A system of education in every society and in every age has been evolved according to its needs and the temper of its times. Education is a process. Indian education in its wider perspective was more inclined toward spiritual development, receiving knowledge and disciplining the mind as well, but today it is secular.

Shankarrao (1997:415) writes that according to Plato, “Education is the creation of a sound mind in sound body”.

Inamdar (1983:02) says that Mahatma Gandhiji says, “By education I mean an around drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit.

John Dewy opines, “Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his possibilities”.

The human standards and ideals are raised through the forces of education, both formal and informal. Educational expansion is sin-qua non for an around progress of any community. Education is very important for the around development of individual's personality, such education was denied to the fourth varna shudra, later no so called untouchables as a result of Varnasankara. Hence Prabhu, P.H. (1961) said that “In the Hindu home every male child belonging to the Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya Varna started his educational career with the observation of certain rites and rituals grouped under the name of the Upanayana Ceremony”. But the Upanayana ceremony was not performed by shudras and they were not allowed to learn and to be educated.
To make it lucid Prabhu (Ibid : 108-110) again says, "The Upanayana Sacrament is virtually regarded as the second birth of the young boy. Till the Upanayana is not passed through, every child is considered nature born and as such as good as Shudra". Hence Shudras were non-Dwijas and non-Aryans, who were illiterate and uneducated.

Education is basic necessity to achieve anything in the life of human beings. The primary function of education system as Panunzio (1939) has pointed out is "to transmit a knowledge of the forms and skills of society regarded as indispensable to its survival and improvement". Along with imparting knowledge and skills, education also transmits the particular system of moral, social and cultural values of the society.

Elwood (1931:06) says, "Systems of education have not been created for the training and development of the individuals as such, but rather fit the individuals for membership in society, that is, to control the process by which they acquire habits so that they shall advantageously co-ordinate their activities with those of the group".

As W.G. Sumner (1906:04) has expressed, education transfers the 'mores' to the individuals, that is, "He learns what conduct is approved or disapproved; what kind of man is admired most; how he ought to behave in all kinds of cases; and what he ought to believe or reject". In this sense, education may be said to be the process par excellence to socialize the individual.

In many educational systems, the aims of the education are formulated with reference to the satisfaction of certain ideals of a particular group at a definite period in its history. In this regard Nunn
(1935:5-6) says, "There is no universal aim of education if that aim is to
the assertion include of any particular ideal of life, for there are as many
ideals as there are persons. Educational efforts must, it would seem be
limited to securing for every one, the conditions under which
individuality is most completely developed that is, to enabling him to
make his original contribution to the variegated whole of human life as
full and as truly characteristic as his nature permits; the form of
contribution being left to the individual as something which each must,
in living and by living forge out of himself".

Thus education has its own significance in human life as well as
the advancement of society. Such education was denied to untouchables.
In India the growth of education in its initial stages was limited to the
upper castes. Certain religious sanctions still prevented the lower castes
from taking education freely. It was only in the 1920's that the scheduled
castes emerged as a force to reckon with under the leadership of Dr. B.R.
Ambedkar. He initially started his movement for the removal of
untouchability by taking up issues like temple entry and the use of
public places by the scheduled castes. When the congress included these
aspects on their programme, Ambedkar fought for the educational
advancement and political representation of the scheduled castes. In
1946 he founded "the People's Education Society" and started the
Siddartha College. It is this organization which has been mainly
responsible for the spread of education among the scheduled castes.

Therefore in the present chapter an attempt is made to examine the
development of education among scheduled castes and anti-
untouchability measure taken from time to time in India. The evolution of
education in general and development of education among scheduled castes in particular can be discussed through following way.

During the period of Vedic Culture or Aryan Civilization education was the monopoly of the highest caste viz. Brahmins. In those days education was considered religious by nature and was consisted of a study of sacred texts and scriptures. In the words of Mudaliar, A.L. (1960: 5-6). If we take the first period i.e. Aryan civilization, the education imparted was generally continued in the beginning to the priestly classes and later it spread to the two other classes, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, who were of Aryan descent. In the early vedic schools instruction would appear to have been continued to young Brahmins and was regarded mainly as a preparation for their future vocation as priests. He again said, “But sometime before 500 B.C. the education of the young Kshatriyas and Vaishyas would appear to have been started”.

Cumingham (1941) has found that in the pre-British traditional system of Sanskrit learning, education was monopolised by Brahmins. In other words members of lower castes were not allowed to educate their children in institutions of learning and higher education. Entry into temples of learning was completely forbidden for members of untouchable castes.

Similarly, Beteille (1969) also has found that perhaps this was intended to keep the lower caste subjects perpetually at the lower rung of the social ladder. It may also be speculated that in giving them rights and privileges of better education, the Brahmins and other upper castes saw a threat to their own social prestige and social status, which they had continued to enjoy in the priest dominated society.
So far as education system in vedic period is concerned, Singh R.G. (1986:30) noted that, "In the vedic India the education was provided to all. But after the law of Manu was enforced, which prohibited the Shudras or the low caste people from acquiring knowledge and a system of Mediation through education and other intellectual activities, the perpetuation of education to all was prohibited. The ethics and philosophy of the upper caste people were codified in Sanskrit language, which Brahmins called the divine language. He further said, "the separation of the media of expression helped in enlarging the gulf between the cultures of the two basic groups of Indian society. The low caste people fell prey to blind faith, superstitions, blackmagic and the like, which became a part of their day to day life customs and rituals".

