1.1 Conceptual framework

In India, the study on "Socio-economic Status of Scheduled Castes" population has been one of the significant themes of social sciences. It has always lured undivided attention of the scholars of the different field in a country that is traditionally regarded as the land of religions and castes. 'Status' which may be determined by the institution of the family and the caste, but in the changing society, other social institutions like education and occupation also emerged as the status determinants. It may also be determined on the basis of educational qualifications followed by wealth and property, land, caste and occupation in order of preference. In the present problem, the word status is the central theme which is conceived as synonymous with position and has been utilised for comparison.

'Caste' - (the word derived from Latin word 'Cartus' meaning pure) was mostly used by the Portuguese to denote the Indian social classification.\(^1\) It is originally rooted in Hinduism. It may be defined as the organization of people into hierarchically organized endogamous groups with restrictions of food, drink and smoke and with ritual and other privileges as well as disabilities in parallel in other societies.

The origin of the caste system can be traced in the principles of Vernas of ancient times. But spatially it has not been mentioned that
from where or which regions these have been originated. However, it includes only four Verna, viz. Brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Gradually these Verras divided into different castes and sub-castes which become a symbol of higher and lower caste and exploitation of lower castes started by the people of higher castes. In ancient time, it has also been mentioned that the Shudras have remained dependent on the upper castes economically, socially and politically. It is they from whom the Shudras have sought help and assistance at the times of need and crisis. But overall they were badly treated. They are reduced to a low status. Some of them are called untouchables.²

With the course of passing times, they had been given many names, that is first they were called Shudras. After that in 1914-15 in the report of Inspector General of Education, the word ‘Depressed Classes’ was used for them. They were also regarded as leather worker, down trodden, dalit and later on as the Scheduled Castes. The term Scheduled Castes was first coined by the Britishers. Mahatma Gandhi called them ‘Harijan’ - ‘the children of God’. But Dr. B.R. Ambedkar objected to these terms and demanded for them the name ‘Protestant Hindu’. Dr. Ambedkar gave them the name ‘Non-Conformist Hindu’, that is the people who do not conform to the Hindu religion.³

However, the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ stated to symbolize down trodden people who are engaged in mineal jobs like sweeper, leather
worker etc. Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes or group within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of the constitution. Scheduled Castes are those groups which are named in Scheduled Castes order in force for the time being. Thus the Scheduled Castes is a set of castes which comes under the lowest strata of society. They may also be defined as the groups of socially, economically and politically exploited group of human-beings whose standard of living is comparatively low and backward.

The Scheduled Castes have remained both oppressed and depressed throughout the country for centuries. In the name of untouchability (the term is considered as the outcome of the Aryan Conquest in India) they have suffered lot of exploitation in the hands of the dominant section of the society. It is only after India become independent that the Scheduled Castes have shown a little progress for their socio-economic upliftment. Therefore, the regional distribution and analysis of Scheduled Castes in relation to their social and economic parameters are of a significant study at different level.

1.2 Review of literature

Most of the studies have been conducted on Scheduled Castes and various parameters of socio-economic problems which were contributed by various scholars belonging to various disciplines. The origin and evolution of castes at international, national and regional
levels have been studied in spatio-temporal perspective. Most of the literature have been studied and reviewed. The Scheduled Castes, their nature, structure, work and socio-economic status have also been studied by sociologists, economists, demographers, anthropologists and ethnographers. The caste, class and power as a major component of society has also been studied by different scholars in a variety of ways at national, state, district, block and village levels. The changing nature of caste and social system has also been studied in depth. At the same, the different activities of the different caste groups have also been a major theme of study for geographers in particular and others in general. But socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes has been a pivot of study for geographers, demographers, economist, sociologists and historians all over the country with varying approach.

In geographical context there are only few studies which have focussed the problems faced by Scheduled Castes. These are contributed by Mukherjee (1980), Mohammad (1988) and Chandna (1989). They studied their spatial distribution and socio-economic structure in detail. But they have not discussed the detailed problems of exploitation and discrimination etc. Thus some findings of the studies have been analysed for more clarification.

