CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

If the enhancement of people’s capacity to improve their own lives is the main aim and measure of development, then nothing could contribute more directly to its achievement than education and literacy (Grant, 1989).

India is a welfare state. Its aim, therefore, is the all round development of the individual, the society and the community. (Belvi, 1994). But its destiny is tied to the division of man into distinct classes with understood functions and place in overall society.

This division is termed as 'Caste' derived from the Latin 'Castus', meaning pure or unmixed. It indicates that all persons in a stratum are of one unmixed social heritage (Anderson, 1966).

CASTE

To define a caste is harder than to give the derivation of the term. Hutton (1981) writes, a caste system is "One whereby a society is divided up into a number of self-contained and completely segregated units, (castes) the mutual relations between which are ritually determined in a graded scale".

Caste is Universal

Caste is presumably the world’s largest insurance for which one does not pay a formal or regular premium (Lohia, 1979). It is not a phenomenon peculiar to
India. The Japanese have their bura-kumin, the 'untouchables' and ethnicity in South-East Asia has also bred many so called sub-cultures and race distinctions. Chandrasekhar, (1946) claims that the West might have developed a similar caste system, had not the guilds of the medieval period been demolished by the Industrial Revolution. It is accepted, nonetheless, that in traditional society, particularly villages such as those in India and other Asian countries, there are even more subtle variations in the caste system.

**Peculiarity of Indian Caste System**

In India, caste is supposed to be a polar opposite to the other societies, with maximum emphasis on ascription and least emphasis on achievement (Paranjpe, 1970). The system that rose on the soil of united states, was a system of group slavery; the man born in a low caste in India, was a slave for everybody.

Stevenson, (1954) speaks of ritual status which seems to characterize status grading in the Indian caste system more than ascriptive emphasis or anything else. He makes a distinction between secular status and ritual status. Secular status is determined by criteria like wealth, education, occupation, and skill while ritual status is determined by the concepts of purity and pollution. The secular kind of status is universal, while ritual status seems to be an exclusive characteristic of Indian caste system.

**Evolution of the Caste System**

The exact origin of the caste system can not be traced but the system is said to have originated in India. The Greek, the Chinese, the Persian and other
observers right from the days of Alexander have left their memoirs which describe the caste system in India. There is also internal evidence which traces the origin of caste system to the hymns of the Rig Veda itself. (Kuppuswamy, 1989). The records of the Indo-Aryan culture contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up caste.

In the primitive days of the development of human society, division of labour on the basis of occupation and profession might have been the need of the day. So, the division was made. As such, some of the characteristics of casteism are as primitive as primitive society itself.

There are various theories, regarding the evolution of the caste system in India. According to the racial theory, the caste system took its birth after the arrival of Aryans in India. The political theory describes the caste system as a clever device invented by the Brahmans in order to place themselves in the highest ladder of social hierarchy.

As it is envisioned by the occupational theory, the origin of caste system can be found in the nature and quality of social work performed by the various groups of people. Those professions which were regarded as better and respectable made the persons who performed them superior to those who were engaged in dirty professions. The caste system is of divine origin, according to the traditional theory.

Whatever may be the idea behind the caste system, as a result, a four principal partition was made. The first and the most distinguished of all is that of
Brahmins; the second in rank is that of Kshatriya or Rajas; the third the Vaisya or merchants and cultivators and the last that of Sudras or cultivators, subordinate to the others. (Pope, 1989).

**Traditional Features of Casteism in India**

The feature of caste that strikes even the most superficial observer is hereditary specialisation. The work, a man does is not determined by his aptitude or desire but his descent. Family and profession are coupled. It is not only the right but also the duty of a son to follow the avocation of his father.

Each caste, being a social unit in itself, is autonomous, having its own Panchayat which enforces conduct appropriate to that caste. It is a form of differentiation whereon the constituent units of the system justify endogamy on the basis of putative biological differences which are signalled by the realisation of multiple social practices. For Green, (1964) it is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down the status ladder, at least ideally, may not occur.

Differentiation and discrimination on the basis of caste led to the segmental division of society which again implied social distance and hierarchy. The idea of hierarchy is omnipresent in the caste system; not only do the various castes form a hierarchy but the occupations practised by them, the various items of their diet and the customs they observe, all form separate hierarchies. Thus practising an occupation such as butchery, tanning, herding swine, or handling toddy puts a caste in a low position. Eating pork or beef is more defiling than eating fish or mutton.
Inequalities, special privileges and mutual repulsion are the result of the four hierarchical groups - the highest castes, the upper castes, the lower and the lowest castes.

