CHAPTER 7
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

More than half a century has elapsed after India attained independence. Ever since then our National leaders and the successive Governments have brought about a number of reforms with the specific objective of alleviating the poverty of the downtrodden masses especially the backward communities. Despite all these efforts we find that even now they continue to remain marginalized from enjoying the fruits of development. Even in a State like Kerala which boasts of a unique development experience, with social indicators like literacy birth rate, death rate and health status being comparable to countries like U.S.A, the scheduled castes, especially those living in the rural areas are still experiencing standards of living much below that of the general population. In this context, the present study made an attempt to analyse the socio-economic background and the consumption pattern of scheduled caste households in Idukki district. The summary of the findings on various aspects and recommendations of the study are given in this chapter.

A comparative study of the MPCE of Scheduled castes in India and Kerala with that of General households in India and Kerala using NSSO data has brought out the following features:

7.1 Distribution of MPCE among scheduled Castes

Looking to the proportion of persons in each MPCE level, it is found that, the MPCE position of schedules castes population in rural Kerala is lower than that of the general population. This is the same trend at all India level. The MPCE position of SC’s in urban Kerala is also lower than that of general population in Kerala. The same trend is found at the all India level. However the MPCE position of rural Kerala SC’s is better than that of SC’s in rural India. The MPCE position of urban Kerala SC’s is also higher than that of SC’s in urban India. More percentage of SC population in rural Kerala fall in lower MPCE levels than urban SC’s. Similarly in rural India more percentage of SC’s fall in lower MPCE classes than urban SC’s.
Looking in to the distribution of persons in to different MPCE classes. It is found that MPCE position of SC households in both rural and urban Kerala is lower than that of non-Sc households in both sectors in both Kerala and India. MPCE position of SC's in both rural and urban Kerala is better than that of SC's in the All India level. More percentage of SC's fall in lower MPCE ranges in rural Kerala than Urban Kerala. Similar is the trend in all-India also.

7.2 Size distribution of Scheduled Castes

    Looking to the average size of SC households it is found that, In case of rural Kerala for SC's average household size is higher than (5.24) the urban SC's (4.75). All India level also rural SC's have larger household size (4.85) than urban SC's (4.75). Average size of rural SC households in Kerala is higher than rural SC households in All India. Average household size of urban SC households in Kerala is higher than All India urban SC's. Average household size is higher in rural sector for SC's in Kerala as well as all-India.

7.3 Proportion of Expenditure on food of SC's

    Analysis of proportion of expenditure on food for scheduled Castes provided the following findings: For rural Kerala SC's percentage expenditure on food declined from 1983 to 1987-88. Same trend is found for food expenditure in all-India also. For rural India SC's percentage expenditure on food declined from 1983 to 1993-94. Food expenditure for Kerala urban SC's declined from 983 to 1987-88. In case of urban India SC's percentage expenditure on food declined from 83 to 93-94. Here it is observed that the pattern similar to that of general households.

    In rural Kerala for general households, percentage expenditure on food declined from 1983 to 1987-88. In rural India for percentage expenditure on food declined from 1983 to 63.23 in 1993-94. For urban Kerala general households the percentage expenditure on food increased from 1983 to 1987-88. For urban India general households the percentage expenditure on food changed only very little between 1983 to 1987-88. But there was a steady decline between 1987-88 and 1993-94. So it is found that as in case of the general households in Kerala as well as in India
percentage of expenditure on food of scheduled castes was declining between 1983-1993-94.

7.4 Pattern of Consumption Expenditure of SC's.

It is found that (considering all expenditure classes) average MPCE of SC’s in rural Kerala is lower than that on general households. This is similar to the situation of SC’s and general households of all India rural sectors. In the top most MPCE classes of Rs.300& above the average MPCE of SC’s found very high in Kerala. At All-India level in the top most MPCE classes of Rs.300& above the average MPCE of SC’s is greater than that of general households.

