Social and Educational Problems of Scheduled Castes: Some Critical Insights

G.G. WANKHEDE

This paper identifies and critically analyses the social and educational problems of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) with reference to the educated SCs in their social contexts. The study shows how social problems obstruct the motivation level, quality and utility of education. Although education carries inherent handicaps, it has proved to be the best means for their overall development. However, their emotional achievements are to be analysed within the parameters of their Socio-cultural and economic conditions. Therefore, their past is to be linked with the present that is directly affecting their educational progress.

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INTRODUCTION

Social justice has special connotations for socially and culturally deprived communities such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) (that is, the former untouchables). (Certain communities suffered from various handicaps due to the social structure based on caste hierarchy, and, remained backward and fell victims to various social evils. Therefore, the concepts of 'equality' and 'equality of opportunity remain meaningless unless visualised through proper perspective. This perspective needs to be based on a comprehensive analysis of the problem involved.

The social and educational problems of a deprived population are interlinked and interrelated. Although education has proved to be the best means for their development, it has not reached the majority of the SCs. Besides, education carries inherent handicaps, both structurally and functionally. For example, social problems obstruct the motivation, level, quality and utility of education. However, these issues have not been identified and empirically studied at regional levels or at an all-India level.
This paper attempts to ascertain and analyse the social and educational problems of the educated SCs in general, and the problems of those among them who have achieved social status. This new status is contrary to their traditional stigmatised social status. The specific foci of the paper are:

- to understand the educational problems in the context of the old and new social problems;
- to examine the processes in the educational system and SC homes to see how the social and educational problems manifest themselves at micro levels; and
- to analyse the problems faced by the educated SCs in their new social contexts.

The data are both from primary and secondary sources: accounts of direct interaction with educated SCs from various parts of the country maintained for over seven years; and discussions with the educated SCs during both formal and informal public functions organised by them.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Traditionally, Indian society has been based on structured caste inequality, of which hierarchy and 'purity-pollution' has been the guiding principle. The society was divided into four *Varnas* — Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, wherein Brahmins have been at the top and Shudras (the untouchables) at the bottom. Each Varna consisted of many castes and each caste was further divided into many sub-castes. There were specific rules and regulations regarding social and religious life. Caste members were not allowed to follow the occupations other than those prescribed by the institution of caste. The untouchables were known as *Atishudras* or *Avarnas* and treated as outcastes. Their social status in society was very low, stigmatised and their occupations were menial in nature and so treated as polluting. They had no right to property, land, education and religious rituals like that of upper castes. Thus, they were forced to live in pathetic conditions for centuries. They were subjected to social, economic and cultural suppression and exploitation. There is, however, great controversy among the scholars regarding the origin of caste and untouchability.

Basic changes in the socioeconomic structure of the country started taking place only after the Industrial Revolution and India came under British Rule. These changes were facilitated by the humanistic
approach of the Christian missionaries who, for the first time, came in contact with untouchables. The untouchables were employed as domestic servants, because British administrators required domestic help. The churches were thrown open and they were allowed to avail of education.

The present day education system was introduced by the Britishers in India with the limited purpose of producing clerks with the adoption of a policy of non-interference in religious and social matters. A new educated class of Indians soon came up through the education system, which professed belief in the Western principles of equality and fraternity. Education created general awareness among the people. Many social reformers who believed in political freedom took up the cause of the downtrodden. Prominent among them were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, and the Maharajas of Baroda and Kolhapur who used their legacy for these deprived sections. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the most dynamic and well-known leader of the depressed castes, belonged to the Mahar community, an untouchable caste, of Maharashtra. He was the first highly educated leader who fought for the cause of the untouchables throughout his life. However, prior to Ambedkar, Phule, a Shudra from Maharashtra, laid down the guidelines of social change by opening schools for women and untouchables in the country as early as in 1849. He openly challenged Brahminical dominance and exposed the oppressive aspects of Brahmin ideology by starting an anti-Brahmin movement in the state of Maharashtra.

THE ROLE OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR

The twentieth century social and political scene was dominated by Mahatma Gandhi. Ambedkar was not only a political rival, but also a social rival of Gandhi. While studying the social and educational problems of the SCs, it is relevant to study and analyse Ambedkar's role because contemporary issues and achievements are mainly rooted in his philosophy and struggle.

