CHAPTER 7
THE STUDY AND ITS POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The main objectives of this study, as discussed earlier, are firstly to study the level of awareness among scheduled castes about various governmental measures for promoting social change among them and also to examine the degree of their participation in various welfare schemes, secondly to study the changing pattern of social conditions of the SCs, thirdly, to study the quality and quantity of facilities accessible to them through various governmental measures. Fourthly, to study the nature of work engaged in and the sources of income among various segments of the scheduled castes. Fifthly to study the changes in the educational status of the scheduled castes, and finally to study the changing patterns of relationship within the scheduled castes and in relation to non-SCs.

The study is based on a sample of 233 respondents drawn from Daudnagar block of Aurangabad district of Bihar. These respondents are drawn from different segments of scheduled castes like Chamars, Dusadhs, Bhuiyas, Nats Pasis, Dhobis, Rajwars, Dabgars, Mehtars and Doms.

This chapter aims at explaining the salient features of the study and their policy implications.
We observe that there is no homogeneity in the socio-economic and cultural ethos of different segments of scheduled castes. They are heterogeneous in character. Every caste has its own belief system, rituals, living patterns and occupations. They reflect a hierarchically arranged social status and differential degree of respect, prestige and influence. Various segments are governed by the principles of purity – pollution, superior – inferior relationship and by the principle of endogamy. The marriage outside the caste, commensality and contact with members outside the castes are forbidden among the SCs. Still the social, economic and cultural relations in rural Bihar continue to be largely governed and regulated by caste system.

The practice of untouchability among the SCs and between the SCs and the non-SCs has been abolished legally but it continued to be a practice as observed by the respondents at social occasions. There is such a wide cultural gap existing even today between these castes, particularly the scheduled castes and the non-SCs castes that they have separate 'Patal' and Pangat' on social occasions. The scheduled castes in general are forbidden even today to touch and use the utensils of the non- scheduled castes or caste Hindus. There are 88.41 percent respondents who accepted that the untouchability is widely practiced even among those SCs who have changed their traditional occupations by taking up secular occupations like teaching, engineer and politics, although the practice is not openly accepted.
Another point of our observation is that the scheduled castes belong to a mixed type of family, although the proportion of nuclear family is more among them, particularly among the Rajwar, Mehtar, Dom and Nat as compared with Dusadh, Pasi and Dhobi. Because some of these members of these caste (Dusadh, Pasi and Dhobi) are engaged in government secular job and cultivating their own land. The percentage of the stem families is also high, mainly among the Pasis and Dusadhs.

The proportion of joint family is significantly higher among the Dhobis, Pasis, Dusadhs, Dabgars and Chamars. It has been observed that the proportion of joint family is high among those who have government job and cultivable land, while the small families or nuclear families are more among those who constitute landless agricultural labourer and those working as labourers in organised sector. It had also been observed by Gough and Cohn in their studies of Kumbapettai and Senapur village in North and South India. According to the Gough¹ “the Brahmin are landowners and farm managers. Their main resource of income is land, which is owned jointly. A young man in such a household can not easily afford to leave his paternal family after marriage. Joint ownership and common management require a structure of authority; the head of a Brahmin joint household can effectively be the manager of the lands and can thus wield decisive authority in his family until he is quite old”

Contrary to this among the Scheduled Castes such as, Ade Dravidas, who are agricultural labourer in the village their siblings who are a wage earner can easily leave the families after puberty because there is no joint household and land ownership.

In senapur village study, Cohn\(^2\), also observes small number of nuclear family in landowning *Thakurs* (Rajputs). It only 19 percent among them while among the landless *Chamars*, it is as high as 59 percent. In a survey of four villages of west Bengal, Sarma\(^3\) found some correlation between higher *Jati* status and a higher *Jatees* and a marked relationship between occupation and family form further in a sample of 111 families of owner – cultivators, Sarma found 35 percent of nuclear and 65 percent of joint families again in a sample of 126 families of agricultural and labourer he found 75 percent of nuclear and 25 percent of joint families.

