CHAPTER : X

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF SCHEDULED
CASTE LEADERS.

Introduction:

In recent years community development has been one of the most dominant forces of rural social change in developing countries, revitalizing existing rural community organizations, building up new ones and considerably modifying the old ones. In 1956 the United Nations defined community development as the "process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress."

Community development is nation-building from the grass-roots. The accent is on the word community rather than on development, that is, development of communities rather than for, or even by communities. Community development is a technique to make more effective use of
local initiative and energy for increased production and better living standards. It is a process of social action in which the people of community organize themselves for planning and action, define their common and individual needs and problems; make group and individual plans with a maximum of reliance upon community-resources; and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from governmental and non-governmental agencies outside the community.

One of the principal tenets of community development is the faith in the capacity of rural people, and unfortunately one of the most difficult tasks in developing countries has been to get government officials to accept that fact that rural people have almost limitless capacity to fashion a better life for themselves if properly aided by state action and guided by technical assistance. The new functionaries, such as community development officers, extension educators, community organizers and agricultural agents, who work with the people rather than for the people, have opened up new avenues of social growth and development. They inspire people to achievement; as peddlers of ideas it is
nature of their work that they should operate through others. They identify, develop and depend upon local leadership, and seek to involve the entire rural community in different phases of programme-building from diagnosis to the treatment of rural problems; in short, local programme is entirely the responsibility of the village community.

A study of the characteristics of Panchayat leadership is important for three reasons. Firstly, the performance of the Panchayat as a human group depends much upon the experience, outlook and attitude of the members upon which it must draw while it makes the decisions. Secondly, leadership development is a very important responsibility of the community development agency. The achievement in this respect can be verified by the reference to the changing characteristics of Panchayat leadership. Thirdly, the functioning of the Panchayat as a democratic organization of the community depends upon the nature of relationship between the voters and office-bearers of Panchayats. The characteristics do indicate the dynamics of power in a community. Change of power may be a cause, as well as consequence, of
social changes taking place within the community. The introduction of the Statutory Panchayat and the changing social and economic pattern brought a change in the autocratic attitude of the traditional leadership and the structure of the village panchayat.

Leadership is a function of community social structure in terms of its controlling and influencing the social, economic and political process in the society. This crucial position of the leadership makes it imperative to explain meaningfully the behaviour of the leaders and its important determinants.

An analysis of rural leadership is basically concerned with an inquiry into the cultural orientation and structural determinants of power processes in society. Analysis of leadership thus, has two main purposes to fulfil. At the first stage the leadership has to be described in terms of its socio-economic composition and secondly it has to be viewed in terms of the social and political values of leaders in relation to the local value system.

It has rightly been said that personal life is always influenced by the actual, imagined or implied
presence of others, the behaviour of the leaders can fully be explained by making a thorough investigation of the environment in which they were born and in which they grew today. The probing of early socio-economic environment is essential for the proper understanding of the behaviour, values, attitudes, actions and perceptions of the Panchayati Raj leaders. The socio-economic status of leaders can be used to ascertain their positions in the hierarchy of the social system. Again, the changing socio-economic status of leaders may be adopted as an index to the changing power-structure within the social system.

Here we have taken personal characteristics of sampled leaders analysed in the study are their, caste, sex, age, religion, education, occupation, income, house ownership, land-holding, vehicle, field of work, proficiency in language and mass media. Let us start probing them one by one.

1. Caste:

India is a land of many castes. Castes and sub-caste groups have their own place in Indian politics. It has been regarded as the main determinant of political behaviour in India. Caste as a factor determining
leadership is more significant. The caste system has hierarchical character. Between the highest and the lowest castes there are several intermediate levels. The mere fact of birth in a particular caste gives a good initial start to some and puts obstacles in the way of others.

Caste is a significant variable in the Indian political system. Power structure and activity in rural India were closely associated with caste. The local political system operates within the general social system prevailing in rural India. The caste structure is a significant factor in this system. Even though it is in the process of change and its foundations is being gradually eroded, the caste system is still in fact the existing social system in rural India, and underlies the economic, social and political relationships among the groups.

Although the caste system functions throughout all rural India and national generalizations with respect to its functioning are possible, its detailed characteristics, specially in terms of ranking of
castes, between the Brahmins on top and unclean castes at the bottom, vary from area to area. The relationships between the high castes and the low caste were virtually that of the master and the ryot. The castes are generally ranked in a hierarchical order of ritual purity with the Brahmins universally ranked on the top and the unclean castes at the bottom traditionally associated with specific occupation of the caste.

After independence an attempt was made to de-emphasize and eliminate caste. The column of "Caste" was removed from the census form but this has not served any purpose.