**SCHEDULED CASTES**

Scheduled castes are, by and large, the former untouchables, coined by a British administrator in the year 1911. (Singh, 1983). Since the 1930s it became increasingly necessary for the Government of India, to evolve a suitable term for these depressed people. But ever since the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935, they were named as scheduled castes, which was continued in the Constitution of India, 1950. (Sharma, 1983). Harijan, a popular usage which refers to a number of low caste group is almost used as a synonym. The word 'Harijan' meaning 'Children of God' was first used by a great Gujarati saint Narsimha Mehta, and later adopted by Gandhiji to refer to the heterogeneous masses of untouchables. (Mishra, 1992). Although he meant well and caste Hindus still use it, ex-untouchables resent the implied condescension.

**Genesis of the Scheduled Castes**

As it is known, traditionally the entire Indian population is stratified on the basis of birth and occupation, into distinct groups having customs, traditions and values of their own. The head of the hierarchy had been occupied by the socially advantaged, who were religious and rigidly follow the norms of the traditional Hindu society, like vegetarianism. The non-vegetarians, whose food habits kill the animals and living beings and the agriculturists whose ploughs injure the earth and destroy living things, are the socially disadvantaged for ritual and socio-religious reasons.
It may be a news that within the scheduled castes, there is a hierarchy. The pure untouchables had abjured beef and anathematic diet and polluted others by their touch. They were above the impure untouchables who were concerned with scavenging and cleansing the dead animals. (Chitra, et al., 1994).

Addition of some theories of genesis of untouchability may well pave the way for a clear understanding. Ambedkar (1948) states that the Aryan nomads who settled in village communities were the 'Broken Men' from the original group. The theory of eating the meat of a dead cow says that eating beef, that too, carcass of a cow by a few groups reduced their status to untouchability. According to the excommunication theory, the bad actions of some group caused them to be excommunicated from the upper varnas permanently. The racial discrimination theory concludes that the original inhabitants of the country, who, when conquered by the invaders, became the servants. However, anthropological investigations have proved that the Harijans are not racially different from the members of the higher castes of India (Prakash 1989).

Scheduled Castes in the Pre-British India

In pre-British India, if economic, social and even ritual relation between the castes of a region are taken into account, Harijans were an integral part of the system. All castes living in a village or a cluster of neighbouring villages were bound together by economic and social ties. The Jajmani System, existed then, tied the highest and the lowest castes in a strong bond of mutual dependence. Moreover, all rituals required the participation of several castes. During a wedding, more than eighteen castes came together.
Certainty of position in the ranked order of caste was not, however, a characteristic of caste at the existential level. Despite the commonly held belief that hierarchy in Hindu society was clearly defined and operational, in actual practice only the position of the Brahmins at the top of the ritual scale and Harijans at the bottom was relatively stable. In between there was ambiguity about the status of several castes, an ambiguity that was acceptable to all concerned. This itself produced a large extent of fluidity in the system. (Jain, 1990).

Srinivas (1989) writes, actually, even the two ends of the caste system were not as firm as they were made out to be. Some Brahmin groups were regarded as low that even Harijans would not accept cooked food from them. Disputes regarding caste rank occasionally reached the king, whose verdict was final. Thus the position of castes in the hierarchy as it actually existed was liable to change.

**Scheduled Castes in British India**

It is not generally known that the India of rigid social stratification and hierarchical ranking was largely a British creation and that in their attempt to comprehend and control the Indian social order, the British set in motion, forces that transformed the older system in a fundamental way. As late as the eighteenth century, the hierarchical ordering of Hindu society was not an established fact over large parts of the sub-continent. It was only the British determination to tame all floating populations and in the nineteenth century, the British rule broke up the homogeneity of small groups over small areas and encouraged horizontal
organisation of castes over vast stretches of land that finally led to their amalgamation with the agrarian society. Thus British rule destroyed the local character of the caste system.

A different classification of caste groups was made under the British administration in India. This was a fourfold division of Hindu society: Brahman, non-Brahman high castes, Backward Classes or low castes, and Depressed Classes or Untouchables. (Rajagopal, 1985).

**The Oppression of the Weak and Defenceless**

The scheduled castes, who occupy the lower rungs of stratification system have been facing the most virulent form of discrimination. They suffer from a cultural and socio-economic deprivation which does not attune them to demands and opportunities of modern life. The disabilities suffered by them, since time immemorial, were the ugliest manifestation of man's inhumanity to man.

The disabilities they suffer can be grouped mainly into two categories. First they are barred from civil utilities, such as the use of wells, tanks and roads. Secondly they suffer from entering temples, burial grounds and other institutions. The segregation of certain specified castes from the settled portion of the village or town occupied by the upper caste Hindus became the most obvious form of civil disability suffered by the untouchables all over India, until recently.

'Chandala' a term referred to a degraded person, who is ranked along with the dog and the pig was used to refer the deprived untouchable groups.
Gandhiji remarked, that socially the untouchables are treated as lepers and economically they are worse than slaves. (Mishra, 1992)

Thus, they have remained grilled to the wheels of exploitation and oppression in the society. Even today they are a neglected lot, vastly discriminated against, in terms of income distribution and social status.

