

CHAPTER – I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Since, independence, India has been making continuous efforts to develop its rurality. The community development programme was the first to tackle the problems of rural India in a comprehensive manner. The weaker sections of Indian society are classified into scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under the schedules of Indian constitution. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been oppressed through centuries on account of an iniquitous and rigid social order. Their upliftment involves a multi-faceted planned process of socio-economic transformation. This has been sought to be achieved through an overall policy of protective discrimination. This policy consists of legislative and administrative measures designed to benefit weaker sections in terms of education, employment, financial assistance, political representation and protection against exploitation has been assured to enable them to develop in the network of Indian society.

Since, time immemorial the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been subjected to several social, economic and political discrimination, even though, they constitute a numerically dominant minority group. Their condition remained practically the same till recently. Several attempts have been made during pre-independence period to improve their conditions. But these were mostly in the forms based on humanitarian principles. A systematic and organised attempt at a national level was made by the government only during the post-independence period by providing constitutional provisions. Several measures have been undertaken to improve their conditions in several fields.

Even after the emergence of information technology oriented information society in the new millennium, the atrocities against dalits are not stopped in many parts of the country and still prevails in several places of the country. They are treated as untouchables and ill-treated as inhuman. And thus about 161 million people of the Indian total population are relegated to the margins of Indian caste-ridden society.

Though the Constitution of India has outlawed the practice of untouchability in any form as a criminal offence, the disadvantaged dalits are ostracized from and even persecuted in the day-to-day life of Indian Society. Even the remedial measures of reservation of the jobs and the educational privileges did not suffice to undo the injustice done to the dalits.

In short, the dalits are dehumanized through exclusion, denied through exploitation and defaced through elimination. At this crucial juncture, there is some belief that if their economic status improved. Along with this it will induce them to actively participate in the politics which may improve their social status and get remedy for their sufferings. Thus, even in the political arena, many reservation policies are adopted by the Indian government to give opportunities to them to participate in the administration of both the central and the state governments. Irrespective of all these arrangements, the dalits are coming to the mainstream due to various reasons

Scheduled Castes are defined in Article 366(24) of the Constitution of India, as - “such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of this Constitution.” Article 341 of the Constitution of India States that (1)The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be. (2)Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Castes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any caste, race or tribe or part of or group within any caste, race or tribe, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification. The introduction of the term „Scheduled Caste“ can be attributed to the most coveted Government of India Act of 1935. In April 1936, the British government issued the Government of India Scheduled Caste order 1936, specifying certain castes, races and tribes as scheduled castes in the then provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Bombay, Central provinces and Berrar, Madras, Orissa,

Punjab and United Province. Prior to these, they are known as depressed classes. The depressed classes were systematically categorized in 1931 census by John Henry Hutton, the then census commissioner of India. The Scheduled Caste population is also referred as „Untouchables, „Dalits, „Harijan etc. The deprivation of Scheduled castes can be traced back to the historical processes of economic & social exclusion and discrimination based on caste system.