It was true that to a certain extent industrialization and urbanization weakened the hold of caste. But industrialization has not spread widely or deeply enough to modify the system profoundly. It is true that people lost the caste complex to a certain extent when they were in an industrial area, but the moment they went back, they accepted all its old rigors.

In this connection the Bongirwar Committee observed that caste groups no doubt seem to be playing an important part, but with the change of generations and
the interchange of occupations it would appear that the community which was hitherto polarized towards caste was now beginning to drift away from it, thanks to the infiltration of political parties to the village level where gradually groupism was swinging round ostensibly to political loyalties and programmes rather than old caste groups.

Maratha, the majority caste group formed 40% of the population in Maharashtra. This caste was over-represented in the Panchayati Raj institutions. The absolute majority of the Marathas helped them in capturing important executive posts in the Zilla Parishad. President, Vice-President and the Chairman of the two Subject Committees belonged to this caste. Five out of seven Panchayat Samitis were controlled by Maratha caste.

The overall high representation of the Maratha caste group may be attributed to several reasons. The social composition of the Congress Party and its leadership in Maharashtra underwent a cataclysmic change after 1930. From a predominantly Brahmin leadership with an urban following, it changed to Maratha leader-
ship with a rural following. The Maratha caste group represented the landlord peasantry of the state. They had a tradition of leadership in War and Government. The cumulative effect of all these factors helped Maratha caste to influence the politics of Maharashtra under the unchallenged leadership of Y.B. Chavan.

The dominance of the Maratha caste was visualised by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Scheduled Castes. He had said that in a monolithic Maharashtra, Maratha with their absolute majority would dominate. He added that history had shown that the minorities, especially, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes would not get justice at the hands of the Marathas.

Caste plays an important role in traditional Panchayats, as traditionally dominant castes play the supreme role in the functioning of traditional Panchayats. As a result of this the leadership in traditional Panchayats is, generally, centred in the hands of the elite castes. But due to introduction of statutory Panchayats and provision for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes the complexion of Panchayats has changed in recent years. Provision
for free and direct election to Panchayats also provides an opportunity to the Backward Castes to emerge as Panchayat leaders. Hence it is generally supposed that the Panchayat leaders come from various castes. In statutory Panchayat, particularly the Panchayats, under study, caste plays an important role in shaping the Panchayat (S.C.) leadership, because the Scheduled Caste leadership is dominated by the one particular caste, i.e. Mahar other than Scheduled Caste community. The following table shows the importance of caste in case of the villages formal leadership in Scheduled Caste community.

The sub-castewise distribution of our respondents is given in the following table.

**Table No. 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Sub-caste group</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mahar.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mang.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chambhar.</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>04.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dhor.</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Others.</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>06.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total.</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Personal Interview.*
Mahar respondent constitute numerical majority among all Scheduled Caste leaders. They are followed by Mang, Chambhar, Dhor and others. It is clear from the above Table No. 1 that majority of the respondents 61 (45.52%) are belonged to Mahar caste, 55 (41.04%) Mang, 06 (04.48%) Chambhar, 03 (02.24%) Dhor and 09 (06.72%) are other sub-caste i.e. N.T., D.N.T.

2. Sex:

It is general feeling that women all over the world participate less in politics than men do. Even in this democratic age of today, in some countries women still are devoted of their political rights, but even if in the countries in which they are granted these rights, comparatively they make less use of such rights than men do.22

But, in modern world, the realisation that women can play a more significant role than generally permitted by society has been a new awakening over the past decades of modern history.23 In India, the effort
to restore to woman her rights as a person may be traced across the social and political events that affected the destiny of the country from the 18th century onwards.

Under Mahatma Gandhi's magnetic leadership, thousands of women from all walks of life, literate as well as illiterate, throughout the length and breadth of this vast country, gathered together in the movement for independence. Spurred by the common urge of freedom women dared to leave the protected walls of their homes to appear openly in public; once regarded as minors, "under the perpetual tutelage" of males, they marched side by side with men voicing their rights on public roads and courting imprisonment.24

The post-Independence period:

The years soon after independence gave women a constitutional status which moved her to a position of equality with men in the social, economic and political life of the nation. It is of interest to see how the constitutional status has affected the lives of the majority of Indian women across the diversity of regional backgrounds.
The Preamble to the Constitution assures to men and women the fundamental rights of liberty, equality and fraternity. Woman is guaranteed "equality before law" (Art.14) and equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Art.16(1) and (2)). The Constitution also protects woman from discrimination in these matters, on grounds of "religion, race, caste, sex, decent, place of birth, residence or any one of them." A special clause (Art. 15(3)) empowers the state to make any special provision for women and children in spite of the existing fundamental obligation of non-discrimination among citizens. This has enabled the state to make laws giving special protection to women in the field of labour, specially those engaged in factories, mines, plantations, shops and commercial establishments.

The Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution bind states to a policy directed towards the promotion of a just social order with specific recommendations of a socio-economic nature. The principles uphold the equal right to men and women to an adequate means of livelihood; the right of equal pay
for equal work for both men and women; the need to protect the health and strength of workers - men, women, children; the need to protect citizens from having to enter avocations unsuited to their age and strength merely because of economic necessity (Art.39). Article 42 also directs states to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

The Constitution has given to women a dignity that derives from her status as person. One may say that religious and cultural prejudice with regard to women has given way to official equality of opportunity to every woman in the country. The Constitution and the ensuing legislation are symbolic of the progress that is desired in the status of women. They have definitely opened the way for the Indian woman to emerge as a responsible person able to participate fully in all aspects of national life. However, the realisation of this goal depends on a network of socio-political factors which influence social attitudes and the motivation for change. It is the interplay of these factors in various situations that makes for the unequal development of women despite a common constitutional norm.
The women who had emerged as leaders during the independence struggle, continued to play an active part in the political life of the country. Several of them became members of the constituent Assembly; an impressive number were entrusted with ministerial responsibility at Central and State levels; some hold office as governors, some hold office as a Chief Minister of State, some became members of Parliament and State Assembly. On international bodies women were delegated as official representatives of the country.

The position of women in this set-up is that they are to have representation on each of three bodies at the district, taluka and village levels. In the case of the Zilla Parishad, two women are to be "co-opted if the directly elected members do not include a woman or women." At the Panchayat Samiti level the cause is, "co-option of one woman residing in the block if such representation is not already included."

Reserved seat for women is of a different political category. Women is a classificatory term rather than an interest group and hence the representation to articulate women's interests is not purposeful. Due to
caste, occupation and class differentiations, women are not even a homogeneous category. This legal privileges for females, operates within limits set by the male-oriented and male-dominated social structure.\textsuperscript{30}

In India equal political rights are provided as our fundamental fights to men and women. But our data of above said indicate the domination of male leadership (122) in rural India. Even then the small number (12) of female leaders may be considered an important index of some change that might be taking place in rural India with regard to the status of women in socio-politico spheres.\textsuperscript{31} It was also proves that even today women in India, particularly in villages, still occupy traditional roles and in only a few castes have they taken on the role of leadership. But the small number of female leaders may be considered an important index of some change that might be taking place in rural India with regard to the status of women in the socio-politico spheres.\textsuperscript{32}
The information gathered through the questionnaire and personal interviews reveals that out of 134 respondents 122 (91.04%) were men, while only 12 (08.96%) were women. This microscopic political recruitment of women in village Panchayat is nothing but the reflection of low status given to them in the society. Again, this is very low recruitment, in comparison to 30 percent reservation for women proposed in the national legislation.
George Mathew conducted a study in which he interviewed 363 members, out of which 125 were women and remaining were men. The percentage came to 30. Recently 30% seats are reserved in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Elections to Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad in Maharashtra which took place in 1992 provided 30% seats for women. But there is no reservation for backward class women. There must be reservation for backward class women then only they can do better services of the people and a new women leadership can be developed. The women can go to school and get educated to become a successful leader.

3. Religion:

Religion has been the other factor in village leadership. Hindus were in a majority in all these sample villages. Normally all Scheduled Castes are Hindus and as such the question of religion should not arise in case of Scheduled Caste. But since Mahars of Maharashtra got themselves converted to Buddhism, the question of religion became important vis-a-vis leadership in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Maharashtra. The table No.3 regarding this would be illustrative.
Table No. 3.

Religion and break-up of the Panchyat members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Interview.

Table-3 reveals that Hindu are in majority in rural areas. There were 92 leaders, who belonged to Hindu religion. All the caste leaders like Mahar, Mang Dhor and Chambhar worshipped and followed Hindu religion. 42 leaders, who were Mahar converted themselves to Buddhist religion. There was no Muslim and Christian religion leader in the study. This fact was also founded by George Mathew in his study. In his study, majority members are belongs to Hindu religion.
4. Age:

The age is another important factor which influences leadership formation. The analysis of leadership in relation to its age composition simply explains the mobility of younger generation into leadership positions.34

The significance of age and social characteristics is almost universal to all human societies and social positions. In modern societies, age sets limits to the entry to various occupations, groups and organisations and therefore it plays decisive role in one's career and life time.35

Age plays a dominant role in the formation of the career of a politician.36 Those who enter politics at an early age have several advantages over those who enter it late in life.38 To begin with they gain more expertise out of it by sheer length of time, and since they take it up as a career much more than the late comers they are also more motivated to it.38

In many of the democratic countries, people enter politics at a very young age. However, Mills
found that the American politicians enter their political career when they are about 52 years old. In an ascription-oriented society, age has its own role in fixing a person's status in society. Those with advanced ages stand to gain in this process.

