1.1. INTRODUCTION

Stratification of societies is a known phenomenon in all civilizations. This is due to the direct result of class struggle and class exploitation. The ancient Indian society was not only stratified but also fossilized into different Varnas and Jatis, the latter being determined by the accident called "birth". The lowest in the social ladder, the Sudras, were further divided into indefinite number of mixed castes of varying status and finally a group of despised castes forming the lowest stratum of society in ancient India. The scheduled caste people in India are less developed educationally, economically, politically and culturally than those of forward castes.

Ever since the attainment of independence, the Government of India launched a number of programmes to foster economic development and upliftment of the weaker sections of society to enable them to march forward educationally and economically through implementation of the five-year plans. Poverty in India is not only acute but also chronic though there are vast unutilized and underutilized natural resources and opportunities for development. But lack of proper dissemination of information of the available resources and opportunities hinders the progress of the disadvantaged groups.
Information is considered to be a resource or an asset. It is deemed to be an asset either as a body of factual knowledge or as a series of acts endowed with response potential leading to adaptive behaviour. It is essential for the progress of the individual and national development. This is why access to right kind of information or possession of correct and relevant information is a key to resolve various types of problems faced by the individuals. Information sensitizes and enhances the problem solving capacity of the individual and also of the Nation. Precisely, this is the reason why Wilson argues; “It is clear that question of the distribution of knowledge in society touches immediately on profound questions of the whole social, political and economic activity of society”\(^1\).

The concept of 'New Public Library Service' aims at providing community information services to all segments of the society. The information needs at present is varied and complex.

Public library is an agent of social change to all its clientele through relevant documents. The affected segment of the society namely schedule castes, schedule tribes, weaker sections are badly in need of relevant information for their social and economic development. Understanding the information needs and providing precise and relevant information to these people who come under the umbrella of 'disadvantaged' is the need of the hour.
1.2. PROPOSED RESEARCH

The purpose of the present study is to understand the information needs of Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) and the hiatus between their information needs and services provided by the public libraries with the aid of special grants under Special Component Plan of Andhra Pradesh. Research on the study of information needs of scheduled caste and the quality of services offered by Special Component Plan (SCP) libraries will assist in improving these libraries to serve the cause of scheduled castes and make them work more effectively. Though several studies have been conducted on public library system and its services, no intensive and systematic study has been made on scheduled castes and their information needs in relation to public libraries fostered by SCP Finances. Research on this aspect is crucial for optimum utilization of grants provided by the government under SCP plan. The investigator has attempted to meet the information needs and information seeking behavior of the scheduled castes attached to these libraries. Further an attempt has been made to study the state-of-art of these libraries with regard to physical conditions, books and journals, magazines, non-book materials available.
1.3. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH TITLE

Public libraries for the disadvantaged - A Study of special component plan libraries in Andhra Pradesh with special reference to Scheduled Castes.

1.3.1 Explanation of the concepts in the title

1.3.1.1 Public Libraries

UNESCO "Public library must be readily accessible and its door open for free and equal use by all members of the community, regardless of race, colour, nationality, age, sex, religion, language, status, and educational attainment"².

The UNESCO manifesto further states "Public libraries should be maintained wholly out of public funds, so that they can render free service to one and all in the society"³.

1.3.1.2 Disadvantaged

The most common factors used in identifying the disadvantaged are economic level and education. Groups that suffer more deprivation in terms of education and economic resources than the rest of the society including the poor, the elderly, the uneducated, the unemployed. In India, which falls under this category is the scheduled caste.
1.3.1.3 Andhra Pradesh

It is one of the modernized states of Indian Republican Country, situated on the southeastern side of the Indian peninsula. It is having an area of 2,75,045 sq. kms. Hyderabad is the capital of Andhra Pradesh state. Mother tongue of this state is Telugu. It has 23 districts. There is an organized network of public libraries installed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. In many rural areas there are no library facilities for the SCs and even where the facilities are available, due to the domination of upper caste people, the SC people are not allowed to enter on the other hand those libraries. The Government of Andhra Pradesh is not taking proper action to meet the situation.

