CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The Scheduled Castes, according to the 1991 census, are 13.82 crores and constitute 16.48 per cent of the total population of the country and have long suffered from extreme social and economic backwardness. The Scheduled Castes category comprises many castes which share certain common handicaps in relation to the rest of the castes in society. They are quite distinct in caste hierarchy. They are economically dependent, educationally backward, politically suppressed, and socially the worst sufferers. Further they were classed as untouchables.

The term “scheduled castes” refers to a list of castes prepared in 1935 by the British Government in India. But during the ancient period and medieval period they were known as “Panchamas” (fifth group), “Chandalas” (heathens or outcastes) and “Antyajas” (lowest class), and during the British period they came to be called first as “Depressed Classes” (dalit jatis) or “Exterior Castes” (avarnas), later as Harijans (children of God), and finally as “Scheduled Castes” (castes listed in the Government Schedule Article 341).

The Scheduled Castes who were also called untouchables were subjected to various types of humiliation before they came to enjoy the social and economic privileges along with the other castes in India. The various terms used to denote the low castes from time to time give
an impression that all these terms are synonymous. We can understand these by examining the various terms that have been used from time to time. During the Vedic period there were four loosely structured social classes (chatur-varnas), namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras (Ghurye, G.S., Moorthi, 1975). In the post-vedic period these four classes became rigidly structured, closed hierarchical groups each following its own occupation and its rule of endogamy. Each one of them included a number of castes. Each class was rigid in observing its rules. Marriages of people from one class with those of another was treated as violation of norms. Children born of such unions were called the mixed breed (varna-sankara) or of impure origins and were not given the caste of either parents but were placed outside the four classes. They were not permitted to associate with the four classes, nor were they allowed to take up professions of the four classes. As such they had to take up occupations that involved dealing with dirty and unclean things. They were debarred from attending the social and religious ceremonies of the four classes.

The ever-increasing conservatism of the four-fold class system gave such a stability to the phenomenon of untouchability that the untouchables considered themselves as such since their birth. As they were outside the four classes, they were designated as the “fifth class” or “Panchamas,” altogether a separate class. The “Panchamas” included several caste groups, each following distinct customs.
occupations and socio-religious ceremonies. While they comprised lower artisans such as skinners, tanners, shoe-makers and makers of medical instruments, several of them served as agricultural labourers and workers. All of them were beef-eaters. They lived outside the village in isolated areas that were not clean. They were prohibited from entering the village temples from, drawing water from public wells, from approaching the wards inhabited by other castes, and from following any occupation other than their own. Thus they suffered many socio-economic disabilities. (Dutt, N.K., 1931, Ambedkar, B.R. 1936, Ambedkar, B.R. 1946, Ambedkar, B.R. 1948).

Further, Flutton, J.H., 1961 and Majumdar, D.N. 1961 mention that they had to create their own socio-religious life that was several degrees removed from that of the four classes. Persons from the four classes thought it improper even to touch them. As they had unclean habits, followed defiling occupations, and led inferior socio-religious life, they were classed as untouchables.

In the medieval period, the “panchamas” came to be quite often designated as “Avarnas” (exterior castes or those who were outside the four-fold class system), “Achhutas” or “Asprusyas” (untouchables), while people belonging to the four classes, namely, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, were designated as “Savarnas” (those who were in the four-fold caste system). Unlike the “panchamas” in the post Vedic period, those in the medieval period had to suffer very
severely from social, economic, political and religious disabilities because of the greater conservatism of the caste system in that period.

During the medieval period also, the "Avarnas" lived outside the villages in untidy habitations as in previous centuries. They had a monopoly on dead cattle. They were beef-eaters. Many of them were agricultural labourers and workers. Some of them were lower artisans such as skinners, tanners, shoe-makers and makers of many varieties of leather articles. Some of them swept and removed the night-soil. Some of them became hereditary village servants. As such they had to cut firewood, carry fuel to the cremation ground and dig graves. All "Avarnas" could not enter temples, no Priest officiated for them, they were denied access to wells, their children were denied of education, and the barber and even the washerman could not serve them. There were untouchables amongst the untouchables. Some "Avarnas" considered themselves superior to the other "Avarnas" hence the former did not touch the later. This was due to the ideas of low and high occupation held by themselves. The "Avarnas" who were agricultural labourers and workers considered themselves superior to others who were leather workers and hence had a contempt for those who dealt with the dirty occupation of leather-works.