It was a widespread belief that aged people would dominate in acquiring leadership roles in a traditional society like ours. Seniority in age is still a cherished value. It symbolizes experience, maturity and equanimity of mind, and hence aged persons are trusted and respected more than the younger ones. It adds to one's prestige and reliability. Hence, gerontocratic leadership has been an accepted mode of Indian social life.

On the other hand, younger persons are considered irresponsible, immature, and easy-going. Because of the conflicting value system with the old, the younger persons in the village also do not want to assume the leadership positions. People very old in age are also not preferred as they are indolent and lethargic. A favourable choice for leadership crystallises towards the middle age group. It has
also been observed that the certain rural populations people from the younger age groups have assumed leadership positions but to what extent their roles are effective is yet to be evaluated.

The age factor has also been marked as an important variable in political socialisation and politicisation of the people. The effect of the social and political change in independent India differs in effect according to the age variations of the people.

The functions of the old Panchayats and Panchayats in new set up differ in their characteristics. The Panchayati Raj institutions armed with legal support are now shouldering the responsibility of development activity. To solve the new developmental problems leadership is increasingly becoming functional. In traditional panchayat, generally, the persons of higher age-group were enjoying the privilege of holding the leadership position but the condition is different now. The initiative and dominance in the rural community have been taken over by
the more active and younger sections of the population, replacing those belonging to the older age group. The leadership is also shifting from the hands of older age-group to younger age-group in both the upper and lower classes. In lower class the younger generation is more active in taking over the leadership from older generation. (see Table No.4). The tendency of shifting of the leadership from older generation to younger one reflects the power motivation and inclination of younger generation towards bringing rapid change in social set-up.

Table No. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Classification of Age Group</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>07.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>65 and above</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Interview.
According to Table No. 4, we can find that the minimum age of the leader was 18 years and the maximum was 5 years and above. The most popular age group of the leaders, in which a majority of the respondents were found was the age group of 26 to 35 years, 41.04% of leaders belonged to this group. 07 leaders (005.22%) belonged to the age group of 18-25 years, 39 (29.11%) belonged to the age group of 36-45 years, 22 (16.42%) belonged to age, 10 (07.46%) belonged group of 46-55 years and 56-65 years respectively. Leadership qualities are found in the youths of backward class. They want to serve their caste brothers in best possible manner. They have no employment and they are free to contest the Gram Panchayat elections.

5. Own house:

Own house is one of the basic necessities of man, the other primary necessities are food and clothes. Every society has a definite value of own house. House is that pillar of progress on which depends the inter-relationship of members of the families and the external world. According to Dharam Raj Singh, housing does not only provide shelter and security against natural hazards but
also serves the psychological, economic and status needs which are in a society. Housing conditions of the Scheduled Caste leaders are analysed in the following pages.

The Marathas, Lingayats, Reddys and other upper caste groups have the best houses in the best possible areas as one hand and the low castes have the worst houses in the worst place on the other hand. The Scheduled Castes are concerned not only with the type of houses and facilities available but also with the segregated practices enforced on them.

Segregated habitation of the Scheduled Castes is based on the religious sanctions, social restrictions and economic oppressions practised from time to time. According to Manu the Sudras had no right to own property. They had to wander from place to place without a fixed habitation. Later on, the untouchables said to be Antyavasayin were required to stay at the end of the village or outside the village itself.

Besides the religious sanctions, there were economic oppressions also favouring segregation. Most of
the Scheduled Castes were landless agricultural labours in the past. They had to put up some sort of a structure for shelter. The only alternative left to them, since they could not own sites elsewhere, was to construct their houses on lands nearer to the fields of their masters. There was very little assistance coming forth from their masters.\(^{50}\)

It was not only that the Scheduled Castes were made to live in ghettos outside the village but they also had virtually no civil enemities. They had to live in clustered huts in dirty surroundings which were unfit for animals even. In fact, the residential conditions of the Scheduled Castes have not contributed even a little towards their low status in society.

After independence, the Government realized the imperative need to tackle the housing conditions of the Scheduled Castes as a part of their programme for the improvement of the general conditions of the Scheduled Castes. Several measures have been undertaken so far to provide free sites, building materials, building advance and to establish colonies for them.\(^{51}\)
Segregated habitation is a traditional accepted feature of rural community in India. Mukerjee reported that nowhere had the distance and segregation between different social or ethnic groups influenced so powerfully the arrangement of rural communities than in India.\textsuperscript{52} Ghurye reported that segregation of individual castes, or groups of castes in a village \textsuperscript{54} is the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities, and it had prevailed in a more or less definite form all over India.\textsuperscript{53} Houses of the Scheduled Castes were segregated from those of the caste Hindus throughout the sample villages.\textsuperscript{54} Dube and Mathur have reported confirming this.