Thus for centuries, scheduled castes were kept away from education, knowledge and culture on religious grounds. The roots of this evil are so deep that even in independent India they have to face many socio-economic disabilities.

Coming to the Buddhist period the system of education took on a different course. One main difference between the education system of Aryan Civilization and Buddhist period was that the Buddhist education system was not based on vedic study and its teachers were not of priestly class. It was open to all and not merely to the three twice born castes. All castes were equally admissible to the Buddhist community.

With the arrival of Buddhism, there was a shift not only in the venue of education but also from the topmost stratum of Brahmins although the famous Maths of Sringeri, Badri, Dwaraka and Puri are said to have come into existence during this period. The most important
Buddhist centre of learning was Nalanda. During this period admission on to the order was thrown open to all the castes. Nalanda was a famous University to which scholars even belonged to all strata of society. The Chinese scholars Huen Tsang and Fa Hien who left behind detailed descriptions of this great historic university town. It was an age of cultural regeneration. Sincere attempts were made by Buddhist monks to spread education to all those who were capable of educating themselves irrespective of their caste origins. For the first time the doors of education were thrown open to all in a truly democratic spirit. There were no restrictions on receiving education. However, this era came to an end after a few centuries.

The frequent disturbance due to warfare and foreign invasions led to an end of the Buddhist period. Indian society again became conservative and traditions, customs again became important. This was a natural response to the upheavels brought about by wars and invasions from the north-east. It caused the destruction of Nalanda and the educational system.

In the medieval India, saints and their Bhakti cult preached equality of human beings before God. They advocated that even the low caste person can attain the bliss of God and salvation through faith in God. Saints spread the knowledge to common masses by preaching in common, local languages rather than in sanskrit. This was very important because, hitherto all religious precepts and knowledge was in Sanskrit, which was not a common man's language. It was known to Brahmans and a few people belonging to the Dwijas, while a vast majority of the masses in general and Shudras or Panchamas in particular were
prohibited from even learning Sanskrit and religious verses. However, the saints did not preach strongly the necessity of social equality. They bothered only about the salvation after death and did not bother much about the sufferings in this life. As a result they laid emphasis on the equality of souls, salvation and heaven. Some causal references were made to the problem of human segregation and that too out of sympathy rather than to assert the birth right of the scheduled castes. They did not attack the practice of untouchability.

During this period in India a number of changes occurred in the educational system. But no changes took place in the educational life of the scheduled castes. With the consolidation of Mughal power in India, Persian and Arabic came to be accepted as the languages of the new rulers. To a certain extent, it weakened the position of Brahmin teachers. While in the past, education was imparted in the monasteries and maths, now it was done in the Maktabs and Madarasas. Hence, Muslim rule changed the linguistic aspect of education, but the basic format of the system was retained. As a result while in the past it was the Hindu who monopolised education during the Mughal rule it was the rich class among the Muslims, who came to rule the roost in the field.

For the first time in India after the establishment of the British rule the traffic in human beings was legally prohibited. During the British period education was accelerated towards scheduled castes or untouchables. The British government introduced a system of education in the 19th century in India, which was secular and scientific by nature. As Ghurye G.S. (1961:78) observes, "The British brought with them a casteless culture and a literature full of thoughts on individual liberty".
Western education thus brought forth new ideas, aspirations and behaviour patterns, which were different from those to which the people were accustomed. Western education enabled individuals in the Indian society to extricate themselves from the restrictions of the caste based taboos. The low castes especially saw in western education an avenue through which they could better their status.

The British Government in India introduced special provisions and concessions for the educational advancement of the backward classes which was later converted into caste reservations in educational institutions and for jobs. Shudras, women, the untouchables and tribes in this country obtained entry into the four walls of literate learning as a result of the Social Reform Movements which were to a certain extent supported by the Englishmen during 19th century.

However Sinha R.K. (1986:131) observed that even during British rule the facilities for education were mainly arrived for the benefit at the upper castes, though education itself had become secularised. It was only in the 20th century that the scheduled castes began to enter the portals of institutions of higher learning. In this context Sinha further said that “In a modernizing society a person’s educated status is determined to a large extent by his educational attainment. But the latter in turn depends upon his parents’ education and socio-economic status. In the case of the scheduled castes, then it was a vicious circle. This led to a form of alienation between educated scheduled castes and their non-educated and the poor parents. Further, it has brought about a widening gap between the educated and professional dalits and their illiterate breathren. However, they again face the problem as they are unable to
consolidate their gains through education as they cannot fully integrated themselves in a society dominated by upper caste Hindus.

During the British rule, Christianity played an important role in motivating the depressed classes for higher and professional education and particularly to the girls. As a result their life had been urbanized and westernized. In this context, M.N. Srinivas (1977:19) opined, "As early as 1830, the missionaries for the first time in the history at India started giving formal education to the untouchables. Apart from them the British were the first to expose the untouchables to western education on a large scale. The policy pursued by the British government in India of giving preference to the low castes for education was in accordance with its humanitarian sentiments and it also had the effect of making lower castes look upto the British for protection.

