

The Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling Hills: A Sociological Study

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Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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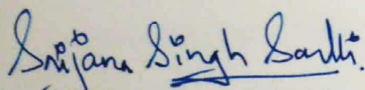
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All assistance and help received during the course of investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

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List of Abbreviation

AISHE	All India Survey on Higher Education
B.A	Bachelor of Arts
B.Sc	Bachelor of Science
B.Com	Bachelor of Commerce
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CST	Computer Science & Technology
DCE	Diploma in Civil Engineering
DEE	Diploma in Electrical Engineering
DIB	District Intelligence Branch
DM	District Magistrate
GEN	General Degree
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GPU	Gram Panchayat Unit
GTA	Gorkhaland Territorial Administration
HONS	Honours Degree
IAS	Indian Administrative Services
ICSE	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IIT	All Indian Institute of Technology
ISC	Indian School Certificate Examinations
LLB	Bachelor of Law
M.A	Master of Arts

M.Com	Master of Commerce
M.Sc	Master of Science
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NET	National Eligibility Test
NIT	National Institute of Technology
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PH	Physically Handicapped
PHE	Public Health Engineering
PWD	Public Work Department
SC	Scheduled Castes
SCD	Scheduled Castes Development
SET	State Eligibility Test
ST	Scheduled Tribes
U-DISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UGC	University Grant Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	West Bengal
SI	Sub-Inspector
RGNF	Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship

Summary

The Constitution of India granted reservation policy to ensure participation of the socially excluded section of the society. As the Scheduled Castes is one among the socially excluded groups who due to their ascriptive nature were traditionally neglected therefore, reservation policy worked as a bridge to undo the wrong that they have witnessed in their past. By allotting educational scholarship and quota in employment, educational institutions and legislative bodies, it tries to protect this section from various social discrimination. The three communities Kami, Damai and Sarki among the Nepali communities of Darjeeling are included in the Scheduled Castes category, hence are entitled to these rights granted by the Constitution.

Traditionally the three communities are positioned in the lower rung of the Nepali caste hierarchy and were socially discriminated on the basis of their low caste status. Based on their traditional occupation of blacksmithing (Kami), tailoring and musicians (Damai) and shoemaking (Sarki), the three communities were considered to be impure and had to maintain a distance with the caste belonging to the higher status. Dumont (1988) while discussing the concept of purity and pollution highlighted that the hierarchy of caste decided the degree of its purity and pollution, where the impure or low caste had to maintain their distance from the pure or high caste. Since there was no occupational choice and their livelihood depended upon their traditional occupation, the meager income from their traditional occupation along with their position in caste hierarchy accounted for their low socio-economic status in the society. Further, due to the social stigma attached to their traditional occupation they were often discriminated by the members of other communities and in some cases even were called with derogatory names. Consequent to this stigmatization and

economic instability, they were socio-economically deprived from the basic rights and were socially discriminated. However, after the implementation of the reservation policy, the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling began to change. On this backdrop, the present study entitled ‘The Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling Hills: A Sociological Study’ attempts to understand the trend of change that reservation policy brought in the life of the three communities in Darjeeling hills. The study by exploring the history of reservation policy for the Scheduled Castes tries to understand the efforts of the communities to enlist themselves in the category. Most importantly the study tries to examine the impact of reservation on socio-economic and cultural life of the three communities experienced after the utilization of reservation facilities. Looking at the population concentration of the three communities the study has been conducted in Darjeeling, Kurseong (Mirik) and Kalimpong. Using purposive and snowball sampling, the samples are collected from the field, stratified on the basis of the variables like age, gender, education, occupation, rural-urban breakup, etc.

The present study is divided into seven chapters. The First Chapter begins by introducing the topic followed by statement of problem and contextualization in Darjeeling, it also discusses the conceptual framework and review of literature to examine the research gap. The section then deals with the objective of the research, the research questions and the methodology used in the study.

Using secondary data, the Second and Third Chapters discuss the historical backdrop of caste and reservation in both India and Darjeeling. The chapters highlight the current status of Scheduled Castes in education and employment sectors and also discuss the implementation and rate of utilization of the reservation policies. The third chapter in particular focuses on the three Scheduled Caste communities of Darjeeling

viz Kami, Damai and Sarki and locates these communities in the Nepali caste system and examines their participation in education and employment.

The Fourth and Fifth Chapters are entirely based on the empirical analysis on the basis of fieldwork conducted in the hills of Darjeeling. Both the chapters examine the socio-economic impact experienced by the three communities after the implementation of reservation policy. The fourth chapter in particular explores the utilization of the reservation policy by the SCs and examines its impact on educational and occupational mobility. The fifth chapter is mainly qualitative in nature and on the basis of case study and narrative analysis, the chapter examines the impact of reservation on socio-economic and cultural life of the Scheduled Caste communities in Darjeeling.

The Sixth chapter is divided into two sections; the first section analyzes the empirical data within the conceptual framework of social exclusion and sociological concepts of habitus, social and cultural capital and cultural hegemony to understand the changes that the studied groups experienced in their everyday life. The second section discusses the major finding of the present study. The final chapter Seven concludes with summary and suggestions and recommendation.

The study reveals various forms of changes that the Nepali Scheduled Castes (Kami, Damai and Sarki) experienced after the implementation of reservation policy in the hills of Darjeeling. In the traditional caste based society of Darjeeling, due to their ascriptive low status and social stigmatization attached to caste, the three communities had to face social discrimination and social exclusion in the various sphere of life till the recent past. These communities had to face deprivation and humiliation due to the social stigma attached to their traditional hereditary occupations which were regarded

as impure and polluted. The rigid nature of the hereditary occupation that they followed did not give them economic stability and placed them in low socio-economic position. They were excluded from participating in most of the social activities, denied entry in the high caste houses, had to follow the strict rules of commensality and marriage with a high caste was strictly prohibited. Conceptually, the three communities were socio-economically and culturally excluded from all spheres of social life. The caste based norms made these three communities internalised these subjugations and low position as a part of their social structure and they regarded this cultural hegemony to be a legitimate part of their social reality. This conditioned them to accept this dominance and subjugation process as natural and without questioning they followed these hegemonic forces which over the years have determined their habitus. However, in recent times, the scenario began to change with the introduction of reservation facilities which provided them platform for socio-economic upliftment.

The study shows after the implementation of reservation policy, the Scheduled Castes by garnering facilities were able to gain socio-economic mobility and by utilizing reservation quota a section of respondents was able to get recruitment in government services in different level such as Group 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' jobs. In overall there has been a shift and occupational diversification leading to both vertical and horizontal mobility. The intergenerational mobility both in education and occupation has been discussed in the study which shows us how by availing reservation policy the new generations were able to uplift their status in the social hierarchy.

The study also highlighted that after availing reservation quota in educational institutions and scholarships, there has been an increasing number of enrolments of students in the educational sector. In fact, we could notice that a section of

respondents were even able to pursue higher education such as M.Phil or Ph.D. However, despite educational schemes and scholarship, reports of increasing number of dropouts have also been highlighted in the study which is one of the growing concerns.

The other interesting observation was the socio-cultural changes that the Scheduled Caste communities of Darjeeling experienced in recent time. We could observe that after gaining socio-economic mobility the three Scheduled Caste communities had sanskritized their lifestyle. They imitated the food habits of the higher castes and chose vegetarianism, a section of the Scheduled Castes gave up non-vegetarian food items such as beef, pork, etc. and in some cases even started consuming *satvik* food. Changes in rules of commensality could also be observed as there has been relaxation in restriction in inter-dining to a great extent. Opening of restaurants, café houses, hotels, fast food corners, etc. also played an important role in changing the old norms of food restriction. Changes in the pattern of inter-caste marriage were also noticed, in fact it could be observed that marriage with the higher caste began to take place and there were instances of social acceptance although the non-acceptance and stigmatization was reported in some cases. Breaking the boundaries of old family structure of joint and extended family, the trend of nuclear family started emerging in the hills of Darjeeling and most of the families prefer to live in a nuclear family and such trend was also found among the three communities.

The gaining of socio-economic mobility enabled the three communities to access the modern technology which has impacted their lifestyle and changed their habitus. The changes were noticed in the forms of attire, housing style, use of modern gadgets and appliances which also has impacted their nature of social interaction with the wider

society and relaxed the rigid old social norms and boundaries defining their exclusion to a considerable extent.

However, apart from these positive changes there are few constraining factors that have impacted the fair implementation of reservation policy. One such issue is the lack of awareness, which is observed among a majority of the respondents residing in rural areas of Darjeeling hills because of which the advantages of reservation has not been penetrated to the socio-economically deprived section within the community. There were still sections of people who due to lack of education and unawareness of reservation policy were only able to gain horizontal mobility i.e. although they no longer followed the traditional occupation but were engaged in manual labor of various kinds or other menial works hence are economically low and still socially excluded from certain social activities. Consequently, they hold an indifferent attitude towards the community and feel that reservation is mainly for the privileged sections of the communities. Many among them even preferred to isolate themselves and practice self-exclusion from the community members who they feel are privileged. The other issue reported by the respondents was poverty and meagre scholarship amount due to which many respondents were not able to pursue higher education resulting in lack of social mobility.

The role of All India Nepali Scheduled Caste association has also been critically discussed in the study which was instrumental in bringing all the three communities together under the banner of Scheduled Castes and works for the upliftment of the communities and sensitizes them through workshops, meetings and programs to inform the people regarding its functioning. They raised their voice for people who still faced discrimination and helped its members during the time of crises. However,

there are still many issues which are unaddressed for which the association needs to be proactive.

There is no doubt that reservation has helped the people of the reserved category to improve their social and economic status. After the implementation of reservation policy, the proportion of Scheduled Castes has increased in government institutes providing them a chance to raise their social status by either gaining privileged or secondary inclusion. There is a hike in the number of Scheduled Caste students' enrolment in the Under Graduate and Post Graduate levels. The rise in number shows the growing importance of education among the Scheduled Castes.

The study shows that implementation of reservation policy in Darjeeling has come with both milestones and challenges which have brought transformation in the socio-economic and cultural life of the communities, however the persistence of deprivation among some unprivileged sections still shows the existence of some kind of neighbourhood or self exclusion. Nevertheless, the process of inclusion has been initiated as educational upliftment over the years has strengthened the process of social change and gradually began to challenge the hegemonic forces. Along with the social transformation, their individuals' reflexivity allowed them to learn and consciously incorporate change in their social action and habitus, which was earlier pre-determined by the rigid caste system of Nepali society. The empirical observation indicates ample instances that consequent to these changes in their habitus, changes began to be experienced in their socio-economic and cultural life among the Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling which was facilitated by the implementation of the reservation policy.

Chapter – I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The reservation policy was formulated by the Indian Constitution in an attempt to ensure equal rights and access to benefits and resources to the disadvantaged groups in the society (Pangannavar, 2014) with an objective to bring social change and socio-economic upliftment of marginalized sections. It was a device of positive discrimination that ensures an adequate representation of the deprived castes and sections of the society. The objective of reservation as pointed out by Verma (2011) was to place the deprived castes in the higher stratum, authority, power, and position to safeguard their interests and protect them from the assault of discrimination and injustice that was done to them by the unequal pattern of social order and vested interests of the dominant group. These deprived groups had been subjected to various kinds of social discrimination, economic deprivation, and powerlessness through ages and the Scheduled Castes are one of such groups (Kumar, 2013). Due to their ascribed nature which is linked with the concept of purity and pollution, the Scheduled Castes belonged to the lower strata of the social stratification. Hence, the Scheduled Castes had to face social degradation, economic exploitation, and cultural depression (Verma, 2011) which ultimately resulted in the social exclusion of this group. Therefore, the nature of exclusion associated with the institution of caste particularly needs to be conceptualized as it lies at the core of developing equal-opportunity policies, such as a reservation policy for the Scheduled Castes (SC), which goes back to the early 1930s (Thorat and Newman, 2010).

Discussion on the topic of the reservation is an enormous and controversial one. A brief historical backdrop of the reservation policy in India highlights that after the

appointment of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as a member in the Viceroy's Executive Council, the Scheduled Caste (SCs) was allotted 8.5 percent reservation in the Central services and other facilities for the first time in the history of India in 1942 (Das, 2010). In 1947, the power was transferred and provisions of reservation were made in the Constitution of India for Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes and were initiated on 26th January 1950 (Bakshi, 2013). Ambedkar (2008) highlighted that owing to the initiative taken by the Indian Constitution the Scheduled Castes derived their rights, privileges, and safeguards in two ways. Initially, as citizens of the country, they were entitled to all the rights, safeguards, and advantages that are assured to everyone. Secondly, to undo the historical wrongs they are granted special privileges for a certain period. Prasad and Singh (2016) specifically listed out that to promote education and economic upliftment among the Scheduled Castes the government of India allotted quotas in the job and granted several concessions and relaxation in educational institutions and jobs. They were also allotted numbers of scholarships from pre-matric to research studies. Hence, various policies and programs were formulated by the policymakers to reduce the discrimination and include the excluded in almost all the spheres of life.

However, despite all constitutional provisions, the question of proper implementation has always been a prime concern as highlighted by many studies which reveal the gaps in its implementation. Bhattacharya (1997), in his study 'Reservation Policy: The West Bengal Scene' discusses how even after the formulation of elaborated rules and regulations, the accurate information about the post of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories are not fully available. With the help of the limited data, he asserted that in government jobs the rightfully prescribed reservation quota for both the SC and ST could not be achieved. He pointed out that the two categories in

lower jobs mostly unskilled and manual did not face issues of unfulfilled seats but the jobs in the higher rank especially Group ‘A’ and ‘B’ remained virtually unattainable. As per the data extracted from Employment Exchange Statistics on SCs Job-Seekers in India in 2013, the total percentage of Scheduled Caste candidates who registered was 45.80 percent while it was only 0.10 percent who got the placement in West Bengal. Similar type of underrepresentation is noticed by Hasan and Mehta (2008) in the field of higher education in their study ‘Underrepresentation in Colleges’ where they discuss how despite reservation of 15 percent and 7.5 percent of college seat for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they only make up to 10.2 percent (SC) and 3.9 percent (ST) in national colleges. On this background, the present study attempts to understand the implementation of the Reservation policy and its impact in Darjeeling, one of the districts of West Bengal focusing on two aspects of reservation i.e. education and employment. By exploring the macro scenario of reservation in India, followed by West Bengal, the study will be contextualised in the hills of Darjeeling district. Most importantly the study attempts to examine if reservation has been able to make any difference in the life of Scheduled Castes through social mobility after its implementation in the Darjeeling hills. If so, what are the impacts on their socio-economic and cultural life of the communities. The study also attempts to identify what are the facilitating and constraining factors in its implementation.

1.2. Statement of Problem

The notion of social justice as enshrined in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution ensures security to all its citizens in the form of justice, social, economic, and political liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship equality of status and opportunity (Bakshi, 2013). It ensures social justice to the marginalised group who were socially excluded on the ground of caste, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and many

more. The Scheduled Castes in India are the marginalized group who in the past were socially excluded due to their low caste identity which was ascribed in nature. To give justice to the socially excluded groups, the Constitution of India envisaged various constitutional provisions for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes category among which few are mentioned here. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 15 Clause (4) enables the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens. Article 17 ensures the Abolition of Untouchability. Article 330 and 332 categorically deals with the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies of the States (Singh, 2008).

Discussing reservations in the Indian context, numerous debates appeared before the implementation of this policy. The most eminent debate that took place before the completion of the policy was the debate between Gandhiji and Ambedkar (Due, 2010: 19-20) which has been discussed exhaustively in the subsequent chapter. However, to understand the rationale of the implementation of reservation policy for Scheduled Castes in India, we must begin with a strong conceptual understanding of caste.

Caste is observed as one of the delicate issues in India as caste-based discrimination and exclusion is socially and culturally legitimised practice in Indian society. According to Ghurye caste is an endogamous group and is a status that is ascribed. It is bounded by the rules of hierarchy that hold the concept of purity and pollution. Ghurye in his 'Caste and Race in India' has mentioned six features of the castes, they are: segmental division of society, hierarchy, restrictions on feeding and social intercourse, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and restriction on marriage. Over-all he views caste

to be an endogamous group (Ghurye, 1932). For Dumont (1988) although caste is unified from outside but is divided from within. He asserts that a particular caste is a complex group, a successive inclusion of groups of diverse orders or levels, in which different functions are attached to different levels. For him caste is far more than a group, it is a state of mind which is expressed in various situations. Srinivas (1969) claimed that the core of the caste system is hierarchy. It is the arrangement of the hereditary groups in rank order. He also opined that caste and occupation have a link between each other which is systematised according to the occupational differences. Moreover, in India caste has always been highlighted as an important element of exclusion where individuals' birth has become the reason and basis of their exclusion. Social thinkers in India conceptualize exclusion or social exclusion to be a group concept and always discuss this with special priority. Social exclusion is practiced on the basis of caste and untouchability in India; where a group of people is excluded or denied the rights and opportunities which the majority of the population enjoys (Kadun and Gadkar, 2014). Where caste and untouchability are applicable then the concept of purity and pollution also automatically creeps that determines the extent of exclusion.

The 'idea of purity and pollution' has always been attached to the institution of caste which has a religious essence (Mohanty, 2004). Since historical times, caste discrimination and exploitation is a social reality and has always been an issue in Indian society (Ghurye, 1932). Exclusion of various groups under different circumstances is found at every level of society. Haan (2000) agrees that 'group formation is a fundamental characteristic of human society, and this is accompanied by the exclusion of others'. Therefore, there are various types of exclusion prevailing in Indian society such as gender, ethnicity, religion, region, etc. and caste is one such

form of exclusion. The caste system has categorized people according to their hereditary occupation where an individual is born and is inherent and has the ascribed social status, which when rendered becomes impossible for the individual to change his occupation even if he showed remarkable talent for excelling in other occupations (Dumont, 1988). In this backdrop, the concept of “social exclusion” becomes important to understand as it includes all voiceless and marginalized groups of people who are excluded from the mainstream society.

The Constitution of Independent India enlisted the policy of inclusion and affirmative action in the form of reservations policy, where certain benefits in the form of social justice were allotted to the section of those people who fell into the category of deprived or depressed class. This inclusive policy aims in bridging inequality and addresses the problem of social discrimination and inequality. After the implementation of the reservation policy, a considerable transformation in education and the occupational field was observed as indicated by various studies. Sethi and Somanathan (2010) highlighted that reservation led to the narrowing of gaps at a higher level of education and employment, due to which mobility among the Scheduled Castes communities became visible. In such a case, reservation has been viewed either as an opportunity or an instrument of eradicating disadvantage that prevailed in the society. Tejas K. (2018) argued that due to reservation policy, an increase is noticed in the enrollment percentage of Scheduled Castes in the educational institutions as well as in the employment sectors. However, some studies show contrasting views. For example, the study by Kumar and Jones (2008), argued that even after six decades of post-independence, the reservation policy is unable to uplift a majority of the section of Scheduled Castes. They further opined that the reservation policy has nourished a small group of the petty-bourgeois who for their

benefit promotes caste-identities and politics, and at the same time defends the capitalist social order. Due to the unequal implementation of reservation policy classes of the privileged and unprivileged group could be created that would disturb the solidarity of the society. Similar finding has been made by Pradeep (2008) who pointed out that a privileged group among the reserved has been created, who compete against their group to enjoy benefits resulting in a creamy-layer or super-caste within the caste.

1.3. Conceptualizing the Scheduled Castes

Scheduled Castes are sub-communities within the framework of the Hindu caste system who have historically faced deprivation, oppression, and extreme social isolation in India due to their prescribed low status. They are the marginalized communities that are termed as Scheduled Castes by the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) order 1950.¹ Sociologically, Scheduled Castes has been nowhere defined in the Constitution in particular according to Pais (2011), however, he highlighted that ‘Scheduled Caste’ the classificatory term is assigned to the groups of people who are socio-economically one of the disadvantaged groups in India. Ghurye (2014) pointed out that the Scheduled Castes are formerly known as depressed classes and are the fifth order of the four-fold society of the Hindu theory of caste. The Constitution of India has provided the Scheduled Castes with not only special privileges in the matter of recruitment to services but also with special representation in the legislative bodies. Historically the category of Scheduled Castes came into recognition through the enactment of the Government of India Act 1935, where the untouchables were listed who fulfilled the criteria of being called untouchables (Hasan, 2009). In 1936, for purposes of giving effect to the provisions for special electoral representation in the

¹thequint.com(accessed 3/10/2020)

Government of India Act, 1935, some untouchable castes were listed (i.e. scheduled). From then onwards the term 'Scheduled Castes' has been in vogue and the Constitution of India has accepted it as a constitutional category (Pais, 2011). Bakshi, (2013) opines that the term 'Scheduled Caste' is only a legal fiction and is a constitutional myth. As a result, those groups of people whose defining feature was untouchable were identified and placed in a scheduled order to render them eligible for certain safeguards and benefits.

Article 341 (1) of the Indian Constitution stated that the President with respect to any state or union territory after consulting with the Governor authorizes a certain caste, race, or tribe as scheduled. However, under Article 341 (2) the Parliament of India is authorized to include or exclude any group under certain circumstances. In India, these categories are the marginalized groups of lower castes who had a history of life deep-rooted in deprivation, discrimination, exploitation, and subjugation. They are the group of people who belonged to the lower rung of the social hierarchy and were socially excluded in the foreground of caste. While discussing exclusion Haan (2000), asserted that in India exclusion of the Scheduled Caste takes place at every level of society which starts by forming groups. This ultimately results in the inclusion of one group who is superior or privileged and the exclusion of others who is inferior or unprivileged. Therefore, exclusion becomes a common factor in the society where a group of people due to a lack of certain capability are excluded from receiving their basic rights. Thorat and Newmen (2010) also argue in a similar line by stating that today we recognize a wide range of domains being affected by the processes of social exclusion where a huge group of people is excluded in the name of caste, race, gender, and creed. India witnessed the social ills of Casteism in which low castes were the receptacle of injustice.

Kumar (2013) stated in the Hindu social order which is anchored in the caste system excludes these untouchables forming a sequence of discrimination and deprivation. Kabeer (2000) claimed that the primary economic conceptualizations of injustice deal with the exclusion of an individual from the means of their livelihood and being denied the rights of an adequate standard of living. Therefore, in India caste is the foreground of exclusion where despite their unwillingness, groups of people were excluded from their basic rights.

Therefore, the government of India for the upliftment of this excluded group laid down a strategy that focused both on removing past disadvantages and also on protecting them from continuing discrimination and exclusion in the present through the introduction of public policies of empowerment (Hasan, 2009). However, despite these efforts of the Constitution of India, several studies show that the Scheduled Castes in India still live a life of deprivation in some corners of the country (Kumar, 2013). This argument is also substantiated by Vasanthamma (2011) who highlighted that though India has a literary tradition of thousands of years, yet a bulk of its population was scrupulously kept outside the purview of learning, reading, and writing. Even free and modern India have fallen under the clutch of politics where the huge population of Scheduled Castes are regarded as a source of vote banks and are only used by the political leaders as a piece of equipment and are still excluded.

Discussing reservation for Scheduled Castes, it has been viewed either as an opportunity or an instrument of disadvantage. Thinkers like Weisskopf (2004) claimed that there are groups within the excluded category that occupy the upper strata and get an ample amount of opportunity to exercise the facilities and corner the people belonging to the lower strata. It has also become a formal ground for politics without which the ruling party can't exercise its power (Kumar, 1992). In a similar

vein, Ramaiah (2008) argued that looking at the heterogeneity of the socio-economic status of the country, it was also speculated that only some were able to climb the ladder of the socio-economic while the rest either remained at the same position or find their position declining. Pradeep (2008) also reiterated that a section of The Scheduled Castes has climbed the ladder to garner most of the facilities proving the formation of the creamy layer within the Scheduled Castes while cornering the poor section. There are various reasons rooted in the socio-culture and economic status of the SC communities that have contributed to such partial fulfillment of reservation policies. This increasing problem may create fragmentation among the Scheduled Castes which may result in the improper implementation of reservation facilities. Consequently, stagnancy in social mobility can also prevail among a huge section of the Scheduled Castes who are unaware of the facility.

1.4. Contextualizing the Problem in Darjeeling Hills

Darjeeling is one of the 23rd districts of West Bengal, comprising four sub-divisions i.e. Darjeeling, Kalimpong (Kalimpong at present is a separate district, formed in 2017), Kurseong hills, and the Siliguri Terai. It shares an international border with Nepal and Bhutan and stretches from the plains of Bengal in the South to the state of Sikkim in the North. Darjeeling District has an area of 3,149 square km and has grown tremendously in population and household².

