Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction

India is a caste based society. Caste is the predominant factor and feature of Indian society. The caste in Indian society is still the most powerful factor in determining a man’s dignity, calling and profession. In India every Hindu necessarily belongs to the caste of his parents and in that caste he inevitably remains. No accumulation of wealth and exercise of talents can alter his caste status and marriage outside his caste is prohibited or severely discouraged. It almost invariably happens that every man’s caste is known to his neighbours. In some cases, the application of the rule of caste seems almost to prescribe the means of livelihood of its members. Thus the caste system, which may have originated in the preservation of ceremonial purity in social relations and in rules designed to limit admixture of blood has in the course of the ages developed into an institution which assigns to each individual his duty and his position in orthodox Hinduism.

There is discrimination in India on the basis of caste. Scheduled Castes are the most deprived castes in India facing such discrimination. The Scheduled Castes constitute 16.2 per cent of the total population of the country as per 2001 Census. This population forming about one – fifth of the total population, have been socially, economically and educationally backward. Such a situation arose due to the social stratification system which is based on caste hierarchy in India. Their status all over the country is still precarious as they live in abject poverty and are mostly concentrated in low paid material occupations. For these people, the shifting in occupational base has largely been denied by social customs and conventions. Overwhelming majority of them are living at the pleasure of other higher status people of either social or political or economic authority. It became a common tendency that as one belongs to SC/ST category, everyone looks at in another way. They neglect his/her
existence and they tend to keep away him/her. Atrocities on the scheduled caste people, especially on the scavenging castes and women of these untouchables, have been still found to a large extent in the form of various kinds of discriminations, killings, beatings and putting them to all kinds of physical torturing.

There is caste discrimination among the sub-castes of the Scheduled Castes and also within a particular caste. The elite group among the Scheduled Castes are keeping themselves at a distance from other ordinary people of their own castes. Probably, the richer and educated sections are isolating themselves from the uneducated poor people as well. That’s why the scheduled castes are not developing. There are many sub-castes among the scheduled castes and they live separately in the villages. Majority of the population of the Scheduled Castes lives in rural India. Rural India resides in sub-divisions of a village, known as habitations or hamlets. Habitations are generally organized along caste lines, so that the rural economy is characterized by a considerable degree of caste-based segregation with scheduled caste households frequently residing in separate, smaller sub-habitations of the village. For the country as a whole, 2002 data reveal that India’s 586,986 villages are divided into more than double the number of habitations, with an average of 2.1 habitations per village. Of this total, 38 percent are scheduled caste and tribe habitations, in which most of the nation’s SC/ST population resides¹.

There is a relative segregation and isolation in the social inhabitations of the Scheduled Castes in the urban areas also. However, the urban setting has witnessed more changes in the social status of the Scheduled Castes due to expansion of educational facilities, employment avenues, political changes, and the urbanized way of life of the city dwellers. The rural people are still living under the old patterns of social setting with some marginal
changes. Further, political leaders of the Scheduled Castes are severing their relations with their own caste and they mostly become unapproachable to the masses.

1.1 Caste in India

Caste is defined as a system incorporating within it a structure and organization, and is based on endogamy, hierarchy, and commercial restrictions. It also prescribes the pattern of group relations that may bind the interacting individuals in routine life. The groups in caste system are exhaustive, exclusive, and discrete, i.e., every person is a member of such a group and of only one. Membership in-group influences the members in their roles and activities; there is a degree of ‘role summation’. The groups are independent; each needs the services or goods provided by others.

Traditional Indian society was based largely on the principles of caste. Caste is the very complex social institution deeply entrenched in Indian society from immemorial past. It is a system of social organization found in traditional India and surviving to a large extent to the present day. The earlier Vedas do not reveal the existence of caste. Careful analysis of the sacred books of India indicates that the caste system is developed in the latest phase of decline of the Vedic culture as a result of Aryan invasion and conquest of the original inhabitants. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar coined the views of Dr. Johnson on these sacred books in his writings. According to Dr. Johnson, the doctrines contained in these sacred books are responsible for the decline and fall of the country and the society in terms of caste system.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, “Caste in India mans an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy”. In his view, Chaturvarnya is the root cause of all its inequality and is also the parent of caste system and untouchability which are merely other forms of inequality.
In terms of social status, the Indian population can be grouped into four categories: Scheduled Castes (SC) or Dalits, Scheduled Tribes (ST) or Adivasis, Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Others\(^6\). The caste system in its entirety constitutes a status hierarchy with the Brahmans at the pinnacle and the Scheduled Castes or so-called untouchables at the base. Scheduled Castes are persons of discrete sets of low castes who are excluded from social, cultural, religious, and other conventions of an elaborate hierarchical Indian caste system. They are in a condition of being marginalized and deprived of basic rights on account of their birth into low status social groups. Thus the Scheduled Castes are characterized by a low, in fact, the lowest, social status in the caste hierarchy, as well as by low socio-economic conditions. These strata had, on account of their low social and ritual status, been subject to a variety of disabilities. As a consequence, these castes have remained socially, economically and educationally backward.

