Introduction

"Indian society has been undergoing far reaching changes over the last two hundred years. The nature of the changes and their implications vary from one region to another. Assuming that some or all of these changes can be subsumed under modernisation, India today provides a vast and fascinating laboratory for research into modernisation of institutions and individuals, and the kinds of linkage which modernisation in one area has with the other areas needs to be studied carefully, and it is not unlikely that a picture of the general drift of the changes may be teased out from a number of such studies."

This observation of Professor Srinivas very aptly describes the complexities involved in studying modernisation in India. Indian society, as is well known, is not a homogeneous society but an agglomeration of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and other religious groups. Therefore it is difficult to

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study such a complex society as India for arriving at
generalisations which are applicable for the nation as a
whole. However it must be noted that the process of
modernisation is not restricted to any one group but extends
to all segments of the society. It also has an impact on all
aspects of society, bringing about change as a consequence.
To understand such a complex and plural society as India, and
to understand the process of modernisation that is taking place,
it is necessary as Prof. Srinivas has stressed, to undertake
studies of different groups in the country, on the basis of
which attempts could be made to derive a general understanding
of the process as well as deduce generalisations. This study
on the "Impact of Development Agencies on the Process of
Modernisation" is an undertaking in that direction.

All societies are undergoing change although the rate of
change may be different in different societies. While the
changes that were taking place during the pre-World War II
period were very slow and were characterised by natural changes
in the process of societal evolution, in the post-World War II
period even isolated societies were exposed to the forces of
change viz., advancement in science and technology,
communication, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. And
added to that all nations were linked with each other by a
global economy characterised by interdependence. Such an interdependence resulted in flow of skills and knowledge with the result that all societies are undergoing rapid social changes.

The above mentioned processes are applicable all the more to the Indian society. The Indian society, unlike other developing societies in Africa and other places, had a rich tradition and when such a traditional society came under the influence of the forces of westernisation and modernisation, it also began to change considerably. However this change is qualitatively different from that in the other societies. The fact is that India is a classic example of what happens when a traditional society is exposed to the forces of modernisation. Several scholars like D.G.Mandlebaum,* Milton Singer,** M.N. Srinivas*** and others have engaged themselves in studying this problem and the general impression that one gets from their studies is that the Indian society is no doubt no longer what it was and is moving rapidly in the direction of modernisation.

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but with this qualification that there is a continuity between tradition and modernity. What is happening according to these scholars is that the traditional institutions and values are getting adapted to the factors of modernisation. This is what makes the studies on India fascinating.

While, as stated earlier, it is difficult to study the Indian society as a whole, it is even more difficult to study the several segments which form the Indian society. Each segment is a full-fledged universe with its own culture, institutions and style of life. But a systematic study of a segment will give us perceptions, if not generalisations. And this very perception will help the students of Indian society in understanding the problem of modernisation and change.

This study is restricted to a segment within the segment, viz., the leather-workers of Athani — a taluka in Belgaum district of Karnataka state. But to understand the subsegment it is necessary to grasp the nature of the broader segment, viz., the Hindu society, of which leather-workers are a part.

The Hindu society is characterised by a unique form of social stratification where different groups on the basis of certain features are placed in a hierarchical system. This
stratification of the society is as old as Hinduism itself and also has the religious sanction. This caste system can be aptly described on the basis of Emile Durkheim's classification of society as mechanical and organic solidarities. The Hindu society is a classic example of organic solidarity. The basic feature of this system is interdependence among different hierarchical groups based on the notions of purity and pollution and occupation. This was not only an economic system but also a political system. The ruling class and the priestly class had a vested interest in the persistence of the system. It is generally opined that the caste system is a closed system wherein one's membership of a particular group is based on birth only, though there are many cases where this was not rigidly followed. There were cases of individuals wanting to get absorbed into the group but history reveals how many peripheral groups outside the Hindu society were absorbed into the Hindu fold though such an absorbed group was given a very low status in the hierarchy.


