CHAPTER - VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

India is rightly called as a ‘melting pot’ of castes, races and tribes. There are many scheduled caste communities in different parts of our country. They constitute an important segment of the Indian society and are socially and economically backward in comparison to the rest of the population of the country. The scheduled caste population is found in almost all the parts of the country. The scheduled caste people in India, earlier known by different nomenclatures, have asserted through the ages for their rights of justice and equality.

In our country, this unprivileged section of the society have faced a lot of discriminations, disabilities and sufferings in the past. They have suffered for a long time from extreme social and economic backwardness and are thus socially, educationally, economically and politically backward in comparison to the rest of the population of the country.

The main causes of their backwardness are deprivation, exploitation and illiteracy. With few exceptions, most of them have also been for centuries, the victims of untouchability and discriminations though these have been legally abolished. A majority of them often become the victims of various types of atrocities committed by the higher castes. In India, these people have to wage
for mere existence a great struggle. Their social status is still
downgraded and the social relations between them and the higher caste
people are not free from traditional caste prejudices. Their economic
exploitation is higher in the rural areas than in the urban setting. Their
literacy rate and educational level is lowest in the country. They are
still regarded ritually and religiously impure and their entry into the
temples managed by higher caste people is resisted in spite of legal
enactments in their favour. Over and above, the most important issues
before them are of achieving their respectful identity and dignified
social status for which they have been agitating and organizing various
types of movements with both success and failure.

The scheduled castes are found everywhere in India and their
population is fast increasing. The scheduled caste population in India
during 1931 census was 39.0 million which has increased to 138.2
million in 1991. The percentage of the scheduled caste population was
15.54 percent in 1931 and it was 16.48 percent in 1991. Thus, the
population of the scheduled caste has gone up in the country over the
last decades. The smallest member of scheduled castes is found in
Mizoram and the largest population of the scheduled castes is found in
the states like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Utter Pradesh,
Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Tripura. In the remaining states
their proportion is less than the national average.

The need to improve their conditions has been recognized and
many serious attempts in this direction have been made at the state and
national levels only after independence of the country. Since, then, various measures and strategies have been devised with a view to improve their socio-economic conditions. Although, the Government of India has started various developmental schemes, policies and programmes for their welfare and upliftment, yet at the national level most of the scheduled caste people are still living lives of abject depravity and subjugation.

The state of Himachal Pradesh is also not an exception to the disappointing state of affairs of the scheduled castes. According to the Amendment Act, 1976, there are 56 scheduled castes in Himachal Pradesh. Most of the scheduled castes in the state are cultivators and agricultural labourers and generally they reside with the majority community in the same village or slightly away. They constitute about one fourth of the total population of the state. The total population of the scheduled castes in the state in 1951 was 2.52 lakhs which increased to 15.02 lakhs in 2001. A vast majority of scheduled castes (93.40 percent) reside in rural areas. There has been a remarkable progress in the field of education among the scheduled castes during the decade 1981-91. The literacy rate among them in 1981 was just 31.50 percent which increased to 53.20 percent in 1991.

Within the districts of the state, the scheduled caste population has varied concentration. As per 2001 census, Sirmour district has the highest population (29.61 percent) while Lahaul and Spiti has the lowest population (7.84 percent). As far as Shimla district is
concerned where the present study has been carried out, it ranks fifth in respect of percentage of scheduled castes population to total population of the district and ranks third in respect of concentration of scheduled caste population to the total scheduled caste population of the state. There are a number of scheduled caste communities in the state but Koli, Chamar, Julaha, Lohar and Doom are the dominant scheduled caste communities who constitute about 78.00 percent of the total scheduled caste population of the state.

In Himachal Pradesh, the scheduled castes have suffered for long time from the extreme social and economic backwardness in the past. Even today, in some parts of the state they are denied access to drinking water facilities, eating places, social ceremonies and functions, etc. They are denied entry into the temples. They suffer from severe economic exploitation and social discrimination. They are still associated with menial jobs and occupations and are denied entry into the houses especially the kitchens of the higher caste people. Although, for the socio-economic upliftment of the scheduled castes, the state government has started special component plan at the end of fifth five year plan and the various schemes and programmes have been started for their welfare in the state, yet most of the scheduled caste people are still a subjugated class of the society. With this backdrop in mind, the present study is an attempt to analyse the social mobility among the scheduled castes in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh.
In order to understand the research problem properly, it was important to take cognizance of some of the studies carried out in the context of social mobility among the scheduled castes by various scholars. The existing literature pertaining to the research problem has also been reviewed.

Keeping in view the nature of research problem, the present study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To analyse the demographic, socio-cultural and economic profile of the area and the respondents.
2. To examine the variations in the social mobility pattern of the sub-groups among the scheduled castes.
3. To analyse the variations of socio-economic factors in the social mobility at the individual level among the scheduled castes.
4. To study the emerging trends of social mobility among the scheduled castes.
5. To analyse the problems faced by the scheduled castes in availing the benefits and other related facilities provided by the state and other agencies.

The main hypotheses of the present study are as follows:

1. Educated persons may tend to have better chances of acquiring social mobility than the uneducated and less educated ones.
2. Persons who have got an opportunity to attain employment through reservation policy may tend to have better chances of social mobility than those who could not avail this facility.
3. Persons having higher educational status may tend to have higher educational aspirations for their children than those with lower educational status.
4. Persons having higher educational status may tend to have higher occupational aspirations for themselves and their children than those having lower educational status.
5. Persons having higher educational status may tend to have taken more benefits of reservation policy in different spheres than those having lower educational status.

6. Reservation policy may tend to bring about social mobility (educational, occupational and political) among the scheduled castes.

7. Persons belonging to high sub-caste category of the scheduled castes may tend to have better chances of acquiring social mobility than those belonging to medium and low sub-caste categories of the scheduled castes.

8. Persons having higher occupational status may tend to have better chances of acquiring social mobility than those with lower occupational status.

Keeping in view the nature of the research problem, Himachal Pradesh has been selected as an area of study. However, the geographical and topographical setting of the state make it difficult to study the whole area with limited time and the sources available at the disposal of the researcher. Hence, the present study has been confined to Shimla district. Shimla district comprises of 9 developmental blocks namely Rampur, Narkanda, Theog, Chopal, Jubbal, Rohru, Chohara, Basantpur and Mashobra. The present study has been carried out in 'Mashobra' block because it has a sizeable population of the scheduled castes (32.45 percent). This development block comprises of Shimla tehsil (Rural) and Junga sub-tehsil.