In terms of inhabitants, Lepchas are widely considered as the original inhabitants of Darjeeling. In 1829, the community had a small population of one hundred. Gradually a large number of people from different parts of India accumulated in Darjeeling (Dasgupta, 1999). It became a great market, for the slaves and menial classes of Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal who took refuge here (Sinha, and Subba 2003). The

²www.darjeeling.gov.in

Darjeeling district propounds a significant example of the growth of population mainly due to immigration from outside. The reassignment of the hill region of Darjeeling to the British in 1835 by the Raja of Sikkim was ensured by the development of British Darjeeling for political or military, economic, and social functions, tea plantation, and health resorts. The Nepalis, among other immigration, came to this region partly persuaded by the British to work on a tea plantation and road or building construction, and partially due to the poverty of their birthplace Nepal (Bomjan, 2008). The other prior reason for the migration of Nepalis according to Dasgupta was the domination of the higher caste over the lower in Nepal (Dasgupta, 1999).

1.4.1. Caste Structure in Darjeeling

The understanding of the caste hierarchy in Darjeeling needs to be understood against the backdrop of the history in Nepal. Sharma (1978) highlighted that in 1854 the Mulki Ain (Civil Code) presented the four-fold classification of the Nepali society based on their caste and ethnic group. He asserted that the social universe consists of *Car Varna Chattis Jat* which indicates the presence of four varnas and thirty-six castes namely *Tagadhari, Matwali, Pani Na Calne Choi Chito Halnu Na Parne* and *Pani Na Calne Choi Chito Halnu Parne*. From the beginning of the 19th century, there was a gradual increase in the number of upper-caste Brahmins and Chettri from Nepal which contributed to the growth of Hinduism in Darjeeling (Bomjan, 2008). The Nepali community was infused with social practices, which they brought from Nepal while migrating. It was a hierarchical society with caste practices extremely embedded within the social fabric. Specifically, the society was too rigid and tradition-bound. Thus like Nepal, the Nepali society in Darjeeling had also a hierarchical caste structure which is prevailing till date, however; here although the

caste structure was not divided into five broad castes but is divided into four categories which made it different from that of Nepal. Pakhrin (2013) has discussed the four divisions of the caste system found in Darjeeling which was similar to that of Nepal namely- Brahmans consisted of *Upadhyay, Sharma, Dahal, Upreeti*, etc. Kshatriyas formed Chettri, *Newar*, etc. Vaisyas like *Gurung, Mangar, Tamang, Subba, Rai*, etc. Lastly, Sudras are composed of *Kami, Damai, and Sarki*. As the Kami, Damai, and Sarki are the lower castes, Kami is engaged in the hereditary traditional occupation of blacksmithing, Damai in tailoring and music and the Sarki in shoemaking. The Terai Settlement Report of 1898 gives community-wise population in Darjeeling has been presented in the following table 1.1.

Table 1.4.1. Community-wise Population in 1898 Census

Community	Population	Community	Population	Total Population
Bhuimali and Mehter	2.9%	Limbo	1.4%	} 36,941
Bhutia	1.1%	Magar	3.6%	
Brahman	1.7%	Munda	0.7%	
Damai	0.3%	Murmi	2.7%	
Gharto	0.6%	Newar	1.4%	
Gurung	5.2%	Oraon	12.5%	
Kaibarta	0.9%	Rajput	1.4%	
Kami	1.7%	Sarki	0.4%	
Khambu	7.5%	Sunur	0.3%	
Kachh	30.1%	Yakha	0.1%	
Lepcha	2.8%			

Source: Bomjan, 2008

In terms of community-wise population, Bomjan (2008) mentioned that in 1898 out of the total Nepali and Adivasi communities i.e. 36,941, the Kachh consisted of the highest percentage of the population i.e. 30.1 percent, followed by the Shaik with 17

percent and Oraon with 12.5 percent. On the other, Yakha had the lowest population of 0.1 percent and similarly, the Sunur and Damai's had only 0.3 percent. However, the Brahmin and Kami had a similar population of 1.7 percent each while 1.4 percent was Limbo, Newar and Rajput, 2.9 percent was Bhuimali and Mehter, 1.1 percent of Bhutia, 0.6 percent Gharito, 5.2 percent Gurung, 0.9 percent Kaibarta, 7.5 percent Khambu, 2.8 percent Lepcha, and 0.4 percent was Sarki. Currently, Darjeeling has a population of 1,846,823 out of which the Scheduled Castes population is 3,17,275 that accounts for 17.18 percent of the total population of District, out of which the total population of Kami, Damai, and Sarki communities are 84,110 that accounts 4.55 percent (Census of India 2011).

Darjeeling Hills consists of a wide variety of people belonging to different ethnic groups, languages, religions, and customs. It is resided by the Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalis, plainsmen, consisting of Bengalis, Biharis, and Marwaris. It is a perfect example of the growth of the population because of immigration from outside. At present Kami, Damai and Sarki are the communities that are included in the Scheduled Castes category in Darjeeling within the Nepali community. In retrospect, as the circular for Reservation Policy was released in 1950 throughout India, the three Scheduled Castes communities of Darjeeling were not incorporated in the category of reservation policy, therefore an association was formed by the Kami, Damai, and Sarki, to claim the status of Scheduled Castes community to acquire facilities from the government within the framework of the Indian Constitution in 1956. Consequently, they were enlisted in the category and were finally eligible to avail the reservation facilities (Ramudamu, 2001).

The implementation of the Reservation Policy in Darjeeling is expected to bring changes among the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Castes. Various studies in

India show that the implementation of reservation policy has generated a gap within the Scheduled Caste communities itself and the people belonging to the upper strata of the Scheduled Caste cornered the facilities (Thorat and Senapati, 2010). Weisskopf (2004) identified increasing class inequality and the emergence of two classes of people i.e. upper (the creamy layer)³ and lower class within the Scheduled Castes. Thus evoking the research question, whether the implementation of the reservation policy has benefited the communities in general or has widened the gap within the scheduled caste communities of Darjeeling? Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the impact of reservation policy among the Scheduled Castes with a special focus on education and employment in Darjeeling. It also explores if the implementation of reservation facilities has led to any kind of social mobility among the communities. If so what are the socio-economic consequences of reservation that have been observed within the community. Has reservation generated any type of intra-caste inequality among the communities? It also seeks to examine whether reservation policy as an inclusionary measure has addressed the problem of social exclusion or not.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

Discussing exclusion, it became the subject of debate in France during the 1960'. The then politicians, activists, officials, journalists, and academics referred to the poor as *les exclus*, Rene Lenoir (1974) the Secretary of State for Social Action in the (Gaullist) Chirac Government is attributed to coining the term 'the excluded' (Silver, 2014). Hence, social exclusion is a process by which an individual or household experiences deprivation either of resources or social links to a wider community or society. In India, the most precise form of social exclusion is practiced by the

³Applicants from Well-to-do families.

institution of caste which also controls the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Castes. (Subramanyam and Sekhar, 2010). While Chakraborty (2014) held a view that when people or place goes through a series of crises such as unemployment, discrimination, low income, poor housing, and many more than social exclusion is inevitable. Thorat (2008) stated that the concept of social exclusion has been developed in social science to refer to the processes through which groups are wholly, or partially, excluded from full participation in the society in which they live. In the Indian context, the problems of discrimination of Scheduled Castes are related to the processes of caste and ethnicity-based exclusion. Therefore, the concept of social exclusion has been used in the present study to understand the nature of exclusion faced by the studied group.

Initially when the term 'social' is used it means something related to society and its organization. If society is understood as a means to lead an ordered life of a community, then the exclusion is the process of being excluded from that ordered life. The ordered life of community includes the following namely employment, education, public services, benefits and institutions, political and civil participation, access to resources, power of decision making. Exclusion from one or more of this community life leads to segregation and poverty. Hence, if segregation divided the group based on their caste, race, tribe, region, gender disability, etc. then exclusion debarred the people from including themselves in the ordered life of the community (Chakraborty, 2014). Therefore, in the circles of social science, the core features of social exclusion have an agreement with the principle indicators of social exclusion, which is directly related to social discrimination, unequal access to rights, unequal distribution of power, and inequality.

The study has conceptualized ideas of many thinkers such as Sen (2000) who highlighted various dimensions and distinctive features of social exclusion; he distinguished between unfavorable exclusion and unfavorable inclusion. He indicates that when some people are intentionally kept out (or at least left out) from participating in any form of social affairs against their will and are excluded under unfavorable circumstances it is known as unfavorable exclusion. While when these excluded were included forcibly under unfavorable terms it is termed as unfavorable inclusion. The nature of social exclusion was further distinguished into Constitutive relevance and Instrumental importance. Constitutive relevance according to him is the situation where an individual is not able to relate oneself with others and take part in community life. However, for him, instrumental importance is not depriving but can lead to deprivation such as denying the social and economic opportunity that would have helped the person in inclusion. Further, Sen has also emphasised the importance of active and passive exclusion. By active exclusion, he indicates the deliberate exclusion of people from opportunities through government policies whereas the passive exclusion works through the social process in which there are no deliberate attempts to exclude but may result in the exclusion of people from a set of circumstances (Sen, 2000; Kadun and Gadkar 2014).

Kabeer (2000) highlighted that the nature of different forms of exclusion and inclusion resulted in the segmentation of society and is characterized as privileged and secondary inclusion. According to Kabeer (2000) people who occupy the central position in the society and can influence the framing of the rules and norms with the help of whom the main decisions are made are known as privileged inclusion. Whereas when people occupy a more peripheral position and are, however, able to enjoy some privileges is known as secondary inclusion. Further, he called those

people, who may be devalued by the dominant social group, but prefer their outsider status as self-exclusion. While hard-core exclusion occurs when the principle of unequal access penetrates into the different institutions of the society. Hence, caste is one of the spheres where people experienced all of these different forms of exclusion in the Indian society.

According to Hasan (2009) exclusion leads to the denial of economic opportunities and resulting in a lack of incapability. Hence low income, low merit, or low productivity are the consequences of such exclusion and are commonly witnessed in a country like India. This is because there is no other country with such divergent social plurality-which is followed by institutionalized exclusion in India. Silver (2014) also agreed that unemployment and job statistic is often regarded to be the indicators of economic exclusion. Haan (2000) discusses two main characteristics of exclusion; first, he refers to exclusion (deprivation) related to the economic, social, and political sphere. Secondly, he believes that social exclusion implies a focus on the relations and processes that cause deprivation. For example, landlords exclude the people from access to land or housing, elite political groups exclude others from legal rights, priests in India excluded scheduled castes from access to temples, minorities may be excluded from expressing their identity, and so on. Perhaps exclusion takes place at every level in society.

The Scheduled Castes due to their caste identity also got excluded on the religious ground and Chhetri (2014) opined that religion is an integral part of the culture. Citing, Will Kymlicka Bhargava (2004) highlighted that cultural exclusion occurs when the culture of a group, including its language, religion, or traditional customs, is suppressed by the state. Therefore, attributed to this the untouchables had to face social discrimination and subjugation that preceded various forms of exclusion.

Ascribed to the nature of exclusion, the Scheduled Castes further experienced neighborhood exclusion at the societal level in which their presence was either avoided or were differently treated in the social-religious gatherings. This resulted in individual exclusion due to which some were unable to achieve good education which was followed by low skill, loss of self-esteem, and confidence. Hence some confined themselves resulting in itself-isolation and self-exclusion (Smith 2000). Therefore, caste in India has become a foreground for the practices of such exclusion.

In India where the intergroup disparities are sharply marked, with major contrast of social conditions and chances of sharing in society's material and cultural resources—that is income, employment, education, health, and so on. Exclusion of a certain group is very much persistent as in-order to exercise power forming of the group is a fundamental characteristic of human society resulting in the exclusion of another group (Haan, 2000). In this context, Thorat (2008) highlights two particular characteristics that are relevant to caste in India. First deprivation is caused by denial of equal opportunity (exclusion) in most of the spheres. Second, it is the societal relations and societal institutions through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in society. Therefore, the functioning of social institutions depends upon the degree of social exclusion of a group. Hasan (2009) also mentioned those inequalities that are rooted in the caste system, property, wealth, and employment resulting in the upper-caste being the advantaged and SCs being the poorest and most disadvantaged in India.

Sabates, et al (2007) identified six zones of exclusion from primary and secondary schooling. Zone One contains those who are denied any access to the schools, zone two included all the children who dropped out due to certain reasons, zone three includes students who are enrolled in school but are silent of the exclusion if their

attendance is low and have low achievement. Zone four contains those students who are excluded from lower secondary school due to their inability to score passing marks or unable to afford the cost or have dropped out before completion. Zone five includes those children who have entered lower secondary school but who fail to progress to the end and Zone six contains lower secondary children at risk of drop out similar to that of zone three.

Sociologically, the dominant theories cover the paradigms of caste in India, and two among such are the functionalist and conflict theory. M.N. Srinivas, one of the functionalists understood that the Indian society was a caste dominating society which assigned caste ranking order based on purity and impurity that determined the functioning of the society. In his book 'Religion and Society among the Croogs of South India' (1952) emphasized how caste is inter-related to the economic and religious functions of an individual. He highlighted how the members of one's caste are devoted to their group and maintain their integrity towards their group which helps in the functioning of the society. Moreover, it was the caste structure that determined the social opportunities, economic position, and political privilege of a group to which the upper caste always owned the social privileged (Nagla, 2008). However, over time Srinivas also discussed the changes that could be noticed in the functioning of the caste system by discussing Sanskritization in his later studies. On the other hand, conflict theorists argue that stratification in a society is dysfunctional and harmful. This is because social stratification benefits the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. Thus, it creates a system of social discrimination that ranked the people in a hierarchical order. In fact, for Marx, the central theme of the social world was located in the economic interpretation of history. Hence, in every age, the ruling class dominated the material force and at the same time also dominated the

intellectual force (Abraham and Morgan, 1985). Therefore, due to this, the conflict rises in which the war is always between the oppressor and the oppressed. On this basis, we can understand that in India one's social identity is based on birth and is ascribed in nature and is also determined by the economy as there is an intersectionality of caste and class. Then the Scheduled Castes who are placed low in the caste hierarchy have to undergo severe social discrimination because by occupation they perform the impure job that does not give them economic stability. This indicates that the Scheduled Castes had to face socio-economic and cultural discrimination that paved way for exclusion.

Comprehending further, the conceptual framework of Gramsci's (1975) cultural hegemony has also been used in the present study to understand the excluded and marginalized status of Nepali Scheduled Castes in the recent past. For Gramsci, before the ruling group resorted to direct force and compulsion, it seeks to make its rule acceptable by all which he calls hegemony. He asserted that the powerful group becomes hegemonic not only by controlling the economic means and through compulsion but also by establishing their consent. This emphasizes that before the ruling class utilizes force and coercion, it seeks to convince the proletariat with those ideas that make them consent to their subordinate position (Abdellatif El Aidi, 2017). Gramsci opined that the dominion of a social group or class demonstrates itself in two different ways: domination or coercion and intellectual and moral leadership which he later called hegemony. Social control, in other words, takes two basic forms first of all besides showing influencing behavior and choice externally, it also controls through rewards and punishments, and secondly, it also affects internally and i.e. by influencing personal opinion into an imitation of the prevailing norms. Such internal control is based on hegemony. Therefore, hegemony is predominance which is

obtained by consent rather than force of one class or group over another class. Whereas domination is realized, essentially, through the coercive machinery of the state, and intellectual and moral leadership is objectified which is mainly exercised through civil society, the ensemble of education, religious and associational institutions (Femia, 1981). Lears, (1985) pointed out that hegemony is the spontaneous consent given by the vast majority of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; historically this consent is caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. Taking credence to the concept, the study discusses how the dominant group with the high caste status by taking consent from the subjugated group dominates the group in the lower caste hierarchy as a legitimized social order. Comprehending Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony, the people in lower caste hierarchy were socialized in such a manner where submissiveness was thought to be normalized and taken for granted as a social reality. Hence, people without interrogating accepted their position and domination with consent. Being socially excluded groups for decades, the marginalized group accepted their position without question. Due to a lack of access to education and other resources, the subjugated group accepted their discriminated position and regarded suppression to be their fate and accepted it to be a reality in the Nepali society in the past.

Sociologically, for understanding the socio-economic and cultural ramifications of reservation policy of the Scheduled Castes and the changes therein, the concept of social practices of Habitus becomes relevant. Bourdieu coined the concept of habitus to refer to set of acquired patterns of thought, behaviour and taste which constitute the link between social structure and social practice or social action. He also emphasized

that semi-conscious reflexiveness of social actors enables them to have understanding of social conditions which influence and in turn influenced by their personal decision, therefore habitus is flexible open-ended structural system (Kenway and McLeod, 2004) which enables social actors to deal with the situation. Bourdieu's Habitus, therefore, accounts for how well-practiced habits bridge individuals and the wider social things of which they are part. He opined that people utilize a kind of self-automatic action of what is appropriate to certain social situations and are product of Habitus. His aim over here was to observe how individual action comes to join with society's expectations in a specific situation. It is because individuals inculcate a particular cultural pattern that is carried out in a fashion that appears spontaneous yet it is scripted and structured, unregulated yet regular. It is as if the very spontaneity of our daily behavior is always overwritten, as it were, with some kind of social unconscious which serves to harmonize our practices with those unexpressed norms and values of the wider society (Elliott and Lemert, 2014). Writing on Bourdieu, Jenkins (1992) asserts that in his emphasis upon social practices, Bourdieu is concerned about an individual's daily activities which directly or indirectly are guided by their habitus. He emphasized that an individual's habitus exist inside the head and exist because of their practice and the interaction with the other in the social environment (Sutton, 2009). In this context, if we analyze caste practices in India, then we can notice how bounded by their habitus people practiced the caste system which was accepted both by the dominant and dominator. That made the caste practices an integral part of the Indian society. Since caste has created a considerable amount of discrimination and subjugation for the Scheduled Castes (lower caste) resulting in their engagement with the occupations that have been ranked low in the occupational hierarchy. Such practice has been culturally embedded and molds the

minds of an individual which acted as an additional factor of the deteriorating social position in the social hierarchy over the years. However, the impact of educational and occupational mobility due to reservation has led to change in the habitus which gave the three communities a new socio-economic status and new social world filled with opportunities and diversification of occupation.

1.6. Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to provide foundational knowledge on the researched topic. It helps us to identify the gaps in the research, explore existing information, and provide a context in the researched area. Therefore, on this basis, the segment on the literature review broadly explores the books on caste, reservation, mobility among the Scheduled Castes, and the kinds of literature available in Darjeeling have been separately reviewed.

1.6.1. Conceptualizing Caste

The core of caste formation is located in color, an occupation that the individual follows, and the 'new belief' (Ambedker, 2008). It is a term used to describe the social relation which is comparatively different from the West (Jodhkar, 2015). Hence, if we revisit the depth of ancient religious texts and discuss the Varnas hierarchy then the concept of purity and pollution is found to be embedded in the caste system of India (Dumont, 1988). To make people understand the perspective of the caste system G.S. Ghurye (2014) in 'Caste and Race in India' deals with the problem of the caste. He gives a very inclusive view regarding caste and calls it an endogamous group. By enlisting six main features of the caste system such as segmental division of society, hierarchy, restrictions on feeding and social intercourse, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and restriction on marriage, he demonstrates the

pervasive and rigid nature of caste. He presents intricate arguments on the growth of sub-castes based on which he has examined the hold of caste in the society. Ghurye stood with the older legal tradition because for him this tradition rationalized and arranged the chaotic situation in order. However, this rationalization was based on Brahminical interest. Overall, from the book, we could understand that Ghurye did not reject the practices of the caste system and also did not agree to the policies of equality of opportunities initiated by the British.

Dumont (1988) does not regard caste to be based on social stratification but is perceived to be a system of hierarchy based on the concept of pure and impure resulting in inequality. He argued in his work how the traditional societies emphasised the notion of a whole, collective man, and how an individual put an effort to fit within the order of the society and hierarchy. He demonstrated how caste is distinguished but is connected in many spheres like marriages and contact, division of labour, tradition and professions, and hierarchy in ranking orders i.e. regarding one as superior and the other as inferior. Most importantly in his point of view, the Indian hierarchical system was based on religious values i.e. the Varnas. Overall, throughout his work, he attempts to highlight that the indigenous concepts, values, and ideas of the social groups and social facts are bound together in the social structural whole. However, his work somehow highlights the Western ideas in his comparison between status and power.

Dipankar Gupta (2000) opposes Dumont's idea of caste as a single system based on a consensual ideology of hierarchy in his 'Interrogating Caste understanding hierarchy and differences in Indian society'. He argues that any notion of a fixed hierarchy is uninformed and is applicable only from the viewpoint of the individual castes. For him, it is not a hierarchy but differences that determine the affinity of each caste to

keep its isolated nature which is true because some castes occupy the same rank in the hierarchy. He further argues that the economy and polity sets the basic rules for the behavior of caste.

Srinivas (1996 reprinted in 2014) in his collection of different essays in 'Caste it's Twentieth Century Avatar' deals with the political economy of caste, caste and women, caste and Hinduism, and non-Hinduism religious, questions related to reservations for Other Backward Classes. The theme of transformation and change links the essay. It presents a motivating opinion about the role of women in understanding caste; it gives an account of how women play an important role in maintaining the concept of purity and pollution through their active participation in occupational continuity, practices of food, ritual restriction, preservation of marriage and sexuality. Further, it deals with the relationship between caste and economy and efficiency and job reservation and gives a review regarding the backward class movement in Tamil Nadu.

Jodhka (2012) also highlights the similarly rigid ascribed nature of caste and emphasises the concept of purity and pollution which according to him determined the social position of the caste in his book 'Caste'. It further draws our attention to how under the political influence caste still exists in the country. It also attempts to explain the relationship between caste and power. He argues how hierarchy and status are different forms of power that are determined by religious identity. To be in power the dominant caste controlled the lives of the untouchables which demonstrate the relationship of power reinforced with compulsion. However, the book further explores how education, jobs, business organization, and political mobilization resulted in forming a new class of Dalits who understand and react to the issues of caste identity.

Additionally, it also emphasizes how caste has become the former ground for politics. Overall, the book introduces caste in India with its present context.

M.N.Srinivas (1966) in his book *Social Change in Modern India*, has discussed his key concepts such as Sanskritization, Westernization, and Secularization. He discusses both the cultural and structural aspects of Sanskritization. In the cultural aspect, he specifies it with the spread of certain values while in the structural aspect he refers to the movement of a certain caste from one position to another in the caste hierarchy. In short, it refers to the imitation of the lifestyle of one dominant group by other groups. The second fundamental process of Westernization discusses two levels first the meaning of the concept and second the changes that took place due to the contact of the west. These changes occurred at various levels such as technological, institutional, and ideological. Srinivas briefly gives us a sneak of how westernization influenced the life of the people residing in India. Here we can see the birth of a new elite class and see the urge for reform as well as for freedom. Sanskritization and Westernization promote caste mobility where the desire for mobility is noticed among the Backward Class. This is followed by a discussion of increasing secularization in a country like India where religion is the founding ground in every sphere. Finally, Srinivas points out how the sociologists are engaged in studying their society. Overall, the book gives us the social changes that are in vogue in India.

1.6.2. Reservation Policy- An Opportunity for Oppressed Classes

Thorat (2005) in 'Why Reservation is Necessary' claims that a fixed occupation fundamentally involves limitations on mobility. The social stigma of impurity and pollution generally reduces human capability and thus they remain economically deprived. Reservation in India is limited in public sectors, therefore Thorat in this

article discusses the necessity of reservation even in private sectors similar to that of other countries like the U.S.A, U.K, and North Ireland, etc.

On the other hand Satish Deshpande and Yogendra Yadav (2006) in the article 'Redesigning of Affirmative Action' regard the quota system to be a problem which in their point of view has not reached the different parts of rural India. Shah (2014) in 'Job Reservation and Efficiency' also reveals that the defense services are exempted from the system of reservation. He states that the court has allotted seats in the lower level of bureaucracy.

Weisskopf's (2004) article titled 'Impact of Reservation on Admission to Higher Education in India' claims that all the SCs and STs students who are enrolled in universities and institutions for professional and technical training would not get easy access without reservation. Further, he asserts that the different financial help in the form of scholarships is a major reason for the increasing percentage of Scheduled Castes in higher education.

Bhagwan Das (2010) in his article 'Moment in the History of Reservations' highlights the upcoming issues of reservation policy. He discusses the historical, constitutional, and legal moments in the evolution of reservation policy in India. The article further argues how some people to maintain their status quo have created a dominant group and have monopolized power and are indulged in practices of corruption.

Contrasting, view is presented by Jagjivan Ram (1980) in his book 'Caste Challenges in India' where he highlights the obstacle that the scheduled caste population had to face to come along with the vast population of India. He argues that even after the allotments of seats for SC's by the constitution of India, the SC's are not given ample

amount of opportunities to exercise their full rights and the non-reserved categories oppose this policy and demand seats according to economic position rather than caste.

K.S. Chalam (2007) in the book 'Caste-based reservation and human development in India' reveals the need for reservation and the present status of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes in India. For Chalam no democratic society can survive keeping a vast majority of the population away from participating in the socio-economic process. Therefore, to preserve this protocol, the Constitution of India had incorporated caste-based reservations as a way to attain it. Overall, the book deals with the socio-economic status of reservation groups and the impact of the caste-based reservation where the author has tried to gather empirical data to present the factual position of caste-based reservation in India.

