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SCHEDULED CASTES IN THE POLICYMAKING: THE CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Ritually ordered inequality, poverty, identity, deprivation, isolation and marginalization existing since the dawn of human civilization denote the rules of exchange and practices have left a crippling mark on certain groups and communities. There has been a widening of gap between the rich and the poor for the last several decades. Significant discrepancies in terms of distribution of resources and opportunities exist among certain groups and one such marginalized social group is the scheduled caste which has been pushed systematically to the periphery by the age-old caste-hierarchical tradition in the society. The present study makes a survey of literature and ascertains implementation of policies provided to scheduled castes. This paper looks through the paradox that despite several policy and programme interventions for improving socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes in India, serious gaps still exist when they are compared with other social groups. In the backdrop of analyzing implementation of various constitutional welfare measures and policies, the study also attempts to highlight the facts and fallacies in the implementation of these policies which has not made any material difference in the social and economic conditions of these scheduled castes.

Keywords: Exclusion, Reservation, Poverty, India

Introduction

The existence of disparities defined by colour, race, caste and class in societies is a very real phenomenon in everyday life, particularly for those at the receiving end of discrimination (World Development Report, 2006). Any society which is hierarchical and highly skewed not only follows the division of labor but also the division of people into inferior and superior. Those who are declared inferior are barred from participating in all spheres of the society including social, political, economic, cultural, educational and religious domains which in turn provides a base for a sense of superiority and inferiority among members of the same society or culture. Some communities were subjected to historical ritualistic discrimination and deprivation of resources in every domain of social life including economic as well as political. Such condition is connected to the deprivation they suffer in relation to the higher status groups and to the differential treatment they receive from the power elites among themselves. This system proceeded to assign rights and duties across caste according to hierarchy. Indian society is an ethnological museum of different races, cultures, religions, regions and castes. It was characterized by a high degree of structural inequality based on the tenets of the caste system which involve the division of people into castes with unequal and hierarchal assignment of economic and civil rights ascribed by birth. Though, every caste has suffered from unequal and hierarchal assignment of rights to some extent, the Scheduled Castes suffered the most as they were historically denied their rights including right to property, business, education, and civil,



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cultural and religious rights (Akerlof, 1976). They have been made to suffer from residential segregation, social isolation, poverty, and marginalization from mainstream development, discrimination, under-representation in politics, bureaucracy and lack of competent power. In order to mend the imbalance in terms of access to assets, employment, education, politics and other spheres, societies have turned to practices of welfare measures in the form of policies. After the establishment of the Permanent Court of justice, about one quarter of the nations across the world use some form of justice in the form of policies. Policies are in observance in both developed and developing countries to compensate for persistent discrimination or inequality in social or geographical system (Maheshwari, 1997:1). Given the nature of structural inequalities and exclusionary and discriminatory character of Indian society, the state has developed remedies against these structural inequalities for development and empowerment of excluded groups. They have been given numerous rights and concessions under various statutes of central as well as state governments but they still remain deprived of the benefits arising out of such statutory provisions. However, in order to eradicate illiteracy, poverty and above all the social stigma attached, number of measures has been taken in the shape of welfare schemes, policies, and constitutional provisions of ameliorative nature to ensure their participation in the mainstream society. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programmes of Action (1992) were the contexts in which Government of India implemented programmes for the educational development of the Scheduled Castes. The *Right to Education Act (2009)* guarantees free and compulsory quality education to every child in the age group of 6-14 years, and obligates the state to satisfy that right. Furthermore, section 12(1) of the act mandates that the unaided private schools must fill 25 of their students with children from weaker and disadvantaged sections of the society free of cost in order to foster diversity and to eliminate the segregation and discrimination (Kothari, 2018). The *Twelfth five year Plan (2012-17)* with the objective of inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility (Government of India, 2015). The government has implemented measures such as incentives for poor families for sending their children to schools, pre-matric scholarship schemes, remedial courses, recruitment of teachers from SCs, hostelschemes, and adult education Centre's etc. towards achieving these goals. Apart from the general educational development programmes for SC students, focus is rendered also on specific schemes for encouraging higher and technical education realizing the improvement in their education. These schemes include post-matric scholarship, central sector scholarship of top class education, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, National Overseas Scholarship, and hostel schemes (George and Naseem, 2010). Apart from that the Constitution adopted a two-fold strategy for ensuring equality for the "depressed classes". On one hand it provided equality before law, ensuring that everyone irrespective of caste will receive equal protection of the law and be treated alike; on the other hand it empowered the state to make special provisions to promote the educational and economic interests of the SCs and minorities to provide legal and other safeguards against discrimination in multiple spheres. Thus various articles have been embodied in the constitution which inter-alia covers provisions relating to reservation for the SCs. Hence, *reservation policy* has also been advocated as a strategic tool for Scheduled castes with a view to abolish all forms of discrimination, untouchability, and social exclusion emanating from the caste system and to alleviate the peripheral position of these social groups (Thorat, 2015). However, careful empirical analysis and consequences of these policies could lead to a more reasoned evaluation of their desirability for overall national development.