As one approaches the village, the houses of the Scheduled Castes are distinctly visible on the outskirts of the village. Mangs and Mahars live in two separate but distinct areas and there houses are out of village vase. It is interesting to note that though all the Scheduled Castes are homogeneous groups from the point of pollution and impure: but the houses of Chambhars are especially inside the vase and Dhors houses are also out of the vase. It was also found that some respondents were not having their own houses.
Table No. 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you own house?</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>92.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>07.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Interview.

Out of 134 respondents, 124 leaders were having their own houses. But it was seen that many of them did not possessed their houses from their ancestors, on the other hand they were given houses under the Government welfare scheme. Many respondents were not happy about their houses, because their houses were very small and were built in a kacha fashion. Only 10 leaders did not possessed the house, they lived in the field of their master.
Civil amenities: An observation:

Rural housing conditions are generally poor and full of problems of a varying nature and degree. Lack of civil amenities is one such problem constantly faced by the rural people in general. The position of the housing problems of the Scheduled Castes cannot, however, the better than that of the other relatively advanced people. The Scheduled Castes who are used to living in thatched huts in unhygienic environment cannot understand the importance and the need for certain civic amenities which are not only desirable but also essential for a comfortable and healthy life. However, in view of the several special schemes the Government has undertaken for the improvement of housing conditions of the Scheduled Castes, it is expected that the Scheduled Castes would have received some of the basic civic amenities required for a comfortable life. An attempt is made to examine the position in following pages.

Roads:

The condition of roads is generally not satisfactory. Barring the new settlement area, none of
the other areas have planned roads. There are generally mud roads which are neither broader nor straight. In the rainy season, they become very muddy and slippery.

**Drinking water:**

In most of the villages the Scheduled Castes have a chronic problem of fetching drinking water from the well. In some villages, they have to walk a long distance for this purpose as caste Hindus do not allow them to use the common public wells. Some villages have the Government water supply pumps, and in some villages separate hand pumps have been provided for the Scheduled Castes community.

**Lavatory:**

The problem of lavatory is more acute in the case of the Scheduled Castes. Women in particular have been facing this problem very much and they are highly critical of the Government and the Panchayat.
Bathing:

Since generally there is no provision for a separate bath-room inside the house, men invariably bath outside the house. Women also generally bath outside. There is no separate or private place outside the house. Just near the house a few flat stones are spread and these people sit on them and bath.

Married women and unmarried girls feel very bad to bath outside the house in the open space since they are exposed to the passers by. The difficulty of bathing becomes still worse in the rainy seasons since there is no protection outside the house.

Electricity:

Though all the villages under survey are electrified with provision for electricity for domestic purposes also. Though all the areas in the villages are provided with a reasonable number of street lights, the Scheduled Caste areas have received extremely inadequate attention. In no Scheduled Caste area the street lights are reasonably adequate. The question of electricity for domestic purpose hardly arises in any of these areas.
The civic facilities are necessary for scheduled caste people. They do not have good roads, electricity, supply of water etc. The Gram Panchayat has no proper funds. Gram Panchayat take the care of high Hindu caste leaders. Therefore it is suggested that Government should give directives to Panchayat to do the things necessary for Scheduled Caste people.

6. Education:

Experts viewed that literacy instructions are the best possible means for development of the nation, to break the vicious cycle of poverty and tradition and to accelerate the rate of progress on the road to modernization.

In the present study literacy is correlated with community leadership. Education and literacy may be considered to be indices of expertise.

As a matter of fact, the degree of political mobilization of the people is dependent on the effort which the political parties put in to educate the people. As such education plays a crucial role in the making of a political leader. The legal rational
orientation of democracy makes it absolutely important that those who guide democracy have the expertise to do so.

Education as a culture trait and as an asset in democratic political participation. Day-to-day work of the panchayat involves contact with various administrative officials and business deals with contractors, banks and co-operatives, thus involving knowledge of law, administrative procedure, accounts and drafting. Community development and Panchayati Raj set-up has increased the complexity of budgets, correspondence, resolutions, documents, supervision, visits of officers, raising of funds and donations, organising people's contributions in money and labour, representing at the taluka panchayat and land mortgage banks and such other matters of policy making and administration.

Education is a new value for the villagers. The two functions of education are: 1) transmission of culture to village people, and 2) development of social personality. The first function has a historical perspective whereas the second has a social-psychological
perspective. Both these functions are important for inculcating among the villagers a consciousness about their rights and obligations in order to perform their roles more effectively. We do find changes at the attitudinal level among the villagers as a consequence of general education. It is opined that change in attitudes of individuals is one of the prerequisites for bringing change in the social structures of the communities. It has been observed that there are not many marked changes in the social structure of Indian villages. But due to the impact of general education and many new development activities the attitudes of the people are affected and economically it has changed the outlook of leaders.