Ghurye's (1957) study on 'Caste and Class in India' describes that the social structure is an important factor where men are divided by
language or by religion but the caste distinctions grounded on race or on occupation. These are some grounds for mutual distrust and enmity which make it hard for them to act together or for each section to recognize equal rights to the other.7

The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste in an edited book by Marricott (1958) and based on the report by Bernard S. Cohn, describes how an attempt has been made by the members of 'untouchables' castes in the country to raise their socio-economic status. They are traditionally leather workers and agricultural labourers who have been found near the bottom of the hierarchy of the social status in respect of wealth, power and the caste position.8

Bluent's (1969) work on 'The Caste Study in Northern India' describes the past development of caste system and various aspects of its present conditions. The study shows that a small number of educated youth oppose the castes structure for the last thirty years. The study also mentioned that the modern conditions and the caste's under the pressure of circumstances, customs have been materially modified. In the present position of caste it concludes that the efforts of social and religious reformers of the disintegrating force of modern ideas have impaired to serious degree of vitality of caste. All the customs attacked and checked infant marriage, virgin marriage, the commensal and food regulations etc.
Lastly, the study highlights that social reformers and politicians are helping in raising the standard of living of the depressed classes. It seems probable that in the course of time, until the nation will change the customary restrictions of the caste and social system, it would not be possible to achieve the goal of removing untouchability etc. And there is no doubt that the customs are definitely harmful in the modern conditions of the society which have become ridiculous.

Deb's (1975) study on 'Social Stratification and Mobility in Rural Setting' describes that how far the population is aware of the community in India. Accordingly, there is a change in the occupational structure in comparison to traditional rural population who is mainly engaged in agricultural or rural occupations. About half of the population in the community followed non-agricultural occupation and the remaining half in rural occupation such as farming, farm labour and village crafts and services.

It also analyses that the caste system is losing its hold on the society and the people have started moving from their hereditary occupation to economically sound occupations with the exception of those engaged in farming. Also, the frame of reference of rural people in relation to status of various occupations has undergone a considerable change. Rather than laying emphasis on the ascribed status, people have
begun to emphasize achieved status. It is a favourable trend for the uplift of the rural community because the jobs which were considered in the past low paid and meant for illiterates are now highly esteemed.\textsuperscript{10}

Aggarwal and Ashraf's (1976) study 'Equality Through Privilege - A Case Study of Special Privileges of Scheduled Castes in Haryana' describes that in the state due to variety of reasons the practice of untouchability in Haryana is less severe than the other parts of India.

Regarding occupation of the people of Scheduled Caste, the study shows that they are engaged in low paid polluting occupations, remain economically dispossessed and accorded low evaluation in society. However in literacy and education they seem to be catching up with the higher castes. Overall the study explains that the economic conditions of the majority of the Scheduled Castes population is very weak.

It has also been noted from the study that the Scheduled Castes are poorly represented in government services, banks, educational institutions (particularly in the universities, government colleges, government aided colleges etc.) and other agencies that employed educated people. In various departments of government of Haryana, the Scheduled Castes representation is less than half where as the state government has a policy of reserving roughly twenty percent of jobs for them. Now the government of Haryana has a fairly extensive programme
for the welfare of Scheduled Castes population. Their study also suggested that reservation policy should continue until the goal of equality is achieved.11

D’Souza’s (1980) study on ‘Educational Inequalities Among Scheduled Castes - A Case Study in the Punjab’ describes the educational problem of Scheduled Castes in the state of Punjab. It shows that the educational gap between the Scheduled Castes and the rest of society is still very wide and the rate of improvement is very slow. Another important fact of the problem is the existence of educational inequalities among Scheduled Castes themselves. It has also been argued that the inequality among the Scheduled Castes is the result of the exploitation of some Scheduled Castes by some influential members of the same caste or due to an unfair competition among themselves for state assistance.