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Thus, review of the existing literature provides an opportunity to identify gaps that exist in the implementation of policies favoring scheduled castes.

Aim

The aim of the study is to review and elaborate the implementation of policies favoring Scheduled Castes and to highlight the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes.

Methodology: Data for the study was collected from secondary sources including books, journals, research papers, government reports, and other relevant unpublished material available on the subject. A survey of relevant literature (1974-2011) was carried out to analyze the implementation of policies, welfare measures and constitutional provisions favoring scheduled castes in India. The articles, books and other sources (government reports) relevant to the issue were selected on the basis of certain themes viz. educational backwardness, literacy rate, representation in employment and level of awareness and participation.

Analysis and discussion

Sharma (1974) analyzes the factors related to the educational backwardness of the SCs which reveals that their alarmingly backward condition is connected to the deprivation they suffer in relation to the higher status groups and to the differential treatment they receive from the power elites among themselves. Accordingly, the author observed distributive disparities between the SCs and the general population in enrolment figures. The higher the educational level the lower is the enrolment rate of the SCs. It is not the quantum of available educational facilities which determines the educational attainments of various groups but it is the differential background of social networks, status and power of these groups which determines their level of education. This leads to a situation where the jobs and positions earmarked for candidates belonging to the SCs remain unfilled for some time and are then filled by recruiting non-Scheduled castes candidates. Furthermore, multiplicity of factors such as, numerical strength, political representation of a particular scheduled caste, certain political and election strategies, past socio-cultural background and present power position in the state and local hierarchies operate in a very complex fashion in the matter of providing hostel facilities and granting scholarships to various SCs and among SCs in a particular district or area which leads to intra-SC disparities and discrepancies. Thus the author concludes that SCs suffer today not only because of imposed social and cultural disabilities, but perhaps much more because of the imbalances created by the emergence of structural differentiation within them which is a consequence of the policies and plans undertaken apparently for their upliftment and welfare. The lack of political mobilization and the prevalence of social isolation and extreme poverty among the SCs have also frustrated the egalitarian programmes meant for their welfare.

Jacob (1980) analyses that Scheduled Caste students are to be inferior in economic, educational, occupational, and academic background in comparison with the non-Scheduled Caste students. The dropout rates were higher among the Scheduled Caste than among the non-Scheduled Caste students. The author suggests that poor



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academic performance of the Scheduled Caste students can be met with special coaching classes, special additional lectures can form part of such assistance which can promote the education among them.

