CHAPTER-V

PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED CASTES

This chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section of the chapter deals with the practice of untouchability which is one of the serious social problems confronting the scheduled castes and the extent of its existence in the study area while the second section of the chapter deals with the problems faced by the scheduled castes especially in availing the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes started by the Government and other agencies for their upliftment.

SECTION - I

PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY

The burning problem facing the country’s about one fifth of the population is that of the problem of untouchability. It is one of the serious social problems of the Indian society. It is the greatest blot on humanity. It is a stigma attached to some people because of their ritually impure status and are of eternal source of pollution to others. Untouchability implies those disabilities which are imposed upon the scheduled castes by the higher castes. The untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social, religious, economic and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by the higher castes. It is estimated that this practice is
rooted in the socio-cultural and religious life of the people of India for over two thousand years (Parvathamma, 1984).

It is believed that untouchability was born around 400 A.D. No one knows the origin of untouchability. All the existing theories are based on conjectures. It may be said that the scheduled castes are socially, culturally and economically distinct from the rest of the population. They were unlawfully brought under the fold of Hinduism and were also reduced to assume the position of untouchables over a period of time. It may be stated that untouchability can not exist in the absence of either the higher castes or the scheduled castes since it is practised by one group i.e. higher castes over the other i.e. scheduled castes. It is the state of mind in which the higher castes believe strongly that the scheduled castes are unworthy of touching. It is the ways and means by which both the higher castes and the scheduled castes are constantly reminded that the later are unworthy for the former not only for touching but also for even approaching. It is the disease which has corrupted the minds not only of higher castes but also of the scheduled castes and, as a result, they do not look at people objectively, rationally and on the basis of merit as fellow human beings. It directs their minds to determine the status of each individual whom they interact with only on the basis of the particular caste they belong to. They, therefore, accord superior status to the higher castes and lower status to the scheduled castes (Ramaiah, 1995).
Whatever may be the origin of the untouchability, its persistence even today negates all the values that Indian Society is trying to realize through development and modernization. Observance of untouchability is undeniably condemned publicly by almost everybody. However, a very few people really practise what they preach in their private life. Surprisingly, the untouchability also exists among the various sub-castes of the scheduled castes themselves. The nature of this problem would have been much different, had the scheduled castes themselves succeeded in uprooting this evil amongst themselves first. Failure on their part to do so has adversely affected the whole movement against untouchability. The leaders particularly the scheduled caste leaders spearheading the fight against untouchability are seriously handicapped in putting forth their view points forcefully and asking the people, in general, to remove the stigma of untouchability (Roy and Singh, 1987).

The problem of untouchability still exists in the society and it has become a cause of concern for one and all. The politicians, policy makers, social workers, intellectuals and all those who are victimized are grouping together to find out a solution to this great social evil confronting the society as a whole.

This section of the chapter deals with the practice of untouchability which is one of the major social problems confronting the scheduled castes in the village communities. It deals with the beliefs of the respondents in untouchability, their awareness about the constitutional provisions to eradicate the untouchability, factors
helpful in reducing the untouchability, and their views about the existence of untouchability and its future.

Belief in Untouchability:

Although rigidity in the practice of untouchability is somehow disappearing from the society, yet the majority of the respondents are not favourably inclined towards it. The respondents in the present study were asked whether they believe in untouchability or not? In response to this question, almost all the respondents said that they do not believe in untouchability. Thus, it shows that at the attitudinal level, the scheduled caste people do not believe in untouchability but in actual practice, it is observed that the untouchability is highly practised in the study area. However, it has been observed that those respondents who are well educated, exposed to the outside world and are in Govt./Semi Govt. jobs, while outside their homes and villages do not believe in and practise untouchability but while at home, they are compelled by the social circumstances i.e. the societal norms to believe in untouchability. Thus, it can be said that in actual practice, the untouchability still exists in the village communities and people still commonly follow it.

