CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the present study an attempt has been made to examine the responses of the majority (NSC) towards the statutory benefits accorded to the minority (SC). A review of literature revealed that no comprehensive study was available in which the reaction of the majority to the special privileges granted to the minority had been examined. However, attempts had been made by a few sociologists and social anthropologists to deal with the subject of untouchability on the basis of which a large proportion of the populace was and is still being treated as less than human. There are some studies which focused attention on the impact of the reservation policy or other general measures adopted for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, and the amelioration they affected in their position and status in the Indian society. The present study was undertaken with a view to filling up this gap partly. Much of the data, on which this study is based, were collected by interviewing 500 employees of the Punjab government stationed at Chandigarh.

In the Constitution of India, statutory privileges have been provided for the Scheduled Castes because having been oppressed for almost three millenia by the high caste Hindus, it was realized that they could not compete with other sections of the populace. No doubt, the incorporation of Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46, granting preferential treatment
to the Scheduled Castes, is not in consonance with the spirit
of liberal-democratic philosophy of the Constitution of India,
which guarantees freedom and equality (Article 15(4)) to all,
irrespective of any considerations of caste, colour, religion,
etc. The accommodation of the concept of equality along with
preferences, known generally, as the "reservation policy",
which has been legally recognized, constitutionally established,
administratively enforced, judicially protected and politically
articulated, has, however, a century-old history of protracted
battle against the inequalities of a traditional social order
based on distinctions by birth.

This dualistic feature of the Constitution has been
the cause of a great deal of controversy. On the one hand,
there is the guarantee of equality for all citizens; and, on
the other hand, there is provision for the preferential
treatment to a minority consisting of Scheduled Castes and
Scheduled Tribes. There does not seem to be this kind of
paradox anywhere else in the world. But, as a parallel
instance, the US experience of the directives of the government
for proportional equality is one case which in some sense is
a parallel one. In the USA, the desirability of reserved
seats for the Blacks was recognised but it was not made a
constitutional mandate. The government's efforts to rectify
injustices perpetrated on the Blacks by granting them special
privileges evoked strong and violent protests from the White
dominant majority. Even the Supreme Court of the USA did not
uphold this preferential treatment accorded to the Blacks
(Bakke case).
In India, where the reservation policy is a constitutional mandate, the reaction of the majority, i.e., the non-Scheduled Castes, has been very strong and organised. This study has been a modest attempt to answer the following questions: Why are the NSC government employees against this policy of reservation? Which part of the policy affects them directly? Do they want that the conditions of the Scheduled Castes should be improved? If the answer to this question is in affirmative, what concrete measures can they suggest to ameliorate their position in the society?

Highlights of the Findings
The findings pertaining to the social and demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that the respondents were characterised by heterogeneity. Though the designation 'non-Scheduled Caste' government employees tends to suggest that there would be a high degree of homogeneity among the respondents, yet there were variations among them on the basis of religion, caste, age, job classification, education, income, etc. Thus, it was inevitable that these background factors would affect the respondents' attitudes accordingly. Regarding the different levels of awareness among the respondents towards the specific statutory privileges, it was found that more than two-thirds of the respondents had moderate to high awareness level with respect to different types of privileges accorded to the minority community. Regarding the awareness about reservation for the SC in general, almost all the respondents were found to be aware that the Scheduled Castes had been given compensatory benefits.
Regarding their awareness about educational privileges, it came out that the majority of the respondents were aware of only those privileges which were available to the Scheduled Castes up to the school levels. Barely one-third of the respondents had some knowledge about the existence of the privileges granted to the Scheduled Castes in the colleges and the professional institutions.

Though all the respondents were aware of the reservation policy of the government, yet strangely enough, they lacked exact knowledge about the percentage of quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes in various job categories, i.e., class I, II, III and IV. Similarly, they did not know that the age limit for recruitment to government service had been relaxed by five years.

