SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The scheduled castes have long suffered from extreme social and economic backwardness. They had no access to education in the past because of social and religious sanctions imposed on them. Inspite of the legal provisions against discrimination on the basis of caste, the practice of untouchability and other forms of discrimination and prejudices are still prevailing.

The scheduled castes, are largely illiterate, backward, poverty stricken and continue to suffer from socio-economic disabilities. More than 81 percent of the population of scheduled castes live in rural areas. Till recently, they were devoid of the basic necessities like water, electricity, proper sanitation, roads and transport facilities. However, for the past few years, there is an improvement in their living conditions.

Inspite of the constitutional benefits in the field of education provided for the scheduled castes, their literacy levels continues to be low. The performance of the SC children is not very encouraging. The problem of poor performance by scheduled caste students is not limited to school education only, but has been reported at the university level too.

The present study explores the way, scheduled caste students coming from different backgrounds face problems and how they cope up with different situations. The study also seeks to understand and analyze their hopes and aspirations.

The main objectives of the present study are enumerated below.

1. To study the scheduled caste student’s attitudes towards the present caste system, educational system and welfare schemes provided to them.
2. To study the problems related to social interactions and how they adapt themselves to various social situations in and outside the university campus.
3. To explore the problems they face in the process of academic achievement and how they adapt themselves to their academic environment.
To explore the strategies they have found to adapt themselves in and outside the University.

The universe in the present study consists of the scheduled caste students drawn from the two universities, i.e., Central University of Hyderabad and Osmania University. OU is a state university in Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh, and HCU is one of the ten Central Universities located in the different states in India.

**METHODOLOGY**

This Ph.D. program is mainly based on primary data collection through intensive interviews, case studies and collection of quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires. Data were collected during the year 1995-1997.

The secondary data was collected from books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and census reports from different libraries.

A total of 400 scheduled caste students, of both sexes, from these two universities were identified for sending the questionnaires. The scholar visited the concerned university hostels and efforts were put to hand over the questionnaires to the scheduled caste students, explaining the objectives and value of the present research topic. Questionnaires were sent by mail to the rest of the students who could not be contacted personally in the hostels and departments.

Both closed and open-ended questions were posed in the questionnaire to get quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires were coded and a covering letter was attached. The purpose of the study and the request to participate in the study, was stated in the covering letter. Also, it was assured that the identity of the person and opinions expressed in the questionnaires would be kept confidential.

After repeated reminders and personal contacts the scholar could succeed in collecting 106 filled-in questionnaires from the scheduled caste students.

Thirty-five interviews were conducted and observations recorded wherever possible. Interviews with the leaders and activists of scheduled caste organisations and other student organisations were also conducted. Group discussions on the present status of the scheduled castes and their problems too were conducted. Twenty case studies of scheduled caste students were collected. Data was obtained in the
form of case histories that reflected different life-stages of an individual scheduled caste student, including the contemporary realities of their lives.

The scholar borrowed a value projective technique (Spindler and Spindler, 1990) consisting of open-ended sentences such as “university teachers should be ------ ------” and got a wide response from the students as to what they expect from their teachers. Similarly several open-ended questions like, “If you were a university teacher or professor, how would you teach so that your students would really learn the material”, gave a good deal of information.

All the hundred and six questionnaires collected, were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program. The graphs and tables were produced in Microsoft Excel.

The analysis and results of the study are presented in eight chapters, in this thesis including introduction and conclusion. The first chapter is the ‘INTRODUCTION’ the second chapter is, ‘SCHEDULED CASTES- A PROFILE’, the third chapter is ‘THE PROFILE OF THE SC STUDENTS’ the fourth chapter is ‘ATTITUDES OF SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS’ the fifth chapter is ‘SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE ADAPTATION OF SC STUDENTS’ the sixth chapter is ‘ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AND THE ADAPTATION OF SC STUDENTS’ the seventh chapter is “STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: MOBILIZATION AND ADAPTATION OF SC STUDENTS” and the eighth or the final chapter is ‘SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS’.

Students in this study do not form a homogeneous group. There exist considerable variations among them on the basis of their background- their caste i.e., jati, class, the place they belong, socio-economic, educational and occupational background of parents etc. The total sample population is 106. Of the hundred and six filled in questionnaires received, 64 percent (68) students responded from the Central University and the rest 36 percent (38) responded from the Osmania University.