However, the British did not wish to pursue a policy of open discrimination in 1857. The entry of a scheduled caste person into an educational institution in the country was recorded in the year 1856. As recorded by Dr. Mudbidri, A.G. (1982:94) in June 1856 a Mahar boy named Vitoo Bin Narayan a scheduled caste boy, applied for admission into Government Marathi School at Dharwad, Bombay Presidency, presently in Karnataka state. It was the first case of a scheduled caste boy to officially seek permission to be admitted to a government school. The authorities were in a dilemma and at first refused admission to the boy. However, upon the advise of the collector the scheduled caste boy asked for justice by petitioning to the Governor-in-Council and later the Viceroy of Calcutta.

After obtaining the opinion of various high officials, the Viceroy directed the provincial governors that none could be discriminated
against in Government schools whether the upper castes liked it or not. Thus Vitoor Narayan was admitted to the Government Marathi School in Dharwad.

Chalam K.S. (1990:23) says, “The incident had created a furore in the administration, which ultimately attracted the attention of the rulers. The Board of Directors were then forced to formulate an educational policy, where it was stated that as long as the schools maintained by the Government, the classes of its subjects are to be given admission without any distinction of caste, religion and race”. This policy was further strengthened with the enactment of the Caste Disabilities Act 1872. This was how a small beginning was made for the educational development of weaker sections in India.

Thus the demand for entry into educational institutions and for equality of opportunities was first started in South India.

It casts light on the fact that the desire to get educated among the low castes had been kindled as early as the middle of the 19th century. It also means that perhaps, the low castes had become conscious of the fact that they were being denied many privileges and that they could possibly be obtained if one fought for them. Thus, admission could not be refused in a Government School on the basis of caste.

The above principle when implemented did create some anxiety to school authorities in Dharwad. As anticipated, the upper castes did not welcome such a measure. Even almost thirty years later the upper castes were not fully reconciled to the situation. “The Dharwad Vritta”, a daily newspaper in 1882 reported that attendance in Dharwad high school was
rapidly declining. The newspaper reported that the Director of Public Instruction had expressed his readiness to close the school rather than refuse admittance to the boys of Mahar and Mang castes.

Mudbidri (Ibid : 95-96) said that the admission of two boys belonging to the Holeya caste created a disturbance in Dharwad for four or five days. Many of the upper caste boys began to leave the school and join a private English school. However, the efficiency of this school was none too high as it was new. Several boys, therefore, returned to the Government school reconciled to the rule. Eventually the native gentlemen had to accept the decision.

The Inspector of Education of Southern Division had notified in 1881 that low caste students belonging to Mochi, Holeya and other low castes attending schools in Hubli and Dharwad were to be exempted from paying fees. Even girls from the lower castes also began to take an interest in education.

Hunter (1882) says, “Early efforts towards the education of the untouchables are usually associated with British rule and efforts of the missionaries in India. British policy documents relating to the education of the untouchables reveal a dualism following from a liberal stance on the one hand and tendency to compromise with dominant caste pressures on the other. This crucially affected the early educational opportunities of untouchables and their experiences within schools. Thus it was a part of education policy to recommend that no boy be refused admission to Government college or school merely on the ground of caste”.
But the reaction of caste Hindus was one of the continuous oppositions to the education of untouchables. Cotton J.S. (1996:1024) has said that in Kaira district five or six large schools were closed down when they attempted to avail of education. Hutton J.H. (1933) noted that in one case, the depressed classes at Surat had to withdraw their children from the school as a result of indirect pressure exerted on them by higher castes. Similarly, Richley J.A. (1996) observed that in Multan division it was reported that boys of low castes such as Chamars, Musails and Sansis occasionally attended ordinary schools, but are seated apart from the children of higher caste.

Institutionally a number of options were made available by the administration. Special Government Schools ensured separate education for untouchables, who would thereby not come into contact with upper caste children. Missionaries also were encouraged to run private schools for the lowest castes, where other castes objected to the association of their children with the untouchables, the former were persuaded to set up their own special schools under the government grants in aid system. At that time, night schools were also extremely popular among the fact that they taught only the most elementary skills.

R.K. Sinha (1986) noted that even during British days, when education was formalized and relatively secularized through the school system, it was mainly Brahmins and other high caste groups, who took advantage of the new opportunities. While those belonging to scheduled castes, considered as untouchables, continued to be disallowed from the school, the social and economic situation was such that lower and even middle castes found it difficult to send their children to school. Even
when some lower caste children went to school the atmosphere was not conducive as discriminatory treatment was given even by teachers.

Similarly Briggs (1970) has observed that both teachers and pupils make it difficult for low caste boys to sit in the classroom. Moreover the belief that it was only the higher ups who needed education was widespread even among middle and lower rungs of the caste hierarchy.

In the 19th century the most important social reformer was Jyotirao Phuley. He openly came out against untouchability and propagated education for untouchables, women and the downtrodden by starting a school for these people. He carried out his movement for social equality and non-Brahminic philosophy. He founded a “satya shodak samaj” in Maharashtra in 1873. He supported and encouraged, pleaded compulsory and free education for untouchables before the Hunter Commission in 1884.

The study done by Seal (1968) has revealed that there has been unequal distribution of various castes at various levels of education in the British presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras in 1883-84. The data shows extreme monopoly of the high castes at various levels of education. The percentage of low castes was small, while the untouchables were negligible.

Later the British Government introduced the compulsory Education Act in 1913. According to this act the government had to accept the principle that no pupil should be denied admission to government school or school maintained at the cost of public funds on the ground of caste.
Kuppuswamy B. (1978) writes, "The admission of three boys belonging to the ‘Holepyaka castes in the Sringeri school created a great stir. The parents of higher caste boys protested against this and withdrawn their children. Not only Brahmin parents, but the non-Brahmin parents as well as the muslim parents withdrew their children from the school into which the untouchable boys were admitted. However, the government was firm in its attitude.