Awareness about the Provisions in Constitution to Eradicate Untouchability:

As per the Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, 'untouchability' is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of the untouchability shall be an offence
punishable in accordance with the law. Further, the protection of civil rights Act, 1955 amended in 1976 has been equipped with a legal weapon under which untouchability was made an offence by the Government of India, under the untouchability offences Act, 1955 so as to safeguard the civil rights of the people. An another Act known as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, has also been passed in which there is a provision to punish those practising untouchability and committing atrocities on them. Thus, to know to what extent the respondents are aware about the provisions in our Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability, they were asked to state whether they are aware about the provisions in our Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchabilities or not? The responses of the respondents are given in table 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Responses of the Respondents</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>41.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Not Aware</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>58.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>406</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 shows that majority (58.87 percent) of the respondents are not aware of the provisions in our Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability whereas 41.13 percent of the respondents are aware about it.
Those respondents who are aware of the Constitutional provisions to eradicate the practice of untouchability stated that legally untouchability cannot be practised by anybody and those who will ever practise it shall be punished in accordance with law. Such persons can be imprisoned, fined and trailed by the special courts and can be fined and imprisoned both. They also stated that there is a Untouchability Offences Act, 1955 which provides penalties for preventing a person on the ground of untouchability from entering into the temples and other public places like hotels, restaurants, hospitals, parks, water wells, etc. These respondents have also knowledge about the protection of civil rights of the scheduled castes.

It has been found that the respondents who are educated, employed and exposed to the mass media and outside world are aware about the provisions in our constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability and have also the knowledge about the protection of civil rights of the scheduled castes while those who are illiterates, less exposed to the mass-media and urban places and those belonging to the agriculturists and labour classes are not aware about the same.

Education and Awareness about the provisions in the Constitution to eradicate Untouchability:

Table 5.2 shows the educational levels of the respondents and their awareness about the provisions in the Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability.
Table 5.2

Educational Level and Awareness about the Provisions in Constitution to Eradicate Untouchability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Educational Level of the Respondents</th>
<th>Awareness About the Provisions in Constitution to Eradicate Untouchability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(19.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(41.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(60.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(82.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Plus Two</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(83.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(41.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X²=76.696; df=6; P<.01.

Note: Figures with brackets indicate percentages.

A cursory look at the table 5.2 shows that majority of the respondents who are educated above middle levels are aware about the provisions in the Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability from the society while majority of those respondents who are either illiterates or educated upto primary level are not aware about the same. This indicates that higher the educational level of the respondents, higher is their awareness about the provisions of the
Constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability while less is the education level of the respondents, the less is their awareness about the same. The chi-square test also shows a significant relationship between the educational level of the respondents and their awareness about the provisions in the constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability.

**Views About Existence of Untouchability:**

The untouchability still exists in our society in some form or the other. People belonging to the scheduled caste community can be seen complaining that they are being discriminated against on the ground of untouchability. To examine this aspect, the respondents were asked to mention whether untouchability still exists in their society or not? In reply to this question, almost all the respondents said that the practice of untouchability still exists in their society in different ways. They said that the instances of untouchability can be seen in various spheres of social life especially during community dining, social, religious and marriage ceremonies, entry into the temples and other public places, etc. However, those respondents who are born before independence and implementation of abolition of Untouchability Act, 1955 had observed such type of instances of untouchability more as compared to those respondents who are born after independence and the implementation of this Act.

They stated that the feeling of untouchability is so much rooted in the minds of not only that of the higher caste people but also of
scheduled castes as a result of which they do not look at people objectively and rationally as fellow human beings. It is a matter of great shame for all of us that this evil in the society still exists even in the era when we have entered the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

**Factors helpful in reducing the practice of untouchability:**

The practice of untouchability has very deep roots in the Indian society. It prevails wherever the caste-system prevails in its traditional form. The practice of untouchability prevails more in the village communities which are not influenced by the modern forces and by the social legislation than the urban areas. The Government has brought into force so many enactments and legislations so as to abolish the practice of untouchability from the society. Eradication of untouchability has been the ideal of political leaders and social reformers for over five decades. Prior to independence, it was the aspiration of the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and after independence it has become a constitutional objective. Nevertheless, untouchability continues in various spheres of Indian social life.

In order to know about the factors which have helped in lessening the practice of untouchability, the respondents were asked to state that what factors they think have helped in lessening the practice of untouchability from the society? It has been found that cent-per-cent of the respondents in the sample are of the opinion that the spread of education, efforts of the Government and various social/voluntary organizations, exposure to mass-media and communication,
transportation, industrialization, urbanization and various other modern forces have helped in lessening the practice of untouchability from the society. But most of the respondents again are of the opinion that although these factors have helped in lessening the practice of untouchability, yet its roots in our society are so deep that the chances of its eradication from the society in near future is very remote.

Further, the respondents were asked to mention that what do they feel about untouchability? Should it continue or should it be abolished? In reply to this question, cent-per-cent of respondents said that untouchability should be abolished in the best interest of the society as a whole. Thus, it shows that the scheduled castes in the village communities want to get rid of this evil practice and want its complete eradication from the society. Further, the respondents were also asked to mention whether the eradication of untouchability will improve the social status of the scheduled castes in the society or not? In response to this question, the cent-percent of the respondents in the sample said that if the untouchability is eradicated from the society, the social status of the scheduled castes will certainly improve to a great extent.