Almost three fourth of the sample respondents were born in rural areas, i.e., 73.6 percent of the respondents were born in rural areas. Another 18.9 percent respondents are born in urban areas and the rest 7.5 percent are born in semi-urban areas. A fairly high percentage i.e., 65 percent of females belong to urban areas, compared to 35 percent in the case of males. 82 percent of the males come from rural areas for higher studies in the city, compared to a low percentage of (18 percent)
females from rural areas. The percentage of the unmarried to the total number of respondents in our sample is as high as 91 while the married constitute only 9 percent.

Nearly 87 percent of the student respondents have declared themselves as Hindus. 12 percent respondents stated that they are Christians and just one respondent out of 106 in the sample stated that he is a follower of Buddhism. Thus, the sample represents a large percentage of Hindus.

Majority of the respondents belong to Mala caste, representing 63 percent of the sample. Another 29.4 percent respondents belong to Madiga caste. A small 6 percent respondents belong to different castes that are categorized under ‘others’.

The educational levels of the parents show that more than fifty percent of the fathers are either illiterates or can just read and write. Very small percentage of them have gone for higher studies like post graduation or professional studies. Thus indicates that most of the respondents are among the first generation who are pursuing higher studies.

The data shows that more than fifty percent of the sample respondents have fathers who are either agricultural laborers or marginal farmers. Closely related to the educational level is the occupational level of the parents. Most of the respondents whose fathers are illiterate and those who can just read and write are either land-less laborers or are marginal farmers. Here again, 58 percent of the illiterates are laborers and another 50 percent of those who can read and write are marginal laborers. Those who are in service have some kind of formal education ranging from matric to post-graduation. Compared to the educational levels of the fathers, those of mothers are even lower i.e., nearly three fourth of them are either illiterate or can just read and write.

Thus a large percentage of sample respondents are coming from the family where both the father and the mother are illiterate, or at the most, can read and write and did not received any formal education. They may not show any interest in preparing them for schooling. They can hardly guide their children in the matters of education. Parents working as laborers or those who are marginal farmers can hardly find any time to look into the progress of their children in the schools or colleges after a hectic day of manual labor. After the school hours or on holidays, most of the grown up children, accompany their parents to the fields for helping them in some kind of works.
Another important factor, which may influence the motivation and performance of students, is the socio-economic status of the family. A student coming from rural area and from poor and illiterate family, with no property or any assets, is considered to be coming from a disadvantaged family background. Another student coming from urban and educated family, having necessary assets at home can be considered to be privileged or coming from a socially advantaged environment.

Overall, 49 percent i.e., almost half of the respondent’s families are landless. They are the landless laborers who work as laborers or “coolie” at the landlord’s fields. They are totally dependent and are at the mercy of landlords. Among those who have land, 33 percent of them have wet lands and another 19 percent of them have dry land. These land holdings too are marginal, ranging from one to five acres.

Even in this modern era, there are families where there are no assets at all. Some do not even have a radio. Most of the respondent’s parents are staying in a thatched roof house in some remote rural areas, with no assets at all.

On the whole, the scheduled caste students in the two universities, as reflected in our sample, exhibit certain characteristics that are peculiar to their backwardness.

Many of the respondent’s houses are segregated or their settlements are in the fringes of the main village. There is no informal interaction with the forward caste people. Especially there is no interaction with the educated younger generation.

The data shows that almost ¾ of the sample respondents come from disadvantaged family backgrounds with meager resources and incondusive environment which pose obstacle in their proper and smooth progress in education. There is hardly any guidance or motivation for them.

In the fourth chapter, the attitudes of the SC students on various issues related to them, are explored. They were asked to write about the origin of caste system as per their knowledge. Very few respondents were able to provide with the information regarding the origin of caste system. Their views were similar to the three theories of origin of caste system, the Divine Plan Theory, Theory of Racial Antipathy and the Occupational- Functional theory. Though most of them did not believe in these theories. They felt that caste system is not created by God, and that it is created by the Brahmins for their own benefits. Many of the respondents expressed different
kinds of feelings- feelings of pain, agony, anger, anxiety, anguish and hatred for experiencing the caste prejudices.

Most of the respondents are unhappy on the position assigned to Harijans and the consequent humiliation to them, in the system. They feel that they will be happy if they are treated as equals and are not humiliated just because they are born in this caste.