In 1915 in Karnataka there was a great awakening regarding the need for education among ‘Panchama’ classes. Seeing the new spirit of the times, the government passed an order in 1915 asking the landmasters to admit the ‘untouchable’ children in all public schools of the state. The first school to be thrown open to the Harijans in the state. The school opened as per the compulsory Education Act-1913. As a result the government order came to be known as the 'Sringeri order'. There was a great deal of protest by the orthodox sections against this order (B. Kuppuswamy, 1978 p.48).

During that period Dr B.R. Ambedkar faced lot of problems in his education life, Keer D. (1971) has explained the humiliating experience of Ambedkar and other untouchables. He observed that Bhimrao had to sit on gunny bags in a corner of a classroom along with his untouchable classmates. He was not allowed to answer questions for fear of polluting the teacher. Caste Hindu pupils were afraid that if Ambedkar touched the black board he would pollute their lunch boxes kept behind it. In high school, he was prevented from studying Sanskrit as the language was considered the key to the Vedas. Under such stringent circumstances education hardly developed among untouchables.
The actual spread of education among the untouchables was extensively slow in pre-independent India. Moreover, the spread of education was uneven. It means there were sharp variations in literacy among the untouchables. Castes such as Mahars of Bombay and Paraiyans of Madras Presidency were relatively more educationally advanced as compared to Chamars, Bhangis and Cherumars.

As the educational system became secularised to some extent, the non-Brahmin higher castes first began to take education in greater numbers. Towards the end of British period educational facilities became enlarged and the overall development level of Indian society steadily increased. This created a more conducive environment for lower status for educating their children.

Lynch O.M. (1969) in his extensive and investigative study of the Jatar or Cobbler caste of U.P., observed that the fruits of western education were made use of fully by the first few educated Chamar elite. These elite not only got educated in 1920’s but saw to it that others from their own caste got the necessary encouragement.

The Jatars first thought of improving their social status by advancing the theory that they had a very high social status of Kshatriyas during the Vedic times and had lost it due to a defeat in a great war. They claimed downward social mobility as the main reason for their downfall and low status. They claimed their rightful status. Though they did not fully achieve it, they still claimed this myth would separate them from other leather working classes such as the Chamars, Dhors etc. The Jatavs also started in 1924 “The Jatav Youth League”, in 1939 “The Jatav Meris Association” and “The Jatav Meri’s Educational
Institutions" etc. They also started girls school to encourage female emancipation. By the turn of independence, many of them were active in the freedom movement and in politics. Many were elected to the state and central governments. This is a story of what one scheduled caste can do for itself by its own hard work,

**Anti-untouchability measures and progress of scheduled castes**

Manu’s creation of four Varnas is illogical, unscientific, unconvincing and irrational, which divides society into watertight compartments and infuses the idea at high and low, superior and inferior among the people. In this context Wilson J. (1955:22) opined that the code of Manu says, “The king shall never execute a Brahmin though convicted of possible crimes, but may banish him with all his property secured and his body unhurt. No greater crime is known on the earth”.

The purpose of writing this religious text was to keep non-Brahmins or especially Shudras as slave caste or ruled class. South India has witnessed non-Brahmin movements in order to overthrow the Brahmins and share social status, educational attainment and political power.

The Hindu religion makes Brahmin a very powerful and ‘Divine authority’ to rule, Bulhar (1886:334-335) said that according to Manu Smriti, “A Brahmin may kill a Shudra and his action is equivalent merely to the killing of a cat, a mongoose, a blue jay, a stray dog, a lizard, an owl or a crow”.

In every society, the class which has marched ahead in education, politics and other fields, guides the unorganized, ignorant and illiterate masses. But this is not in the case of Indian intellectual Brahmins, who
claim to be wise and superior to all other castes, exploited the non-Brahmin ignorant masses. The Brahmins in India deliberately did not reform the society because they had fear that if the lower castes become aware of their positions and rights they would pose a threat to the upper castes, hence they deliberately kept the Shudras under continuous poverty and subjugation. The intellectuals have become tyrannical toward the lower castes and have waged inhuman wars on the cultural, economic and the educational life of the oppressed castes. In this regard Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1936:64-65) writes, "It is true that intellect by itself is no virtue. It is only a means that depends upon ends which an intellectual person persues. An intellectual can be a good man but he can easily be a rogue".

The scheduled castes suffered a lot in the Hindu social system and very little attention has been given to the social ills by the ancient kings and reformers. But in the medieval period the Bhakti movement tried to bring about reformation in the Hindu society. The religious saints waged a war against caste system and untouchability. The prominent name that figures in Karnatak history is that of Basaveshwara, who in the 12th century tried to break the caste system and untouchability. In the 20th century two important personalities who have struggled a lot to emancipate the scheduled castes are Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhiji.

