CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
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The progress of any Community or Nation depends on the quality of its human resources. The human resources in turn depend on the nature of education imparted and extent of the participation in it. Further it is proved that education is a pre-requisite for the all-round development of an individual and the nation as a whole. It was therefore, quite appropriate that our constitutional framers have incorporated specific article to ensure that the state should take active part in promotion of education among the marginalized the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The scheduled castes constitute an important section of the society and their proportion to the total population is 16.19 per cent. However, their literacy rate is lower than the other sections of the society and in case of women it is still lower. Their proportion of participation at various levels of education in comparison with other sections of the society is found to be lower.

The causes for their low literacy and low participation in the education system were attributed mainly to their low socio economic background. In view of their low literacy and low educational status majority of them were involved in the unorganized sectors for their livelihood. In view of their low social status, historically they were forced to live in segregations in the outskirts of the habitations and were not allowed to mingle with the general population. Majority of them were poor and depend on their manual work for their livelihood especially in agriculture.

The scheduled castes were the former untouchable castes of Hinduism during the early days of Chaturvarna, the persons other than the four traditional castes come to be described as untouchables because they were of darker skin and were engaged in unclean occupations (Nilkna Perumal 1937, 45, Government of India, Backward Class commission report 1955; 16-18). They were referred in the earlier times as Antyajas, Pariahs, Adi-dravidas and in the modern contest as depressed classes and scheduled castes (Sanjana, 1946; 70). The "untouchable" are found at the lowest rung of the caste ladder. The untouchables due to their lowest ritual standing and low economic position, traditionally subject to onerous social and civic disabilities.
Further, the "poor" in India as identified mainly belongs to the class of small cultivators and agricultural labourers, artisans and crafts men, slum-dwellers and coolies in towns and cities and those belonging to scheduled groups-scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.

The term "scheduled castes" is used in the Constitution of India though nowhere it is defined. Article 347 of Indian constitution declares that the President of India "may with respect to any state or union territory and where it is a state after constitution with the Governor there of public notification, specify the castes, races, or castes or part of or groups within castes, races or castes which shall for the purpose of their constitution be deemed to be scheduled castes in relation to that state or union territory as the case may be.

Whereas, Article 366 (24) states that "Parliament may include in or exclude from the list of scheduled castes specified in a notification of any caste, race of tribe. Thus scheduled castes may be defined as those groups which are named in the scheduled castes, grade of the Government of India in force from time to time. In accordance with the provision of the constitution, the scheduled caste order was promulgated in August 1950 and was amended in 1956.

The scheduled castes, as these groups came to be known since 1935 are continued to be the most disadvantaged groups in Indian society. Their backwardness will be evident from the comparative figures about their predominantly rural nature (80 million, forming 14.60 per cent of the total populations), illiteracy, dependence on agriculture and also employment as agricultural labourers. Although the bulk of the Indian population (80 per cent) is concentrated in rural areas, 90 per cent of the scheduled castes live in rural areas. About 67 per cent of the Indian population derives its substance from agriculture while 95 per cent of the scheduled castes do so.

Similarly while the per cent of agricultural labourers in national population is 16.7 per cent, that of agricultural labourers among the scheduled castes is 34.5 per cent. In terms of residence, housing and health conditions, the condition of the scheduled castes is precarious. In most of the villages, they have to suffer residential segregation and indirect social boycott. There are many among them who are too poor to build houses. On account of their poverty and unhygienic living conditions,
they, in large numbers, suffer several from malnutrition, physical disabilities and
diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria and general diseases. This is not to say
that the post-independence period has not brought any socio-economic and political
change in the scheduled castes.

They are mostly engaged in menial jobs which add to lower their social and
ritual status. Further the social milieu in villages simply does not favour changes. So,
not many can own lands despite constitution provisions and safeguards. From time
immemorial they have been serfdom the upper castes and are economically dependent
on them. It is any body’s guess that once dependent it becomes almost impossible to
extricate themselves from the clutches of exploiters. They are generally required to
live at a distance from the main village i.e. in the outer circles of the main villages
popularly known as ‘Harijanawadas’ or Malawadas.

After independence, the Government of India has passed and enacted several
legislations in the parliament to the effect of amelioration of scheduled castes and
scheduled tribes. The constitution of India has provided profusive provisions to
safeguard to the Scheduled castes. They have remained backward economically,
educationally, socially and culturally since the beginning of the caste stratification of
Indian society. After Independence, the nature and dimension of social differentiation
has undergone a radical transformation.

There has been a growing tempo of developmental activities for them to
facilitate their mobility and acceptance in other social channels. In the second half of
the present century, several constitutional provisions and Governmental and
institutional incentives have been effectively provided to the scheduled castes for their
upliftment from their wretched and sordid economic and social conditions. These
safeguards and welfare measures have created a definite impact on them against a
backdrop of relative immobility for centuries.