On the other hand, the leather-workers had an aversion for those who were involved in sweeping and removing of the night-soil. Thus, one "Avarna" discriminated against another "Avarna" and hence
there were untouchables amongst the untouchables. The studies of Briggs, G.W. 1920; Sundaranda Swamy 1945; Senjano J.E. 1946; Tiwari, C. 1963, were evident to trace untouchables among untouchables.

Owing to various disabilities enforced on the “Avarnas” or “Asprusyas”, Hindu society had to suffer a lot. Firstly, the “Avarnas” were pushed out of the main stream of Hindu society. The “Avarnas” became unconcerned with the problems of “Avarnas” and vice versa. This proved to be hindrance for the achievement of solidarity amongst the Hindus. Secondly, enforcement of numerous disabilities by the “Avarnas” upon the “Avarnas” caused a feeling of separateness in the hearts of the persons belonging to “Avarnas”. The “Avarnas” were not considered to be a part of the Hindu society. Consequently, political and national disunity increased.

During the British period, the “Avarnas” were first branded as “Depressed Classes,” as “Exterior Castes”, and finally as “Scheduled Castes”. The term “Depressed Classes” was introduced some time later in the nineteenth century in British official records. (Issacs, Harold R. 1965).

The census of 1901 identified some castes suffering from disabilities and classed them as “Unclean Castes”. However, the various official and non-official reports started identifying the “Unclean Castes” as “Depressed Classes”. To identify the “Depressed
Classes" the term "Untouchables" was first used by the Maharaja of Baroda in 1909. (Galanter, Garc 1972).

The census of 1911 tried to list the castes which suffered from social, economic and religious disabilities to include under "Depressed Classes" but in vain. However, the census report of 1931 listed out 31 castes and called them "Exterior Castes" in preference to "Depressed Classes". In 1932 the World's "Depressed Classes" and "Exterior Castes" were officially defined as the "untouchables". (Issacs, Harold R. 1965).

In the mean time, Saint Narasimha Mehta coined the term "Harijan" meaning (Children of God) as the most satisfactory denomination to refer to "untouchables". In 1933, Mahatma Gandhi adopted it and popularized it. Ambedkar opposed the word "Harijan". He demanded inter-alia a change of the nomenclature. He opposed the words "Protestant Hindus" or "Non-Conformist Hindus". (Issac Harold, R. 1965).

Finally, in 1935 as recommended by the Simon Commission, the term "Scheduled Castes" was adopted by the British Government as a substitute to all other words hitherto used for identifying the "untouchables". (Govt. of India, 1935).

In 1936 the British Government issued the Government of India Scheduled Caste orders specifying certain castes and tribes as placed
in listed Scheduled in the provinces, Bihar, Madras, Orissa, Punjab and United Provinces.

Prior to that these castes were generally known as "Depressed Classes". The list of the Scheduled Castes issued in 1936 was continued by the earlier list of "Exterior Castes" or "Depressed Classes". The list took into consideration the social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the historical context of untouchability.

Even after achieving Independence in 1947, the term "Scheduled Castes" has not been defined anywhere in the Constitution. Article 34 of the Constitution reads as follows: "Scheduled Caste means such castes, races or tribes, parts of groups within such castes races or tribes as are deemed under Act 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of the Constitution of India (Constitution of India, the Scheduled Castes).

The President of India has powers to issue the list of the Scheduled Castes order of 1950 after consultation with the Governor of any State.

Not withstanding this officially approved designation of "Scheduled Castes" the term "Harijans" has become so popular that both the terms "Scheduled Castes" and "Harijans" are now-a-days used as synonyms in all official and non-official records in India.
Generally speaking the Scheduled Castes or Harijans today suffer somewhat diluted social, economic and other disabilities against the very rigid disabilities that were suffered by them during the British times. (Appasamy, P. 1929, Isaac, H.R. 1965, Mahar Michael (ed), 1972).