According to V.A. Panandiker's (1997) reservation is one of the most sensitive issues to be discussed in India. In his book 'The Politics of Backwardness Reservation Policy in India' he emphasizes that reservation is an issue which if mishandled would create an environment of violence throughout India. So in his point of view before making policies, the policymakers should discuss and have debates. Therefore, Panandiker by bringing different views together written by different authors attempts to help the policymakers and direct them in their discussion and debate.

S. N. Ambedkar (2008) in 'Reservation Policy Issues and Implementation' summarizes the policies and safeguard granted by the government to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. It also discusses the issues of reservation in the private sectors. Further, the book also points out issues related to the issuance of false caste certificates and the emergence of the creamy layer who

although by availing the facilities managed to socially mobilize but are still unable to change their social identity of untouchables.

An individual's caste may determine his/her status of inclusion or exclusion from the society. Therefore, Silver (2014) while discussing social exclusion asserts that an individual based on their magnitude of social relation experiences social exclusion in three paradigms i.e. in solidarity, specialization, and monopoly. According to him when the social bond between an individual and society known as social solidarity breaks down then social exclusion occurs. Further, exclusion also emphasizes specialization, hence when an individual is denied freedom of participation in social exchange that exclusion in the form of discrimination takes place. Finally, when group forms then social exclusion in the form of monopoly may exist. Overall, we can observe that in these three paradigms an individual's social class, economic status, and political power play an important role.

Thorat and Newman (2010) *Blocked by Caste Economic discrimination in Modern India* is a collection of articles where the linkage between caste and society has been studied. The book explores the contemporary patterns of economic discrimination and inequality faced by the Dalits and religious minority groups in various spheres of life. Taking empirical data the book investigates the degree of discrimination in the urban labour market as well as others in the rural area. It also explores the discrimination in other areas such as education, primary health care services and fair price shops. The book by discussing case studies examines the consequences of exclusion on health status, educational attainment, wage-earning, business, etc. It is an extremely valuable resource for policymakers and activists.

Louis (2003) in 'Scheduled Castes and Tribes: The Reservation Debate' discusses how the Constitution by granting job reservation and educational facilities has divided the Indians into two camps, pro and anti-reservation. The article discusses that the group who belong to the anti-reservation points out that reservation has always benefited a section of people who are already privileged within the disadvantaged group. Further, it highlights how even after 66 years the social condition of the untouchables has not changed. The article emphasizing the socio-economic profile of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes demonstrates that even after five decades of implementation of reservation policy. Overall, the article with the help of data shows the poor representation of SC and ST in educational and government service sectors.

In 'Education for Equality case of Scheduled Castes in Higher Education' Chitnis (1972) emphasizes the role reservation played in education. It views education as a mechanism which equipped the members of Scheduled Castes with an ability to avail occupational and economic mobility. However, the article discusses how despite the remarkable rise in the number of SCs in educational sectors the percentage of the SCs in higher education continuously decreases and also discusses the issues of disparity of enrollment number of SCs in different states. It also emphasizes the poor performances of the SCs enrolled in higher education, the increasing percentage of SC drop-outs rates, uneven courses of college career and decline in academic progress. The article concludes by discussing how the policy and programme for educational development seem to have been guided less by reasoned planning than by a political and a moral sense of obligation.

Maheshwari (1997) in 'Reservation policy in India: Theory and Practices' traces the history of reservation policy in India. The article in detail discusses the different

periods of implementation of reservation policy. It also highlights the percentage of reserved seats allotted to various categories in India. The article also discusses the involvement of politics in Mandalisation. It further exhibits the extended reservation in legislature and reservation for 'sons of the soils' where it discusses how residents are given importance in their area. Finally, the article concludes by giving a critical note on reservation in its future impact and few suggestions.

Pinto (2008) in 'Reservation and Social Justice' discusses the existence of caste-based unequal society in India and the purpose of the Constitution in framing the reservation policy. The article highlights that reservation aims to enhance and widen one's access to better educational opportunities to ensure representation of all in proportionate measure. It also exhibited that if reservation is properly implemented then it will democratise the knowledge system and more people will get entry into educational institutions. It further discusses that reservation policy will not uplift all the weaker sections from their poverty status and give them equality but will only benefit few. The article also highlights the fear of the gradual disappearance of reservation policy with the privatisation of the state which is ruled by the elite. It also discusses the necessity of the much broader programme to equalize the people. The issues of religious conversion have also been discussed in the article where it exhibits that although Ambedkar's pointed out that conversion was a social and political protest against the caste system, today it has kept most of the SCs out from the Dalit fold and have only benefited the Hindu SCs. The article concludes with the discussion of including the Christian Dalits in the reserved category.

In 'Reservation without Reservation' Pradeep (2008) discusses the issues of reservation policy. It discusses how a privileged group among the reserved has been created who compete against their own to enjoy the benefits. It further discusses that

the increasing competition has resulted in the formation of 'creamy-layer' or superstructure within the caste. It also highlights that although these groups have managed to socio-economically uplift themselves but the social stigma attached to it has still not erased. The article points out that the majority of Dalits who have not got an opportunity to utilize the reservation facilities will be further marginalised and discusses if the size of the reservation does not increase the benefit will not reach the other section of the less privileged. Finally, it concludes by highlighting that the caste-based reservation will only divide the people further.

Bhattacharya (1997) in 'Reservation Policy: The West Bengal Scene' discusses the role of CPI (M) the Left Front government in West Bengal in supporting the economically neglected section of the society. It discusses how the government of West Bengal deliberately focused on ensuring adequate representation of SC and ST in the employment sector. The article briefly outlines the reservation Act and by discussing the scenario of reservation highlights that the reservation quota for both SC and ST has not been fulfilled. It exhibits that the lower job categories such as unskilled and manual have not faced any problem in its fulfillment whereas at the higher level such Group 'A' and 'B' it has never reached its remark. It also highlights how reservation has merely been politicized. Overall, the article summarized by discussing that currently, reservation has become marginally administrative and political.

1.6.3. Literature on Social Exclusion

Throat and Kumar (2008) in B.R. Ambedkar Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies explores the problems of the exclusionary nature of Indian society, constitutional reforms, political and electoral representation, share in employment and education and post-constitution reforms and policies. The book presents systematic

literature on one side along with the historical sequence. It presents Ambedkar's interpretation of the institution of the caste system and untouchability and also gives solutions to the problem of social exclusion and inclusive policies. While Arjan de Haan (2000) in his 'Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation' discusses the concept of social exclusion and draws a comparison between social exclusion and poverty. He describes that social exclusion takes us beyond mere descriptions of deprivation and focuses attention on social relations and the processes and institutions that lie beneath and are part and parcel of deprivation. Similar view is shared by Sen (2000) as in order to understand capability deprivation he draws a comparison between social exclusion and poverty. This is because for him poverty is the outcome of the lack of capability to live a minimally decent life.

Thorat and Kumar (2008) in their book 'In Search of Inclusive Policy Addressing Graded Inequality' address the problems faced by socially excluded people. The book has a collection of articles that discusses the Acts passed by the Parliament and the reservation facilities with a special focus on the higher educational institutions. It also draws our attention to the upcoming issues of the creamy layer among the excluded group. Finally, the book ends by suggesting a few inclusive policies that address the group specified problems that depend upon the nature of discrimination.

Kabeer (2000) in his article 'Social Exclusion, Poverty, and Discrimination: Towards an Analytical Framework' discusses poverty, inequality, and justice in the context of social and economic changes in the north. He classifies different categories of disadvantage which strengthen patterns of inclusion and exclusion in different perspectives. The article also focuses on the asymmetries of access entrenched in the institutional rules and norms. He looks into the different dynamics of group behavior in different institutions and finally also discusses the different forms of social

practices of social exclusion. He hopes that the perspective of social exclusion might enrich social policy analyses and draw its attention towards both the positive role that public policy can and does play in countering exclusion, as well as also discusses the negative role that it can, and often played, in aggravating it.

Kadun and Gadkar (2014), in their article 'Social Exclusion –Its types and impact on Dalits in India' discuss a different understanding of social exclusion in different countries. They examine social exclusion in context with the caste in India and also describe the different types of social-based untouchability in contemporary India. He underlines different types and indicators of social exclusion with the help of which we can understand the hold of exclusion upon the Indian society based on caste. This article further helps us to measure the result of exclusion upon the life of Scheduled Castes.

Prashant Chaudhry (2013) similarly in his article 'Caste as an Institutionalized System of Social Exclusion and Discrimination: Some Pieces of Evidence' discusses caste as being equipment of social exclusion in India and also outlines the evil facts of the caste system that discriminate and exclude people from the huge population.

To understand the different forms and nature of social exclusion Sen (2000) 'Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny' has been referred to Sen by discussing active and passive exclusion tells how an individual due to their social identity gets deliberately excluded from participating in any social activities. Whereas he also discusses how people unknowingly get excluded from certain social activities. Then he goes further by arguing that exclusion is in itself deprivation and can be important which is not negative but can lead to deprivation indicating exclusion. This is because when an individual is unable to relate to others and take part in community affairs this

can directly affect a person's life leading to deprivation and is known as constitutive relevance. By discussing instrumental importance he emphasizes how denial of social and economic opportunities may not be deprived but can lead to the process of deprivation.

Smith's (2000), 'Policy Responses to Social Exclusion towards Inclusion?' by giving an overview of the concept of social exclusion Smith starts the chapter. That is followed by various dimensions of exclusion such as social, economic, political, neighbourhood, individual, spatial and group exclusion. Then he discusses the policy responses to social exclusion with reference to the later chapters.

Thorat and Newman (2007) in 'Caste and Economic Discrimination Causes, Consequences and Remedies' attempts to precisely understand how caste affects individuals' economic lives, how the economy is interlinked with caste values and attitudes and what produces inequality and deprivation for groups based on caste, ethnicity or religion. It highlights that discrimination is a kind of exclusion which can take an active and passive form. On a market basis, it shows how a particular person can get actively excluded by not getting hired even after obtaining proper qualification due to their social identity. The article further discusses the issues of unequal wages, working conditions and denial of opportunity for gaining upward mobility. Overall, the article discusses how due to social identity an individual can get socially excluded from participating in the economic, education and social institution.

1.6.4. Literature on Social Mobility

K.L.Sharma (2006) in his book *Social Stratification and Mobility* gives us a critical review of the studies of social stratification. The essays in the volume investigate the theory, method and data used in the study of social stratification in India. It also

presents the debate of caste and class in India in connection to continuity and change. The book contains a critical evaluation of the structural perspective on caste stratification by Louis Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus*. It gives us a profile of social stratification in urban-industrial, rural, and tribal areas combined with theoretical issues and empirical realities. The book also discusses the social stratification and mobility among the Scheduled Castes by highlighting the connection between class and caste. Despite social mobility, the book also discusses the downward social mobility experienced by the Scheduled Castes. Overall, the book discusses all the important issues of social stratification in India.

Kamat (1981) in the article 'Education and Social Change amongst the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' discusses different features of social change that the SCs and STs experienced after the advancement of education during the post-independence period. It discusses how after acquiring the educational incentives they got an advantage to do away with the caste-bound occupation which accelerated the process of social change. The article also highlights the change in the inter-relationships between the SCs and the other castes in Hindu society. By discussing the problems of untouchability and caste discrimination the paper emphasizes the changing scenario of caste practices in India. While observing the changes experienced by the STs the paper explores the changing lifestyle and their interaction with the wider society.

Sethi and Somanathan (2010) in 'Caste Hierarchies and Social Mobility in India' discuss how affirmative action has succeeded in reducing inequalities in India. It highlights how in comparison to STs the SCs by utilizing the facilities have managed to uplift their socio-economic status in the society. Further, it shows how the SCs after implementation of reservation policy have excelled in the field of education, job and political representation in comparison to STs.

Karade (2007) in his study 'Occupational Mobility among Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra: A Case Study of Kolhapur City' shows a correlation between education and occupational mobility. The study with a special focus on the SCs of the Kolhapur city discusses the transition of the SCs from the Vedic period to the Post-independence period. By discussing the relationship between caste and occupation the study examines the intergenerational mobility that the SCs experienced after independence. The book also emphasizes the role of Dr. Ambedkar in uplifting the socio-economic status of the SCs. It also highlights how even after acquiring education and better economic and social status the SCs are still unable to escape from the social discrimination that exists in the society. The book also draws our attention to the drawbacks that the reservation policy is facing in its implementation. Further, the study concludes by discussing the necessity of introducing reservations in the private sectors.

The article 'Caste Hierarchy and Social Mobility in India' by Rajiv Sethi and Rohini Somanathan (2010) have documented a series of changes the Scheduled Castes/Tribes have been through after the implementation of reservation policies. A comparison is made between the growth of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in which the rate of mobility is much higher among the Scheduled Castes than Tribes. The Tribes as believed are geographically isolated and the Scheduled Castes getting more opportunities to communicate with the political groups due to which they have good access to facilities in comparison to Tribes. Therefore this article shows a tremendous growth of mobility among Scheduled Castes in comparison to Tribes.

'Caste and Occupational Structure in Central India' by Edwin D. Driver (1962) depicts how the caste system is one of the major obstetrical in occupation changes in

India. The article reveals that although intergenerational occupational mobility is one of the visible trends observed in the society. However, it draws our attention to the fact that here mobility is generally confined to occupations of similar rank. Therefore, we can observe here that mobility has a minor effect on the position in the caste and occupation hierarchy.

1.6.5. Literature on Caste system in Darjeeling and Nepali Community

Pandey's (2005) 'Culture and Politics of Caste in the Himalayan Kingdom' views caste as being highly molded by the cultural context of society and the political interest of the rulers. The article discusses the rigid caste system of Nepal that follows a strict structure of hierarchy. It discusses the rules that were laid by Mulki Ain (Civil Code) that distorted the conservative categories of the Varna system into five broad caste categories, which allowed incorporating all ethnic groups of Nepal into a new structure of the caste system.

Subedi (2010) in 'Caste System: Theories and Practices in Nepal' taking various sociological views on caste system have given an overview of the practices of caste system. By taking Dumont as a central figure the paper is divided into three sub-categories: Pre-Dumontian view of caste, Dumontian View of caste and Post-Dumontian view of caste. Emphasizing hierarchy, hereditary specialization and other features of caste the paper discusses the different dimensions of the caste system in Hindu society. The paper by taking *Muluki Ain* discusses the caste hierarchy in the Nepali society and the practices of occupational and social discrimination within the society. Finally, the paper concludes by the discussion that caste has not become completely class or replica of caste and it is not always the upper castes who are the dominant caste.

Bista (2015) in his book 'People of Nepal' studied the Nepali society in detail. Elaborately the author has discussed the different castes of the Nepali community, their culture, occupation, language, rituals, and many more. Overall, this book sketches for us the Nepali lifestyle.

Indramani Darnal (2014) in her article '*Ahakhil Bharat Nepali Anushuchit Jati Sang Ahani Mero Anubhav*' deals with the formation of the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association. Here she tells us about how the urge for individual rights united the three SC communities and their combined effort for identity among the other Nepali community. Similarly, Ramudamu (2001) in his quest for identity for the community tells us about the long run and the necessity for the formation of the association.

Sharma, (1978) in 'Nepal: Hindu-tribal interface' discusses the Hindu-Tribal relationship in Nepal. The article by discussing Muluki Ain highlights the caste system that exists among the Nepali community and the existence of the pure and impure caste. It further discusses the practices of inter-community marriages among the Hindu and non-Hindu communities. The article also discusses how the notion of blood purity and pure patrilineal descent is rooted in the belief system. Overall, here we can observe how the population of Nepal has implemented necessary changes in their caste system according to the changes of time.

Atis Dasgupta (1999) in the article 'Ethnic Problem and Movement for Autonomy in Darjeeling' wrote about how the population of Darjeeling fought for an autonomous state. While T.B. Subba (2006) in his article 'Are you from Nepal? : Interrogating the Monolithic Identity of Nepalis in India' and A.C. Sinha with T.B. Subba (2003) in 'The Nepalis in Northeast India' deals with the issues of Nepali immigrants who are

facing problems regarding their identity in India. Mona Chettri (2013) in 'Choosing the Gorkha: at the Crossroads of Class and Ethnicity in the Darjeeling Hills' discusses the search of ethnic identity of Nepalis in Darjeeling and the long fight and struggle to overcome the exploitation which they faced for ages.

The article titled 'The Gorkhaland Agitation in West Bengal' by Prabhat Datta (1991) starts with the historical backdrop of early immigration of the Nepali population and the establishment of British rule in the hills of Darjeeling. The paper further by revisiting the emergence of the All India Gorkha League in 1943 discusses the early scenario for the demand for a separate state by the population of Darjeeling. Then we see how the rise of GNLF led by Subas Ghising formulated major demand for a separate state for the Gorkhas to be called Gorkhaland. Overall, this article gives us a wholesome picture of the scenario of the agitation.

Debarati Sen (2007) in the article 'Fair Trade Organic Tea Production and Women's Political Future in Darjeeling' discusses the groups of women in the tea industry in Darjeeling who with the advantages of Fair Trade improved their livelihoods. Here a comparison between independent women who grow organic tea in their land and women plantation workers (wage laborers) has been done. It also discusses the political consciousness of the women and highlights the little knowledge that the women workers have about fair trade. However, it also exhibits the growing consciousness about their place within the larger Fair Trade movement.

D.S. Bomjan (2008) in 'Darjeeling-Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule' presents some of the flashes of the ordeals passed and suffered by the Nepali speaking Gorkha National in West Bengal. He argues that during the British period the different nationalists who took an active role during the freedom movement

enjoyed political privileges but the Nepalis who participated equally in the fight were exempted from this privilege.

There is no comprehensive literature on the caste system and reservation policy for Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling. There are scattered references about the communities and the ethnic profile in various published literature. The book which exclusively deals with the caste-based discrimination is that of Jewan Laber's (2003) '*Hamro Byakti Ra Byaktitwa*' is published in the Nepali language where he talks about the history of discrimination of the three communities Kami, Damai and Sarki of the Nepali community. He discusses how these three communities based on their occupation, eating habits, and other ritual impurity were discriminated and excluded from societal affairs. Overall this book discusses in detail the history of exploitation that the three communities faced before the implementation of reservation policy.

In 'Caste Stratification, Ethnicisation and Tribalization in the Darjeeling Hills' Thatal highlight the caste stratification of the Nepali community in Darjeeling and the issues of ethnicisation faced by the various sub-ethnic tribes. The article briefly discusses the history of migration which is followed by the caste structure in the Nepali society in general and in particular the present caste higher in Darjeeling. It also highlights issues of caste discrimination that exist in the Nepali society. The article further discusses the struggle of the tribes in enlisting in the Scheduled Tribe category for availing of the reservation policy.

The available literature till date tells us about the emergence of the caste system, Varna, Reservation policy (Dumont, 1988: Chalam, 2007: Ghurye, 2014), and many more. It tells us about how the policy of reservation has managed to bring equality among people of India and has also given an ample amount of opportunity to the

oppressed caste to stand along with the population (Subramanyam, 2010). However, these kinds of literature do not tell us about the caste flexibility that has been generated after the implementation of the Reservation Policy. Further, it does not discuss the class hierarchy within the Scheduled castes community (if there is any).

1.7. Rationale of the Study

Darjeeling District of West Bengal covers a total area of 3149 sq. km and has a population of 1,846,823 consisting of Scheduled Castes population of 17.18 percent, among which the population of Kami, Damai, and Sarki comprises 4.55 percent (Census of India, 2011). In the Nepali caste system of Darjeeling Hills, the three communities Kami, Damai, and Sarki are ranked lower in the caste hierarchy and caste-based discrimination and stigmatization were legitimate practices in the traditional Nepali society of Darjeeling hills. The caste stigmatization attached to their traditional hereditary occupation excluded them from participating in any socio-economic and cultural activities of the society. Hence, due to the restriction in occupational choice, they were economically deprived and were victims of social discrimination. Additionally, lack of educational opportunities was one of the main hindrances that made the task of upliftment impossible for these three communities. Kami, Damai and Sarki due to their caste status were called with derogatory names such as *acchoot*, *Pani muniko Jat*, *tallo jat*, *pani na chalne*, etc. and suffered inequality in the society and the caste-based social structure of the Nepali society had excluded these three communities from the basic rights that they were entitled to.

After the enlistment in the Scheduled Castes category, the three communities were finally entitled to reservation facilities that gave them opportunities of experiencing socio-economic mobility, as it granted opportunities of availing education and shifting of occupation which ultimately changed their lifestyle. The socio-economic

upliftment also has influenced the socio-economic and cultural life of the Kami, Damai and Sarki communities as reservation gave them the opportunity to break the caste barrier of occupational choice and build a new habitus that can be free from subjugation based on caste.

A thorough review of literature available on Darjeeling shows that these are mostly related to political history, Gorkhaland Movement (Datta, 1991; Dasgupta 1999), the study on ethnic identity and politics (Chettri, 2013; Subba, 2006), historiographical and geographical aspects of Darjeeling (Das and Bhumali, 2011) and many more, but so far there is no comprehensive sociological study conducted in relation to Reservation for Scheduled Castes in the Nepali community of Darjeeling hills. Therefore, the study attempts to fill up the gap and understand the impact of implementation of reservation facilities in the hills of Darjeeling.

The study is exploratory in nature and attempts to understand reservation and its impact on Nepali Scheduled Castes community, if the three communities experienced any kind of social mobility and if so, how it has impacted the socio-economic and cultural life, simultaneously identifying the facilitating and the constraining factors in implementation in reservation policy.

1.8. Objectives of the Research

The objective of the present study focused on the following objectives.

1. To explore the history of the reservation policies for the Scheduled Castes with special reference to Kami, Damai, and Sarki communities in Darjeeling hills.
2. To assess the impact of reservation with reference to their representation in higher education and employment.

3. To examine to what extent the three communities utilized the SC reserved seats and quotas.
4. To explore if the Reservation Policy led to social mobility, if so has it generated any intra-caste inequality.
5. To understand the impact of reservation policy on the socio-economic and cultural life of SCs.
6. To examine what are the constraining and facilitating factors as well as the role of the various agencies in the implementation of the policies.

1.9. Research Questions

The present study is based on the following research question

1. What is the historical background of the implementation of reservation policy for the three communities in Darjeeling hills?
2. Has reservation policy ensued high representation of Scheduled Castes in higher education and employment?
3. Has the implementation of reservation policy resulted in any kind of social mobility? If so, what is the nature of this social mobility?
4. Has implementation of reservation policy led to any kind of intra-caste inequality?
5. What is the impact of the reservation policy on the socio-economic and cultural life of the SCs?
6. Has reservation policy as inclusionary measures impacted the nature of the social exclusion in any manner?

7. What are the facilitating and constraining factors for the implementation of reservation policies?
8. What is the role of the various agencies in the implementation of the policies as well as the upliftment of the communities?

1.10. Methodology

Methodology is an organized theoretical analysis of the methods applied during the field survey. It incorporates concepts such as paradigm, theoretical framework, phases, and quantitative or qualitative techniques (Lgwenagu, 2016). It helps to understand why a particular research study is undertaken and helps us in outlining the methods used in collecting data and analyzing them (Rajasekar, et al. 2013).

The present study has made Methodological triangulation which involves using more than one kind of research method to study a phenomenon. It is beneficial in confirming findings, comprehensive data, increase validity, and enhance understanding of studied phenomena (Bekhet and Zauszniewski, 2012). Therefore, for the comprehensive understanding, the study used methodological triangulation employing multiple research methods combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study is based on exploratory research design and is undertaken to explore those areas where little is known or investigated (ibid, 2012). So as there is no research conducted till date in the concerned area hence, to have an authentic understanding exploratory research design was selected. Descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, program, provide information, discuss the living condition of the community, or describe people's attitudes toward an issue (Goundar, 2012). Therefore, in this context, as the present study attempted to

understand the implementation of the reservation policies and people's perspectives about the policies the descriptive research design was very appropriate.

Both the primary and secondary data have been used in the study. Secondary data have been collected from books, articles, newspapers, research studies, reports and policy documents, internet websites, Employment Exchange and journals, etc. The official record was collected from different organizations, colleges, and departments such as All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association, different *Samaaj* (like Kami *Samaaj*, Damai *Samaaj*, and Sarki *Samaaj*), State boards (i.e. Kami State Board, Damai State Board, and Sarki State Board), Darjeeling Municipality Office, Backward Classes Welfare Department Darjeeling, Superintendent Of Police DIB Office Darjeeling, and Census Department of Darjeeling District Magistrate office, etc.

Primary data has been collected directly with first-hand contact with respondents in the field area which has been done using a semi-structured interview schedule. The first section of the interview schedule contains the socio-economic background of the respondent, followed by open-ended questions regarding the respondents' experiences, perspectives, and constraining factors of reservation policies which is more qualitative in nature. The final section contains questions for the office bearer and the members of the organization to understand the nature of their functioning and achievements.