The study also shows that the educational inequalities among the Scheduled Castes are related with two structural dimensions: (i) Firstly, it is the division of people into mutually exclusive castes; (ii) Secondly, it is related with the concentration of different castes in various educational and socio-economic regions. Further the study states that mostly the members of the socio-economic weaker section are not able to utilise the state aid for education. There are two broad approaches to the solution of the problem. One of them is to improve the socio-economic conditions of restructuring disadvantaged section, so that they may be in
a position to make use of the state aid for educational advancement. The other approach is to change the policies regarding the administration of the state aid.

Lastly, for the best results, attention must be focussed on primary education as it has been observed that there is a distinct relationship between the degree of attainment of primary education and the education at higher levels. Priority should be given to the education of those districts which are more backward economically as well as socially.¹²

Khan's (1980) study on 'Scheduled Castes and Their Status in India' highlights about the education among Scheduled Castes that female education has a major role to play in the education of children of the coming generation. It has also been pointed out that the children receiving higher education is higher in number of those villages located nearer to the towns or cities. This may be seen in the case of Banglore city. It also highlights that the majority of the children of Scheduled Castes is not sent to schools for various reasons such as economic handicap, domestic problems, inadequacy of government assistance etc. About occupation, there is a greater degree of generational occupation, automatically transfer to one another. Subsidiary occupations which the government has provided for the Scheduled Castes have not been made available to them. About land distribution which is given free by the
government to the Scheduled Castes are invariably dry lands and are uneconomical in size. Untouchability law is ineffective, which also very much exists in the police force. No legal aid is available. The Scheduled Castes are not familiar with the procedures of getting legal aid.

About the government policies and programme, it has been noted from Khan's study that there is a wide gap between the policies and the performance. However, some programme of the government do have positive effects on Scheduled Castes and progress.\(^ {13} \)

Kamble's (1980) study on The Scheduled Castes described the status of Scheduled Castes with the concept of pollution, which was prevalent during ancient time. The Scheduled Castes had to keep a physical distance from the higher castes when they talked. According to the study, the touch of Scheduled Castes of animate or inanimate things was treated as polluted. Therefore, they were forbidden from using public roads, water and other economic activities such as business, work in the house, drinking water from the well or carrying food stuff etc. as these things would pollute. In brief the study concludes that their position was like that of a deaf and dumb slave.\(^ {14} \)

Chauhan's (1980) study on 'Caste, Status and Power-Social Stratification in Assam' describes the social structure of the Assamese society by force of its geographical location, political history, cultural values and particular type of socio-demographic composition of its
population, displays certain characteristics, which though resemble, to a great extent with the broad structural characteristics of the Indian society yet differs from it in many important ways. About status the study states that it may be determined by the institution of the family and the caste, but in the changing society, other social institutions like education and occupation also emerged as the status determinants. However, the findings of the study reveal that the status may be determined on the basis of educational qualification followed by wealth and property, land, caste and occupation in order of preference. Thus the institution of caste comes on the fifth place in order of importance as far as the status determination is concerned.\textsuperscript{15}

Saradanand (1981) studied on Divided Poor of Kerala Villages 'Pulayas' who shares about 45 percent of Scheduled Castes population in Kerala, mainly engaged as labourers in the agricultural sector. Till the middle of 19th century, they were slaves, bought and sold like any other piece of property and were treated worse than cattle. It also analysed that the studies of deprived section in India can be undertaken only in the context of the country's development efforts and a committee has to be set up to enquire as to what extent the benefit of development have reached.\textsuperscript{16} It again reflects that the people especially the poor and deprived have a big stake and responsibility in making and implementing local level development. Efforts have to be disseminated and it should become a part of their consciousness, just as the way the idea of the progress. It requires
a big organisation through which people of the Scheduled Castes may be trained to take more and more benefit. Therefore, without such facilities the 'en masse' deprivations and disparities of Pulayas, Scheduled Castes or others cannot be lessened and it is the only way to change economic and social structure of the Scheduled Castes population.17