Mashobra development block has 41 panchayats, out of which 35 panchayats fall under Shimla (rural) tehsil and 6 panchayats come under Junga sub-tehsil. Within this block, Junga sub-tehsil is selected for the study purpose because it is comparatively interior, less developed and has high concentration of scheduled caste population.
(41.14 percent) as compared to Shimla (Rural) tehsil (27.37 percent). In Junga sub-tehsil, out of 6 panchayats, two panchayats with high concentration of scheduled castes namely Junga (45.66 percent) and Piran (51.75 percent) have been selected for the study purpose. Junga panchayat consists of 21 revenue villages and Piran panchayat consists of just 2 revenue villages.

The justification behind selecting these two panchayats for study purpose is that Junga Panchayat is comparatively more developed and having a sizeable population of scheduled castes. On the other hand, Piran panchayat is a remote and less developed one and having a high concentration of scheduled caste population. The population size of the scheduled castes in these two panchayats helped us to have a sufficient number of respondents in our sample. Thus, this setting provided us with a suitable design of research whereby we could deliniate the social mobility among the scheduled castes in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. The descriptive research design has been adopted for the present study.

As soon as the area of the study was selected, the next step was to have a representative sample in an objective manner. Since, the present study has been carried out in two panchayats, therefore, a complete list of all the scheduled caste households from these panchayats was prepared by doing a preliminary door to door survey and with halp of panchayat record. The total number of scheduled caste households at the time of survey came out to be 406 which was
291 in the case of Junga Panchayat and 115 in Piran Panchayat. This constituted our universe of the study. It was decided to include all 406 scheduled caste households in the sample. Thus, the actual size of the sample for the present study is 406 scheduled caste households. The unit of investigation in the present study is the head of the household either male or female.

The data for the present study have been collected with the help of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly consists of interview schedule designed for the purpose of ascertaining informations on different aspects of the research problem. The interview schedule was put to the respondents in their spoken language i.e. 'Hindi' and 'Pahari'. The secondary sources of data collection included census reports, gazetteers, statistical outlines of H.P., Revenue records, panchayat records, statistical abstract of H.P., Economic survey of H.P., Social statistics of H.P., Annual Special Component Plan for scheduled castes, Economic review, Brief facts of H.P., Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes State Development Corporation’s office record, office record of H.P. State Social Justice and Empowerment Department, Journals, Editorials, Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Articles, etc. Besides, the interview schedule and secondary sources of data collection, another technique of data collection i.e. 'observation' was also used. To know more about the research problem, the informations were also collected through discussions with government functionaries, social workers, leaders and prominent persons of the area, activists of various volunteers.
organizations, (Yuvak Mandals, Mahila Mandals, Gram Sudhar Sabhas, Koli Samaj, Anusuchit Jati Kalyan Parishad, etc.) and Panchayat representatives, etc.

After finalizing the tools and techniques of data collection, the field work was started. Before interviewing the respondents, the purpose of the study was explained to them. All the respondents were personally contacted by the researcher himself. The responses were carefully recorded by the researcher himself. After the data collection was over, the data were subjected to statistical operation starting from coding, scoring and tabulation to the writing of the research report. The data were classified and arranged in simple and co-relational table manually as well as with the help of computer in order to draw the generalizations. Some statistical tests such as simple ratio, percentage, arithmetic mean and chi-square have also been applied where ever needed according to the nature and requirement of the data. There are some limitations of the present study. But in behavioural research, we can not be completely objective and factual as in the case of natural sciences.

The second chapter deals with the demographic, socio-cultural and economic profile of the area and the respondents of study. Analysing the profile of the area of study in th first part of the chapter, it may be stated that Himachal Pradesh consists of 12 districts and Shimla is one of the districts of the state having total geographical area of 5,131 sq.kms. which constitute 9.22 percent of the total area of the
state. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the district is 7.23 lakh persons which includes 3.81 lakh males and 3.42 lakh females. The sex ratio in the district is 896 females per thousand males. The literacy rate is 79.68 percent (87.72 percent for males and 70.68 percent for females). The total population of the scheduled castes in the district is 1.89 lakh persons out of which 51.47 percent are males and 48.53 percent females. The percentage of the scheduled caste population in the district is 26.13.

Shimla district consists of nine development blocks. Mashobra is one of the blocks of this district which has been chosen as an area of the study. The total population of the scheduled castes in this development block is 32.45 percent. This development block comprises of Shimla Tehsil (rural) and Junga sub-tehsil. The present study has been carried out in Junga sub-tehsil having the total population of 12,422 person (6414 males and 6008 females). The sex ratio of this sub-tehsil is 935 females per thousand males. Out of the total population of this sub-tehsil, the scheduled caste population is 5110 persons which is 41.14 percent of the total. There are six Panchayats in Junga sub-tehsil. Two Panchayats namely Junga and Piran of Junga sub-tehsil have been selected for the study purpose. The area under study has the distinction of being a part of one of the erstwhile princely hill state named as 'Keonthal'. The total population of Junga Panchayat is 4058 persons comprising of 2101 males and 1957 females. Out of the total population of the Panchayat, the scheduled castes comprises of 1853 persons (45.66 percent). The total population
of Piran Panchayat as per Panchayat records is 1633 persons. Out of this total population, scheduled castes comprises of 845 persons (51.75 percent).

The study area has multi-caste population which may be categorized into three groups – higher castes (Brahmins and Rajputs), intermediatory castes (Khatris, Sunars, Jhiwars and Maha-Brahmins), lower castes (Kolis, Chamars, Badahis, Lohars, Turis, Bhangis, Bedhelas, Barads, Chanals and Dumnas). The spoken dialect of the people is ‘Pahari’. The staple food of the people is maize, wheat and rice taken with dal and subzi. The people wear cotton as well as woolen clothes. The ordinary clothing for men consists of Kurta and Payjama and that of women is Salwar and Kameej. The ornaments are worn by women especially during festive occasions. The faith of people of the area in local deities (Isht Devis/Devta and Kul Ishts) is more pronounced. The people of the area celebrates almost all the fairs and festivals of Hindu faith all around the year. The area under study represents an agricultural community. The higher caste people dominate social, economic and political aspects of life in the village community. The study area is having all types of basic amenities and facilities available to the people such as education, health, electricity, transportation, communication, banking, irrigation, drinking water, etc.

Analyzing the demographic, socio-cultural and economic profile of the respondents in the second part of the chapter, it has been found that majority of the respondents in the sample belong to the middle
aged-group. Sex-wise distribution of the respondents shows that the sample is dominated by males which indicates that the area under study is a male dominated society. As far as the marital status of the respondents is concerned, it is found that majority of the respondents in the sample (78.33 percent) are married and rest of them are widowed, unmarried and divorced.