The profile of Scheduled Castes i.e., their occupation, their dwelling and their disabilities have been further examined by several researchers and social workers. The studies of Nilkan Perumal, 1937, Ratna Reevankar 1971, Sanjann, 1947, Ammu Menon Majumdar, 1964, Harold Isaac, 1947, Eswaran, 1966, M.S.A.Rao, 1957, Mohinder Singh, 1947, Andre Beteille, 1969, identified several disabilities among the scheduled castes.

It was against this sorry state of affairs that both GAUTAMA BUDDHA and VARDHAMANA MAHAVIRA had revolted. However, their gospel of brotherhood and equality had no far-reaching effect in India and remained as a passing episode in Indian history. The Hindu caste system with its emphasis on purity and pollution was accepted without protest by the princes and people of the time.

During the Muslim rule in India there was some slight relief from the invidious discrimination practiced on the basis of caste. But the remedy which Mohammedanism suggested was conversion to the universal brotherhood of Islam, which did not appeal much to the low caste people.
Murthy, 1972 mentions that with the advent of the British rule, social position of the untouchables registered some slight improvement. The Christian Missionaries found among the untouchables a fertile ground for conversion. Both their social inequality and economic misery were advantageously used by the Missionaries to get new recruits, specially from the lowest rungs of the Hindu society.

It was, however, the British Government's programme of education and social reform, much more than the work of Missionaries that paved the way for the mitigation of their social misery. The British were not so much interested in the radical reform of Hindu society. But their educational system created a new generation of intellectuals and reforms who imbibed with liberalistic ideas. The founding of the “Brahma Samaj” and “Arya Samaj” and the teachings of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Kesav Chandra Sen, Sri Ramakrishna and Swamy Vivekananda, all had one common aim to purify Hinduism from the evils of caste and to raise the status of the lower caste communities.

The Indian National Congress which crystallised the social thinking of the time, officially took up the work of uplifting the depressed classes on a national scale.

However, it was only after Mahatma Gandhi's initiation to uplift the untouchables, that it received a momentum. Gandhiji called
them "Harijans" — children of God — and organised a network of agencies to work for their cause. He also carried out campaigns against untouchability through the press, the pulpit and the platform. He edited a weekly journal called the "Harijan" to highlight the magnitude of the problem and to channelize popular opinion and effort in uplifting the untouchables.

In 1932, the "All India Anti-Untouchability League" was formed under Gandhiji’s inspiration. This was later called "Harijan Sevak Samaj" and it soon engaged itself in vigorous propaganda against untouchability allowing Harijan use roads, temples, dharmashalas, public ghats, and schools. Mahatma Gandhi started a special column in the Harijan Weekly for giving accounts of temples, schools, wells etc., which were thrown open to them. (Raja Sekharaiah, 1971).

The role played by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, himself an untouchable, in the cause of Harijan uplift was specially significant. Unlike Gandhi, Ambedkar’s emphasis was not social but political, even though he did not ignore the social aspect. He declared that unless the untouchables enjoy political power they will not be able to raise themselves up. He argued that the depressed classes should be entitled to special protection, more than any other religious minority in the country. While framing the Constitution of India, Ambedkar who was one of its architects, secured necessary constitutional guarantees for the uplift of Harijans.
Safeguards for Scheduled Castes in Indian Constitution: The Constitution prescribed certain protective measures and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes. The following are main articles, which safeguards the interest of the Scheduled Castes.

Article 15 (1): The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

Article 15 (2): No citizen shall, on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to:

(a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment, or

(b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

Article 15 (3): Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 15 (4): Nothing shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes.

Article 16 (4): Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in
favour of any backward class or citizen which, in the opinion of the state is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 17: Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 19 (5): This article provided "Free Movement throughout the territory of India, to the residing and settling in any part of India and of the acquisition, holding and disposal of property" and vest authority in the state to make suitable laws imposing regional restrictions on exercising of these rights for the protection of the interest of any scheduled tribes.

Article 23: Traffic in human beings and beggars and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any violation of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 25: All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.

Article 29 (2): No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only on religion, race, caste, language or any of them.
Article 330 (1): Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for Scheduled Castes.

Article 332 (1): Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the Legislative Assembly of every State.

Article 334: Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this part, the provisions of this Constitution relating to:

(a) The Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes in the house of the people and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

Article 335: The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration in the making of appointments to service and posts in connection with the affairs of the union or of a state.