Dr. Ambedkar being himself an untouchable turned his life into a mission and strove hard to liberate the downtrodden masses from the tyrannical Hindu system. On the contrary Gandhiji, a caste Hindu, who never underwent a humiliations, insults and sufferings unlike Dr. Ambedkar, worked partially to liberate the scheduled castes socially.
Reform movements

The earliest reform movement perhaps goes back to the times of Gautama, the Buddha. Lord Buddha as a compassionate religious reformer made sincere attempts to propagate complete equality before god. He was the first to attack Varnashrama Dharma, caste system and discrimination on its ground. He preached equality of all human beings irrespective of their status in caste hierarchy. He attacked the ritual purity which went a long way in annihilating the division of human beings into water tight compartments of caste. He established a new religion and a new order of monks, who came from all sections of society. Even women were not debarred from spiritual attainment. The untouchables were given an opportunity to lead a respectable life and improve their status. Buddhism proliferated for a time and a status. Buddhism proliferated for a time and a few centuries later after the death of Lord Buddha, it was again undertaken by Hinduism.

In the medieval period in India saints and their Bhakti-cult preached equality of human beings before god. They advocated that even the low caste person can attain the bliss of god and salvation through faith in god. Saints spread the knowledge to common masses by preaching in common, local language rather than in Sanskrit. This was very important because hitherto all religious precepts and knowledge was in sanskrit which was not a common man's language. It was known to Brahmins and a few people belonging to Dwijas while a vast majority of the masses in general and shudras in particular were prohibited even learning sanskrit and religious verses. However, the saints did not preach strongly the necessity of social equality. They bothered only about the
salvation after death and did not bother much about the sufferings in this life. As a result they laid emphasis on the equality of souls, salvation and heaven.

In the 12th century, A.D. Lord Basavanna again made attempts to propagate equality. This founder of Veerashaivism brought about far reaching social reform. He was indeed a revolutionary who was a far sighted visionary. Basavanna, as he was popularly known wanted to break the caste system, though he was himself born in the Brahmin caste. He gave importance to 'Kayaka' or 'Bread-labour'. Through his philosophy he stressed the importance of doing hard work, irrespective of one's caste, such was the appeal of his new faith that the common folk flocked to him.

Basavanna even arranged the marriage between a Shudra boy and a Brahmin girl, who were the children of his followers, though this created a furore in the society. Many of his well known contemporary, followers came from Dalit background though they were leading figures in the Veershaiva movement. Allam Prabhu used to beat the drums at the Madhukeshwara Temple of Banavasi before he became a Veershaiva, Dohoar Kakkayya was from the Shudra caste, so also was Haralayya, who was a cobbler, Hadapad Appanna was from the barber caste, while Madiwala Machideva was from the Washerman caste. Similarly Medar Ketayya made a living by making bamboo baskets and Nuliya Chandayya made and sold ropes. Again Urilinga Peddi was a Shudra who went on to establish a Veerashaiva Matha.

The above are only a short list of Shivasharanas or Veerashaiva devotees. More than 800 years later they are still remembered due to
their spirituality which shows that Dalits are not devoid of spiritual learning. Basavanna had the courage to provide them individual freedom and gave the right encouragement.

After Lord Basavanna, for the first time in India after the establishment of the British rule traffic in human beings was legally prohibited. The British brought with them the legal system which treated all persons as equal before law. However, they too maintained the status quo in the social structure and relations and did not make any direct attempt to abolish untouchability because they were interested in preserving and expanding the British rule in India and not in bringing about social changes. For achieving this end, they did not touch the caste system and untouchability.

The British brought with them western literature, science, commerce, philosophy and their ideology of constitutional law and jurisprudence which had a great impact on Indian social life. As a result the position of the untouchables improved gradually because they began to regain their status as persons in the eyes of law. The Indian Penal Code of 1860 and the code of Criminal Procedure of 1890 were generally made applicable to all persons, irrespective of their caste or creed or religion in British India.

The British rulers brought with them the western judiciary system which treated all persons as equal before the law. However, they did not disturb the Indian social order because it would not have worked in their favour. Nevertheless in general people were influenced by the liberal western education which never advocated water tight segments of the society like the caste system in India. The impact of western education on
Indians put them in two minds, one believing in castism and untouchability and second believing in a liberal society. Slowly western educated caste Hindus because of their association with westerners and introduction to western education became less violent and rigid unlike their female folk and other caste Hindus. Such men projected themselves as liberal in the public but remained conservative and caste minded in the private, in their family lives.

It was Mahatma Phule, the first Indian social reformer from Maharashtra in 19th century, who not only attacked the caste system and untouchability but led a movement in an organized way through his “Satya Shodhak Samaj”, which was actively engaged in anti-untouchability movement. This movement was the first of the kind to organise the masses and gain their confidence for abolishing caste system and untouchability. This movement was a considerable force in Maharashtra till the early part of the 20th century.

It was Mahatma Gandhiji who was also keenly aware of the need to bring the scheduled castes into the mainstream of Indian society. He observed that freedom from British rule meant nothing if the marginalized groups were not given their rightful place in free India. He called the practice of untouchability a blot on the face of Hindu society.

Gandhiji organized a stringent campaign against untouchability. He called the Dalits ‘the true children of god’ or ‘Harijans’. He made attempts to include the Harijans in his freedom movements. He led them in his prayers, both morning and evening. He took up the job of cleaning latrines and urged the upper castes to do the same to show that it was a basic hygienic duty.
Gandhiji started the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' and a mouth piece called the 'Harijan'. Schools and health clinics were established to help the Harijan overcome their natural diffidence. He made attempts to rehabilitate them both socially and politically. It is for this reason that he was against separate electrorates for Harijans, for he saw it as a 'divide and rule' policy of the British Indian Government. It is here that he had a difference of opinion with the great Dalit leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Thus Gandhiji made sincere attempts to make the Dalits socially better and restore to them their rights. Gandhiji himself launched a propaganda drive against untouchability within the framework of broad caste system.