Future of Untouchability:

The matter related to the disappearance of 'untouchability' from the society has been debated and discussed time and again in so many seminars and conferences in many parts of the country by several learned scholars. But no fruitful conclusion of the problem has come
up so far. Keeping in view the importance of the problem, the respondents were asked to state that do they think that the untouchability will disappear from the society in the near future or not? In reply to this question, almost all the respondents said that there seems no chances of its disappearing from the society in the near future.

The main reasons stated by them for its not disappearing from the society are many religious and social causes. The religious beliefs and conventions are the main causes of untouchability. In religion, much importance is given to purity and divinity. Further, social customs and taboos are so rigid that even the members of untouchable castes dare not violate these. The respondents also mentioned that the rigidity of caste system is the major cause of untouchability. The untouchable castes are the inferior among the other castes. As long as the caste system is there in the society, the practice of untouchability will also be there. Therefore, in order to eradicate the untouchability from the society, it is essential to first eradicate the caste system. Thus, it indicates that there seems remote chances of disappearance of untouchability from the society especially in the village communities where the practice of untouchability has its deep roots.

The above analysis shows that although various legislations and enactments have been brought into force by the central and state governments to abolish the practice of untouchability from the society but the stigma of untouchability as a form of social discrimination still
is rampant in the rural areas and there seems remote chances of its complete eradication from the society in near future.

SECTION – II

PROBLEMS FACED BY SCHEDULED CASTES IN AVAILING THE BENEFITS OF VARIOUS WELFARE SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES:

To understand the problems of the scheduled castes is of practical need. Owing to centuries of social discrimination, they are a socio-economically and psychologically submerged group who till today remain have-nots in a real sense. They even today have remained as an entity meant for humiliation, oppression and exploitation. The main problems faced by the scheduled castes in the past and even today are social, religious, economic and political deprivations. At the social level, they face the problems of untouchability and discrimination though these have been legally abolished. They become victims of various types of atrocities committed by the higher caste people. Their literacy rate and educational level is low, their social status is still downgraded and their economic exploitation is higher especially in rural areas. Ritually and religiously, they are still considered impure and despite legal protection, they are generally not allowed to enter temples or use public places (Ram, 1998).

Poverty, illiteracy, economic background, poor health conditions, and lack of general awareness are some of the problems the scheduled caste suffer from. Most of them are engaged as landless,
manual daily wage workers even today. A majority of the scheduled castes live in rural areas and are hence deprived of better education including higher education. Lack of urban and mass media exposure make them unaware and ignorant of many basic things which are important for motivation and aspiration. They being economically dependent on the higher castes, have to survive a hand to mouth existence. Their level of self-perception is low and life is mainly reduced to a struggle for survival (Wankhede, 1999).

Although the main problem affecting the scheduled castes is their economic backwardness yet in reality what affects them the most is the caste discrimination and the oppression. They have no courage to protest against the higher caste people even when heinous crimes are committed against them. The scheduled castes are themselves divided both horizontally and vertically. The notion of caste hierarchy among the scheduled castes stands as a stumbling block in their unity and solidarity. The problems of the scheduled castes become a non-issue for the politicians especially belonging to the higher castes, except when they are to be used for political ends. The other main obstacle in their way has been the bureaucracy, which is mainly dominated by higher castes. All the welfare programmes, schemes and plans remain on the papers or are implemented haphazardly and normally do not reach the needy scheduled caste people (Abbasayalu, 1978).

This section of the chapter deals with the general problems of the scheduled castes. In this section, an attempt has been made to
analyze the views of the respondents about social distance between higher castes and scheduled castes, problems faced by the scheduled castes in the economic, social, educational and political spheres, and their knowledge about the welfare schemes and programmes for the upliftment of the scheduled castes. In addition to this, an attempt has also been made to analyse the problems faced by the scheduled castes in availing the facilities of various welfare schemes and programmes, and their views regarding discontinuation of the facilities and concessions meant for the scheduled castes.

Social Distance between Higher Castes and Scheduled Castes:

The reduction in social distance between the higher castes and scheduled castes is an important indicator of social mobility. Educational advancement, employment opportunities, participation in social and religious ceremonies, participation in socio-cultural activities, inter-personal interactions, inter-dinasty inter-caste marriages, etc. play a significant role in reducing the social distance and bridging the gap between the higher and lower castes.