Religion-wise analysis shows that cent-per-cent of the respondents belong to the Hindu religion. The caste-wise distribution shows that Kolis in the medium category caste-group and chamars in the low category caste-group together accounts for more than two-third of the total sample while rest of the representation goes to eight other communities like Lohar, Badhi and Turi in high category, caste-group and chanal, Bhangi, Bedhela, Barad and Dumna in low category caste-group.

Education-wise, it is found that a vast majority of the respondents (71.68 percent) are either illiterates or have studied upto primary level only. Thus, there is a dire need of providing non-formal education to these people in the village communities. Occupation-wise distribution of the respondents shows that majority of them are agriculturists (57.88 percent) followed by Government and Semi-Government employees (28.82 percent) and rest are shoe-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, petty businessmen, wage labourers and waste material collectors. Gross annual income (self)-wise distribution of the respondents shows that majority of the respondents (70.94 percent) in
the sample have their gross annual income ranging between Rs. 10,000-40,000 which indicates that the gross annual income (self) of the respondents in the sample is relatively low. The traditional caste occupation of the majority of the respondents was to work as 'Mujaras' (agricultural labourers). However, a vast majority of them are now not following their traditional caste and family occupations.

Further, analyzing the family structure of the respondents, it is found that majority of the respondents (58.13 percent) in the sample belong to the nuclear family units which shows that with the passage of time, nuclearization of family is taking place in the village communities. As far as the family-size of the respondents is concerned, it is found that more than half of the respondents' family (55.42 percent) is comprised of 3-6 members which indicates that with the spread of education, exposure of the mass media and the efforts of the health department, the scheduled castes in the study area are preferring to keep their family-size small. Gross annual income of the family-wise distribution of the respondents shows that majority (65.02 percent) of the respondents in the sample have their gross annual income of the family ranging between Rs. 10,000-65,000 which shows that on the whole barring a few respondents, majority of them have less gross annual income of their families.

As far as the possession of land-holding is concerned, more than half of the respondents (55.91 percent) in the sample possess land holdings up to 5 bighas. Thus, the majority of them are marginal and
small land-holders. The majority of the respondents also possess live-stocks* but have no substantial income from them. The majority of the respondents participate in cultural and religious activities of the area. They have a deep faith in Gods and Goddess of Hindu faith but their faith and devotion is more pronounced in their local Isht Devis-Devta and Kul-Ishts. The distribution of the respondents by their exposure to mass-media and urban-living shows that majority of them are less exposed to both these. The housing pattern and the level of living of the majority of the respondents in the sample is not good and upto the mark.

The chapter three deals with the emerging trends of social mobility among the scheduled castes. The first section of the chapter deals with the inter and intra caste relationships between the scheduled castes and the higher castes and also the relationships between various sub-castes within scheduled castes so as to assess the trends of social mobility among them. Analysing the social position of the respondents' castes in the hierarchy of the scheduled castes, it has been found that majority of the respondents (66.75 percent) in the sample who mostly belong to Badhi, Koli, Lohar and Turi castes consider their castes to be superior than other scheduled castes in the area because of the purity attached to the occupations of these castes in the past as well as in the present time. This reveals that the caste hierarchy even within the scheduled castes still exists and has deep roots in the area under study. While analysing the castes of the respondents and their views about the social positon of their castes in the hierarchy of scheduled castes, it
has been found that the respondents from the lower caste category in the area under study have low social position of their castes as compared to the respondents belonging to the high and medium caste categories. This is mainly due to the fact that the concept of purity and impurity is attached to them even today in the area. Further, analysing the educational level of the respondents and their views about the social position of their castes in the hierarchy of scheduled castes, it has been found that the educated scheduled caste respondents as compared to the uneducated scheduled caste respondents consider their castes to be higher or equal to other scheduled castes in the hierarchy of scheduled castes in the area. This shows that with the advent of education, a trend of social mobility among the scheduled castes can be seen.

It is also found that the cent-per-cent of the respondents in the sample pointed out that the castes to which they belong are lower in status than the higher castes of the area. This shows that the caste stratification based upon the purity and pollution concept still prevails in the study area. While probing the views of the respondents regarding their preference for the type of social stratification in the society, it has been found that cent-per-cent of the respondents preferred social stratification based on the principle of ‘Karma’ rather than on the principle of ‘birth’ and ‘wealth’. As regard to the availability of the services of priests/pandits and barbers, and the tea-stalls/hotels owned by higher caste people, it has been found that the scheduled castes are
not deprived of the services which are available to the higher caste people in the study area.

It has also been found that majority of the respondents are invited by the higher castes people to visit their houses especially on the occasions of marriages and other ceremonial functions but the cent-per-cent of the respondents pointed out that the scheduled castes are not allowed to enter the kitchens of the higher caste people. They all are not even allowed at the door-steps of the kitchens. However, it is observed that the better educated ones and those who belong to high caste category of the scheduled castes are allowed to enter their drawing rooms. The cent-per-cent of the respondents stated that the scheduled castes are allowed to enter the varandhas/corridors of the houses of higher caste people. The analysis shows that changes are taking place with regard to the entry of scheduled castes into the houses of higher caste people. The trend of change is more visible in the case of their entry into the drawing-rooms and varandhas but their entry into the kitchen is prohibited. As regard to the discrimination shown to the scheduled castes by higher castes during community dining it has been found that the majority of the respondents (79.31 percent) have felt discrimination during community dining. The scheduled castes belonging to the low and medium caste categories than the high caste category are discriminated more by the higher caste people during the community dining in the village community. Thus, higher the position of a caste in the caste hierarchy of the scheduled castes, lower is the discrimination.
A vast majority of the illiterates and less educated respondents as compared to better educated respondents have felt discrimination during community dining. This shows that the scheduled castes who are better educated are discriminated less by the higher caste people as compared to those who are illiterates and less educated. This shows that higher the educational level of the respondents, the lesser is the discrimination with them during community dining and other social occasions. It seems that with the spread of education, the scheduled castes in the area under study are becoming socially mobile to some extent and are inter-mixing with the people of higher castes on certain social occasions. It has also been found that the elderly people belonging to the higher castes in the area, in no way accept cooked food, tea and water at the residences of scheduled castes. However, they accept uncooked items like biscuits, namkin, sweets, etc. at their residences.