Another great leader who came from the scheduled caste group themselves was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was from the Mahar caste and suffered the greatest disabilities. Despite this he acquired western education and even went abroad. He was a social humanist. The rise of Dr. Ambedkar and his collective struggles for the emancipation of untouchables created an atmosphere in favour of eradication of untouchability. He became a symbol of revolt against caste Hindus. He led a social movement which engulfed the whole of India and his message to the Dalits reached the far corners of India. Political and social empowerment of the weaker sections of society was his life mission, while eradication of the pernicious system of untouchability was his goal.

The anti-untouchability movement led by Dr. Ambedkar made the British government feel the necessity of removing untouchability. After the second round table conference in 1932 one noticed a radical break away from the thraldom of the ages, the eradication of untouchability
was a result of the efforts made by Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhiji and others. Consequently all states in India except Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan adopted legislations for enabling scheduled castes to exercise their rights to worship in temples and use public places and amenities. The Madras legislative council was the first to introduce a legislation for throwing open the Hindu temples to all Hindus by enacting the removal of Civil Disabilities Act and the Malabar Temple Entry Act in 1938.

Dr. Ambedkar instilled a sense of dignity, self-confidence and a definite identity status among his followers. He established several institutions to achieve his aim. He called his movement the "Self Respect Movement". He established the "Bahishkrita Hitakarini Sabha", the "Independent Labour Party" and the "Depressed Classes Education Society". It was a three pronged attack on traditional society to uplift the untouchables.

Dr. Ambedkar even made a scientific study of the caste system in order to find out its roots and how it could be eradicated. In this attempt he wrote several books on the caste system, on untouchability and on Hinduism. Hence he was even called the "Modern Manu".

As a member of the committee to frame the constitution for independent India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was responsible for incorporating several measures for the upliftment of the Dalits. He was awarded the 'Bharat Ratna' the highest title in India for his efforts.

In 1956 Dr. Ambedkar rejected Hinduism and embraced Buddhism at Nagpur, with millions of his followers. This place was then called "Deeksha Bhoomi" and every year many Dalits embrace Buddhism.
Today Dr. B.R. Ambedkar remained a beacon of light for the scheduled castes. He is an example to show how education can bring about a transformation and restore civil and political rights to educate scheduled castes.

Another movement for the upliftment of the Dalits was headed by Sri. Narayan Guru in Kerala. Though it was started in Kerala it spread all along the western coast and into Karnataka.

Sri Narayan Guru started the S.N.D.P. movement in 1902 with the message "One caste, one religion, one god". He started a number of schools as he saw education of the depressed classes as the most potent instrument to fight untouchability. He also built a number of temples where the Dalits could pray, conduct marriages and other rituals. He also established an order of sanyasis. Thus he modernised and sanskritised the Dalits within a short period of 30 years. Though the appeal of this reform movement was limited and regional, nevertheless it is an important landmark.

Indeed the ex-President of India Sri. K.R. Narayanan who comes from an extremely poor Dalit family from Kerala is yet another example. With a good education he succeeded in the Indian Foreign Service. He was a successful Ambassador to foreign service. He was a successful Ambassador to China and ultimately became the President of India.

Thus education and freedom are two important avenues for the betterment of the Dalits in India.
INDEPENDENT INDIA

After the advent of democracy in India for the first time a special consideration was made for the education of the scheduled castes. Due to the age old rigid caste system existing in India, the scheduled caste people had suffered from distinct social, economic and educational disabilities. Even today the caste system is still holding a unique position in Hindu society.

After independence the Central and State governments have undertaken various plans, programmes, projects and schemes to promote the welfare of the scheduled castes. There have been several constitutional safeguards and legislation passed to protect the rights of the scheduled castes.

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

The constitution of India provides protection and safeguards for these classes, either specifically or by way of general rights of citizenship with the object of promoting their educational and economic interests and of removing certain special disabilities from which they suffer. The constitutional safeguards are:

i. The abolition of untouchability and forbidding its practice in any form. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law (Art. 17);

ii. The constitution also lays down that no citizen shall on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth,
residence or any of them, be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state;

iii. The promotion of the educational and economic interests of these classes and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Art. 46);

iv. The throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus (Art. 25);

v. The removal of any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment, the use of wells, tanks, water taps, cisterns, bathing ghats, burial or cremation ground, any sanitary convenience, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of the state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public (Art. 15);

vi. The forbidding or any denial of admission to educational institutions maintained by the State or receiving aid out of the State funds (Art. 29) is considered an offence.

vii. The obligation of the States to consider their claims in making the appointments to the public services and reservation of them in case of inadequate representation (Art. 16 and 335) is made compulsory.

viii. Special representation in the Lok Sabha and the state Vidhan Sabhas to scheduled castes for a period of 10 years (till January 1980) which has been further increased to another period of 10 years (Art. 330, 332, 324);
ix. The setting up of the special officers to investigate all matters relating to constitutional safeguard (Art.338) is made.

Special appointment of a Commission to investigate the condition of socially and educationally backward classes is made.

It will, thus, be observed that a three-pronged attack, legislative, executive and educational has been launched to eradicate the evil of untouchability which still continues to be practised in some form or the other in certain parts of the country.