In the present study, it has been found that a majority of the respondents (71.18 percent) have stated that despite some improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled caste, the social distance between scheduled castes and higher castes has remained almost the same as it was there in the past whereas 28.82 percent of the respondents pointed out that due to the improvement in socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes, the social distance
has decreased to some extent between them. This shows that the social
distance between the higher and lower castes in different spheres still
exists in the village communities.

**Economic Problems:**

The scheduled castes in the village communities have suffered
from the dual disabilities of severe economic exploitation and social
discrimination. They have very few assets and are mainly dependent
upon agricultural pursuits and other low income generating occupations
like shoe making, sweeping, bamboo basket making, black-smithy,
weaving, poultry, piggery etc. Their economic condition is deplorable.
A large number of them continue to live below poverty line. Due to
their poor economic condition, they can not afford adequate and good
quality food and basic amenities of life for themselves.

Although, due to reservation in employment, there has been an
increase in the representation of the scheduled castes in various
government/semi-government services, but their number is very less.
Even in government services also, there is a significant backlog of the
posts to be filled up on the basis of reservation. Many of the reserved
seats and posts remain vacant on the pretext of 'not finding suitable
candidates' though many scheduled caste candidates with adequate
qualifications and experience are hunting for employment.

Further, the factors like castes discrimination and favouritism
play a major role in the employment sector. A situation of under-
employment and un-employment also arises because of the type of education and courses the scheduled caste choose. Generally, they go in for general degrees in Arts, Science and Commerce and take considerably long time to complete and perform poorly. As far as availing the facility of reservation in employment is concerned, it has been observed that they sometimes have no knowledge of vacancies for the scheduled castes in the various governmental and semi-governmental departments or sometimes in many cases do not fulfil the essential qualifications.

Educational Problems:

Although there has been a gradual increase in the literacy rate of the scheduled castes over the years yet the gap between the higher castes and scheduled castes in their educational achievement is still very wide. No doubt, facilities in education such as scholarships, hostels, free text books and dresses, special coaching for the competitive examinations, reservation of seats in educational institution, etc. have proved to be of great use but are stated to be inadequate by the respondents. These facilities are utilized marginally and suffer from bureaucratic procedures and do not reach the needy scheduled caste people well in time. They also stated that during their studies, the scheduled castes face problems like lack of guidance, lack of conducive environment, discriminations, financial and language problems. All these problems affect their motivation and performance in education.
Further, in case of getting higher education to their wards, they face the problem to send their children to the cities and towns, for getting higher education as the facilities of higher education are not available in the rural areas. Their socio-economic conditions do not allow them to send their wards to higher educational institutions in the cities. Most of the scheduled castes also face problem to acquire higher educational loan as they have no knowledge from where to get such type of loans. It has been reported by majority of the respondents that they have not been benefited by the facility of getting higher educational loan for their children.

In political sphere, it has been found that the provision of political reservation although has provided an opportunities to the scheduled castes to get elected to the local bodies, state legislatures and the Parliament, yet their say in decision making, be it at the grass-roots level or district level or at the state level or the national level, it is hardly given the due weightage and consideration. Similar is the attitudes of the various political parties of which they are the members. The elected scheduled castes leaders are often used by their higher caste political leaders to meet their own political and personal needs. The scheduled castes' representatives are also often unable to effectively articulate the interests of the scheduled castes in the legislatures and at various other platforms. It has been stated by the respondents that due to the poor economic conditions of the scheduled castes, they face the problem of finance to contest the elections to the
elected bodies and they also lack the potential to fight these elections. They also pointed out that the scheduled castes in the village communities are still being exploited and discriminated by the higher caste people on one pretext or the other.

Knowledge About the Welfare Schemes and Programmes for Scheduled Castes:

The various special economic development programmes and schemes introduced in rural areas have not yielded the expected results. The loan facilities and self-employment schemes more often have not reached the needy persons and are often being used by the upper castes and in some cases even by the rich among the scheduled castes. An attempt has been made to know about the knowledge of the respondents about the welfare schemes and programmes for the welfare of the scheduled castes. It has been found that a majority of the respondents (68.47 percent) in the sample are not aware about the various welfare schemes and programmes started by the government for the welfare of the scheduled castes whereas only 31.53 percent respondents possess the knowledge about these schemes and programmes for the welfare and upliftment of the scheduled castes. This shows that the scheduled castes in the area under study are not much aware about the various welfare schemes and programmes started by the government for their upliftment.