It is also observed that food items and other eatable items are being accepted by young generation of higher castes mainly at the residences of the scheduled castes such as Badhi, Lohar, Turi and Koli whom they consider to be higher in the caste hierarchy of the scheduled castes in the area. Thus, it can be said that with the spread of education and effects of other modern forces, the changes are taking place especially among the younger generation of the higher castes of the area in accepting food items, tea and other eatables at the residences of the scheduled castes. Again, majority of the respondents
in high caste category as compared to the respondents in medium and low caste categories of the scheduled castes are of the view that the younger generation belonging to higher caste people in the area accept food items at their residences. This shows that the younger generation belonging to the higher caste people in the village communities have started accepting food items at the residences of the scheduled castes especially from those castes whom they consider less polluted and are higher in the caste hierarchy of the scheduled castes of the area. Thus, there seems a trend of social mobility among the scheduled castes particularly with regard to acceptance of food items by the younger generation of the higher castes at their residences which was not there in the past.

With the spread of education and impact of other modernizing factors, the younger generation of higher caste people have started accepting food items and other eatables at the residences of the scheduled caste people in the village communities. Due to the advancement of education and modernization of the society, the long standing restrictions of seating and eating together with other caste-groups have reduced to some extent in the rural society. It is observed that the rules governing sitting, drinking, smoking and taking of food together are no longer as strict as they used to be in the past. It is also observed that there is now generally a liberal attitudes of higher caste people towards the scheduled castes. The scheduled caste people are usually invited by the higher caste people to their residences on the occasions of various social ceremonies but they are served food
separately. However, a vast majority of the respondents (92.86 percent) pointed out that the higher caste people in the area do not wash their used utensils and are supposed to wash these by themselves.

Further, it is also found that the cent-per-cent of the respondents allow the scheduled castes, lower than their own castes to enter their houses including drawing-rooms and varandhas (corridors) but their entry into the kitchens is strictly prohibited. The majority (77.34 percent) of the respondents stated that they do not accept food and tea, etc. at the residences of the scheduled castes lower than their own castes. However, those respondents who are educated, younger in age and are in Govt. and Semi-Government jobs accept food and tea, etc. at the residences of scheduled castes lower than their own castes. Thus, the starting of acceptance of food items by the scheduled castes at the residences of the scheduled castes people lower than their own castes shows a trend of social mobility among the scheduled castes in the rural areas.

Analysing the extent of the entry of the scheduled castes into the temples, it has been found that majority of the respondents are allowed to enter those temples only which are managed by non local priests and pundits. But as far as the extent of their entry into the temples belonging to the local Ihst Devis-Devta and Kul-Ishts managed by the local priests and pundits, the cent-per-cent of the respondents pointed out that the scheduled castes are not even allowed to enter the main gates of the temples and what to talk of entering these temples. It is
also observed that the scheduled caste people are not allowed to take part in the religious ceremonies and processions and are also not allowed to touch and shoulder the idols and palanquins of these local deities.

The analysis about persistence of Jajmani system shows that a rapid change has taken place in the Jajmani system in the village communities. The educated scheduled caste people are no longer tied up to their traditional occupations and they no longer prefer to work as 'Kamins'. Thus, the occupational mobility has taken place among the scheduled castes in the area under study. Further, it has also been observed that the caste system is not all that rigid as it used to be in the past. It has become open to some extent as the changes have occurred in its various aspects in the contemporary village communities. It is also observed that the scheduled castes in the village communities are aware about the overcoming of the caste barriers in the society. With the spread of education and due to the impact of other modernizing forces, the traditional barriers of caste system in the sphere of social intercourse will be overcome.

While analysing the second section of the chapter which deals with the institution of marriage among the scheduled castes with special reference to inter-caste marriages, it has been found that the age at marriage-wise distribution of the respondents shows that the trend in the village communities is to get married at an early age. This is more so especially among the scheduled castes. Majority of the
uneducated and less educated respondents got married at an early age whereas better educated respondents got married at later age. This may be because the educated respondents were more interested in having better settlement in life, so they preferred marriage at the later age. Thus, there is a positive relationship between education and age at marriage among the scheduled castes in the area under study.

Further, it is found that a vast majority (87.68 percent) of the respondents' spouses were got married upto 20 years of their age. This shows that in the past, the trend was to marry the girls at an early age. But now the trend of age at marriage even among the scheduled castes has changed. A vast majority (96.80 percent) of the respondents got married in their own caste while just 13 respondents got married in the castes other than their own. This shows that inter-caste marriages are not common in the area and caste endogamy is still very prominent in each caste group in the village communities. As regards to the views of the respondents regarding the right age at marriage for boys, it has been found that a majority of the respondents (57.39 percent) are of the view that right age of marriage for boys is in the age group of 23-27 years. This shows that respondents have preferred late marriages in case of boys. The analysis also reveals that uneducated and less educated scheduled castes prefer a younger age at marriage for boys whereas better educated scheduled castes prefer a later age at marriage for boys. With the spread of education and exposure to mass-media and the various educational facilities provided by the Government for the education of girls like free education upto College and University
levels, free distribution of text-books, scholarships, etc. have encouraged the scheduled castes to educate the girls and marry them at a later age. The majority of the respondents (57.88 percent) have preferred 18-22 years as the right age at marriage for girls. It is also found that better educated respondents have preferred a later age of marriage for girls as compared to the illiterates and less educated respondents.

The analysis shows that at the attitudinal level, the scheduled castes in the area under study are in favour of marriages of boys and girls at a later age, but in actual practice it is observed that there is still a tendency towards early marriages in the village communities. Further, it is observed that the average age at marriage for boys is about 25 years and it is around 20 years in the case of girls among the scheduled castes in the area under study. It is also found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (91.13 percent) prefer to marry their children/grand-children in their own castes while just 8.87 percent respondents prefer to marry their children/grand-children in higher castes than their own castes.

Interestingly, none of the respondent in the sample preferred to marry their children/grand-children in the castes lower than their own castes. It shows that the majority of the respondents prefer their own castes as an ideal castes to marry their children/grand-children and thus, the caste endogamy is still very strong in the village communities. It is also found that as the educational level of the
respondents increases, their preference for higher castes in order to marry their children/grand-children also increases although the number is very less. But, interestingly both the educated as well as uneducated respondents have not preferred to marry their children/grand-children in the castes lower than their own.

Further, analysing the views of the respondents regarding inter-caste marriages, it is found that a sizeable number of respondents (33.99 percent) have favoured inter-caste marriages which speaks of a change at the attitudinal level of the respondents, although at the structural level, there is not much change in solemnizing marriages in between different castes and sub-caste groups of the society. Thus, the caste endogamy is still very important in each sub-caste and caste group in the village communities. The analysis shows that educated as compared to un-educated respondents have favoured the inter-caste marriages. This may be due to the fact that educated respondents are more exposed to the outer world and have a rational outlook. So they do not see any problem in solemnizing inter-caste marriages. It is observed that both educated and un-educated respondents are not prepared to accept inter-caste marriages in actual practice in village communities.