After independence, the Government of India has taken a number of steps to
strengthen the educational base of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
Provision of educational institutions on priority bases in the areas predominantly
inhabited by these communities; Uniforms, Books, and Stationary, Reservation of
seats in institutions of higher learning, provision of coaching classes for competitive
examinations, remedial coaching classes and provision of hostels are some of the steps which have contributed a great deal in raising the educational level of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

However, it has been observed that the educational development of the scheduled castes in India it is not uniform in all states. Imbalances exist not only between the backward and forward states but also between males and females and rural and urban areas, and also between the regions within the states. Besides, regional imbalances, differences in the levels of education and literacy also exist among communities.

The New Education Policy envisaged cent per cent enrollment of SC /ST children in the age group 6-11 (class 1-5) ensuring their retention in schools leading to satisfactory completion of the primary stage of education or its equivalency through the non-formal stream. Further, atleast 75 per cent of the children in the age group of 11-14 of classes VI-VIII will have to be enrolled and retained in schools leading to satisfactory completion of class VIII to achieve the policy rules envisaged in the NPE. The operational strategy for achieving the above, the Programme of Action envisaged that incentive to indigent families to send their children to school regularly till the age of 14. Further, it has suggested providing incentives or assistance to indigent SC / ST families. The detailed of scheme of incentives will have to be worked out in consultation with the State Governments.

To ensure timely payment of pre-metric scholarships, the amounts of continuing scholarship should be released by the first of the month to which it relates. To avoid delays in case of new scholarships, these may be sanctioned on the basis of sole affidavits furnished by the parents of the candidate. Payment should be through banks, post offices or other governmental agencies will have to be explored. Rates and amount of scholarships will be raised to make them adequate from the point of view of helping to ensure universal enrollment of SC children. The coverage will be cent per cent of eligible SC / ST children.

The constant micro planning and verification will have to be done to ensure that enrollment, retention and successful completion of courses by SC / ST students do not fail at any stage. A crash programme for recruitment of teachers only from
SC/ST will be undertaken to remove existing gaps. Adequate appropriate measures should be taken to relax the qualification in case of women teachers and also to upgrade their professional standards. All these measures have been proposed to ensure the social mobility among the Scheduled Castes.

Further, all these provisions enable the Scheduled Caste students to get socialized with the other social groups. The larger objectives of these programmes are to bring a social change where the Scheduled Caste students should be equipped psychologically to mainstream them and to create awareness among the other sections that they do have opportunities to grow along with them. Inspite of all these provisions, the crux of the problem lies in the experiences of the Scheduled Caste students in the educative process, not only in attaining the academic excellence, but also in socializing themselves with the other groups on equal terms without any inhibitions.

Besides, recognizing the backwardness of the scheduled castes, the government has taken up the programmes leading to the empowerment of scheduled castes in terms of socio-economic and political fronts on priority basis in the National Development agenda. Further, it has instituted a National Charter for Social Justice based on the principles of social harmony with social and gender justice and necessary legal measures to protect their interests.

To this effect, implementation of reservation policy both in the educational institutions and in services for scheduled castes is taken up. Further, it has conceived and implemented programmes for supplemental efforts for educational, economic and social empowerment. Under educational programmes, it has launched schemes of pre and post metric scholarship for scheduled castes children of those engaged in unclean occupations, hostels for SC boys and girls, the Book Bank Scheme, coaching and allied schemes for SC students with due reservation in the educational institutions at the entry levels.

Education was considered as one of the means to promote their socio-economic development. Keeping this in view, education was given utmost priority at all levels by providing reservations at entry levels and supporting them financially to retain them in the system. Further, a number of welfare programmes have been
initiated for the households so as to allow their children to pursue their education. In addition, priority was accorded for this section in the non-formal stream of education not only to promote their literacy levels but also to develop the competencies required for them to enter into the world of work through vocational training programmes.

No doubt, all these measures enabled them to enroll their children in the formal system of education, but for one reason or the other, more than half of them were withdrawn before reaching 5th standard and three fourths of them were not able to move beyond the graduation. In other words, it appears that the people enrolled in the formal education system from these sections were not able to cope up within the system of education due to the external environment or due to lack of adjustment and adaptability within the system. Hence, there is a dire need to probe deeply into the experiences of these people and their opinion towards the educational system. In case of adult education too, the promotion of literacy among these groups have to be studied in terms of enrollment, success rate and transition from literacy to post literacy and to continuing education programme.

Keeping the above back drop, it is an imperative to study the participation of the scheduled castes in the education system and consequences as viewed by the parents, so as to bring required changes in the system of education by creating a favourable environment for the scheduled castes to get enrolled and retained in the system.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE