Chapter-1
Introduction
INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE/CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Scheduled castes constitute a significant segment (16.2%) of the total population of our country. Though they have been placed at the lowest edge of the Hindu society but they have always been intrinsic part of the social structure. Sechidhananda (1974) has argued that since independence scheduled castes have become a special concern of the nation. Their problems cannot be satisfactorily solved unless they are clearly identified and conceptualized considering their deprivedness. Some provisions were made and thereby several programmes have been initiated for them at national level in independent India. Thus the welfare oriented research with respect to the scheduled castes has national relevance. This may be directed towards an evaluation of welfare programmes in operation in different states. This evaluation should reveal not only shortcomings at implementation level but lacunae at the planning level as well.

In a later survey of rural studies T.K. Oommen (1984) has observed that the concern of the rural studies undertaken earlier in 1950s to 1970s have focussed upon the quantitative and qualitative effects of planned development in India. He has further suggested that the future scope of rural studies lies in the contexts like what are the effects of the planning or more specially of the various development programmes introduced by government, and what categories
of people are benefited through these programmes.

An overview of select literature has also suggested that studies of planned development efforts have been undertaken in various states of India with respect to the scheduled castes upliftment. These studies have largely focussed upon the aspects like community development, Panchayati Raj, leadership, reservation, unemployment, physical amenities, educational upliftment, removal of untouchability, bonded labour and impact of various programmes of rural development.

In the chain of all these people oriented programmes initiated by the state and especially the rural development programmes, a stage has reached where exclusive provisions in these programmes are made for the scheduled castes. A few well known programmes of rural development specially contain provisions for the betterment of such social groups.

Studies of various aspects of these programmes though being undertaken but few have hardly had the deep sociological probe (Gommen:1985) More so the case of states like Jammu and Kashmir where in some parts the population of scheduled castes is as small as 9% such studies have been least reported whereas as these state initiated programmes for welfare of scheduled castes are in full operation in the recent times in such states.

Thus in the light of the above scenario the present study has focussed specially upon the following questions which have been
explored in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. These questions are stated in the statement of the problem that follows.

1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study has focussed upon the following questions.

1. Who are the beneficiaries of the recent rural development programmes among the Scheduled Castes?

2. How Scheduled Castes are making use of the benefits of the recent rural development programmes i.e. what is the process from its information to the final materialization of the benefit?

3. Whether there are any voluntary efforts by Scheduled Castes themselves to mediate the process of getting the benefit?

4. What are the social consequences, if any, of the recent rural development programmes on the Scheduled Caste beneficiaries, the members of the voluntary organisation, and the Scheduled Castes at large?

The first question means which people or groups among the Scheduled Castes are making use of the benefits of the recent rural development programmes and what are the contributing factors in getting these benefits. Who are the beneficiaries refer to the background variables of the beneficiaries. The background is understood in terms of the caste, age, education, landholding, occupation and family size. The contributing factors in getting the benefits of recent
rural development programme have been observed in terms of facilitating the steps to be undertaken in finally materializing the rural development benefits by the actual beneficiaries. Education, neighborhood, caste, caste organisation and role of voluntary association of Scheduled Castes have been noted as contributing factors. The processual part in detail is referred in question second. This question has been attempted by interviewing strategically located persons, voluntary organisation members and the beneficiaries in the area of study.

The second question implies the steps taken from information to finally materializing the benefit i.e. the process of taking a benefit. This takes note of how a Scheduled Caste beneficiary has to proceed and how many formalities he has to complete in various offices through various officials concerned. This question also includes who are the people who get involved with the beneficiary in completing the process or cycle of making use of the benefit, and aspects from the knowledge or information of the benefit availability, filling and filing of the applications in the concerned offices to the concerned officials. The relations get involved in terms of persons and agencies, have been explored in this process. The facts have been studied initially through case studies of the beneficiaries, officials, mediating persons/agencies based largely on observations and interviews.

The third question aims at exploring the persons and voluntary agencies or associations of the Scheduled Castes themselves
which have emerged in the area and have been acting to negotiate between the beneficiaries and the offices and organisations concerned. The role of such voluntary associations have been studied by their involvement in completing the process of taking the benefit. The voluntary organisations of scheduled castes has been studied by involving a combinations of techniques of observation, interview, case studies, and consultation of documents and records etc.

The fourth question attempts to know the extent and manner in which the benefits of the recent rural development programmes have introduced some social consequences if, any, i.e. any change from living together in a larger family to a separate smaller family feeling of independence from others, or indicating increasing or decreasing harmony of the beneficiary with other family/kin/caste members inside and outside the village. This question has also explored the emerging consensus among the Scheduled Castes for their own unity and leadership qualities within their castes and outside the caste organisations in solving their own problems and in negotiating with state agencies. These questions have been studied in an area just briefly introduced in the following. In detail it is described in Chapter 3.