Article 338 (1): There shall be a special officer for the Scheduled Castes to be appointed by the President of India.

Article 338 (2): It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes under this Constitution and report to the President upon the working of those safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament.
Article 339 (1): The President may at any time and shall at the expiration of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, by order, appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the scheduled areas in the State.

Above all, are some of the important and the necessary Constitutional safeguards that have been provided by the Government to the Scheduled Castes in order to protect them from several disabilities. Further the Government has provided several welfare measures to bring them into the main stream of development after the Independence.

After Independence, the Constitution of India prescribed protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes (and also Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes) with the object of removing their social disabilities and promoting their varied interests.

The machinery for safeguarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes) has been created in the form of setting up a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It functions as an advisory body on issues and policies related to the development of the Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes). It includes experts from the field of social anthropology, social work, and other social sciences. Its important functions are:
1. To study the extent and ramifications of untouchability and social discrimination arising therefrom and effectiveness of the present measures.

2. To study the socio-economic circumstances leading to the commission of offences against persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes).

3. To take up studies on different aspects of development of Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes) to ensure integration of these groups with the mainstream of the society.

The Commission consists of a chairman and eleven members. Its term is three years. The State Governments have separate departments to look after the welfare of the Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Castes/Classes). Their administrative set up varies from State to State. A number of voluntary organizations also promote the welfare of these people. The important organizations of an all India character includes the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, the Hindu Sweepers Sevak Samaj, New Delhi, and the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi.

The welfare of the Scheduled Castes (and Scheduled Tribes) has been given special attention in the Five Year Plans. The amount of investment on the special programmes has been increasing from plan to plan. The expenditure of Rs.30.04 crore in the First Plan (1951-56) increased to Rs.79.41 crore in the Second Plan (1956-61), Rs.100.40 crore in the Third Plan (1961-66), Rs.172.70 crore in the Fourth Plan
(1969-74), Rs.296.19 crore in the Fifth Plan (1974-79), Rs.1337.21 crore in the Sixth Plan (1980-85), and Rs.1521.42 crore in the Seventh Plan (1985-90). The State Governments have also been spending a sizeable amount on the welfare of these people. Government has launched several programmes from the beginning of the First Plan till now for the benefit of the poor, needy and reserved. The members of the Scheduled Castes were given due recognition and importance to become beneficiaries of these programmes.

Have all these measures really contributed to their upliftment? Some people are of the opinion that as long as the framework of the caste system exists, the position of the untouchables cannot be improved. The Scheduled Castes spend their social energy in sankritizing themselves by accepting one of the economically and politically dominant castes, which also enjoys a high ritual status, as the reference group and emulating its life-style. They give up their social customs like child marriage, widow remarriage, etc, abjure from non-vegetarian food, and discourage outdoor activities by their females. But what do they gain? Their social status remains the same. Even if they change their occupations, occupational mobility does not lead them to social mobility. They continue to remain weak in the local power structure for asserting their rights. They suffer economic insecurity and are impoverished.
In 1948, finding that the lot of untouchables have not improved in spite of several welfare measures taken by the government, Ambedkar wrote a letter to the General Secretary of the Anti-Untouchability League (later converted into the Harijan Sevak Sangh) suggesting that rather than dissipating its energies on items like co-operation, libraries, schools, gymnasiums, etc. the league should concentrate on campaigns to secure (a) civil rights, (b) equality of opportunity, and (c) social intercourse (Ambedkar, 1948, 134-40; also see Roy Burman, 1977:89). Ambedkar's letter did not evoke any response. Perhaps his approach did not fit in with Gandhi's approach at that time because Gandhi thought that it would disrupt national unity in the fight against colonial rule. And surprisingly, there is no change in the attitude of the people and the status of the scheduled castes, even after forty years of independence. It is this negligence and harassment that has compelled several Harijans to convert themselves either as Buddhists or Christians.

