CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The scheduled castes are characterised by the lowest social or ritual status in the caste hierarchy as well as by their poor economic conditions. For centuries they have remained educationally, socially, politically, economically and culturally backward. They are the highly vulnerable, gullible, innocent and exploited section of the society. Before the dawn of freedom, the scheduled castes were shrouded in darkness of confusion and suppression and were victims of an inferiority complex deep-rooted in poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, exploitation and social oppression. As a result, they have remained extremely backward in all aspects as compared to the upper castes in the society.

However, with the arrival of the British rule, the scheduled castes and tribes had received some attention and some slight improvement in their social position. Though the Christian missionaries found their social inequality and economic misery as the fertile ground for conversion it was however the British Government's programmes of education and social reforms that paved the way for the mitigation of their social misery. Their educational system created a new generation of intellectuals and reformers with liberalistic ideas who introduced radical reforms in Hindu society.
In pre-independence, during nineteenth century, several outstanding leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Parama Hamsa, Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Ghose, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Sam Sunder and a score of freedom fighters had fought against the evils of caste system in Hinduism and advocated for social, economic and political equality of all in the society. Of all these leaders, the most outstanding illustrious personality was Mahatma Gandhi, who had coined 'Harijan' for the down-trodden and outcaste people, and throughout his life until his heath associated with the movement for their socio-economic improvement. Organizations like Ramakrishna mission, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Hindu Sabha had preached the unity of humanity, oneness of humanity and oneness of God. They had spread the real message of Hinduism to the length and breadth of the country. Several measures had been adopted from time to time to improve the conditions of these strata of society but they touched only the fringe of the problem. It was only after the emergence of India as a sovereign Independent Republic that visible progress had been registered in this field.

With arrival of freedom, the constitution of India, granted recognition to the need for safeguard laws and administrative measures to ameliorate the poor and down-trodden sections of the society who suffered most from illiteracy, poverty, exploitation, backwardness, social
oppression and above all, untouchability for centuries.

The doctrines of equality have been enshrined in the constitution of Free India which aims at securing for all citizens of India "Justice, social, economic, political, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faiths and worship and equality of status and of opportunity". Article 15 of the constitution prohibits distinction against any citizen on grounds of only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. It further provides that no citizen shall, on the grounds, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainments and the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of the state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public (Article 15, (1), (2), (3) and (4)).

Article 16(1) and (2) of the constitution further states "there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizen in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. No citizen shall be ineligible or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state".

This provision is supplemented by Articles 19(g) and (29)(2). The former guarantees that "all citizens shall have the right to practise any profession or to carry
on any occupation, trade or business''. The later ensures that "no citizens shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds on grounds of religion, race, caste, language or any of them".

Article 17 of the constitution states that "untouchability is abolished and its practice in any part is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law".

Article 38 directs the state to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people. According to it, "the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life". It further states that "the state shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities not only amongst individuals but also amongst group of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocation".

The state have also been directed to ensure Article 17. This is evident in Article 46 which says that, "the state shall promote with special care the educational and
economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation''.

In addition to these provisions the constitution has also secured the economic and political interests of Harijans. Thus, Article 330(1) and Article 332(1) provide that "'seats should be reserved for them in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the states'". Under Article 335, the claims of the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointment to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the union or of a state".

Article 338, provides a special officer for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes who is appointed by the president. The Article says, "'It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under this constitution and report to the president upon the working of those safeguards at such intervals as the president may direct and the president shall see all such reports to be laid before each House of the Parliament'". Recently, the Parliament has amended the constitution to give constitutional status to the commission.
The 68th Amendment (Passed in June 1990) gives statutory status to the commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. According to the Amendment the commission will have wide powers to go into the cases of injustice and atrocities on the backward classes. The Government has also provided the commissioner the status of a Cabinet Minister.

Thus the aforementioned provisions and safeguards amply testify the inherent right of Hijans for socio-economic and political equality has been fully recognized, guaranteed and protected under the constitution of India. However, to make these constitutional safeguards and pensions more effective and a reality, both the Central and the State Governments are making strenuous efforts to improve their poor socio-economic conditions in all possible ways by creating so many social welfare measures and beneficial schemes and developmental programmes.