Thus we may draw the conclusion that the higher proportion of nuclear family among the SCs is a directly worked with their economic position. The Joint family among them if any is breaking due to lack of resources to support them.

\(^2\) Cohn, B.S. 1961 Chamar Family in a North Indian Villages, the Economic Weekly 13, pp 1051 – 1055 op.cit.

In addition this, the respondents and their families have a similar pattern of residence. Mostly Scheduled Castes reside in Kutcha and semi-Pucca houses. This is, because the governmental housing schemes do not take into account their housing problems. However, there are few pucca houses for them constructed with the help of governmental agencies but both the Kutcha and the pucca houses lack basic amenities. Significantly there are still considerable number of SCs who live Kachcha houses and plastic tent. The material conditions of the SCs show their miserable economic status in general but some of them do possess fans, motor vehicle, Radio and T.V. sets. They have the desire and efforts to improve their economic conditions, provided opportunities are available to them.

Their main occupation is the primary occupation, particularly agriculture. Majority of them are engaged as agricultural labourers. the Bhuiya, Dusadh and Chamar are predominantly engaged in agriculture as labourers. The Dhobi, Rajwar, Dabgar, Pasi and Mehtar are still engaged in traditional occupations while the Mehtar mostly work as class IV government employees in municipality. A few of Chamar and Dusadhs are engaged in Banihari.

The significant point to be noted in this context is that the occupational mobility and diversification of occupation are quite negligible among the scheduled Castes inspite of various developmental
programmes for their upliftment. These programmes have not improved their economic status. Majority of them are landless particularly Rajwar, Bhuiya, Mehtar and Dom. The Nats are totally landless. So far the livestock which forms an additional source of income and livelihood, is concerned most of them have limited sources of such income which are obtained by them through the Bataiya system.

Their economic status can be perceived by the nature of their income. i.e. kind and cash. Most of them earn in kind, while only a miniscule minority earn in cash. The Bhuiya, Rajwar, Chamar and Dusadh mostly earn their living only in kind. Some of the Doms, Dhobis, Dabgars, Mehtar and Pasis earn their income in cash – from their traditional occupations. However their primary source of income is the agricultural labour. This is supplemented by cultivation of small landholding, animal products, making and selling basket and soop, leather work, rickshaw pulling and bidi making.

The degree of indebtedness among the Scheduled Castes is known fact. Even today, majority of the Scheduled Castes have taken loan from traditional sources i.e., the farmer, landlord and businessmen. Those castes who are in government job and have money to give bribe to authority, have taken loan from government sources. Only a small proportion of the loan taken by them has been utilised for productive purposes as against the major proportion of loan used for non-productive
purposes, such as marriage, religious ceremonies like 'mundan' and 'saradh' etc.

Majority of the Scheduled Castes are illiterate. Only a small proportion of them are educated upto matric. It needs to be noted that they are not educationally motivated.

This is due to be their educational backwardness that they have deep faith in traditional medicine and method of treatment like the 'Jharphunk'. For example most of them have availed of medical services being provided by the quacks. This points to the failure of the modern medical facilities being provided by the government. It is due to this that, majority of them have preferred their home maternity where Dais provide medical help. Thus public health services are negligible for the SCs.

There are various anti-poverty programmes to eliminate poverty among the Scheduled Castes one of them is Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) intended to alleviate rural poverty in general and of scheduled Castes in particular. Similarly, there are programmes like the Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Indira Awas Yojna, Anganwadi Yojna. They aim at their upliftment through income and employment generation, provision for housing, nutritional awareness, land to landless, distribution of lalcard to those below the poverty line and through educational facilities. Similar is the scheme of the State
Scheduled Castes Development Corporation intended to alleviate poverty among them through self-employment generation.