Another rural respondent expressed that because of the inferior status assigned to their caste they start feeling inferior. And he feels that he is not able to adjust himself in this society. He feels uncomfortable to attend functions, religious functions like poojas etc., even though they are invited to such occasions. He feels that the feeling of fear, and fear of being isolated and fear of humiliation is still there in the minds of the SC people, as there are still cases of atrocities, arson and crimes against them. They are still humiliated, so even though a forward caste person invites for some occasion, he feels uncomfortable and anxious and avoids such occasions. He feels that SC people can mingle freely, only when there are no more caste prejudices and no more fear of being humiliated.

At the same time, many respondents appreciated and paid respectful regards to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who is considered to be a messiah and who had fought for their cause. He had showed a path for their emancipation through education and by changing to other religions, especially Buddhism.

Some of the rural respondents expressed that after joining the universities and acquiring knowledge about their rights and equality, their minds and hearts are filled with pain and agony, which is intense and cannot be expressed when they are discriminated.

Few respondents are in the favour of abolishing the caste system. But a majority of them wants to improve their position. They expressed that they would feel happy, if they are not ill-treated or humiliated and be treated as any other human being.

Regarding the attitudes related to the present status of SC and their future, most of the respondents feel that the position of SC has improved, though inferior in many ways. They feel that even today a majority of SCs are illiterate, backward and poverty stricken. Though very few, urban respondents feel that the Status of SC is now equal to the forward castes. Few of the rural respondents opine that the position of SC has not improved at all. They feel whatever benefits the SCs have got are just
peripheral. Reservations are like crumbs to appease them that are not even implemented properly.

Both rural and urban respondents opined that if the reservations and other constitutional benefits continue and if the policies and programs for their welfare are implemented seriously, the position of Scheduled Castes will improve. More than half of the sample respondents i.e., 57% are optimistic and foresee the improvement in the position of SCs.

Some of the respondents however opined that the position of SC would remain the same. The benefits and reservations are utilised by the small group who are already in a better position. Most of the SCs are poor and rural based, their conditions continue to be miserable as they are not aware of their rights and opportunities provided for them.

Few respondents are not so optimistic in their view. They feel the position of SCs will deteriorate. They expressed that if most of the companies are privatized, then there won't be any reservation and the employment opportunities will further decrease.

Most of them are not so optimistic about the situation as such. They reported that they would be happy if they are not ill-treated humiliated and discriminated. They just want to improve their position. One of the respondents expressed that they do not want a kind of Brahmin status but a status, where they are not attached to any inferior position and are treated equal.

Few respondents are of the view they do not want to abolish the caste system as such but want the caste system should not be attached to any discrimination or stigma. It should be free from all prejudices. They want to improve their status in the caste system but do not aspire to remove the caste system quid pro quo.

In order to improve the position of SC people, most of the respondents came to the conclusion that education is the only means for their upliftment. Even today, a large population of SC are illiterate and are unaware of their rights and privileges. These welfare measures should be made available to everybody, by making them aware of these facilities. There should be a kind of social movement for educating the people. So they express that these policies and programs meant for the welfare of SC should be implemented properly, and funds should be increased for their upliftment, especially in the field of education and employment, and should strictly implement it. Few of them
even suggested that more job oriented courses should be introduced in the universities, so that they become self reliant as soon as possible.

The respondent feels that nearly 80% of the SCs are poor and rural based. Their position can be improved only by equal distribution of land among them. They have to be self-reliant as most of the oppression is because they are land-less and resource less and have to depend on others for their survival.

Most of the respondents feel that inter-caste marriage is an important way to diminish the caste feelings. Another respondent is of the view that for the overall development of SCs, like socio-economic and political, focus on all these factors should be given equal importance.

Many of the respondents want the privileges and reservations to continue, even if the caste system is abolished, because they feel that the conditions of SCs are still very miserable.

Most of them expressed that the reservations should be based on economic criteria rather than caste. That is, they want the reservation for all the poor SC. Most of the rural respondents expressed that till now only a section of SCs have cornered all the benefits. They have formed a class of their own, and are not bothered about the development of the community as a whole. The respondents suggested to implement a creamy layer policy so that the well-to-do SCs can leave space for the more needy SC and gradually all the SCs could come at par with the others. Once all the SCs have come to certain stage of development, they can decrease or stop the reservations.

During the course of interviews, majority of the respondents, especially from the rural areas, wanted the reservations to continue forever, i.e., for an indefinite period. They wanted the reservations to continue until all the SCs achieve a respectable position. Whereas 6.6% of them want for a minimum of 5 years, another 16% wanted for 6 to 10 years, and a small percentage of 5.7 and 6.6 want the reservation to continue for 16-20 years and 21 and above years, respectively.