It is against this background, the present study, therefore constitutes an attempt to assess the general socio-economic conditions of Holeyas, a sub-caste group among scheduled castes. The study is mainly confined to Holeyas in Bidar District in the Karnataka State. It deals with the socio-economic, political and religious aspects of the Holeyas. Though the study is in a way ethnographic in nature, it nevertheless assesses whether the Holeyas in Bidar District areas have made any real progress in view of the existing constitutional provisions and safeguards.
The study was conducted in five villages in five taluks, namely, Sicunderpur, Balat(B), Madakatti, Bellura and Hunsgera in Bidar district. The data was collected by using the simple equal random sampling method. A sample of 250 respondents, consisting of 243 males and 7 females, was selected. The sample was equally distributed to all the six taluks. Thus from each village 50 respondents were selected at random. All the respondents are the heads of their respective households.

For the necessary data for the study, the researcher has employed the tools such as Interview Schedule and the Participant Observation. In addition, the Researcher has also consulted the secondary sources such as Government records and Census Reports for primary information. During the investigation, the Researcher has personally taken part in several of their festivals, ceremonies and other important social functions and meticulously recorded the information. The 250 respondents have however furnished the authentic information regarding the various aspects of their way of life.

By taking advantages of constitutional provisions and safeguards, it may be noted that scheduled castes on the whole in the country have been improving their socio-economic status along with dimensions of education, occupation and income. Since our study is confined to Holeyas, a sub-caste group within the scheduled castes, it
is of importance to observe how far and to what extent the changes have affected.

As regards their social organization, the Holeyas by and large remain to be endogamos. Marriages are allowed within same-caste groups. Exogamos marriages are strictly prohibited and punished by the caste council. For instance, the fact may be seen that a boy belonging to Metreya, Singya, Shotayle, cannot marry a girl in Murli, Jani, among Holeyas. He is allowed to choose and marry a girl of his own group. However, the inter-caste marriages idea is slowly creeping into their society. It may also be noted that the marriages between the two different sub-divisions are also taking place. These two important changes may be noticed.

Regarding the structure of their family, it may be seen that a real change has taken place. Nuclear family has come into existence. This due to the fact of Government's policies with regard to family planning, and added to this, the economic severities have necessitated them to adopt two or three-child norm. In spite of these changes in the structure of family, the joint family is also found among Holeyas. From this it may be drawn that both traditional and modern families coexist. The relationship between sub-divisions of Holeyas is based upon superiority and inferiority complexities. Though they inhabit in the same place, "Holageri" and draw water from the same well, they can mix,
interact and inter-dine within but at the time of marriage feel superior and inferior technical terms (Akara Masi) and (Bara Masi).

It is also found that the Holeyas continue to live separately from the main village. They are still treated as untouchables. The age old stigma is still in vogue. Although the untouchability was abolished by the Government Act of 1955, they are not allowed to live amidst other castes in the heart of the village. Their relationship with the caste Hindus remain to the same. In all public functions, festivals and ceremonies they are treated as second class citizens. They are kept at a distance.

Some changes are however noticed in their economic pattern of village. The hitherto practice traditional impure occupations such as removing animal, grave-digging and carrying dead message are being replaced by tractional pure occupations like agriculture. The study reveals that the majority of respondents have given up the traditional impure occupations and taken to agriculture. This, indeed, is a remarkable change in respect of their economic occupations. It is also discovered that most of the Holeyas are willing to take up employment outside. But want of adequate educational and opportunities they are not able to move upwards in their mobility.
One of the important findings of the study is that the majority of Holeyas are hut dwellers. Their housing conditions remain to be extremely poor and wretched. Only a few of the families have pukka houses. Majority of the houses are non-electrified. The truth is that they do not lead a luxurious life like that of the caste hindus. They are on the other hand content with that they have. Their utensils consists of pots and aluminium vessels. In most of the houses small planks of wood prepared by country wood are used as seats. It is also distressing to note that there are no significant change in the food habits. They eat Tangal Roti (leftover food of Jawar) (dry chilly, green chilly) along with beef. A few of them are addicted to drinks like arrack and toddy. Above all they dress shubbily. They wear cotton and are never gandelily dressed.

Furthermore, majority of them are landless labourers. They work in the fields and earn money. According to them they are not really benefitted by Land Reforms. Even the land obtained from the Government under the scheme of patta distribution for landless is without infrastructure facilities. So it is hard for them to till the uncultivable land by spending money from their own packets.

Their income sources are very low. Many families depends on agricultural labour. More than 70 per cent of the respondents whose income does not exceed an average
between Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 4,000 per year. It is found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents are indebted. They live in debts and poverty. They lead a miserable life with no perceptible change in their economic status. Their mobility is invariably stagnated due to their own abjects poor conditions.