1.3.1.4 Special Component Plan Libraries

The objective of this special plan is to provide funds for various scheduled caste development schemes. This was introduced by the Government of India in 1979 to channelise the flow of funds/outlays and benefits for specific schemes, which are development and welfare oriented for scheduled castes. The state governments / union territories / union ministries have earmarked funds. The phrase special component plan libraries refer to libraries receiving aid under SCP by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.
1.3.1.5 Scheduled Castes

The expression-scheduled caste was first coined by the Simon committee and standardized in the constitution of the Republic of India. The Hindu society is largely caste-based system and associated with the occupation. Scheduled castes in India have suffered several disadvantages in social, political, and economic spheres. They have been associated with occupation, which are degrading and demoralizing. They were assigned lowest status in the society. They were denied the property ownership, freedom to choose an occupation, admission to educational institutions, right to hold public posts, free access to public places. The post independence era witnessed organized efforts by the National government as well as state governments to uplift the scheduled category and improve the general conditions and bring them on to the mainstream on par with the other castes in India.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted with the following objectives

1. To trace the growth and development of public library system in India in general, and in Andhra Pradesh in particular.

2. To present an overview of Special Component Plan and Public Libraries sponsored by SCP in Andhra Pradesh.
3. To assess the information needs of users belonging to Scheduled Castes.

4. To identify the various channels of information the scheduled caste (SC) users make use in information seeking.

5. To analyze the perceptions of the Scheduled caste users about the library services rendered by SCP libraries.

6. To examine the services provided by the public libraries in general and SCP Libraries in particular in Andhra Pradesh.

7. To offer suggestions for the effective provision of service to SC community library users of SCP libraries.

1.5. HYPOTHESES

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses were framed

1. The Special Component Plan library development in Andhra Pradesh is progressing on satisfactory lines.

2. The library service being provided by SCP libraries in Andhra Pradesh is satisfactory.

3. The information needs of scheduled castes are heterogeneous in nature.
4. The Scheduled Caste groups in Andhra Pradesh are satisfied with library materials from the SCP libraries.

5. The physical facilities of SCP libraries are satisfactory.

6. The library materials in the SCP libraries are compatible with information needs of SC communities.

7. The extension services offered by the SCP libraries are satisfactory.

1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The present study has been confined to two districts in each region, that is Rayalaseema, Telangana and Andhra regions.

2. It has been limited to scheduled caste community people living in catchment area of Special Component Plan libraries.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. The study gives light to the backward or down trodden scheduled caste people who can be turned into resourceful and knowledge persons.

2. The implication of this research adds to status, dignity and morality of the schedule caste community people.
3. The study of information needs will help in selecting appropriate interventions to schedule caste community under study.

4. This research provides the information to give the facilities especially to Scheduled Castes.

5. The results of this study help the policy makers to develop effective information system. Which meets the information needs of Scheduled Castes.

1.8. METHODOLOGY

There are 100 public libraries identified by the government of Andhra Pradesh under SCP grants of Government of India. The Andhra Pradesh state is geographically divided into three regions namely Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. For the purpose of the study, the researcher has selected 33 libraries based on purposive random sampling basis and chosen Visakhapatnam and Nellore from Andhra Region, Nalgonda and Warangal from Telangana Region and Kurnool and Anantapur from Rayalaseema Region giving weightage to libraries in different regions namely Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. Data also has been collected from Districts Central Libraries.

Two types of questionnaires are prepared for the purpose of this study.

a. Questionnaire prepared for branch librarians.

b. Questionnaire prepared for library users.
1.9. PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 60 respondents from each district in three regions and results were tested. Based on the responses, the questionnaires were modified making necessary corrections. The revised version of the questionnaire was finally served to the respondents to elicit their responses.

1.10. CHAPTERISATION

The thesis has seven chapters.

Chapter 1 Need and Methodology
Introduces the concept of public libraries for the disadvantaged and presents the need for the proposed research. Further it highlights objectives, hypotheses, limitations, significance and methodology adopted in the data collection and analysis.

Chapter 2
Presents the review of the literature.

Chapter 3
Scheduled Castes Development Programmes and Information needs of Scheduled Caste community.

Chapter 4
Growth and development of public library system and Special Component Plan Libraries in Andhra Pradesh.
Chapter 5
Analysis and Interpretation of data of SCP Public Libraries of Selected Districts.

Chapter 6
Summary, Findings and Suggestions.

Chapter 7
Public Library Information system in Andhra Pradesh - A prototype design.
The thesis concludes with a list of bibliographic references and appendices.

REFERENCES


3. Ibid.,