From the literature and also through interviews and discussions, it was found that there were no inter marriages between Mala and Madiga. There were not much of social interactions. Only when the reservation and other government facilities were provided, did all of them fight together. The Mala are in a better position as compared to Madigas. There was never a cohesion between Mala and Madiga jats. Malas maintain distance
with Madigas. Malas do not call the Madigas to their houses, to the

Even if they are called they are served separately.

Regarding the ABCD categorisation, more no. of Madiga respondents are in
favour and more no of Mala respondents are against it. Though most of the Mala
respondents feel that this is all a political game, where they are trying to split the two
communities. Caste wise distribution of the respondents about the opinion on the
categorisation of SC's shows that most of the Madiga jati respondents, 77.8 per cent who
will be benefited with the categorisation of separate quotas are in favor of categorisation.
Only 18.3 percent of respondents who belong to Mala jati are in favor of separate quotas.
Whereas as large as 81.7 percent of Mala respondents are against categorisation. 60 per
cent respondents from the other castes (other than Mala and Madiga) are against the
categorisation of SC's.

Regarding the attitudes towards marriage, inspite of higher education, more
than 60 percent respondents prefer endogamy. Very few wants to go for inter caste
marriages, as it is still not accepted in the society. Females have shown some kind of
apprehension in marrying a man from a caste above them in the hierarchy. They feel
her in-laws won't give them respect and equal status. Though they cited some
examples of inter-caste marriages, wherein mostly a SC boy in good position married
a girl from forward caste.

Further it was found that most of the respondents, whether rural, urban, male
or female like to marry an educated person only. More no. of rural male respondents
wish to marry rural females as compared to urban males who wish to marry an urban
girl only. Most of the females wish to marry an urbanite

For the choice of colour and complexion, most of the respondents are not
particular about colour, complexion and beauty measures. They wish to go for an
average looking person, but most of them would prefer to marry educated and urban
person.

Regarding the religious beliefs, more no. of respondents, especially from
Madigas, are secular. Those who are religious are mostly Christians, and those who
belong to Mala caste. Very few respondents are Christians and their parents had
converted to this religion recently and not the respondents themselves. Most of them,
non-Christians as well as Christians feel that the converted religion has hardly
affected their lives. Only few respondents feel that the conversion of religion has been helpful in raising their educational, economic and social status.

With regard to purity and impurity theory, most of the respondents do not believe that eating non-vegetarian is impure and eating vegetarian is pure. But only a few of the sample respondents, mostly Madigas, eat beef.

Further the respondents reported that most of the University teachers and the upper caste peer group carry negative attitude towards the SC students in general. They feel that the SC students are not worthy enough to be in the University. They are dull and are coming for higher education, just because they have reservations. This kind of attitude may influence them to form a poor image of themselves and may effect their academic performance as well as their social interaction.

Fifth chapter is focused on social interactions of S.C. students in and outside the university and how they adapt themselves to different situations.

Most of the rural respondents, as a whole, lack the study environment at home. There is a lack of encouragement and support from the home. Since most of their parents and the relatives are not educated and are not in a good position, they do not provide a reference group for the respondents to emulate. They do not function as role models to their children. These respondents can be called as disadvantaged children, who are coming from uneducated, rural and socio-economically backward homes.

Many of the rural respondents continued their studies because of sheer interest and also because of the fact that they were not interested in doing the agriculture labour. Very few rural respondents got an encouragement from their parents, relatives or teachers. This encouragement too, was verbal and occasional. They were not in a position to guide them in their studies and in making choices of the courses. These rural respondents somehow continued their studies by overcoming the obstacles with loss of some years in between and reached to the university education.

Very few rural respondents reported that either their fathers or relatives encouraged them for their studies. The respondents reported that they were encouraged, but not guided by them.
Urban and semi urban respondents are in an advantageous position as compared to the rural respondents. These urban and semi-urban respondents have an exposure to the outside world, which is totally lacking for the rural respondents. The urban respondent's family environment is somewhat better. Their parents are educated and are in service or white-collar jobs. These children are better prepared for the schooling. They are put into the schools at the right age and get reinforcement from their parents, who guide them to study, to choose the courses and the careers.

Thus an overwhelming majority of the rural respondents in the sample come from backgrounds that may be considered disadvantaged and non-congenial. Apart from the above factors, there is lack of conducive environment for studies, lack of privacy, lack of books, study materials, basic amenities etc. All these factors are likely to create disinterest, distractions and difficulties in pursuing education.