**1.2 Conceptual framework**

**1.2.1 The term ‘Status’**

The term status refers to social position. The status is the basis that fixes the honour and respect to stand high in social scale, on one hand, thereby some are bestowed with certain advantages and privileges and , on the other hand, the others are ranked low in the scale and put to some disadvantages and disabilities. Parkin stated that ‘Status can be regarded as one example of an important non-material reward which is unequally distributed. According to Ross, ‘Statuses are ranked, some being considered higher than others. The rank of a status is variously expressed in prestige, power or monetary reward’. Rose and Rose say that status means social standing in relation to others, on the basis of which the individual is ranked in the society. Status is a word of Latin origin ‘standing’, which refers to the social ranking of people relevant to how they ‘stand – higher, lower or at the same level – in relation to other
people belonging to a particular community. Thus status means social position in any social structure\(^7\). This is to say, the status refers to ‘the relative rank of a person in terms of the degree of his possession of characteristics highly valued by the culture.

The term status, therefore, refers to a quality of social honour or rank of it, which is conditioned as well as expressed through a specific style of life. Thus the term ‘status’ is defined to denote either a persons’ social position, grade, place, rank, standing, dignity, category, relation to others or his relative importance in a given society. Accordingly, one is ranked higher or lower in position on the basis of his status.

Social status means person’s station and/or placement in social relationship, i.e., person’s order or rank in relation to others in a society or community. This is to say that a person’s status refers his group standing or ranking in relation to others in society. Moreover, members of each society or group are assigned with some functions and carry with it some degree of power and prestige and the same degree of power and prestige is referred to as his status. Social status, therefore, refers to the rank or position in a society or community in which the bearer obtains and ascribes some definite power and social respect. In other words, in a social system persons are prescribed with some position and the same is termed as his social status, which is determined by the extent of power and prestige related with that status.

1.2.2 Untouchables

As a result of Hindu caste system, two broad segments had developed in the society, namely, one, of those who were privileged and the other one, of those on whom restrictions were imposed, say, untouchables. The worst sufferers of the system were untouchables\(8\). Some sociologists criticized this type of caste system for its inhuman organization and exploitation of lower castes and the untouchables\(9\).
It is extremely difficult to define untouchability. In fact, it implies those disabilities which are imposed upon the scheduled castes by the superior castes. In Untouchability Offences Act, 1955, the word untouchability was given this connotation. According to it, “it is an offence to prevent any person on the ground of untouchability (a) from entering any place of public worship which is open to other persons, professing the same religion, (b) from worshipping or offering prayers or performing any religious service in any place of public worship or bathing in or using the waters of any sacred tank, well, spring or water-course in the same manner as is permissible to other persons professing the same religion; and (c) from access to or use of a shop, hotel, public restaurant or place of public entertainment or public conveyance or hospital, dispensary or educational institution or charitable trust”10. In this way, disabilities are a sign of untouchability. According to Dr. Majumdar, “the untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities, many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes”11. According to Pillai, ‘untouchability has its origin in hygiene first and then in religion’12. In brief, untouchables are those castes which are subject to some disabilities in every walk of life – social, religious, economic and political.

Dr. Ambedkar also defined untouchability on the basis of some disabilities. According to Dr. Ambedkar, ‘untouchability was a grievous crime and unless it was uprooted, the whole society will destroy itself’13. The practice of untouchability created a sense of superiority, an attitude of apathy and hatred and indifference towards the untouchables14.

Dr. Ambedkar insisted that Scheduled Castes be called ‘Untouchables’ so that there is no obfuscation of reality. Dr. Ambedkar was particular about using the name ‘Untouchable’ apparently for two related reasons – to rouse the self-respect of the victims of untouchabliy
and to sting the conscience of those individuals of upper castes, who were capable of feeling qualms of a social conscience, and in any case deprive the practitioners of untouchability of the luxury of an easy slave for their conscience\textsuperscript{15}.

According to Ambedkar, untouchability shuts all doors of opportunities for betterment in life for Untouchables. It does not offer an Untouchable any opportunity to move freely in society; it compels him to live in dungeons and seclusion; it prevents him from educating himself and following a profession of his choice. Untouchability has ruined the Untouchables, the Hindus and ultimately the nation as well. If the depressed classes gained their self-respect and freedom, they would contribute not only to their own progress and prosperity but by their industry intellect and courage would contribute also to the strength and prosperity of the nation. If the tremendous energy Untouchables are at present required to fritter away in combating the stigma of Untouchability had been saved them, it would have been applied by them to the promotion of education and development of resources of their nation as a whole\textsuperscript{16}.