**The Emphatic Protest of the Reformers**

The institution of untouchability which became very rigid after the fourth century A.D., suffered a death blow during the twelfth century from the Veerashaivas of Karnataka. From the twelfth century onwards, owing to stronger impact of Hinduism, the institution of caste, sub-caste and untouchability once again came into practice. Saints and religious reforms in different centuries have advocated the removal of untouchability from the Hindu society. The movements of revolt and reform were led by saints such as Ramananda, Kabir, Ravidas (Raidas), Eknath, Tukaram, Chaitanya, Nanak and many others.

During the nineteenth century, Indian social, political and religious leaders gave thought to the upliftment of untouchables and propagated the need for the removal of untouchability from the Indian society. Tilak, Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Anne Besant worked for the eradication of untouchability.

The seed that was sown during the nineteenth century grew into a big tree in the twentieth century. Among the national leaders who fought against the
social disabilities of the untouchables, Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Narayana Guru in Kerala and Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra played a dominant role.

Jyotiba Phule (1827 - 1890) was the pioneer in improving the condition and securing social equality to the erstwhile untouchables.

By means of modern education and sanskritisation, Narayana Guru (1854 - 1928) was able to transform the Ezhavas from an untouchable group to a backward caste within a short period of 30 years. Bhima Rao Ambedkar (1891 - 1956) was a highly educated leader of the untouchables, who drafted articles to abolish untouchability. Gandhi (1869 - 1948) along with his involvement in the removal of social disabilities fasted unto death against a separate electorate for Harijans.

**Post - Independent India**

Though the untouchable castes spent their social energy in the blind alley of sanskritisation and emulated the life-style of the reference group that enjoyed a high and ritual status, they did not have the economic resources at their command; neither did they have the aura of history behind them and they found themselves in the arid zone of vanishing dreams. Hence ameliorative and welfare programmes, described by Ambedkhar as 'Political Charity' were launched. Before independence, these programmes were promoted by non-official agencies.

With the dawn of independence, India has committed herself to the ideal of modern society based on equality of opportunity and in conformity with this
avowed aims of our constitution, viz - socialism, secularism and democracy, the Government of India adopted a policy of 'protective discrimination' with a view to redressing the imbalance in the matter of social justice.

This governmental policies of 'positive discrimination' promote social justice by acting as justifiable correctives to the more noxious ascriptive features of the stratification system. They facilitate the integration of minority groups by providing them with opportunities for upward social mobility within a relatively stable consensual framework.

There are two aspects of the legal provisions in the constitution. The first is that under Part III 'Fundamental Rights', several articles explicitly state that everyone is equal before the law and discrimination by the state or citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth is prohibited. In the same spirit, untouchability is abolished. The second legal aspect is that several articles in other parts of the constitution require the state to discriminate in favour of certain 'backward classes'. The spirit of these legal provisions is perhaps expressed in Article 46, which occurs in Part IV entitled 'Directive Principles of State Policy and it states, "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

This policy is carried out by federal union and the state governments, in specific ways that are aimed at the political, economic and religious axes of power in
society, in the form of 'Reservation', whereby seats in educational institutions and jobs in organisations are reserved for certain underprivileged groups of people so that their interests are protected. (Seshagiri, 1993)

In every state or federal election, only members of the SCs or STs may contest from certain electoral constituencies. In addition to these reserved constituencies, they may contest from any other general electoral constituencies.

Also a certain percentage of jobs in government sector is set apart for members of SCs and STs.

Further, the policy of reservation is aimed at education. The state and federal governments have encouraged the admission of scheduled caste and tribe children to schools. Specifically government financial support is withheld to schools which discriminate against members of the SCs. In educational institutions such as science and professional colleges, where competition for admission is extremely high, a certain percentage (18% for SCs and 1% for STs) of seats is set aside for those belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. Further, pupils from scheduled castes and tribes are entitled to special scholarships and maintenance grants while pursing their studies.

The Constitution of India, promulgated in 1950, specified that the reservation of seats in the legislatures was to be borne in force for ten years. Amendments enacted immediately prior to the deadline, however, have extended the legal validity of the policy for the 1960-1970, 1970-1980 and 1980-1990 decades. (Zachariah, 1982)
The importance of the development of SCs and STs had been identified and it was included in the new 20 point programme of the Prime Minister (Kuppuswamy, 1989).

With effect from April 1, 1989 the government have imposed ban on dereservation of vacancies reserved for SCs and STs in direct recruitment to posts in group A, B, C and D. However the carry forward of the vacancies falling due to the non-availability of SCs and STs for selection in appointment by transfer and promotion shall be for a total period of four recruitment years. ie. year of recruitment plus three subsequent recruitment years (Performance Budget, 1992).