Jain (1981) opines that an overwhelming majority of the SCs in India are facing acute social and economic disabilities. Drawing heavily from the report of the Commission for Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes, the crucial factors that have contributed to these disabilities are lack of education, literacy, lack of employment opportunities, assets, institutional credit and services on fair terms and indebtedness, humiliating conditions of life and work, social oppression and suggests various practical ways in which these can be mitigated. According to the author, the commission for SCs and STs should be armed with the constitutional authority for participating in socio-economic planning process. Central assistance should be made by the Central government to the commission for launching a sustained crusade against untouchability and for monitoring the working of Protection of Civil Rights Act, reservation policy, and the balance towards the commission's administrative and organizational expenses. Furthermore, the commission should be empowered to retain and use the development funds to be routed through it for giving a wide publicity to development schemes among the population of SCs and STs. The commission should publish special reports on specific aspects like education, untouchability, employment and on specific programmes and schemes. The policy of Reservation (in Services) for SCs needs a positive support from the Commission in the form of continuous training and retraining and orientation at all levels so that they are able to discharge their responsibilities with confidence and competence. Ultimately a reform of such magnitude and high purpose can progress significantly only with the most active involvement of the people themselves, particular the SCs in particular. The voluntary organizations have a vital role to play in helping the SCs to organize themselves against injustice and in making the society aware of its responsibility. Therefore, development of co-operatives, associations and unions of the SCs must be an integral part of the programme of the commission. Thus the author concludes that apart from the strengthening of the Commission legally and financially, it is also necessary to link the commission with other national level organizations vital to this programme.

Jadhav (1982) analyzes Lohia's thought on reservation policy for scheduled castes. According to the author, Lohia is of the view that reservation policy for scheduled castes is the only way to solve the problem of in-built inequality in Indian society. Cultural and educational traditions of certain castes on the one hand and systematic deprivation of large numbers of people from educational and administrative pursuit on others have created certain advantages for the children of upper castes and disadvantages for the children of other castes in the Indian society. These mechanical inequalities and disadvantages can be removed only by a systematic effort to implant educational and administrative traditions among the backward and SC population. He warned that the policy of upliftment of downgraded castes and groups is capable of yielding much poison. The policy may be misused by selfish men among the lower castes for individual advancement, economic and political issues may be obscured into the background, reactionaries among the lower castes may misuse the anti-caste policy to serve their own ends, higher castes may succeed in heaping direct or indirect discredit on the practitioners of this policy but the fear of the poison should not blind us to the miraculous power of this policy to create and cure. The author concludes that the higher caste people must rise, instead of seeing an attack on their interests in this policy and should view it for its capacity to renew people.



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Vakil and Rao (1982) analyses the developmental programmes for backward classes in reservation policy in the state of Andhra Pradesh mainly pertaining to education, economy, social services, communication, health, and institutional structures. According to the authors, some concern has been shown in the five year plans for the welfare of SCs. The authors conclude that for the speedy development of backward classes, there is a need for evolving better type of integrated package programmes implemented on time bound basis in order to meet the problems of the backward classes.

Vakil (1982) analyzes various socio-economic measures covering the important aspects of economic development which have been initiated for the welfare of the weaker sections of society in Andhra Pradesh. In view of the vast indebtedness prevalent among the backward classes, various suitable legislative and executive measures have been taken such as Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas (APSA) and the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Debt Relief Regulations (APSTDRR) to control money lending and to save the victims from the vicious hold. Massive programmes have been undertaken for construction of houses for SCs which is the primary necessity for amelioration of their economic condition. Institutional finance to improve the economic betterment of the weaker sections is being channelized through a number of institutions such as the Andhra Pradesh Backward Cooperative Finance Corporation (APBCFC), the Andhra Pradesh SCs Cooperative Finance Corporation (APSCCFC) and Grijan Cooperative Corporation Limited (GCCL). According to the author, these efforts have not touched even the fringe of the problem in the areas comprising the SCs. The author concludes that the real poverty stricken SCs and backward classes do not seem to get much from the various economic schemes.

