Independent India has pursued a policy of protective legislation with a view to equalising educational and occupational opportunities for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. This policy provides for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes in educational institutions and in the public sector. This provides an impetus to the Scheduled Castes to acquire education and improve their chances of occupational mobility by changing their traditional occupations. As a result of this, the all-India enrolment of Scheduled Castes has increased since independence.

While the rise in educational levels has been substantial, its feedback on the Scheduled Castes has yet to be examined. All India enrolment in various types of recognised educational institutions has increased from 49.7 lakhs to 103.49 lakhs in 1974-75. However, the effect of increased educational enrolment and utilization of educational facilities is not known for want of systematic follow-up studies on what happens to high school and college educated persons upon completion of their studies. The present study therefore examines the question of their occupational mobility and the levels of the occupational hierarchy in which they find jobs.

The data for this empirical study are based on interviews with 209 persons, with a minimum qualification of high school, who belong to four Scheduled Castes of Delhi. Delhi has a very...
high percentage of Scheduled Castes to the total population. There are 6.35 lakhs Scheduled Castes and they comprise about sixteen per cent of the total population of Delhi. The four castes selected for the study constitute over sixty per cent of the total Scheduled Caste population of Delhi and about sixty-five per cent of the total Scheduled Castes who are high school and above.

We shall examine the educational and occupational attainment of Scheduled Castes in an urban context where opportunities for schooling are substantial.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

(1) To what extent is son's occupational status associated with that of the fathers'. What is the role of age, marital status, educational attainments and caste in inter-generational occupational mobility.

(2) To what extent does the individual in his job career move from a lower occupational status to a higher occupational status. (i) at what levels of the educational system does he begin his career (ii) what is the nature of his job involvement (iii) what type of organisation does he get work in and, (iv) what is the mode of entry to the job.

(3) To what extent are the occupational and educational attainments of the Scheduled Castes affected by the number of siblings in the family, by their position among the siblings and, by the educational attainments of their fathers and older brothers.
(4) What is the correlation of father's occupational status (social origins) and sons' occupational status. This will allow us to assess the extent to which fathers pass on their occupational advantage or disadvantage to their sons. Again, to what extent is the influence of father's occupational status reflected in the association between father's occupational status and son's education?

(5) How do Scheduled Castes evaluate their mobility relative to the others who have achieved upward mobility? Who are the people the Scheduled Castes are likely to compare themselves to?

The social background of our respondents show that as many as fifty-nine per cent of them had fathers who had no schooling and around thirty per cent were educated below high school. Looking at the parental status of sons we find that, of the 28 respondents in professional, administrative and supervisory occupations, 39.3 per cent had fathers who were skilled/semi-skilled manual workers, and around 36 per cent were marginal workers. Of the 99 respondents in the clerical category, over seventy-four per cent have fathers who are manual workers. Of the 69 respondents who are skilled/semi-skilled manual workers, eight per cent have fathers in manual occupations; Finally, all 13 respondents who are marginal workers have fathers in manual occupations.

Data on occupational mobility show that there is a fairly high degree of occupational mobility. The proportion of the population who belong to occupational strata higher than those of their fathers varies between twenty-five per cent for those
whose fathers are clerks and eighty-eight per cent for those whose fathers are marginal workers.

There is growing mobility from skilled/semi-skilled manual jobs to low status white collar clerical services. This shows that mobility is only short-distance type. However, when we look at sibling data who have among them lower educational levels than the respondents, we find that very few persons whose fathers are in marginal jobs reach low status white collar jobs.

We find that those who move upwards from manual to white collar work are more likely to be persons with higher educational status are also more likely to have completed their graduation and are those who have an older brother with higher levels of education.

For most of our respondents their current jobs are not their first jobs. If one were to compare their current jobs with their first jobs we find that the sons of marginal workers are more likely to get marginal work as their first job than as their current job. Respondents who have fathers in skilled/semi-skilled and clerical occupations also show a high degree of status inheritance when they enter the labour market.

A majority of the respondents enter the labour market upon completion of high/higher secondary school. But entry to the labour force does not put an end to formal education. There are striking differences between the levels of educational attainments upon entry to the first job and those attained after entering the job. One is likely to assume that employment follows educational career but this is not what happens to our
respondents. The educational and the occupational paths overlap and they cut across each other. Our respondents break their educational career to work and may also drop work to study. More often than not they combine both. Thus, the educational career and the occupational career are so intertwined that it is difficult to say where the former ends and the latter begins.

Data on family structure and it's influence on our respondent’s attainments show that large families do not adversely influence educational attainments and this is probably because siblings in a large family are able to 'pool in' resources in order to help send some of the children to school. Sibling support - financial and social - however, does not seem to be useful in securing a job in an urban occupational structure. Further, our data reveal that younger sons have higher educational attainments than the oldest sons.

We used path analysis to determine the relative influence of social origins (father’s occupation) and educational attainments of respondents, on their current occupational status.

Our findings show that father’s occupational status determines to some extent, the level of education is able to attain. Our second finding indicated that the influence of family background, as measured by father’s occupation, on son’s current occupational status, reflected to a large extent the correlation between father’s (reflected to a large extent the core) occupation and son’s education and to a smaller extent, the correlation between father’s occupation and son’s first job. This means that
education is more a source of privilege than a genuinely egalitarian influence in society, more a means by which status is reinforced than a means by which it is achieved. However, the above finding does not contradict the finding that there is a high correlation between educational attainment of the respondents and their current occupational status.