THE UNTOUCHABILITY (OFFENCES) ACT – 1955

The untouchability (offences) Act, 1955, came into force on June 1, 1955. It provides penalties for the following offences.

i. Preventing a person, on the ground of untouchability, from entering a place of public worship, offering prayers therein or taking water from a sacred tank, well or spring.

ii. Enforcing all kinds of social disabilities, such as denying access to any shop, public restaurant, public hospital or educational institution, hotel or any other place of public entertainment, denying the use of any road, river, well, tank, water tap, bathing ghat, cremation ground, sanitary convenience, dharmashalas, sarai or musafirkhana or utensils kept in such institutions and hotels and restaurants is an offence.

iii. Enforcing occupational, professional or trade disabilities or disabilities in the matter or enjoyment of any benefit under a charitable trust, in the construction or occupation of any
residential premises in any locality or the observance of any social or religious usage or ceremony is punishable.

iv. Refusing to sell goods or render services to a Harijan because he is a Harijan, for molesting, injuring or annoying a person or organising a boycott of or taking part in the excommunication of a person who has exercised the rights accruing to him as a result of the abolition of untouchability are punished.

ELAYAPERUMAL COMMITTEE-1965

Ever since the act came into force, there was criticism about the effectiveness of the act. So a Committee was appointed on Untouchability and Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes, under the chairmanship of Shri. L. Elayaperumal in 1965. This Committee observed that:

i. The enforcement of the Act was inadequate and ineffective.

ii. The offences were committed with impunity.

iii. The victims of the practice of untouchability did not lodge complaint for fear of social reprisal and deterrent economic consequences.

iv. Instances of atrocities on Harijans were very frequent. Harijans would be beaten, their children given blows and women assaulted.

v. The landlords, money lenders and rural ogavichs would not give them work and resort to their boycott to bring them under their socio-economic subordination.
The Committee, therefore, recommended the establishment of an enforcement machinery and made proposals for plugging the loopholes and lacunae in the statutory provisions. This recommendation was accepted by the Government. Accordingly, the Untouchability (offences) Act, 1955 was amended under the name of Untouchability (offences) Amendment and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1976. Under this Act:

i. Where the minimum term of imprisonment does not exceed three months, the offences are triable summarily.

ii. Direct or indirect preaching of untouchability or its justification on the historical, philosophical, religious or traditional grounds, has been made an offence.

iii. Privately owned places of worship allowed by the owner to be used as place of public worship have been brought within the purview of the law.

iv. Collective fines can be imposed on the inhabitants of any area where such inhabitants are concerned in or have abated the commission of untouchability offences.

v. Persons convicted of untouchability offences have been debarred from contesting election to the central or state legislatures.

vi. Public servants who virtually neglect the investigation of any offence punishable under the Act are deemed to be abettors.
Section 15 of the Act lists out measures for the effective implementation of various provisions of the Act. It also provides for the Central Government to take such steps as may be necessary to coordinate the measures taken by the State Governments.

One of the special features of the Act is that special responsibility has been placed on the state governments to ensure that the rights accruing from the abolition of untouchability are made available to and are availed of by, the persons subjected to any disability. In sub-section (2) of section 15A of this Act, the state governments have been asked to take the following measures:

i. the provision of adequate facilities including legal aid to persons subjected to any disability arising out of 'untouchability' to enable them to avail themselves of such rights;

ii. the appointment of officers for initiating or exercising supervision over prosecutions for the contravention of the provisions of this Act;

iii. the setting up of special courts for the trial of offences under this Act;

iv. the setting up of committees at such appropriate levels as the state government may think fit to assist the state government in formulating or implementing such measures;

v. provision for a periodic survey of the working of the provisions of this act with a view to suggesting measures for the better implementation of the provisions of this Act;
vi. The identification of the areas where persons are under any disability arising out of "untouchability" and adoption of such measures as would ensure the removal of such disability from such areas.

Many states have taken steps for the implementation of the above measures.

In order to prevent ill-treatment of Harijans, the government has issued the following directives to the states.

i. Periodical drives to be launched to reassure the scheduled castes and other weaker sections that their rights will be protected;

ii. Areas where reoccurrence of such instances of harassment is likely to occur should be identified and adequate preventive measures taken:

iii. Offences involving violation of civil rights on account of caste considerations should be investigated as special report cases and entrusted to specially designated officers;

iv. Prosecutions in such cases should be swiftly launched;

v. Victims of serious atrocities should be given immediate relief and procedural difficulties should be promptly remedied;

vi. Imposition of collective fines under the provisions of the Protection of Civil Rights Act should be considered in cases where such instances have occurred more than once;

vii. Legal assistance to the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes should be provided for their defence; and
viii. Non-official agencies should be suitably mobilized in this task of providing protection to Harijans and weaker sections of society.

Since 1954, the Central Government has been giving financial assistance to the movement of eradicating untouchability. Both official and non-official agencies are being utilized for this purpose. Harijan days and "Harijan weeks" are observed in almost all the states to focus public attention and enlist people's co-operation in the eradication of untouchability. Publicity media such as books, pamphlets, hand bills and audio-visual aids have also been pressed into service.

The assistance and co-operation of voluntary organizations such as Harijan Sevak Samaj, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bharatiya Depressed Classes League, and the Harijan Ashram of Allahabad have been obtained in the fight against untouchability.