\textbf{1.3 The Scheduled Castes}

Several castes in Hindu society have been associated with unclean occupations and social restrictions, and suffered from socio-economic, educational and cultural disabilities. The people belonging to the castes, to which the elite of Hindu society have ascribed ‘untouchability’, are Untouchables.

The untouchable caste, being on the last rung of the social ladder, was denied entry into several occupations which were relatively cleaner or well-paid and the field of its activities was restricted to somewhat unclean and menial jobs which yielded low incomes. They were associated with a variety of specialized traditional occupations such as
scavenging, cobbling, disposal of carcasses, basketry, etc. These castes in the past had no access to education. The road to knowledge was closed to them.

As Untouchables were outside the Varna system, they were known as ‘Avarna’, ‘Panchamas’, or ‘Antyaja’. These people were out castes and as such were socially ostracized by caste Hindus is rather a strange expression. All the Hindus come under the Varna and Caste System and as such there was no one like non Varna or non-caste Hindu. As the lower strata in the society, the Untouchables were outside the four Varna fold and formed the fifth Varna and as such were ‘Panchamas’.

The practice of untouchability developed in the course of time, some scholars argued as the conflict between the Aryans and the indigenous people became sharp. Practice of untouchability was preceded by a long history of social and cultural prejudice of the Vedic Aryans towards some groups of the indigenous population who posed threat to their way of life, based on pastoral wealth and performance of religious rituals and sacrifices. Untouchables were hated because they spoke a different language and did not follow the religion of the Aryans.

Cultural segregation increased as time passed by the habitational segregation and cultural religious prejudice practiced by the Aryans vis-à-vis certain other groups identified as hostile and unassailable, resulted in the practice of untouchability. The Aryans could not bring them under their control and these groups continued to rebel against the hegemony of the Aryan in economic and cultural spheres.

Few societies have condemned one of their sections to physical segregation as the Hindu society has done in the case of the former untouchables. The mere physical touch of an untouchable was a sin, an abomination. The segregation of a section of the Hindus as untouchables, precluded from such elementary rights as entry to public temples or the use of
public wells and tanks, and whose physical touch contaminated a member of higher castes, constituted a most inhuman form of social oppression. The untouchables were the outcastes of Hindu society. Hallowed with tradition and sanctified by religion, the unsociability continued to exist in all its barbarous vigor for centuries.

The Scheduled Castes were said to be carried with them the stigma of their low and impure birth. The caste system was said to be founded on the concept of ‘purity and pollution’. As the very positions in the caste hierarchy are based on the ideas of ‘purity and pollution’, the caste at the top have greater ‘purity’ in that their food, dress and occupation are regarded as more pure than those of other castes. Castes at the bottom are regarded as ‘impure’ and their food, occupations, clothes, customs and myths are regarded as either inferior or impure. Economically completely dependent on the superior castes and much exploited by them, educationally backward, socially degraded and treated with contempt, deliberately deprived of the higher religious and cultural values of the Hindu society, all the Scheduled Castes were attributed with varying degrees of ritual impurity. Close contact with them was polluting; hence they were untouchables.


Census Superintendent for Assam in 1931 suggested the term ‘Exterior castes’ for these castes. During the British rule different terms such as ‘Depressed castes’, ‘Exterior castes’, ‘Untouchables’, ‘outcasts’, and Backward classes’ were used to refer to the disabled classes of people in India including tribal people.
Gradually in the official documents the use of the term ‘depressed classes’ came to be restricted to those who were subjected to ‘untouchability’. However, at the second round table conference held in London in 1931, Ambedkar objected to the use of the term ‘depressed classes’ as it is degrading and contemptuous and suggested other terms such as ‘Protestant Hindus’ and ‘Non Conformist Hindus’\(^\text{19}\).

A Guajarathi saint Narasimha Meheta first used the term ‘Harijan’. Later Mahatma Gandhi adopted the term for Untouchables. Instead of calling them ‘Untouchables’ he called them ‘Harijans’, ‘the men of God’. However, these communities especially in western India have resented this term. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar never liked this term of Harijan to refer to the untouchables of India. It became a political controversy to use or not to use the term Harijan for untouchables. Kananaikil writes that “Harijan is a bad word introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. In Hindi it means a boy whose father’s name is unknown, hence the child of God. In the Hindu temples, there were *devdasis*, the girls who took part in worship ceremonies and also served the priests. Sometimes they gave birth to the children and these children were called Harijans. This is why we do not like this name”\(^\text{20}\). As such this term was not only disliked but also hated by some of these sections. Ambedkar followers resented the term ‘Harijan’. Despite controversy, the term ‘Harijan’ is popular and widely sued for these sections of people.