1.3 AREA OF STUDY

These questions have been studied in a larger size block in district of Jammu and Kashmir, namely Kishwah block in district Doda. The selection has been made purposively. Doda is the third
largest district of the state in area after Leh and Kargil. The district is comprised of fourteen community blocks and 600 plus villages.

Kishtwar is the largest tehsil and second largest block in the district. There are fourteen panchayats in Kishtwar block. The study has been carried out in two panchayat areas namely Matta and Pochhal. Matta panchayat is comprised of three villages and Pochhal panchayat is comprised of two villages. The population of Matta panchayat is 3542 and of Pochhal panchayat is 4798. The total number of families in both panchayats are 520 and 725 respectively. The total number of Scheduled Castes families are 185 and 93 (Survey Report 1996 of the block office). Recent rural development programmes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Million Wells Scheme, Indira Awas Yojna and Rural Sanitation Programmes have been in operation in both the panchayats. Both panchayats are in the urban proximity of the block/tehsil headquarters, kishtwar which is a town.

1.4 PERSPECTIVE/APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The programmes are received by the beneficiaries who are placed in a rural social structure. How the process of taking the benefit is related to the other units of this social structure, involves a structural functional perspective.

Beneficiaries in two rural social structures have been selected for intensive study, one marked by preponderance of Scheduled
Castes (35%) and in the other they are proportionately lesser. The comparison of the beneficiaries of the two social structures involves a comparative perspective to an extent.

The study takes note of one point of time the middle 1990's thus it remains a synchronic study in structural functional and comparative perspectives.

1.5 UNIVERSE/SAMPLE AND RESPONDENTS

On the basis of the explorations it was noted that there are 150 beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the recent rural development programmes namely Integrated Rural Development Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Million Wells Scheme, Indira Awas Yojna and Rural Sanitation programme. Of the 150 respondents 97 are the beneficiaries and the 57 are non-beneficiaries those who applied but could not get. Of the 97 beneficiaries 43 are from the Scheduled Castes. Thus all the 43 beneficiaries of the recent rural development programmes, namely of the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Million Wells Scheme, Indira Awas Yojna and Rural Sanitation Programme scheme constitute the universe of the study. All these have been studied.

The process of getting a benefit involves the beneficiaries, the officials of the various offices like the development block, the bank etc., voluntary organisation and the village where they are located. Thus five set of respondents have been selected for
the study.

1. The beneficiaries of recent rural development programmes
2. Officials of various offices involved,
3. Members of voluntary organisation,
4. Non-beneficiaries and
5. Strategically located persons in the village social structure.

The first category of respondents i.e. the beneficiaries constitutes the main set of respondents. Respondents of the other four sets have been taken up illustratively for the study to understand their role in the process. A small number of non-beneficiaries has been taken up for a comparative understanding.

For the study of the operation of social structure factors, two villages panchayat areas have been selected for intensive study. The voluntary organisation members, strategically located persons and non-beneficiaries have also been selected from these two panchayats areas. The number of respondents have been determined looking at the feasibility and explorations of the process of getting the benefits on the part of the beneficiaries. Only strategically important officials of the development block, the bank and tehsil level screening committee have been selected as respondents.
1.6 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The beneficiaries have been identified largely by interviewing strategically located persons, members of voluntary organizations, officials concerned and scheduled castes member of the statutory tehsil level committee in addition to the records available from the office of block development officer, bank and progress reports of the state development department at the district level. Web techniques has also been used in identifying the beneficiaries.

At the first stage data have been collected through case studies based on observations and interviews of the beneficiaries of recent rural development programmes, officials, members of voluntary organisations, strategically located persons and non-beneficiaries (who applied but could not get). The data collected from officials, members of voluntary association, non-beneficiaries, and strategically located persons has largely remained limited up to a few case studies.

Initially it was found that in the two village panchayats 150 persons consisting of Scheduled Caste and other caste applied for taking benefits of recent rural development programmes during last two years, in 1995-96 as the cut off year. Of these 150 persons 53 could manage to get the benefits of any of the recent rural development programmes. Of these 83 beneficiaries, 43 were the Scheduled Castes and 50 were others. Thus as proposed in the area of two village panchayats 43 Scheduled Caste beneficiaries
were identified. Because of the smaller number discovered in the proposed area which is geographically wide spread, it was decided thus not to take only survey of these 43 identified respondents but undergo more detailed study of all of them*. Thus case studies of all the 43 Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of the recent rural development programmes have been conducted.

* Other option could be to add, one or two more village panchayats and then the number of beneficiaries become appropriate for a survey. But with consultation of fellow scholars and experts available at the centre, it was opted to go for case studies for more in-depth sociological explorations rather a superficial survey. Some set of social relationship would be entirely understood through few cases and other case studies would be sufficient to indicate the trends on the aspects of the proposed questions. A firm generalization may not even be possible on the basis of survey of few more cases by taking up one or two panchayats more.