Santa Kumari's (1983) study on 'Scheduled Castes and Welfare Measures' concluded and emphasized that while government's Harijan welfare programme have benefitted the Scheduled Castes to some extent, they have not been able to make as much impact on them as it was considered in these programme. The study also argued that the different sub-castes within Scheduled Castes hierarchy will be availing themselves of the welfare programme in different doses with those standing on the top of the hierarchy beneficiary more than those down trodden. Because, even today the position of Scheduled Castes is very poor, so the study concluded that government's programme like distribution of land, house, thatching grant were not able to make any impression on the Scheduled Castes progress.18

Parvathamma and Satya Narain's (1984) study on 'New Horizons for Scheduled Castes' deals with school, college students and teachers in the state of Karnataka. They observed that as far as Scheduled Castes teachers are concerned, it is strange to note that inspite of many master degree aspirants, only few teachers have recruited from
these communities. The economic disadvantages are the basic problems for these communities. The students are in a difficult financial position. Their parents being mostly agricultural labourers have negligible income. Hence the study suggests that care must be taken to regularise the payments of agricultural labourers working on other's land. Until this is done, exploitation continues and Scheduled Castes conditions will never improve. Efforts should also be made to cater the needs of more deserving and neglected sections of the Scheduled Castes which otherwise would continue to live in the dark.\textsuperscript{19}

Singh's (1985) study on 'Rural Leadership Among Scheduled Castes in Narayanpur block district Mirzapur of the State of Uttar Pradesh. The study concludes that: (i) most of the rural leaders of Scheduled Castes are new, young and literate. They hail from dominant caste and well to do families among their own caste groups; (ii) from the point of view of the social values they stand half way between tradition and modernity; (iii) they have higher development oriented programme but feel helpless to do so much because of the oppressive attitudes of the higher castes and classes etc. It has also been concluded that majority of the rural leaders of the Scheduled Castes gets entry to the formal power structure of the village through the reserved seats. The old traditional leadership among the Scheduled Castes is being challenged and contested by the young entrants to socio-political life.\textsuperscript{20}
Paramji's (1985) study on 'Caste Reservation and Performance' which focused on the representation of SC/ST/BC in Osmania University during the period of 1977-78. The number of lecturers appointed from these categories together did not constitute even ten percent of the selected candidates. Even now the share of SC/ST in teaching staff is just one percent. Another University in the city of Hyderabad continues to be a non-starter in this regard. And yet the opinion of the forward castes appears to be totally inimical to the idea of reservations. According to a campus survey conducted in Osmania University reveals that the male students and teachers from forward sections have negative ideas to reservation even today.21

Reddy and Haragopal's (1985) study on 'Public Policy and the Rural Poor - A Study of Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) in Andhra Pradesh' describes about the district of Medak and East Godavari'. Accordingly, it has been generally found that the dominance of the forward castes in the land ownership is quite striking. Most of the backward classes and Scheduled Castes members are found in the category of small and marginal farmers and the agricultural labourers. About measures of eradication of poverty the study suggests; (i) increase the governmental assistance and take special attention for the effective implementation of anti-poverty schemes; (ii) redistribution of land and strengthening of irrigation potential; (iii) Landless labourers pleaded for
higher wages. Lastly, the pattern of responses conclusively established that the poor look to the government and government alone can think for eradication of poverty.\textsuperscript{22}

Prakash and Sen's (1985) study on 'Caste Hindu and Scheduled Castes Children in Rural India' has led to open conflict in many of the regions of India. The study also stated that caste discrimination and prejudice has caused distrust and helplessness in schools of a community development block in the state of Haryana. About occupation it again proved that conditions persist the same in agriculture, self cultivators and the agricultural labourers also.\textsuperscript{23}

Mohammad (1988) studied on Caste and Primary Occupations - A Geographical Analysis. The study is basically related with primary data. He has selected twelve major castes and six basic primary occupation with a view to analyse the relationship among them and more than a thousand respondents selected from 35 villages falling in 34 caste-combination regions. From each region one representative village has been selected with a few exceptions. He has adopted stratified purposive sampling technique and from each village 20 to 40 respondents are selected for a detailed interview. Overall he has divided the state of Uttar Pradesh into caste combination regions on the basis of the then 48 districts caste data of 1931 census. The study also examined and assessed
the impact of age, educational level, social status, family size, innovativeness, exposure to mass media, involvement, knowledge and skill of the respondents on agricultural productivity.