Satyanarayana and Reddy (1982) analyze the political representation of SCs at national, state and local level. According to the authors, the system of reservation at national level has worked out in such a way that the constituencies reserved were relatively static. This has barred a large number of SC voters from having anything to do with the election of the legislators who were supposed to represent their interests. In this way SCs legislators are not representatives of their respective communities. At the state level, the case of reserving opportunities in all key sectors of political life to the SCs and backward class categories does not extend to a share in the political decision-making structures. When it comes to the sharing of real power, these elites have been relegated to minor positions in power hierarchy. This exhibits the hollowness of the claim that the power has been transferred to SCs in the state. Still the power is successfully exercised by the dominant sections in the society. At the local level, by and large, they remained as untouchables in the rural power structure. No care has been taken to provide representation at crucial levels of authority. The author concludes that SCs have not been given the share in power structure at the national, state and local level and highlights the several reasons for the inability of the SCs members to get into the key positions of the power structure, such as, people lack the resources to build influence, poverty, lack of functional skills, dependence on the dominant section of community, low level of political aspirations, and hierarchic caste consciousness.

Reddy (1982) believes that the reservation policy for scheduled castes has reached a stage where both its critics and supporters are not satisfied about it. The supporters are of the view that this policy has not made any material difference in the socio-economic conditions of SCs, who still continue to be socially isolated, illiterate and poor. Its critics complain that reservation has resulted in ignoring merit, equity and the efficiency in public services has



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suffered. According to the author, the impact of reservation policy is, though severely limited, certainly positive in the sense that, because of it, at least a handful of SCs could get into legislature, government services and education. The system is highly unequal and the effect of other developmental policies has been to aggravate the problem of social and economic inequalities. Instead of progress, there has been retrogression in the name of growth and there has been increasing poverty and alienation. The logic of reservation policy is to encounter the evils of the rigid caste system and move towards an equalitarian society, other forces have been deliberately, irretrievably and cumulatively contributing to growing inequalities. The author concludes that it is not the reservation policy which is to be reconsidered on the basis of any kind of evaluation, but it is the other policies that need recasting.

Parvathamma (1984) analyses the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes in Karnataka. The study reveals that Scheduled Castes are predominantly residing in rural areas in separate colonies outside the village. More than 80 percent of Scheduled Castes are landless agriculture labourers working in others land in the village. Furthermore, the other modern conveniences like electricity, radio, watch, car, and motor cycle are not found with them. Hence, the author opines that the Scheduled Castes continue to be the most poor.

Desai (1985) analyses the agitation in Gujarat against the policies (reservation of seats) for scheduled castes. According to the author, the demand for the abolition of reservation was supported by all those who believed that they have been affected adversely by reservation, as it goes against the interests of individuals who raised by their merit. The landowning agricultural classes' took the lead in perpetrating atrocities and creating terror among the SCs. Out of the three categories of beneficiaries of reservations, only the SCs has been made the target. They have suffered heavily in terms of life, personal injuries and destruction of houses and household possessions at the hands of both the higher caste Hindus and the police. Furthermore, the author is of the opinion that the so many years of independence have brought about a great change in the social character of the population of Gujarat. The sense of political, economic, social and intellectual power generated by the new developments united with that of the old social stratification including the arrogance of the higher castes. The higher castes, therefore, wish to prevent the mobility of lower strata of higher castes by appealing to the concealed castes sentiment among them and speaking publicly against Casteism, communalism, and reservation.

Kulshreshtha (1986) analyzes that various constitutional measures, directive principles of state policy, other legislative measures, and judicial decisions that have been taken to protect the culture and the interest of SCs in order to bring them into the stream of prosperity and progress. According to the author, mere framing of policies by the government without their knowledge to the public and their effective implementation by governmental agencies shall not solve the problem. Furthermore, the total dependence on government for every welfare measure has a freezing authoritarian and bureaucratic bias and deprivation of the vital democratic dynamism must come from the people if social justice is to poses a potent delivery system. According to the author, the basic point is that of the best administration, with the most constructive schemes that proves a flop in implementation where the service of voluntary agencies is not mobilized as mediators between the people and the state apparatus. Thus the author concludes that the non-publicity of the facilities available to the SCs and STs and discriminatory implementation has made further classification among them besides the classification of the untouchables as



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already existed. Thus, unless attempts are made by the government and social reformers to educate this class and the facilities are made known and accessible to them, they cannot progress.

