CONCLUSION

Present research study, i.e., Education and Gender Equality: An Inquiry into the Status of Scheduled Caste Women of Aligarh (U.P), is targeting towards one of the most negligent sections of the Indian society, i.e., Scheduled Caste women. For the purpose of this study, sample of 250 respondents were taken up from two tehsils of district Aligarh namely Koil and Khair. Fourteen respondents were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Present study is aimed with the four main objectives, these objectives helped the researcher to give a general direction to the study. The objectives are:

1. How much education of women has increased among the Scheduled Caste & what are the educational standards of women belonging to Scheduled Caste community?

2. How far the community takes its own initiative to educate women?

3. Does education really help to reduce gender inequality? If yes, then how much?

4. How far the education is liberating an emancipator?

The foregoing results show that inequalities based on education and gender are weakening in today’s Modern Indian Society, which is changing fast. Therefore, changes are also coming into the status of women and when we talk about the status of Scheduled Caste women, their status is also getting uplifted but the speed of this change is gradual. Though when we
compare these changes with the ancient and pre-independence period, their status has improved a lot.

The present study is unique in the quest with respect to those Scheduled Caste women who witness a change in their status based on education and gender and who reaped the fruit of different government programmes and policies. An analysis of the data collected through the field work and case studies shows that the post independence period has witnessed so many positive changes in the status of the women belonging to the Scheduled Caste community. The position of Scheduled Caste women is interesting. On one hand government has promised to raise their status and on the other hand only urban women and women belonging to higher status are enjoying the benefits of the developmental Schemes and policies run by the Government of India. Rural women or the women belonging to the lower strata are still in a miserable position and struggling for better facilities. A discussion over these issues will be in order.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA:

Ancient India has an eminent status of women. Ancient India was marked by the glorious position of the women. They were given the position of Goddess. Women belonging to this period enjoyed participation in every sphere of life, be it political or social. Lopamudra, Vidyotma are some of the eminent women scholars of that time.

In Vedic period the condition of women deteriorated with the introduction of untouchability and confinement of the women to the four
walls of the house. Actually, this was the period where caste system and gender inequality made its way.

In the Medieval period the condition of women still continued with its deteriorating phase. Even the great Mughal Empire was not able to help the situation.

In the British Era, Britishers were not aware about the prevailing caste situation and gender inequality, they in indirect way started giving equal opportunities to the people of India, irrespective of their caste and gender. With the introduction of modern educational system in India and new communication set-up and their rational thinking showed a ray of hope to the various social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar, Mahatma Gandhi, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Jyotiba Phule, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. The policy which was started by these reformers was continued by Kanshiram for the betterment of Harijans. Their contribution proved to be a mile-stone in the process of building the awakened and modern India where the presence of women is strongly felt by the participation in the freedom struggle shoulder to shoulder with men.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN POST-INDEPENDENT ERA:

As it is evident that before the advent of Britishers, the condition of women was not satisfactory. They were the sufferers of suppression, negligence and victims of physical and mental harassment. With the advent
of Britishers, the condition of women started improving. Britishers opened the door of educational institutions to all the citizens of India.

After independence, the Government of India continued this tradition, the pattern of education for all and gave special emphasis on the education of women belonging to all castes. National Educational Policy of 1986, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mahila Samakhya, Five-year Plans, National Programme for Education of girls at Elementary Level, Shiksha Karmi Project, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalayas, Jan-Shikshan Sansthan, Institute of Open Schooling are some of the main Governmental schemes to achieve the goal of women education in India.

Government of India also set-up National Council for Educational Research and Training and National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, these were set-up for the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which carried out a number of studies relating to educational programmes and schemes for Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

The impact of these schemes is visible in Aligarh Distt. also. Scheduled Castes people are also taking benefit of these schemes which helped them to raise their status socially as well as educationally.

**RESERVATION POLICY:**

On the issue of Reservation Policy, almost all the respondent said that this supports Scheduled Caste Community without it the women of Scheduled Caste Community could not make progress to the level they have
today, they said that without reservation a major section of Scheduled Caste Community will find very difficult to get Government jobs. The Constitution of India under Articles 14-18, provided right to equality and equal opportunity to all the citizens of India irrespective of their caste, creed, gender and race.

Women reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions provided 33% reservation in the total seats. But the condition of District is not satisfactory as the low participation of women in election and their negligible presence in Panchayati Raj Institution working.

Provisions of Constitution, Government Policies, Schemes and Panchayati Raj Institutions has provided women opportunities in every sphere. They contributed a lot to the women empowerment and made her self-reliant and competent enough to take and handle situations even at the higher levels and demand their share of dominance in Parliament and the National Level also in the form of ‘Women Reservation Bill’.

**FACTORS OF GENDER EQUALITY:**

On the issue of factors that enhanced and deteriorate the women of Scheduled Caste Community, almost all of the respondents said that education is the strongest factor that opens the door of development and equality in Scheduled Caste Community, various respondent said that different factors which are responsible for the Scheduled Caste Community are as follows:
Reservation
Modernization
Urbanization
Sound Economic Position
Political Power
Standard of Living
Consciousness towards their Rights
Secular Values

These were the major factors that enhance the status of Scheduled Caste Community and factors that are deteriorating the status of women of this community are as follows:

Poverty
Illiteracy
Lack of Educational Background
Lack of Determination
Custom of Dowry
Lack of Unity
Ignorance
Unemployment
Discrimination
Alcoholism of the Male Members
Gambling by the Male Members
UNTOUCHABILITY:

It is observed that almost all the respondent said that untouchability is still prevalent in our society. It is more visible in rural areas than urban areas. However, it is generally accepted that untouchability is practiced in lower section of the society and people of higher class do not think much about it.

It is analyzed that some of the studies showed that untouchability exists in urban areas also and one of it, shows that even if the women of Scheduled Caste Community holds a professional position still faces social discrimination in the form of avoidance, less interaction and hence, limiting the relationship.

In the course of the study, many respondents said that whether untouchability is still present in the mind-set of the people belonging to higher caste but it is also analyzed that this practice has weakened as the modernization and Government Policies has taken over the rigidity of the caste system. Now days, more importance is given to the economic condition, educational standards, values and civil rights, which has made Scheduled Caste more acceptable to the Hindu religion.

Practice of untouchability declared an offence under the Act of 1955. It out laws all the imposition, disabilities on the ground of untouchability in virtually all fields of activity except home life, private religious ceremonies and private employment.
Andre Beteille in his “Caste: Old and New” states that the new educational system plays a very significant role. Education along with income and occupation becomes the basis of new forms of social differentiation, which tends to cut across differences based on the caste.

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:**

Educated women of Scheduled Caste Community are fully conscious towards their rights and constitutional provisions whereas rural women are also aware of political power due to political activities during Panchayati Raj Elections.

It is analyzed that almost all the respondents are aware about their political rights. Women respondents are of the opinion that there should be more representation from their community in the political sphere. They strongly believe that their M.L.A./M.P./C.M. should be represented by their community in more numbers.

It is observed that most of the respondents cast their vote for BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party); on the other hand, few of them cast their vote in favour of Congress and other parties. The reason behind casting their vote to BSP is that they want strong political representation as they believe only then they will be able to mobilize themselves from the downtrodden condition to a better and secure position.
ROLE MODEL:

In the course of the present study, it was found that most of the respondents considered Ms. Mayawati as their role model and rest of the respondent pay great respect to other personalities such as Ahilya Bai Holkar, Sonia Gandhi and Meera Kumar at the national level and Bhagwan Devi (Ex. Deputy Mayor, Aligarh City), Ram Sakhi Katheria (Ex. M.L.A., Aligarh), Kalpana Maurya (Chairperson, Tehsil-Khair, Distt. Aligarh) at the local level are some of the renowned persons in Aligarh.

PRIVITIZATION OF EDUCATION:

It is observed that, on the issue of privatization of education, most of the respondents said that privatization of education will not be beneficial for the poor section of society as they are not able to pay the heavy fees which is charged by Private Schools/Colleges in general and Scheduled Caste in particular. Only higher class and creamy layer class can send their children to the private schools and colleges.

Privatization of education prevents the women and girls to go to the schools and colleges because their parents are less concerned about their education in these expensive institutions.

On this issue, Jha stated that the formation of Human Capital is tremendously influenced by the standards of education made available by the educational institutions, particularly in the Developing Countries like
our, further, he said that an urgent task before policy makers is to make possible qualitative improvements in the system of education.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER FOR WOMEN:**

It is observed that almost all respondents have positive attitude about higher educations and a better career for women. However in practice lower class hardly educates their girls. Though middle class have been providing education to their girls but after completion of their graduation of girl they, first attempt to arrange a partner for her.

The present scenario shows that higher class, which belongs to higher status, wants that their daughter should be an I.A.S./ P.C.S., doctor and engineer. It is observed from society that persons who have consciousness towards changing environment of our society motivate their daughters to get higher education and career. It is also noticed that daughters who have got education through convent/ public schools are inclined to enter in the job market. These daughters are highly conscious about the changing position of women in the society, human rights, family and marriage life. She is more career oriented. It is also a fact that working women supports the family in addition to her housewifely duties. Middle class parents, who earlier not interested in the career of their daughter, are now also motivating their girl to be a career oriented.

All the respondents believe that education is the strongest factor which takes the people up to different heights. Reservation, Modernization,
Urbanization, Sound Economic Position, Political Power, Standard of Living, Consciousness towards their Rights, Secular Values are the other factors responsible for gender equality and the progress of the whole community. On the other hand Poverty, Illiteracy, Lack of Educational Background, Lack of Determination, Custom of Dowry, Lack of Unity, Ignorance, Unemployment, Discrimination, Alcoholism of the Male Members, Gambling by the Male Members are some of the factors responsible to deteriorate the status of the women belonging to Scheduled Caste community.

In the course of the present study, it is finding out through case studies with the help of observation that education is an important agent of social change not only for the women of Scheduled Caste but also for the community as a whole. It is also proved that reservation, standard of living, sound economic position and political power change the attitude of other castes towards the Scheduled Caste people in the society. A lot of awakening has come in the mindset of Scheduled Caste people, as a result they started sending their girls to schools/colleges, which automatically led to increase educational level among the women of Scheduled Caste. mass media, governmental schemes and self-awareness played a very significant role in bringing this change.

Present study reveals that, to some extent education has been quite successful in removing the gender inequality in the form of the long awaited change in the perception of concerned people. Initially, girls were
considered as a burden on the parent’s shoulder but now with the changing circumstances and perception parents started considering them as an important member of their family and encouraging them to participate in various spheres of life. Finally, the decreased rate of female drop outs, female participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions show the education really helped to reduce gender inequality.

During the course of the present study, the researcher found that education again liberating an emancipation of women as they have become more economically independent and aware about their basic rights at domestic as well as social level. Now, they know very well how to take part in the social, political and economic front.

In the light of above description it is concluded that education and gender equality affect the down trodden community. As it is evident that untouchability is still prevailing in society in latent form, scheduled caste people are more inclined towards the education, not only for the boys but also for girls.

Indeed government and the community itself struggling hard for the upliftment of scheduled caste women but is, lot to do with the mindset of the people, specially in rural areas, where the women are yet to find a niche for herself.