The study stated that there were more than hundred castes at that time, but only 13 castes have emerged as most important castes in terms of first, second and third ranking in all the then 48 districts of the state. Hindus other than Chamars are divided into various castes. Chamars have emerged most dominant caste in the state. They rank first alone in 27 districts, while in 5 and 6 districts they rank second and third respectively. It means that there is a sizeable percentage of Chamars in the state but they are most down trodden and backward inspite of reservations and incentives given by government at various levels. The study also suggested that they should be given more protection and incentives to build up and develop their abilities and capabilities in order to compete with the general masses. About Brahmans (the socially, economically and politically a dominant caste) the study said that they take the lion's share in all incentive oriented government programmes and so is the case with Rajputs, Jats etc. There are certain castes - Pasi, Kurmi, Koiri etc. who are concentrated in pockets.

Further this study shows that the Scheduled Castes, backward classes are given scholarship as incentive but unfortunately it has been existed on paper only. The money given in this connection is being eaten
up by the officials, clerks and the concerned school. Similar is the case with free education to girls. Therefore, the study suggested that the government should be vigilant while allocating and reimbursing the funds on all these counts. About status, the study explains that there are inter and intra-caste variations in social status. Except Scheduled Castes and Lodh, no other caste comes in very low status group.

About occupation the study shows that piggeries is the main occupation of Scheduled Castes. A minor percentage of lower castes is also in service. A further analysis indicates that higher caste are in superior position and better jobs (white collar jobs), while lower caste are in inferior position and involved in mineal services. The study also revealed that a microscopic percentage of Scheduled Castes have been given land by the government which has not brought even a little change in their socio-economic conditions.  

Ram’s (1988) study on ‘The Mobile Scheduled Castes - Rise of a New Middle Class’ who describes about the representative of Scheduled Castes in educational institutions and government employment (except their political representation where they face the different types of problems) is hardly 50 percent of the quota reserved for them and it is for those persons who already involved in the state and the central level politics have achieved education, occupation and their children have access to education particularly higher education and the government
jobs. In other words, the constitutional measures and the protective
discrimination policy have failed to serve the interest of majority of the
Scheduled Castes population.28

Chandna's (1989) study on Spatial Dimension of Scheduled
Castes in India, describes the spatial distribution of Scheduled Castes
population on the basis of the Census of India 1971. Some of the main
objectives of his study is to raise the following questions: (i) Are they
distributed ubiquitously all over the country or in a specific area of their
concentration? (ii) Is there any variation of growth pattern of Scheduled
Castes population from one part of the country to another? (iii) migration
pattern of Scheduled Castes population; (iv) the area of 'out' and 'in'
migration and their causes; (v) literacy pattern of Scheduled Castes
population and competition with other section of the society; (vi)
occupational pattern of Scheduled Castes population; (vii) rural-urban
residential pattern of Scheduled Castes population.26 The study states
that the Scheduled Castes population constitutes 612 castes in all over
India. In terms of population by castes, the share of Scheduled Castes has
been nearly 20 percent. About half of the Scheduled Castes population is
shared by 10 major castes viz. Chamar, Adi Dravida, Pasi, Madiga,
Dusadh, Mala, Paraiyan, Dhobi, Adi Karnataka and Mahar. In terms of
areal spread, Chamar comes on the first rank covered a large parts of
north and central India viz., most part of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab,
Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar; Adi
Dravida and Paraiyan dominate in most of Tamil Nadu; Pasi ranks first in Avadh region of Uttar Pradesh; Madiga and Mala are in Andhra Pradesh; Dusadh predominates in northern Bihar; Dhobi in Mizoram; Mahar ranks first in Maharastra and Adi Karnataka predominates in Southern Karnataka.