A committee was appointed by the Government of India in April 1965 under the chairmanship of L.Elayapemmal, Member of Parliament on “Untouchability, Economic and Educational Development of Scheduled Castes.” It submitted its report in January 1969 wherein it was pointed out that untouchability was at its height in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. However, Scheduled Castes in Tripura, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and Kerala
were treated better. The main recommendations of the committee were (and these recommendations are as relevant in 1993 as these were twenty five years ago in 1969):

1. To bring about an amending legislation to the untouchability Offenders Act, 1955, to lay minimum punishment for offenders as at present only the maximum punishment was laid down in the Act. The minimum punishment suggested was a fine of Rs.50 or three months’ imprisonment if the offence was proved in a court.

2. The educational institutions should directly be authorized to give scholarships to the scheduled caste students instead of giving them through the Central Social Welfare Board or Harijan Welfare Department at central or state level. This is because students were not getting scholarships at proper time resulting in suspension of studies by some of them.

3. In the economic field, there was no programme except giving some land, bullocks and agricultural implements to the Scheduled Castes. Except in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh funds allotted for the purpose were not utilized. The committee recommended that land which was available in Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh should be allotted to members of the Scheduled Castes, giving first priority to landless persons.

4. For small scale industries, members of the scheduled castes should be able to get loans at reasonable interest without furnishing any security. A finance corporation should be set up for this purpose.
5. In services, the position was still worse. The quota of 12.5 per cent was not filled up properly, although qualified scheduled caste candidates were available. As such, high-power committees should be appointed at central and state levels.

6. On all selection boards or recruitment committees there should be an officer preferably belonging to the Scheduled Castes, to safeguard the interests of members of the Scheduled Castes.

A comprehensive three-pronged programme was evolved for the development of Scheduled Castes during the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85). This was a combination of three schemes: (1) Special Component Plans (SCPs) of the Central Ministries and State Governments, (2) Special Central Assistance (SCA) to SCPs for the Scheduled Castes of the States, and (3) Scheduled Caste Development Corporations (SCDCs) in the States.

The SCPs envisage identification of schemes of development which would benefit Scheduled Castes, qualification of funds from all divisible programmes and determination of specific targets as to the number of families to be benefited from these programmes. The overall objective is to assist the scheduled caste families to substantially improve their income. The provision of basic services and facilities, and access to opportunities for social and educational development are also to be brought under the purview of the special component plans. During the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), Rs.4,481 crore were
earmarked for the special component plans. Till 1990, only eight Central Ministries had formulated the special component plans for the scheduled castes. The Special Central Assistance (SCA) to the special component plans for the Scheduled Castes is an additive to the state plans and programmes for the Scheduled Castes.

It does not follow the systematic pattern for special schemes. The states use this additional assistance for income generating economic development schemes in conjunction with the outlays in their special component plans, so as to assist the economic advancement of the maximum possible number of scheduled caste families living below the poverty line.

For example, it may be illustrated that the percentage of special component plan outlay of the state plan outlay in between 1980-81 and 1988-89 had varied between 4 per cent to 7 per cent each year, while the Special Central Assistance during this period had varied from Rs.100 crore to Rs.175 crore each year.

The Scheduled Castes Development Corporation (SCDCs) in the state is envisaged to interface between the scheduled caste families and financial institutions in respect of bankable schemes of economic development. The Scheduled Castes Development Corporations provide money and loan assistance to these families, thereby helping to increase the flow of funds from financial institutions to scheduled caste families. The Scheduled Castes Development Corporations have
been set up in eighteen states and three union territories. Grants are
given by the central government to the state governments for
investment in the share capital of the corporation in the ratio of 49:51.
For example, during 1980-81 and 1989-90, the State Governments'
contribution in each year had varied between Rs.140 million and
Rs.190 million, the amount released by the centre to the Scheduled
Castes Development Corporations had varied between Rs.130 million
and Rs.150 million each year. The corporations also provided loans up
to Rs.12,000. Besides arranging financial assistance for traditional
occupations like agriculture, animal husbandry and household
industry, the Scheduled Castes Development Corporations also
arrange for diversification of occupations such as financing of small
shops, industries, auto-rickshaws and many other trades and
professions. Some corporations arranged for irrigation facilities too,
like digging wells and tube wells. Some of them also imparted training
to enable the beneficiaries to take up profitable occupations or to
improve their existing skills.

The "Sulabh Sauchalaya Scheme" has been launched in several
states for converting dry latrines into water-borne latrines in order to
liberate scavengers and rehabilitate them in alternative occupations.