The first and foremost means of change and development of the SCs, which Ambedkar strongly advocated, was education. He realised its importance because he himself had experienced its effects. His education in India was followed by further studies in various reputed universities in Europe and the United States. Besides his political and social activities, he established educational institutions in Mumbai and Aurangabad in 1945, mainly for the deprived sections, under the
auspices of the People's Education Society. These institutions are one
of the biggest in the country and has produced many administrators,
scholars, scientists, artists and writers. The removal of the caste system
and untouchability was another important aim of his movement. Dr.
Ambedkar and his followers launched Satyagraha for issues such as
temple entry, access to public places and drinking water. In addition
to educational and socio-religious reforms, he founded political parties
like the Scheduled Caste Federation followed by the Independent
Labour Party. Dr. Ambedkar made many representations to the British
Government and attended the Prime Minister's Round Table Confer­
ence at London in 1930. The struggle went on for almost three decades.
But in the end, he was frustrated and came to believe that Hinduism
could not survive without caste and untouchability and, therefore, it
could not be reformed. In 1935, he declared his decision to change his
religion. As a strategic move, he aligned with the Congress Party, held
ministerial positions and also functioned as Chairperson of the Drafting
Committee of the Indian Constitution. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar could
gain something concrete for his people through these tactics, specially
relating to land; reservations in education, employment, the Parliament
and State Assemblies; and special facilities in education. At the same
time, he single-handedly fought with the formidable Congress Party.
The controversy between Gandhi and Ambedkar over separate elec­
torates for the untouchable communities is well-known (Keer, 1971).

Finally, however, the political parties and the government had to
take cognisance of his role. Special provisions were made in the
Constitution and development of SCs became a state responsibility.
Untouchability was declared abolished under Article 17 of the Constitu­
tion. Article 46 provides that: 'The State shall promote with special
care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of
the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled
Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of
exploitation.' Consequently, new avenues to enter into modern and
secular sections of development have been opened to the SCs.

The philosophy of equality and equal opportunity was cherished
during the post-Independence period. Political mobilisation and social
awakening among SC communities was, to a large extent, responsible
for the initial spread of education. Restricted access to education
became a matter of great social concern ever since the notion of
equality of educational opportunity gained recognition as a basic
Studies have established that access to and performance in education strongly continue to be a function of social background — caste, class, occupation, income and rural-urban background (Wankhede, 1993). It is in this context, that it is relevant to assess the performance of the protective discrimination policy in education and the nature and extent of social problems that impinge on its effective implementation and impact. It is interesting to analyse how far the experiments in education and other special programmes over the last 45 years bring the SCs on par with the general population.

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

The SCs are scattered all over the country. They are mainly settled in rural areas and are dependent on the upper castes for their livelihood. They are engaged mostly in low paid manual occupations and also work as bonded labourers.

There is social hierarchy, practice of untouchability among different SCs in different regions. According to the 1991 Census (India, 1991), there are 1,181 castes among the untouchables (now known as ex-untouchables). The President of India has the power to dischedule or include any caste(s) fulfilling a fixed criteria. It is surprising to note that although the criteria for defining untouchability and SCs have been fixed, an SC in one region is not necessarily an SC in another. This has been one of the major problems in the process of development at the national level. This paper focuses on the major problems of SCs which are common at an all-India level.

Social Problems

Understanding the social problems of the SCs is of practical need and theoretical interest to comprehend the processes underlying the advancement of the ideals of equality and social justice. The widespread occurrence of atrocities on these castes and caste riots over the issue of reserved quotas and other related issues have been a regular phenomena. The Government of India constituted, under the President's special order, an office of the 'Commissioner for the SC-ST', headed by a senior civil servant (recently replaced by the National Commission for SC-ST). This office was to receive, record and collect complaints, incidences of atrocities like social boycott, arson, murders, rapes, untouchability, land disputes, child labour against the SC/ST, with the help of state level officials. The reports were to be submitted every year to the President of India. Incidents of continued injustice,
discrimination and oppression were recorded since the inception of this office. However, there was little follow-up done to prevent such occurrences, compensate the victims and punish the guilty. During the year 1965-66, as many as 3,051 complaints of various types were received by the Commissioner's Office. The break up is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Types of Complaints Received by the SC-ST Commissioner in 1965-66.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Complaints</th>
<th>Number of Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Practice of untouchability</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Harassment</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Land and housing problems</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Matters relating to appointments under government service</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Miscellaneous, including matters relating to education and drinking water</td>
<td>952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,051</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India, 1967.