This hierarchical system was broadly based on the Varna model which classified the society into several small hierarchical groups called castes. This Varna frame helped the society in placing the smaller groups in a particular position in the ladder. However, the functional unit of the society was caste — which was the reality. There are several arguments to the effect that in such a rigid system there was no room for mobility. But then several studies, especially by M.N. Srinivas, have shown that even under such a rigid system, mobility was possible. It was possible because the position of the topmost priestly and twice-born caste and the bottommost untouchable caste was clear and at other levels it was fluid. This fluidity made it possible for enterprising groups to move up by emulating the way of life of the upper castes and Srinivas describes this process of mobility as Sanskritisation. But this process had no effect on the priestly class for the reason that they were already on the top and they had no other place to move into; as to the lowest class, the fact of untouchability


blocked them from moving up. However the top castes were moving towards westernisation and modernisation on a larger scale than any other group.

The Indian society, i.e., the Hindu society in particular, has been facing onslaughts from the external forces beginning with the Muslim invasion. Surprisingly the Muslim invasion could not make a dent but the arrival of the British in the Indian subcontinent started bringing about a radical change in the Hindu society although the British did not want to usher in any drastic changes in the traditional system. The new ideas, knowledge and rationality brought by the British started making impact on the Hindu society. Especially important agents of change in the Hindu society can be seen in the liberal and secular education which was provided to the masses. This not only developed a sense of nationality but also made the enlightened and educated Hindus re-examine their own society in the light of new ideas. This gave impetus to many reforms within the society and certain rigid doctrines like those of purity and pollution started losing hold. This does not mean that the caste system underwent change totally, but certain obnoxious customs like Sati and child marriage began to be given up. The non-Dwija groups who were totally prevented from education and access to
high professions now had the freedom of educating themselves and taking their share in the administration of the state with equal status with the high caste groups. Unfortunately, with all this the lowest categories of untouchables remained where they were in spite of the freedom and access to education and professions. It was left to the constitution makers in the post-independence era to tackle their problem. It may be relevant to point out here that although the British were the agents of great changes in the Hindu society, in the history of the system many attempts were made by the enlightened Hindus themselves to reform the Hindu society and especially break the hierarchical barriers between different groups. The saints of the Bhakti movement, the Veerashaiva movement, and other similar movements in the various parts of the country are the classic examples of such attempts. But, unfortunately, the notions of hierarchy in the Hindu minds is so strong that the reform groups which emerged out of the efforts of these religious leaders, over a period of time, became the replica of the caste system itself.

With the attainment of independence, emergence of India as a secular state, the government started intervening to bring about change. This was attempted from two sides: through economic
development and by enacting social legislation. In fact, it was, and is, the desire of the government to make the Hindu society a casteless and classless one. It may be pointed out here that the stability of the state and the performance of the government depend largely on the overall soundness of the social organisation. Hence no segment of social reality can be ignored. An attempt was made during the British regime to minimize the social distance between these caste groups and opportunities were provided to the members of the lower strata to overcome the handicap and enter the mainstream of life. But these bureaucratic attempts were too weak to make any appreciable dent in the existing social order or to pave the way for a new one. The Hindu society continues to suffer from the malady of segmentation based on the Varna system as well as several diverse age old religious philosophies that promote division of social groups into inferior and superior ones.

To remedy the situation arising out of the placement of different groups in an unequal relationship the government of India has made a provision in the constitution for the protection of the lower classes especially the untouchables under articles, 15 and 16 etc. In fact, under article 17 of the constitution untouchability has been abolished and anybody
who practises discrimination on the basis of untouchability is punishable under law. In spite of this, untouchability in the rural areas is a major problem although it is not felt to that extent in the urban areas. The state, at both the national and state levels, has taken and continues to take measures to ameliorate the conditions of this class of persons. In the traditional system the untouchables provided bulk of the labour to the landowning classes and they also performed certain tasks which no other class was expected to do: the disposal of the dead animals, leather work and scavenging work. In addition, some of them ate carrion and all these were not only degrading but were also defiling. And as a result of these and their very low position they had to face certain disabilities like living far away from the upper class settlements, inaccessibility to the common well or source of water and denial of entry into the temples. During the post-independence era some improvements in their living conditions are perceptible. The stigma of untouchability has not yet completely disappeared; it persists because of their low living conditions and their inability to make full use of the opportunities provided by the state.