Patil (1986) highlights the situation regarding literacy and employment of SCs in Maharashtra. According to the author, the SCs in Maharashtra form an integral part of the social system in both rural as well as urban areas. The percentage of SC members in rural areas is greater when compared to that in urban areas in Maharashtra. The percentage of literacy rate of SC population in Maharashtra (35.55 percent) is greater as compared to India (31.38 percent). Even in the urban areas of Maharashtra, nearly half of the SC population (47.13 percent) is literate. Furthermore, according to the author, majority of the SC population staying in rural areas engaged themselves as agricultural labourers and it is particularly true for female employment. The situation is that the wages to labourers in agriculture were comparatively lower than industrial sector, besides the work being seasonal. Most effective means of eradicating the social disabilities of SCs were to make them economically stronger as well by improving their economic conditions through various measures like land reforms, industrialization in rural areas, co-operative agricultural processing and developing milk production and poultry. Thus the author concludes that there was need of some outside agencies to reach these landless, agricultural labourers with helping hand through finance, technical know-how, necessary education, and economic assistance to start small-scale industrial units while giving them an opportunity of self-employment, to improve the conditions of SC agricultural labourers in rural Maharashtra.

Ram (1986) details out the atrocities committed on the weaker sections (scheduled castes) and the competence and effectiveness of the politico-legal system. According to the author, the SCs, and other weaker sections had been subjected to antagonism, hostility and atrocities by the upper caste Hindus and others as they became socially and politically conscious and assert for their rights and insist that proper justice be accorded to them. In such situation the number of cases of atrocities reported through the various media do not project the actual state of affairs, as a larger number of such cases goes unreported and unregistered where the victims either do not dare to lodge complaints about their suffering, or a case cannot be established for lack of sufficient evidence. According to the author, the polity and legal system was not well integrated, offenders get direct or indirect patronage from a political leader or a party which influences the effectiveness of the various measures adopted to deal with the cases of atrocities. The politico-legal system does not have an effective mechanism to deal with the cases of atrocities committed on the SCs, Buddhists and other weaker section as they are not completely devoid of subjective bias and prejudices against these people. Different provisions of law are interpreted in favour of the dominant forces leaving the victims to the mercy of politicians and social workers. Furthermore, there was no uniformity in various laws and legislations as the phenomenon of atrocities has been varying in nature and magnitude in different time and space. In this way the system is not always in a position to assess the situations in which the victims of atrocities are placed because the system incorporates the views of those who are relatively privileged in the society which is not easily accessible to the victims of atrocities. Thus the author concludes that there has to be a simplification of the complexity of the politico-legal system and there is a need is to evolve certain prompt and committed mechanism to get the various judicial decisions taken on the cases of atrocities effectively implemented so that the victims could embrace the proper justice.



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Roy and Singh (1987) explore the status of a section of SCs which has achieved a better economic position in the society and thus emerged as Harijan elites. According to the authors, this new class tended to develop contradictory interests. Majority of this new elite belonged to younger age group and they found themselves in a situation of sharper conflict with the upper castes. While their legitimate aspirations for upward mobility increased fast, they came to be viewed by the upper castes as a severe threat to their job interests, thus facing obstructions and conflict. They also started distancing themselves from the vast majority of their own backward community, tending to shun their past. In fact the authors found evidence that members of these new elite were poised against the progress of the other SCs. The authors conclude that the atrocities on the Harijans were no longer the monopoly of the upper castes. This new class of Harijan elites was found to be no less oppressive as they considered the advancement of other SCs as a threat to their position and need for labourers.

Parvathamma (1989) explores the growing implementation of different policies for the development of Scheduled Castes since Independence. He is of the view that the social stigma and ritual pollution are so great that the untouchables cannot engage themselves in many gainful employments and they are caught in the traditional occupation. Economic backwardness is common to them while the policy of protective discrimination militates against them. Further, the reform movements have not made any impact on overcoming the disabilities faced by the untouchables.