The SC settlements are segregated and isolated in most part of the country, but more so in the Southern states. Their hamlets are clustered and are away from the main village. Even if they are within the main village, they are segregated. In the rural areas, where agriculture is predominant, the SC families mostly work as agricultural labourers or have marginal lands. Some of the SC families are engaged in their caste occupations, like, weaving, leatherwork, etc.

The rural respondents who are born and brought up in the village environment become aware of their caste status in their childhood itself. They are taught about the behavioural norms and they also observe how their parents interact with other caste people.

Once the respondents move out of their traditional set-up and come to urban areas, they find out that the super-ordination and subordination does not exist in the cities. Here individualism and equality is stressed upon. The respondent too develops a new ideology of equality and secularism. So they realise that their parents in the villages are suffering.

The SC students in the University are exposed to new ideology of independence and egalitarianism. They do not like inequalities. They are aware of their constitutional rights, privileges and protection given to them. But when they witness the oppression on their families and kin members, they are not able to tolerate it. Thereby some or the other conflicts arises, which have become common.
The respondents have reduced their frequency of visit and duration of stay in the village during vacation. Even if they visit twice or thrice a year, their stay is limited for a week or for 10-15 days. Very few rural respondents stay for a month and rarely does a respondent stay for two months.

In the villages, the interaction between people is totally governed by the caste-based rules. There are fixed norms and guidelines for social interactions. But in the city, the situation is not so rigid and there is flexibility in social interaction.

The respondents reported that at times they face very odd situations. In their own village, their caste is known to every one, but once they go out, there is a subconscious fear and anxiety as to when the other person would ask about their caste.

Most of the respondents feel normal about being born in the caste they belong to. They feel they are just like any other individual, with similar features. Few respondents feel inferior. This feeling of lowliness remains in the subconscious, which influences their behaviour and interaction. The inferior status given to their caste becomes a part of their thinking. They are conscious about their caste status at every social interaction. Even though the other person is not particular about it.

The rural respondents become aware of their inferior caste status from the childhood. This is because of the village environment, where the traditional set-up continues. But once they come to the university, they develop a new ideology, based on equality, individuality, and secularism. They feel agonised and angry at the suppression of their parents. They find difficult to adjust themselves to the village environment once they are out of it.

It was further revealed that nearly fifty percent of sample population experienced discrimination/ harassment or injustice because they belong to SC. Comparatively more number of rural respondents experienced the discrimination.

The interaction of the respondents with their classmates in schools and colleges showed that the rural respondents faced more social distance with the forward caste students in school than the urban respondents. This social distance somewhat reduced in colleges as they are away from the villages, where the identity is not easily revealed.

Few respondents expressed that the feelings pertaining to caste are carried among the students and the teachers in the university also. Most of the rural respondents have friends from their own castes, as they reported that they do not have
money and good clothes to feel comfortable and reciprocate to the FC students. They reported that they have their own problems which can be easily understood and shared by the people who share the same caste, i.e., rural SC students. Apart from this, they face language problem in communicating with others. Since childhood they are segregated and have maintained social distance with the FC people. Therefore they have inhibitions in interacting with them. Though few respondents reported that the FC students do not encourage the friendship and maintain a social distance. In the hostels too, more number of rural respondent’s share their rooms with their own caste students than the urban respondents.

But the urban SC respondents, who are in comfortable financial position, reported that they have friends from all the other castes. And it is the economic criteria, which guides the friendship rather than caste.

This shows that the rural respondents are at a disadvantageous position. They face more social problems, which continues from their childhood to schooling to college and are still continuing in the universities.

Chapter six describes and discusses the respondent’s progress and performance through the school and the college. The marks scored by the respondents in Xth, XIIth, and the degree shows that there is a direct influence of the education and occupation of the parents on the performance of the their children. The children from the disadvantaged family background i.e., poor, rural and illiterate family, generally tend to perform poor or are below average or just average in their studies. Whereas the children from advantageous family background, i.e., urban, educated, white collared jobholders and from better socio-economic background, tend to perform well in their studies.

Again, the subjects taken in inter, i.e., Sciences or Arts, too is influenced by the parent’s economic and residence status. More no. of the urban students, tend to take science streams than the rural respondents. This is because either the rural respondent has scored less percentage, or it is because of financial constraints, that he had to opt for arts subjects. Also, the students coming from rural areas are having more gaps in their educational career because of financial problems, health problems and failure in exams. This is due to lack of awareness, inspiration and guidance and support from the parents.
Regarding their experience related to caste discrimination in school and colleges, though only few reported that few teachers discriminated and were partial in their evaluation, comparatively more no. of rural respondents experienced discrimination than the urban respondents in the school and colleges.