In recent years education has come to be considered another trait of rural leadership. The educated people are respected by the villagers not only because they help in disseminating new knowledge in the villages, but also because they can fight for the interests of village community with the officials and the town people. Oscar Lewis has found out on the basis of his study that the young and educated persons
are gradually making their presence felt in the rural life.

The leaders with formal or informal education have a definite advantage over a leader who has no education in establishing contacts with outside world. The intermediary role of leadership between the village and the outside world is a major source of political power or influence within the village.

The Scheduled Castes, most of whom had been subjected to various social disabilities of extreme forms were exploited and kept subservient mainly because they were illiterate. Their mass illiteracy was in turn due to religious and social sanctions imposed on them by the caste Hindus. Religious scriptures as seen through the laws of Brihaspati prohibited any attempt on the part of the Shudras to recite the Hindu religious slokas. It was ordained that the tongue of such a person should be cut off, if he ventured to do so. Manu's laws also prescribed such punishment.

Until recently the caste Hindus were not prepared to allow the Scheduled Caste children to sit
along with their children in the schools. The caste Hindus were totally opposed to education for the Scheduled Caste children. Even a few attempts by the Government were thwarted by the caste Hindus. And therefore, the progress of education among the Scheduled Castes was painfully slow.

However, the position seems to have undergone radical changes since 1950. It has been known that education is a dynamic agent of social change and social mobility. Lannoy's observation that the greater source of hope to the Harijans is modern education which acts as a solvent of caste barriers, is quite relevant here.

Education whether formal or informal, is particularly required for the Scheduled Caste for various reasons. Education provides for social mobility.

Education provides the Scheduled Castes to adopt innovations in agricultural technology, and also to have effective political participation. It promotes acquisition of new skills among the Scheduled Castes. It also reduces social distance observed in the relationship between the Scheduled Castes and the Caste Hindus.
The Government has radically changed its approach towards the betterment of the conditions of the Scheduled Castes since 1950. Introduction of universal suffrage, adult franchise, compulsory elementary education, and provision of social justice, equality and freedom, prevention of exploitation and so on are expected to benefit the Scheduled Castes more than any other group of citizens. In order to translate the constitutional provisions into action, several schemes were included in the various Five Year Plans, the most important of them being the educational policy towards the Scheduled Castes.

The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes observes that the spread of education among the weaker sections of society was an essential pre-requisite to their all round development and to assure them benefits of various safeguards provided under the Constitution. Similarly, the Education Commission has also suggested that the existing programmes should be continued and expanded in the interest of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
In short, educational qualification help in shaping a political career. The modern political activities pre-supposed a through knowledge of current political issues and events at local, state, national and international level. This could possible be done only by education. In addition to this education creates the capabilities and potentialities to convince and propagate the ideology and programme among the people.

It is believed that the educational background of the Scheduled Caste member was very poor. It was, therefore, decided to study the educational background of our Scheduled Caste members to village panchayats. Table No. 6 presents data on this aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Illiterate.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Upto 7th.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Upto 10th - 12th.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Graduates.</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>04.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Post-graduate.</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total.</td>
<td></td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Interview.
49 respondents were illiterate. They did not read and write. They were unable to perform the activity in a best possible manner. Next were 47 leaders who passed their 7th class. In this manner the majority of leaders in the sample were uneducated. 28 leaders completed their education up to 12th class. 6 leaders were graduates and 4 were post-graduates. It is the recent phenomena to have educated leaders in Panchayat Raj.

7. Landholding:

The role of land tenure and land ownership has been very important in determining social status in the traditional village system of India. The British administration in India gave rise to different systems of land tenure which brought about far-reaching changes in land relations. The permanent settlement created a class of absentee landlords and rentiers who became entitled to vast unearned incomes. They exorted high rents and evicted the failing tenants. The landlords or the zamindar was practically master of his village where law was usually equated with his will. Feudal
customs were virtually more effective than law. The village Patwari and Chowkidar acted usually under his advice and instructions, although they were directly responsible to Mukhia, appointed by the Government.

The economic status of a caste played a crucial role in leadership formation. In the traditional economic sphere, and in an agricultural society, land was the main source of economic power as it ensured economic dominance also. The extent that the dominant caste controlled the land in the village and that land remained the primary source of subsistence and income, the dominant caste could control and influence all sectors of activities wielding economic, social and political power in the society.

Land ownership was a crucial factor in establishing dominance. Generally, the pattern of landownership in rural India was such that the bulk of the arable land was concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of big owners as against a large number who either own very little land or no land at all. The power and prestige which landowning castes command affected their relations with all
Landownership conferred not only power but prestige, so much so that individuals who had made good in any walk of life tended to invest in land.  