It is found that a sizeable number of respondents (35.97 percent) are of the view that they will accept readily the marriages of their children/grand-children in the higher castes. There seems a trend of accepting the marriages of the children/grand-children in the higher
castes by the scheduled castes in the area under study which indicates that the preference for the inter-caste marriages is emerging at the attitudinal level among the scheduled castes. Further, it is probed that respondents from medium and low caste categories are not ready to marry their children and grand-children even in higher castes than their own castes. The educated scheduled castes in the area under study prefer to marry their children/grand-children in the higher castes. Thus, the education is effecting the caste endogamy in the village communities. A vast majority (78.31 percent) of the respondents in the sample are not in favour of marring their children/grand-children in the castes lower than their own caste which indicates that even scheduled castes in the area under study do not prefer marriages in the lower sub-castes of the scheduled castes.

Further, it is also found that the educated scheduled castes have no objection to the marriage of their wards even into the castes lower than their own castes. Thus, with the spread of education, changes at the attitudinal level of the scheduled castes have taken place and these attitudinal changes may bring about structural changes in the institution of marriage in general and inter-caste marriages in particular in the village communities. Majority of the respondents have not observed any type of improvement in the caste status as well as social status of those families in which inter-caste marriages have been solemnized. The spouses belonging to the lower castes are not even allowed to enter the kitchen of the higher castes and the temples of the local deities in the area. It has been reported by the respondents and
of 32.02 percent of the respondents have felt discrimination on caste consideration during their studies in the educational institutions either from students/class-mates or from their teachers while the family members of majority (67.98 percent) of the respondents have felt no such discrimination on caste consideration during their studies from any quarter. Further, out of those who had their formal schooling in the educational institutions shows that the scheduled castes who had obtained their formal education well before the independence of our country had felt some discriminations during their studies in the educational institutions while those scheduled castes who had their formal education in educational institutions after independence have not felt any discrimination from any quarter during their studies.

It is observed that in the past, the scheduled castes discontinued their studies due to social discriminations and poor economic conditions of their families and now they suffer from various handicaps like financial problems, lack of proper guidance in their academic pursuit and lack of their interest in the studies which compel them to discontinue their studies. While examining the educational aspirations of the respondents for their children/grand-children, it has been found that a vast majority of the respondents in the sample want their children/grand-children to be educated at least above matriculation/plus-two levels which further shows that even the scheduled castes in village communities are now aspiring for higher education for their children/grand-children so that they could raise
also observed by the researcher himself that a few inter-caste marriages have taken place in the area but these inter-caste marriages have not been socially approved which indicates that caste endogamy is still an important factor in each caste group in the village community. It is observed that the inter-caste marriages in the communities lead only to the individual mobility and not to the group mobility.

The cent-per-cent of the respondents mentioned that they prefer monogamy type of marriage in the family. However, it is observed that there are few cases of polygyny among the old generation people in the village communities. The scheduled castes seems to be getting modern oriented towards widow-remarriages, as majority of the respondents have favoured the widow re-marriages. It is also found that almost cent-per-cent of the respondents reported that there is no practice of child-marriage in their community. A vast majority of the respondents pointed out that the practice of dowry exists in the village communities which is one of the greatest social evils of the contemporary Indian society.

The chapter four focuses on the factors affecting social mobility among the scheduled castes. The chapter has been divided into four sections. Analysing the first section of the chapter which deals with education and social mobility, it has been found that no body from amongst scheduled castes in village communities has been able to compete in open merit selection for seeking admission in various educational institutions. It has been revealed that the family members
their social status in the society by getting prestigious and respectable jobs.

The analysis of educational levels of the respondents and their educational aspirations for children/grand-children shows that majority of the educated respondents right from primary level to the post-graduation level aspire for better education for their children/grand-children like graduation, post-graduation, professional diplomas/degrees and M.Phil/Ph.D. degree while majority of the illiterates aspire for comparatively a lower level of education i.e. upto matric/plus-two levels which further indicates that higher the educational level of the respondents, higher is their educational aspirations for their children/grand-children. On the other hand, the lower is the educational level of the respondents, the lower is their educational aspirations for their children/grand-children. Thus, it shows the scheduled castes are becoming educationally mobile in getting their wards to educate them to the level they so desire.

It has been found that almost all the respondents’ children/grand-children have availed or are availing various educational facilities like fee-concession, scholarships, free text books, uniforms, reservation in admissions, financial assistance, etc. It has been observed that only those respondents’ children/grand-children have availed or availing these facilities who themselves are educated and well informed.

While seeking admission in any higher educational institution just 10 respondents (2.46 percent) in the whole sample have availed the
facility of age-relaxation while a vast majority (97.54 percent) of the respondents have not availed any relaxation in age while seeking admission to pursue their studies. It has also been found that only 12.32 percent of the respondents' children/grand-children have availed relaxation in age while studying whereas majority (87.68 percent) of the respondents' children/grand-children in no way have availed or are availing age-relaxation to pursue their studies which shows that the children/grand-children of the respondents are availing or have availed the age-relaxation facilities.

Further, it has been found that only 10 respondents in the entire sample have been helped by the reservation policy in improving their educational status. On the other hand, the children/grand-children of just 15.76 percent of the respondents have been helped by the reservation policy in improving their education while the children/grand-children of majority (84.24 percent) of the respondents have not been helped by the reservation policy in improving their education in any way. This shows that the scheduled castes in the village communities are not fully availing the benefits of reservation especially in education due to various reasons.

A vast majority of the respondents (57.64 percent) reported that due to their educational achievements, their social status has improved in the society while rest of the respondents (42.36 percent) said that their social status has not improved in the society because they are all totally illiterates and less educated. Further, almost all the
respondents pointed out that the social status of the scheduled castes in the village communities has improved to a great extent due to educational advancement among them.

The second section of the chapter deals with the occupation and social mobility among the scheduled castes. While analysing the occupation of the respondents and of their fathers, it has been found that there is a shift in the occupation of the respondents from that of their fathers. The shift in their occupations has been mainly towards agriculture and government/semi-government services. In comparison to their fathers, the respondents have shown a trend of upward occupational mobility. This shows that occupational mobility has taken place among the scheduled castes as the change has occurred in their occupations from the traditional occupations to the modern ones. Thus, it has been observed that in the past, different scheduled castes had different caste occupations. But today, we see there is a drastic change in the occupations of the present generation. With the passage of time, these people have started to opt for modern occupations like Government/Semi-government jobs or the occupation other than those of their traditional ones. The mujaras/agricultural labourers have now become the owners of the land and have opted agriculture as their main occupation and way of life and it is also their source of livelihood. Thus, the change in the traditional caste occupations of the scheduled castes in village communities is mainly due to the spread of education, the enactment of laws in their favour, reservation policy and other
welfare schemes started by Central and State governments for their emancipation and upliftment.