South Indian Scenario

The Aryan theory, that mankind is divided into four varnas was wholly foreign to the southern Dravidians and the distinction of the castes observed by the Aryans did not exist among Tamils. The expression 'twice-born' was always used in Tamil literature to denote only the Brahmins and it is evident therefore that the Kshatriya and the Vaisya, who wore the sacred thread, were not known in Tamilakam. "There is no reference to the term 'Sudra' in the whole of Tholkappiyam. It refers to four professional castes such as Arasar (Kshatriya or rulers) Anthanantar or Parper (Brahmins), Vanikar (Merchants) and Vellalar (Agriculturists).

Next in rank to the Vellalas were the shepherds and huntsmen. Below these were the artisans such as goldsmiths, carpenters, potters etc. After this came
the military class i.e., the Padaiaachchier or the armed men. Last of all were the Valayar and Pulayar or the fishermen and scavengers respectively. (Iyengar, 1989)

In all the districts of the peninsula, the Pariahs were subjected to the ill-treatment of other caste groups. Besides the caste of Pariahs, there is the caste of Pallar which is little known but in the kingdom of Madura and other parts bordering on Cape Comorin (Pope, 1989). They are an industrious, hard-working and hard-worked class of land labourers, found mostly in Madras Presidency and especially in the southern districts. (Oppert, 1988). They boast superiority over Pariahs, because they do not eat the flesh of cow or ox, but the Pariahs held them to be far beneath themselves.

The caste of the (Chakkili) shoemakers is held to be very infamous in all the provinces of the peninsula, and are inferior to the Pariahs, from the baseness of their sentiments and the total want of honour of all feeling of shame.

Two of the lowest castes are Barbers and the Washermen, one or more families of whom exercise their respective trades in every village. The Barber is obliged to shave and to cut the hair and nails of all the inhabitants of the village. As to the Washerman, he is bound to wash all the clothing which men and women wear.

Adi-Dravida was the new name for the Tamil speaking untouchables. There are still a great many other detached castes in the southern parts of India, all living in a state of degradation and contempt.
'The Hindu' of December 24, 1932 wrote 'In Tirunelveli district there is a class of unseables called Purada Vannans, who wash the clothes of other exterior castes. They are not allowed to come out during day-time, because their sight is considered to be pollution and they work between midnight and day break.'

The unique feature of caste system in South India is the two sections: right-hand and left-hand castes (Rao, 1988). To the right-hand section belong various cultivating and trading castes and also one of the lowest, the Pariahs. Artisans belong to the left-hand group. Brahmans and other castes stand aloof and belong to neither section.

Beteille, (1969) has observed that the disabilities from which the depressed classes suffered with regard to the use of amenities such as wells and roads, temples or status symbols such as dress and ornaments, are more severe in Madras Presidency than elsewhere.

Srinivas (1989) has written, while Brahmin dominance in certain areas is general to peninsular India, it is particularly striking in Tamil Nadu.

**EDUCATION - A MEANS TO AN END**

Education has been considered as a basic instrument of national development. According to Ogbu, (1982) 'Education in a given society is intently related to the society's status mobility system, which is the society's approved theory and methods of self-advancement in a hierarchy of social goods, particularly in the occupational ladder of modern industrial societies'.
Hence, any meaningful upward social mobility of the deprived community would not be achieved in the absence of education. But casteism and social prejudices have been operating as barriers to the spread of education among the SCs and STs (Dhan, 1991). These barriers could be removed only when they occupy equal positions in the office, which necessitates the provision of educational opportunities to teach those skills and behaviours necessary for survival or success in society.

Educational Schemes

There are centrally operated and centrally sponsored schemes. Most of the welfare schemes have been invariably launched by the central government, but implemented through the state governments. The Collectors of the districts are responsible for the implementation of ameliorative measures. Christian scheduled castes are given scholarships by the state governments.

Under the reservation policy 18 per cent of the seats have been reserved for the scheduled castes in all educational institutions and jobs. Free education is ensured at all stages to Adi - Dravida and Tribal children.

The schemes available can be categorized into

i. scholarships and awards
ii. separate schools and hostels and
iii. compensatory coaching and training
Pre-Matric Scholarship

Under this scheme, all text books are supplied to all the students of standard I to VIII by the Education Department under the Puratchi Thalaivar M.G.R. Nutritious Meal Programme. For the scheduled caste (Hindu), scheduled tribes and scheduled castes (converts) in standard IX & X free books are issued by the Adi - Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department. Note-books are supplied free of cost to these communities in standard IV to X in general schools. They are exempted from payment of special fees and examination fees, which would be paid by the Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department. Besides, residential scholarships are sanctioned to students in standard VI to X who are residing in hostels, attached to the schools. The income limit of the parent/guardian for the sanction of the residential scholarship for these pre-matric course is Rs.15,000 per annum from the academic year 1989-90.