With regard to reservation in promotion, two-third of the respondents had shown awareness regarding the exact percentage (20%) among class III and IV employees. When it came to the higher level employees (i.e., class I and II) the awareness declined considerably to two-fifth of the total awareness level. Similar trends emerged regarding the awareness of the fixation of the seniority of the Scheduled Castes based on the 100 per cent roster maintained for this purpose in the government departments.

Regarding awareness of the respondents about economic and political privileges granted to the Scheduled Castes, the findings on economic benefits revealed low awareness, i.e., about one-fifth of the respondents were aware of such
privileges. But their awareness about reservation of seats in the Legislative Assemblies of the states and in the Lok Sabha was quite high, that is, two-third of the total sample.

The level of awareness with reference to the socio-economic and demographic factors, like government job classification, education, income and the place of upbringing, had shown a variable influence on their levels of awareness. Similarly, the respondents with higher education and with higher income also revealed high level of awareness. The respondents with urban background exhibited more awareness of the statutory privileges than those with rural background. The respondents adversely affected by the policy showed higher degree of awareness than those who were not affected.

In this study, all the 500 respondents revealed unfavourable attitude towards the statutory privileges. Keeping in view their negative attitudes in the continuous series on the scale continuum, the respondents were grouped into three categories of "highly unfavourable", "unfavourable" and "less unfavourable" responses. This distribution showed that two-third of the respondents had shown highly unfavourable to unfavourable attitudes and the remaining one-third had shown a little less unfavourableness in their attitudes towards the statutory privileges.

The variables like age, caste, education, job classification, income, 'job adversely affected'((a) the respondent and (b) members of his family), were considered important to study for their possible effects on the attitude of the respondents.
In the present study, it was anticipated that the respondents of higher age would reflect a more negative attitude than the younger respondents. Surprisingly enough, the findings showed a reverse trend, i.e., the higher the age, the weaker the unfavourable attitude towards the policy of reservation, and vice-versa.

Besides age, caste of the respondents also revealed results which were not according to our expectation. Contrary to our hypothesis, it was the middle castes which were strongly hostile to the statutory privileges and not so much the upper and the lower castes.

The effect of educational background of the respondents on their attitudes revealed a significant relationship. The respondents with the middle categories of educational attainment (from high/higher secondary upto graduation) were more antagonistic to the statutory privileges than others, probably because this group was adversely affected by such provisions. These findings have also not substantiated the earlier stated hypothesis in the study, i.e., the higher the educational qualification, the lesser will be the unfavourable attitude towards the statutory privileges.

A large majority of the respondents, both in class IV and I categories, had shown less unfavourable attitude towards the statutory privileges. However, the trend was reversed for class II and III categories, who reflected highly unfavourable attitude towards the privileges. The findings of this nature are consistent with the results of the influence
of education on unfavourable attitude towards the privileges. This clearly indicates that it were the middle level job categories of the employees, which had manifested highly unfavourable attitude. In this case our stated hypothesis, i.e., the respondents in the middle range categories, i.e., class III and II, were more likely to hold highly unfavourable attitude towards the statutory privileges than the employees from class IV and I categories, was substantiated.

In case of income also, it was the middle group, i.e., Rs. 901 to Rs. 1800, which had exhibited greater degree of unfavourable attitudes towards the policy of protective discrimination.

Findings pertaining to their job experience in the present conditions in which their promotions were affected directly or indirectly by the policy of reservation, revealed that more than one-half of the respondents had been directly affected by the reservation policy, and hence had first hand negative experience. Those respondents who had been promoted on their turn had less unfavourable attitudes. However, on the other hand, the attitude of those employees who had been denied their due promotions, were bitter and harsh in their denunciation of the privileges.

Besides promotion, the personal experience of being harmed by the reservation policy had also revealed significant differences in their attitudes. The employees who were superseded by the Scheduled Castes due to the reservation policy, were more hostile than the employees who were not superseded. Similarly, the findings related to the harm
experienced by the respondents' relatives due to the policy of reservation also revealed significant differences in their attitudes. Those respondents whose relatives were harmed, reflected a highly unfavourable attitude in larger proportions than those whose relatives were not harmed.

