainstream of development.

Caste rigidities, social restriction and untouchability, as prevalent in other parts of the country are also found in the study area. Village set-up is by and large similar as in other parts of the country. The people such as the Brahmins, Thakurs (Rajputs), Kanets or Bhots, Lohar (Iron-Smiths), Dagis (Carpenters), Hessis (Landless Labourers or Musicians) etc. are found almost all the villages of the agrarian set-up. As the bulk of the community still lives in the rural setting, inter-community linkages are more rigidly adhered to here in comparison to the urban setting. As elsewhere in India so here (study area) also, inter-community relations are based on the caste hierarchy and several restrictions in marriages and eating together are observed. Scheduled castes such as Chahans, Dagis, Shippis, Dombas, Lohars, Bararas, Sunyars, Hessis etc. have no inter-martal or inter-dining relations with Non-scheduled castes namely Thakurs (Rajput), Bhramins etc. Table 7.8 revealed that 81.78 per cent of non-scheduled castes believe in caste system, on the other hand 18.21 per cent of non-scheduled castes do not believe in the rigid system of caste. Table 7.8 revealed that 70 percent of the non-scheduled castes in Trans Himalayan region (Lahaul and Spiti) have no faith in rigid customs of caste system, it is due to the impact of Buddhism in these region. On the other hand, in greater Himalayan region (Kullu) and Middle Himalayan region (Mandi) have rigid custom of caste system, 90 to 95% people of non-scheduled castes believe in the caste system, as mostly these regions are Hindu Religion dominated. Slightly low rate of caste system (81.75%) have been found in Shivalik region (Hamirpur). It is due to the high
literacy rate in Shivalik Himalayan region (Hamirpur). Among Scheduled castes themselves, there are several types of restriction on eating together and marrying with each other.

The foregoing analysis clearly demonstrates that there prevailed a notable inequality between the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in the study area with regard to their socio-economic advancement. On all indicators thought crucial to measure the standard of living viz. land holding, occupational structure and income level, the scheduled castes were found scoring poorly as compared to the non scheduled castes. For example in case of size of landholding, the scheduled castes had less than half of what the non-scheduled castes had. This shows that land reforms measures carried out by the government have not been able to achieve desired objectives in the study area. Most of the scheduled castes households were found still engaged in the primary occupations, signifying their poor level of development. By comparison, the non scheduled castes were much better of in this regard. On the other hand scheduled castes scored very poorly on their participation in the tertiary sector which again pointed towards their low level of socio-economic advancement. As against this, the participation of the non scheduled castes was found to be considerably high. As pointed out earlier, the relatively high proportion of non- scheduled castes in the tertiary sector was due to their high involvement in the government services. From this situation it appeared that either the benefit of reservation in the government jobs has either not reached the scheduled castes or they have not been able to derive this benefit themselves. A wide gap in the personal income has been found to persist between the two communities. On this front again scheduled castes were found lagging far behind the non scheduled castes.
Even today scheduled castes per household income were much below the state and national averages. The regional variations in the factors responsible for a certain phenomenon rarely allow uniformity in the distribution of such phenomena to come about. The inequality in the socio-economic development of the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in the study area could not be an exception to this rule.

Majority of the adult population among the scheduled castes was either illiterate or had attained education up to a low level. Only the situation in case of female illiteracy was even worse. A comparison in the possession of modern facilities threw sufficient light on the difference in the living standard of the two communities in the study area. In this aspect again, the scheduled castes were situated in much lower condition as compared to the non-scheduled castes. The non-scheduled castes were found quite ahead of the scheduled castes in the possession of modern facilities.

The regional variations in the factors responsible for a certain phenomenon rarely allow uniformity in the distribution of such phenomena to come about. The inequality in the socio-economic development of the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes in the study area could not be an exception to this rule. The level of socio-economic development between the two communities was marked by significant area variations. The inequality was found to be high in those areas which are on the whole relatively backward in the level of socio-economic development. Sub-block Udaipur (Lahual and Spiti) Saraj at Janjehali Block (Mandi district), Nagger and Kullu block of kullu district of the different physiographic region of study area have been found in this category, on account of: (i) Their prevailing remotely located; (ii) Being entirely rural and (iii) Due to lack of modern infrastructural facilities. The inequality on the other hand
was found to be low in areas: (i) Which are near to the urban centers; (ii) Close to the District Headquarter (iii) Which have better infrastructural facilities and (iv) Which are near to the main arterial roads. Inequality in landholding occupational structure, income level educational attainment and modern facilities among the scheduled castes and non scheduled castes are the product of cultural, historic, economic and political processes operating in the study area.