The centrally sponsored scheme of award of pre-matric scholarships to the children of those engaged in unclean occupation is being continued. One child per family is eligible for this scholarship. The income limit was Rs. 12,000 per annum upto 1990-91. The income limit has been enhanced to Rs.18000 per annum with effect from November 1, 1990 and it has been extended to the day - scholars also. A sum of Rs.200 per month is given to those in standard VI to VIII and Rs.250 per month to those in standard IX and X. The rates of scholarship for day-scholars are, Rs.25/-, Rs.40/- and Rs.50/- per month for ten months, for those in I to V, VI to VIII and IX to X standard respectively.
Post-Matric Scholarship

In the post-matric stage, tuition is free to all students belonging to Adi-Dravidar (Hindu), scheduled tribes and Adi-Dravidar converts to Christianity regardless of the income of their parents / guardian. Both residential and non-residential scholarships are awarded to the students belonging to Adi-Dravidar and scheduled tribe (including converts to Christianity) for Higher Secondary, Post-Matric Arts, Science and Professional Courses. The annual income limit of the parent/guardian for Government of India Scholarship is Rs.24,000 from July 1, 1989.

The Adi-Dravidar (Hindu) and scheduled tribe students who are not eligible for Government of India scholarships and Adi-Dravidar converts to Christianity are sanctioned state scholarships. The income limit for this scholarship is Rs.15,000/- per annum from the academic year 1989-90.

Under the free education scheme upto graduate level, special fees and examination fees in respect of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes/scheduled caste converts to Christianity pursuing +1, +2, B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., courses and who are not covered under State/Government of India Scholarship Schemes are reimbursed to the Heads of Institutions. The scheme has been extended to professional courses subject to the condition that the parental income does not exceed Rs.15,000 per annum and the student should be the first graduate in the family.

Incentive Schemes

The awards to bright students are sanctioned under this scheme. Two boys and two girls among each category - the scheduled caste (Hindu), scheduled caste
converts to Christianity and scheduled tribes, who secure first two ranks in S.S.L.C. Examination in each district are selected and helped to continue their studies. There is neither income limit nor a pre-condition that under the scheme they should reside in hostels. The awards are sanctioned at the rate of Rs.80 per month, for a period of 6 years provided they continue their studies.

**Gandhi Memorial Award**

After passing higher secondary examination, it is sanctioned from the year 1980-81, to the Adi-Draider Community (Hindu) students in addition to the regular scholarship. One boy and one girl from each district who secure first mark in the district in the higher secondary examination will be awarded Rs.1500 each for the first year and Rs.1000 per annum for the subsequent 5 years.

**Merit-Cum-Means Award**

From each District, one boy and one girl from Adi-Draider converts to christianity and one boy and one girl belonging to scheduled tribes who secure first mark in the district in the higher secondary examination are awarded the merit-cum-means award on the lines of Gandhi Memorial Award.

**Ad hoc Merit Grant**

A scheme of an ad hoc grant of Rs.300/- was introduced in the year 1976-77 to each of the Adi-Draider / scheduled tribes and to each of the
Adi-Dravidar convert to Christianity who secure 60 per cent and above marks in the S.S.L.C. Public Examination. It has been extended to students who secure 60 per cent and above marks in the final year higher secondary examination from 1980 - 81.

**Prize Money Award**

This award is to the SCs, STs and SC converts to Christianity who have secured 60 per cent and above marks in the Degree/ Post Graduate Professional Course Examinations and passed in the first attempt. It will be ranging from Rs.1000 to Rs. 1500. In all, 1000 students will be covered under this scheme.

**Loan Scholarship**

Initially, this scholarship was for the needy students pursuing professional course. But from the year 1974-75, it was extended to students studying in degree courses. It ranges from Rs.750 to Rs.1750 depending upon the course.

**Book Banks**

Book banks are established for SC and ST students pursuing medical and engineering course. The expenditure under this scheme is shared by the Government of India and the states on 50-50 basis.
Schools

For the benefit of Adi - Dravidar and ST Children the Department is running 1222 schools (as per the Performance Budget, 1992) with a strength of 2.50 lakh students. The students studying in these schools are given text books and note - books free of cost. Distribution of uniform is restricted to boys studying upto standard VIII and girls upto standard X.

Hostels

Hostel facilities are provided to the students who study in schools, colleges and Industrial Training Institutes. The District Collectors have been authorised to admit students in hostels by 10 per cent over and above the sanctioned strength.

Incentives for Promotion of Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe Girls Education

With a view to prevent drop-outs especially in higher standards among SC and ST girl students and to increase enrolment, a scheme of granting cash awards to Headmasters has been sanctioned. Three Headmasters who enroll and retain the largest number of Adi - Dravidar / ST girl students in standard VI to VIII and in standard IX to X till the end of the academic year in each Educational District of this state will be given cash awards.

Special Orientation Training to the Teachers

For enriching the knowledge of the teachers working in the Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Schools in the subjects - English, Science and
Mathematics, orientation is being imparted by the SCERT, using modern methods of teaching and new technique.