The untouchables, who are also called scheduled castes, are classified as backward classes under the constitution.
However untouchables are not the only group who are classified under the backward classes category in the constitution. There are many other caste groups which are above the untouchability line, which are educationally and socially backward and which are classified as other backward classes. The protection of the scheduled castes is the responsibility of the central government. The protection of the "other backward classes" is the responsibility of the states.

The backward class is not a well defined category of persons. It is relevant to quote here from scholars who have worked on the backward classes in India. For example, Andre Beteille says, "The backward classes are a large and mixed category of persons with boundaries that are both unclear and elastic. Together, they comprise roughly one-third of the total population of the country. They are made up of three principal components, the scheduled tribes, the scheduled castes and the other backward classes. The scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are well defined category; comprising respectively a little less than seven and a little more than fourteen per cent of the population. The other backward classes are a residual category; their position is highly ambiguous; and it is impossible to give an exact statement of their number."*

Similarly, Dubey and Murdia state that "The term 'backward classes' has a specific connotation in our country. The backward classes include scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, denotified tribes and other backward classes."

Since the beginning of this century several commissions and committees have been entrusted with the problem of defining as well as identifying the backward classes for receiving the benefits extended from time to time by the succeeding governments. In the process, the oppressed and the downtrodden have been variously designated as: 'depressed class,' 'backward class,' 'untouchables,' 'scheduled castes,' 'scheduled tribes,' 'backward communities,' 'weaker sections,' 'Harijans' etc. All these designations are more or less used as synonyms. During the British regime certain concessions were extended to these identified people (notified groups) in the field of education, political representation and recruitment to government services.

After the country attained independence and the constitution was promulgated, the downtrodden sections of the population were recognised as legitimately deserving the preferential treatment

In the field of education, recruitment to government jobs and the representation in the representative or legislative bodies for political participation. Articles 15, 16, 46, 244, 330, 332, 335, 341 and 342 as also the fifth and the sixth schedules of the Indian constitution make reference to the preferential treatment meant for such backward classes.

In addition, the constitution of India prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste and also authorises the union and the state governments to make special provision for the untouchables, tribals and the backward classes. This discrimination has come to be known as 'protective,' 'positive' or 'progressive discrimination.' Under the provisions of this policy, reservations have been provided in schools, colleges, universities and other institutions of learning; government services, public sector industries and organisations etc., as also the parliament, state legislatures and other representative bodies. The policy also provides for special welfare measures that lead to overall development of these sections. Towards this end schemes are designed in various 'Five Year Plans' - community development programmes and various other non-plan developmental activities.

As a result of these measures quite a sizeable section of the Indian population that once suffered from the inherited and
environmental handicaps has benefited. A case in point is the leather-workers, a community of untouchables, in Athani. However a number of occupational groups among the downtrodden and the socially oppressed continued to live in pathetic conditions though they were highly skilled workers. To help these artisan classes special developmental programmes were initiated in a variety of ways and their execution was entrusted to specially created developmental agencies. One such agency is the Khadi and Village Industries Commission at the all India level, Khadi and Village Industries Boards at the state levels and sectorwise development boards or corporations also at the state levels. Some of these agencies are influencing the socio-economic profile of the backward castes involved in the footwear manufacture in Athani. These backward castes who are also called scheduled castes are the subject of this thesis.