The most saddening fact is that the level of literacy of Holeyas is at the lowest. A greater proportion of them are illiterates. Only a few have been educated upto high school and college level. For economic reasons, there are many drop-outs at the elementary level. Their traditional attitude with regard to sending their daughters for higher education outside is not changed. They are not more inclined to send their daughters to schools since they are expected to stay at home and look after babies and other household responsibilities. Similarly to supplement their family income their sons are sent to the fields for work. As there is low level of literacy and education there is no vertical mobility among Holeyas in respect of their economic and social status. Inspite of the fact of their low levels of literacy, the interesting feature is that they are more inclined and enthusiastic to receive higher education and capture higher jobs in society. Thus the spirit of having higher education is not dampened by their poor economic conditions their low status in education is interlinked with their, poor wretched and sordid economic conditions. It is
because of their extremely poor economic conditions, their literacy level is also alarmingly low. It is sad to note that none of the adults in the study areas have been benefited by adult educational programmes. They expressed regret and dissatisfaction and made a sad commentary upon the Government's ineffective handling of the programme. According to them, they are very eager to receive minimum education under the adult Educational Programmes.

At the political level, the Holeyas are found to be less conscious, means and degraded. In their respective villages, caste councils are playing a pivotal role in regulating the social behaviour of the Holeyas. Whatever is decided by the council in any matter pertaining to individual or group disputes or problems is final and binding upon the Holeyas. Prior to independence, the Holeyas used to approach the caste Hindus for resolving their disputes. Knowing the great injustice was meted out to them in disposing the judgements, the Holeyas formed their own caste councils for solving their own problems, conflicts and differences.

In view of the constitutional provisions and safeguards, the Holeyas have formed several associations, registered and unregistered and they are actively associating with the political activities of their regions.
Honouring the constitution of India, the Holeyas age given their due representation in the village panchayat. In spite of their representations, their members are not properly treated at panchayat meetings though they can voice their views in discussion, they are not seriously taken into account. The members are compelled to go by the majority of the caste Hindus and their views and discussions will be invariably prevail upon all. Further, it is discovered that the untouchability is practised in one form or the other in the village panchayat.

To speak of their political consciousness and their active involvement in political activities, the less said the better. Owing to their poor economic conditions, most of the Holeyas are not serious about politics, although at the time of elections, they take part with less enthusiasm and gaiety. They are more worried about their poor economic status than the day-to-day politics. As to them, politics has not solved their grievances. As revealed in the study, they have less faith and confidence in politicians of any political party since none of them have really solved the problems with political will, determination, dedication and hard work.

Regarding their religious practices and beliefs, the Holeyas worship all Hindu deities, especially Vithal, Rukhan of (Pandarpur), Ambabai of Tuljapur, Shrishayala,
Virbhadra, since its nearer to their places. They celebrate all important hindu festivals such as Deepavali, Dasara, Ugadi, Sankrantri, grandeur but with more religious fervour, enthusiasm, zeal and happiness. On all important festival days, they observe all traditional rituals and religious piety.

Apart from their participation in important hindu festivals they also observed and celebrate, Dr. Ambedkar's birthday and Death day with pain and pleasure.

They intensively worship village Goddess and God like Satikavve, Margamma, Laximi, Kholamma, Mosobha, in order to ward of the evil spirits from their villages and keep them free, clean and hygienic from epidemics. What is most important to be observed in them is that they strictly follow and adhere to rituals that accompany all festivals and ceremonies such as observing fast on the Jatara days, Jagarna (waking throughout night) on Siva Rathri (Lord Siva) festival day and so on. In a way, they are being slowly sanskritized. As to the caste hindus they are in no way inferior and degrading.

It is interesting to notice that the dress and ornaments of Holeya women have undergone a significant change. They have given up the glass bangles and now they are more attracted to wear plastic bangles. They are also more inclined to wear costly dress, varieties of artificial
silver and gold ornaments. So the women and men now wear colourful dresses.

The traditional practice of paying the bride price (Teru) at the time of marriage is now replaced by the dowry (Honda). This is due to the influence of neighbour cast hindus. The marriages are simplified and made less expensive. Previously the marriage used to take place for five days, in the bridegrooms house. At present, the marriage is being celebrated both places at bride's home or bridegroom's house for only one day with the acompañiments of all Buddhist rituals. On the whole, their marriages are simple and less pompous.