It has been found that majority of the respondents are not following the traditional occupation of their families. This shows that the scheduled castes, in rural areas in majority cases have left their traditional caste occupations and are on their way to adopt modern oriented occupations. It further shows a trend of upward occupational mobility among the scheduled castes.

Almost all the respondents who have deviated from their traditional occupations have stated that their socio-economic status in the society has certainly improved due to change in their occupation as they have adopted the modern occupations. The change in their occupation has increased their income levels which is more so especially among the respondents who are in government/semi-government jobs and this has helped them in raising their social status.

It has been observed that the changes have occurred in the social and economic spheres of the lives of those respondents in whose occupation a change has taken place. A definite change has occurred in their dresses, food-habits, housing patterns and way of life. It is observed that they felt no resistance from any quarter while they changed their occupations and have cordial relations with the people of all castes groups including higher caste in the area.
Further, majority of them reported that caste is not in any way a barrier in their socio-economic advancement. Almost all the respondents preferred their children to adopt new occupations rather than following the traditional ones. It is observed that majority of the scheduled castes in the area are not in any way feeling isolated from their own caste due to change in their occupations.

It has been found that out of those respondents who are still following their traditional caste and family occupations, 46.51 percent respondents in high caste category who mainly belong to Lohar, Badhi and Turi castes are still following the traditional occupation of their families. In low caste category, 37.59 percent respondents mainly belonging to Chamar, Chanal, Bhangi and Barad castes are still following the traditional family occupation. On the whole, a vast majority of the respondents (82.76 percent) irrespective of the caste categories are not following their traditional family occupations. This shows that the scheduled castes in the village communities have become occupationally more mobile.

It is also found that majority of the respondents who are educated, are not following the traditional occupations of their families whereas illiterates and less educated respondents are following the traditional occupations of their families. This shows that there is a positive relationship between education and occupation of the respondents. Further, it has also been found that cent-per-cent of the respondents said that caste of a person in no way should be the basis of
occupation. They said that the merit and ability of a person should be the basis of his or her occupations.

As regards to the preference of occupations the children of the respondents should take up, it is found that only 9.36 percent respondents in the sample want their children to adopt agriculture as their main occupation. Although majority of the respondents themselves are engaged in agriculture yet they do not want their children to adopt this occupation. A vast majority of the respondents i.e. about 90 percent want their children to adopt modern occupations like teaching, technical, professional, administrative, etc. This shows that the scheduled castes in the village communities are preferring modern occupations for their children in place of traditional caste occupations. Further, it has also been found that cent-per-cent respondents have aspired for better occupational and economic status for themselves and their children/grand-children as well. It has also been found that irrespective of the educational levels of the respondents, a majority of them have preferred modern occupations like teaching, technical, professional and administrative for their children. However, the better educated respondents have given more preference to the modern and prestigious occupations for their children.

Further, it is also found that out of the 117 respondents who are in Govt./Semi-government jobs, 77 respondents (65.81 percent) stated that they got their jobs through reservation whereas 40 respondents
(34.19 percent) stated that they did not get the job by taking the benefit of reservation policy. It has been found that better educated scheduled caste respondents as compared to illiterates and less educated ones have taken more benefits of the policy of reservation in getting employment. This shows that the educated scheduled castes in the rural areas are taking the benefits of reservation policy in getting employment and are becoming occupationally mobile. Thus, it can be said that occupational mobility is taking place among the scheduled castes in rural society especially amongst the educated ones. This indicates that occupation as a factor is playing an important role in the social mobility among scheduled castes in the village community.

While analyzing the third section of the chapter which deals with political participation and social mobility among the scheduled castes, it has been found that a very small proportion (16.75 percent) of the respondents take part in politics whereas, majority of them (83.25 percent) do not take part in politics. As regards to the voting pattern, it has been found that cent-per-cent of the respondents cast their votes in each and every election from panchayat level to the parliament level. Majority of the respondents give more importance to the achievement oriented factors like individual merits, education and political party affiliation of the candidate rather than ascriptive oriented factors such as religion, region, sex and caste of the candidate while casting their votes. This shows that scheduled castes in rural areas have become quite aware of their voting right.
It has also been found that out of those respondents who take part in politics, majority of them (72.06 percent) take part in politics at the grass-roots level and rest of them take part at block, district and state levels. This shows that scheduled castes in the village communities have started taking active part in politics not only at the panchayat and block levels but also at the district and state levels whereas in the past, they had nothing to do with the politics.

Further, it has also been found that 16.75 percent of the respondents have enrolled themselves as members in the State/National level political parties. Thus, the enrollment of the scheduled castes as members in these political parties shows that with the passage of time, these people have started to channelise their political activities in the rural areas indicating their political mobilization.

It has been reported by just 28 respondents (6.90 percent) in the sample that they have been helped by the reservation policy in increasing their political participation in various political bodies at different levels. This shows that a very small number of the respondents belonging to scheduled castes have been helped by the reservation policy to increase their political participation at different levels in the village communities. However, as compared to the past, the scheduled castes are on their way to become politically more active and conscious due to the benefit of the policy of reservation. It has also been found that better educated as compared to less educated and uneducated respondents have been helped by the reservation policy in
increasing their political participation. This shows that education is playing an important role in getting the benefits of reservation policy as those scheduled castes who are active in politics by getting the benefits of reservation policy are comparatively better educated. It is also reported by just eleven respondents that their parents have been helped by this policy in increasing their political participation. Thus, due to the implementation of reservation policy in favour of the scheduled caste people throughout the country, the chances of their political participation have increased.

Analysing the extent to which the children/grand-children of the respondents have been helped by the reservation policy to increase their political participation, it has been found that the children/grand-children of only 7 respondents (1.72 percent) in the whole sample have been helped by this policy to increase their political participation which shows that the children/grand-children of majority of the scheduled castes in the area have not been helped by the reservation policy to increase their political participation because in majority of the cases, they are still getting their education. However, it has been observed that political mobility has started taking place in the third generation indicating inter-generational mobility among the scheduled castes in rural areas.