While the impact of Governments' welfare measures in the
educational sphere was thus very mild, their economic consequences
were also very modest. Some of the measures like free land
assignment partly failed especially in the earlier stages because the beneficiaries mortgaged the land to others for a consideration, either because they had no money to buy complementary inputs for cultivation, or because their already existing indebtedness compelled them to alienate the land to others for money. Hundreds of such cases from all over India were being reported in the Annual Reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1970). According to the 20th Report of the Commissioner, the lands given to the scheduled caste/scheduled tribe persons are usually uncultivable and lack irrigation facilities. In order to make them remunerative, a lot of investment is required in the beginning (Ratna Murdia, 1975). Due to their poor economic position, these persons were not generally capable of doing so and involved themselves in debts from private money lenders and local businessmen. Land reforms which, among other things aimed at giving fixing of tenure and fair rent have not benefited the bulk of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes except in Kerala because, most of these people were casual agricultural workers without any kind of right over land. In Kerala, however, all homesteaders were given proprietary rights over their homestead and the land in which they were located up to 10 cents in rural areas, and 3 cents in urban areas.

Indebtedness is one of the worst forms of exploitation to which the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe persons are exposed (20th
Measures for ameliorating their lot, such as Debt Relief Regulation, Money Lenders' Regulation, and the establishment of Harijan Co-operative Societies have only marginally succeeded because of the ingenuity of the local money lenders in circumventing the law, through attractive and flexible terms on which they offered credit unlike institutional money lenders.

There were several kinds of housing facilities given to the harijans by the Government, namely (1) grant of house sites for building hutments, loans and subsidy for purchase, building or repairing of houses and grant of houses built by government. Some state governments have established colonies and settlements for rehabilitating the economically weaker sections of the people, mainly harijans. As in the case of land assignment, house plots, sites and colonies were located in places far away from the normal places of their work; there were no approach roads and the materials used for house construction were of low quality (Report of the Task Force 1972; Report of the Evaluation Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, 1962). As a result, there was not much enthusiasm on the part of the Harijans for this programme.

While the direct benefits accruing from the specific government welfare measures have been rather limited, the indirect benefits coming out of general welfare measures have also been tardy. According to H.P. Sharma, (1971) though the traditional caste and
occupational inter-relatedness is slowly but steadily breaking down, caste still plays a major role in determining the choice of new occupations. The sizeable number of Bhangis working as sweepers or the Dhobis and Nais working as laundrymen and barbers in the urban setting are enough indicators of the role caste is playing (K.L. Sharma, 1972). H.P. Sharma also notes another tendency in the village under his study, viz., the tendency towards maintaining the traditional caste functions in the village, for example, among the jats, although a large number of younger people have moved to new occupations, each family has ensured that at least one person stays back to cultivate the land. When the family has only one person in the younger generation, he decides to stay back regardless of his educational standards. Even in cases of families with very small and uneconomic holdings, the same arrangement with close cognate on the same line was worked out. Similar pattern was observed among carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers etc. The sweepers, even when they took up urban jobs, left their women and children to look after "jajmans." This phenomenon is supported by Atal (1968) who found that while open occupations are gradually being accepted, traditional occupations are not being given up entirely.

In some places Scheduled Castes are still sticking to their traditional occupations (V.D. Souza, 1962; H.C. Upreti, 1967). According to Mukherjee (1965) though the traditional relationship
between caste and occupation had changed, the current occupations were to a large degree, evaluated as being equal to their traditional caste occupations by rural people (Bopegamage & Veeraraghavan, 1967; Nanda, 1969, Jetley, 1969). In many cases abandoning of traditional occupation does not involve any improvement in status as the change involves a horizontal movement from one low status to another low status occupation (Patwardhan, 1973; G.P. Reddy 1968; K.L. Sharma, 1969).

The tendency to preserve the traditional occupations is found to be prevalent mostly among those castes whose occupations require higher skill. Castes whose occupations are of a general service nature show greater tendency to move to other jobs which do not require higher skill (Amir Hassan, 1969).