The study has made use of mixed-method combining both the qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative method was required with regards to the statistical indicators of population, literacy rate, educational levels, and employment from the Census of India. The data was extracted from the official data of Ministry of Human

Resource Development, School Education in India U-DISE, Education Statistic at Glance, MHRD: All India Survey on Higher Education, Higher Education in West Bengal at A Glance, Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances, and Pensions Annual Report, and Employment Exchange Statistic. The field data have also been analyzed quantitatively, the static indicators like Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), and the placement percentage of the SCs in employment provided a comprehensive macro-level scenario after the implementation of reservation policy.

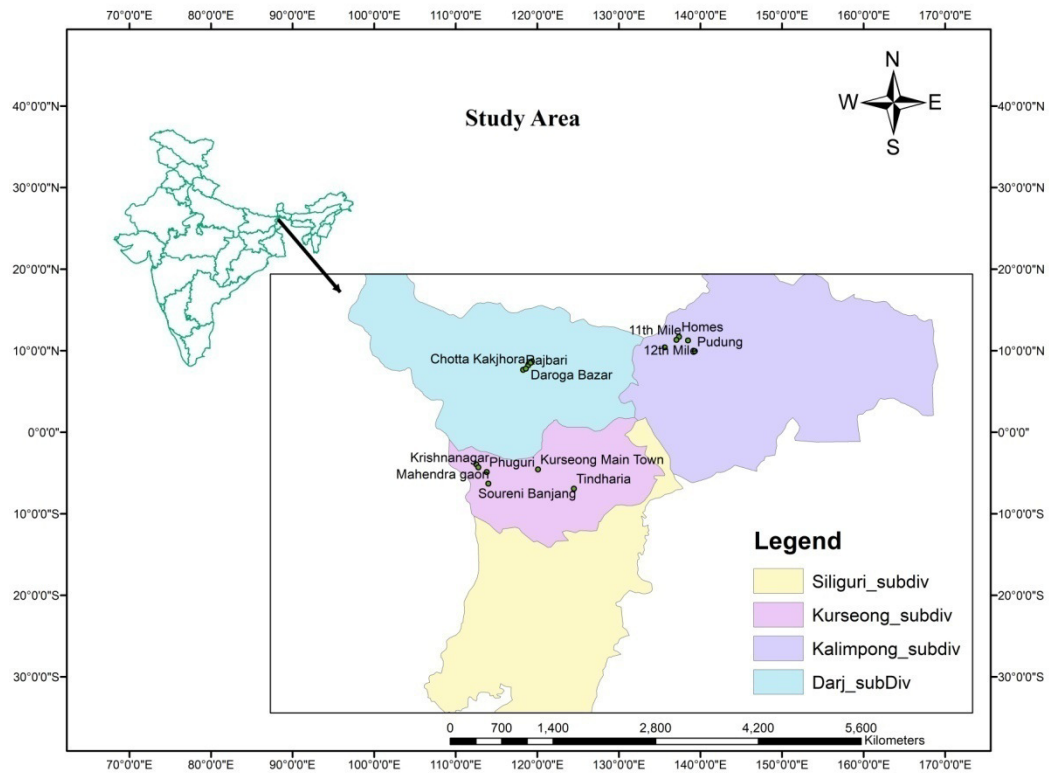
Qualitative data has been collected using in-depth interviews, case studies as well as narratives to understand the perspective of the people regarding the implementation of reservation policy and if they have experienced any form of social exclusion. Group interviews and Focus group discussion was conducted with office bearers, members of the different organizations, and respondents to understand the strategies implemented by the government and organization for the upliftment of the communities and to understand the respondents' perspective on the implementation of reservation policies. The empirical finding has been analyzed using different forms of social exclusion like unfavorable exclusion and unfavorable inclusion, active and passive exclusion, and group exclusion discussed by Sen (2000) has been used Kabeer's (2000) privileged and secondary exclusion, self-exclusion, and hardcore exclusion, Smith's (2000) economic exclusion, individual exclusion, and neighboring exclusion have been implemented. Various sociological concepts have been used with special focus on Bourdieu's (1992) social practices where habitus explains how an individual's habitus unknowingly governs our way of living and cultural capital which could be a source of social inequality this is because lack of cultural capital results in lack of social capital which is reflected in one's social status.

This idea is supplemented by Gramsci's (1947) cultural hegemony as he holds the view that it is because of the consent given by the dominant group due to which the dominant group can enjoy the power and social position in the society (Hoare and Smith, 1971). However, as Bourdieu pointed out, habitus as a flexible structure, open to change due to individuals reflexivity which enables one to learn and change and consciously incorporate in their social praxis which can bring a change in their habitus. Therefore, the study attempted to examine the way the implementation of reservation resulted in restructuring of the habitus of the three communities. Further, M.N. Srinivas's Sanskritization has also been used to comprehend the changing scenario of caste practice in Darjeeling hills.

1.11. Field areas

The location of the field areas for the proposed study is the hills of Darjeeling district in West Bengal, India which covers a total of 3149 sq. km. However, after the creation of Kalimpong district on 14th February 2017 at present, the area covers 2092 sq. km of Darjeeling and 1053.6 sq. km of Kalimpong, thus the fieldwork was conducted in both the areas. In total there are thirty-two municipality wards and one hundred thirty-four gram panchayat unit (GPU) in the hills of Darjeeling. Hence, looking at the settlement of the Scheduled Caste i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki, the fieldwork was conducted in seven municipal wards and ten-gram panchayat units. The detailed discussions and samples of the gram-panchayat unit (GPU) and municipality ward have been presented in chapter 4.

1.11.1 Location Map of the Study Area



Source: Prepared by Author

1.12. Sample Size

Since the SC population is concentrated in different areas therefore the sampled field area and respondents were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, stratified on the based variables such as age, educational level, gender, caste, area, and occupation. A total of 350 samples were collected that comprised 32 percent of Kami, 36.85 percent of Damai, and 31.14 percent of Sarki. Due to the scattered concentration of the communities variations in the percentage of the sample size can be observed. 32.6 percent sample from Darjeeling was collected from four municipality wards Chota Kakjora, 'C' Building, Jawahar Busty, and Daroga Bazaar, and two GPU Mulldara and Rajbari. Another 32.9 percent of sample represents Kurseong (Mirik) which was collected from two municipality wards i.e. Main Town (Kurseong) and Krishna Nagar (Mirik), while from GPU four areas were taken into consideration Thindaria, Mahendra Gaon, Sourani Banjang, and Phuguri. In

Kalimpong, 34.6 percent of samples were collected from Main Town Kalimpong and four GPU i.e. Pudung, Homes, 11th, and 12th Mile. The target groups for the study undertaken were the locals' who resided in the area for more than one generation.

1.13. Chapter Scheme

Chapter I- Introduction

- Chapter one deals with the overview of the thesis and presents the Statement of the Problem, followed by Conceptual Framework, Survey of Literature. The Rationale of the study is followed by Objectives of the Study, Research Questions and Research Methods.

Chapter II- Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in India

- This chapter basically deals with the Scheduled Castes' status, an overview of their rights and constitutional provisions granted to the Scheduled Castes under the Constitution of India. It also presents the macro scenario of Scheduled Castes enrolled in the educational system and employment after the introduction of reservation in India and West Bengal in general and Darjeeling in particular.

Chapter III- Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in Darjeeling

- The chapter starts with a brief profile and historical backdrop of Darjeeling. It discusses the socio-demographic composition of the district which is followed by the discussion of caste system in Nepali society and tries to locate the three communities within the caste hierarchy in Darjeeling hills. It also discusses the struggle of the three communities to include in the Scheduled Castes category. The chapter by discussing the history of education sketches the literacy scenario of the hills and also examines the literacy rate and the different

educational levels of the three communities. The chapter in detail discusses the educational schemes, scholarships and reservation facilities implemented by the government in the hills of Darjeeling.

Chapter IV- Reservation and its Impact in Darjeeling: An Empirical Analysis

- The chapter based on the objectives analyses the data collected in the field. It presents the socio-economic profile of the respondents and examines the inter-generational mobility experienced by the respondents both in educational and occupational sectors. By exploring the availability of reservation policy the chapter tends to examine the extent of use of the policy by the respondents. It also discusses the level of awareness among the respondents and their perspectives regarding the reservation policy. The chapter concludes by discussing various issues that emerged after the implementation of reservation facilities.

Chapter V- Impact of Reservation Policy on Socio-Economic and Cultural Life

- The chapter on the basis of information collected from the field discusses the impact of reservation policy on socio-economic and cultural life of the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling hills. Taking narratives and case studies the chapter especially focuses on the changing life patterns of the three communities. The chapter also focuses on the facilitating and constraining factors of the reservation policy.

Chapter VI- Discussion and Findings

- As the study revolves around social exclusion therefore, this chapter on this basis discusses the nature of social exclusion experienced by Scheduled Castes (i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki) in Darjeeling hills. Using various sociological

theories the chapter discusses the milestones and challenges faced by the Nepali Scheduled Caste before and after the implementation of inclusion policies. The chapter also discusses the major finding of the study.

Chapter VI- Conclusion

- The chapter concludes by summarizing the entire study and outlines few suggestions and recommendations for the betterment of the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling hills.

Chapter II

Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in India

2.1. Introduction

The term Scheduled Caste refers to an administrative legal category that includes several castes into the category of depressed classes based on the official acceptance of the idea of 'pollution-line', which was eventually categorised into 'Scheduled Castes', that produced a contradictory model of caste division i.e. 'touchable' and 'untouchable' (Jodhkar, 2012). Nath and Parakandathil (2016) stated that the Scheduled Castes are the ex-untouchables, who continue to follow the Hindu faith. Historically, the term, "Scheduled Castes" was first incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1935. The purpose of classification of castes as Scheduled Castes is to safeguard the interest of those who suffer from caste discrimination and to provide special concessions in the form of protective discrimination to help them equalize with the rest of the population in the process of development.

Das (2000) in recalling the history of reservation or quota system mentioned that it was initially introduced in Malta which was later adopted in India. Americans also introduced 'affirmative action' in the year 1960's intending to allocate the discriminated sections' rights. Later, other countries like Europe and Great Britain too implemented reservation or affirmative action. In the Indian context, reservations were introduced during the last decades of the 19th century. On the midnight of August 15/08/1947 the Constitution of India, framed by Indians dreamt to secure all its citizen justice in social, economic and political and as well as to formulate liberty, equality and fraternity was the main theme of the national life (Prasad and Singh, 2016).

Fundamentally, in the form of affirmative action, a percentage of seats are reserved in the public sector, state civil services, and state government departments for the socio-economically deprived groups. Additionally, a percentage of the seat is also reserved in all public and private educational institutions except in the religious or linguistic minority educational institutions for the socially and educationally backward communities (Nityanath and Melkeri, 2017). Ambedkar (2008) highlighted that preferential discrimination/ reservation policy was suggested to bring about a more equal and more vital society and was introduced to motivate the members of underrepresented ethnic communities of India.

The main objective of reservation in India was to create opportunities for the subjugated group who had suffered without any faults of theirs for ages (Pinto, 2010). In this regard, Justice Chinappa Reddy quoted: “Reservation is not a charity, it is representation.” (Nityanath and Melkeri, 2017) Accordingly, for Thorat (2010) the development of ‘Inclusive Policy’ (Reservation Policy) required two major policies, namely policy of social and economic empowerment and policy of Equal opportunity (in the form of Reservation policy). The vision of Constitution makers was to create an inclusive society that is free from the bondage of gender, class, religion, caste, region, ethnicity, and many more. Given this backdrop, the present chapter discusses the history of reservation policy for Scheduled Castes in India. Since an understanding of Scheduled Castes is related to the caste system, an overview of the caste system in India precedes the discussion on the reservation.

2.2. Caste System in India and Scheduled Caste Status

Caste as a social institution, is a hierarchical organization that comprises five categories, the four comprising-Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras but the fifth one comprises those who are outside the caste system called 'Untouchables',

'Harijans', 'Dalits' (Maheshwari, 1997). Ghurye (1932) identified that the important aspects of caste centers around the four orders in society, namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The *Rigveda* discusses the presence of three classes of society and repeatedly reveals the non-existence of the fourth class. The first two groups introduce the two honorable professions of the poet-priest and the warrior-chief. The third group mentioned encompassed the common people in general. This Veda did not state the existence of the fourth group. In the *Purushasukta*, which was one of the later hymns, we find a reference about the existence of the fourth-order of the society as originated from the sacrifice of the ancient people and was called Brahman, Rajanya, Vaishya, and the Shudra. It is believed that these four groups originated from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet of the Creator. The limbs, in particular, are associated with these divisions and the order in which they are mentioned probably indicates their status in the society (Ghurye, 1932).

Dumont (1988) highlighted the importance of 'purity and impurity' while discussing caste which divides the people into hierarchical order and is still considered to be a prevailing thought of the century. The notion of purity and impurity confined caste as an endogamous group that maintains their solidarity through strict norms lead by religious beliefs (Dumont, 1988; Ghurye, 1932) which is obligatory for every individual. Berreman (1967) mentioned that caste is a typical institution with strange consequences. He asserted that caste is believed to be one of the most rigid systems in India that bounds people with its authoritarian rules and regulation. Previously this rigidity did not allow an individual to give up their hereditary occupation and take up new occupation independently. He identified three dimensions of the caste system: stratification, pluralism, and interaction and pointed out that the caste system occurs where society is made up of birth-ascribed groups which hierarchically involves

divergence valuation, reward, and association. Therefore, in India, the dominant elite was the Brahmins formally known as the higher castes that were religiously powerful and determine the functioning of the society and made humiliation visible and adamant in the forum of caste (Guru, 2009). Deshpande (2010) defined the caste system as a classification of people into four hierarchically ranked castes called Varna. They were classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power, and privilege. The Brahmins, usually priests and scholars, were at the top. Next were the Kshatriyas, or political rulers and soldiers. Followed by the Vaishyas, or merchants, and the fourth was the Shudras, who were usually laborers, peasants, artisans, and servants at the very bottom and were considered the untouchables. Therefore, one's profession was the basis of the classification of the caste hierarchy. Similarly, Thorat (2007) discusses that the occupation and property rights of each caste are fixed and compulsory which involves forced exclusion of one caste from the occupations of other castes. In this regard, Kadun and Gadkar (2014) highlighted five different indicators of social exclusion based on caste. First, socially the lower castes were denied access to public places like temples, schools, hospitals, housing, etc. Secondly, the economic sphere where the excluded were denied access to jobs, denial of purchasing and selling of land, paying low wages, and by imposing more interest rate. Thirdly, access to education was denied to the excluded groups. Fourthly, they were also excluded from health care facilities such as proper medical aids and entrance to hospitals. Lastly, the political sphere as they were denied to exercise political power, social justice, freedom of expression, and the existence of rule of law. On the other hand, Kumar (2013) points out that the paradigm of social exclusion of the lower castes emerges from social structure justified by religion in which historicity plays a dominant role.

Contextually, Shah (2017) pointed out that every caste is a community with a name and it is not definite or compulsory for the members of a similar caste to live in the same concentrated area. They are spread worldwide in various villages and towns. They are the vertical relationship that dominates thought and is usually considered to be based on inequality throughout the century. Therefore, according to Kumar (2013) while conceptualizing the process of exclusion concerning caste he specified that it is predominantly based on ascribed features resulting in social stigmatization of certain groups.

Closely related to caste is the concept of untouchability. Davenport and Armstrong (2010) highlighted that untouchability is an ancient form of discrimination based upon caste in India. Historically the practice of untouchability has marginalized, terrorized, and relegated a section of Indian society to a life marked by violence, humiliation, and indignity. In fact, in some cases, the level of discrimination is so pervasive that some lower caste believes that they are responsible for their suffering and exclusion. Sooryamoorthy (2008) stated that untouchability refers to the humiliation imposed, from generation to generation on a particular section of the population in India. They are caste whose touch is also enough to cause impurity and pollution. They were referred as Harijan (children of God) by the social reformer Gandhi. Even Karade (2009) argues that the foundation of untouchability was laid during ancient times. He mentioned that the Manusmriti dreadfully tried to revive the golden age by re-establishing the ancient system of the Varna hierarchy.

Untouchability is prescribed and practiced as an integral part of the age-old institution of the caste. It is a very complex institution consisting of innumerable Hindu ideas rooted in pollution, purity, social units of jatis, varnas, and dharmas. The caste practices maintain their hold over the prevailing social structure and are manifest,

both covertly and overtly, in several realms of social intercourse (Sooryamoorthy, 2006). Therefore, caste is a form of social stratification promoting the system of social hierarchy, which is closed, has an endogamous stratum, abided by the rule of ascription, and contact between castes is restricted and mobility is impossible due to endogamy. These sets of restrictions form a social order and maintain its integrity. The social order was viewed by Weber and Marx as coercive which was imposed through a set of hierarchical power relations. In the social-democratic world, exclusion arose from the interplay of class, status, and political power which served the interest of the included. Social closure is achieved when institutions and cultural distinction not only create boundaries but are also used to perpetuate inequality. Those within restricted social entities enjoy their monopoly over scarce resources. This results in the formation of two groups' outsider and insider. The excluded are the outsiders who were dominated and denied access to full participation in the communities (Silver, 2014).

The Scheduled Caste status and reservation system in India derives its rationality from the prevalent caste system, the most noticeable social institution of India. Sociologically, Ghurye has termed 'Scheduled Castes' as the expression standardized in the Constitution of the Republic of India who formerly is known as the depressed classes and forms the fifth order of the four-fold society (Ghurye, 1932). The Government of India Act, 1935 read, 'the Scheduled Castes' referring such castes, race or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes, being castes, races, tribes parts or groups which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as 'the depressed classes' (Prasad, 2016). Chitins (1997) used the term Scheduled Caste as the labels that have been used to denote a particular sector of the socially and economically disadvantaged population in Indian

society. According to him, they are the disadvantaged sector, who have often been collectively referred to as the 'depressed classes' and the 'backward classes'. Besides, the scheduled caste has been referred to as untouchables, ex-untouchables, outcastes, and Harijans. Scheduled Castes are those castes named in the Scheduled Caste order of the government of India, promulgated in August 1950. Hence, a person is considered to be a member of Scheduled Caste, if he or she belongs to a caste which, is under the Constitution, and has been declared to be a Scheduled Castes for the area, for which he/she is resident. Moreover, under Articles 341(1) the President after consulting with the Governor by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribe or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes concerning the State. (2) Specifies that it is only the parliament who may by law include or exclude a caste from the list of Scheduled Castes specified in a notification issued under clause (1).⁴ Hence, there are two lists prepared by the State and the Central which may vary in including and excluding certain castes. This is because some castes in a particular region due to their socio-economic and political background may not be able to enlist themselves in the schedule. Further, Article 366(24) of the Indian Constitution states that, 'Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes or other parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the Constitution (Nath & Parakandathil, 2016: Prasad, 2016; The Constitution of India, 1950).

⁴The Constitution of India,1950 as amended by The Constitution (Ninety-eighth Amendment) Act, 2012, dt.1-1-2013

2.3. Reservation and Its Historical Background

Reservation policy has been a consequence of the British style and system of governance in India, particularly in social and economic spheres. Tripathi (2018) stated that it was the Christian missionaries who initiated adopting the cause of the lower/Depressed Classes and seeks to provide welfare for them and by the 1850s, the Hindu reformers also joined them. According to Maheswari (1997), English was officially declared as India's official language in 1836. Therefore, the State set up educational institutions in India. In 1856 a lower caste boy took admission to an educational institution in Dharwad, then in the Bombay Presidency. This encouraged a protest in the caste-ridden local society, which forced the foreign ruler to formulate a definite -policy in this regard. The policy announced admission in educational institutions to all without any distinction of caste, religion, and race. In 1872, the policy was elaborated and made clear with the passage of the Caste Disability Act. One may, thus, note that unrestricted admission of lower castes to educational facilities was the beginning of the quest for the advancement of the weaker sections of the society. Thus, in South India, educational reform preceded the reservation policy, and the leadership in this respect was provided by the various social reform movements underway for quite some time in Madras, Mysore, Travancore-Cochin, etc (Maheshwari, 1997).

According to Maheshwari (1997), historically, the old princely state of Mysore had introduced reservation of jobs in government as early as in 1874 though in a selective way: it had reserved 20 percent of lower and middle-level posts in the police department for Brahmins and the remaining 80 percent for non-Brahmins, Muslims, and Indian Christians. This measure was the first conscious attempt to break the Brahmin monopoly in the state public service. In 1882, the Hunter Commission was

appointed. According to Raj & Gokulraja (2015), Mahatma Jyotirao Phule made a demand for free and compulsory education for lower caste along with proportionate representation in government jobs. In 1891, there was a demand for reservation of government jobs with an agitation (in the princely State of Travancore) against the recruitment of non-natives into public service overlooking qualified native people. In 1901, reservations were introduced in Maharashtra (in the Princely State of Kolhapur) by Shahu Maharaj. Chatrapati Sahuji Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolhapur in Maharashtra introduced reservation in favor of non-Brahmin and backward classes as early as 1902. He provided free education to everyone and opened several hostels in Kolhapur to make it easier for everyone to receive education. He also made sure everyone got suitable employment no matter what social class they belonged to. He also appealed for classless and the abolition of untouchability. The notification of 1902 created a 50 percent reservation in services for backward classes/communities in the State of Kolhapur. This is the first official instance (Government Order) providing for reservation for depressed classes in India. In 1908, reservations were introduced in favour of several castes and communities that had little share in the administration by the British. There were many other reforms in favour of and against reservations before the Indian Independence itself (Raj, and Gokulraja 2015). Maheshwari (1997) highlighted that reservation in elected bodies began with the passage of the Government of India Act, 1909. This statute for the first time provided certain privileges for Muslims. It was the old Karnataka (known as Mysore State) where the policy of reservation in educational institutions and government jobs was first put into motion in the twenties of the century. Earlier, in 1918, the Maharaja of Mysore set up what is known as the Leslie C. Miller Backward Caste Committee to consider measures for adequate representation of non-Brahmins in the public service of the

princely state. From princely India, the reservation arrangement traveled to British India. The year 1918 is significant in this respect. The Moritagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 recognized the claims for separate representation only of Sikhs. The setup committee (1918-19) recommended the nomination of members of Depressed Classes to each provincial assembly. But the Government of India Act, 1919 was the first statute of the British Government to have provided for representation in the legislative bodies of depressed classes; Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indian, Aborigines (that is the tribes). The Government of India Act, 1935 further consolidated the policy of communal representation in elective bodies. In 1932 came the Communal Award of Ramsay MacDonald creating separate communal electorates for Depressed Classes, Sikhs, and Muslims (Maheshwari, 1997).

The reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1935, legislation by the British designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure that would incorporate the princely states. The Act went into force in 1937. The Act brought the term “Scheduled Castes,” now the Indian Government’s official designation, into use, defining the group as including “such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes, being castes, races, tribes, parts of groups which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as “the Depressed Classes,” as His Majesty in Council may specify.” This unclear classification was later clarified in “The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936 which contained a list, or “schedule,” of scheduled castes throughout the British provinces. Efforts by both Indians and British officials encouraged untouchables and the lower castes to form their organizations to call for more equitable treatment and to demand economic assistance. Ambedkar was at the center

of these activities. Seeking a vehicle to bring pressure to bear on the government to secure more resources for the Depressed Classes, he had formed the Independent Labor Party in 1936. In July 1942 he conducted the All India Depressed Classes Conference in Nagpur to establish an All India Depressed Classes Federation. Among the group's demands were those for a new constitution with provisions in provincial budgets, specifically in the form of money for education, to support the advancement of the scheduled castes; representation by statute in all legislatures and local bodies; separate electorates; representation on public service commission; the creation of separate villages for scheduled castes, "away from and independent of the Hindu villages," as well as a government-sponsored "Settlement Commission" to administer the new villages; and the establishment of an All-India Scheduled Castes Federation. When in 1942 Congress Party leaders launched a "Quit India" movement, the British, engaged in a war for survival, jailed Nehru, Gandhi, and other leaders for the duration of the struggle with Germany and Japan. Ambedkar, by contrast, supported the war effort and became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. He used his new position to advance the interests of the Scheduled Castes (Meheshwari, 1997: Tripathi, 2018).

Ambedkar was appointed member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and he submitted a memorandum 'On the Grievances of the Scheduled Castes' detailing their injustice and also demanding reservation in public services, scholarships, and stipends for study within the country and abroad. This was duly recommended by the viceroy and referred to the secretary of state, who accepted the recommendations. The scheduled castes were allowed an 8.5 percent reservation in central services and other facilities for the first time in the history of India in 1942. After the transfer of power in 1947, a drafting committee with Ambedkar as chairman was set up in India. There

were eight well-known figures upon whom the responsibility of constructing strong Constitutional guidelines was vested. They were, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Chairman), K. M. Munshi (Ex-Home Minister Bombay), Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer (Ex-Advocate General, Madras State), N. Gopalaswami Ayengar (Ex-Prime-Minister J&K, member Nehru Cabinet), B.L.Mitter (Ex-Advocate General, India), Md. Sadullah (Ex-Chief Minister of Assam, Muslim League Member), D. P. Khaltan (Lawyer), Sir Benegal Narshing Rau was appointed as the Constitutional Advisor. He later became the first Indian Judge in the International Court of Justice in 1950. Later, Madhav Rao (Legal Advisor of Maharaja of Vadodara) replaced B. L. Mitter as he resigned from the committee, D. P. Khaltan passed away and was replaced by T. T. Krishnamachar. Some members of the constituent assembly opposed the provision of reservations in favor of the Scheduled Castes (Das, 2000). In this historical backdrop, the following section deals with the arduous pathway of implementation of reservation policy and the never-ending debates on the reservation.