Table 1 shows that all the complaints are related to social and economic conditions. However, the figures may not be realistic considering their population spread.

The succeeding years show a greater increase in the incidence of atrocities. The increase may be the result of the growing awareness to assertion on the part of the SCs and its consequent resentment by the higher castes. It may also be due to the improvement in the reporting process. The year-wise and incidence-wise break up is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Atrocities Committed on SCs - STs during 1981-86.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Murder</th>
<th>Grinburt</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Arson</th>
<th>Other IPC Offences</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>1,492</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>10,454</td>
<td>14,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>1,429</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>11,441</td>
<td>15,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>1,351</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>11,440</td>
<td>14,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>12,327</td>
<td>15,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>11,824</td>
<td>15,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>11,715</td>
<td>15,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,139</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,501</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,998</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,278</strong></td>
<td><strong>69,181</strong></td>
<td><strong>91,097</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India, 1985-86.

The figures in Table 2 show the situation of SCs after almost four decades of freedom during which rapid progress and development of
the SCs is claimed to have been made. It suggests that the legal provisions and mechanisms have not been very effective.

Poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, and lack of general awareness are other problems the SCs suffer from. Most of them are engaged as landless, manual daily wage earners even today. Political reservations have not played a significant role to represent their cause due to the domination and numerical strength of the upper castes in all the political parties. The elected political leaders from the reserved constituencies are effectively coopted or silenced due to tough competition and for political survival. The problems of the SCs become a non-issue for the politicians, except when they are to be used for political ends. The other major obstacle has been the bureaucracy, which is dominated by caste Hindus. All the welfare programmes, schemes and plans remain on paper or are implemented haphazardly and normally do not reach the needy (Abbasayalu, 1978). The funds allocated are diverted to other heads.

Religion and culture are other major issues to be considered seriously. All SCs, despite legal protection, are generally not allowed to enter temples or use public places. They have no drinking water facility or access to other services such as haircut, laundry, and so on. They do not have priests to perform rituals, although they are Hindus. Along with Dr. Ambedkar, there was mass conversion to Buddhism in 1956 by some castes, particularly the Mahars of Maharashtra. This has proved to be a partially fruitful alternative to traditional Hinduism as the stigma of caste and untouchability continues to exist even among Buddhist and Christian converts (Patwardhan, 1968). In general, it is observed that this is an imposition of a new stigmatised social identity for the ex-untouchable groups which should not be seen as a replacement of, but in continuity with the old identity. Social structured aspects, are implicated at the socio-psychological level as can be seen in the feelings of subordination and inferiority among the new, young professionally educated generation (Velaskar and Wankhede, 1996). However, there is a degree of difference between urban based, educated lower and middle class SCs and the poor, illiterate and rural based SCs. In urban settings, there is a certain degree of awareness and resistance based on new militancy and group solidarity. But such groups are insignificant in number. In response to this new awakening, a new institutionalised casteism and prejudice have come up into the minds of the upper castes in general.
Educational Problems

Education is supposed to lead to upward social mobility and positive change in modern technological society. It has been revealed by various studies (Chauhan, 1975; Chitnis, 1981; Wankhede, 1978) that the role of education, insofar as the SCs and their development is concerned, despite limitations, is very crucial. For them, other means like political and economic power have proved to be a failure compared to education. But, at the same time, when it must be remembered that education also has its own limitations. Inherent problems exist within the system. For example, the pattern of education is not uniform, the contents of education have been under severe criticism and its relevance to practical life and indeed the overall development of education is questioned because of the fact that it is not indigenous. Further, it is also found to be urban biased and pro-rich. As such, the role of education in developing the lot of the SCs along with special facilities, has not been very significant in qualitative terms. In quantitative terms, education was expanded for 'populist' motives as a counter to its 'elitist' nature.

As a result, a new educated middle class (although a numerical minority) has developed among the SCs. It is largely urban based, due to forced migration for education and employment (Ram, 1988). It is also important to highlight and understand the nature and types of the problems this so called 'privileged' section face, after they are educated and get into white collar modern, secular jobs. In other words, it is necessary to analyse their 'achieved' status as against their ascribed one.