Modernisation

This thesis attempts to examine the impact of various external forces on a particular section of the backward classes. It examines, in particular, the resulting modernising process and also the argument that in case of India there is a continuation between tradition and modernity. Such an examination requires an understanding of the meaning of the terms modernisation and backward classes.
There are several viewpoints regarding the process of modernisation. Some hold the view that modernisation replaces traditionality, while some others hold the contrary view that there is continuity between tradition and modernity. Milton Singer, for example, does not view these two processes as contradictory. He thinks they are complementary. In the light of these controversies, it is necessary to review the meaning of the term modernisation from several viewpoints.

The term modernisation has several aspects. Referring both to qualitative and quantitative changes, modernisation can also be examined from the economic point of view as well as social point of view. Economic modernisation broadly refers to the use of modern science and technology and rationalistic attitudes towards the production process while social modernisation refers to the attitudes, the values, and the political institutions. These two aspects are closely interrelated and in fact we can say that there is a reciprocal relationship between the two because the change in any one aspect can bring about change in the other aspects.

What is modernisation? According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, "Modernisation is the current term for an old process — the process of social change, whereby
less developed societies acquire characteristics common to more developed societies. The process is activated by international, or intersocietal, communication.* Elaborating further, Manning Nash says, "Modernity is the social, psychological framework which facilitates the application of science to the process of production. And modernisation is the process of making societies, cultures, and individuals receptive to growth of tested knowledge and its employment in the ordinary business of daily living."** These definitions emphasize scientific knowledge as well as its adoption besides other values in the day-to-day activities and the business of living. This line of thought is very close to the views of economic philosopher Robert L. Heilbroner who refers to the economic development as "deepening flow of incomes and widening flow of production*** in which the emphasis is on the process of economy that would break the shackles of backwardness. The shackles of backwardness, according to him, can be broken by the process of


economy in which income is more important and is ahead of production for profit. However he has no firm views on the equality of income. The modernisation process encompasses all aspects of social life. Rationality, individualism, secularism, equality and the application of scientific principles for advancing technology as well as personal goals become basic criteria for understanding modernisation.

Several models of modernisation have been evolved. For example: "Modernisation refers to the process of directed change through which a nation achieves economic growth, political development and autonomy, and social reconstruction based on the principles of equality, fraternity, enhancement of freedoms, and satisfaction of basic needs. The principles of social reconstruction are articulated by individuals and cumulated by groups working often in the short run through revolutionary methods but in the long run through consensus and democratic consent. The model stresses individual autonomy and community growth.** This model appears remarkably suitable for analysis in our study, although the model does not make any provision for the tradition - modernity relationship. It is evident from the

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model that it covers an enormous ground and a wide variety of factors: political, economic, social and cultural. It also refers to the process of directed change.

The universe which we have selected for our study belongs to the lowest class of the Hindu society which is undergoing change. It is undergoing change as a result of the state's intervention in the social life of the class through the constitutional guarantees and protections as also the economic benefits bestowed on it and also making it politically involved in the administration of the nation. In a nutshell the state is directing the change in the class towards modernisation. Whether such an endeavour of the state has succeeded or not is a basic problem of this thesis.

Social mobility is one of the outcomes of modernisation. The leather-workers of Athani are on their way to social mobility as a result of their economic development. "A mobile society has to encourage rationality for the calculus of choice of shapes, individual behaviour and conditions its rewards. People come to see the social future as manipulable rather than ordained and their personal prospects in terms of achievement rather than heritage."* And this is also one of the areas of this study.

It is relevant to note another definition of modernisation: "Modernisation is defined as the process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution. This process of adaptation had its origins and initial influence in the societies of western Europe, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these changes have been extended to all other societies and have resulted in a world-wide transformation affecting all human relationship."