The expression ‘Scheduled Castes’ was first coined by Simon Commission and was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. Under this Act, the untouchables are designated as ‘Scheduled Castes’. The ‘Scheduled’ of ‘Scheduled Caste’ refers to official lists of caste names, schedules attached to legislation. These lists were drawn up in order to establish entitlements to benefits. Each state of the Indian union has a list, containing on average fifty to sixty names. Each in principle represents a group the membership of which
is hereditary and exclusive; no one can belong to more than one. The term was introduced by the Government of India Act, 1935 establishing a scheme for the reservation of seats in legislatures. It remains the official legal category, and it has become an integral part of the set of terms through which identities are allocated and claimed and the structure of contemporary Indian society is understood. To claim benefits of special legal protection, under welfare schemes specifically for Scheduled Castes, of reserved seats in higher education and in representative assemblies, of reserved jobs in government employment, and special financial assistance for enterprise – a person must obtain official certification as belonging to a group listed in a schedule to be relevant legislation.

Later the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ was adopted while drafting the Constitution. Thus, the term “Scheduled Castes” is an expression standardized in the Constitution of India. Article 366(24) of the Indian Constitution stated that “Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under Article 341, to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of Constitution of India”. The expression thus standardized in the Constitution was first coined by the Simon Commission and embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, in Section 309. The main commission, its education committee and Franchise committee studied the cases of what till then were called either the untouchables or the depressed classes or the backward classes. Although Mahatma Gandhi had, through his weekly ‘The Harijan’ and his Harijan Sevak Sangh and other organizations, his propaganda and his fasts, tried to designate these classes as Harijans, the framers of the Constitution, the largest bulk of whom were staunch followers and devotees of Gandhi, surprisingly adopted the term coined by the Simon Commission.  

After independence, in 1950, the Constitution of India abolished untouchability (Article 17) and in 1955, the Parliament passed the Untouchability Offences Act. The
national movement had created an atmosphere sympathetic towards the untouchables. It made it possible for the Government to provide protective discrimination in an attempt to pull out the untouchables from traditional segregation. In the Republican Constitution, the Scheduled Castes have been provided with not only special privileges in the matter of recruitment of services but also with special representation in the legislative bodies.

Article 341(1) of the Constitution reads “the President of India may with respect to any State (or Union Territories), and where it is a State after consultation with Government thereof, by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall, for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State (or Union Territory) or as the caste may be”.

Article 341(2) reads, "Parliament may by law include or exclude from the list of Scheduled Castes specified in a notification issued under clause (1), any caste, race, or tribe or part of or group within any caste, race or tribes”.

However since 1970 the term “Dalit” has been widely used. Dalit is a Marathi word, first used by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, a 19th century social reformer who led a movement for the upliftment of Untouchables, which means “broken people”. The term ‘Dalit’ has gained popularity and is generally used, more often than not, to refer to the Scheduled Castes. The term Dalit is inclusive of all the oppressed and exploited sections of the society. Generally the term ‘Dalit’ includes, what is called in administrative parlance, i.e., ‘Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes’. The vocal and activist sections of the former ‘Untouchables’ in preference to ‘Harijan’ and ‘Scheduled Caste’ are today increasingly using the term ‘Dalit’. The term ‘Dalit’ has become a positive, assertive expression of pride in Untouchable heritage and a rejection of oppression.
The Scheduled Castes were kept apart from the rest of the Society due to the prevalent practice of untouchability. The Indian caste system based on the notion of purity and pollution believed that the Scheduled Castes were impure and polluted. As a result they were forced to live outside the village/town proper and suffered from discrimination in all walks of life.

On account of the restrictions listed above the Scheduled Castes were placed low in social hierarchy and suffered from disabilities and discrimination. These disabilities can be categorized as (a). occupational disabilities; (b). educational disabilities; (c). social, cultural and religious disabilities and (d). political disabilities.

1.3.1 Occupational disabilities

The nature of ones occupation has a direct reference to one’s status. The social status of an individual is affected and even determined by the nature of occupation from which he derived his livelihood. The Scheduled Castes were known for their long association with so-called impure, unclean, degrading, socially looked down and least preferred occupations. Many Untouchables followed the hereditary occupations such as scavenging, carcass recovery and flaying and hide tanning, leatherwork, drum beating and grave digging. These occupations that was associated with the Untouchables with permanent ritual pollution, barred social intercourse between them and higher caste Hindus, in the framework of traditional Indian society. Besides these traditional occupations, they are also involved in ‘clean’ occupations with a majority of them being agricultural labourers.