It is by now an established fact that educational problems do not exist only within the educational system and process, but also in the family and at home. These two sets of problems are interlinked and affect each other negatively. This means, we have to differentiate and identify the problems on two fronts, that is the school and the home. The problems prevalent in the educational process will be discussed first.

A majority of the SCs live in rural areas and hence are deprived of so-called 'better' education including higher education which is available only in urban areas. The lack of urban, modern exposure makes them unaware and ignorant of many basic things which are important for motivation and aspiration. Moreover, the SCs, being economically dependent on the upper castes, have to survive a hand-to-mouth
existence. Consequently, their level of self-perception is low and life, is mainly reduced to a struggle for survival. Besides education becomes very expensive as they have to migrate to cities and towns to receive education beyond the primary and middle levels. Lack of proper guidance in education, right from the point of entry to the point of completion is another major problem. Within the educational system, wherein upper caste people dominate the situation, the SCs are discriminated against, ignored underestimated and sometimes literally thrown out from schooling. Teachers, normally from upper castes, may harbour negative perceptions and attitudes as a result of which they may not assist in crucial matters such as selection of subjects and instruction. The studies also show that, even today, many of the rural schools in India practice physical segregation and untouchability. Drinking water facilities are not yet open to all and the 'general category' students do not interact with the SC students (Desai, 1976; Kulke, 1983a). They perform badly not because they lack intelligence (as is normally believed), but because their intelligence is suppressed by their low stigmatised social status and utterly poor and adverse conditions.

There is also evidence to show that unemployment and underemployment among the educated middle class is very conspicuous, despite the reservation policy (Ram, 1988; Wankhede, 1993). Factors like caste discrimination, irregularities and favouritism play a major role in the employment market. The employer, the management and the fellow rivals all belong to upper castes and the entire recruitment process is under their control. A situation of underemployment and unemployment could also arise because of the type of education and courses the SCs choose. Generally, they go in for general degrees in Arts, Science and Commerce and take a considerably long time to complete and perform poorly (Chitnis, 1975; Aikara, 1980). They do not go in equal numbers for professional degrees like law, medicine and engineering, because it is expensive and involves a lot of efforts. Other problems they face in education are lack of guidance and the 'language' problem as most of the SCs study in vernacular languages. Vernacular languages hardly have any demand and prestige at higher levels, as compared to English. Those who have studied in the English medium dominate all the key and prestigious sectors in the Indian economy. This section of the society represents the case of an elite microscopic minority dominating the common Indian language speaking masses. The SCs, in particular, suffer doubly because they cannot
afford, to study in English medium schools nor are such schools made available to them.

Though, facilities in education such as pre and post-matric scholarships, hostels, special coaching for professional education, freeship and scholarships for studies abroad have proved to be of immense use, they are inadequate. These facilities are utilised marginally, suffer from bureaucratic procedures and do not reach the needy on time. The result is that educational quality and motivation get badly affected. There is no uniform mechanism to implement these facilities at the national level; rather each state has different criteria and mechanisms. Even if there is non-implementation and total negligence in implementing these facilities, there is no penal provision.

The above mentioned constraints in the social background and educational process are reflected most sharply in the problem of non-enrolment and stagnation among the SCs. Non-enrolment is one of the major problems affecting the SCs. There are regional, caste and gender differences as far is non-enrolment is concerned. The goal of achieving universal elementary education is being repeated in every Five-Year Plan. But most of the children in the age group of six to fourteen years who remain out of school due to their social background primarily hail from the SCs.

The problem of stagnation is prominent, especially upto the secondary school level. Absenteeism due to services required of pupils at home for domestic purposes, lack of guidance and lack of learning material are some of the important factors responsible. The problem of stagnation is more prevalent among rural students and girl students. A study done by Henriques and Wankhede (1985) has revealed that the SC-ST students lag considerably behind the general students in regular passing at all stages of schooling in Maharashtra and have been doing reasonably well when compared to other states in educational enrolment and sustenance. This, perhaps, is due to the high level of general awareness created by Dr. Ambedkar's movement among the SCs.