Tripathy (1994) analyzes the types of political means adopted by Dalits(scheduled castes) through a comparative field study in two villages of Orissa. The study brings out vividly the deprived and downtrodden conditions of Dalits in rural India. According to author, without access to vital economic resources and bargaining power, the Harijans have become one of the most exploited peripheral groups in the Indian society. In contemporary Orissa, Harijans have also been victims of atrocities and violence. The study conducted in the two villages of Orissa, namely *Kesharpur* and *Jari*, reveals that the Harijans in both the villages remain in poverty, illiteracy and ignorance because of their low level of income. They are underemployed and economically dependent on the upper castes. Numerical strength, better economic opportunities, frequency of urban contact, better communication better exposure to mass- media, help of external leadership, the presence of Harijans elites in the villages, greater economic benefits due to better awareness of government programmes and participation in political process through general elections and Panchayat elections have helped Harijans in *Jari* to resort to protest political action against their socio-economic disabilities. While as in *Kesharpur* village small number, less urban conduct, under developed communication, less exposure to mass media, absence of Harijan elites and very low political participation have discouraged the Harijans to resort to protest political action against their socio-economic disabilities. Thus the poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, social disabilities, public disabilities and economic disabilities are major obstacles for the development of Harijans in *Kesharpur* village. Although Harijans in both the villages resort to different forms of protest like public-meeting, hunger-strike and holding peaceful march to remove their socio-economic disabilities but the use of protest political techniques has helped to a considerable degree to remove disabilities in case of *Jari* but it has failed in *Kesharpur*. Thus, the author concludes that Harijans in both the villages were critical of lack of political will in the implementation of various constitutional measures and legislative Acts meant for their welfare.



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Illaiyah (1990) analyzes that the socio-economic questions raised by the 29th report of the commissioner for SCs and STs, which illuminates the wider reality about the life of the SCs are likely to be put down to the background by the rise of militant Hinduism and the recommendations made by it are likely to go neglected by a system built on exploitation of SC's and STs. According to the author, some of the important issues raised by the commissioner of report are skill, merit, wage and a job in organized sector. He emphasized that the skills of the working masses particularly that of the SC's go unrecognized as the skill and merit are equated with going to school and college and are constantly, as part of systematic endeavor, humiliated. In spite of the fact that the Constitution guarantees the right to equality, yet inequity is maintained as a systemic process and the courts support it in the name of protecting the Constitution on the pretext that the wage system is based on the principle of skill and merit. Furthermore, the author examines role of the state which operates, against the interests of the masses. The landlords, the bureaucracy, the press, the industrialists, all of whom constitute the real power in the state, function in way that totally disregarded constitutional guarantees. However, the state provides protection to brutal landlordism, in human exploitation and it gives enough cover to those who violate the laws of the state. The report subsumes at the end the recommendations for Hinduisation of untouchables who suffered so much at the hands of upper castes which tends to ensure that the guarantee of the constitution are subverted and oppress the SCs.

Atle (1992) analyzes the impact of "National Rural Employment Programme" in general and Scheduled Castes in particular in Marathawada Region on village level. According to author, there is lack of co-ordination and proper linkage with other ongoing programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme" (IRDP), "Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programmed" (RLEGP) etc. So, the benefits of the development programme are very thinly spread over. The study shows that the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Castes is very much governed by their caste factor even today. They mainly live in rural areas and dependent on wage employment as agriculture labourers, scavengers and bone collectors. Land reforms and reservation in employment could not help much despite Governmental efforts. Social and economic deprivation, denial of opportunities compels them to live under the social and economic insecurity. Finally, the author concludes, practically NREP remains as a short term employment providing scheme and hence cannot help to rehabilitate the people in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular.