As regards the range of occupations available to the scheduled castes, Patwardhan (1973) mentions only a few occupations open to them. It is in the skilled, semi-skilled and in small trade and household industries that there is concentration. Lower occupations such as watchman, gardener, etc., are entirely followed by low caste groups (Singh 1967). Even when the Scheduled Castes have been able to move to higher occupational roles, the poles of hierarchy (viz., Brahmans and untouchables) have not significantly changed (Gould, 1967).
A special feature of Scheduled Castes occupation is that they were given wages lower than those paid to higher caste workers. Further, the harijans got employment for fewer days in the year than higher caste labourers because the non-harijan employers preferred members from higher castes in hiring workers. As a result, the average income of the harijan labourers was much low compared to non-harijan labourers even in the same occupation (Visaria, 1974; Report of Commissioner for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes, 1968-69). After a comprehensive study of the economic progress attained by the Scheduled Castes during 1950-70, Visaria concludes: "Thus in terms of economic indicators, size of land holding, employment, occupation, income savings, it is found that the position of the harijans had progressively worsened between 1950:70".

Thus, inspite of several constitutional safeguards and welfare measures provided by the Government through its policies and programmes during the planned development, still the Scheduled Castes have been suffering with low profile. It is evident from the present status of Scheduled Castes in the country.

Of the total population of the country the Scheduled Castes population is 13.82 crores which consists of 16.48 of the total population. Nearly 53.1 per cent among the Scheduled Castes population in the rural areas is below poverty line. The literacy rate among the scheduled castes is 37.41 when compare to All India
Literacy rate of 52.21. Among the scheduled castes the literacy rate of male and female is 49.91 and 23.7.

With regard to Main workers in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, the 1991 census data reveals that the all India percentage of main workers in primary sector is 67.53 per cent. However among the scheduled caste workers 77.11 per cent of the labour force is working in primary sector which is nearly 10 per cent high with all India percentage. This reflects the concentration of working force in our country mainly from scheduled castes. With regard to the secondary sector, percentage of workers in the total population is 11.97 per cent and among the scheduled caste workers it is 9.83 per cent. With regard to the tertiary sector of the total population, 20.50 per cent are working in this sector and among the scheduled caste workers the percentage is 13.06 per cent of the total work force. Thus the bulk of the labour force is drawn from the category of Scheduled Castes which reflects their low profile in the society.

The average earning strength of the scheduled caste households is found to be 1.93 per household in year 1987-88, when compared to 2.02 in the year 1983.

Only 59.84 per cent of the total households were having safe drinking water facilities and 21.84 per cent of percentage of the total households were having electric facility. Alarmingly, only 1.86 per cent of the scheduled caste households were having all facilities that is
electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation and as many as 32.14 per cent of the scheduled caste households does not have all the three facilities. The above figures really indicate of the poor social profile of Scheduled Castes in India.

THE PROBLEM AND THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

A review of Scheduled Caste's economic development and social status in India during the past five decades reveals interesting trends. The trends show that, a slow but steady progress is being made. The slow progress gives impression that not much has been done in both economic development and social status attainment by Scheduled Castes. The trends also reveal that even to attain minimal progress it took more than four decades. It reflects the complexity of Indian stratification and the challenge of developing and reaching the downtrodden.

The trends further revealed that many preparatory and infrastructural development programmes were required in the form of a host of developmental programmes for the poverty stricken general population as well as specifically Scheduled Caste population.

In this context, it may be mentioned that, "Jawahar Rozgar Yojana" (JRY)* which is launched after four decades of India's independence and its struggle for development through a number of

* Hereafter Jawahar Rozgar Yojana may be referred as JRY or Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.
programmes from Community Development Programme to Integrated Rural Development Programme could make appreciable breakthrough in benefiting the Scheduled Caste's through a specific programme component called provision of Community Irrigation Wells. This project could not only create employment but could make it sustainable by generating assets and alleviating poverty.

However, there is paucity of literature with regard to the performance of JRY and its impact on Scheduled Castes' beneficiaries specifically. Hence an attempt is made in this study to examine the working of JRY with reference to Community Irrigation Wells in the context of a drought prone district in Andhra Pradesh and its impact on social transformation with reference to employment, asset creation, alleviating poverty, sustainability and economic empowerment which facilitates social transformation of Scheduled Castes. A drought prone district Kurnool in Rayalaseema region has been selected purposefully for the present study.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives for the purpose of the present study:

1. To review the social status and development of Scheduled Castes during the post independent period;

2. To examine the working of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana with reference to community irrigation wells in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh;
3. To analyse the strengths and weakness of the JRY with reference to community irrigation wells in the context of sample beneficiaries;

4. To analyse the impact of the community irrigation wells on the social transformation of the sample beneficiaries and;

5. To suggest suitable measures to strengthen the community irrigation wells programme in the context of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries and their transformation further.