In spite of the constitutional safeguards and socio-economic protection, the problems of untouchability are continuing in our society rural and interior hill areas, especially in region of greater Himalaya and middle Himalaya, being worst victims of the problems.

**Recommendations:**

It is necessary that rural camps be organized to develop healthy rural leadership and with the aid of such camps, trained workers be prepared for the social harmony and social development. Administrative machinery can definitely play an important role but it has cleared that tours of the officers in the rural areas and incident prone pockets have not proved very effective. It is, therefore, necessary that socio-economic studies in depth in various parts of the country should be conducted and social scientists should be involved in undertaking such studies. In essence, the problem can only be solved after the empirical finding of the root cause.

It has to be accepted that the socio-economic conditions of the so called scheduled castes (untouchables) have still not improved to the level of satisfaction. Majority of the members of this scheduled castes population are still leading a life of exploitation and humiliation.

In view of the economic conditions of scheduled castes, particularly belonging to the rural areas, the trend of migration from
rural to urban areas may create further problems of livelihood and adjustment. To solve the problem, efforts should be made to grant financial assistance to the persons of scheduled castes for setting up small cottage industries. Special measures should also be taken to promote the interest of artisan groups amongst scheduled castes. It has to be taken for granted that irrespective of the genuine need irrational craze for granting loans to the persons belonging to scheduled castes may prove derogatory in the direction of self-sufficiency and improvement of skill. Much precaution should be taken in assessing the need for loans although after being satisfied about the geniuses of its utilizations, loans should be sanctioned liberally and at a nominal rate of interest.

The local moneylenders first distribute loans to scheduled castes generally at a high rate of interest and after the inability of scheduled castes to repay, they forcibly take possession of their lands. In this context socio-economic development of scheduled castes is important an issue. The steps taken by the some of the state governments to encourage inter-caste marriages are praiseworthy in the direction of bridging the gulf between caste groups. Although legislation or administrative efforts may not prove much helpful but with the help of social incentives, inter-caste marriages may be encouraged.

Education is one of the effective factors most likely to influence and improve one’s behavior. In fact, attitude and behavior being the functional aspects of one’s personality are greatly influenced by the awareness and knowledge of individual imparted to him through education. Therefore, the government should give top priority for providing education i.e. mainly technical and professional to these people, so that they may be able to take up gainful employment in the modern sector of the economy. For this purpose, the Government
should provide free and compulsory education up to certain levels, provision of scholarship to be made and finances at low rate of interest be provided for vocational and higher education.

The disparities in the levels of living are higher due to unequal distribution of productive assets, mainly land, in the rural areas. The distribution of land is owned by the majority of marginal and small farmers. The percentage of uncultivated land is highest among the scheduled castes households mainly due to the reason that land allotted to them by the Government is either a part of steep hill full of trees, bushes and stones or a part of river which remains under water for half of the year and covered by the stones and sand during the next half of the year which is substandard and not suitable for cultivation. Therefore, the Government should provide cultivable land for cultivation in order to raise the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes in the state. For this purpose land reforms should be implemented effectively mainly in the rural areas so that the benefits of these reforms percolate to the needy sections of the society. There are four regions viz; Shivalik Himalayan Region, Middle Himalayan Region, Greater Himalayan Region and Trans Himalayan Region in Himachal Pradesh. Shivalik Himalayan Region and Middle Himalayan Region are suitable for intensive cultivation and animal husbandry and partly for horticulture, whereas the Greater Himalayan Region and Trans Himalayan region are suitable mainly for horticultural crops. The observation of this study reveals that most of the land in the tribal areas is used for the horticultural and cash crops which are more remunerative in nature as compared to the field crops. But agricultural production as well as horticultural production depends upon rain and snow. Therefore, the Government should develop proper irrigation facilities in rural areas in order to decrease their dependence on rain. On the one hand it will increase their production and productivity on the other.
In order to increase the gainful employment opportunities and household income, emphasis should be laid down on the cultivation of cash crops like floriculture and off-season vegetables which has big scope in Himachal Pradesh because of suitable climatic conditions for different varieties of fruits, medicinal herbs and forest products is possible in the state and for this purpose agro-processing units can be set up in rural areas so that the farmers can get remunerative prices for their products on the one hand and unemployment poor persons (scheduled castes) can be employed gainfully in these activities on the other. Another related aspect which needs encouragement is the development and introduction of new and improved varieties of livestock. The people are encouraged to take up fisheries, poultry and pig-rearing activities in a big way so that their income portfolios are diversified in a substantial manner. These activities require low capital investment and their gestation period is also small. The smaller holdings as well as scheduled castes households are engaged in household industries. Therefore, the development of household cottage and small scale industries based on the availability of local raw materials has to be encouraged so that these people (scheduled castes) are gainfully employed in these industries. There is lot of potential for the development of household industries like bamboo based industries, carton boxes, leather processing units, wool based industries (i.e. mainly in the Trans Himalayan region (tribal areas) )handloom and handicrafts etc. Which have a lot of income and employment generation potential in both the tribal as well non-tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. Such activities will help the rural economy in two ways viz; by stopping the migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and by way of creating jobs near the villages, thus leading to the general development of the state. The households falling on the smaller holdings and lower income groups as well as scheduled caste
households remained dependent on moneylenders for their financial needs and due to very high rate of interest they fall in debt trap which leads to vicious circle of poverty.