Regionally, the pattern of growth of Scheduled Castes population was in consonance with changing pattern of employment opportunity for them. The literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes population was only half of the general population. Mostly, they are agricultural labourer. Some of them are engaged as sweeper in the government offices, municipalities. It also shows that about eight out of ten workers of Scheduled Castes population engaged in these activities. Most of the Scheduled Castes population resides in rural areas. As the census of India 1971 shows that only one out of every nine persons was living in urban areas, while in case of the rest of the population the corresponding figure was one in every five.27

Selvanathan's (1989) study on 'Status of Scheduled Castes' describes the socio-economic status of the Harijan in the state of Tamil Nadu. According to the study all Harijan respondents without exception have reported that they experienced discrimination in both rural and urban areas; the majority of the Scheduled Castes respondents is not aware of constitutional provisions intended for their benefit; the majority
of Scheduled Castes respondents reported that they have not been
benefitted through the reservation policy. An important method
suggested by the Scheduled Castes respondents to eradicate
untouchability is inter-caste marriage. The study also suggests that the
reservation need to be continued until economic and social inequalities
are abolished; steps must be taken to fill up the reservation quotas for the
Scheduled Castes. However, the study stressed that the problems faced
by the members of the Scheduled Castes are more or less similar
wherever they lived.28

Parakh’s (1989) study on ‘Scheduled Castes - A Socio-Economic
Change’ deals with Lucknow district of Uttar Pradesh. In this study most
of the respondents belong to Chamar sub-caste followed by Pasi.
Accordingly, the hierarchy among Scheduled Castes is same as that was
observed a century back. Here, the attitude of respondents towards
education shows a bright trend. Irrespective of their occupational status,
most respondents consider education as an important criterion for
earning money, acquiring prestige, personality development and
uplifting of their community. Some of them are of high as well as low
occupational status hold the opinion that reservation policy formulated
by the government of India for uplifting of Scheduled Castes is the only
way which can bring out the uplifting of their community members.
The study also concluded that entry of Scheduled Castes in the
government services influenced their life style to a great extent. However,
among Scheduled Castes some members have also been employed in class I, II, III and IV services. The impact of occupation on lifestyle of Scheduled Castes employed in class I service is most significant.29

Dahiya's (1991) study on 'Dynamics of Economic Life in Rural India' describes the socio-economic structure of a village - Ladhot in District Rohtak of the state of Haryana. It also studied about the caste structure of the area under study and highlighted that the village represents 15 castes each having the distinct character. About Scheduled Castes the study reveals that there are two sub-castes, viz. Chamar and Balmiki in the village. Jat and Brahmans are the other Upper Castes.30 It has also been highlighted that the relation among different castes of the village is normally good. However, there are some inhibitions which prevent the process of interaction and the celebration of marriage and other social functions. It has been generally seen that such inhibitions are now quite on the wave. About sixty percent of the households believed in caste identity, but the educated ones and those who are in services have cultivated liberal attitudes. There is perfect harmony in community. But Chamar and Balmiki the two Scheduled Castes maintain distance and keep segregation with each other.31

Baboo's (1992) study on 'Economic Exchanges in Rural India (A Comparative Spatio-Cultural Study in Orissa)'. He concludes with suggestions that the state policy has accelerated capitalist development
in agriculture and accentuated the disparity between the rich and the poor; higher the level of development in a region or among a social category, greater the economic disparity; not withstanding internal class differentiation within primordial collectivities - castes, religious, classes and regional groups - the tendency among them to act as interest group of wrest economic benefits for the state and the non-governmental agencies persists. The findings of the study have far reaching implications for planning and policy making in India. But the response of planners and policy makers in multiparty democracies such as India is rarely 'automatic' and 'natural' but prompted and pressurized.32