The third important problem in education is drop outs. A study has revealed that when 100 SC students enrol in Standard 1, only 40 move on to Standard 4, and 7-8 up to Standard 10 (Gare, 1974). Thus, it is relevant to study these problems after 50 years of educational experiment. It is also found that very few who survive upto college level education. In today's context, a higher level of education is a necessity to get into white collar jobs.
THE ACHIEVEMENTS

Political and social changes have changed the traditional status and problems faced by the SCs, particularly due to the special treatment meted out to them. Universal and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 was enshrined in the Constitution as a Directive Principle. In spite of this, the pace of universalisation has been extremely slow compared to the crucial role of education in bringing equality and justice and the objectives set in the Constitution itself (India, 1985-86). Nevertheless, educational advancement can be taken to be the best indicator of development of a community where an important indicator is the literacy rate.

Literacy

The progress of literacy amongst the SCs, during the last four decades, when compared to the general population is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Literacy and Growth Rates of SCs from 1961-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literacy Rates (in percentages)</th>
<th>Growth Rates (in percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All communities</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excluding SC:ST</td>
<td>27.91</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India, 1985-86
N.A.: Not Available.

Table 3 shows that there is very slow growth of literacy among the SCs as compared to the general population during 1961-1991.

Enrollment

Similarly, enrollment at various levels of schools can give us an idea of their educational achievements. Table 4 gives their enrollment compared with general students for the year 1985-86.

Table 4 gives the all-India figures of enrollment from Standard 1 to 12. It is seen that the enrollment of the SC students is very poor and it
decreases as the educational level goes up. This is due to the increase in the rate of dropout among these students.

**TABLE 4: Enrolment of SC Students for the year 1985-86**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total No. of Students</th>
<th>No. of SC Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>8,64,65,189</td>
<td>1,39,21,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>2,81,24,756</td>
<td>36,18,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>1,16,17,262</td>
<td>1,96,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>34,88,672</td>
<td>64,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: India, 1985-86.*

It is also pertinent to see their enrollment at higher levels of education, including professional education. Table 5 gives these details where it shows that very few or a negligible number of SCs are studying at higher levels of education and girls are underrepresented.

**TABLE 5: Enrolment of SC at Various Levels of Higher Education at an All-India Level (as on March 1, 1992)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D/D.Sc/D.Phil.</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduation (M.A+M.Sc+M.Com)</td>
<td>27,341</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>6,494</td>
<td>8.87</td>
<td>33,835</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduation (General)</td>
<td>2,07,799</td>
<td>80.46</td>
<td>60,943</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>2,68,742</td>
<td>81.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduation (Engineering+ Medicine + Education)</td>
<td>22,371</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>5,515</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>27,886</td>
<td>8.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,58,235</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>73,160</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,31,395</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: India, 1993.*

**Employment**

Employment in modern sectors is another indicator of progress. Modern white collar employment is based on the education level and knowledge and is secular as against traditional ones. The SCs have opportunities to get into this kind of employment, necessarily because of the educational facilities and reserved seats in employment. Table
6 gives the details of representation in teaching and non-teaching posts in 41 Indian Universities.

**TABLE 6: SC Representation in Academic and Ministerial Posts in Universities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Posts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>2,133</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers/Associate Professors</td>
<td>3,261</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>5,341</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Associate</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>10.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministerial Posts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>3,525</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>4,833</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C</td>
<td>14,811</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td>8.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D</td>
<td>17,607</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>14.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: India, 1985-86.*

The representation of the SCs in the teaching and non-teaching professions in the universities are very marginal. This area needs a thorough probe. However, one can estimate the factors for such poor representation. These factors could be lack of skills and educational levels required for such jobs, discrimination against the SCs under the pretext of 'merit' or the feeling among the non-SCs that the quality of education may go down as the SCs do not possess a high calibre. In addition, educational institutions are not under the direct control of the government and private institutions do not encourage them.

A similar trend of poor representation is seen in Central Government Services. Table 7 gives the break up.

**TABLE 7: Representation of the SC-ST in Central Government Services (in Percentages)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>As on 1-1-1977</th>
<th>As on 1-1-1987</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>11.84</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>20.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: India, 1985-86.*
The figures in Table 7 show that there is visible increase in representation in categories A and B from 1977 to 1987. However, going upward from D category to A, there is significant decrease in representation. Thus, at higher level jobs, there is poor representation.