Singh (2003) explores the implementation and the impact of the various government schemes for the upliftment of SCs in Punjab. The author opines that numbers of schemes for the welfare of SC population looks like a divine rainfall for development and enrichment of the lowest of the lowly. If we look into the implementation of these schemes, the only objective of the concerned government agencies seemed to be to fill the official records and to present abstract statistics of achievements or the targets. Various schemes such as library rooms in Dharamshalas in villages, residential schools for SC boys and girls were never started and remained only on paper. Some of the schemes were known for the novelty of a change in their names but the basic content of these schemes remained almost similar. Furthermore, the author describes the overall impact of various government schemes under which the subsidies-cum-loans were given to the Dalits in the rural areas for self-employment. It has been found that majority of the beneficiaries, received less than 50 percent of the amount they were supposed to get and only a small fraction of the SC population was enabled to be gainfully employed or to cross the poverty line. Besides, their perception about the benefit of scheme is related to the centrality of the entrepreneurial middlemen in the



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SCs' access to the loans and subsidies. In this way the non-beneficiaries failed to secure the loan-cum-subsidy because they had not approached the middlemen. Thus, the author concludes that it is the illiteracy, ignorance and powerlessness of the people and their representatives that sustains the existing arrangement.

Louis (2003) argues that the persistence of constitutionally sanctioned privileges to the SCs by way of job reservations and preferential treatment in educational institutions, has divided Indians into two divisive camps Pro and Anti-reservationists. According to the author, the SCs continued to be poorly represented in government services and they score far lower than most other sections in several development indicators, chiefly literacy rate which indicates that even planned intervention has not improved the educational level of the weaker sections. The quantum of reservation prescribed for SCs fixed is on the basis of the percentage of their population, but the figures of their actual representation show that this legal provision has been grossly violated. At both state and central level, the seats allotted for the SCs have not actually been filled. Furthermore, the elite use merit as an alternative for privilege and they feel insecure, as their monopoly is slipping out of their hands. Hence the need of hour is to explore the multifaceted aspects of affirmative action which seeks to rectify the consequences of social discrimination involving reservations, quotas and special efforts such as special training and coaching for SCs to supplement positive discrimination in jobs with special economic packages, social facilities, passing of central legislations to enforce reservation in government services and public sector enterprises, banks, universities, grant-in-aid for members of disadvantaged communities. The author concludes that the dominant castes preserve the reservation policy only as an electoral tool for continuing in power and maintaining the status quo. Hence, it is important to make affirmative action work in favour of ensuring rights of weaker sections to be citizens and human beings.

Naval (2004) explores the history of unwarranted atrocities on the SCs. He traces out the various causes and factors responsible for origin and continuance of atrocities on the SCs. The author also tries to assess the responses of the legal functionaries towards the law enacted for prevention of atrocities and to remove the factors responsible for commission of the atrocities. In introduction of the book, the author deals with history of the caste disabilities and atrocities, its development and changing form from ancient period till present day. He is of the view that one of the main factors responsible for commission of atrocities is caste system and the other factors responsible are untouchability, endogamy, caste hatred, religion, illiteracy, poverty, economic backwardness, cultural backwardness, lack of political will, awakening of SCs and resultant demands of their rights and ignorance of law. The following chapter, covers law as an instrument for combating atrocities and author discusses salient features of 'SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act' like creation of new type of offences, commission of offences only by specified person, protection against various kind of atrocities, creation of special reports, appointments of special public prosecutors and so on. Thereafter, the author tries to find out the impact of the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 which depends upon many factors such as awareness of the people, in general, about the problem, impact of the problem on society, causes of giving rise to that problem, provisions of the particular Act, machineries provided therein in order to prevent the problem, adjudicate the cases and rehabilitation of the victims. In this way, on the one hand, the author tries to find out the awareness of incidents of atrocities on the SCs and on the other hand deals with the awareness of provisions of the Act, its enforcement, rules and applicability of provisions of the Act. The books also deals with implementation of provisions of the



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Act on the various aspects of attachment of properties of offenders, forfeiture of properties of convicts, services of senior advocate to the victim, taking of preventive action, attitude of investigating officers and working of SCs protection cells. The book also deals with reasons for failure of the Act which includes, non-coverage of all possible forms of atrocities, procedural drawbacks, lack of infrastructure with investigating agencies, special courts, non-availability of time with police officials, cumbersome procedure, low rate of convictions and inadequacy of platform. While concluding, the author has made some suggestions for prevention of atrocities like widening the definition of atrocities, employment of children, blockade of service career, economic exploitation and practice of untouchability, humiliations and harassment.