Unlike the pattern of MPCE for the total population of SC’s, the top expenditure class among SC’s exhibit close similarly in average MPCE to the general population in rural India. In the top expenditure class in rural average MPCE is lower and MPCE on food is higher for general households. That is the average MPCE is higher and MPCE on food is lower for SC’s in the top expenditure class. SC’s belonging to top expenditure class spend more than general households on food items like cereals, fish and egg and on non-food items like pan, tobacco and intoxicants, miscellaneous goods and services and durable goods in rural India. SC’s in rural India spend less than general households on food items like pulses, milk and milk products, fruits and nuts, beverages and refreshments and non-food items like clothing and footwear in the top expenditure class. Considering all expenditure classes, average MPCE of SC’s in rural and urban Kerala and India is lower than that of general households. Considering “top expenditure class” in rural and urban sector average MPCE of SC’s in higher than general households on items such as cereals, meat, fish and egg and non-food items like pan, tobacco and intoxicants, miscellaneous goods and services and durable goods.

7.5 Per capita Expenditure.

As observed earlier average monthly per capita expenditure general households of Kerala is found much higher than that of SC’s of rural and urban Kerala. In urban SC’s spend on food 63.08% on food and general households spend
59.38% SC's non-food expenditure in rural Kerala was 33.48% of total MPCE and that of general households 38.33%. The same trend was seen in urban also. MPCE on cereals of SC's of rural Kerala was higher than that of general households in rural Kerala. In urban Kerala also same trend. SC's had higher average MPCE only on cereals, and spices in rural Kerala than general households urban SC's have higher average MPCE on sum more items sugar, and beverages and refreshments than non-SC's in urban Kerala. Among non-food in rural and urban Kerala SC's have higher expenditure on only two items pan, tobacco and intoxicants, fuel and light. It is found that SC's in both rural and urban Kerala have higher percentage expenditure on food than general households. Among food items cereals, cereal substitutes and spices are the item that lead in the food basket of SC's than general households. MPCE on non-food items pan. Tobacco and intoxicants and fuel and light exceed that of general households in both rural and urban Kerala.

7.6 Movement in budget Share

Analysis of movement in the budget share for SC's over the period using NSSO data 1983-1993-94 showed that over the period from 1983-1987-88, expenditures have increased on all items for SC's in both Kerala and all India rural and urban. Proportion of expenditure on food declined while that of non-food has increased. In food group in rural and urban items attracting more expenditures were cereals, beverages and refreshments, meat, egg and fish and spices. Percentage expenditure on clothing is found to be declining while expenditure on footwear is increasing in both sectors. In urban sector percentage of expenditure on durable goods found decreasing during the period, and increasing in rural sector. Per capita expenditure on the item was found less than that in rural sector.

7.7 Percentage expenditure of SC's

Looking to the percentage expenditure over the years for Kerala, it is found that for SC's expenditure on cereals is declining over the period in both rural and urban Kerala. Similar trend is found in all India level percentage expenditure on cereals declined steadily during the period. Increase in percentage expenditure has been observed in case of durable goods. Increase in percentage expenditure has been
seen for all India SC’s in rural and urban for durable goods. Expenditure on clothing in total non-food expenditure in declining for SC’s in rural sector of Kerala and increased in urban Kerala. At all India level also clothing expenditure has been declining for SC’s.

7.8 Per capita consumption expenditure.

Looking to per capita consumption expenditure it is found that average MPCE of SC’s lower than that of general households in rural Kerala. Same trend is found in rural India also. In urban Kerala also average MPCE of SC’s is lower than that of general households same trend is found in urban India also.

7.9 Rural Urban differences Kerala Consumption Pattern

Examinations of consumption pattern of rural and urban Kerala for Scheduled castes show significant changes. In rural sector, footwear, durable goods and total non-food are found to be consumed at an increased rate. In urban consumption of durable goods is fast increasing. Cereals expenditure is declining for rural SC’s of Kerala. Clothing expenditure is declining for rural and increasing for urban. In both rural and urban Kerala for SC’s expenditure ratio of food and non-food items changed showing decrease in food consumption and an increase in non-food consumption. Similar trend is found in all-India also expenditure ratio of food and non-food items has changed. Non-food consumption of SC’s in Kerala rural SC’s higher than that of rural India SC’s. For durable goods SC’s in urban Kerala have lower expenditure than urban all India SC’s.