Modernisation in India began with the advent of the European powers in the subcontinent. The modernisation process during the British rule was not in a sense directed. A society which was submissive or adaptive could absorb many things as a result of its exposure to new values, new ideas etc. The impact of the western society in general and the British in particular began to be felt between the 17th and 19th centuries when the British consolidated their political power and strengthened their hold on the Indian people. They tightened the grip on the civil

administration with unity as their ultimate goal for commercial and other exploitation of the eastern hemisphere with the sole aim of enriching the British coffers. The Hindu society which had already come under the influence of Islam as a consequence of the Moslem and Mogul rule and the impact of the learning of the Persian language by the native Hindus (to cope up with the civil administration) had already begun to change. There was considerable erosion of the main traits of the Hindu way of life and thinking. The British administration brought with it the secular educational system to India to fortify its administrative infrastructure and prepare and train Indians to run the civil administration. This system emphasised features like formal rationality, experimentation, codification, verification, and rational utilitarian orientation in behaviour and thought.* In the long run this led to a process of synthesis of the modern western or, to be more precise, the British innovatory traits with the more ancient valuable Hindu -- or Indian -- elements to change the Indian scene from its distinct oriental setting to a modern Indian society. Today, the Indian bureaucratic structure, its legal system, the military organization, the educational pattern, the system of

medicine and health care, the science and technology policy, the life styles of the intellectuals and scholars are all in a way 'very western' and contribute greatly towards inculcating western values and a scientific temperament. In a way, the cumulative effect of all this is leading to a kind of universal strategy for the betterment of living conditions through economic development and a sort of social growth in which the individual develops and lives as an independent entity, free from the bondage of caste and other social stigma of the occupations one is involved in. Inculcation of this temperament and attitude to enhance the social standing of the individual, irrespective of his vocation and traditional moulds like caste, is felt in all the contemporary developing societies around the world and its impact is equally strongly felt here. As a concept, modernisation is understood as a symbol of rational attitude and is always considered to be intimately associated with the diffusion of scientific knowledge and technical skill, in every activity and attitude of people, the attitude leading to the humanistic and philosophical view of the contemporary human problems.

In traditional societies such as India, the process of modernisation has been unable to replace the old society by a new one. Although the rationalistic, secular and scientific
ideas are a potent force, the society breaks away from the past and the experience shows that in the traditional societies the traditional institutions have been able to adapt themselves to the modernistic ideas and beliefs. In fact, the two come to coexist. Examples can be given to illustrate this. Srinivas states that:

"Scientists from Kerala and Tamilnadu employed in a meteorological institution are known scrupulously to avoid doing anything important or auspicious during that part of the day which is believed to be presided over by the inauspicious Rahu, one of the nine planets of Indian astrology. A chart showing the period of each day of the week presided over by Rahu is frequently hung on a domestic wall. South Indian calendars and diaries generally show Rahukula. According to Hindu mythology, Rahu is a demon whose head was cut off by Vishnu after he had attempted to drink the nectar obtained at the churning of the ocean, but, having become immortal, periodically revenged himself on his betrayers, the Sun and Moon, by swallowing them at the time of the eclipse. The interesting point in the above example is that people who have been trained to study weather phenomena in terms of the operation of impersonal forces perceive no contradiction between their professional activity and their astrological beliefs. It is likely that these scientists also observe the food and other taboos which orthodox Hindus observe during an eclipse."

Even such a rationalist and modernist as Jawaharlal Nehru had a belief in astrology. One can cite many instances wherein at the inauguration of factories and industries which use most sophisticated modern technology, rituals are observed to ward off evil. On Ayudhapooja day it is customary to worship machines. Thus it can be observed that there is no contradiction between tradition and modernity. This is true of the leather workers of Athani.

Backward Class

The leather-workers of Athani consisting of several subcastes of Athani belong to one of the scheduled castes and they fall into the category of backward class under the constitution. It must be pointed out here (to repeat) that the backward classes which refer to the castes included in the schedule and who belong to the lowest section of population come directly under the protection of the central government. There is one other category called "other backward classes" which include all other castes which are socially and or economically backward. They come under the protection of the state governments. We are concerned in this study with the backward classes who are also called scheduled castes.
From the beginning of this century, several measures have been taken to ameliorate the conditions of the backward classes. As early as 1923, the Bombay Legislative Council resolved that the untouchables be allowed to use all public places, wells, schools, dispensaries etc. Other measures were also taken by the state and the provincial legislatures. In the princely Mysore state, as early as 1919, a committee headed by Miller went into the problems of the deprived castes and made recommendations that this class of citizens be given preferential treatment in education and employment. In the 1932–36 period a number of temple entry and anti-disabilities bills were introduced in the Central, Legislative Assemblies and in Madras and Bombay Legislatures. Although these legislations and acts of the governments did help the backward classes to some extent, it was left to the constitution makers later to take up this problem systematically and provide the various benefits and facilities to these classes with a constitutional guarantee. The central government’s main concern was to put an end to the discriminatory policies practised against them and, by providing them with reservations in education