Looking into occupations of the Scheduled Castes it can be said that the Scheduled Castes were economically poor and generally were dependent on agricultural labour and other low-income occupations besides their caste occupation. In fact, the greatest majority of Scheduled Caste occupational force is engaged in agricultural labour in rural areas. Besides
this all the primary leather workers, scavengers, and who deal with carcass recovery and flaying were almost the Scheduled Castes. In urban areas, a large proportion of cart pullers, hamalis, and the like manual workers and other unorganized non-agricultural wages labourers and civic sanitation workers belong to the Scheduled Castes\textsuperscript{23}.

Even those Scheduled Castes who do follow the ‘clean’ occupations were also subjected to discrimination. It is not the polluting occupation alone, which is the reason for discrimination of the Scheduled Castes, but the very birth in the caste seems to be the reason for low status imposed on the Scheduled Castes, as the Scheduled Castes who follow the clean occupations were equally ill-treated.

One of the important factors that are associated with the occupation is economic condition. Because of their lowly placed occupations, Scheduled Castes had depressed economic conditions. The Scheduled Castes were virtually denied of the right to own land for cultivation, were paid low wages as manual workers and always were in debts far beyond their capacities to repay. Although outside the rigid Varna system, the Scheduled Castes constituted a vital segment of population and performed mostly unskilled and manual labour and unclean occupations without which the smooth running of traditional system would have been impossible. Their earnings were meager and were primarily indebted and were forced to work as bonded labour to the upper caste on low wages. Scheduled Castes were also under obligation to perform forced labour.

1.3.2 Educational disabilities

The Scheduled Castes also suffered from educational disabilities for centuries. Historically they had been most uneducated and illiterate group. The mass illiteracy among the Scheduled Castes was in turn was due to the social and religious sanctions imposed on them. The sacred books, Brihaspathi and Manusmrithi have prohibited any attempt on the
part of Sudras, leave alone Scheduled Castes, to recite Hindu religious slokas and if they ventured to do so, the smrithi ordained that the tongue of such person be cut off.

Besides the religious and social sanctions imposed on the Scheduled Castes against taking up formal education the poverty among the Scheduled Castes is the main obstacle for them to take up formal education. In addition to this ignorance of use of education feeling that education is not useful, adverse economic conditions, absent of educational facilities in rural areas, lack of knowledge of educational facilities and traditional apathy towards education, home environment were other reasons of educational backwardness among Scheduled Castes. Moreover for the Scheduled Castes it was felt that children were assets to their families. The older children in the family by helping the mother in domestic chores and looking after the younger siblings make it possible for her to remain in labour market. Apart from their indirect economic contribution a substantial portion of them were wage earners in their own rights. With all these reasons the Scheduled Castes have remained educationally backward.

1.3.3 Socio Cultural and Religious Disabilities

Untouchability was the major social disability of the Scheduled Castes. Hindu society insisted on the segregation of untouchables and would not allow them to live inside their own areas. The caste Hindus public appearance and behaviour is contrary to their true intentions and feelings. The caste Hindus discriminates the Untouchables. Scheduled Castes’ social identity was highlighted by the fact that they were generally required to live at a distance from the main village settlement. Residential segregation was somewhat strictly enforced. Thus, most of them lived in the outskirts of the villages and slums in the towns, in Kutcha houses that were made of mud and thatched roof. The life of these sections of people had
been miserable and unhygienic. The environment of these people was in no way conducive to the achievement of better standards.

The services of barbers, water carriers, washer men, tailors who serve caste Hindus were denied to them. They were debarred from using all public conveniences, roads, vehicles, ferries, wells, schools, restaurants and teashops. They were not allowed to enter the houses of caste Hindus and for that matter was not allowed to enter the streets where higher castes live.

In traditional Hindu society there were legal and ritual sanctions which prevented the lower castes from imitating the life-styles of the upper castes. Apart from this, there are certain elements in the life-style of the Hindus which are perhaps ranked even lower in the traditional Hindu scheme of values. Foremost among these are the ones which pertain to their diet. Different items of food and drink are graded carefully in Sanskritic Hinduism, and in any given region the social rank of a caste is closely related to the food habits of its members. In general, meat-eating is ranked rather low, Harijans not only eat meat, but particular kinds of meat which are held to be especially clean. Those among them who eat beef are assigned the lowest social rank

Thus, the practices such as meat eating and in particular beef and carrion eating, consumption of alcohol, use of shamans and animal sacrifices, the practice of divorce and remarriages of windows and a less lineally and age status oriented family structure tend to distinguish low status groups such as Untouchables.