Yet another theme in the present study was the possible influence of awareness about the privileges on their attitude towards them. The relationship was found to be positive.

Perhaps the most important post-facto assessment of the degree of any kind of antagonistic attitudes towards a social issue is the organization and mobilization of an affected social group. The attitudes translate into practice through organised opposition. The organization and mobilization of the non-Scheduled Castes against statutory privileges have been discussed in Chapter V. The NSCWA came into existence in 1974 with the exclusive goal of pressurising the government to end the reservation policy. The Association organised dharnas, hunger strikes and various other forms of protests.

A considerable number of the respondents was in one or the other way involved in the NSCWA activities of protest. Interestingly, most of these involved respondents were committed to the idea that the NSCWA would be able to force the government to withdraw the reservation policy.

The data pertaining to the socio-economic variables and their relationship with NSCWA-related index showed an interesting trend. It was found that those respondents who
belonged to class II and III jobs had higher participation in the NSCWA activities than class I and IV employees. In terms of educational background of the respondents and their participation in the NSCWA activities, it was clearly discerned that the higher the education, the higher was the level of participation in the NSCWA.

It was expected that those respondents who themselves or their family members had been harmed by the reservation policy, would participate in the NSCWA activities intensively and extensively. The data substantiated this contention as it was clear that those respondents who were not harmed had low participation scores than the harmed respondents.

The data pertaining to the NSCWA related index and its relation with social sphere index indicate a significant relationship. This implied that those who participated in the NSCWA activities also showed an unfavourable attitude towards the Scheduled Castes in the social sphere. But this relationship is relatively weak which means that, in future, a highly unfavourable attitude against the Scheduled Castes might come into existence. Moreover, the data tend to reveal that this organised opposition was directed against the government rather than the Scheduled Castes. Evidently, there is a negative relationship between the NSCWA related index and relationship at work place. It can be argued that since the leaders of any movement are numerically small, the quality of relationship is not considerably affected. In fact, it takes a long time for relationships to deteriorate
between two groups. However, if the reservation policy continues (which is likely to be the case) there is a strong possibility that the opposition would also escalate. In that case, in all likelihood, there will be qualitative deterioration in the relationships between the Scheduled Castes and the non-Scheduled Caste government employees. This finding presents a paradoxical problem in the sense that the Scheduled Castes, being exploited for centuries, may face discrimination and deprivation if the government withdraws the reservation policy. At the same time, the reservation policy is widening the gap between the SC and the NSC instead of narrowing it down.

The findings pertaining to work-place relationship revealed that one-third of the respondents had uncordial relations. Obviously, a large majority of the employees belonging to the non-Scheduled Castes had cordial relationship with their non-Scheduled Caste colleagues. Their resentment was, primarily, against the government and not against their Scheduled Caste colleagues. Findings in the case of social sphere relationship revealed a similar state of affairs. But when the comments of the respondents at the end of the interview regarding their relationships with Scheduled Castes in the offices and society in general, were analysed, they revealed a very interesting trend. Nearly one-half of the respondents straightway asserted that it was creating friction between the two communities and this policy was strengthening caste system and encouraging further fragmentation of the society. It is difficult to say whether it was a mere feeling of the non-
Scheduled Caste respondents or they were actually swayed by what they perceived. This is a question which needs exploration in greater details, and another study can throw light on this aspect of the problem.

As a part of the further probing exercise in different work situations, the respondents were asked to give their assessment of their Scheduled Caste colleagues in terms of their intelligence and working abilities. The findings pertaining to this aspect vividly mirrored their caste prejudices when the respondents responded by saying that they were below average and inefficient. But the number of such respondents was two-fifth of the total sample. The data listed in this regard led to the conclusion that the majority of the respondents assessed their Scheduled Caste colleagues as not inferior. Similarly, regarding the respondents' preferences in seeking advice relating to official work, the majority of the non-Scheduled Caste employees gave evidence of a secular outlook as they stated that they were not swayed by any caste considerations while seeking advice.