*Coaching in the Schools and Hostels*

Free coaching for the SC, and ST students in each class would be arranged both in the schools and hostels.

*Upgrading the Merit of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes*

The main objective of this scheme is to upgrade the merit of SC/ST students by providing all round development through education in residential schools throughout the country. The entire funds relating to the scheme is borne by Government of India. The coverage in Tamil Nadu is 50 SCs and 3 ST students. The intensive coaching starts from IX standard and continues upto XII standard.

*Pre-Examination Training Centre for I.A.S., and I.P.S.*

To impart training to candidates belonging to SCs and STs appearing for I.A.S., I.P.S. and other Central Services Competitive Examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission, New Delhi, the Pre-Examination Training Centre was started in Madras in the year 1966. Candidates belonging to SCs and STs throughout India are admitted in the centre by the Standing Admission Committee. The sanctioned strength is 60.

A view of the educational scenario of the scheduled castes would give a clear picture of their position inspite of the developmental schemes.
Educational Scenario in India

The educational levels of the population in India are very low in general and the levels of education among the lower strata of population are still lower (Upendranadh, 1993). Till now India is characterised by extreme forms of social inequality and education can not become a matter of priority for those who are caught up in the mire of poverty, helplessness and social insecurity. An appraisal of the educational scenario would provide an useful input for this study.

Using literacy as a measure, it is found from the Literacy Digest based on the 1991 census, India’s overall literacy rates (percentages) for the population aged seven years and above are 52%, with 63.9% for male and 39.4% for female. The 1991 census has revealed Tamil Nadu to be a state with 63.7% literacy level with 74.9% male literacy but only 52.3% female literacy. The literacy rate for SCs and STs is likely to be still lower. (Padmanabhan, 1994).

A close look at table 1.1. brings out more clearly the relative magnitude of illiteracy among the SCs. Going by the available indicator, the 1981 census data, the scheduled castes and tribes accounted for about one-third of the total illiterates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Literates in Per cent</th>
<th>Population aged 7 Years and above (in million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>SCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tabulated from census of India, 1981. Parts IV A, IV A(1) and IV A(IV).

In the nation, the average male literacy among the SCs was so low (38%) that in general this section needs to be treated as illiterate. The literacy rate was lower than the general male population by 25% in the state as well as nation. The average female literacy rate among the SCs in the nation was too insignificant (13%). It was about 23% lower than that of the general female population both in the state and nation.

Upendranadh, (1993) states that educational participation among the scheduled castes who generally constitute major portion of lower FGs (Fractile Groups) is much lower compared to other groups. The classwise enrolment of the SCs presented in table 1.2 would provide a clear picture of the educational levels of the SCs.
TABLE 1.2

SCHEDULED CASTE ENROLMENT AT VARIOUS SCHOOL STAGES 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Class I - V</th>
<th>VI - VIII</th>
<th>IX - X</th>
<th>XI - XII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total per cent SC</td>
<td>Total per cent SC</td>
<td>Total per cent SC</td>
<td>Total per cent SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1478144 20.18%</td>
<td>487476 18.69%</td>
<td>149007 15.36%</td>
<td>56790 15.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>14704908 17.12%</td>
<td>4006855 14.69%</td>
<td>1513571 13.14%</td>
<td>391072 11.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1986, SC students constituted about 17.12% of the total enrolment in primary classes (I - V). In middle schools (VI - VIII), of the total enrolment 14.69% belonged to SCs. As the level of education increased, the enrolment decreased, reaching about 11.14% in the higher secondary classes. Likewise, in the state also, the percentage of enrolment decreased along with the increase in the level of education.

According to the report (1990) of the review committee on the National Policy on Education of 1986, in 1989 there were in all, about 16% of SCs at the primary level (Classes I - V), about 12% at the middle level (Classes VI - VII) and about 11% at the high/post-basic level. But going by its data for 1986 - 87, the drop-out rates at the primary level were about 51% among the SCs with 69% at the middle level and about 80% at the high/post-basic level.
SCOPE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The study was conducted in Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District of Tamil Nadu. Hence, an account of the scheduled castes in Tamil Nadu would help in scanning the status of these people.

Tamil Nadu is the south-eastern state of India. It is flanked by the Indian Ocean in the southern side, Bay of Bengal in the eastern side, Kerala in the western side and Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the northern side. It extends between latitudes 8°5' and 13°35' north and longitudes 76°15' and 80°20' east (as shown in the map, 1.1) thus covering an area of 130058 sq.kms, with 56 educational districts.

As per the 1991 census, it has a population of 55,638,318 with 52.20% female. The density of population is 428 per sq.km, and the sex ratio is 972 female per 1000 male. According to the Fifth All India Educational Survey (1992), Tamil Nadu (11.49%) is one of the states which has a higher percentage of SC habitations than the national average. Literacy percentage of the state is 63.7% (74.9% male and 52.3% female) and among the states it is in the third rank.