Their dress pattern was also different from those of clean castes. The male Scheduled Castes used only loin cloth and females in some part of the country were not allowed to cover their breasts. Gold ornaments were prohibited to them and at the same time they could not afford.
The religious disabilities took the form that they were debarred from Hindu temples and places of worship, from the celebrations of feasts, offerings and sacrifices. At all times, the Brahmin priesthood has endeavoured to keep them segregated, not only from Hindu society, but from the Hindu religion and the Hindu ceremonial; they were not allowed to hear, much less study the Vedas; they must not enter the temples; they must carry on all ceremonies without using the mantras and no Brahmin would carry out any domestic ceremony for them.\(^2^6\)

The disabilities of the Scheduled Castes affected the women among them with double intensity. The Scheduled Caste women suffered from twin disadvantage, one because of their castes and the other because of their gender. They were under-privileged among the under-privileged and discriminated among the discriminated. The Scheduled Caste woman was perceived to be the essence and epitome of ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and pollution not long ago. It was found in the earlier studies that scheduled caste women were more instruments to quench the sexual hunger of the higher castes. The Scheduled Caste woman working for a landlord had to submit to the sexual desires of her master. The untouchable status of Scheduled Caste women never came in the way of the gratification of the sexual desires of the higher castes.

The caste and gender of the Scheduled Caste women made her to perform menial tasks that were considered to be impure and defiling such as disposal of human waste, looking after cleanliness at the times of birth, menstruation and death. Even today many of the indigenous ‘Dai’ and ‘Midwife’ in the rural areas are from the Scheduled Castes only. The disabilities, disadvantages and dishonour afflicted on the Scheduled Caste women hurt and undermine their status and position.
1.3.4 Political disabilities

Caste has been most important locus of power in traditional India. The power structure in such a society is characterized as tradition oriented and ascriptive. A largely feudal society emphasized, the rule of elders and tradition, and the dominance of higher castes. In such society power is generally linked with economic religious factors besides education. Brahmins held power in Indian society for a long time because of the importance given to the ritual status and knowledge in the past. Later the economically dominant castes wrested power from Brahmins. This was made possible because of the shift in the importance from the ritual status and knowledge to number land holdings and economic power.

The Scheduled Castes had absolutely no access to power in the past not only because of the absence of any of the factors that contributed for political participation which the caste Hindus had, but also due to their low social status and economic dependence on the caste Hindus. For reasons such as illiteracy and ignorance, traditional values and customs, lack of hopes and aspirations, the Scheduled Castes have generally accepted the lowest rank tagged on to them with many social disabilities.

Caste associations play a vital role in political campaigns and are important for backward castes and classes as they strive for the betterment of the group. It serves the common interests of the groups. It is particularly so in case of Scheduled Castes. But in the past there was no room for entertaining caste associations among Scheduled Castes. They had neither the required capacity nor the courage to do so. Therefore practically no caste association was found, in the earlier times, among the Scheduled Castes.
In the earlier times, the Scheduled Castes had no access absolutely to power due to their low status and economic dependence on Hindus. There was no representation for Scheduled Castes in the village councils in the traditional political set-up. The Scheduled Castes had little voice in decision-making and in fact disputes among them were being settled by upper castes. As observed by the earlier studies, Scheduled castes still remain in the periphery of power.

As a consequence of all these disabilities, Scheduled castes suffered oppression at the hands of the upper castes for centuries, their socio-economic condition was extremely depressed, they were educationally backward and they lacked political skills to hold their own against the upper caste leadership of the country.

There were movements to abolish the rigorous of untouchability. Several social reformers as well as Scheduled Castes themselves led these movements. After independence, the Government of India had made certain constitutional safeguards for educational, economic, social and political empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. Provision of equality of opportunity became the preamble of planning in the independent India.

After India attained independence the plight of the Scheduled Castes was the primary concern of the social reformers and planners and their efforts shaped into a formidable action. Independent India’s commitment to equality, socialism and welfare led to the launching of multi pronged welfare measures for the development of the Scheduled Castes who constitute a formidable section of the population in the country. The planners of Independent India visualized social change among the Scheduled Castes by bringing about social mobility among them.
Constitutional protection was provided to the Scheduled Castes to undo the social injustice and all forms of exploitation and to bring them into the main stream of development. The Indian Constitution has provided a Section for the abolition of untouchability and the Union as well as the State governments has taken legislative measures to enforce this section. Apart from this, every effort has been made to promote the educational and economic interests of these sections of society. They are offered big fee concessions and stipends to help them to carry on their academic pursuits. In the occupational field, special privileges by way of reservation of seats are granted to enable them to attain respectable status in society. Thus, not only has judicial discrimination been constitutionally abolished, but special privileges have also been given under the Constitution to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Caste people to enable them to bridge the gulf which in the past separated them from the advanced sections of the society.