As a result of this tendency the per capita burden of debt is highest on the smaller holdings in the rural areas and on the lower income groups in the urban areas. Thus their financial needs for productive activities should be met out through the government financial institutions like co-operative societies and banks on low rate of interest and easily repayment installments, so that they can get rid-off the clutches of moneylenders, the percentage of poverty and unemployment is highest on the smaller holdings and scheduled castes households in the rural areas as well as on the lower income groups. It happens mainly on account of the fact of small land holdings inferior and unfertile land, dependence on rain, lack of fertilizer and manures, modern inputs, best quality of seeds, dependence mainly on wage work, low level of literacy, lack of gainful employment opportunities, meager household income as well as less productive assets etc. Therefore, the gainful employment opportunities for poor/unemployed persons should be provided on priority basis. The employment generation schemes should be productive and beneficial which should create real productive assets and provide long term solutions for raising the income of the weaker sections, for raising the income of smaller holdings. The Government should supply inputs like seeds, plants, protectional materials, fertilizers equipments, implements etc. at subsidized rates to increase their production and productivity.

The present study observation reveals that already better-off sections of the selected households among the general castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes households have taken the major share of benefits under the anti-poverty programmes and the
worst off sections of the society, who generally represent themselves in the form of marginal farmers in the rural areas and low income group have not been benefited much out of these programmes. It happened mainly due to the biased attitude of the panchyat representative, corrupt administrative staff at low implementation levels, and wrong selection of beneficiaries, inefficient and faulty distributive system, lack of knowledge about these programmes etc. It has been observed that the poor beneficiary households that most of the benefits have been given to them are not according to their requirements and hence they are non-matching to their needs. It has been observed that the target approach which has been adopted in the implementation of these programmes does not serve the spirit behind these programmes at the implementation level needs to be changed where greater co-ordination to be ensured between the government functionaries and the target groups, so that poor people are benefited in a real way. The process of selection of beneficiaries to be made more transparent, and only deserving as well as needy poor are to be chosen for providing the benefits. Proper mechanism should be devised for monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes. Therefore, the effective policy implementation has a major role to pay in generating income and employment opportunities for reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment among the Scheduled castes. For this purpose, the role of non-governmental organization (NGOs) and self help groups should be encouraged.

The infrastructural development is the key to economic development in any economy and region. Therefore, the efforts should be made for improving the infrastructural facilities like transportation, communication, power, marketing, education, health and safe drinking water facilities etc. mainly in the remote areas to enable the people of these areas to join the mainstream of development in the state in particular and the nation in general.
Thus, in order to reduce the inter as well as intra-caste and class wise disparities and thereby to raise the levels of living, through increased income and employment opportunities, the planning strategy for development should be judicious mix of the beneficiary oriented programmes, human resource development and infrastructural development. Keeping in the view the hilly topography, extreme cold climatic conditions and lack of infrastructural facilities mainly in the remote and tribal areas of the state, emphasis should be placed on the minor irrigation, soil and water conservation, roads, storage and marketing in infrastructural sector, drinking water supply, general education and health in social services sector, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy development, fisheries, forestry and land reforms in the agricultural sector and small as well as cottage industries based on the availability of local skill and raw materials in the industrial sector.