The effects on the respondents of different variables, like government job classification, harmed respondents/family members by the policy of reservation, educational qualifications, awareness and the degree of unfavourableness at work place relationship, showed significant differences in their responses. The findings in this regard revealed that nearly one-third of the employees from class III and II categories had shown unfavourable attitude at work place. This trend was also
discernible in the case of harmed respondents/family members. But in the case of the effect of education, the findings indicated somewhat reverse trend, i.e., the respondents with high educational qualifications had shown unfavourable relations at work places. A similar trend emerged in the case of awareness level and the degree of unfavourable attitude towards the work place relationship in relation to educational qualifications of the respondents.

The findings relating to the social sphere revealed ambivalence in the attitude of the non-Scheduled Caste respondents towards their Scheduled Caste colleagues. A majority of the respondents stated that they had no objection to their Scheduled Caste colleagues living in their neighbourhood. But when it came down to social interaction with the Scheduled Castes, it was found that though a majority of the respondents, i.e., three-fourth, had no hang-ups in interacting socially with the Scheduled Castes, yet one-fourth, which might be considered as a sizeable proportion, entertained reservations in this regard. Even those who had no reservations in interacting socially with the Scheduled Castes actually, rarely interacted with their Scheduled Caste colleagues. For instance, slightly less than one-fifth of the respondents invited their Scheduled Caste friends on ceremonial occasions. Generally, the invitations, on such occasions, were extended to their own relatives and castemen. In addition to the above, it was found that the close friendships were formed with persons from within one's own caste, religion and occupation, and among those with
no educational disparities and among those who worked together. Of the respondents, only a few stated that they had close friends from among the Scheduled Caste colleagues.

It was also expected that the various socio-economic variables would affect the relationship in social sphere. It was found that job classification and educational qualifications were significantly related with social sphere index. The respondents from class III and IV and with lower educational background were unfavourably disposed towards their Scheduled Caste colleagues in the social sphere. Such an attitude was in consonance with the prevailing ideas that the persons who were less educated were conservative in their outlook. No wonder, the class IV employees being less educated, exhibited unfavourable attitude. The above generalization was authenticated by the finding that most of the respondents who were highly aware of the statutory privileges were favourably disposed towards the Scheduled Caste government employees in terms of social interaction. On the other hand, low awareness was strongly associated with unfavourable disposition for social interaction. This seemed to be a function of educational level of the respondents. The more highly educated were more aware than the less educated about various social issues but their interaction patterns generally exhibited a rational outlook.

Discussion

The finding that those who opposed the statutory privileges did not show unfavourable attitude or antipathy towards the Scheduled Castes par se, is of considerable significance.
The respondents were of the view that the Scheduled Castes should be helped to raise their status, but, not at the cost of the interests of the non-Scheduled Castes. They emphasised the need for reforms in the reservation policy and laid more stress on providing them infrastructural help in the economic sphere. Most of them were also willing to concede that reservation in jobs for the SCs be provided at first recruitment. However, the staunchest opposition was revealed to reservations in promotions.

The reservation policy of the Government of India has given rise to some serious problems. Several backward classes and minority groups have started demanding similar privileges on the basis of their backwardness and there is every possibility that such demands will become more strident with the passage of time and strengthen fissiparous tendencies in the country. If one were to assess the actual benefits accruing to the SC from the policy of reservation, it has been estimated, that despite the fullest implementation, only a fraction of them - say, not exceeding 10 per cent - could benefit from it. The policy is, thus, more of a symbolic gesture on the part of the state.