Universalisation of education, a key factor for social and economic justice was to be achieved within ten years. Planned economic development adopted a 'growth first' rather than an 'equity first' approach based on the mistaken belief that the benefits of development would percolate to all sections of the society which proved to be unrealistic (India, 1985-86). However, the constitutional safeguards for all the deprived sections of the society are still needed as the vast majority of them are still not in a position to avail of them.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW MIDDLE CLASS
The experiment of special provisions for the SCs and its outcome are the major areas that need to be probed empirically. Facilities in education, reservations in employment and political representation have led to the emergence of a new educated middle class among the SCs across the country. This new class, however, is in minority and basically urban based. A few studies have been done on this class. (Abbasayalu, 1978; Issacs, 1965; Ram, 1988; Saberwal, 1976; Sachi-danand, 1977; Wankhede, 1993).

The fact that this new middle class is formed in an urban set up, ensures that they get segregated from their kith and kin from rural areas who comprise the majority. As a result, there is a trend towards their alienation from their people and culture. Studies have also revealed that there is a big gap between the educated and uneducated SCs. The former suffer more at emotional and social levels because they are in a 'semi-limbo' positions.

Issacs (cf. Mahar, 1972: 396) observes:
As the educated ex-untouchables pull up and away from the sodden bleakness of their past estate, they do not quite get nowhere, but neither do they reach somewhere. They are people who want above all to become different from what they were and what their fathers were. They want to leave all that behind, to forget it, to blot it out, but they came into a situation where too little is changing too slowly; a society still governed by caste does not allow them to abandon their past, to forget it, to blot it all out. What they move into becomes a kind of semi-limbo.
(The educated also suffer from an identity crisis because identity is not formed positively with an ideal reference group. The traditional stigmatised social identity continues to be carried forward by the new imposed stigmatised social identity for the ex-untouchable groups, which should not be seen as a replacement of but in continuity with the old identity (Velaskar and Wankhede, 1996).

Thus, the effects of special provisions can be seen through the emerging new middle class which, in a way, is positive change and development. But at the same time, this class suffers from variety of social and emotional problems. They belong to the first generation of educational and occupational achievers who have risen through struggle (Wankhede, 1993). For example, Table 8 shows that a majority of respondents took up employment while pursuing higher education. The table presents findings of a study of educated SCs employees in Delhi.

**TABLE 8: Higher Education With/Without Job.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entire education with Job</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly with Job, Partly without Job</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire education without Job</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No higher education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During education, they face problems like lack of motivation, lack of guidance, lack of conducive atmosphere, financial problems and language difficulties. All these problems affect their motivational level and performance in education and ultimately their career of growth. Education, unemployment and social life are the major areas of their hardships.

Prejudice, however subtly expressed, and discrimination are experienced by the affected as injuries to their self-esteem and evoke strong and deep feelings within them. In elitist and competitive environments, every SC experiences some degree of isolation and alienation. These feelings are compounded by the attitudes and behaviours of those others around them (Velaskar and Wankhede, 1996). Here are few narrations that illustrate the generalised prejudices held by non-SCs and are actually operationalised in day-to-day life. A few quotes drawn
from the interviews and the observations would suffice to elaborate the problem. (These narrations are reproduced here without any edit-
ing).

- I have joined this course without knowing anything much about and it has no scope further. I am frustrated. Therefore, I have decided to take Indian Administrative Services (IAS) Examina-
tion. But as I am preoccupied with the present studies, I do not find time to prepare for IAS. I am following your instruc-
tions strictly. I do not know how far I will succeed in that. But I am determined to do that. Your encouragement has created a new hope in my life. I admit that I have miserably failed in my life (Career wise re) and that is because of lack of guidance and also hard work. I could not take right decision at right time (A student of Agricultural Engineering).

- I got inspired by your speech to take IAS exam. But I need your help and guidance for I am final year student of Agriculture Engineering. My family background is well, but not enough well to send me abroad for higher education. My father are government servant in 'ABC City where I have my own house. I have a 12 Acres of land in paddy growing areas of Chandrapur district in a village where my mother lives. My elder brother is an Agricultural Officer in a Bank. I always dreams of becoming an administrative officer. Now that is my goal and I am firm on my decision. This year I am giving prelim in any examina-
tion. But this year just for an experience because during our academic study we have not get enough time for doing prepa-
ration seriously. The subject chosed is completely new for me (Public Administration). I select this optional because it is related to the working of a civil servant, their duties and more important is that it give more detail knowledge of the admini-
stration. Please give list of books and tell the study pattern. In one corner of my heart there is dream to go abroad in European Countries for further education. But when I look at the total possible expenditure on it, then I feels very nervous. Sir, is it possible to study more in European Countries in Agricultural Technology by having some aid from any Institute or by means of any scholarship. Please guide me (Another student of same course).