Lal's (1997) study 'From Higher Caste to Lower Caste' (based on Rajasthan and other states like Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat etc.) describes that a caste has its own self image and identity on the basis of which it considers itself historically as well as socio-culturally and nominalistically distinct from other caste groups and tenaciously sticks to it and justifies its identity inspite of various changing taking place in its life. It is this sense of identity which is the basis for the survival of a caste. The study described two processes by which transformation of higher castes into lower ones is effected. Firstly, a number of higher caste persons/groups become Bhangis, Chamars, Bhambhis, Jatav etc. losing thereby their high caste names and membership. Secondly, a large number of such individuals engage themselves in the unclean and impure occupation of lower castes without
abandoning their caste designation. Further, it highlights the reasons for the conversion, like protection given by the lower castes to members of the higher caste during famine period and to orphans, ex-communicated members of higher castes for inter-dining with the members of the lower castes, illicit relation of higher caste members with low caste women/men, epidemics, floods and other natural and man-made calamities were the main factors behind conversion and change of identity from higher to lower castes. However, it is interesting to note that like the traditional higher castes, the lower castes too are conservative and do not allow any non-caste member to be absorbed in their caste community.33

Manikumar's (1997) study on 'Caste Clashes in South Tamil Nadu' describes that South Tamil Nadu appears to be in a state of great social turbulence. The erstwhile Tirunelveli district have recorded several incidents of violence in the last few years. Those involved in these clashes are maravars, a dominant agricultural caste and pallars or devendrakula vellars, a chronically oppressed dalit caste. South Tamil Nadu has its own share of discrimination against dalits. Many village wells and temples are still out of bound to dalits, while separate place of worship and deities also exist. Even municipal schools tend to cater exclusively to dalit children, while children of other caste Hindus, notably maravars, generally abstain from such public schools. Though stainless steel tumblers have replaced coconut shells or aluminium cups, dalits
continue to be served separately in tea stalls. In Tirunelveli region, the
district Arivoli Iyakkam, which is a part of the National Literacy Mission,
had to conduct separate classes for maravars and dalits. In many villages
dalits have no access to maravar streets. They are not permitted to use
the cement benches in bus stops. They have no approach road to their
cremation ground. Dalit members are made to sit on the floor as a matter
of routine. A woman, the dalit panchayat union president, complained to
the writer of this paper that the members belonging to non-dalit castes
were not attending the regular meetings she convened because she was
a dalit.

Regarding remedies for the clashes, when caste violence of
unprecedented nature erupted in Tirunelveli in 1995, one of the dalit
leaders suggested that the government set up an office of the Inspector
General of Police in Tirunelveli to tackle the tricky situation. It sounded
an odd suggestion then. Now the present Chief Minister has translated
this idea into reality and so it looks as though the state has decided to
treat the clash between maravars and dalits as a law and order issue.31

Pinto's (1997) study on 'Karnataka: State Protection for Dalit'
describes that with the strong Vokkaliga and lingayat lobby ruling
Karnataka, the state was not known for its strong measures in protecting
the dalits. In all the recent atrocities against the dalits the state has
always sided with the dominant communities. Recently, the incident that
provoked Vokkaliga anger was the celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti by the Dalit group of the village with the assistance of the Dalit Sangharshan Samithi (DSS). Chitamani is known for its communal tension. The vokkaliga community has been rising up against the dalit at the slightest provocation. The majority land owning vokkaliga community has strongly opposed all activities of the Dalit Sangarshan Samithi specially in the area of providing awareness and conscientising the dalits on their identity.

Regarding, the protection of dalit the paper raised the question that, did the police come to protect the dalits? There are more than two explanations. The dalit still believes that the police have not been very friendly towards them. The police had come to see that the function was either not conducted or carried on in a low profile. The police are considered as agents of the Vokkaligas.36

Singh's (1997) study on 'Dalit in Haryana Politics', describes that Dalits are emerging as a new autonomous factor in the politics of the state. Dalit mobilisation as an autonomous factor has shown regional variations in Haryana. In most part of Haryana especially in the Jat-dominated district like Rohtak, Bhiwani, Hisar, Jind, Sonepat etc. dalit assertion is in nascent form.