As regards to their membership in local bodies, it has been found that out of the total sample, 43 respondents have/had been the members of these political bodies at panchayat, block and zila parishad levels.
Furth\(\text{er, almost all those respondents who are or had been the members of these local bodies reported that they are equally treated in the local bodies' meeting by the higher caste people and their suggestions in such meetings are given due weightage and consideration. This shows that the scheduled castes in the rural areas have started taking part in politics especially at the grassroots level.}

The last section of this chapter relates to reservation policy and social mobility among the scheduled castes. As regards to awareness about reservation policy, it has been found that majority of the respondents (60.34 percent) in the sample are not aware about the reservation policy but there is a sizeable number (39.66 percent) of respondents who have knowledge about the reservation policy. It is observed that the respondents who are educated and employed possess awareness about the reservation policy while those who are uneducated and not unemployed, lack of awareness about the reservation policy. Thus, awareness about reservation policy has taken place to some extent among the scheduled castes in the rural communities.

In the case of benefits received by the respondents, parents and their children/grand-children in different spheres due to the policy of reservation, it has been found that a very few of them have taken the benefits of this policy. It has been found that the respondents themselves (second generation) are benefited more in all the three spheres i.e. education, politics and employment as compared to their parents (first generation) whereas the children/grand-children (third
generation) are benefited more in the sphere of education as compared to their parents i.e. the respondents (second generation) and their grand parents (first generation). This may be due to the fact that the wards of the respondents are still getting their education and are too younger to seek employment or participate in politics. This shows that to some extent, there is a trend of inter-generational social mobility among the scheduled castes in the village communities due to the reservation policy. No doubt, the scheduled castes in the village communities have started to be benefited by this policy but their number is not very large.

Further, it is also observed that only those scheduled castes and their family members whose educational level, socio-economic condition, awareness and exposure to mass-media is high are taking more benefits of reservation policy. It is hoped that with the spread of education and awareness among the scheduled castes, more and more scheduled castes will come forward to take the benefits of reservation policy.

As regards to the views of the respondents regarding reservation on caste consideration, it has been found that an overwhelming majority (98.52 percent) of the respondents barring just six respondents favour the reservation on caste basis. Thus, the scheduled castes in the village communities favour reservation on caste basis so as to get rid of social, educational, occupational, economic and political backwardness of the scheduled castes and it will also help in reducing
the caste based discriminations against them in the society. The cent-per-cent of the respondents reported that the higher caste people do not favour this policy because they think that it will harm their interests and also hamper their overall development in spheres like education, economic, politics and employment.

Further, it is also found that all the respondents in the sample are strongly in favour of the continuation of reservation policy. They want this policy to continue so long as the scheduled castes do not come at par with the higher caste people in each and every sphere of life. Again, almost all the respondents (98.52 percent) stated that their children/grand-children also want this policy to continue because by taking the benefits of this policy they want their socio-economic, political and educational advancement. It is also reported by the cent-per-cent of the respondents that the higher caste people in no way want this policy to continue any more because they think that this policy is against the interests of higher caste people.

The fifth chapter relates to the problems of the scheduled castes. The first section of the chapter deals with the practice of untouchability. The practice of untouchability is one of the serious social problems confronting the scheduled castes. The rigidity in the practice of untouchability is somehow disappearing from the society. It is found that almost all the respondents do not believe in untouchability. Thus, at the attitudinal level, the scheduled castes people do not believe in untouchability but in actual practice, it is
observed that the untouchability is highly practised in the study area. It has been observed that those respondents who are well educated, exposed to the outside world and are in Govt. and Sem-Govt. jobs, they while outside their homes and villages do not believe in untouchability but while at home, they are compelled by the social circumstances i.e. 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, as is observed. It is found that majority (58.87 percent) of the respondents are not aware of the provisions in the constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability whereas 41.13 percent of the respondents are aware about it.

It is also found that the majority of the respondents who are aware of the constitutional provisions to eradicate the practice of untouchability stated that legally, untouchability cannot be practised and those who will ever practise it shall be punished in accordance with law. Such persons can be fined and imprisoned both. These respondents have also the knowledge about the protection of civil rights of the scheduled castes. Thus, it has been found that the respondents who are educated, employed and exposed to the mass media are aware of the provisions in our constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability while those who are illiterates and less exposed to the mass media and urban places and those belonging to the agriculturists and labour classes are not aware about the same. Further, the majority of the respondents who are educated above the middle
levels are aware about the provisions in the constitution to eradicate the practice of untouchability while those respondents who are either illiterates or educated up to primary level are not aware about the same. This indicates that the higher the educational level of the respondents, higher is their awareness about the practice of untouchability.

Almost all the respondents pointed out that the practice of untouchability still exists in the society in different ways. Instances of untouchability can be seen in the spheres of social life especially during community dining, social, religious and marriage ceremonies; entry into the temples and other public places, etc. Those respondents who are born before the 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 implementation of this Act. They also stated that the feeling of untouchability is deeply rooted in the minds of the higher and lower caste people.

It has further 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, transportation, communication and various other modern forces have helped in lessening the practice of untouchability from the society. Most of the respondents are again 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. It is also found that cent-per-cent of the respondents want that untouchability should be abolished in the best interest of the society as a whole. This shows that the scheduled castes in the village communities want its complete eradication from the society.

Again cent-per-cent respondents in the sample opined that if the untouchability is eradicated from the society, the social status of the scheduled castes will certainly improve to a great extent. With regard to the future of untouchability, almost all the respondents said that there seems no chances of its disappearing from the society in the near future especially in village communities where the practice of untouchability has its deep roots. It is also stated by them that 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.

The second section of the chapter deals with the general problems faced by the scheduled castes especially in availing the facilities started by the government for their upliftment. It has been found that majority (71.18 percent) of the respondents reported that despite some improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes, the social distance between scheduled castes and higher castes has remained almost the same as it was there in the past whereas as 28.82 percent of them pointed out that due to the
improvement in the 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 castes and the scheduled castes in different spheres still exists in the village communities.

The scheduled castes suffer from the dual disabilities of severe economic exploitation and social discrimination. They are mainly dependent on agricultural pursuits and other low income generating occupation. Their economic condition is deplorable. 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 various government and semi-government departments or sometimes in many cases they do not fulfill the essential qualifications. In the sphere of education, it has been found that during the studies, the scheduled castes face problems like lack of guidance, lack of conducive environment, discrimination, finance and language. All these problems affect their motivation and performance in education. It has also 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 the political sphere, it has been found that due to the poor economic conditions of the scheduled castes, they face the problem of finance to contest the election to the various elected bodies and they also lack potential to fight these elections.
Analysing the knowledge of the respondents about the various welfare schemes and programmes started by the government for the upliftment of the scheduled castes, it has been found that the scheduled castes are not much aware about these welfare schemes and programmes. It is observed that only those respondents who are better educated, exposed to mass media and urban places, are in Government/Semi-government jobs have the knowledge about these schemes and plans. It has been found that though the majority of the scheduled castes or their family members have been benefited by one or the other welfare scheme but it does not mean that they have been benefited by all the schemes. Further, the respondents stated that the various welfare schemes and facilities are not reaching to the needy and poor scheduled caste people. They also mentioned that 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, exposed to mass-media, well aware about schemes, and above all having influencial family background amongst the scheduled castes in the area.