- My condition is very bad here. I do not know what to do. I can't think properly. My l'ife is full of darkness. I am totally frustrated.
I have no job, no money and no guidance. What is the use of reservations and education? I strongly hope that you will help me getting job (A post-graduate in Social Work writes from his home town).

- I had 'attained' your speech. As a civil engineering student. I want to appear for Indian Engineering Services or Indian Administrative Services examination after graduation. I hope­fully writing you this letter for your valuable guidance about this examination as well as for help (An Engineering student from Mumbai).

- I find it very difficult to adjust in this hi-fi westernised atmos­phere. Fellow students and faculty also neglect me and make fun of me. Language is my main problem. Students show their caste biases by passing comments on facilities I avail. I just don't know what to do. I get isolated from others (A student doing Masters in Professional Course).

It is observed from these narrations that the educated SCs lack proper guidance, self-confidence and face an unemployment problem. Language (English) is another important barrier to their education and employment. Most importantly, there prevails a feeling of being discriminated by the upper caste people. Thus, one can infer that the Scheduled Castes continue to suffer from the same old social problems.

CONCLUSION

The major objective of this paper was to identify and critically analyse the social and educational problems of the deprived sections (that is the SCs) of India. The major problematic areas have been identified and specific problems have been discussed in detail. The underlying assumption is that with the principle of equality and social justice supported by constitutional provisions, the SCs are expected to make significant progress. The experiment of special provisions is in opera­tion since the last 50 years and, therefore, it is expected that there have been changes in their socioeconomic conditions.

However, studies have revealed that the progress made by them is marginal and is limited to the urban situation. The majority, still, have a long way to go. Further, the problems of the SCs need to be studied separately, as they are not a single entity.

In order to assess their present social and education situation, we have compared it with the past, with special reference to British rule and social reform movements. In particular, we have studied the role
and contributions of Dr. Ambedkar who was the champion of their cause. After Independence in 1947, the process of planned change was initiated by constitutional and legal safeguards with special programmes for improving their standard of life. Education was expected to contribute a lot to the social and economic status of the SCs. Various studies show that the educational progress made by the SCs is marginal, differs from state to state and caste to caste and is necessarily urban based. The so-called 'best' education is available in cities and the majority of poor SCs cannot afford it. The facilities provided to them suffer from many drawbacks: they are not properly implemented, do not reach on time, and so on. Politicisation of the issue is another hurdle to their progress. The women among the SCs are doubly disadvantaged. The majority still live in rural areas and depend for their social and economic needs on the upper castes. They are still engaged in traditional occupations and a few of them are engaged in modern manual occupations. Many of them continue to work as bonded labourers.

However, there is also some change in the over all stigmatised social status of the SCs due to both planned changes and modernisation processes. It is observed that a new educated middle class has come up among these people. This class has come up necessarily through education. This is the positive side of the study. However, it is revealed by many studies that there is a gap between the educated and the uneducated SCs, between rural and urban SCs, between male and female SCs, and so on. The educated class suffers from status anxiety and lives in a semi-limbo position, having got alienated from their own people, and suffer from an identity crisis.

Referring to the educational problems, currently the educational system itself is under heavy criticism for several reasons. Its alienating contents are incongruous with local realities and it is completely dominated by the English knowing class. Thus, the SCs are afflicted by problems such as non-enrolment, stagnation and dropouts, besides illiteracy. It is important for us to understand and analyse the problems in the context of their previous conditions which continue to have a bearing on the present. It is in this context that we find that they have made progress. But it is also due to this context that they continue to be backward compared to higher caste people. In sum, caste is an important variable in the analysis of contemporary social reality of India and if the goals of social justice and equality have to be met, through the education system, one needs to confront the problems of casteism squarely in the content and process of the education system.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sachidananda</td>
<td><em>The Harijan Elite: A Study of their Status, Networks, Mobility and Role in Social Transformation</em>, New Delhi: Thomson Press.</td>
<td>1977</td>
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