Article 45 of Indian constitution has laid down that, "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years". In order to promote education among them the government is giving concessions such as free education, free tuition, stipends, scholarships, free supply of text books, mid day meals, free boarding and lodging facilities etc. to the scheduled caste students.

In spite of providing all such facilities, the educational gap between the scheduled castes and the rest of society is still very wide and the rate of improvement is very slow. In this context, D'Souza (1980:56) noted that, "The state is endeavouring to bridge the educational gap between the scheduled castes and the rest of the society, but on the other hand as
an unintimated consequence of that endeavour, the educational gaps among the scheduled castes themselves are widening”.

Hence Ambedkar recommended that the best scheduled caste students, who were selected from primary schools be kept away from their parents and be given all the facilities till they complete their education. As per Article 45 of the Constitution of India, the reservation policy was first implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. Chalam (1990:23) has said that, “It was the Jammu and Kashmir government which for the first time after independence resorted to a large scale communal reservation policy in 1952”. The first time that endeavoured all India to recommend reservation on caste basis (other than S.C. and ST) was attempted by Kaka Kalelkar Commission in 1953.

The Government of India grants liberal concessions in the field of education because education plays an important role in the advancement of scheduled castes. Education alone can remove their social, economic and educational disabilities. Hence Yadav (1991:26) has said that, “Today a significant proportion of Dalit families are ready to send their children to school and do so as reflected in class I standard enrollment”.

**Development measures of Scheduled Castes**

Singh R.B. (2003:4-13-14) writes that the state intervened in favour of dalits in variety of ways, which included constitutional and legal measures, reservation in government jobs, provision of special component plan, special programmes of Health and Education etc. A variety of efforts have been made so far to uplift the Scheduled Caste Population.
At present, among the development measures the main focus is on Special Component Plan (SCP) and Special Central Assistance. At the state level, the formulation and implementation of SCP is going to do through Social Welfare Department. Various Schemes exclusively included and meant for the scheduled caste persons under SCP are as below.

**Schemes related to education of scheduled caste children**

1. Free books to scheduled caste children

2. Grant for Medical, Engineering Law etc. books to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students.

3. Grants to Scheduled Caste students studying in Medical and Engineering Colleges.

4. Attendance scholarships to scheduled caste girl students studying in primary classes.

5. Post-Metric scholarships and schemes for scheduled caste boys.

6. Special grant to scheduled caste girl students studying in post-matric and post-graduate classes.

7. Pre-Matric scholarship for the children of those engaged in unclean occupations i.e. Sweepers, Seavangers, Players and Tanners.

8. Opening of hostels for Scheduled Caste boys and girls in schools and colleges.

9. Hostel for scheduled caste girls in schools/colleges.

10. Awards to Scheduled Caste Sports students.
11. Awards to brilliant scheduled caste students.

12. Schemes for residential schools for boys and girls upto ten plus two level in blocks having low literacy rate.


14. Grant for reading rooms in dharmshalas.

**RESERVATION IN EMPLOYMENT**

Article 16(1) of Indian Constitution envisages equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state, irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth or residence. However, in order to ameliorate the socio-economic backwardness of scheduled castes the constitution provides reservation in the service.

Alongwith the above facilities, they have been receiving special attention through the constitution of India with special provisions in education, employment and political representation. Article 46, for instance, says, “The state shall promote with special care the educational 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”.

Thus educational advancement is accelerating towards scheduled caste people. Today, significantly a larger number of children from lower caste groups attend schools is better as compared to the situation that prevailed even five decades ago.
Suggested Measures for Social and Economic Amelioration

The social disabilities of the Scheduled Caste people spring partly from prejudices of high caste Hindus and partly from the economic cleavage between the high castes and the depressed classes. They can be removed by the spread of education, by propaganda for their removal and by an improvement in the economic conditions of these classes. They have to be induced to abjure hard drinking, eating carrion or vermin which are so repugnant to high castes. Where, they indulge in extra marital relations and give up their women to prostitution, the standard of morality has to be raised and new marital customs must be introduced. The ministration of a Brahmin priest at the time of marriages may contribute towards the approximation of their marital standards to those of other Hindu castes. Economic advancement of the untouchables can only be stabilized with opportunities for improvement of social status. Social reform and economic uplift must aid each other in a collective, planned drive in the villages.

The appalling ignorance of the untouchables is often a hindrance to their advancement in the social and economic sphere. But their extreme poverty, their backwardness and social disabilities conspire to prevent them from making full use of the existing educational facilities. The vicious circle must, therefore, be ended. Residential schools should be provided. Intensive propaganda in favour of education is also necessary. This work can be entrusted to societies or associations interested in rural welfare and the village officials.

It should be noted that no substantial improvement in their economic condition is possible without bringing about an improvement in
the condition of Indian masses in general. To do so, concerted action in three directions is necessary; First, a vigorous policy of industrial and rural reconstruction to utilise fully the resources of the country, Secondly, propaganda in favour of birth control to check an abnormal increase in population, and Thirdly, education in the widest sense of the term and encouragement of social reform must be taken up. Specially important is to bring about a reduction of expenditure on social ceremonies.

Finally, more imperative is the change of the social attitude of the high caste Hindus to these classes. No nation can be strong and efficient which has doomed about sixty million people to economic and social degradation. A countrywide campaign of land reclamation and vocational education of temperance, cleanliness and social purity of removal of untouchability and better living among the less favoured and depressed castes can alone contribute towards eliminating one of the darkest blots on the face of the Indian civilization.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