When the rural students come to the university, they face lot of initial problems in adjusting themselves to the social environment and also in coping with the higher educational standards. Their rural background and regional language, hampers in adjusting themselves to the university environment initially. They try to adjust to the environment, individually or with the help of seniors and their caste fellows. Most of them have reported to face problems in understanding the lectures due to varied reasons given in the chapter. Apart from the social and academic problems most of the poor and rural students face financial problems. They are not able to buy books, photocopy the reference material and to cope up with all these they some times do part time jobs, which again hampers their performance.

With regard to student teacher interaction, majority of the respondents feel that the teachers do not maintain any informal relations with them. They do not take interest in knowing their problems. The students wished that the teachers should show some personal interest in the student and should be friendly and humane, towards the SC students who are undergoing transition.

Though a majority of the students feels that the teacher's evaluation in the university is fair, still, there are more than 30% students who feel that the teachers discriminate and do not give marks as expected. Students from both the universities cited many instances where they were discriminated. Again more no. of rural students complained about it.

Thus, it shows that the urban students do not face much problems in adjusting themselves to the academic and social environment in the university. But the rural respondent finds many problems in adjusting to the university environment.

Chapter VII is about the adaptation of SC students. How they are adapting to different situation and what are their adaptive strategies.

There is a growing awareness among the Dalit Students that they are denied human rights for centuries and suppressed by the upper castes. This consciousness
provokes the students against the existing social systems and their protest is expressed through various forms of agitation and struggles.

Caste associations or caste-based organisations are formed to exert pressure on the institutions or government for their defence. They adopt different ways and means to pressurise or defend themselves. Defence or offence is the mechanism or strategy to put pressure on the institutions. Some of these organisations are officially recognised while the others are not.

The SC students, in their endeavour to achieve higher education and a respectable position in the society, are facing a lot of hurdles. Individually, they are putting their efforts to adapt themselves in various situations and are trying to maximise their goals. Also they are trying to achieve their goals in the university by forming organizations.

In these two universities, there are different student organisations. Some are managed by dominant caste and some by the Scheduled castes. The purpose of these organisations is to fulfil their demands. The working of these organisations is almost similar. They conduct meetings and discuss local, national or even international issues. They invite people for giving lectures, mostly academicians, political leaders and sometimes from bureaucracy and human rights commission. By inviting outsiders, they try to establish networks and strengthen their organisations, thus maintaining social contacts. This is to make their own caste students aware of the problems and present situation.

The respondents believe that through the activities of such organisations, the conditions of the dalits would improve. These organisations give them a sense of security. It reveals that the students are joining the organisations in order to protect their rights, to develop their position like gaining their own people and to have a sense of security.

The respondents who are the members of these organisations, attend meetings, take part in demonstrations, march rallies, processions and other minor works, like pasting posters, putting banners etc. These respondents who are not directly involved in these organisations, participate indirectly, by contributing money, giving donations or attending some meetings etc.

There are more problems and obstacles for the rural respondents as compared to the urban respondents. Also, the rural respondents have to make strategies in order to
adapt themselves in the totally new environment. For the rural, SC students the university environment is totally new with varied culture. Since they are coming from rural areas with Telugu as a medium of language, they face problem from the first day of admissions. They have to undergo different formalities, seek admissions in to the university, and get an accommodation. The rural respondents are all alone when they come to the university. They get help from the SC organisation or individuals from their own caste. They feel new to the place and the seniors of their own caste help them in getting the formalities done. The rural students try to find rooms along with their own caste people so as to feel secure and to get support.

Few of the rural students try to put efforts personally in order to improve their performance. They try to learn the language by reading English course books. Some by interacting with other students who are good at the languages. But most of the rural SC students, because of their inhibitions, do not interact with other people. Hence they do not find ways to improve their language or performance. They seek the help of the organisations in order to survive in the campus. The rural SC students are not able to come out of the caste boundaries in interacting with others. Their close friends are mostly from their own caste or of backward caste. Comparatively, more no. of rural SC students are the members of the organisations and actively participate in it as it safeguards their interest. In the Central University the SC organisations are more active and are successful in mobilising the students and achieving their goals by any means, either peacefully or forcefully, by agitation or by protesting.