Against all these negative and positive developments the evil practice of untouchability is still in vogue in one form or the other. The Holeyas are still treated as untouchables despite the existence of laws and constitutional provisions. The traditional social stigma still persists and hangs upon Holeyas. The manner in which the Holeyas are segregated from the main village, and their living in a separate 'Holegeri' or 'Harijan wada' far from the village itself speaks immense of untouchability. In some of the villages, a Holeya never touches caste hindus; is strictly prohibited. Likewise, the caste hindus do not take food nor touch water from Holeyas. They are kept away from tea stalls, they have to wash their own glasses and those glasses are kept in the caves.
In order to raise their status in the caste hierarchy the scheduled castes in general and the Holeyas in particular are making various efforts. They are trying to imitate the caste Hindus in respect of observance of rituals, traditions, customs and beliefs. They are being slowly sanskritised in the words of M.N. Srinivas. Further, they are doing their utmost to give their children education, so as to raise their social status. They feel that with education, they will move away from the low traditional caste based occupations and thereby attain a higher status. Thus, they value education as an important determinant of social status.

The Holeyas are forsaking all those traditional impure occupations which are considered mean, low and degrading. They do not want their children to take up such occupations. The Holeyas are also adopting the ways of life of the higher castes. The bride price is replaced by dowry. They have developed a tendency towards remarriage and divorce. They worship Hindu popular Gods as that of the higher castes. So in many ways they are becoming sanskritised.

It may be seen that the Holeyas are trying to improve their social status in the society. Nevertheless, they feel that they do not get the same social status in society as given to members of the higher castes. In other words, they feel that they are enable to commensurate social
status beca. of the low social status of their hereditary group. They express an arogent desire to be freed from the stigma of being untouchables and not to be connected any longer in any way the rejected past. They want new identities for themselves.

Education is the key to social mobility. It is found that only a small part of Holeyas have attained high school education. Only a very few have passed the school leaving Examination. An insignificant number of respondent have received college education. Only a very few of their children are going to a college to receive higher education. Majority of them are illiterates. This means that there is heavy dropout. The dropout seems to be more at the primary stage itself. Despite the special financial concessions and free education facilities are given to them, the dropout continues to be higher among Holeyas. It is therefore imperative that an alternative mechanism have to be instituted in order to stop this heavy dropout and provide minimum education to Holeyas.

The obvious reason for this heavy dropout is attributed to their inadequate or chronically inadequate economic conditions. In order to substantiate their income position, the parents are not allowing their children to further their studies. These children are instead sent to fields for earning additional income. This has to be firmly
checked. It is found that the parents are poorly paid in the fields despite they work for longer hours in the day. The landlords who employ Holeyas in the fields are insufficient and unsympathetic towards their genuine economic problems. There is no proper wage policy governing these landlords who employ the poor Holeyas in their fields in respect of paying good and reasonable wages. Hence the need is to see that these poorer sections are properly paid for their work. The Researcher feels that some stringent law is to be enforced on the landlords so as to see that they pay good wages to the labourers. Whoever violates this law has to be strictly punished under the law. And the officials at the district and block levels must periodically visit them and enquire their wages. Such visits will enable the officials to know and understand the problems and grievances of the labourers. And they should be honest in dealing with the situations. Landlords who do not properly pay the wages according to the terms of law should be booked at once and until they meet the requirements of the law, their right to employ labourers in the fields should be forfeited.

Besides, the State Government should draw more and more rural development schemes and projects and implement them in true spirit. It is not merely enough to draw and implement these schemes and projects. As the guardian and protector of people, it should see that the rural poor are
reasonably paid in accordance with the prevailing inflationary conditions. This will undoubtedly check the dropout and encourage the parents to send their children to schools and colleges.

The study also reveals the fact the majority of Holycasts are unaware of the various Governmental policies and constitutional provisions and safeguards. Even after forty seven years of independence, we find that only a part of this community is benefited by the concessions and privileges. It is only the educate people of this community who are aware of the facilities and constitutional safeguards. The less educated are still oblivious and ignorant of this. They hear of various grants provided for them by the Government and various loan facilities offered to them, but when wish to avail themselves of these opportunities they are completely bogged down.

Despite the creation of constitutional provisions and safeguards to protect the interests of scheduled castes, tribes and other weaker sections despite the spurious efforts being made by the Central and the State Governments to improve their economic conditions and to provide them with land, housing facilities, debt redemption, subsidies and interest free loans and other liberal educational facilities and concessions and reservations in jobs, their general socio-economic status continues to be low, wretched and degrading. Thus their economic conditions need to be improved a lot.
Also the officials at the block and village levels must feel the responsibility of educating the Holeyas in respect of various constitutional provisions and safeguards and other concessions being given by the state in promoting liberal and free education. This will enable the parents to be aware of every step being taken by the government in safe-guarding their interests. Further, it will make the parents present their problems if any they are failing to the officials who may in turn provide all facilities and help for their improvement. All the more, a cautious approach coming led with sympathetic understanding and appreciation and a will to serve on the part of officials will alone do some justice to these teeming suffering people.