and employment, to bring them to the level of the upper classes. The protection was extended to provide opportunities of political participation as well.

As we have observed, the backward classes are not a well defined class or category. Since the beginning of the 20th century several commissions and committees have been entrusted with the problem of defining the backward classes but they have either failed in their missions or have given only summary findings that leave many questions unanswered, contributing to the confusion and complexity of the problem which in a way would continue for many more years to come. The basic criteria used in identifying the backward classes are poverty and social disabilities.

Certain policies have been evolved by the government to help these groups. One of the main objectives has been to help these people to overcome the handicaps that lead to the inequalities based on birth and the prevailing living conditions which depend on the place of the group in the social hierarchy. The major state help is in the form of promoting the educational level, preferential treatment in the recruitment to jobs, and proportionate reservation to facilitate active political participation in the elected institutions at all levels — from
village panchayat to the central (federal) government. All this is done to generate a feeling of fellowship and trust and develop an infrastructure conducive to the overall growth and progress of the backward classes.

While backwardness in contemporary India is not defined in the constitution, it can be understood in its historical perspective. Backwardness has been a result of the disabilities faced by the backward people for centuries. By and large the criteria of backwardness followed in the pre-independence days are much the same as those adopted in the post-independence period. The main consideration for any group or caste to remain in the backward list is its social position and the economic factor. Historically, these sections not only suffered from an intense economic deprivation but also had to carry the stigma of "untouchability."

The Criteria of Backwardness

The Backward Classes Commission appointed by the government of India in 1953 "experienced difficulty in finding a generally valid and acceptable criterion of backwardness to denote a group or a community." The commission for its purpose of

recommendation set the following criteria* for its general guidance:

1. low position in the traditional caste hierarchy in Hindu society;
2. lack of general educational advancement among the major sections of a caste or community;
3. inadequate or no representation in government service; and
4. inadequate representation in trade, commerce and industry.

In addition to the above, the commission adopted the following criteria to determine the segments of population as educationally and economically backward.** They are:

1. people suffering from the stigma of untouchability or near untouchability;
2. tribes not yet sufficiently assimilated in general social order;

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3. the communities which owing to a long neglect, have been driven to crime; and
4. other backward classes.

The first category (listed above)/designated as scheduled castes, the second was classified as scheduled tribes, the third as denotified groups and the fourth remained broadly as other backward classes.

Over the years, the government has provided various amenities and benefits to these people. But the progress among the backward classes has not been uniform. The politically powerful castes amongst them have been getting the lion’s share of the benefits. However there are some castes who are traditionally attached to a craft; these, when provided with aids and facilities, have improved not only their economic status but also their social status. This is what is happening among the leather-workers of Athani.

**Methods and Techniques**

This study seeks to examine the impact of development agencies on the process of modernisation of the backward classes of Athani. In a way, it is a continuation of the Researcher’s
M.Phil. dissertation (The Cobblers in Athani: A Socio-Political Profile) undertaken during 1983-84 with a different focus, to compile the profile of the cobblers at Athani. During my two-year tenure (1981-83) as Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Shri Shivayogi Purushottama Swamiji College, Athani, I came in contact with a variety of influential and communicative persons like my colleagues and student leaders, the locally influential families, NIDAs, the municipal administrators, officials of the government departments at the taluka level, the block development personnel, social workers, community leaders, the press reporters and so on. The field investigation of this study helped me to develop an appreciable degree of familiarity with not only the local cobblers but also a cross-section of the backward classes in the area. It helped in building up an intimate rapport with the local tanners, cobblers, footwear merchants, personnel of the development agencies like the KVIC, KVIC and the Likhata.