Further, it has also been observed that the scheduled castes in the village communities face problems while getting subsidies on agricultural and horticultural equipments, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides and so on. They also face problems in getting the loans
from the banks. It is also found that 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. It has also been observed that all the scheduled castes in the village communities want to avail the facilities and concessions meant for them even if their socio-economic conditions have improved. They also do not want these facilities and concessions to be discontinued especially meant for the scheduled castes even in the case of scheduled castes who are above the creamy layer. The cent-per-cent of the respondents are of the opinion that more and more is still to be done for improving the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes in the rural areas.

Resume:

An examination of the findings of the present study shows that the social mobility among the scheduled castes in the village communities is taking place. The caste hierarchy even within the scheduled castes and caste stratification based upon purity and pollution concept exist in the study area. However, the caste system has become open to some extent as the changes are taking place in its various aspects in the village communities. The changes are taking place with regard to the entry of the scheduled castes into the houses of the higher caste people and there is also some trend of change in the attitudes and behaviour patterns of the higher caste people regarding sitting, eating and drinking with the scheduled castes.
There is a trend of early marriage especially among the scheduled castes in the village community. However, the educated scheduled castes prefer to get marry at the later age. It is found that caste endogamy is still very strong in the village communities. The inter-caste marriages are not generally preferred by the scheduled caste people in the area under study. It is found that educated scheduled caste people at their attitudinal level give more preference to inter-caste marriages. However, in actual practice both educated and uneducated scheduled caste people are not prepared to accept inter-caste marriages. Further, the scheduled castes in the rural areas are in favour of widow remarriages and are against the practices of dowry and child-marriages. It is also found that changes are more at the attitudinal level of the respondents, but at the structural level there is not a much change with regard to the institution of marriage in general and the inter-caste marriages in particular in the village communities.

The scheduled castes in the rural areas have realized the importance of education for the upliftment of their community. They know that education plays an important role in achieving social mobility. They have high aspirations for higher education of their children and grand-children and are conscious about their carriers. Their wards have availed or are availing various educational facilities like scholarships, fee concessions, free text books, uniforms, coaching facility, age relaxation and reservation in admission in educational institutions. With these facilities provided to the scheduled castes by the government to promote education among them, they are on their
way to acquire higher education. Thus, they have shown upward educational mobility and their social status has improved to some extent due to their educational advancement.

There is also a shift in the occupations of the scheduled castes. The shift in their occupations is mainly towards agriculture and employment sectors. The occupational mobility has taken place among the scheduled castes as the change has taken place in their occupations from traditional to modern ones. The scheduled castes now do not favour caste as the basis of occupation but they favour merit and ability as the basis of one's occupation. They also want their children to adopt modern occupations in place of traditional ones. It is also found that the educated scheduled castes are taking the benefits of reservation policy in getting the employment in the public sector and are becoming occupationally more mobile.

The scheduled castes in the area under study are taking interest in politics and take more part in the voting which was not there in the past especially among this unprivileged section of the society. They now give more importance to the achievement oriented factors rather than to the ascriptive oriented factors while casting their votes. They have started to become active members of various political parties at the block, district and state levels. With the enactment of reservation policy, a political mobilization to some extent among them has taken place. They are also becoming members of local bodies like Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, Zila Parishads and legislatures by
virtue of reservation. Thus, the process of political mobilization among the scheduled castes in village communities is taking place slowly and steadily.

It has been found that majority of the scheduled castes are not aware of the reservation policy. Although, they have been started to be benefited by the reservation policy yet their number is not very large. Due to the reservation policy, a trend of inter-generational social mobility among the scheduled castes to some extent is visible. The scheduled castes in the village communities are in favour of reservation on caste basis and are also in favour of its continuation in near future as well. The scheduled castes face many problems in social, educational, economic and political spheres.

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 in different ways still is rampant in the rural areas and there seems remote chances of its complete eradication from the society in near future. In order to eradicate the untouchability from the society, it is essential to first eradicate the caste system.

It is also found that 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. Consequently, the facilities mostly go unutilized or are utilized at a minimum level.

Further, it is also found that the benefits of various facilities and concessions 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 started by the government and various other agencies for their upliftment and emancipation.

In order to improve the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes and to bring about a change in various aspects of their lives, both short term and long term policies and programmes should be adopted and implemented by the government and other agencies. The upliftment of scheduled castes has to be based on integrative approach and not in isolation in any specific area of development. Their socio-economic development, educational advancement and shedding of traditional social disabilities are necessary aspects of their empowerment in the society.

The Indian Constitution has provided a number of provisions with a view to safeguarding and securing the social, educational, economic, political and employment rights of the scheduled castes. The reservation policy is an important aspect of such provisions. In order to protect the interests of the scheduled castes and to make them socio-economically, educationally, occupationally and politically more mobile, the government should implement the reservation policy in
letter and spirit and as in the case of public sector, the reservations should be extended to private sector as well. Further, it may be stated that there should be a proper and full implementation of the constitutional and legal provisions relating to the welfare and development of the scheduled castes so that they are not discriminated and their socio-economic conditions are improved and they join the main stream of Indian social life. Further, the development efforts for the welfare of the scheduled castes must be accorded a top priority in the national endeavour. The central and state governments should adopt policies and programmes in such a manner that it ensures growth with social justice and minimise the gap between the higher castes and the scheduled castes. The government should take serious steps for the welfare and upliftment of the scheduled castes.

Further, in order to bring about a change in the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes, they need to organize themselves more vigorously at the socio-economic and political fronts. The most important issue before them is of achieving their respectful identity and dignified social status for which they have been agitating since long. The scheduled castes should mobilize themselves to fight against the discriminatory practices, behaviours and attitudes of the higher caste people towards them.

The people belonging to higher and lower castes should come out of their caste prejudices and the hatred that they have developed against each other. The scheduled castes in themselves should also
develop a favourable attitude towards the higher caste people. The
government, voluntary organizations, social workers, public
representatives, etc. should also play a constructive role in bridging the
gap between the higher castes and the scheduled castes. They should
also make serious efforts for the welfare and emancipation of the
scheduled castes in the rural areas. It is hoped that with the spread of
education and the impact of other modernizing forces, the social
mobility among the scheduled castes will become more pronounced and
will pave way to the changes in their role structure.