Pasricha (2006) throws some light on the caste based reservation in theory and practice. According to her, reservation has been provided in order to compensate members of the backward castes for their age-old exclusion, by giving them better representation, opportunities and facilities. However, in practice there is no denying of the fact that the reservation has tended to increase rather than reduce disparities between and within targets groups. The author concludes that reservation must not be exclusively on the basis of caste. The combination of caste, class, and occupation is necessary, to evolve a more scientific criterion which should benefit the deprived castes as well as the poor sections of the society without undermining the efficiency and merit.

Cassan (2011) analyzes the impact of positive discrimination on educational attainment of the groups that attain the status of the SCs with the harmonization of the Schedule Castes and Tribes List in 1976. The author reveals that the timing of access to the positive discrimination is exogenous allowing the caste members which had access to the positive discrimination scheme from 1950, to be a credible counterfactual for the members of the same castes which had access to the policy only from 1976 onwards. He is of the view that positive discrimination affects schooling through various channels. Firstly, by reducing the cost of secondary education, it favors longer studies in the cost-benefit arbitrage of the household. Secondly, the quotas in higher education allow pursuing the studies until this level, to effectively have access to it. The author also highlights the impact of reservations in education has been mixed. Indeed, only the SCs residing in urban areas benefit from the policy, showing an increase in primary school completion. The author suggests that differential impact between urban and rural areas come from the very poor supply of schooling. Thus, the most of the improvement of the education of the SC does not come from the reservations, but from the general improvement of the supply of schooling. Hence, in a context of poor supply of schooling, emphasis must be put first on improving the supply itself before trying to put the accent on the access to schooling of certain sub categories.

Conclusion: The backwardness or degradation of any group is not due to inherent failings in it but principally due to the lack of opportunities and long suppression by other groups (Nehru, 1946). Policies favoring Scheduled Castes have not made any material difference in the socio-economic conditions of SCs who still continue to be poorly represented in government services and they score far lower than most other sections in several development indicators. Various official reports and studies have pointed out that the rate of growth of literacy among SCs has increased however, the gap in literacy as well as higher education between SCs and non-SCs remains the same. If we look into the implementation of schemes, the only objective of the concerned government agencies seemed to fill the official records and to present abstract statistics of achievements or the targets. The



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non-publicity of the facilities available to the SCs and discriminatory implementation has made further classification among them besides the classification of the untouchables as already existing. They have not been given the share in power structure at national, state and local level. Several reasons for the inability of the SC members to get into the key positions of power structure and lack the resources to build influence, poverty, lack of functional skills, dependence on the dominant section of community, low level of political aspirations, and hierarchic caste consciousness that sustains the existing arrangement. The crucial factors that have contributed to these incapacities of policies are lack of education, lack of employment opportunities, assets, institutional credit and services on fair terms and indebtedness, humiliating conditions of life and work, social oppression and lack of political will. The study illuminates the wider reality that in spite of the constitutional guarantees inequity is maintained as a systemic process and the courts support it in the name of protecting the constitution on the pretext that the wage system is based on the principle of skill and merit. The bureaucracy, the press, the industrialists, all of whom constitute the real power in the state function in way that totally disregard constitutional guarantees. Furthermore, the politico-legal system does not have an effective mechanism to deal with the cases of atrocities committed on the SCs as they are not completely devoid of subjective bias and prejudices against these people. There was no uniformity in various laws and legislations as the phenomenon of atrocities has been varying in nature and magnitude in different times and spaces. However, the status of a section of SCs which has achieved a better economic position in the society and thus emerged as elites was found to be no less oppressive as they considered the advancement of other SCs as a threat to their position. Hence the need of hour is to explore the multifaceted aspects of different policies and recasting of other developmental polices for effective implementation of policies to mitigate the socio-economic backwardness of the scheduled castes in India. Furthermore, unless education is given to this class and the facilities made known and accessible to its members, it cannot progress.

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