It is observed that majority of the respondents are aware of such schemes but they are not aware of the procedures of obtaining benefits of these schemes. Only a small proportion (about 6.0%) of them were assisted by IRDP schemes. There is a scheme of training of rural youth for self-employment under the IRDP. Majority of the SCs are ignorant about this. Only 1.81 percent of them have been benefited by this scheme. Similarly, only a small proportion (11 percent) of them are benefited by JRY. Such schemes instead of helping the SCs have helped the upper castes and upper backward castes whose villages have been linked with main road. The scheduled castes people do not get employment every year through such schemes. They get some employment only once during the period of ten years.

The Indira Awas Yojna scheme has provided benefits to only 16.30 percent of the SCs and those benefits are not uniformly distributed among various segments of scheduled Castes. Most of the scheduled Castes are still landless and figure below the poverty line. The programmes of such schemes are channelised through the Jansevak and agent or influential persons in the villages. They have vested interest in such programmes. There are schemes of the state government to identify SC families below the poverty line to provide them ‘Lalcard’. But only
20.60 percents of them have so far received the Lalcard. The Lalcard is also not equally distributed among all the SCs. The government has failed to provide them Lal card. Even if they have lal card, they are not availing food grains as they are sold by the dealer in the market for black money.

In addition to the distribution of Lalcard, allotment of land is also programmes of the state government for improving the economic status of Scheduled Castes. A large section of Scheduled Castes population earns their livelihood by working on the land. Only 21.14 percents of them were allotted agricultural land by the State government but only 0.85 percent actually took possession of land. Only a minority of Chamar and Dusadhs are benefitted by this schemes. The cultivable land continues to be under the control of the landlord. This forms the major cause of conflict among the scheduled Castes and landlords. However, the scheme of land distribution has made only a negligible impact on the scheduled Castes regarding upliftment of their economic status.

The state government has enacted the Minimum Wages Legislation Act as part of the land reform. Majority of the SCs are aware of this Act but 97.42 percent of them are not getting wages according to this Act. This shows that the Act has not altered nor brought significant change in the social condition of the Scheduled Castes. Further, if demand for wages according to the Act is made they are accused of being members of
the naxalite group. The caste Hindus perceive them as a threat to their dominance and traditional authority. As a consequence of this, inherent conflict the SCs continue to suffer from atrocities committed by the upper castes and upper backward castes. This was also observed by Pradeep Kr. Bose and Sachchidanand. Sachchidanand observed that the landless labourer struggled to improve economic conditions by demanding higher wages, homestead land and redistribution of government held waste lands. The conscious educated youth among the SCs resented social abuse and are determined to put an end to economic exploitation. Since 1978 onwards, there is an alarming increase in atrocities against 'Harijans' who have became politically active and assertive this has encouraged the landholders to organise their own private armies against them. They set out to ravage the Harijans hamlets and to eliminate their leaders. The continuous struggle between the backward and the SCs labourers on the one hand and the upper cast dominated Sena has created a socio-economic and political turmoil in Bihar which will continue because of vested political interest into it. The upper cast landholders felt threatened by the SCs who claimed to have the control on village common land. They are feel threatened because of the rising expectation awareness and demand among the SCs who are no longer now ready to suffer from cast based atrocities and exploitation.

One example of the rising tension between them, is the extremists operating under the banner of the Maoist communist centre of the landless labourer as against upper caste Senas in Bihar. The violent incidents continue in the village after village resulting in the mass killing of men, women and children. Pradip Kumar Bose\(^5\) observed in almost all the cases (massacre) the primary cause of conflict was wages, proper share of the crops, or land dispute.

The state scheduled castes Development corporation is providing financial assistance in the form of margin money at the low rate of interest and also giving subsidy to reduce their repayment liability. It was observed that only 1.28 percent of the SCs have received financial help from this scheme to improve their economic status and only an insignificant number of *Chamars*, *Pasis* and *Dabgars* have received loans from it. This again points at the failure of the Corporation in improving the status of the scheduled castes. The reasons for failure are official complexities, indifferent attitude of bankers, District Executive officer of SCDCs and limited and irregular funds being provided by the state to the District scheduled castes Development Corporation.