Accordingly, the following section is devoted to the analysis of land holding by the Village Panchayat leaders of the Scheduled Castes. Table No. 7 shows land holding of the respondents.

Table No. 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Land in acres</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Landless</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>58.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Below 5 acres</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>5 to 10 acres</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>07.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>More than 10 acres</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Personal Interview.*
Out of 134 leaders 79 leaders had no land. 42 leaders were having below 5 acres of land. 10 Leaders were having land between to 5 to 10 acres and only 3 leaders were having more than 10 acres of land. The majority of leaders were working as labours on the field of rich farmers. Due to no land or less land leaders were not economically better and therefore they were always worried about economic conditions.

8. Economic status:

One of the most important factors which determined the social status of any individual related to the economic conditions. Depressed economic conditions led to illiteracy, social immobility, loss of personal freedom and eventually affected the development of the human personality that was particularly so in the case of the backward and weaker sections of the society like the Scheduled Castes who were virtually denied the right to own lands for cultivation, paid low wages as manual workers and were always in debts for beyond their capacity to repay.
It was the general impression of the public that leaders always came from rich classes of society. Economic status had been traditionally an important determinant of rural leadership in the past. The traditional hierarchy of economic status was an informal, but important, structure of power. The rich had always enjoyed greater authority over the rural masses. Even such persons who had no inherited claims to leadership attained higher status by virtue of their acquired wealth.

However, the position seems to have changed a little since independence. It has been urged and realised that improvement in the economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes is a pre-requisite for their emancipation from traditional bondage of the caste Hindus and also for their better status in the society.

The power pattern in the villages has been changing as a consequence of a number of factors since independence. Seeking election to the Panchayat Raj institutions is open to every adult villager. A poor man can compete with the rich or his erstwhile master
and sit with him in the panchayat. The Zamindari abolition has freed the farmer from economic dependence on Zamindars to a considerable extent and he can now turn to cooperatives for financial help. The poor are being encouraged to become active participants in public affairs by Panchayati Raj institutions. The government has undertaken several measures under the Five Year Plans to improve the economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes. The idea of socio-economic equality, being propagated by the political parties along with the movement for voluntary redistribution of land being pursued by the Sarvodaya movement, have emboldened the poor to put a continuous pressure on the party in power to pass legislation for ceiling of land. These factors have gone a long way to democratize the rural polity that has affected the unrevealed authority of the Zamindars and the rich.

The economic conditions are more significant in context of leadership, because, they determine its capacity to achieve as well as sustain power. The studies have brought forth that the leadership of poorer and weaker section is generally less effective (Mehta, 722,
Rangnath, 1971, Gangade, 1974, Mishra, 1977, Singh 1990). It has been observed that most of the leaders in the village community are those who are wealthy, big landowners and who belong to higher income groups. Thus some of the Scheduled Castes have also enhanced their social status due to higher education and better opportunities. They have moved into higher socio-economic strata and a few of them have represented the village leadership.

The influence of wealth on the electorate has been a generally accepted fact. Power and wealth usually go together. The resources of wealth were monopolised by a small class within the rural population and that class utilised such resources to attain and maintain themselves in power. One of the studies of this phenomenon showed that every leader and candidate frankly admitted that without adequate money they could not think of winning the elections.

Wherever there was a keen contest rival groups resorted to wooing the voters by offering money. Either it was given to the caste leaders or distributed directly. Drinks (toddy and wine) flowed liberally in most
villages. The voters enjoyed themselves for about a week in the keenly contested areas because both the rival groups tried to please them. As one of the leaders put it, it was a festival of votes and lasted longer than other festivals.

In short it could be said that economic condition of the leaders was not good. They said that they do not have sufficient money to contest election also. Therefore it is difficult to develop the leadership in SC & ST.

9. Annual Income:

Annual income is another important factor used to determine the status of the leader. In Indian villages it is generally seen that well-to-do persons of high income groups are respected in society. Income enables a person to get education and thereby equip him for a better position in politics. It also helps him to use the expensive, but powerful modern mass media for his advantage. The varied uses of wealth, both inherited and acquired, in strengthening the elitist position is clearly brought out by C.W. Mills in his power Elite.
In Indian villages it is generally seen that well-to-do persons of high income groups are respected in society. They occupy the traditional leadership position in the village by virtue of their wealth. Hence money factor has an important bearing on leadership issue. H.P. Dhillon also says that the leader is the influential person of the village who is respected, followed and obeyed by villagers due to wealth, family, caste, or other reasons.