In the Osmania University, the ABVP organisation is dominant, and the forward caste students like Reddys and Vellamas are the leaders. The SC students either join ABVP by force or some other student’s organisations like PDSU or DSA, which comprise of BC, women etc. Since the OU has a large student population, with different organisations the SC students are not dominating. Here the students try to be preoccupied with their courses and do some part time jobs. Most of them pursue B.Ed courses and try to find some job or the other, mostly teaching jobs and try to go out of the university. They keep a low profile, as the ABVP organisation is more active and powerful.

Though most of the students feel that the SC organisations are a must to safeguard their interest a few respondents reported that they are not happy with the ASA because of their aggressiveness and their way of approaching or solving the problem.
Few of the respondents commented that the activities of the ASA are mostly provoking others. They reported that the organisation wants to be in limelight. They want attention, and hence even over do things, overreact, and try to interfere in everything, which is not needed. They blow up even the small issues. They go for strikes and agitations for petty issues. They sometimes even manhandle the teachers. This makes the others feel the presence of such an organisation, presence of SC people. The people of the other caste develop a kind of antagonism for the SCs. They expressed that they are doing things, which are going against their own interest. The members overreact for petty things, go for agitation, paste posters, banners for every small issues, which is not needed. According to them, things can be solved in other peaceful ways without provoking others. They feel that they should fight for genuine cases only.

According to one of the respondent, the members of ASA are reactive and aggressive because they are the sufferers and have come up to this level of education crossing all the hurdles. So they have inculcated the feelings of aggressiveness and are reactive even for small issues. The respondents feel that the SC group is a minority. If they go for democratic rules, they are not cared for and are not given any justice, hence they have to adapt violent methods to make things work out. This strategy of being offensive, in-turn, acts as a defensive mechanism. The respondent reported that if they are active, aggressive and offensive, then only their interests can be pursued and also others will not try to trouble the SC students unnecessarily.

The respondents also reported that though the Constitution has given them privileges and concessions, but the people or the society is against it. This society or the forward caste people try to see that these privileges do not reach to the SCs and carry negative feelings and develop antagonism against the SC people. So the dalit organisations have to fight against this society in order to get the benefits and privileges meant for them, given by the Constitution.

From the interviews, discussions and observations, it can be opined that students did not imitate the Brahminical culture but a ‘modern secular culture’ and its attendant features of equality, homogeneity and this worldly pragmatism. The respondents did not believe in the Hindu caste system. They rejected the Hindu values and the caste codes. There are no signs of sanitization, instead they are adopting western lifestyle and value system. They do not feel bad in eating beef and feels it is nutritious. They are becoming more independent and are taking pride in revealing their
caste identity. They no more feel shy or try to hide their caste. Instead, with the growing political awareness and their rights and privileges, they are asserting themselves in the society under their own ‘dalit identity’. Their formation of organisation, and affiliating themselves to local, state and national politics, are creating their own niche. They are no more passive or mute spectators, but are actively coming out of it and revolting the caste system. Most of their affiliation and ideology is based on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s philosophy. They are ‘Ambedkarites’.

WORLD VIEW OF THE SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS

Worldview is a defined area of social life, which can be abstracted from observation of social life. Neither does social anthropology nor do its cognate disciplines, however, offer any widely accepted criteria for discussing worldview in a cross-cultural perspective. Geertz (1968) differentiates between ethos, which he calls the evaluative elements of a culture, and world view is the picture of the way things… are, their concept of nature, of self, of society”.

The worldview of people is their characteristic outlook. It is the inside view, the ways in which a person of the group typically sees himself in relation to his world. It includes his mapping of that world, that is to day, the categories he uses in his perception of the familiar and of the strange. It includes the emphasis he places on what he sees, the choices he makes from among the alternatives he knows (David G. Mandelbaum, 1972).

Worldview of the university SC students is not based on the scriptures, traditions of village, but is largely based on modern democratic resources, i.e., the constitution of India. They are in the process of deriving their inspiration from Ambedkar’s philosophy, which outline the issues of caste, downtrodden and deprived people in the contemporary modern society.

They have a feeling that their emancipation from the stigmatized lives is possible only by adopting the modern democratic universal principles, and Indian constitution is such a symbol for them. The reverence for Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is perhaps for the reasons that he is identified for shaping Indian Constitution and polity in which protective discrimination is provided to SC and ST, to give them the opportunity in various spheres of life. The reverence is also due to the fact that he
belonged to Scheduled Caste and in spite of all the hurdles he could pursue higher and became an epitome of struggle for dalits.