However, the state government has been able to provide them public drinking water facility. Only 13.30 percent of them have self-

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sponsored drinking water facility. The caste wise analysis shows that all the segments of the scheduled castes are utilising public water facilities in their Tolas. This has improved their living conditions.

The Angawadi Centres as another programme, provides a package of services to the scheduled castes, namely supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check up, referred services, pre-School non-formal education, health and nutrition, education for mother and children. Only 22.74 percent of the SCs are getting Anganwadi services an regular basis and 21.45 percent on irregular basis. These services are not uniformaly distributed among all the SCs. The nutrituional and non-formal educational services are the major functions of such centres but such function are not performed well. The sevikas of these centres belong to the influential persons of the villages and their role is not favourable to the welfare of SCs.

The educational programmes consisting of the award of pre-matriculation and post-matriculation stipend for scheduled castes children have not reached to them at all. Most of them are not aware of such assistance in the field of education available of them. Only 24.46 percent of the SCs children have received regular financial assistance from the government. The failure of the scheme in providing proper financial assistance is attributed to lack of motivation in the implementing agencies and so also the inability to create awareness and
motivation among the SCs about the Schemes. Another major impediment in the realization of the objectives of the Scheme is corruption and the lack of funds. It is also observed that there is heavy dropout among the various segment of the Scheduled Castes. The main reason for dropout among the Scheduled Caste school children is their parental socio-economic conditions. Since the child is a working hand, he is an economic asset for them. Both male and female children help their parents not only in domestic chores but also outside. A large number of children have joined the working force as construction workers, servants, grage and hotel boys, bidi makers and even as agricultural labourers. Thus parents are not interested in getting the child educated even if government provides them various facilities for their children at school. Secondly, the dropout is also due to lack of awareness of the not utility of education and facilities available to them. In unemployment problem is an additional factor in the process of education among them. They are apprehensive that once their children are educated they would not render any manual labour. Another factor related with school dropout is the prejudice and indifferent attitude of educational institutions towards the Scheduled Caste children. The caste Hindu teachers have their own way of teaching them in the school. Another significant factor for the dropout is that most of the schools are located in the upper caste locality where lower caste children beaten up, marginalised and their entry is restricted.
However, we find that the developmental programmes have not left much impact on the Scheduled Caste in general and their education status in particular. But their increasing social awareness has given rise to a middle class or a dominant class of the SCs as the debated by the social scientists. This is reflected into current debate on the role of emerging creamy layer emerging SCs. This layer is like the emerging middle class among them. Those who are more socially aware, educated, and properly benefited by the advantages available to the SCs belong to creamy layer. They look as if they are farming a class in themselves. They are assimilating into the upper class categories and forgetting their primary duties toward the people of their own background. It seems it is deliberate on the part of the government and various parties to co-opt the dominant creamy layer of the Scheduled Caste. This co-option serves even the interest of backward caste leadership because there socio-economic and political interest are served by the leadership of the dominant castes. This shows a dual character of the emerging creamy layer of the dominant SCs who seems to be instrumental in providing leep-service to their own caste men.

However education and political mobilization have made Sc in general more conscious of their rights. The deprived sections among them have become more assertive. They do not want to more away from their village. They demand the redressal of their grievances and the effect of development in the village itself. They also assert to fight for redressal
of social abuse, specially the honour of their women and self-respect for themselves.

As we have seen that the developmental programmes have not left much impact on the scheduled castes. The programmes are executed by the DRDA, SDO, BDO, Jansevak, and agents or influential persons of the villages. The process of identifying the families to be benefited by the schemes is very faulty. It is stipulated that the list has to be finalised on the meeting of the villagers but such meetings are seldom held and the list is rarely finalised. The administrator, the agents and the influential persons select usually families of their own choice. Such intermediaries play a vital role in identification and selection of the families to be benefit. In the absence of meetings among the villagers, the influential persons and agents take bribe and please the administration in different ways to get the families of their own choice included in the list of those to be benefitted by the developmental programmes.