The post-independence period has not brought any socio-economic and political change in the life of the Scheduled Castes. Equality cannot be achieved if we treat the strong and the week, the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the intelligent on the same footing. Constitutional provisions, political process since independence and the impact of leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have created a wave of rising expectations in the life of Scheduled Castes in general and in the life of the neo-Buddhists in particular. Gradually, since then, the Scheduled Castes are slowly becoming aware of their rightful place in society and are asserting for the reordering of society for their betterment and advancement. This has created a number of pressures and pulls resulting in socio-political tensions in Indian society. Renaming Marathwada University agitation after Dr. Ambedkar was one such occasion.\textsuperscript{27}
1.4 Scheduled Castes in India

According to the 2001 Census, the Scheduled Caste population in India is 166,635,700 persons, constituting 16.2 per cent of the country’s total population. Being rural people, four fifth (79.8 per cent) of them live in rural areas and rest one-fifth (20.2 per cent) live in urban areas. The sex ratio of 936 females per thousand males is slightly higher than national average of 933 sex ratio. The highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population to the total Scheduled Caste population of the country live in Uttar Pradesh (21.1 per cent) followed by West Bengal (11.1 per cent) and Bihar (7.8 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (7.4 percent) and Tamil Nadu (7.1 percent). In fact, more than 57 per cent of total Scheduled Castes population inhibit in these five States. Proportionately, the largest proportion of population of the Scheduled Castes to total population of the State is in Punjab (28.9 per cent), followed by Himachal Pradesh (24.7 per cent) and West Bengal (23 percent). In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry proportion of SC population is exactly equal to the National average of 16.2 per cent. The smallest concentration of the Scheduled Caste population is in the North-Eastern tribal States such as Mizoram (with negligible or only 272 persons) followed by Meghalaya (0.5 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (0.6 per cent).

1.5 States and Districts with High Concentration of Scheduled Castes population in India

The Scheduled Castes population, according to 2001 Census, was 16.66 crore, constituting 16.23% of the total population of India. Punjab has the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes (28.85%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (24.7%), and West Bengal (23%). More than 80% of the SC population resides in 10 States. State-wise SC population in these States is presented below:
Table 1.1

TOP TEN STATES IN TERMS OF SC POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste Population (in Crore)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>W.B.</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tamilnadu</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.54</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2001

1.6 States/UTs in terms of Percentage of SC Population

The highest proportion of SC population is in Punjab (28.9 per cent). Four States - Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh - have more than 20 per cent population belonging to SCs. Another six States and two UTs - Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Tripura, Rajasthan, Orissa, Haryana, and NCT of Delhi and Chandigarh - have percentage of SC population higher than the national average of 16.2 per cent. Four North-Eastern States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland and both the Island UTs viz. A&N Islands and Lakshadweep, have less than one percent population belonging to SCs. In fact, in the case of Nagaland and the two Island UTs, percentage of SCs is zero.

1.7 Need for the study

The traditional Indian society has remained for ages, as hierarchically frozen and segmented into differentially ranked caste groups on the notions of purity and pollutions. Thus the Indian caste system based on the notion of purity and pollution believed that the
Scheduled Castes were impure and polluted. As a result they were forced to live outside the village/town proper and suffered from discrimination in all walks of life. Scheduled castes are lagging behind occupationally, educationally and politically. They also suffered from socio-economic and cultural disabilities.

It is an accepted fact that after the Independence, a small number of persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes have benefited from the ‘protective discrimination’ regarding education, employment in government departments, and politics. These persons are placed in different and probably better socio-economic positions like the persons of other castes. There are also men in the lower castes who have either been upwardly mobile earlier, or are upwardly mobile now, or getting equipped for upward mobility in the foreseeable future. The constitutional measures help them to achieve higher status in the class structure, but they do not guarantee any improvement in their caste status. The members of the new middle class might have achieved certain social status in the class – structure due to changes in their social, economic, occupational and interaction positions. It is, however, still unclear whether it affects their status in the caste hierarchy. It is, thus, important to examine the changes in their socio-economic, education, occupation and political awareness status.

After more than 60 years of independence, it is pertinent to ask what has been the impact of the policies of the government on the socio-economic conditions of those belonging to the Scheduled Castes. There have been a considerable number of empirical studies on the Scheduled Castes in India since independence. Apart from such studies, many social scientists have elaborately analyzed the changing status of scheduled castes in India. However, most of these studies are either based on secondary data or localized when some primary data have been collected. Each of these covered some limited aspects of development in a certain region. No comprehensive study based on primary data and
covering multiple aspects of improved status has been undertaken so far. The earlier studies reveal that the pace of change is rapid in urban areas whereas the change is slow or absent in rural areas. In view of the above, the overall aim of the present study is to examine the present status of the Scheduled Castes in the rural and urban areas of the Andhra Pradesh in terms of education, occupation and social status in Andhra Pradesh. This study is unique because this is a micro level study. No study has been yet conducted on these lines in Andhra Pradesh.