2.4. Debates on Reservation Policy

Reservation is a debatable issue throughout the world and all of those countries that have reservation policies have had difficulties in implementing them. India is not only the country that has implemented reservation policy. We can find it in countries like Malaysia, Pakistan, Ireland and America too (Gupta, 2000). Even before its implementation, reservation has always been a subject of controversies and contestations in India too. Discussing in the Indian context, numerous debates appeared before the implementation of this policy. The most eminent debate that took place before the completion of the policy was the debate between Gandhiji and Ambedkar (Due, 2010). Ambedkar attended the First Round Table Conference that took place in London from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1930 as a representative

of the Depressed Classes. The stand adopted by the various communities and interests, the pressure exerted by several associations of Depressed Classes in India, the near impossibility of the introduction of universal adult franchise and eventually, the attitude of the Congress and Gandhi towards the 'Untouchables' drove Ambedkar to change his stance in favor of a separate electorate for the depressed Classes (Rodrigues, 2012). Gandhiji rigidly opposed the demand of a separate electorate for the untouchables though he acknowledged them to Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Anglo-Indians (Panandiker, 1997). According to Gandhiji, there was already a division made between the Indians under the shade of religion and he believed that further division would destroy the hold of unity. Besides it was at the Second Round table Conference which was held from 7 September 1931 to 1 December 1931 that Ambedkar came to an abrupt encounter with Gandhiji (Rodrigues, 2012). However, the signing of the Poona Pact in 1932 became the initial step towards reservation. Nonetheless, Ambedkar was of the view that the Poona Pact was only designed to keep the Depressed Classes under the domination of the Hindus (Rodrigues, 2012). The Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950 which provided a blueprint of an egalitarian society that was no longer based on the premises of hierarchy but equality (Beteille, 2008). Finally, the reservation policy was granted on the concluding note of Vallabhbhai Patel he stated: "But in the long run, it would be in the interest of all to forget that there is anything like majority or minority in this country and that in India there is only one community" (Panandiker, 1997). However, even after the implementation of reservation facilities for the Scheduled Castes, the prolonged debate still continues.

Many researchers argued both for and against the reservation policy. Although this debate has always been a never-ending process few such discussions are enlisted in

the study. According to Weisskopf and Karade, the proportionate representation of Scheduled Castes/ Tribes students in higher education has gradually increased as a result the oppressed class is in a position to enter into non-traditional occupations in urban areas(Weisskopf, 2004; Karade, 2009). Pandit (2005) similarly claimed that reservation in the Indian context aims at improving the social and educational conditions of the Backward Classes and has managed to gain success to some extent.

However, some arguments discuss the negative implication of the reservation policy. Where Deshpande (2010) argues by stating that quotas of this sort have many merits but they are not essentially the best solution to all social problems. Similarly, Subedi (2013) views that affirmative action has in a way overstressed identity and created a breach among the marginalized group. Singh (1983) also discusses the problems of the reservation and reservation is commonly believed for introducing incompetence and corruption in public life and for being unjust to those excluded, they are also blamed for stigmatizing those who are designated in the higher post. It is said that reservations introduce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable to succeed without compensatory treatment. Pradeep (2008) and Indira (2011) claimed that a privileged group among the reserved group that only competes for garnering the facilities. Likewise Duskin (1967) question's that who are the actual beneficiaries of the reservation policies as he could observe the emerging of three levels of benefit groups among the socially excluded. First is the elite -benefits who are small elite within the category. These are Class I and II administrative government posts holders who were admitted to the universities and, especially, the medical and engineering colleges. The second kind of benefit was Middle-Class Benefits these consist of appointments to Class III (clerical) posts. The third kind of benefit was Lower Class Benefits for the poor. These include Class IV posts as laborers and office peons.

Hasan (2009) revealed that the caste-based reservation policy failed to represent the economic and social backwardness of the excluded groups. While Louis (2003) points out the socio-economic profile of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes which shows that there has been no marked improvement in their social condition even after five decades of implementation of reservation policies. The literacy rate of these communities indicates that even planned intervention has not improved the educational level of the weaker section. Therefore, now it becomes important for us to schedule the safeguards hence, the subsequent section discusses the safeguards granted to the Scheduled Castes by the Constitution of India.

2.5. Constitutional Safeguard for Scheduled Castes in India

According to Ambedkar (2008), the constitution of India provides several safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe, which constituted about 23.51 percent of the total population of India. All the safeguards have been provided to facilitate the implementation of the Directive Principles contained in Article 46 of the constitution which read as follows: ‘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 the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’. The Indian constitution of India has provided four kinds of reservation and has been discussed below Prasad (2016)

1. Reservation of Seats for SCs and STs in the Legislative bodies i.e. Lok Sabha, Legislative Assemblies (Articles 330 and 332).
 - i. Article 330 grants reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in the Lok Sabha (House of People).

- ii. Article 332 privileges reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in the Legislative Assemblies of the State (Pangannavar, 2014).
2. Reservation in Local bodies i.e. Gram Panchayats and Municipalities (Articles 243D and 243T).
 - i. Article 234D allots reserved seats for SCs and STs in Panchayat
 - ii. Article 234T grants reservation of seats for SCs and STs in Municipality.

The other constitutional safeguards for the SC have also been guaranteed by the following articles of the Indian constitution:

1. Article 14 states 'Equality before Law'.
2. Article 15(1) states State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of caste, religion, race, sex and place of birth.
3. Article 15 (2) mentions that 'No citizen shall, on the ground only of caste, religion, race, sex and area of birth be subjected to any disability and restriction. Article 15(4) states that no article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes or the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Additionally, Article 15(5) specified that special provisions related to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State.

4. Article 16 (4), 16(4A), 16 (4B) and 335 envisages equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. (Maheshwari, 1997; Pangannavar, 2014; The Constitution of India, 1950).

The above-discussed safeguards were implemented by the Constitution to promote social equity and unity among the vast population of India. There are various provisions listed for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste however, the section will focus mainly on education and employment as the variable to see the representation of Scheduled Caste. Therefore, the upcoming section gives an overview of the macro-level scenario of the educational and employment status of the Scheduled Castes after the implementation of reservation policy in India.

2.6. Locating SC in Education and Employment in India: Selected Indicators

According to Omvedt (2004), access to education has been a focal point in their struggle for equity and social justice for Scheduled Castes. Movements to abolish the caste system and end discrimination have always proposed education as the primary means to overcome caste oppression. However, historically SCs have traditionally been denied education, and if those who have got access to education have experienced very limited social mobility due to caste-based opposition to their occupational mobility. Similarly, the caste-based ideology of hereditary occupations imposed the most low-status occupations on Scheduled Castes and has determined the socio-economic life of these communities (Jefferey, et al 2002). Education is the best technique for the destruction of social injustice done to the Scheduled Castes. Hence, endeavour ought to be made for the spread of education among them. However, the low socio-economic status of the state of the Scheduled Castes proves to be the major barrier. If they are allocated with professional and monetary help then the chances of

upliftment would be more that will ensure inclusion of the socially excluded groups in society and allow them to climb the hierarchical social status of the society.

Nazimuddin (2014) highlights the importance of education as it depends on the proper development of an individual. He states that the inactive qualities and potentiates of a person enable them to understand themselves and the environment around them. Hence, education sharpens the intellect, widens the vision, helps in the wholesome and balanced development of an individual, and above all it leads to the social, economic, and political development of a nation. Similarly, Schultz (2009) in the human capital theory regarded education as an investment in human beings and claimed it as an important source of economic growth. According to the theory, education transforms immature human beings into productive 'human capital' by imparting knowledge and installing skills required by both the traditional sector and the modern sector of the economy and makes individuals more productive members of the society, not only in the economic institutions but also in the households and also in the whole society (Jana, 2017). Likewise, Parsons (1959) discusses how the school days functions to internalize an individual with both the commitments and capacities for successful performance in their future adult roles and second how the school day acquaints an individual within the role-structure of the adult society. Hence, education is the social equipment of inclusion that trains an individual to mold themselves according to the social structure of the society.

In the Indian context, there are huge sections of the population who belongs to the socially excluded category, who due to their socio-economic disability could not pursue education, therefore, the Constitution of India implemented inclusive policies in the form of reservation and scholarship facilities to include them within the society which is discussed in the upcoming section.

2.7. Educational Schemes for Scheduled Castes

The Scheduled Castes Development (SCD) Bureau with an aim to encourage the welfare of Scheduled Castes introduced various scholarship schemes and hostel accommodation. The Scholarships are provided both at the pre-matric and post-matric level. Additionally, scholarships are also provided for pursuing higher education in India and abroad (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India). The following section contains detailed information about the scholarships in India and West Bengal:

1. Pre-Matric Scholarship for classes IX and X: The scholarship is provided by the Government of India and is implemented by the State and Union Territories. The motive of the scheme is to reduce the drop-out rate of the students enrolled in classes IX and X by financially assisting them. The day scholar students receive an amount of Rs. 225/- per month (p.m) for ten months and also receive Rs. 750/- per annum (p.a) for books and Ad-hoc grants. While the Hosteller is given Rs. 525/- per month for ten months and Rs. 1000/- for books and Ad-hoc grants.
2. Post-Matric Scholarship to SC/ST: Financial assistance is provided to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students studying at post matriculation or post-secondary stages for 10 months. The income ceiling limit of Parents / Guardians has been raised to Rs. 2.5 lakh p. a. for SC. Since scholarship is given for the study of various recognized post-secondary courses in recognized educational institutions, the maintenance allowance for different courses varies. For instance, the students residing in the hostel of the Medical, Engineering, Technology, Architecture, Design, are given an allowance of Rs. 1200/- p.m. and the day scholars are given Rs. 550/- p.m. The hosteller of

General Courses leading to Degree, Diploma, Certification in the area like Pharmacy, Nursing, other Paramedical branches receive a monthly amount of Rs. 820/- while the day scholars receive Rs. 530/- p.m. On the other hand, the B.A/ B.Sc/ B.Com/ M.A/ M.Sc/ M.Ed/ M.Pharma Hostellers receive a monthly amount of Rs.570/- and Day scholars receive Rs.300/- p.m. Similarly, the post-matriculate students residing in the hostel receive Rs.380/- p.m. while the day scholars receive Rs.230/- p.m.

3. Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana, 2008: This is a Centrally-sponsored scheme of hostel for Scheduled Caste girls and boys. The scheme of construction of hostels is one of the means to enable and encourage SC students to attain quality education. The scheme grants 50 percent assistance for boys and 100 percent assistance for girls in SC / ST dominated areas. Post Matric Students of different Schools/Colleges can be accommodated here.
4. Sikshashree is a new scheme in West Bengal which was introduced by merging the existing schemes of Book Grant and Maintenance grant and was implemented in 2014-15. The scheme was launched for Scheduled Caste day scholars' students who are enrolled in classes V to VIII in Government / Government aided schools. The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to increase the participation of SCs in the Pre-metric stage and also minimize the drop-out rates. An amount of Rs. 750/ -per annum is given to the SC student from classes V-VII and Rs. 800/- per annum to Class VIII. However, the students whose family has an annual income of more than Rs. 36,000/- are not regarded eligible to avail this scholarship.

5. Hostel grants for SC/ST students residing in School attached Hostels: Each student of the Hostel gets Rs. 750 /- p.a. for 10 months during the academic year. The criterion of the income ceiling is Rs. 36,000/- p.a. These hostels are attached to the Junior High or Secondary School, run and managed by the respective school authorities. There are at present, more than 1522 schools attached hostels in West Bengal.
6. Ashram Hostel: Ashram Hostels provides accommodation for SC/ST boy and girl students within the campus of the recognized schools. Students reading in Class I to X are eligible to get admission as per the availability of seats. The students are paid Rs. 750/- per month for 12 months. In addition to that, they are given coats, bedrolls, garments, soap, and kerosene. There are at present 98 hostels in West Bengal.
7. Merit Scholarship Schemes is meant for students reading in Classes IX to XII and V to X. The State Government runs two types of schemes (1) Merit Scholarship Scheme is for SC girl students who are studying in classes V to X on their own. They get monthly scholarships of Rs.100/- in classes V and VI, Rs.125/- from class VII to VIII, and Rs.150/- in classes IX to X. However, their parents/guardian's yearly income ceiling should not exceed Rs. 60,920/- p.a. (2) Merit Scholarship Scheme is for SC/ST students reading in classes IX to XII. They are given monthly scholarships of Rs. 400/- and here the yearly ceiling amount of the parents/guardians is Rs. 36,000/-. Under this quota, 790 students belonging to the SC category can avail this scheme.
8. Scholarship for up-gradation of Merit for Students reading in Classes IX to XII: This scheme has been introduced to remove deficiencies in school

subjects. Especially under this scheme, the SC students are prepared for competitive examinations so that they can get admission in professional courses particularly Engineering and Medicine. Under this scheme, the quota granted for SC is 368 where they are allotted a yearly amount of Rs. 15,000/- which is divided in the following order i.e. boarding & lodging facility of Rs. 5,000/- for 10 months, pocket money of Rs. 1000/-for 10 months. Additionally, an annual grant of Rs. 2000/- for books & stationery and allowance to Principal, expert & other incidental charges of Rs. 7,000/- is also given.

9. Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students, 2010. The government of India launched a Central Sector Scheme, named RGNF during the financial year 2005-06 to increase the opportunities to SCs for pursuing higher education leading to degrees such as M.Phil. and Ph.D. the scheme comprises 2,000 fellowships (Junior Research Fellowship) per year to the Scheduled Castes students. The scheme covered all universities/ institutions recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and are implemented by UGC itself on the pattern of the scheme of the UGC Fellowship.

10. National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Castes: The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to support the financially constrained students to go abroad and pursue higher studies such as Master or Ph.D. 100 scholarships are issued by the Government of India in which 30 percent is allotted to the female applicant. The duration of the award for a Ph.D. is 4 years and Master in 3 years. An annual maintenance allowance of US \$15,400 has been allotted for all levels of courses. While in the UK a

grant of £9,900 has been prescribed. Additionally, \$1,500 and £1,100 of contingency are also given in the respective country. The government even provides incidental journey allowances of \$20. The students also receive the actual fee of VISA, poll tax, air travel, and local travel. These scholarships and reservations as discussed above have a procedure and criteria that need to be fulfilled.

However, to understand the representation of Scheduled Castes in educational institutions we need to examine the backdrop of school education. Therefore, the following section deals with the different school systems in India and West Bengal.

2.8. School Education

School education in India has five important stages they are namely primary, upper-primary, elementary, secondary, and higher secondary. The Primary stage consists of the official age group of 6-10 years and includes classes from I-V. The Upper-Primary comprise classes from VI-VII and the age-group belonging to this stage is 11-13 years. Elementary encompasses classes from I-VIII and contains the age group of 6-13. The Secondary stage includes classes from IX-X and belongs to the age group of 14-15. The last stage is higher secondary which comprises classes from XI-XII with age-group of 16-17. However, the above-mentioned age groups are slightly flexible in enrollment. Table 2.8 presents the percentage of schools by category in India and West Bengal.

Table 2.8. Percentage of Schools by Category

Schools	India Percentage	West Bengal Percentage
Primary only	55.21	80.12
Primary with Upper Primary	18.63	1.50
Primary with Upper Primary & Secondary & Higher Secondary	2.70	0.63
Upper Primary only	9.69	7.73
Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	2.35	6.56
Primary with Upper Primary & Secondary	3.24	0.38
Upper Primary with Secondary	3.45	3.06
Secondary only	2.47	----
Secondary with Higher Secondary	1.49	----
Higher Secondary only	0.86	0.01
All School	1522346/100	95736 (6.28%)/100

Source: U-DISE 2015-16

According to the information of U-DISE 2015-16, of West Bengal which 95,736 school accounts to 6.28 percent of total school in India and has the highest percentage of primary school of the total school with 80.12 percent which is comparatively more than the nation's percentage i.e. 55.21 percent. Similarly, the percentage of Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary schools is also high with 6.56 percent which is more than India's percentage i.e. 2.35 percent. However, as per the report, the percentage of other schools like Primary with Upper Primary & Secondary and Upper Primary with Secondary is relatively low in comparison to the national percentage. The lowest percentage of 0.01 percent is recorded in West Bengal in the Higher Secondary School whereas in India the total percentage in this level is 0.86 percent. The disparity is also recognized in the Primary with Upper Primary School was the percentage recorded in West Bengal is 1.50 percent while throughout the nation there is 18.63 percent of Primary with Upper Primary school.

2.8.1. Literacy Rate of All Social Groups, SC and ST Population (1961-2011)

(Figures in percentage)

Year	All Social Groups	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes
1961	28.3	10.27	8.53
1971	34.45	14.67	11.30
1981	43.57	21.38	16.35
1991	52.21	37.41	29.60
2001	64.84	54.69	47.10
2011	72.99	66.07	58.96

Source: Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, 2013

Table 2.8.1 exhibits the literacy scenario of All Social Groups, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India from 1961 to 2011. As the decade passes a continuous growth of literacy rate could be observed among all the categories. We could notice that the literacy growth rate was comparatively high among the SCs and STs than the All Social Groups. For instance, in 1991 it was 37.41 percent of literacy rate recorded among the SCs which increased to 54.69 percent by the year 2001. Similar trend was observed among the STs. in 1991, it was 29.60 percent of literacy rate recorded which increased to 47.10 percent by 2001. Whereas, among the All Social Groups the literacy rate documented in 1991 was 52.21 percent which increased to 64.84 percent by the year 2001. This growth can be observed as the result of the growing awareness among the SCs and STs regarding the importance of literacy. Additionally, affirmative action by the government has also played an important role to push SCs and STs towards achieving this growth rate.

2.8.2. Gross Enrolment Ratio

UNESCO defines Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) as the total enrolment of students in a specific level of education, regardless of age such as primary, upper primary,

secondary, higher secondary, and higher education. It also indicates a percentage of the eligible official age of the population i.e. 5 years

Table 2.8.2. Gross Enrolment Ratio of Scheduled Castes in India

Year	Primary	Upper Primary	Elementary	Secondary	Senior Secondary	Higher Education
2011-12	122.6	90.5	108.2	73.7	48.2	14.9
2012-13	116.8	99.7	110.8	N.A	NA	16.0
2013-14	113.0	98.3	107.7	78.7	50.5	17.1
2014-15	119.9	101.0	108.0	82.7	54.3	19.1
2015-16	110.9	102.4	107.9	85.3	56.8	19.9

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development 2018

India's primary level gross enrolment ratio is never stagnant as we could see that in 2011-12 the recorded GER of Scheduled Castes shown in Table 2.8.2 is 122.6 percent which decreases to 110.9 percent in 2015-16. Similar fluctuation is noticed in elementary education were in 2011-12 the percentage of SC enrolment is 108.2 percent which decreased to 107.9 percent. However, we can observe that the percentage of GER has exceeded 100 percent due to the inclusion of over-age and under-age students, because of early or late school entrance or grade repetition.⁵ We can also notice that as the level increases the percentage of students' enrolment in higher education decreases i.e. in 2015-16 the GER of the primary level recorded was 110.9 percent while in the same year the GER of higher education was 19.9 percent.

2.8.3. Net Enrolment Ratio

According to UNESCO Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is the total number of students in the official age-group at a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as

⁵World Data Atlas

a percentage of the corresponding population.⁶ The scenario of school-level education in terms of Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is presented in Table 2.8.3.

Table 2.8.3. Net Enrolment Ratio of School in India and West Bengal

Country/State	Primary (I-V)		Upper-Primary (VI-VII)		Elementary (I-VIII)		Secondary (IX-X)		Higher Secondary (XI-XII)	
	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
India	87.41	87.30	72.48	74.74	88.45	88.94	48.46	51.26	32.68	32.30
West Bengal	90.96	94.02	77.45	81.30	94.28	96.86	46.36	52.35	31.71	31.11

Source: School Education in India U-DISE 2015-16

Table 2.8.3 demonstrates that the NER in schools in India and West Bengal. In all India scenario, NER in all the levels of education has remained more or less stagnant between 2014-15 and 2015-16 except in the secondary level where with 51.26 percent the NER shows an improvement in 2015-16. In case of West Bengal NER presents better scenario than corresponding all India figures at the elementary level and secondary level. However, the lowest percentage of 31.11 percent of enrolment could be noticed in the Higher Secondary level in 2015-16 which is marginally lower than the all India figure. Despite many initiatives by the government of India in the form of numbers of educational schemes to decrease the drop-out percentage in high school levels, the data shows that only a little more than 50 percent in 2015-16 managed to reach the secondary level in the Indian context and WB. Moreover, we can also observe that with the increase in the educational level the percentage of student's enrolment shows a declining trend in India and West Bengal. After examining enrolment at all India and West Bengal it is pertinent to examine the scenario of

⁶UNESCO Institute for Statistic

educational attainment of Scheduled Caste. Table 2.8.3 exhibits social category wise enrollment of students in different school level.

Table 2.8.4. Age-wise Education Attainment of Population of India and Scheduled Castes

							(In Thousand)
Age	2015		2016		2017		Corresponding level of Education
	All Categories	SC	All Categories	SC	All Categories	SC	
6-10	1,30,401 82.18%	23,248 17.82%	1,30,155 82.17	23,212 17.83%	1,29,942 82.17	23,175 17.83%	Primary (I-V)
11-13	73,614 82.35%	12,996 17.65%	72,827 82.34%	12,867 17.66%	72,071 82.33%	12,740 17.67%	Upper-Primary (VI-VIII)
14-15	49,363 82.49%	8,646 17.51%	48,928 82.49%	8,569 17.51%	48,512 82.5%	8,493 17.50%	Secondary (IX-X)
16-17	44,386 82.86%	7,611 17.14%	44,041 82.88%	7,543 17.12%	43,713 82.9%	7,476 17.10%	Sr. Secondary (XI-XII)

Source: Education Statistic at Glance 2015-16

In Table 2.8.4 the total number of students is scaled as 1000 per student. The Table shows the representation of students in the different levels of school. While analyzing the data from 2015-17 in the age-group of 6-10 to 16-17 years enrolled in primary to secondary level percentage remain more or less stagnant with 82 to 83 percent with very marginal increase in all categories. Among SC, the figure remains stagnant. Also, we can observe that the percentage of students in all the categories, as well as SC, has remained more or less stagnant. The level increases for example in 2017 the total percentage of SC represented in Upper Primary Level is 17.67 percent which decreased to 17.50 percent in Secondary Level and consecutively in Sr, Secondary Level the percentage decreased to 17.10 percent. Similar pattern is observed among All Categories. It appears that the All Categories students' representation in all the different levels of school does not exceed 82 percent. Similarly, among the Scheduled

Caste's it does not exceed 17 percent. Researchers like Chitnis (1972) and Pandit (2015) while discussing the scenario of SC representation in school points out the high rate of drop-outs to be one of the reasons for no increment in the percentage of SCs at the school level. Overall the table presents an average representation of Scheduled Caste students in school levels, to gain equality one needs to pursue Higher Education for which it is important to acquire school education. Hence after reviewing the educational scenario at the school level the next section focuses on the scenario of Higher Education in India.

2.9. Reservation and Higher Education

Reservation or quotas have been an integral part of the Indian higher education system. Over the year many students from reserved categories, especially those belonging to Scheduled Castes and other socially excluded groups, have been admitted to reputed universities and colleges of India with the help of quota. Therefore, in the context of the Indian higher education system, it means that a set percentage of seats are reserved in all universities and colleges for students who are socially and educationally backward or belong to different categories such as SC and ST. As per guideline issued by the Government of India, Department of Personnel and Training, New Delhi (Vide O.M. No. 36012/2/96-Estt (Res.) dated 2nd July 1997), the UGC grants posts and admission based on the rooster. The grant provides reservation of 15 percent to Scheduled Castes, 7.5 percent for Scheduled Tribes, 27 percent to Other Backward Classes and 4 percent for Persons with Disabilities in the matter of teaching and non-teaching posts as well as in admissions to all level courses except in Minority Institutions under Article 30(1) of the Constitution. It provides 5 percent relaxation to SC/ST and Persons with Disability (PWD) candidates during admission and in the appointment to the post of Lecturer/Assistant Professor and equivalent post

in Universities and Colleges at the Graduation level. The State Universities including its affiliated/constituent colleges and other institutes functioning within the State can follow the percentage of reservation for SC/ST as prescribed by the State Government. The UGC also contributes towards social equity and social-economic mobility of the underprivileged sections of the society through special coaching schemes in Universities and Colleges. There is a provision for remedial coaching for SC/ST/OBC and other socially excluded students for National Eligibility Test (NET)/ State Eligibility Test (SET) and entry in services. Equal Opportunity Cells in Universities/College are also introduced to address issues related to the staff and students belonging to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes, minorities, Persons with Disability, and Women. It aimed to empower the persons with disabilities, help students participate in the academic activities, and to ensure access of all in the social and cultural life of the universities. (University Grant Commission SCT section).