The reasons attributed to the poor performance of the programmes include lack of awareness and interest among the villagers, improper identification of families, vested interest of the authorities and agents concerned and negligence of the various agencies through which the programmes are supposed to reach the people. Those programmes, by and large, work mostly on paper. Once the funds for the programmes are sanctioned, no one seems to be much concerned about their proper
utilization. The major churk of the funds is eaten up by the authorities and the remaining goes to yes men among the SCs.

The State Scheduled Caste Development Corporation of Bihar (SCDC) has become a 'white elephant' and a show piece. The SCDCs is Executed by deputy development commissioners, executive officers, supervisors and bankers. The reason for the poor performance of the Corporation include lack of awareness and interest among the villagers, the official complexity and bankers apathy. The indifference of the government regarding funds release to the corporation is also a major factor. It was observed that borrowers do not get credit in time from the Corporation which has led to miscue of the credit. The unusual delay in sanctioning loans by the banks arises because of delaying tactics followed by District Scheduled Caste Development corporation office. It is said that even for a small amount of loan, bankers take more than a month to consider the application. It has been brought to sight that many Scheduled Caste applicant do not get adequate loans meant for them for the intended purpose. This is because of the cumbersome procedure followed by the loan sanctioning banks. This has resulted in non-utilization, as well as misutilization of loan amount year-marked for the progress of conditions of the SCs. The applicant of the loan have repeatedly complained about the procedure followed in identifying the families to sanction the loan under government programmes. On several occasions genuine applicants were deprived of the loan benefits. There is
a strong feeling in the mind of the applicants that under the government programmes only relatives and friends of a local political leader can get the loan at the cost of the genuine applicants.

In order to use properly the advantages of various schemes, the village Panchayat must be an integral part of the decision making. For this the Panchayat election must be conducted regularly. The Gram Sabha has extensive rights of formulation, approval, implementation and monitoring of development schemes in the villages. This should be the decision making body and it should be constituted by members of every Tola (smallest units of the villages like Chamar Toli, Rajput Toli, etc.). There should be regular meeting among of the villagers to finalize the list of families in the presence of BDO. Each Tola should be taken into account and represented. The distribution of benefits should be supervised by the Toals or group of villagers.

The involvement of the villagers is important because the rural masses have a better knowledge of their life environment, necessities and capacities. They are capable of taking appropriate decision. Their full participation is a must for making the rural development programmes successful.

The scheduled castes in various Tolas and villages are aware of their problems but fail to find the solutions because of the lack of support from outside. The governmental help is required in providing
information on various counts, such as, the potential for small and
cottage industries and handicrafts, available technologies for raising
production and its distribution, training avenues and marketing facilities
in various areas etc. such information is required and needed to be
widely published in Hindi. Similarly, the information about the
developmental schemes and the benefits available to them should be
publicized among the scheduled castes directly. The role of middleman
should be abolished.

Further, the long term loan to the SCs should be interest free. At
least one person in the SC family should get employment opportunity,
particularly the families living below the poverty line. All bottlenecks,
such as, complicated procedures, insufficient loans and delay in its
distribution, official indifferences, bribery and corruption, etc. must be
eliminated.

The state government and National Commission for scheduled
caste and scheduled tribes should organize workshops on orientation
programmes to activise government officials about the problems of the
scheduled caste. Annual reports of National Commission for scheduled
castes and scheduled tribes must be tabled in the parliament along with
the action taken report by the central government at the earliest. The
recommendation of the commission should be followed in right earnest.
The commission should be vested with the power to fix accountability for
negligence on part of the state governments and officials. The state should also punish the official for not implementing the developmental programmes properly. Further, a wide spread awareness and sensitization on programme should be launched by the state government in schools, colleges, universities and societies and also through print, as well as, visual media regarding the problems of scheduled castes and the programmes for their welfare. The state government should vigorously implement land reform measures and see that SCs get possession of the land. The funds of special component plan should be allocated in proportion with the size of population of SC and also ensure the utilization of fund properly under different government programmes.