Dalit in Haryana, who have been traditionally supporting the Congress, now search for a political identity. Even before the arrival of
the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), they had been looking for an alternative to the Congress. Over the last few years, the dalits, especially the youth, have been feeling that though the Congress policies have benefitted them to some extent, the party is dominated by high castes. They have found a party of their 'own' in the BSP.

The reasons for regional variations in the electoral performance of the BSP lie in the regional variations in the socio-economic conditions of the Haryana Dalits. Their relation with the agriculturist castes, the differences in the level of their dependence on the land owning classes, nearness to urban centres and proximity to the areas in West Uttar Pradesh and Punjab which have directly seen the assertion of dalit identity.

As elsewhere, dalits in Haryana largely belong to the landless classes. They work as agricultural labourers, rickshaw-pullers in the cities and wage labourers in construction work, cottage and small-scale industries etc. They depending on the landowning castes for work on the land, credit; use of fields for defecation and cutting grass as fodder for their cattle from the fields. Such dependence gets reflected in the economic, social and political relations between dalits and the agriculturist castes. Dependence of dalits gets reduced in the areas which are near Delhi, Chandigarh, Gurgaon on the cities which are located along the highways, and from Delhi to Chandigarh in particular.
Nearness to the cities enables them to find alternative jobs. Dalits face more problems in districts like Rohtak, Jind, Sirsa, Hisar, Bhiwani where they have to rely on land owners.

Chamars, Dhanak and Balmiki form majority of dalit population of the state. Chamars are politically most conscious among them. About the variation within the Scheduled Castes, it states that Dalit do not form a homogeneous group politically and socially. Some of the Balmiki complain that the welfare schemes of the central and state government meant for all Scheduled Castes are appropriated by the Chamars. The conditions of the Chamars have improved, those of the Balmiki remain bad. The paper forecasts that the dalit in Haryana can become a force to reckon with, if the party espousing their cause is able to make alliance with a party which has a strong base in the rural areas.\textsuperscript{36}

Most of the above mentioned studies show that the socio-economic status is an important determinant of disparities of Scheduled Castes in India. The scholars have touched the various aspects regarding the Scheduled Castes. But they have studied with their own perspective, for example the sociologists studied the social aspects while the economist touched the economic aspects of the different caste groups and the Scheduled Castes in particular. However, there has been found lot of uniformity in the ideas about the upliftment of down trodden.
It is also clear from the literature on the Scheduled Castes that a very little contribution has been made by the geographers. Only a few studies have explained their distribution, occupation etc. Though, the present study is an important attempt regarding the socio-economic status within the Scheduled Castes and along with their comparison with Backward Castes and Upper Castes.

1.3 Significance of the study

In the past, rural settlement planning in relation to Scheduled Castes has long been a neglected branch of the subject. Only after the second world war such studies have been stressed and the problems regarding Scheduled Castes in geographic perspective have come into the light at the state level in India.

Therefore, the present study is an endeavour to provide a guideline for the social welfare of the depressed classes not only the Scheduled Castes population of the district but also at the state or national level. This study has also analysed reasons of their socio-economic backwardness in relation to the others. In this way a clear cut picture of the level of Scheduled Castes in relation to the other caste groups may come into existence. On the basis of the findings, a strategy for their progress has also been possible to provide guidelines to achieve the desired goal of the level of development of the society.
1.4 Scope

As it has already been noted that most of the studies on socio-economy of the villages emphasized the cultural aspects of villages life and they either touched the economic aspects or the social. It is well known fact raised by the scholars of the different fields that traditionally, the Scheduled Castes are more or less homogeneous caste groups. They occupied a low position in socio-economic status as well as in education. Therefore, the present study deals with the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes population inhabited in rural settlement of Rohtak district. The present study not only touches the social and economic problems of the Scheduled Castes but also touches reasons of their socio-economic backwardness. A comparative study has also been taken of the different castes. In this way a clear cut picture of the level of Scheduled Castes in relation to the other caste groups has also been presented.
References


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