Athani is a small town in Karnataka. Among its inhabitants the downtrodden scheduled castes form a sizeable portion. Their living conditions are by no means satisfactory. Most of their traditional occupations are unremunerative. Their general socio-economic conditions give a depressing picture to a casual onlooker. However, amidst this an occupational group producing leather
footwear gives a different picture of the social reality. The living conditions of this group are better, its attitude is refined, its aspirations are superior and it is in the process of modernisation. This is attributed to the excellent work done by the agencies which are devoted to the uplift of leather artisans and the general welfare of their families in the area. One agency is sponsored by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. It has been functioning in the town since 1968. Lately, the Karnataka government-sponsored agency, popularly called lidkar (KLIDC), has set up its field office in the town. This also works alongside the KVIO field office, Charmalaya, to promote the well-being of the leather artisans and their families. Thesetwo agencies provide a package of goods and services that seem to bring about a change in the group, permeating every aspect of its life.

I began with a study of documents, books and reports. These have included the various government reports on administration, census reports and the gazetteers of the British times, and of post-independence years. As a resident of the Athani town I have known the occupational and other problems of the cobblers. But I did not know much about their history and background. This I came to have from the early editions of the gazetteers. Of particular use were the works of Edgar Thurston
and R.E. Anthoven who have done monumental work on the castes and tribes and races of western and southern India. While their works are not up to date, they contain much valuable data on the life and activities of the cobblers of Athani and around. They help us in reconstructing a picture of the life and institutions of the cobblers as they existed in the 19th century. I benefited by consulting a number of articles and research papers which have been results of micro studies taken up by the various social scientists of the various communities, castes and tribes in the various parts of the country. Part of this reading is reflected in the bibliography appended at the end.

I have chosen to assemble an exploratory design. Since we do not have adequate number of studies of the various communities like this inhabiting this region, the only approach to the problem is to begin with an exploratory design. At this stage of the development of the field and the stage at which social scientists find themselves, sophisticated hypotheses or theories cannot be attempted. Such sophisticated hypotheses pre-suppose availability of a large body of reliable data, hard data. Thurston and Anthoven have done their job. Similarly the census organization (of the government of India) does its job periodically. But in a fundamental sense, the efforts of
these are no substitute for perspective micro studies or macro projects taken up by social scientists. This is a stage which may be reached in future. Until then, we have to content ourselves with the exploratory design with which we can build up a comprehensive and realistic analysis of the cobblers' community and the process of modernisation.

As regards the methods and techniques employed in course of this investigation, reference has already been made to the documentary method. Some reference has also been made to the method of observation and participant observation. These two methods have been employed in the course of my stay in Athani. I have closely observed the life and work of the cobblers. I have visited their localities frequently and talked with a number of persons, young and old. I have tried to gather some information from the educated members and a few professionals from this community. I have had no language difficulty because the cobblers are by and large bilingual. They speak Kannada and Marathi with equal ease, and several of them have a smattering of Hindi or Urdu. A few speak English too. Local elites, the NSS officer and volunteers have assisted me in collecting valuable information and meeting and interviewing a number of cobblers. The officers of Charmalaya and Idkar, the two key organisations which have virtually ushered in
modernisation for the cobblers, have helped me with a lot of basic data, statistics, reports etc. The various stages of the occupation of the cobblers such as purchase of hides, processing of the hides, working with leather and producing footwear, marketing the footwear and so on have become comprehensible to me through several discussions I had with the friends at Charmalaya and Lidkar.