7.10 MPCE among Occupation groups.

Higher proportion of population in lower MPCE classes is seen among labour households (agricultural labour, other labour) than all households in Kerala. Similar trend is seen in rural India also MPCE levels casual labour households were lower than other categories of households in urban Kerala. In urban India also same trend has been observed MPCE among Occupation Groups for SC’s. Estimation of the two lowest and two top MPCE classes brings some important differences. At the all India level it is found that SC’s is more affected by poverty than “others” in each
occupation category. Incidence of poverty is more pronounced among agricultural labour households among SC’s. in the lower tail of MPCE distribution. In the upper tail of MPCE distribution, differences among SC’s is most prominent for “other type” households.

Analysis of the consumption expenditure pattern and socio-economic background of sample Scheduled Caste households gave the following findings.

1. The scheduled casts living in the rural sample of Idukki district belong to five types of occupational categories viz, Agricultural labourers (17.87%) Other labourers (25.11%), Farmers (1.70%), Regular salaried (9.15%) and Self employed (2.98%). Percentage of unemployed in the rural sample is 8.51. Students constituted 9.36% in the rural sample.

The scheduled caste living in the urban sample of Idukki district are engaged in four types of occupations viz; Agricultural labourers (10.19%), Other labourers (27.01%), Regular salaried (17.54%) and Self employed (1.66%). The percentage of ‘others’ is found to be much high among SC’s.

2. Among the rural sample SC house holds literacy rate is 91% and in the urban sample it is 84%. There is 3.2% male illiteracy and 6.2% female illiteracy among sample rural SC’s of Idukki district. In the urban sample the male illiteracy is 3.3% and female illiteracy is 13.3%.

3. 20.9% of rural sample and 17.3% of urban sample have “below standard V”, level of education. 55.5% of rural sample and 50.5% of urban sample SC’s have education level “Standard V – Standard X”.

4. Only 3.1% of rural SC’s and 13.5% of urban SC’s in sample area belong to an educational level of “above SSLC”.

5. Average household size of rural sample is 4.7 and that of urban sample 4.22. Rural household size of SC’s is higher than urban household size. At the all India level and for Kerala state average household size of SC’s in rural sector is found higher than that of urban SC’s.

6. Average monthly per capita income of rural sample SC’s (Rs.450) is lower than the same for urban sample (Rs.634.4)
7. Average monthly per capita expenditure of rural sample SC’s households (Rs. 372.57) is found lower than the same for urban sample (Rs. 526).

8. Average monthly per capita savings among sample SC households is very less; lower in rural sample (Rs. 78.42) than in urban sample (Rs. 93.33).

Among sample in SC households in both rural and urban more percentage of households fall in lower Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) classes as similar to the trend found between SC’s in all India and all Kerala.

9. The percentage of SC households in the MPCE class of above Rs. 355 (top MPCE class) is higher for urban sector in Kerala (50%) than in rural sector (20%).

10. In the top most MPCE class at all India level for SC’s, the average MPCE (Rs. 448) is greater than that of general population (Rs. 445). The same trend is found in Kerala also. This could be because they have been able to avail the concessions offered to them, while the people in the lower MPCE classes may not even be aware of these issues.

11. Also for the SC’s belonging to the top most MPCE class in the sample rural and urban areas have high average MPCE.

12. Unlike the pattern of MPCE for the total of SC’s, the top expenditure class among them exhibits close similarity in their average MPCE to the general population in all India and Kerala.

13. For the sample SC households in both rural and urban, proportion of food in total expenditure is higher for lower expenditure classes and proportion of non-food higher for higher expenditure classes as already established by theory.

14. At all India level, SC’s in the top expenditure class spend more than general households on food items such as cereals, meat, fish and egg and non-food items like pan, tobacco and intoxicants, miscellaneous goods and services and durable goods. They spend less than general households on food items such as pulses, milk and milk products, fruits and nuts, beverages and refreshments and non-food items such as clothing and footwear.
In Kerala SC's in both rural and urban have higher percentage expenditure on food, than general households. MPCE on pan, tobacco and intoxicants of SC’s exceeded that of general households in both rural and urban Kerala which is one reason why they have not been able to rise up from the low standards of living.