In the study none stated or identified any legendary figure from Indian history or of contemporary times except Ambedkar, who had put forth the vision and strategy for their emancipation. They strongly believe in the constitution of India and its spirit. They feel that the benefits of the constitution can only be realized after educating themselves and by occupying the decision-making positions.

These students feel that the forward caste groups are hostile and do not want them to progress. The forward caste people are not able to reconcile with the fact that the persons whose lives were under their control are now trying to be equals. They are against their interest and hence try to dominate and suppress them. They try to make sure that the SCs do not supersede in different areas like education, employment etc. The students feel that the constitution has provided them with concessions, privileges and safeguards. Through these privileges only, they can rise in life. Their people are represented in parliament, who act as a pressure group to safeguard their interest. Most of them believe that only political power is the way to improve their status. By grabbing power, they can develop their own community. So, a greater number of educated SC students are becoming politically active. At the university level they are trying to organize themselves. They are trying to mobilize their people, educate them and trying to make them aware of their rights and privileges. By organizing, they are trying to pressurize different authorities to fulfil their demands. While in the university itself, they are trying to affiliate themselves with the mainstream politics and wish to become political leaders in future.

The scheduled caste students believe in a secular identity, which is not shaped and influenced by the religious philosophy. Their ideology is transcending to modern democratic society largely influenced by the technological and economical changes. There is an indication of inner and apparent urge to be associated in the mainstream line of politics and bureaucracy. Education has been perceived as a tool to transit in to the world where their identities matter by their achievements and not by their ascribed status.

There is a perceptible rejection of caste system even from the functionalist and integrative point of view. Caste system, as of today, though still deep rooted in Indian social system (in terms of practice and in psyche) and quite alive in rural set-up, does
not seem to serve the purpose at least for the educated youth, who are neither willing to follow traditional livelihood pattern, nor want to inherit the stigmas and disabilities associated with the ascribed status to them. The only utility that they feel about the caste system for them is the protective discrimination provided by the law. This is the reason why some of them are not in favor of abolishing the whole of the caste system, as it might lead to withdrawal of benefits. It is often explained that they have to be protectively discriminated because of the historical reasons for keeping their lot, aloof and deprived from the sources of knowledge, economy and political power which has rendered them backward, poverty stricken and power less.

The last fifty years or more are not just enough to bring out any significant change in their status. They feel the protective discrimination is not implemented with any great zeal and no desired result is achieved.

The various Legislative Acts and Constitutional Provisions have in fact favored the forging ahead of the dalit identities. Infact caste is alive for them not because they cannot get away with it, but because caste status provides them the safeguards, security and pressure tactics. Moreover, the class mobility and social change is too slow to eliminate casteism in India. Therefore, lower status itself has become a tool for their economic and political empowerment in the society, where there is a large gradient in living standards among high caste and low caste. To remain dalit is a blessing in disguise because without the state intervention there is hardly any mechanism by the state or any will/obligation on the part of the privileged lot of the society to bring the poor lower caste persons in to the mainstream. Reservation is considered as an important tool to force the social, economic and political change in the lives of the dalits.

Most of the SC students feel that the caste identities may not get extinguished in near future for the reasons that caste annihilation is not at all possible without political and economic equality. There is also a general feeling that reservation should continue for longer period till they are empowered.

Reservation has been perceived as a remedy for all evils, though it is a passive effort on the part of government and lacks the required dynamism, compassion and enthusiasm in implementing reservation policies. To some, reservation is a strategy in Indian polity as a short-term measure to appease and curb the feeling of revolt among
dalits against the system and as per their vision, the change would take place only when they are at the center stage of all sorts of development.

SC students are in the process of adopting the strategies to achieve their goals through three phases of struggle; first is peaceful, second is agitation and third is violence. But most of them believe in Ambedkar’s philosophy of ‘Educate, Agitate, Organize’.

The same worldview is not necessarily shared by those who have not experienced the bitterness of caste system as by an economically deprived, rural families. Students coming from well to do families feel alienated from the caste based organizations as they feel that it is the economic status, which really matters. The whole struggle to them is transcendence from a caste identity to a class identity. A sound economic background does not inflict a person with disabilities associated with lower caste status. However, the study has not explored the practical connotations of caste versus class status in the Indian context. But some feel that the class mobility does help in positive attitudes towards life. They feel that they can live without revealing their caste identity, as the caste may not matter in their occupation and urban living setup. Perhaps they wish to live with an illusion of being equal as the caste status is a big question when true interaction like matrimonial alliances are considered. Thus, there is a conscious effort to search the required strength and dynamism within them to establish their identities as dignified human beings in the society.