The liberal democratic framework in which certain privileges have been granted to the Scheduled Castes has generated more problems instead of solving the existing ones. The Scheduled Castes as a minority group was subjected to all kinds of disabilities at the hands of the upper castes in the past. The present era, inspired by humanistic ideals of
equality and fraternity, favours abolition of all barriers of caste and the like. Inspired by this ideal, the framers of the Constitution, endeavoured to bring about radical shift in the relationship between the Scheduled Castes and the non-Scheduled Castes, and thus, forge one integrated nation. Unfortunately, this shift is not towards a more egalitarian relationship. It leads towards greater conflict and fragmentation rather than towards consensus and integration. In spite of the fact that the privileges granted to the Scheduled Castes have not been completely utilized by them, the opposition to the reservation policy, among the non-Scheduled Castes, is an empirical reality. The government seems to have been caught between the Scylla of reservation policy and the Charybdis of mounting protest from the non-Scheduled Caste sections of the society. This dilemma that confronts the Indian society today seems to justify the Marxian thesis that such problems cannot be solved within the framework of capitalist social structure.

In any society where jobs are scarce and unemployment is very high, the preferential treatment to any underprivileged community is likely to create deep resentment and sharp reaction among the privileged ones. But the elites among the privileged are not so strongly threatened as those who have become upwardly mobile recently or are struggling to maintain their status. The resentment among class II and III employees among the non-Scheduled Castes is an important finding of this study.
The role of education is perhaps the most decisive in shaping the attitudes and practices of the people in any society. But, usually, the role of education is partially understood. An educated person is not only more conscious and articulate than others but is also well equipped in camouflaging his real attitudes if the situation and his self-interest so demand. This might be the case with the responses they made in terms of their relationship with the Scheduled Castes both at the work places and in the social sphere. They are expected to be well aware of Untouchability Offences Act of 1955.

To wind up this discussion, certain suggestions can be put forward on the basis of the findings of this study. The single important dimension in the whole set of opposition has been the promotion policy based on roster system. The elimination of the roster system may tone down the resentment of the non-Scheduled Castes. It also seems reasonable that after a person has been recruited in a government organisation, he becomes a unit in the whole bureaucratic structure which has its own rules and regulations. Whatever may be the rationale, any violation of these rules is likely to create situations and contexts of conflicts which will not remain confined to specific groups, but will have repercussions on the entire organisation in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

However, in the broader framework, whatever may be the anomalies in the reservation policy, it has a humane and historical justification to continue till the purpose for which
it has been introduced is achieved. The Scheduled Castes, as a depressed group, have no parallel in history. Every kind of disability which a minority could face was imposed on them. But as we very well know that the position of a majority is safe so long as a minority does not become conscious of the disabilities and injustices under which it labours and does not make organised efforts to improve its lot; to expect the privileged majority to be altruistic and initiate measures to emancipate the oppressed is expecting too much. The moment some attempts are initiated to ameliorate the position of the exploited minority, the majority feels threatened. In order to safeguard its interests, it reacts at two levels. First, it reacts in the form of manifest actions. In the present democratic context, such manifest actions take the form of agitations, etc. Secondly, it tries to create a competing ideology to nullify these efforts. In this case, the high caste non-Scheduled Caste sections, having no ideology with which to challenge the humanistic liberal-democratic ideology, have resuscitated the ancient myth of the genetic inferiority of the Scheduled Castes, and after declaring them to be inefficient and incapable of holding any position of responsibility due to their low order of intelligence, have advocated abolition of the policy of reservation for the sake of the larger interests of the country. But history of ideas demonstrates that such spurious myths have been fabricated by the ruling and privileged classes in every age and in every country and in course of time such myths have been exploded.
It is, however, for the Scheduled Caste sections of the society themselves to expose this absurd, irrational and unscientific myth by demonstrating that, if given the same opportunities and facilities enjoyed by the higher castes for centuries, they, too, can compete with higher castes in every walk of life and produce great men like Dr. Ambedkar. However, the time has come when the Scheduled Castes should not look up to the government for statutory privileges for ameliorating their lot but take their destiny in their own hands. The Scheduled Castes must organize themselves in order to demand what is their due but they must operate within the constitutional framework.