15. For the sample rural SC's MPCE on food constituted 56.88% and in urban 45.46%. MPCE on non-food of sample SC's in rural constituted 43.12% where as in urban areas it was 54.54%. Those SC's living in urban areas have adapted the life styles of the other communities and have more or less merged in to the mainstream of the community.

16. Significant differences are there in the “total expenditure” and “expenditure on non-food items” between SC's in rural and urban samples in the study area.

17. Mean consumption of food is not significantly different in rural and urban sample area.

18. Over the period from 1983 to 1993–1994 for all India and Kerala expenditures on all items have increased for SC’s in both sectors.

   The proportion of expenditure on food declined and that of non-food increased for SC’s during the period. Percentage expenditure on cereals is found declining over the period.

19. Top most MPCE classes among rural and urban SC households in sample area show preference towards non-food expenditure and conspicuous consumption which is in line with the general pattern of behaviour.

20. Total expenditure of SC households consisted of consumption out of cash purchases; home grow stock, gift loan and free collection.

21. Results of $\chi^2$ test revealed that there is significant association between monthly per capita expenditure and income, education, occupation and place of residence for SC’s in sample area and this finding supported the third hypothesis.

   It was found that higher MPCE levels are associated with higher income, higher levels of education, better occupational status and residents in urban areas.
22. Results of regression analysis using double log model showed that there is significant differences in the consumption elasticity of different items among SC households in the study area. This finding supported the initial hypothesis of the study.

23. Significant differences exist in the consumption pattern of poorer and richer segments of SC population in the sample area. Average MPCE on food and non-food items by SC’s belonging to different decile groups showed disparities in the distribution of MPCE. This finding has supported the second hypothesis of the study.

7.11 Recommendations

The study has found that the levels of livings of the Scheduled Castes are far below the expectations. Large percentage of the Scheduled Caste belongs to low-income groups. This is due their very low economic status and the consequent employment prospects in low paying occupations. The consumption standards of the majority of Scheduled Castes are found to be much below that of General population. Effective implementation of the Schemes for their economic upliftment is needed for improving their consumption standards.

Some of the scheduled castes have a comparatively better status in educational field. But the educational attainments of the Scheduled Castes especially in the rural areas are much below that of General population. Hence the present educational concessions to Scheduled Castes should be continued wherever necessary.

The analysis of the occupation distribution of Scheduled Castes has revealed a very dismal picture even after five decades of programmes for their upliftment. For their economic upliftment a change in their occupational pattern is necessary. The Minimum wage Act in the case of agricultural labourers should be enforced.

In the agricultural sector the contribution of Scheduled Castes is mainly as agricultural labourers. Their participation as cultivators is handicapped by the non-availability of cultivable land. For those few cultivators among them the lack of resources is the main hurdle in developing their land. As the educational attainment of
a majority of Scheduled Castes are very low the bulk of the population should be provided employment in other fields. The sectors, which can absorb them, are the agricultural and small industries sector. There are a few hailing from households pursuing traditional and cottage industries. Regarding the case of Scheduled Castes in Idukki district this is very important. Facilities for enlarging their activity should be provided; others should be given employment in the agricultural sector.

Schemes for improving the health standards of women and children among Scheduled Castes is necessary to improve their consumption standards. Majority of the Scheduled castes having low educational status are either not aware or are careless of the importance of better health standards. Hence they are found to be addicted to pan, tobacco and drugs and intoxicants, which adversely affects not only their health but also hinders their economic progress. This also adversely affects the consumption standards of the other members of the households.

The housing conditions of the Scheduled castes in the study area are found to be deplorable both in rural and urban sectors. Even though the Government has implemented various schemes they have not been properly utilized and hence programmes for creating better awareness regarding the schemes should be provided. Besides the colonization programmes should be extended to the unreached areas and the existing facilities in the colonies should be improved.

Lack of availability of enough State level data on the status of scheduled castes and also on different sub-castes is a major problem in studying the conditions of Scheduled Castes in Kerala. An intensive data collection on the various socio-economic aspects of Scheduled Castes is necessary to help the researchers in the field.