On account of the kindness and communicativeness of the various colleagues and persons mentioned and on account of the richness of the field, I have been able to find abundant data for this investigation. Whenever possible, I collected copies of documents, letters, correspondence, statistics, pamphlets and so on. I made some field notes. These were made after the discussions were over. Usually the same day or the next day time was found to make these notes. In addition to the data available from these sources, some record of the local Kannada periodical Horatu was maintained. This periodical is a weekly. Time and again, news about the cobblers of Athani, their activities and socio-economic progress appear in some of the periodicals from outside. Some information is published in the journal called Jagruthi run by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (Headquarters: Bombay). The Deccan Herald (daily) of Bangalore and its sister publication Sudha (weekly)
publish news on Athani once in a while. The Marathi daily Sakal (published in editions from Poona, Bombay and Kolhapur) also publishes news items relating to the cobblers here.

Data published in these various periodicals have been useful for the purpose of this study.

The method of interview, both structured and unstructured, has been a vital source of information for this study. A questionnaire was formulated to elicit personal information of the respondents as well as their activities and views on various socio-political and economic problems. The questionnaire is appended at the end. The unstructured interview continued either in extension of the questionnaire session or before or after that. As regards the data which became available from the unstructured interviews, a record was kept in the form of notes after the sessions were over.

In addition, this study not only uses the socio-economic data for all the scheduled castes in Athani town but also makes a comparison of the relative progress between the leather-working scheduled castes and other scheduled castes. This has been done with a view to pin-point the reasons for the progress achieved by the leather-worker group. To supplement the
quantitative data collected for my M.Phil. thesis and the general data for all the scheduled castes, a sample survey of 30 households was conducted recently. It is interesting to observe that the data collected at different times and by different methods, when analysed, tend to reveal the same characteristics as far as the leather-workers of Athani are concerned. With a view to obtaining a better perception of the modernisation of the leather-workers of Athani, 10 cases, which were randomly selected, have been used in the analysis. In this sense, the method of case studies has been found useful and has been employed here.

From the methodological standpoint, the whole study can be treated as a case study. We should note here that the life and activities of the cobblers in the Athani taluka form a general background to the study. The study itself is confined to the cobblers of the Athani town. There are similar clusters of families of cobblers running their leather workshops in the various parts of the Athani taluka. All these are supposed to form a background. It is possible that the argument presented here relating to the cobblers of the Athani town is applicable in essential features to similar clusters. But here the argument has not been stretched beyond Athani.
From the standpoint of the current controversy involving the various castes and subcastes and the various commissions like the Mandal Commission and their reports, the study of the cobblers of Athani would be interesting. The cobblers are a category of the scheduled castes and how they go about their business and what place they occupy in the context of the relations between the scheduled castes and the upper classes in Athani would be worth noticing. This study is not ambitious. It is argued here that this study of the cobblers may help us to say something about the socio-economic developments and the modernisation of the lower classes of the Indian society.

The data collected for this study have been organised in the form of the various chapters. An introductory chapter deals with the general background, methodology etc. of the study. The second chapter deals with a general description of the backward classes of Athani with particular reference to leather-workers. The third and fourth chapters deal with the development agencies and their role while the fifth chapter deals with an analysis of the socio-economic data on leather-workers in Athani. The sixth chapter devotes itself to the question of modernisation of the leather-workers in Athani. The seventh chapter contains ten case studies. The various data and arguments are brought together in the chapter on conclusions.
There have been quite a few general studies on the scheduled castes in the country analysing the impact of the government policies. However, studies pertaining to the influence of specific developmental agencies acting as change agents are lacking.

The present study proposes to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What role are these developmental agencies playing in the improvement in the conditions and in modernisation process of the backward classes in Athani?

2. What are the qualitative differences between the special developmental agencies and the general governmental programmes for the backward classes?

3. Has there been any impact of the special developmental agencies on the economic status of the target group?

* S.N. Dubey, and Ratna Pardia, Administration of Policy and Programmes for Backward Classes in India (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1976).

4. Has the economic upliftment induced changes in the social status of the group?

5. Do the various parameters of the socio-economic change lead to the conclusion that the target group is in the process of modernization?