Coming to the economic aspect, majority of Holeyas are landless and poor. In order to improve the economic status of scheduled castes, tribes and other weaker sections, the Government of India has introduced Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Backward Area Development Programme (BADP) and Jawahar Rojgar Yojana. Huge amounts are being spent on these programmes. And the states are co-operating and coordinating the activities in their respective regions. But what is distressing to note is that the programmes are not really percolating down to the village level. There is lack of will, coordination, cooperation, dedication and determination to do hard work on the part of officials at
the block levels. Many of them are unsympathetic and insensitive to the grievances of the poor. There are no frequent evaluations of the programmes at the lower level.

The Karnataka State Government has introduced several programmes for the amelioration of socio-economically poor sections such as Bhagya Joti Scheme, (P.L.D) Bank for the rural masses. Similarly the Bank of India, Reserve Bank of India with the cooperation of Commercial Banks is extending all assistance such as providing loans at subsidy rates, machinery and land for those poor who wish to start their own small scale and cottage industries at the village level.

It is found that the Holeyas want to be independent and self-reliant respect of their economic earnings. They want to start their own business. But they are unable to launch their own business and projects. They lack entrepreneurship talent and the technical know-how. It is not enough to provide money to those people. Alongwith the financial help the Government should extend all special assistance in training them so that they may set up their own shops and petty business.

The researcher strongly feels that while extending concessional facilities, the Government must really identify the poor if necessary visit them, acquaint with their socio-economic background and extend all liberal facilities to
them. The Researcher is also of the opinion that instead of giving loans, the state may give assistance in the form of material as to avoid the misuse of money for personal use.

Similarly, while distributing the pattas, the Government must create infrastructure facilities such as providing machinery to dig wells, modern agricultural implements, high yield seeds and so on. As regards their housing facilities, their houses are fragile and improperly built. In certain cases the houses are half finished and abandoned for want of necessary funds.

The role of voluntary organizations in the social uplift of the weaker sections is recognized as very important. There are many such recognized and unrecognized organizations operating within the region. The two important such organization in Dalit Panther and Dalit Sangrash Samiti which are rendering a great deal of service to the poorer sections in the rural areas. These organisations may identify the villages where the problems of scheduled castes are peculiar and different and step up their help in order to supplement Government's effort. The scheduled castes themselves have their own associations but they have not been able to play a key role in redressing their grievances. It is necessary that these voluntary organizations must be strengthened financially so as to serve their own communities in a better way.
Another suggestion is the establishment of Scheduled Caste Development Corporation which may function as an autonomous body, and can do a lot to the improvement and promoting Harijan interests. Such a corporation exists in Kerala State where it is doing commendable job. This may be started at the district level with its branches at the block levels with a purpose to serve Harijan interests. It may engage in several economic assistance programmes and can do a lot in strengthening voluntary effort in various fields.

It is also necessary that the state Government should make a thorough review of their policies and programmes towards the scheduled castes and tribes. Though forty years have gone, no systematic and sincere effort has been made to ameliorate the conditions of these sections. Many of the sub-castes listed in the scheduled order are still living in adjunct poverty, unaware of the constitutional provisions and safeguards and other welfare schemes and projects launched in favour of them. Their ignorance and illiteracy is continuously exploited by the politicians and the vested interests for their own benefits. It is therefore high time for the Government to make a comprehensive and systematic review of all their policies, programmes and implementation. It should first assess where actually the defects lie. By making a thorough review, the Government
can understand its own defects and obstacles and thus strive for eliminating them so that a real concerted effort can be made to uplift the sections.

Social change cannot be merely brought by passing and enacting laws and legislative measures. More than the law and constitutional provisions and safeguards, a strong unstinted political will, a sense of commitment and dedicating, wisdom, determination to work hard, foresight are imperative both on the part of politicians and bureaucrats especially officials at the lower rung, without which, a real socio-economic change among the poor is impossible to be brought. For the effective, speedy implementation of the Rural Development Programmes, the administrative machinery should be geared up, overhauled, restructured and revamped so that the interference of middlemen, the unnecessary and cumbersome rules and procedures redtapism, corruption, inefficiency, lack of interest and incompetency can be minimised if not totally eliminated which are the real stumbling blocks in the way of progress and prosperity.