Educational Scenario in Tamil Nadu

An analysis of the latest enrolment scene would highlight the educational status of the scheduled castes in Tamil Nadu. The percentage of SC enrolment to the total enrolment in Tamil Nadu is shown in table 1.3.
### TABLE 1.3
PROPORTION OF SC ENROLMENT TO THE TOTAL
ENROLMENT IN TAMIL NADU 1990 - 91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>SC Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary 3158547</td>
<td>No 1545127 19.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 1157735</td>
<td>No 572552 19.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 478552</td>
<td>No 189728 16.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher 7763873</td>
<td>No 63033 13.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Handbook of School Education Department 1990 - 91, Madras.
It was noticed that about one-fifth of the total enrolment in Tamil Nadu was occupied by the SCs in the primary as well as in the middle level. But as the level of education went up, the SC enrolment decreased.

The stagewise enrolment of the SC population (Table 1.4) would add a clear vision to the educational status of the SCs in Tamil Nadu.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Primary Male</th>
<th>Primary Female</th>
<th>Middle Male</th>
<th>Middle Female</th>
<th>Secondary+ Male</th>
<th>Secondary+ Female</th>
<th>Higher Education Male</th>
<th>Higher Education Female</th>
<th>Total Male</th>
<th>Total Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>SCs</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.684</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>1.352</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.261</td>
<td>2.828</td>
<td>1.417</td>
<td>1.046</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>5.595</td>
<td>4.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58.28%</td>
<td>63.204%</td>
<td>25.330%</td>
<td>23.37%</td>
<td>14.08%</td>
<td>11.69%</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>SCs</td>
<td>9.523</td>
<td>5.878</td>
<td>2.623</td>
<td>1.296</td>
<td>1.800</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>14.184</td>
<td>7.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>43.261</td>
<td>30.859</td>
<td>16.670</td>
<td>10.028</td>
<td>11.171</td>
<td>5.560</td>
<td>2.444</td>
<td>1.234</td>
<td>73.546</td>
<td>47.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58.82%</td>
<td>64.72%</td>
<td>22.67%</td>
<td>21.03%</td>
<td>15.19%</td>
<td>11.66%</td>
<td>3.32%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Others refer to the general population excluding SCs and STs.
Of the male literates among the SCs of the country about 67.14% cornered the primary level and 18.49% of them were in the middle level, while in Tamil Nadu about 62.5% of the SC male literates occupied the primary level and 24.41% of them were in the middle level. About 12.69% and meagre 1.68% of the them in India were in secondary and higher education respectively. It was the same in Tamil Nadu.

Turning our attention to the female literates among the SCs, it could be observed that about 74.55% in India and 68.26% in Tamil Nadu had been in the primary level. The middle level was occupied by 16.46% of them in the nation and 22.26% in the state of Tamil Nadu. About 8% and 1% of the female literates among SCs in India as well as in Tamil Nadu were enrolled in secondary and higher education respectively. This shows a pattern of extreme concentration of literates at the lower levels of education both in the state and nation. But a microscopic few had entered higher education.

**Educational Condition in Tirunelveli- Kattabomman District**

Addition of a brief account of the present educational scenario of the scheduled caste students in Tirunelveli - Kattabomman District would give a better picture in this context. The total SC population of this district, as per the 1991 census is 447,654 (218,607 male and 229,047 female) as against the general population of 2,493,189 (1,224,319 and 1,268,870 female). Tenkasi taluk (82,157)
stands first followed by Sankarankovil (79,144) and Ambasamudram (65,349) taluks in the SC population.

The communitywise enrolment in higher secondary schools (Table 1.5) in the district would give an additional information about the educational condition of the scheduled castes in Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District.
## TABLE 1.5
ENROLMENT IN HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF TIRUNELVELI-KATTABOMMAN DISTRICT BY COMMUNITYWISE 1993 - 94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Districts</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>MBC</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>OC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
<td>8503</td>
<td>28.31</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>5509</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheranmahadevi</td>
<td>8451</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>4091</td>
<td>12.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenkasi</td>
<td>4144</td>
<td>20.92</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1.136</td>
<td>6251</td>
<td>31.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspectress of Girls' Schools</td>
<td>5732</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>3304</td>
<td>11.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23830</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>19155</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tirunelveli educational district has the high percentage of SC enrolment followed by Cheranmahadevi and Tenkasi educational districts. About one-fifth of the total enrolment in girls' schools are SCs. Totally the enrolment of the SCs in Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District is about a quarter of the total population.