It has been observed that only those respondents who are well educated, exposed to mass media and urban places, are in government
and semi government jobs have the knowledge about these schemes and plans. Thus, it shows that majority of the scheduled castes in rural areas have no knowledge about all the welfare schemes and programmes started by the government for their emancipation and upliftment.

Problems Faced in Availing the Facilities of Various Welfare Schemes and Programmes:

In Himachal Pradesh, the central as well as state government and various other agencies have started so many schemes and welfare programmes in order to emancipate and uplift the scheduled castes especially residing in rural areas from their long standing deprivation and backwardness. Some facilities and concessions which are provided to them include housing subsidy, loan to establish small scale industry on low rate of interest, subsidy on the purchase of seeds, horticultural and agricultural equipments, pesticides, insecticides, self-employment schemes, electrification of house, etc. The governmental agencies are providing these facilities at the block levels to facilitate the scheduled caste people in rural areas.

An attempt has been made to know the extent to which the scheduled castes in the area under study are availing the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes started for their upliftment by the government and the problems being faced by them while availing the benefits of these welfare schemes and programmes.
It has been found that a majority of the respondents (78.33 percent) stated that they or any other members of their families have been benefited by one or the other welfare scheme started by the government or other agency. There are 21.67 percent respondents who themselves or any members of their families have not been benefited by any of these welfare schemes. However, it can not be said that the majority of the respondents or any members of the family have been benefited by all the schemes started by the government and other agencies. This shows that though the majority of the scheduled castes or their family members have been benefited by one or the other welfare schemes but it does not mean that they have been benefited by all the schemes. Further, it has been pointed out by majority of the respondents (67.98 percent) that the various welfare schemes, facilities and concessions are not reaching to the needy and poor scheduled caste people.

The respondents have mentioned some of the problems which the scheduled castes generally face while availing the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes. It has been found that most of the scheduled castes in the village communities live in abject poverty, deprivation and backwardness. The housing conditions of most of them are not good and upto the mark. The scheme of housing subsidy and loan have not benefited the majority of the scheduled castes as they lack knowledge of getting the procedures and other codal formalities done for availing this facility. The benefit of this facility has been availed only by those scheduled castes who are well educated and
exposed to mass media, well aware about the schemes and above all having influential family background amongst the scheduled castes in the area.

Further, the most of the scheduled castes in the village communities also face problems while getting subsidies on agricultural and horticultural equipments, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, etc. They are in majority cases marginal farmers holding very small pieces of agricultural land and live in a hand to mouth existence. They either have no amount to purchase the agricultural and horticultural equipments nor they have the knowledge how to get them from the concerned government departments. For the purpose of starting small scale industries, etc. under self-employment scheme, they are not even in a position to arrange the margin money. They also face problem in getting the loans from the banks as the bank authorities are even not convinced that they will be in a position to return the loans back. Most of the scheduled castes in the village communities also face problems in getting the various kinds of subsidies in the form of help to them from various governmental agencies as in most of the cases, the subsidies allotted to the beneficiaries are grabbed by either the higher caste people of the area or by the influential persons in their own caste and community.

Further, it has also been observed that all the scheduled caste people in the village communities want to avail the facilities and concessions meant for them even if their socio-economic conditions
have improved. Further, they also do not want to get these facilities and concessions discontinued especially meant for the scheduled castes even in the case of those scheduled castes who are above the creamy layer and as long as they come at par with the higher caste people and the evils of castism and untouchability are abolished from the society.

It has been found that cent-per-cent of the respondents are of the views that more and more is still to be done to improve the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes in the rural areas. They stated that there has to be a caste free society and education can play a vital role in this regard. So, free education to all the wards of the scheduled castes must be provided at all levels of education.

The above analysis thus, shows that the scheduled castes face many problems in social, educational, economic and political spheres. Social distance between the higher castes and the scheduled castes exists even today. It has been found that the scheduled castes in the study area are not much aware about the various welfare schemes and programmes started by the government for their upliftment. Though majority of the scheduled castes have been benefited by one or other schemes or programmes but not by all the schemes related to their welfare. Further, the benefits of various facilities and concessions in majority cases are not reaching properly to the needy and poor persons among the scheduled castes. They face many problems while availing the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes meant for the scheduled castes. The scheduled castes in the area want more and more
facilities and concessions to the scheduled castes for their upliftment and emancipation. They are also of the view that still more is to be done in the near future for this disadvantaged and downtrodden section of the society so that their socio-economic conditions are improved to a great extent.