2.10. India Higher Education Institution

India's higher education system is the third-largest in the world, next to the United States and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission. The degree-awarding institutions that came under UGC Universities which was established by a Central Act. The Institute of National Importance is established by Act of the Parliament and declared as Institution of National Importance such as All Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), National Institute of Technology (NIT). The State Public University is established by a Provincial Actor by a State Act. State Open University imparts education exclusively through distance education in any branch or branches of knowledge. State Private University is recognized through a State/Central Act by a sponsoring body viz. a

Society registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, or any other corresponding law for the time being in force in a State or a Public Trust or a Company registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. Deemed University refers to a high-performing institute, which has been declared by the Central Government under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956 (AISHE 2018-19).

Table 2.10.1. Universities in India & West Bengal

Type	Year	India	WB
Central University	2017-18	45	1
	2018-19	46	1
Institute of National Importance	2017-18	101	6
	2018-19	127	7
State Public University	2017-18	351	25
	2018-19	371	25
State Open University	2017-18	14	1
	2018-19	14	1
State Private University	2017-18	262	9
	2018-19	304	10
Deemed University	2017-18	80	1
	2018-19	80	1
Grand Total	2017-18	903	43
	2018-19	993	45

Source: AISHE 17-18 & 18-19

Table 2.10.1 shows a considerable increase in the number of universities in India within a year. The number of universities recorded throughout India in 2017-18 was 903 which has increased to 993 in 2018-19. Similarly in West Bengal, with the establishment of 2 more universities namely the Institute of National Importance and State Private University, the total number increased from 43 to 45 within the same year. There has been a considerable increase in the number of State Private University

which has increased from 262 in 2017-18 to 304 in 2018-19 in all over India. Whereas in West Bengal there has been an addition of one more State University within a year. The Institution of National Importance (101 to 127) and the State Public University (351 to 371) also shows a noticeable increase in India from 2017-18 to 2018-19. Overall India witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of higher education institutions within a year.

On this backdrop, it is important to examine how the various categories have responded to the increase in the educational institution. Table 2.10.2 presents the social category wise enrollment of higher education in India.

Table 2.10.2. Social category wise Higher Educational Enrolment in India (2014-15 to 2018-19)

Year	General	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribe	Other Backward Classes
2014-15	48.8	13.5	4.8	32.9
2015-16	47.4	13.9	4.9	33.8
2016-17	46.1	14.3	5.2	34.4
2017-18	45.9	14.3	5.2	34.7
2018-19	43.3	14.9	5.5	36.3

Source: AISHE 2018-19

According to the AISHE report of 2018-19, in the SC category, there has been marginal increase in enrollment from 13.5 percent in 2014-15 to 14.9 percent in 2018-19 which is proportionate to the reservation at the central level. In case of ST, it could be observed that the highest percentage of 5.5 percent was enrolled in 2018-19 which is below the allotted quota i.e. 7.5 percent. Whereas, in the case of Other Backward Classes (OBC) the highest percent of 36.3 percent of enrolment is observed in 2018-19 this is more than the allocated 27 percent of quota. However, the figure also

demonstrates the decreased from 43.3 percentage of enrolment of the general category in 2018-19 from 48.8 percent in 2014-15. Therefore, while comparatively analyzing the percentage, we can observe that in the OBC category the percentage exceeds the allotted 27 percentage indicating positive trend. While a decline could be noticed among the General category. Whereas the ST category was still unable to fillup the allotted 7.5 percent, however, the SC category with 14.9 percent in 2018-19 shows an improvement from 13.5 percentage in 2014-15 indicating filling of the reservation quota. To supplement the above information the subsequent section presents the all India scenario of the category-wise enrolment of students in the various types of universities.

Table 2.10.3. Category-wise Enrolment in various types of Universities

Type of University	Category	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Central University	All Category	719418	723679	704582
	SC	12.43%	12.23%	13.81%
Central Open University	All Category	815946	861275	1035081
	SC	8.61%	11.23%	12.72%
Institute of National Importance	All Category	196664	203197	228431
	SC	13.49%	13.61%	13.33%
State Public University	All Category	2761335	2596633	2387604
	SC	11.74%	12.75%	12.73%
State Open University	All Category	1080812	1090083	1174747
	SC	14.47%	13.40%	12.85%
State Private University	All Category	768389	1035729	1157093
	SC	7.17%	6.97%	7.21%
State Private Open University	All Category	26	26	----
	SC	----	----	----
Institute under State Legislature Act	All Category	3669	3709	5115
	SC	15.09%	13.64%	9.18%
Deemed University Government	All Category	44159	42921	37496
	SC	7.46%	6.07%	9.44%
Deemed University Government Aided	All Category	69901	55994	59720
	SC	10.38%	10.17%	10.70%

Deemed University Private	All Category	611965	652151	696926
	SC	0.38%	4.19%	5.48%
All India	All Category	7072284	7265397	7486795
	SC	10.69%	11.02%	11.3%

Source: AISHE 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19

According to the UGC norms, 15 percent of reservation is granted for the Scheduled Caste candidates in India. Table 2.10.3 shows the enrollment of All categories and SC in the various institutions of Higher Learning in India that none of the universities has been able to meet the criteria of 15 percent quota. The Institute under State Legislature Act in 2016-17 which had an encouraging picture of 15.09 percent of SC in 2016-17 decreased to 13.64 percent in 2017-18 which declined further by 9.18 percent in 2018-19. However, one positive indication is that in all categories of the universities except State Open University and Institute under State Legislature Act the SC enrollment shows a steady increase although marginally. On the other, the information also demonstrates an increase in the percentage of Scheduled Caste candidates' enrolment in some universities like Central Universities wherein 2016-17 the enrolled percentage of SCs was 12.43 percent that increased to 13.81 percent by the year 2018-19. Similar rise was observed in other universities such as Central Open University with 8.61 percent in 2016-17 that increased to 12.72 percent in 2018-19. Deemed University Government also experienced an increment of 9.44 percent in 2018-19 from 7.46 percent in 2017-18. In Deemed university government aided the percentage of SC enrolment has remained more or less static with the marginal increase from 10.38 percent to 10.70 percent. Whereas in Deemed University Private a noticeable increase from 0.38 percent to 5.48 percent has been observed

On the contrary, there are some universities like State Private University where the percentage of SC enrolment decreased from 14.47 percent in 2016-17 to 12.85 percent

in 2018-19 Overall a comparative analysis of the categories reveals that there are still numbers of Scheduled Caste seats that are unfulfilled in higher education institutions. As the all India figure for SC enrolment has remained more or less stagnant with a marginal increase from 10.69 percent to 11.3 percent in the intervening period.

2.11. Higher Education Scenario in West Bengal

According to Jana (2017) historically the modern education system in West Bengal started in 1817 with the establishment of Hindu College with the joint effort of David Hare and Rammohan Roy and is now known as Presidency College. After the establishment of this college, notable attempts were made by two agencies the Government and the Christian Missions to expand the higher education system in the state. In 1869 Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar founded the Metropolitan institution and is still known as Vidyasagar College in Kolkata. He further claimed that the state of West Bengal, had played an important role in expanding all types of education throughout the country may it be mass education and culminating in higher, professional, and specialized education. For ages, the state has always tried to excel in the field of education nationally and internationally (Statistic Annual Report 2015-16). In this backdrop, the present section attempts to examine the growth rate of higher education institutes after independence in WB.

Table 2.11.1. Types of Universities in West Bengal

Category	Number of Universities
State-aided University	21
State Specialised University	06
Deemed University	01
Central University & Institution of Higher Learning	08
Private University	10
Total	46

Source: Higher Education in West Bengal at A Glance, 2019

As per the AISHE 2018-19, the total number of Universities in West Bengal (presented in Table 2.10.1) was 45. However, according to the report of Higher Education in West Bengal Table 2.11.1 shows at present (i.e. by 2019) the total number of Universities in West Bengal is forty-six. This included 21 State-aided University, 6 State Specialised University, 1 Deemed University, 8 Central University & Institution of Higher Learning, and 10 Private University. The above-classified Universities are further divided into 20 state-aided universities like the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, Burdwan University, North Bengal University, and others. 1 Central university i.e. Visva-Bharati University, 6 State Special University like Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya, The West Bengal National University of Juridical Science, West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences and The West Bengal University of Health Sciences. 1 Deemed University namely Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University and 10 Private University like Techno India University, Seacom Skills University, Adamas University, Neotia University, University of Engineering and Management, JIS University, Amity University, Brainware University, Sister Nivedita University, and St Xavier's College (Autonomous). Table 2.11.2 presents the course-wise and stream-wise distribution of the number of colleges in West Bengal.

Table 2.11.2. Specialization-wise Number of Colleges in West Bengal

Sl. No.	Name of Specialization/Course	Number of Institute 2016-17	Number of Institute 2018-19
1.	General	727	783
2.	Arts	10	11
3.	Commerce	1	1
4.	Computer Application	12	12
5.	Education/Teacher Education	231	325

6.	Engineering Technology	72	73
7.	Fine Art	7	7
8.	Hotel & Tourism Management	6	5
9.	Law	22	23
10.	Management	27	26
11.	Medical-Allopathy	23	23
12.	Medical-Ayurveda	4	4
13.	Medical-Dental	3	5
14.	Medical-Homeopathy	11	11
15.	Medical-Others	6	8
16.	Nursing	16	20
17.	Para Medical	3	3
18.	Pharmacy	8	10
19.	Physiotherapy	3	3
20.	Sanskrit	1	2
21.	Science	2	1
22.	Sports/Yoga/Physical Education	2	2
23.	Others	9	13
Total		1206	1371

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report 2016-2017 and 2018-19

According to the stream-wise number of education institutions in West Bengal, the number of colleges increased from 1206 in 2016-17 to 1371 in 2018-19. Table 2.11.2 shows that the highest number i.e. 783 institutions have General courses in 2018-19 which was increased from 727 in 2016-17. Similar trend could be observed in the Education/Teachers education courses which have increased from 231 in 2016-17, to 325 in 2018-19. There has also been a slight increase in the number of institutions having courses such as Nursing, Pharmacy, Sanskrit, medical-others, Science, etc. In this backdrop of the Universities and Higher Educational Institutions, it is important to examine the representation of Scheduled Caste students in these institutions.

Therefore, the following section presents some educational parameters to understand the same trend.

2.12. Gross Enrolment Ratio of Higher Education

Gross Enrolment in Higher Education is calculated out of those students who are enrolled in higher education in the age-group of 18-23 years. The social categories-wise GER of Higher Education is presented in Table 2.12.1.

Table 2.12.1. Categories-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio of Higher Education in India and West Bengal

Year		All Category Male	All Category Female	All Category Total	SC Male	SC Female	SC Total
2018-19	West Bengal	20.0	18.7	19.3	14.7	13.6	14.1
	India	26.3	26.4	26.3	22.7	23.3	23.0
2017-18	West Bengal	19.9	17.6	18.7	14.8	12.8	13.8
	India	26.3	25.4	25.8	22.2	21.4	21.8
2016-17	West Bengal	19.8	17.2	18.5	14.8	12.2	13.5
	India	26.0	24.5	25.2	21.8	20.2	21.1
2015-16	West Bengal	19.1	16.2	17.7	14.2	11.5	12.8
	India	25.4	23.5	24.5	20.8	19.0	19.9
2014-15	West Bengal	19.1	15.8	17.4	14.4	11.2	12.8
	India	25.3	23.2	24.3	20.0	18.2	19.1

Source: AISHE 2018-19

The GER of higher education in India shows an improvement of percentage in All Category enrollment during the last 5 years that is from 24.3 percent in 2014-15 to 26.3 percent in 2018-19. Whereas, the percentage among the Scheduled Castes in India has increased from 19.1 percent in 2014-15 to 23.0 percent in 2018-19. This is

credited to the implementation of reservation policy and scholarship facilities due to which a huge section of Scheduled Castes are being able to enroll themselves in higher education. Weisskopf (2004) in his study also attributes India's reservation policies to be the main reason for the increasing percentage of SC and other socially excluded groups in higher educational institutions.

In West Bengal in both all categories and the Scheduled Caste category, the growth rate of GER is moderate. In 2014-15 the all categories have been recorded as 19.1 percent which increased to 20.0 percent in 2018-19. Likewise, the total percentage of GER for Scheduled Castes stands as 12.3 percent in 2014-15 which increased to 14.1 percent in 2018-19. Comparatively, we can observe that the percentage of enrolment of Scheduled Castes in higher education is slightly less than the School level both in India and West Bengal. However, the steady growth in percentage of SCs indicates the active utilization of reservation facilities.

2.13. Gender Parity Index in Higher Education

Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. In higher education, the GPI measures the female to the male ratio which traces the progress in gender equity and the available learning opportunities to females as compared to males.⁷ Table 2.13.1 provides gender parity index for all categories and Scheduled Castes in India and West Bengal.

⁷Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India

Table 2.13.1. Gender Parity Index (18-23years)

Year		All Category Total	SC Total
2018-19	India	1.00	1.02
	West Bengal	0.94	0.93
2017-18	India	0.97	0.96
	West Bengal	0.88	0.87
2016-17	India	0.94	0.93
	West Bengal	0.87	0.82
2015-16	India	0.92	0.91
	West Bengal	0.85	0.81
2014-15	India	0.92	0.91
	West Bengal	0.83	0.78

Source: AISHE 2018-19

Table 2.13.1 shows a modest increase in the GPI for all categories for the last five years. In 2014-15 the recorded GPI percentage of India was 0.92 percent in all categories and 0.91 percent from the SC category which increased to 1.0 percent in all categories and 1.02 percent in the SC category in 2018-19. In comparison to all the data, in West Bengal, the GPI of SC shows an improvement from 0.78 percent in 2014-15 to 0.93 percent in 2018-19. Although the GPI has shown a trend of improvement, the problem of low representation of females can still be observed both in all category and SCs in West Bengal. Chanana (2007) argued that a majority of women although completes schools with a good percentage but only a few manages to opt for higher education. The prior reason would be the family's unwillingness to invest in the daughter's education or they uphold the belief that a woman is not socially expected to work and garner high education before marriage. Socio-economic and individuals' family background is also an important factor that determines educational attainment but it is less clear how these factors may differentially affect boys and girls (White, Ruther, & Kahn, 2015).

In addition to education, there is a provision of reservation in employment sectors also. Hence, the upcoming section presents the status of Scheduled Caste employment in India.

2.14. Status of Scheduled Caste Employment in India

As per the reservation policy, the central government has a provision of a 15 percent reservation for the Scheduled Castes. Table 2.14.1 presents the percentage of SCs in Government Employment in India.

Table 2.14.1. Total percentage of recruited SC population in India

Year	All Categories	Scheduled Castes Percentage
2014-15	29,52,080	17.57%
2015-16	27,32,278	16.99%
2017-18	32,57,812	17.49%
2018-19	32,58,663	17.49%

Source: Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pensions Annual Report 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2018-19

As per the information from 2014-15 to 2018-19, the highest percentage of recruitment of the Scheduled Castes according to the Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pensions Annual Report is 17.57 percent in the year 2014-15 out of the total number of the employee i.e. 29,52,080. This is followed by 17.49 percent in the years 2017-18 and 2018-19. However, a slight decrease could be noticed in 2015-16 which stands at 16.99 percent. In overall, the Scheduled Castes employees are respectively recruited in all levels namely A, B, C (excluding Safai Karamchari), and C (safai karamchari).

The Annual Administrative Report 2011-12 of Backward Class, Welfare Department West Bengal shows 22 percent of vacancies reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the state. However, Ilaiah (2008) points out that Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal

remains predominantly Brahminical city. Bhattacharya (1997) reported that in West Bengal, in 1982 the total government employees among the Scheduled Castes category were 11.58 percent and the maximum percentage of employees was found in the group D job comprising 62.04 percent out of the total reserved percentage of the Scheduled Castes which mostly consisted the work of sweeping and scavengers. While the high-class jobs such as A and B had extremely low representation of Scheduled Castes. However, the recent official data of the Scheduled Castes recruitment could not be accessed after that. Therefore, an attempt has been to understand the trend through placement data collected from employment exchange (Table 2.14.2).

Table 2.14.2. Employment Exchange Statistics on Scheduled Castes in West Bengal

Year	(In Thousand)		Percentage of SC Placement to SC Registration
	Registration	Live Register	
2016	32.71	883.97	0.3%
2017	31.65	914.27	0.1%
2018	8.27	921.13	0.0%

Source: Employment Exchange Statistic 2016, 2017, 2018

In Table 2.14.2 the total number of candidates is scaled as 1000 per person. Employment Exchange Statistics highlighted that the largest number of job seekers recorded on the live register during the year 2017 in West Bengal was 77.6 lakh, which indicates the magnitude of unemployment issues in the state. An analysis of the data shows low placement and registration percentage of 0.3 percent and 0.1 percent of SCs of West Bengal in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In 2018 we could notice that

despite 921.13 live registered⁸, the recorded Scheduled Castes percentage of placement and registration in West Bengal was 0.0 percent. One of the reasons behind this could be, as at present most of the recruitments are made by the West Bengal Public Service Commission, therefore, after getting employment the SC candidates haven't surrendered their Employment book due to which they remained as live registered in Employment Exchange. However, due to the unavailability of data proper percentage of Scheduled Castes recruited in government jobs could not be accessed. Nevertheless, Borooah, Dubey, and Sriya (2007) claims that jobs reservation cannot alter the employment-related ascribed nature of the Scheduled Castes but, if the Scheduled Castes are given this opportunity, it can raise the proportion of persons from these groups who secure regular salaried or wage employment; that is, it can shift the biases in favor of them.

2.15. Summary

The assessment of the implementation of reservation policy highlights that there has been only marginal improvement. Social discrimination persists even after independence and so does the stigma. The quotas earmarked for the Scheduled Castes are often not filled on account of the indifferences (Ghosh, 2008). A privileged group among the reserved has been created, who compete against their brethren to enjoy the benefits. This competition goes on and as a result, a 'creamy layer' or super-caste within caste has evolved. Its members are similar to the privileged of the unreserved class. The reserved who enjoyed the benefits refuses to acknowledge the fact that they were the recipient of social support and tried to hide it as much as possible, except when it came to admission, recruitment, jobs, and promotion (Pradeep, 2008).

⁸Systematic arrangement of Index cards pertaining to applicants who are in need of employment assistance. It provides the total number of persons waiting for job and is taken as an indicator of level of unemployment in the country.

Reservation does not address the most fundamental problems of economic inequality or access to opportunities in India. There is no question that asset inequalities are at the heart of the issue of unequal access in our country. So it is clear that reservations can in no sense be seen as any kind of substitute for the more serious issues and still necessary strategies of change concerning land reform and other redistribution (Ghosh, 2008) haven't found a solution. Caste-based reservations are often critiqued on more sophisticated grounds as well one among such critique is according to Ghosh (2008) that they promote unhealthy forms of identity politics that distract from more substantive and critical social issues. Therefore, Pradeep (2008) highlights that the majority, within the Scheduled Castes who do not enjoy the comforts, become further marginalized.

Chapter III

Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in Darjeeling

3.1. Introduction

Deprivation in multiple spheres of social life results in social exclusion and its extent varies in different social categories. Specifically, in the case of the Scheduled Castes, Annapuranam and Inbanathan (2017) stated that majority of them live a life below the poverty line and some due to their caste identity is not able to garner any facility. As a result of socio-economic deprivation, they are unable to gain social mobility. Chitins, (1997) highlighted that the Constitution regarded the Scheduled Castes as weaker sections of society who are eligible for special protection and care. Contextually locating in Darjeeling, the three communities namely Kami, Damai, and Sarki fall under the Scheduled Castes category. Hence, the present chapter deals with a brief profile of Darjeeling and historical backdrop of the struggle of the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki for the status of the Scheduled Castes. This is followed by ethnic composition, socio-cultural context and historical backdrop of Darjeeling. The later part especially focuses on the process of implementation of reservation policy in education and employment sectors in Darjeeling.

3.2. Darjeeling: A brief profile and Historical Backdrop

Darjeeling is one of the districts of West Bengal originally comprises of four subdivisions i.e., Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong hills, and the Siliguri Terai. Darjeeling is a frontier region running between Nepal and Bhutan in its west and east respectively and bounded by the plains of Bengal in the South and Sikkim in the North. The region covers an area of 3,149 square km and has grown tremendously in population and households (Bomjan, 2008) in recent years. The Hills of Darjeeling is

inhabited by a large number of migrants who came from different parts of the nearby state and neighbouring countries like Sikkim, Bihar, Bhutan, Nepal, etc. The region is inhabited by different communities of people like Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalis comprising Hindu castes as well as the tribes and plainsmen, consisting of Bengalis, Biharis, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, and Marwaris. Therefore, Darjeeling presents a multi-ethnic society with diverse cultures and languages.

To comprehend the ethnic composition of Darjeeling we need to go back to the migration history of Nepal in the region. From the beginning of the 19th century, the English East India Company began to take an active interest in Darjeeling due to several factors such as its geopolitical importance, the possibility of growth of tea industries, the hope for forest production, cinchona plantation and most importantly the possibility of setting up a sanatorium and health resort for the British Officials and businessmen in the cool climate of the hills (Dasgupta, 1999). Therefore, on 1st February 1835, Darjeeling was given to the British by the Raja of Sikkim through a deed of Grant signed by Raja Gtsuphud Namgyal and Lord William Bentick, the then Governor-General (O' Malley, 1907). In 1841 Dr. Campbell, Superintendent of Darjeeling started the experiment of growing tea plants with few seeds from Chinese stock (Dasgupta, 1999) which became one the major reasons for the rapid increase of population. The other reason was the opening of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways which motivated the people to migrate in huge numbers from nearby areas in the hope of a better life (Dash, 1947). These factors facilitated the Nepalese migration from Nepal in huge numbers. Consequently, the Census Report of 1881 shows that out of the total population of the three districts which was 92,141, the Nepali-speaking population in the district recorded then was 88,000 i.e. 95.5 percent out of the total population. A decade later in 1891, out of the total population of the three sub-

districts, the Nepali speaking population was 1, 34,000 accounting 89.15 percent (Dasgupta, 1999) of the total population. These available records confirm that a huge number of Nepali speaking people migrated from nearby states/countries in Darjeeling making the district a Nepali dominated area.

Due to various ill circumstances in Nepal, people in huge numbers choose to migrate to the district in the hope of a better life opportunity. Among other reasons, Datta (1991) argued that one of the important factors for the Nepali immigration in Darjeeling was the establishment of Gorkha rule over Nepal during the latter half of the 18th century. The dominance of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of the Gorkha dynasty, in Kathmandu in the second half of the 18th century unleashed an aggressive drive of the high caste Hindu monarchy of Nepal for centralization and expansion. This drive caused considerable socio-economic tensions inside Nepal and imposed a series of repressive measures to ensure domination of the high caste Hindu Nepal is over the Buddhist and other non-Hindu Nepali tribes and communities (Dasgupta, 1999). Further during that period the Nepali communities such as the Rais, the Limbus, the Gurungs, and the Tamangs, were downgraded to the status of 'Sudra' in the Nepali Hindu society, making them vulnerable to the oppressions of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya castes. Non-conformity to Hindu scriptures invited serious punishment known as 'panchakhat', which included confiscation of property, banishment, mutilation, enslavement, and even death. Faced with these repressive measures, a large number of Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang, and other low-caste Nepalis started the migration from the eastern region of Nepal. After Darjeeling was passed into the British hands in the first half of the 19th century, the above Nepali communities found the hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling a convenient and accessible place for settlement (ibid, 1999).

3.3. Ethnic Composition of Darjeeling

Discussing the ethnic composition of Darjeeling region, Lama (2008) claims that in the beginning, Darjeeling Hills was inhabited mainly by nomadic tribes such as Lepchas (Rong-pas the ravine people), the Limboos (Chong-pas, the Ridge people who lived at the higher altitudes), the Magars (Mongpas), and some Bhutias. Dash (1947), further proclaims that the Lepchas originally possessed all the hill country of Darjeeling and Sikkim. However, at present, they do not seem to have been ever very numerous in the District and account for 0.9 percent Lepcha speaking population out of the total population of 16, 09,172 according to the annual report of West Bengal 2011.

Bhutias, another major inhabitant in the area are believed to be from Bhutan (Lama, 2008). However, Bhutias and Tibetans have been classified as Sikkimese Bhutias, a mixed-race descended from Tibetans who settled in Sikkim, Sherpa Bhutias or Bhutias of Nepal who comes from the East or North-East of Nepal, Drukpa Bhutia or Bhutias of Bhutan proper, and Bhutias of Tibet or Tibetans (Dash, 1947). The Sherpas originally came from the North-East of Nepal and are of Tibetan descent. They seem to be more definitely practicing Buddhist religion than any other of the Nepalis (Dash, 1947).