1.8 Importance of the Study

The entire humanity has entered the new millennium with sea changes in the various aspects of life. These changes mainly pertain to the techno-scientific and psycho-social areas of human culture in the era of globalization, economic liberalization and free market economy on one side of the coin. On the other side of the coin, Scheduled Castes in India are still living with lower level of socio-economic conditions, lower level of literacy, lower sex ratio and poor conditions of housing as compared to State and National averages. Both the Central and State governments have implemented policies directed at the socio-economic empowerment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (STs). But the status of the Scheduled Castes has not changed hitherto. They are the weakest in terms of political, economic, social and cultural resources.

When a man remains throughout his life in the same occupational, economic and political status, his behaviour inevitably becomes very rigid and non-flexible. On this account, the behaviour of the people of the same status approaches uniformity, while that of people in different social positions becomes widely divergent. A quite different picture is given by the behaviour of the members of a mobile society. A great versatility and plasticity of human behaviour is a natural result of social mobility\textsuperscript{28}. 
Human development, as a concept, will have value or significance until the human development levels of disadvantaged people, particularly of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are raised to the levels of those of the dominant classes. The present study in this direction has studied the status of the Scheduled Castes. The suggestions made by the study if implemented will surely ensure Scheduled Castes to enjoy equal rights and equal access to goods and services in the society and to attain overall development on par with dominant castes.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

In pursuit of the aim of the study, the following are the objectives of the study –

1. To analyze the efforts made by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the government to improve the status of the Scheduled Castes

2. To examine the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents.

3. To examine the intergenerational disparities in educational attainment of the Scheduled Castes in the rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh.

4. To analyze the intergenerational changes in the occupation among the Scheduled Castes in the rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh.

5. To examine the change in social status of the scheduled castes in the rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh.

6. To suggest measures to improve the overall status of the Scheduled Castes.
1.10 Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The main sources of secondary data are books, journals, articles, various publications of Census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, internet and so on. Besides these, various reports and documents of various scholars both published as well as unpublished have been utilized.

1.10.1 Selection of the Sample

Purposive stratified random technique is used while selecting the sample. There are 23 districts in Andhra Pradesh. On geographical basis, Andhra Pradesh is divided into three regions as Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana regions. The scheduled caste population is spread all over Andhra Pradesh. From each region, one district, which is having higher percentage of Scheduled Caste population is selected and 120 samples were taken by representing the rural and urban areas from each district. From Coastal Andhra region, Guntur district, from Rayalaseema region, Chittoor district and from the Telangana region, Nalgonda district are selected for the present study. Therefore as a whole 360 samples were collected by using multi stage stratified random sampling technique.

Both primary and secondary data was used for the study. Various reports from the Planning Commission, Scheduled Caste Development Corporation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation, other government reports, books, journals, articles, newspapers and internet were used for the purpose of secondary data. For collecting the primary data, a questionnaire was framed. The collected primary data is processed through Computer using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Software. Simple arithmetic calculations like percentages were used for the processing of data. To assess statistical significance between the variables, Chi-square test was applied. Substantial part of the thesis is based on tabular analysis. In the analysis of
data, education, occupation, political participation and social status have been identified as variables.

1.10.2 Statistical analysis of the Data

The important variables were formulated and the relevant data collected from the field were coded and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. Cross tables were drawn for analyzing the data. Suitable and appropriate statistical tools such as percentages were used. Test of significance of the data was carried out using Chi-square test.

1.10.3 Chi-square test

Prism\textsuperscript{29} summarizes the probability value using the words in the middle column of this table. Many social scientists label graphs with the symbols of the third column. The present study also makes the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Wording</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01 to 0.05</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.001 to 0.01</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Extremely significant</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.11 Organization of the Study

The Thesis is organized in eight Chapters. Chapter I gives introduction, need for the study, objectives, methodology, etc. The second chapter reviews the related literature available. The third Chapter focuses on the efforts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the government to improve the status of the Scheduled Castes. The fourth Chapter analyzes the profile of Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh. The fifth Chapter presents the profile of the
study area. Chapter VI addresses the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents. Educational, occupational and social statuses of the Scheduled Castes are explained in Chapter VII. The last Chapter sums up the findings and conclusions of the study and presents the suggestions of the study.
References


2. Ibid, p.6.


4. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (1990), ‘Who were the Shudras? How they came to be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society? The Untouchables – Who were They and Why They became Untouchables’, Vol.7, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai.


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