METHOD OF STUDY

The methodological aspects of the study includes, selection of the district, selection of the mandals, selection of the beneficiaries, sources of data, tools of data collection and analysis; and scheme of presentation.

Selection of the District (The Universe): Andhra Pradesh is geographically divided into three regions namely Coastal Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. The Rayalaseema region consists of four districts namely, Anantapur, Chittoor, Cuddapah and Kurnool. Among the districts of Rayalaseema region, Kurnool district has been chosen purposively as the district was represented by the then Prime Minister and Chief Minister and further the district is chronically drought prone.

Sample: “Jawahar Rozgar Yojana” has been launched in the district in the year 1989-90. In order to examine the performance of JRY with reference to community irrigation wells and to study the impact of
community irrigation wells and social transformation of scheduled castes, all the beneficiaries who have benefited during 1990 to 1995 under this scheme in the district have been taken into consideration and called it as “The Universe” for the purpose of present study. Thus in the present study “The Universe” consists of 2011 beneficiaries who have taken assistance under JRY for community irrigation wells in the district.

The present study is based on MULTI-STAGE RANDOM SAMPLE method of survey. The Kurnool district has been divided into three revenue divisions namely, Kurnool, Nandyal and Adoni. Each revenue division has been taken into consideration at the first stage.

In the second stage, in each division, one revenue mandal has been selected randomly from among the Mandals which have higher concentration of Scheduled Caste population and community irrigation wells. Accordingly Veldurthi Mandal in Kurnool division, Rudravaram Mandal in Nandyal division and Aspari Mandal in Adoni division have been selected.

In the third stage, study sample beneficiaries will be drawn from Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of JRY of these three revenue Mandals.

Selection of Beneficiaries: We have selected one Mandal in each revenue division, and 50 per cent of the beneficiaries who have taken
assistance under JRY in each of these three Mandals form the study sample for the present study. Thus, 72 beneficiaries in Veldurthy Mandal of Kurnool division, 49 beneficiaries from Aspari Mandal of Adoni division and 29 beneficiaries in Rudravaram Mandal of Nandyal division form as sample. Thus the total 150 beneficiaries in Kurnool district consists as sample for the purpose of present study and constitutes 7.46 percentage to "The Universe."

Sources of Data and Tools of Data Collection and Analysis: The present study is based on both secondary and primary sources of data. The annual reports of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and annual reports of Government of India are major sources of secondary data.

The primary data have been collected through a well structured interview schedule. The schedule has been filled in with the help of sample beneficiaries through a face to face interview by the researcher.

Tools of Analysis: The data collected through the schedule has been classified and tabulated into many tables for analysis purpose. Simple statistical tools like averages, percentages have been used to analyse the data. The primary data was collected in the period from June to November in the year 1998.

Scheme of Presentation: The study consists of seven chapters. The First chapter "Statement of the Problem" deals with brief introduction
and method of study. The Second chapter "Scheduled Castes: Status and Development: A Review" depicts in brief the review of literature with reference to status and development of Scheduled Castes. The Third chapter "Working of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana" examines the performance of JRY with reference to community irrigation wells in India as well as in Andhra Pradesh. The Fourth chapter "The Setting" deals with profile of Kurnool district, performance of JRY with reference to community irrigation wells in Kurnool district, profile of the Mandals selected for the purpose of study and the profile of sample beneficiaries. The Fifth chapter "Implementation of Community Irrigation Wells and the Sample Beneficiaries" analyses the performance of CI Wells with reference to sample beneficiaries. The Sixth chapter "Community Irrigation Wells and Social Transformation" examines the impact of community irrigation wells on the social transformation of sample beneficiaries and the Final and Seventh chapter "Summary and Conclusions" presents the summary of major findings, conclusions of the study and suggestions to achieve empowerment.