Income is one of the major factors in the economic conditions of the people and this is especially so among the Scheduled Castes. Being the most backward class in the country and having been denied the right to own property, they entirely depended upon the income from their employment. Since employment opportunities in the past were strictly governed by caste status, it was not possible for the Scheduled Castes to increase their income in the absence of a major change.
Table No. 8.

**Annual Income of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1200.</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200-1800.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-2500.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500-5000.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 and above.</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>06.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total.</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Personal Interview.*

Table shows that maximum i.e. 46 leaders were having their income between 1800-2500. The second number in the income group was of 39 leaders, whose income was between 2500-5000, the third group of 28 leaders belonged to the income group of 1200-1800. The leaders do the highest income group i.e. 5000 were above only 7. The other income groups were negligible. Many leaders were labourers therefore their income was very low.
10. **Occupation:**

Occupation is yet another important factor affecting rural leadership. Occupation is not only necessary for an individual's livelihood but, it is also important for his social status and conditions. Therefore it is the reason that most of the mass movements are dependent on some occupational activity. Occupation is the source of the income of people and plays an important role in establishing his amount of income. Whereas, in one manner occupation plays a direct role in men's livelihood in the same way it affects the socio-economic conditions of people.

Occupations in traditional India were believed to conform to certain set patterns. Particular communities were generally associated with certain occupations which were regarded as hereditary. The fourfold Varna System derived its basis from such a functional division of labour. Each of these Varnas was further divided into a number of sub-groups or Jatis, many of which have names indicative of their main economic activities. However, it is not certain
that all the members of a group followed the same occupation or all castes were occupational groups. But it is a common presumption that the groups generally associated with certain occupations had at some time, those occupations as their main source of livelihood.

In the traditional Indian social structure, the role of caste institution is a prominent one in establishment. With the birth of castes in particular the nature of its occupations was also previously determined. Generally the instinct to choose other occupations except their own inherited occupations developed.

Together Bougle point out that even when the status of occupation was the lowest, traditionally people took pride in following their caste occupation generation to generation.

As we know occupations are linked with caste in Hindu society. But the conditions are bound to change in changing social and economic situations. Thus, changes in agricultural economy and agrarian relationship in the villages have brought in series of changes, in the occupational pattern of our respondents. The following table No. 9 shows the occupational pattern of respondents.
Table No. 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Name of the occupation.</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Farming.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agriculture labour.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Government service.</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cottage industry.</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>06.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>House work.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>08.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Taking education.</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Business.</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Interview.

70 leaders were agriculture workers and 29 leaders were working on their farm only. 12 leaders were doing house work and 5 leaders were doing the work of cottage industry. 5 leaders were taking education, 2 were doing business and other 2 were government servants. 9 leaders were unemployed.
11. **Language:**

As we know language is an effective instrument for human interaction. According to D.R. Singh, language helps not only in the accumulation of traditional cultural and idea but also helps in producing new ideas and value. Considering this, it was decided to ascertain the respondents' language proficiency, the following Table No. 10 shows language proficiency of our respondents.

**Table No. 10.**

Languages which they speak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Language</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Marathi.</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Hindi.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>50.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>English.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>49.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Personal Interview.*

134 respondents could speak Marathi, 68 leaders Hindi and 66 leaders could speak English. They could speak English but fluently.
12. **Means of communications possessed and leaders or assets possessed by leaders.**

Apart from the area of land owned and the income from property, one other index of the status of a leader could be of his possession of assets. The radio could be a status symbol, the bicycle is a vehicle of utility, the motor bicycle is the higher utility and also symbol of higher status. The tractor and the electric engine were symbols of affluence and only the very well-to-do could own them for purpose of cultivation. The bullock-cart is another higher utility for farmers to bring the goods from the farm.

**Table No. 11**

**Assets.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>Total No</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Motor bicycle</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Electric engine</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tractor</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Motor car</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bullock-cart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>09.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Truck</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No assets</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total   | 134        | 100.00   |

**Source:** Personal Interview.
Table No. 11 showed that only one leader was having motor cycle, Tractor and truck. Nobody was having electrical engine and motor car. 17 had cycle, and 13 had bullock carts.
Reference:


3. Ibid.,

4. Ibid.,

5. Ibid., p. 101.


9.

10.


12. "Although there are many outside interactions and influences, the social system of the rural sector may be usefully considered to be the caste system." George Rason, Democracy and Economic Change in India, Bombay, Vora & Co. Publishers, 1966, p. 15. Quoted by R.N. Singh, Op.Cit., p. 66.


30. Ibid., p. 12.


32. Ibid., p. 38.


37. Ibid.,

38. Ibid.,


58. Ibid., p. 12.

60. Ibid.,


78. This was also true until recently of urban Indians. Recent land reform legislation has made land unattractive as a form of investment for absentee land owners and for very big resident owners. M.N. Srinivas, *Op.Cit.*, p. 12.