The enrolment in higher secondary schools of Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District by standard and communitywise has been presented in table 1.6.
TABLE 1.6

ENROLMENT IN HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF TIRUNELVELI-KATTABOMMAN DISTRICT BY STANDARD AND COMMUNITYWISE, 1993 - 94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>MBC</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>OC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I - VII</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>6025</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>4976</td>
<td>12686</td>
<td>3040</td>
<td>26848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>5099</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3464</td>
<td>9638</td>
<td>2493</td>
<td>20767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX - X</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>5057</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4183</td>
<td>10766</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>22022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>3368</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2093</td>
<td>7790</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>15181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI - XII</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>2209</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2771</td>
<td>7095</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>13129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2072</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>6683</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>11899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


More concentration of enrolment of the scheduled castes, irrespective of sex is found to be at the lower levels and it decreases with the levels of education. It could be reminded here that both in the nation and state, the same trend is noticed. Now it is vivid that the educational status of the scheduled castes is still poor especially in the higher levels.

This state could be confirmed by an account of the representation by SC/ST candidates in various public services.
As per the annual returns for the year ending December 31, 1990 the percentage of SC/ST candidates in Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings of Tamil Nadu Government is as follows.

TABLE 1.7

DETAILS OF SCs/STs REPRESENTATION UNDER A, B, C & D CATEGORIES IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS OF TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT AS ON DECEMBER 31, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sanctioned Strength</th>
<th>Reservation Quota 18%</th>
<th>Actual Representation SCs/STs</th>
<th>Percentages of SCs/STs Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Government Departments (55 Departments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sanctioned Strength</th>
<th>Reservation Quota 18%</th>
<th>Actual Representation SCs/STs</th>
<th>Percentages of SCs/STs Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11,335</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1,59,491</td>
<td>28,708</td>
<td>23,852</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>15,123</td>
<td>2,722</td>
<td>3,707</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Sector Undertakings (25 Departments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sanctioned Strength</th>
<th>Reservation Quota 18%</th>
<th>Actual Representation SCs/STs</th>
<th>Percentages of SCs/STs Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4,393</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7,599</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>27,124</td>
<td>4,882</td>
<td>5,203</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Performance Budget, 1992 Government of Tamil Nadu
It is found from this table, that one-fourth of the 'D' group categories are filled in the Government Departments. Nearly, one-fifth of the same in the Public Sector Undertakings have been occupied, whereas the occupation of 'A' group categories in both Government and Public Sector is very meagre. The middle 'B' and 'C' grades are poorly filled. In short almost all higher posts ('A' group categories) in Tamil Nadu State reserved for the SCs/STs remain unoccupied.

The over representation in the lower posts ('D' group categories) could be due to the availability of large number of educated SCs upto the middle level who might have entered the job on the basis of merit, apart from reservation.

The meagre proportion of SCs in class I, II and III services, inspite of the reservations, may be due to lack of qualified and educated persons, which inturn, shows indirectly the concentration of the SCs in the lower levels of education.

The data on enrolment of SCs, discussed so far reveal that the enrolment of SCs in the higher levels of education is meagre. In the job market also, higher positions which require higher educational achievements and reserved for SCs are unfilled. This gulf has to be bridged by bringing these deprived groups to higher education. But higher secondary stage is the feeder stage for higher education - both academic and technical.

Further for the majority of the young persons, the years from 12 to 16 years are the most eventful ones of their lives, so far as their growth and
development is concerned. (Hurlock, 1980). According to Manocha, (1993) it is during the higher secondary period that intellectual growth makes possible a more complex and sophisticated self-concept involving great number of dimensions and encompassing potential as well as reality.

Hence, a study of the SC higher secondary students at their feeder stage was highly necessary for bridging the gap between the lower and higher levels of education.

**Status of Women**

Along with the social inequality that is jarring in our society, one could find that women still lag far behind the male. India now has about 335.83 million illiterates as per the 1991 census. Of them, women as a category account for nearly two-thirds. In India the growth rate in female literacy during 1981 - 91 was 9.7%, whereas the female population (7+) in the same decade had increased by 28.15%. In Tamil Nadu, it was 11.9% as against 17.03% of female population. It is understood that both at the national and state level, the rate of female literacy was far below than their population growth rate.

The Fifth All India Educational Survey (1992) revealed that among the total enrolment (17.12%) of SC students in classes I to V, 61.45% were boys and 38.55% were girls. There were about 3,91,072 students belonging to the SCs in the
higher secondary classes (XI & XII) of whom 76.52% were boys and 23.48% were girls. These data show clearly that the enrolment of SC girls in higher secondary classes was not even half of the enrolment of boys.

When schools open the doors wider for girls the benefits from education multiply. (Radhakrishnan and Akila, 1993). Further, the demographic features of female population stress the need for greater attention to the economic emancipation of women, particularly the SC women by opening the opportunities in education, independent employment and income for them. Thus in education the SC women should be brought to the mainstream to share the facilities fully. Hence this study was conducted on a sample of SC girls studying in the higher secondary schools of Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District in Tamil Nadu.