Following points may be considered for the development of scheduled castes:

Need of Political Education: It is, therefore, necessary to give political education to the people about the need and genesis of welfare policies for the weaker sections. Political education means education about nature, working and the functions of a political system. This was the duty of the elites and the leaders in the political process.

Lack of Political Will: There is a lack of political will regarding the development of scheduled castes. It is observed that the welfare schemes remain on paper but because of the policies there is a backlash among non-scheduled (upper castes). A news item in Hindu (9 April 2007) regarding the failure of administrative machinery in implementing the policies for the scheduled castes would throw light
on its apathy and indifference. The news item speaks itself. It clearly shows how there is a lack of political will on the part of the government and also on the part of administrators in particular about the welfare schemes for the scheduled castes. Despite constitutional and legal provisions the scheduled castes still remain deprived of their adequate due in national’s development.

Demand for Change in the Education System: Dr. Ambedkar gave a message—“educates, agitates and organizes.” It is to be understood that the present education system is the product of the colonial rule and the post-independence period governments have done very little to change the same. In addition to increasing educational opportunities, education system should be more meaningful and more relevant to the changing needs in society. Therefore an attempt is to be made to improve the quality of the education. It can be achieved by way of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes in the changing context.

Castes and Class: In post independence period, every caste is now roughly divided into three classes. The elites, middle class and the masses. They have different attitudes. Globalization has posed a challenge to all and more to the scheduled castes.

Reservation policy: The policy of reservation should be viewed as apart of the total policy for the development. Efforts should be made to observe that it is being implemented sincerely and honestly. However it would be well to remind that the reservation would not be enough for the development.

Help from Liberal Hindus: An effort should be made to seek the help from the liberal Hindus. Opposing to general belief, there is a strong element of liberalism among the Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar made
its use wisely in the fight against untouchability. There should be
fight against the conservative elements and not all the Hindus. It
should not be treated as a cold war between scheduled castes and
the non-Scheduled castes.

Suggestions:

In view of the findings of the study the following brief
suggestions can be made:
1. Land reforms should be implemented effectively.
2. More educational and medical institutions should be opened
and reservation should be given to poor scheduled castes
students.
3. Process of construction of roads should be accelerated and
preference should be given to most backward regions.
4. Special Programmes need to be launched for the benefit of
downtrodden castes.
5. Scheduled castes (Dalits) rights are to be made part of the
human rights.
6. Recognize caste related discrimination and violence as one of
the most dehumanizing and criminal acts.
7. Effort should be made to eradicate caste and untouchability
practices, to establish equality, dignity and sustainability.
8. Eliminate the various cultural and religious practices and
sentiments that are responsible for caste discrimination and
untouchability.
9. Include caste discrimination as a priority issue for political
dialogue and development.
10. To establish Dalit's lost humanity, dignity and security.
11. Inter-caste marriages are also one of the ways to eradicate
caste system.
12. Economic upliftment and empowerment of Dalits is the most effective tool to combat caste system.

13. A group of Dalit activists, social scientists, cultural activists, social groups, voluntary action groups, Academicians, and other likeminded activists should be organized for the issues of social justice and Economic Justice.

14. The broad objective defined for the Campaign is to mobilize, support, and facilitate the efforts of Dalit human rights and social equity in Himachal Pradesh.

15. To campaign and advocate against untouchability and all forms of caste, class, and gender discrimination;

16. To mobilize and support mountain Dalits, especially women, to campaign for their civil, political and economic rights.

17. To campaign for sustainable development in Himachal Pradesh.

The level of socio economic development between the two communities was marked by significant regional variations. Inequality in landholdings occupational structure, income level educational attainment and modern facilities among the scheduled castes and non scheduled castes are the product of cultural, historic, economic and political processes operating in the study area. It was the caste which gave rise to the other factors that become responsible for the persistence of age old gap in the living standard of two communities. It is an irony that 64 years of independence and several policies and programmes of the government for the upliftment of the scheduled castes have been unable to bring the scheduled castes parallel, with the non scheduled castes in the matter of socio-economic development even today. The framing policies and programmes are not sufficient only but their implementation with strong zeal is important as well.