Based on the socio-cultural background, the Nepali communities of Darjeeling are broadly divided between Tagadhari, Matwali, and Lower Caste or the *Pani na chalne Jat*. The *Tagadhari* are entitled to wear the sacred ceremonial thread and are in the top rung of the caste hierarchy. This group encompasses the Brahman and Kashtriya Varna who traditionally filled the role of priests and warriors. On the other hand, *Matwalis* are associated with alcohol drinking. For them, the intoxicant liquor is not a

taboo and is generally associated with Mongoloids such as Gurung, Magars, Subha, Rai, and Tamang (Lama, 2008; Pradhan, 2009; Bennett, 1938).

Among the *Matwali* communities, The Limboos/ Limbus (Chang-pas, the Ridge people who lived at a higher altitude) other main inhabitants bear the title of Subha and are also numerous in the district. Their original home is East Nepal or it can be said that they have descended from early Tibetan settlers in Nepal. They have intermarried in the Darjeeling District with Lepchas (Dash, 1947; Lama, 2008). Similarly, Magars are one of the oldest known tribes of the sub-Himalaya region (Roy, 2012) who also inhabits the Darjeeling hills. The other community is Rai who has always been numerous in the district and number has steadily increased. They speak the Khambu dialect and practice Animism and shamanism (Roy, 2012; Dash, 1947) which is still prominently witnessed in Darjeeling. On the other hand, Tamangs are the Mongoloids or semi-Mongolian tribes who claim to be among the earliest settlers of Nepal. They are probably descended from a Tibetan stock modified by the intermixture with Nepali races. They bear the title of Lama and follow Buddhist practices although they still follow Hindu customs at death and on certain festivals. There are more than 100 Tamang clans and sub-clans (Roy, 2012; Dash, 1947).

Newars have the surname of Pradhan and a dialect of their own. However, in Darjeeling, they have ceased to use the Newar dialect and they have become completely Hindu (Dash, 1947; Roy, 2012) the other Matwali are the Sunwar who are commonly referred to as Mukhias. They are mainly engaged in dress and basket making along with subsistence farming. Bhujel also falls under the same category and also refer to themselves as Khawas. They are regarded as close to Magars historically and culturally. Thami also referred to as Thangmis were originally a nomadic tribe. Their main occupation is labor and farming. In religious matters, they are much closer

to the Tamangs and lean towards Buddhism. However, the majority of them practice their ancient faith in Shamanistic Animism. Gurung is an exonym and refers to themselves as Tamu. They speak in a language known as TamuKuwei and traditions are dictated by Pye-tan-Ilu-tan (Roy, 2012).

Among the Tagadhari Hindu Castes, Bahun occupies the highest position in the Nepali caste hierarchy. The word Bahun is colloquial for Brahmin or Brahmans the Priestly Class of Indo-Aryan origin. They are fairly numerous in the Darjeeling district. The community is usually categorized as “High caste”, “Upper caste”, or “*Tagadhari*” in the Khas social stratification or caste system. They are a class of priests who are designated to become Hindu monks or ‘*Pandits*’ in particular. They are known as ‘*Vipra*’- the learned one or ‘*Dvija*’- the twice-born. They are the class of educators, scholars, and preachers in Hinduism (Dash, 1947; Roy, 2012; Lama, 2008).

The Khas has adopted the surname of Chettri and was one of the dominant castes of Nepal. They have probably a large admixture of Aryan blood. Khas is the distortion of the Sanskrit word ‘Kshatriya’. Chettris represent the other most prominent class in the hierarchy of Khas Hindu social stratification. They share many racial, cultural, and linguistic similarities with other high castes ‘Kshatriya’ Hindus of Northern India (Dash, 1947; Roy, 2012).

Lowest among the Tagadari are represented by Kami, Damai, and Sarki. However, there is a caste hierarchy among the three communities. Regarding Kami, it is not possible to trace the proper origin of Kami because there are different opinions regarding their origin. However, according to Roy (2012), they are traditionally indulged in metal works, especially copper, iron, and brass. They also fastened tools and weapons. He further denotes that although they were important in the functioning

of the society but were looked down upon and treated as lower caste or *Pani nachal ne jat*. Gautam (1994) argues that with the help of the literature that is available till date, we can presume that Kami is a descendent of Brahmins and Chettri which is proved when we make an account of *Thar* or *Septs* which is very much similar to that of Brahmins and Chettri. Some thars like *Sapkota*, *Ghimire*, *Adhikari*, *Acharya* are found either in Brahmins, Chettri, or Kami (Gautam, 1994). Although, they were respected by the higher castes but were never treated as equal (Roy, 2012).

Historically Damai is auspicious, yet an untouchable caste of professional musicians and sewer. They are best known for their musical traditions, which include, among others the *Panchai Baja* and *Naumati Baja*. The Damai's origins as a caste are concomitant with the development of their musical traditions. They are predominantly Hindus. Damai dedicated their life to music. However, due to the lack of patronage and the decrease in the observance of various Hindu life-cycle rituals, Damais have begun to look towards other professions to sustain them. Interestingly, it has not been very long since the Damais have taken to sewing and tailoring. It was probably the taking up of sewing and tailoring and the general lack of patronage that Damais began to slide down in the caste hierarchy. They are found in most areas in the Hills of Darjeeling (Roy, 2012; Dash, 1947).

Sarki's traditionally engaged themselves in leather-works and is also known as Charmakar (Roy, 2012). The classification or hierarchical construction has placed the Sarki into the untouchable category (Gurung, 2009). Although Roy (2012) claimed that they are looked down upon by the higher castes though not deemed as 'untouchables'. The Sarki by occupation makes shoes due to which they have to work with the skin of dead animals. Shoemaking is considered to be the down-trodden work done by lower caste people and due to this; they were excluded and were not

permitted to perform prestigious occupations, any religious rituals, and denied access to resources. The higher category people believe that the Sarki is de-hierarchized due to their failure in following Hindu religious norms and values by breaking the religious code set by their ancestors, i.e. food taboos of eating dead carcasses (*sino in Nepali*) of animals. Such religious and cultural myths and the history of the caste system gradually forced them into the down-trodden group (Gurung, 2009).

The scenario of the population in Darjeeling reveals that different people from different backgrounds assimilated in the district with their own set of religious beliefs, customs, rituals, and practices. However, among all the other religions Hinduism and Buddhism flourished most in Darjeeling. On the whole, Hinduism seems to be spreading at the expense of Buddhism as according to the census of 1931, the total number of Hindus found in the district was 2,36,913 that is 74.11 percent out of the total population i.e. 3,19,635 (Dash, 2011). It should be noted that the caste system is intrinsic to Hinduism, the migrants from Nepal being predominantly Hindus have practiced strict casteism (Roy, 2012) and they were able to influence all the other communities that they got acquainted with. And this caste-based system became the social order which according to Durkheim can be conceived social order to be an external, moral, and normative force that created collective conscience which tied an individual with larger society (Silver, 2014). The heavy emphasis on the cultural or moral boundaries of socially constructed categories resulted in the exclusion of certain groups in the Nepali society of Darjeeling also. Although the Brahmins and Chettris of the District are lesser than in Nepal but they were strong enough to influence the notion of caste among the residing population in Darjeeling. The lower castes such as Kami, Damai, and Sarki were looked down upon by the higher castes. Although intermarriage was not permitted but they were to some extent allowed

eating at the same table and practices of untouchability was not experienced by all the lower castes (Dash, 2011). However, traces of passive exclusion could be found in Darjeeling which worked through the social process with no deliberate attempts to exclude but resulted in exclusion from the set of circumstances (Sen, 2000).

The Nepali community who migrated from Nepal brought their social practices along with them. The structure of the society that came with them was hierarchical with caste practices embedded within its social fabric. Specifically, the society was rigid and tradition bounded. Although not rigid as in Nepal, the Nepali society in Darjeeling follows the caste system and the so-called lower caste namely Kami, Damai, and Sarki has been traditionally socially excluded. This form of exclusion had a similarity to what Kabeer (2000) called hard-core exclusion which occurs when principles of unequal access in different institutional domains are made compulsory. Hence, in Darjeeling caste apprehended the feature of social exclusion that affected the culturally defined groups i.e. the Kami, Damai, and Sarki who faced social discrimination in their everyday life due to their ascribed nature which was beyond individual agency or responsibility (Buvinic, 2005).

3.4. Socio-Demographic composition of Darjeeling District

The first regular Census under British regime was conducted in Darjeeling in the year 1871-72 showing a population figure of 94,712 which increased manifold to 1, 55,179 by the next Census in 1881 and within Census 1901, the population of Darjeeling grew to 2, 49,117. The population of the district continued to increase at a steady pace during the next decades and by 1941 it almost touched the four lakh mark at 3, 90,899. As per the first Census after the independence of 1951, the population of Darjeeling district was 4, 59,617, an increase of almost 73 percent within 50 years since 1901. After independence, the growth rate of the population gradually decreased

(with an exception in the decade 1971-81) adding fewer people to the bounty. As per Census 2011, the population of Darjeeling stands at 18, 46,823 with 9, 37,259 males i.e. 50.75 percent and 9, 09,564 females i.e. 49.25 percent. Since the study primarily focused on Kami, Damai, and Sarki communities of Darjeeling Table 3.4.1 deals with the population of these three communities.

Table 3.4.1. SC Population in Darjeeling (1901 TO 2011 Census)

Sl.	Years	Total population	Kami	Damai	Sarki	Total SC Population and Percentage
1.	1901	2,49,117	9,826 (3.94%)	4,643 (1.86%)	1,823 (0.73%)	16,292 (6.54%)
2.	1911	2,65,660	10,939 (4.11%)	4,453 (1.68%)	1,992 (0.75%)	17,384 (6.54%)
3.	1921	2,82,748	11,779 (4.17%)	5,781 (2.04%)	2,036 (0.72%)	19,596 (6.93%)
4.	1931	3,19,635	11,331 (3.54%)	5,551 (1.74%)	2,432 (0.76%)	19,314 (6.04%)
5.	1941	3,76,369	16,272 (4.32%)	8,162 (2.17%)	2,778 (0.74%)	27,212 (7.23%)
6.	1951	4,59,617	19,432 (4.28%)	9,116 (1.98%)	2,932 (0.64%)	31,480 (6.85%)
7.	1961	6,24,640	15,255 (2.44%)	6382 (1.02%)	2181 (0.34%)	23,818 (3.81%)
8.	1971	7,81,777	22,015 (2.81%)	8544 (1.09%)	3846 (0.49%)	34,405 (4.40%)
9.	1991	12,99,919	44,520 (3.42%)	15,566 (1.29%)	13,098 (1.00%)	73,184 (5.63%)
10.	2001	16,09,172	49,704 (3.09%)	17,387 (1.08%)	11,111 (0.69%)	78,202 (4.85%)
7.	2011	18,46,823	52,178 (2.83%)	18,314 (0.99%)	13,618 (0.74%)	84,110 (4.55%)

Source: Figure up to 1941 (Dash, 1947: 49), from 1951 to 2011 (Census of India)

Table 3.4.1 highlights the steady growth of the population in terms of absolute number in respect of three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki under SC

category. Although in terms of population percentage there has been a marginal fall over the last hundred years. Among the three communities, the Kami comprises the highest population from 1901 to 2011 Census Report. The percentage of different decadal varies between the lowest at 2.4 percent in 1961 to the highest percentage of 4.32 in 1941. The population of the Damai community has witnessed a decrease from 1.86 percent in 1901 to 0.99 percent in 2011. There has been a fluctuation in the Damai population and varies between the lowest of 0.99 percent in 2011 to the highest of 2.17 percent in 1941. The Sarki community is numerically lowest among the three proposed communities and forms less than 1 percent of the total population. In terms of percentage, the highest percentage recorded is 1 percent in 1991 which at times decreased to 0.34 percent in 1971 out of the total population.

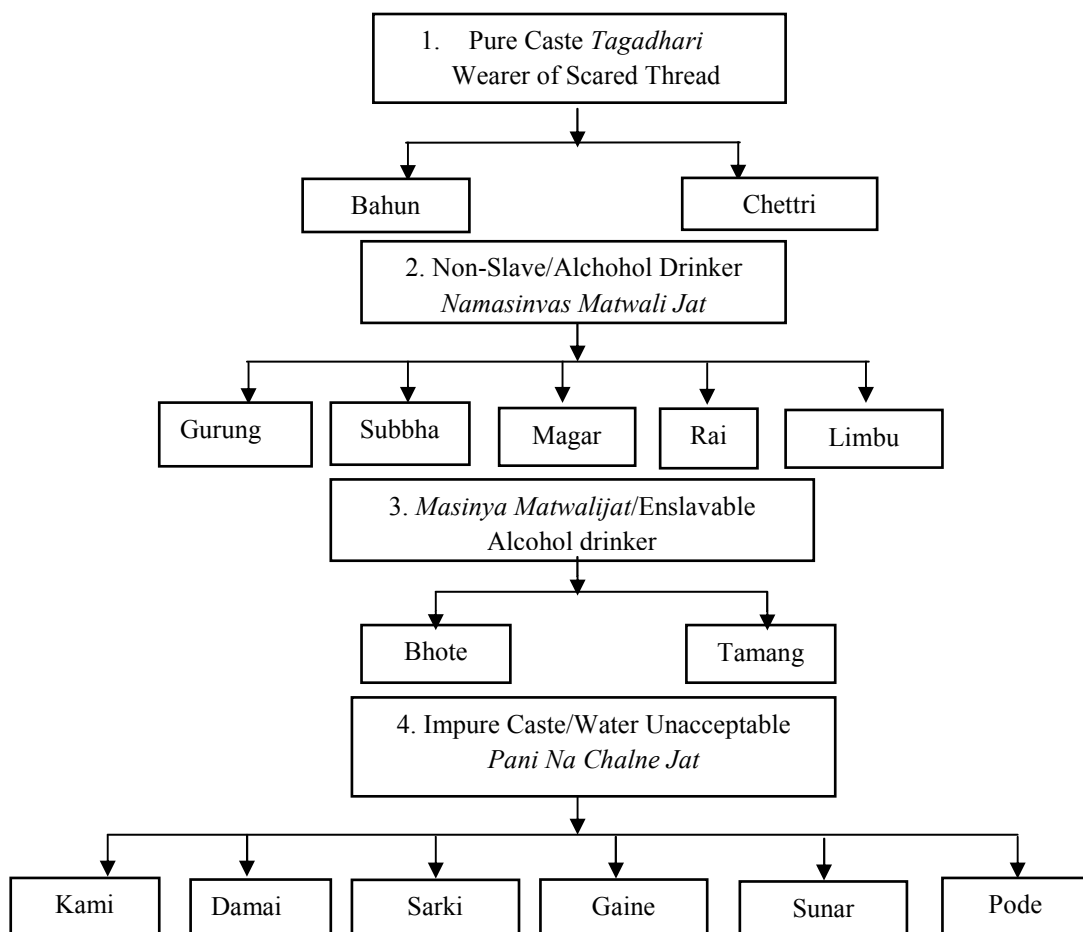
In overall, the total percentage of the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling shows fluctuation from time to time. For instance, the highest population of Kami, Damai, and Sarki in 1941 was 7.23 percent which decreases to the lowest percentage 3.81 percent in 1961. However, according to the census of 2011, the total population of the three communities indicates 4.55 percent.

3.5. Caste System in Nepali Society of Darjeeling: A Brief Overview

The understanding of the caste hierarchy in Darjeeling needs to be understood against the backdrop of the history of the caste system in Nepal. Discussing caste system Thorat and Sabharwal (2015) argue that in India exclusion and deprivation are based on social identities such as caste, ethnicity, and religion. Further, the historical evidence claim that in India, the methods adopted in social exclusion is to exclude, isolate, discriminate, and deprive some group of people based on their social identity. In fact, in India, the socio-economic and political activity of not only Hindus but also Non-Hindus has been directly or indirectly governed by the existing caste system.

Likewise, Nepal being the most Hindu religious country followed the rules of the caste system. Historically, in Nepal, the promulgation of *Muluki Ain* (National or Civil Code), the first legal code by Rana Prime Minister, Junga Bahadur Rana in 1854 transformed the categories of the Varna system into four broader caste categories. The National Code had four-fold caste hierarchy: broadly they were categorized under Pure Caste (*Chokho jat*) or Water Acceptable caste (*Pani Chalne jat*) and Impure or Water Unacceptable Caste (*Pani Nachalnejat*). For a better understanding, the hierarchical position in the Nepali caste system has been diagrammatically represented in Figure 3.5.1.

Figure 3.5.1. Caste Hierarchy in Nepali Society



Source: Pandey, 2005; Bhattachan, 2009; Pradhan, 2009; Bennett, Dahal and Govindasamy (2008)

According to the Figure 3.5.1, the Pure Castes were wearers of sacred thread or twice-born commonly known as *Tagadhari* the Pure Castes who were Wearers of sacred thread *which* included castes such as the Bahun and Chhetri. Next in the hierarchy was the *Namasinyas Matwalijat* who are the Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers such as Gurung, Subbha, Mangar, Rai, Limbu, etc. although impure but touchable caste from whom water is not acceptable but contact with whom does not requires purification by the sprinkling of water. *Masinya Matwalijat* the Enslavable alcohol drinker included Bhote and Tamang, *Pani Nachalne Chhoi Chhito Halna Naparne-* the Impure Castes but touchable. Lastly, the Impure Castes who were known as *Pani Nachalne Chhoi Chhito Halna Parne;* are the groups of impure and Untouchable caste from whom water is not acceptable and contact with whom requires purification by the sprinkling of water. This category includes Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaine, Sunar, Pode, etc. (Pandey, 2005; Bhattachan, 2009; Pradhan, 2009). Various historical references reveal that from the beginning of the 19th century, there was a gradual increase in the number of upper-caste Brahmins and Chettri who migrated from Nepal, and on a very large scale; they contributed to the growth of Hinduism in Darjeeling (Bomjan, 2008). These migrants of Nepal brought the rigid form of social practices along with them. Thus, caste-based practices of social discrimination engraved their foundation in the Hills of Darjeeling. The practices of three caste groups called the *pure* caste (*chokho jat*) or water acceptable caste (*pani chalny jat*), the last two castes the *impure* caste (*pani na chalnay jat*) or water unacceptable caste were popularized (Gurung, 2009) among the Nepalis of Darjeeling.

According to Bhattachan (2009), the lower castes among the Nepalis are called with derogatory terms such as *pani na chalne* (water-polluting), *acchoot* (untouchables), *doom*, *pariganiy*, and *tallo jat* (low caste). The other, terms used to address them are

uppechhit (ignored), *utpidit* (oppressed), *sosit* (exploited), *pacchadipareka* (lagging), *bipanna* (downtrodden), *garib* (poor), *nimukha* (helpless), *alpasankhyak* (minorities), *Harijan* (god's people), etc. And these terms are also derogatorily used for the lower castes of Darjeeling. The higher castes practiced untouchability and avoided physical contact and commensality with people belonging to the lower castes. They believed that any connection with the lower caste would pollute them in a religious manner (Bhattachan, 2009). By accepting the lower position in caste hierarchy they gave consent and voluntarily accepted the practices of social discrimination as legitimate social order and maintained distance from the higher caste which corresponds to what Gramsci termed as Cultural Hegemony where the dominant group directs their social life of the masses which is historically caused by the prestige that the dominant group held (Lears, 1985). Due to the unavailability of academic literature, a proper source could not be referred while discussing the history of the caste system in Darjeeling. However, with the help of the available literature in Nepali written by a few local writers then and based on experiences and oral history of some elderly respondents, the overview of caste practices in the past has been discussed in the following section.

Within the Nepali caste structure of Darjeeling Bhaun and Chettri occupies higher position in the caste hierarchy while the Kami, Damai, and Sarki are placed in the lowest position as claimed by Darnal (2014). Sarkar (2015) while discussing the emergence of Nepali language as mother tongue in Darjeeling in his 'Nepali Nation and Nationalism in Darjeeling' highlighted about caste hierarchy that includes upper castes (Bahun, Chettri) lower castes (Kami, Damai, and Sarki) Mongoloids (Tamang, Mangar, Gurung, Thami, Sunuwar) and the Kirats (Rai, Limbu, Yakha). The alike view was presented by Pakhrin (2013) while discussing the social structure of the Nepali Community in Darjeeling. It revealed the presence of the four divisions of the

Nepali caste system found in Darjeeling which was similar to that of Nepal namely- Brahmans consisted of *Upadhyay, Sharma, Dahal, Upreeti*, etc. Kshatriyas formed of *Chettri, Newar*, etc. Vaisyas like *Gurung, Mangar, Tamang, Subba, Rai*, etc, and lastly, Sudras composed of *Kami, Damai, and Sarki*. The studies made references that social exclusion of lower castes was strongly followed among the Nepali society of Darjeeling during the early periods. Various discriminatory practices like prohibiting the lower castes to enter inside the temple and making them stand at the entrance of the house and not allowing entry, not letting a lower caste to drink water from the same well from where the higher castes drank, allowing them to enter to the courtyard but not to the sanctum, not using utensils used by them and by not allowing them to own land and raise livestock were rigidly practiced (Roy, 2012). Therefore, based on their caste identity the Kami, Damai, and Sarki were not allowed to fully participate in the societal, economic, and political activity Darnal (2014) and that could be equated with Sen's (2000) concept of group exclusion, which highlights the plight and marginalization of the lower Castes communities in Darjeeling. Darnal (2014) further argues that the higher castes even decided the way the scheduled castes would live, the food that they would eat, and the clothes they would wear. They were not allowed to acquire education due to which over the generation has resulted in lack of social and cultural capital as due to the structural reason they were denied education and they fell into the category of illiterate and uneducated. Thus, this form of caste-based social stratification in the past made these three castes i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki fall into the category of socially excluded groups among the Nepali community and the social interaction with other communities was governed by norms of purity and pollution and also the commensal relations. In short, they were considered as an excluded group and their participation was strictly prohibited due to their low status in

the caste hierarchy and was bound to follow strict rules of commensality and obey the rule of endogamy. Hence, the three communities abided by the social norms accepted the dominance and hegemony as dictated by the caste system.

In course of time, the three communities came together under the banner of one organization to fight the deprivation and their marginalization. These socially excluded groups in order to fight social exclusion brought all the members together under the shade of one organization and worked for the benefit of the people. These organizations aimed to integrate them in mainstream society. In addition, these initiatives were also taken at the community level in the form of Samaj. Hence, in order to understand the functioning of the organization the following section deals with the struggle and role of the organization in detail.

3.6. Struggle for Recognition for the Scheduled Castes Status: A Brief Background

As per the record of *Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Anusoochit Jatti Sangh*, (1998) an association known as “Poor Fund Society” was formed on 25th January 1913 in Darjeeling. The society worked for the upliftment of lower castes namely Kami, Damai and Sarki. The major reason for forming this association then was to arrange the funeral and cremation of these low-status castes groups, when the death occurred, as nobody from higher castes would participate and even touch the dead body of these communities in case of death in a family. Consequently, this association worked for the betterment of the Scheduled Castes by opting for Welfare activities. Later, the educated members of the association chose to fight against caste-discrimination non violently. This association functioned in a very active manner from 1913 to 1914 but due to some untold circumstances, there was a split among the community members of three communities and the name of the association was changed into *Biswakarma*

Samaj (association) comprising only the Kami community. In 1930 another association named *Damai Samaj* (association) was formed, and in the same year, the Sarki community also formed *Sarki Samaj* comprising members of the Sarki community. On 19th August 1947, a new association known as “*Gorkha Dalit Warg*” was formed in Kurseong, which brought the three communities Kami, Damai, and Sarki together under its banner and worked unitedly for the betterment of the three castes. Inspired by this, a meeting was held on 11th October 1947 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Parashmani Darnal (Damai) in Darjeeling which was attended by members of all the three communities. Important members such as A. Singha Lakandri, Dalbahadur Singha Gahatraj, Barath Kumar Gahatraj, Karka Singha Roka, Ramlal Sardar, Ghakul Singha Gazmer, D.B. Khati, Shyam Sundar Rasaily, Purna Singha Karkidoli, R.K. Sunam, Gopal Mothay, Lal Singha Sundas, I.B. Mothay were some of the pioneers who attended the meeting. They renamed the association as “*Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Anusoochit Jatti Sangh*” combining the three communities (Darnal, 2014 written record of *Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Anusoochit Jatti Sangh*, 1998). When India was declared as an Independent country in January 1947, an Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Vallabhai Patel was set up by the Government of India to prepare articles dealing with the rights of citizens and minorities and the tribal and socially excluded groups (Stephen, 2006). Therefore, as a certain section of people owing to historical and traditional reasons had to undergo severe socio-economical crises hence, the Constitution granted protective discrimination (Jangir, 2013) to include them in the mainstream society. The Constitution provided three types of reservations namely political, educational, and employment. Bengal being one of the states of India to also implemented the programs for the Socially excluded groups. A list of the lower/ depressed castes of

Bengal was prepared. Although Darjeeling is one of the districts of West Bengal, the Nepali lower castes i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki were not incorporated in the first list of Scheduled Castes (SCs). Following this, the pioneering members of the association viz; Shri. Parashmani Darnal, R.K. Sunam, Gopal Mothay made a representation to the government of West Bengal. However, the task of scheduling these castes in the list was not easy and smooth. The report of the association mentioned that the Bengal government would agree to enlist the communities only after consultation with the government of Nepal and verifying whether Kami, Damai, and Sarki in actual belong to the lower caste category or not. On 15th May 1955, a committee of lower castes made a representation to the Bengal government and presented their demands. During that time Kaka Kalker Sarkar, an Indian independence activist, a social reformer, and a journalist was appointed as a chairman in the Backward Classes Commission by the president of India. The Commission's work was to enlist the criteria that were to be adopted in considering whether any group should be treated as socially and educationally backward or not. Hence, the same day he also happened to attend the meeting for submitting a list of Scheduled Castes and played an instrumental role in enlisting these communities in the list of Scheduled Castes. Finally, in 1956 Kami, Dami, and Sarki along with Gaina and Bhadala of the Nepali community were enlisted (Darnal, 2014; *Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Anusoochit Jatti Sangh*, 1998) in Scheduled Castes category by the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936.⁹ Finally, the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal Order in 1956 was amended and incorporated the Nepali lower castes Kami, Damai, and Sarki among Scheduled Castes of West Bengal which complies with the

⁹The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936, whereby certain provisions in the 1st, 5th, and 6th Scheduled of the Government of India at 1935, His Majesty in Council is empowered to specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which are to be treated a Scheduled Castes (Compendium on Reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes: 2002).

Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936. (Backward Classes Welfare Department Government of West Bengal, 2002). Further, in 1976 The West Bengal Act XXVII of 1976 provided reservations of vacancies in services and posts for the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Act was titled ‘The West Bengal Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of vacancies in services and posts) Act, 1976.’ However, the Acts and Rules as per necessity have been amended on many occasions, for instance, the Act was amended in various years like in West Bengal Act XLII of 1980, in West Bengal Act VII of 1982, in Act XXXI of 1983, Act X of 1990, Act VII of 1992, Act XLII of 1993. Act XV of 1996, Act XI of 2000, and Act XXIV of 2000. Among the various rights that are granted to the enlisted communities under the Scheduled Caste category by the government of West Bengal in compliance to the Scheduled Caste Act government of India, few among them are Clause (4) of Article 15 enabled the state to grant special provisions for the advancement of the socially and educationally Backward Classes. Clause (4) of Article 16 ‘granted reservation of appointment or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State’ (The Constitution of India, 1950), Article 46 in which the State promoted, with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and also protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Therefore, finally, the three communities as Scheduled Castes were included within the purview of protective discrimination.

After reviewing the historical backdrop, of enlistment of the three communities in the Scheduled Castes categories the following sections will initially present an overview of history of education in Darjeeling, then the literacy rate of Darjeeling, followed by

literacy-wise ranking of the districts and subsequently assess the literacy rate of the three SC communities.

3.7. History of Education in Darjeeling

Basu (2012) claimed that ideas have their own strengthening qualities of surviving, because the institution of education has approved many changes which have hardly been rejected. He asserts that despite of so many obstacles knowledge and scholarship are still the important part of the cultural system and also have a significant impact on social structure. Further, literacy level and education attainment are essential developmental indicators and are principal parameters of development that assure good quality of life, increases awareness level. Good literacy and educational level of a locality have many positive impacts such as an egalitarian society, better income opportunities, a prestigious and improved lifestyle, and increases the participation in community welfare programs that result in healthy relationships among the members of the society. Overall these two indicators are effective apparatus to form a socio-economically equitable society. UNESCO defined literacy as “a human right, a tool of personal empowerment, and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. It is at the heart of basic education for all, and essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace, and democracy”(Saha and Debnath, 2016). Shah (2012), while discussing the objective of education points out that the function of the education system is related to the needs and goals of the community. It is widely accepted in the social science circle that education empowers and bridge social inequality. Madan (2013) views education as one of the important needs in life, that regulates and structures one’s social life. Therefore, academic institutions are the platform that teaches socialization and build

one's social role. In the present context, a study like Weisskof (2004) showed that after 1950 the proportionate representation of Scheduled Caste students has been slowly rising in educational institutions. Tejas K. (2018) also argues that reservation policy is instrumental in improving access of Scheduled Castes to educational facilities. Based on these studies it can be concluded that reservation to some extent helped to fight exclusion and promote social mobility, and instrument in bridging social inequality especially for socially marginalized and to locate the three communities. In this backdrop the system attempts to locate Kami, Dami, and Sarki in terms of educational attainment, it is important to understand the literacy scenario in Darjeeling vis a vis the three communities.

History of the evolution of modern education in Darjeeling may be traced back to the role played by Christian missionaries. O'Malley (1907) highlighted that Christian Missionary and other organizations such as Scotland Missionary played an important role in introducing education throughout the district of Darjeeling since 1835. When the British took over Darjeeling, modern education was unknown to the people residing in the region. However, the scenario soon changed after the arrival of the British. According to the 'District Census Handbook, 1961' Darjeeling owes its original development to its appropriateness as a health resort for the British Government servants. Therefore, schools were needed to educate their children so, for those Government servants who could not afford to send their children to be educated in their native land, schools were opened in the district. Initially, the schools were started on a small scale and had an unstable existence but they gradually gained stability. They aimed to provide educational institutions for European and Anglo-Indian children, the kind of education and upbringing to which they were accustomed in their native country. Though the schools were constructed for European and Anglo-

Indian children, the type of education they provided attracted the Indian parents who could afford it. The schools initially accepted children of Indian parents up to 15 to 25 percent only. Scottish missionaries undertook the construction of schools and welfare centers for the British residents, so Loreto Convent was founded in the year 1847, which was the earliest of the European schools in the district for girls. St. Paul's School was shifted from Calcutta in 1864 to Darjeeling. Along with this many educational institutions also began to set up (Harijan, 2011) in Darjeeling gradually.

The Educational Department of the Church of Scotland Mission played the most important role in spreading knowledge amongst the people in the district, for instance, there were 70 schools of which 55 were both day and night schools in 1907. With the passage of the decade in the year 1944, there were one hundred and twenty schools throughout the district that were run by Scottish Mission, ten by the Roman Catholic Mission, three by the Ramkrishna Vedanta Assam, and four by the Buddhist Mission (District Census Handbook, 1961). Thus, when the British left Darjeeling, they left their educational legacy. After independence, the number of schools was raised which ultimately contributed to the spread of education in the region.

3.8. Literacy scenario in Darjeeling

In order to understand the scenario of education in the district, it is important to examine the trend of literacy rate of the district which is presented in Table 3.8.1.

Table 3.8.1. Growth of Literacy among the Population in Darjeeling (1901-2011)

<u>Sl. No.</u>	<u>Census Year</u>	<u>District Population</u>	<u>Literacy Percentage</u>
1.	1901	2,65,780	8.14%
2.	1911	2,79,899	11.44%
3.	1921	2,94,237	12.42%
4.	1931	3,32,061	12.63%
5.	1941	3,90,899	16.27%
6.	1951	4,59,617	22.71%
7.	1961	6,24,640	33.76%
8.	1971	7,81,777	38.48%
9.	1981	1,024,269	42.47%
10.	1991	1,299,919	51.16%
11.	2001	1,609,172	71.79%
12.	2011	1,846,823	79.92%

Source: Population Profile of Darjeeling District (1901-2011); Datta 2003

Table 3.8.1 highlights the literacy scenario of Darjeeling district from 1901 to 2011. The period from pre-independence to post-independence shows a steady and consistent increase in the literacy rate of the total population of the district. The literacy percentage which was recorded 8.14 percent in 1901 out of the total population of 2, 65,780 steadily increased to 16.27 percent till the year 1941. A steady growth can be noticed in the literacy percentage after independence i.e. in 1951 the total literacy percentage stood at 22.71 percent out of the total population of 4, 59,617. The Census Report of 2011 reflects the remarkable increase of literacy to 79.92 percent out of the total population of 1,846,823 thus against corresponding figure of 77.08 percent of West Bengal and 74 percent at the national level (detailed discussion into Chapter 2). Darjeeling is included among the top ten districts of the state and ranked sixth among the 18 districts of West Bengal (District Handbook Darjeeling 2011). The literacy growth can be considered as impressive for a small

district like Darjeeling; a detailed discussion on the location of Darjeeling vis-a-vis of other district of West Bengal in terms of literacy rate is presented in Table 3.8.2.

Table 3.8.2. Literacy-wise Ranking of Districts

	District	Literacy Rate		District	Literacy Rate
1.	Kolkata	87.14%	10.	Cooch Bihar	75.49%
2.	North 24 Paragana	84.95%	11.	Dakshin Dinajpur	73.86%
3.	Howrah	83.85%	12.	Jalpaiguri	73.79%
4.	Paschim & Purab Medinipur	83.35%	13.	Bankura	70.95%
5.	Hugli	82.55%	14.	Birbhum	70.90%
6.	Darjeeling	79.92%	15.	Murshidabad	67.53%
7.	South 24 Paragana	78.57%	16.	Purulia	65.38%
8.	Bardhaman	77.15%	17.	Malda	62.71%
9.	Naida	75.58%	18.	Uttar Dinajpur	60.13%

Source: List of District of West Bengal- Census 2011

Table 3.8.2 demonstrates the rank-wise distribution of the literacy rate of different districts of West Bengal. The districts that have the literacy rate above 80 percent are ranked as the top five districts of the state. Among eighteen districts Kolkata is ranked first with the highest percent of 87.14 percent literacy rate. Saha and Debnath (2016) highlighted that due to the high number of educational institutions, availability of educational facilities, high urbanization, transport and communication facilities Kolkata has managed to occupy this position. This position is followed by North Twenty Four Paragana with 84.95 percent, then Haora with 83.85 percent, Paschim, and Purba Medinipur 83.35 percent, and Hugli 82.55 percent. There are ten districts having literacy rate of above 75 percent, of which Darjeeling is ranked sixth with 79.92 percent followed by South 24 Paragana having 78.57 percent. Bardhaman with

77.15 percent, Naida with 75.58 percent, Cooch Bihar with 75.49 percent is ranked in seventh, eighth and ninth positions respectively.

All other districts like Bankura, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Purulia, Malda, etc. have lower literacy rates below 70 percent among which the lowest percentage of 60.13 percent was recorded from Uttar Dinajpur. Based on this statistical figure it can be safely concluded that Darjeeling has been able to improve the literacy scenario over the years.

The schools established in Darjeeling district are either affiliated with the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), or the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Among the colleges, Darjeeling Government College, South Field College, and St Joseph's College are reputed in recent years the other colleges such as Kalimpong College, Kurseong College, Mirik College, Sonada College, Ghoom Degree College, Salesian College are the institute which has been contributing higher education in the District. With this backdrop, the following section deals with the literacy scenario of the three communities (i.e. Kami, Damai and Sarki) within the Scheduled Castes category.

3.9. Literacy Rate of the Three SC Communities

Literacy rate and educational attainment depend upon many social and economic factors like the economic level of the family, social status, available educational facilities, political scenario, location and religious groups, and many more (Dutta Dasgupta, 2013). Therefore, if an individual have higher social and cultural capital then he/she is able to gain access to better educational opportunities that would help him/her to garner higher social position in the society. The proposed three communities under the study are placed low rank in the caste hierarchy having their

own traditional occupation, which has impacted their access to modern education over the years. To assess the implementation of the reservation policy and its impact on the three communities in Darjeeling, it is important to examine the literacy scenario which is presented in Table 3.9.1.

Table 3.9.1. Literacy Rate of Kami, Damai, and Sarki (Combined figure)

Year	Literacy Rate of District	Literacy rate of SC in District	Literacy Rate of Kami, Damai, and Sarki
1961	28.70%	22.24%	14.49%
1971	38.48%	24.71%	33.25%
2001	71.79%	62.43%	59.91%
2011	79.92%	72.94%	53.75%

Source: Census Report 2001 and 2011

Table 3.9.1 shows literacy rates among the Scheduled Castes of the Nepali community i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki from the year 1961 to 2011. The decadal growth rate of literacy among the three communities has been recorded from 14.49 percent in 1961 to 33.25 percent in 1971. The community wise data could not be accessed for the census year 1981 to 1991. The figure for the year 2001 shows further improvement of literacy rate to 60 percent. But, in 2011 a decline in the literacy rate has been noticed.

The corresponding figure during the years under reference for SC as well as total literacy rate of the district presents a much better scenario than the three communities in terms of achievement of literacy rate. Although the three communities percentage was recorded higher in 1971 (33.25 percent) as compared to 24.71 percent of SC in the districts, the figure in subsequent census in 2001 and 2011 does not project a satisfactory figure for three communities as can be generalized from the above census figure. Such finding has also been highlighted by Chouhan (2013) which stated that despite many socio-economic securities provided by the government, there are still

comparatively less educated and backward Scheduled Castes present in different districts of West Bengal.

3.10. Education Level of Proposed Communities- Kami, Damai, and Sarki

Roy (2005) asserted that by acquiring education one can enhance their human resources and can be empowered by uplifting their economic status. It can also help in raising social awareness, awareness of rights, can make one realize their responsibility of being a democratic citizen and can bring micro-level changes in their family and community. Therefore, attaining education becomes one of the essential factors for marginalized communities to meet their needs and overthrow the old customs and beliefs of the caste system. It also becomes the instrument of social mobility where one could gain upward mobility after receiving education and climbs the ladder of social status. Additionally, the educational schemes and scholarships introduced by the government for the Scheduled Castes worked like an opportunity that empowered them with free educational facilities (Radhakrishnan, et al 2018). The enrolment of the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki in different educational levels has been presented in Table 3.10.1.

Table 3.10.1. Educational Level of Kami, Damai, and Sarki

Sl. No.	Educational Level	Damai (Percentage)			Kami Percent			Sarki Percent		
		1961	1971	2001	1961	1971	2001	1961	1971	2001
	Year									
	Total	9366	8,544	10,082	19,851	22,015	31,195	3,296	3,846	5,454
1.	Illiterate	76.16%	55.8%	32.83%	79.90%	70.3%	35.47%	82.40%	71.06%	37.38%
3.	Literate without Educational Level	16.48%	14.08%	1.09%	14.62%	8.03%	1.22%	13.25%	5.53%	1.08%
5.	Primary	6.86%	26.75%	17.5%	4.77%	19.24%	17.22%	4.00%	21.4%	16.90%
7.	Matriculation /Secondary	0.43%	2.62%	7.51%	0.64%	2.04%	7.25%	0.33%	1.56%	6.36%
8.	Higher Secondary/ Senior Secondary			3.45%			2.73%			2.34%

9.	Non-Technical Diploma or certificate not Equal to Degree	0.03%	-----	0.01%	0.01%	-----	0.01%	-----	-----	0
10.	Technical Diploma or certificate not Equal to Degree	-----	0.11%	0.06%	0.02%	0.06%	0.06%	-----	0.02%	0.01%
11.	Graduation and Above	0.01%	0.62%	2.9%	0.01%	0.34%	2.81%	-----	0.39%	1.74%
12.	Technical Degree or Diploma Equal to Degree or Post Graduate Degree	-----	0.02%	-----		0.01%	-----	-----	0.02%	-----

Source: Census Report 1961, 1971, 2001* calculated above 7 years of age

Table 3.10.1 shows the community-wise percentage of Nepali SC categories enrolled in different educational levels for the years 1961, 1971, and 2001. The analysis of the census figure shows the percentage of illiterates among the three communities has considerably decreased over the subsequent decadal years. In case of the Damai community, the percentage of illiterates decreased from 76.16 percent to 32.83 percent in 2001. Similar trend has been noticed among Kami which has decreased from 80 percent to 35 percent and among the Sarki community, the percentage has come down from 82 percent to 37 percent within the same span of years. Similarly, there has also been a considerable decrease in the percentage of literate without educational level among the three communities.

That data indicates the highest percentage of enrolments of students is observed in the Primary level in the year 1971 among all the three communities i.e Damai (26.75 percent), Kami (19.24 percent) and Sarki (21.4 percent) which marginally decreased to 17.5 percent, 17.22 percent and 16.90 percent respectively by the year 2001. Similarly, an improvement in the percentage of enrolment was also noticed at the Matriculation level over the decadal years. For instance, the percentage of Matriculation among the Damai community has increased from 2.62 percent to 7.51 percent from 1971 to 2001. Similar increase in percentage was observed among the

Kami community i.e. from 2.04 percent in 1971 to 7.25 percent in 2001 and from 1.56 percent to 6.36 percent among Sarki during the same period.

In terms of higher education level of Graduation and above, there has been an improvement in the percentage among all three communities. The highest increase has been noticed from 0.01 percent to 2.9 percent among the Damai community, followed by 0.02 percent to 2.81 percent among the Kami community. Among the Sarki 1.74 percent was recorded at this level in 2001. In 1961 the percentage of Damai Graduate and above was 0.01 percent which consistently increased to 0.62 percent in 1971 and by 2001 the percentage increased to 2.9 percent indicating the increasing awareness of the importance of education among the excluded groups. Simultaneously, the increasing trend is also noticed in the percentage of Kami and Sarki communities

The overall analysis shows that there has been an improvement in all stages of education level over the decadal year. However, it is observed that the percentage of enrolment decreases at a higher level of education level. For instance, the percentage of enrolment is relatively less at Graduation level as compared to Higher Secondary Level. For example in 2001 the enrolment percentage belonging to the Damai community in the Higher Secondary level was 3.45 percent, while in the same year it was 2.9 percent in the Graduation level. Similar trend was observed among the Sarki community which was 2.34 percent in the Higher Secondary level while it was only 1.74 percent in Graduation. However, among the Kami community, the difference between the enrolment in the higher secondary (2.73 percent) and Graduation and above (2.81 percent) is minimal.

Although the percentage at the Graduation level is relatively less as compared to Higher Secondary level, when we compare the representation of the three

communities with their population percentage of the community, their representation in the higher educational level of graduation and above is not discouraging. Table 3.10.2 shows a comparative figure of Scheduled Castes of the district and a combined figure of three communities in different education levels in the year 2001.

Table 3.10.2. Educational Level of the Three Communities and District SC Percentage (above 7 years of age)

Sl. No.	Educational Level	Total Kami, Damai, Sarki Percent	District SC Percentage
	Year	2001	2001
	Total	19.5% (77037/100)	395023
1.	Illiterate	21.30%	31.06%
2.	Literate	39.35%	34.47%
3.	Literate without Educational Level	0.71%	0.91%
4.	Below Primary	12.63%	13.68%
5.	Primary	10.45%	9.46%
6.	Middle	7.73%	5.71%
7.	Matriculation	4.37%	2.82%
8.	Higher Secondary/ Senior Secondary	1.72%	0.94%
9.	Non-Technical Diploma or certificate not Equal to Degree	0.01%	0.003%
10.	Technical Diploma or certificate not Equal to Degree	0.03%	0.01%
11.	Graduation and Above	1.65%	0.89%

Source: Census of India 2001*calculated above 7 years

According to the Census of 2001, the Darjeeling district has in total fifty-nine lower castes enlisted in the Scheduled Caste category, among which a total 77,037 comprising 19.5 percent out of total 395023 Schedule Caste population belongs to

Kami, Damai, and Sarki community above 7 years of age (Table 3.10.2). The comparative analysis of three communities vis-à-vis total SC percentage indicates better scenario in all levels except the category of non-technical diploma. While 31.06 percent are illiterate the combined percentage of illiterate among three communities is much lower with 21.30 percent. In the category of literate, primary, middle, matriculation and higher secondary level, the combined percentage of three communities projects better picture than total SC percentage accept

For instance, in the Higher Secondary Level, the total percentage of Scheduled Caste enrollment is 0.94 percent while the total representation recorded of the three communities is 1.72 percent. Similar trend is observed in the Graduation level, where the total SC percentage of 0.89 percent is lower than the combined percentage of Kami, Damai, and Sarki (1.65 percent). In technical and non-technical diploma courses, not much variation was observed. The Census information gives an indication that the three communities have been able to access the benefit of reservation and educational scheme to some extent.

3.11. Educational schemes for Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling District

Concerning the educational development of the Scheduled Castes, the West Bengal Government has introduced major scholarship programs that are implemented through the Backward Classes Welfare Department in various districts.¹⁰ The scholarships provided by the State have been discussed in detail in chapter 2. However, the programs enlisted in the following section are the major schemes that have been implemented till date for the Scheduled Caste students in Darjeeling.

¹⁰Information obtained from Backward Classes Welfare Department Darjeeling

A. Pre-matric

- I. As discussed earlier Sikshashree is a new scheme in West Bengal which was introduced by merging the existing schemes of Book Grant and Maintenance grant and was implemented in 2014-15. The scheme was launched for Scheduled Caste day scholars' students who are enrolled in classes V to VIII in Government / Government aided schools.
- II. Hostel Charges for SC/ST students reading in Secondary stages and residing in the school attached Hostels: These hostels are attached to the Junior High or Secondary Schools and managed by the respective school authorities. This scheme provides an opportunity for SC/ST students to grow up in an ideal academic environment and without undertaking long journeys for attending schools. The quota for the school attached hostel for the Pre-Matric stage in Darjeeling is 190.
- III. The State Government provides two types of schemes (1) The Meritorious Scholarship for SC/ST students reading in Class V to X. (2) The Meritorious scholarship to SC/ST students reading in Classes IX to XII. The quota for the Merit Scholarship scheme as of 01.04.2014 is 12 for class V to X and 4 for class IX to XII.

B. Post-matric Scholarships:

- I. This Stipends or financial assistance is provided to the SC/ST students reading in Post-matric stage or Post-Secondary stage such as B.A., B.Sc., B.Com, M.A., M.Sc., M.Com, Polytechnic and Degree Colleges which has been discussed in detail in chapter 2.

There are different types of schemes granted to the Scheduled Castes student in the school. While some schemes are merit-based and has limited quota, other schemes are meant for all Scheduled Caste students. The students are given financial assistance after verifying their yearly ceiling of the family income. Every scheme that is provided to the students has a fixed duration that is a maximum of 12 months to a minimum of 10 months. Table 3.11.1 presents level-wise financial assistance granted to the Scheduled Caste students in Darjeeling.

Table 3.11.1. Rate of Grants under different Educational Schemes of Backward Classes Welfare Department (SC)

Sl.	<u>Name of the Scheme</u>	<u>Rate of Grant</u>		<u>Ceiling of Family Income</u>	<u>Quota if there be any</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1.	Sikshashree to SC	V- Rs 500/-p.a. VI- Rs 650/- p.a. VII- Rs 700/- p.a. VIII- Rs 800/- p.a.		Rs.2,50,000/- p.a.	No Quota	Once in a Year
2.	Hostel Grant for SC students Lodging in school attached Hostel	Rs.750/-p.m. per student		Rs.36,000/- p.a.	55,000	10 months in a year
3.	Ashram Hostel Grant for SC students reading Classes I to X	Rs.750/-p.m. per student +Rs.92/- p.m. for meeting other expenses		Rs.36,000/- p.a.	Number of students that can be accommodated	12 months
4.	Post-Matric Scholarship to SC	<u>Hosteller(p.m.)</u> State rate G.O.I. rate Gr. I Rs.1200/- p.m. Rs.1200/- p.m Gr. II Rs.820/- p.m. Rs.820/- p.m Gr.III Rs.750/- p.m. Rs.570/- p.m Gr. IV Rs.750/-p.m. Rs.380/-p.m	<u>Day Scholar</u> Rs.550/- p.m. Rs.530/- p.m. Rs.300/- p.m. Rs.230/- p.m.	Rs.2,50,000/- p.a. M.C.+Full Fees	No Quota	12 months
5.	Merit	V-VI-Rs.100/-p.mVII-VIII-		Rs.60,920/-	1962	12

	Scholarship (V-X) for SC Girls	Rs125/-p.m. IX-X-Rs.150/-p.m.		p.a.		months
6.	Merit Scholarship (X-XII) for SC	Rs.400/-p.m.		Rs.36,000/-p.a.	790	12 months
7.	Up-gradation of Merit for SC students (X-XII)	Package Grant of Rs.15,000/-p.a. per student		No Ceiling	368	10 months
8.	Unclean Occupation for Classes I-X (GOI & State Rate)	<u>Hosteller</u> III to X- Rs.700/-p.m. Ad-hoc Grant- Rs.1000/-p.a.	<u>Day Scholar</u> I toX- Rs.110/- p.m. Adhoc Grant- Rs.750/- p.a.	No Ceiling	No Quota	10 months
9.	Pre-Matric (SC) Scholarship for students belonging to SC (IX-X)	<u>Hosteller</u> GOI rate State rate Rs.350/-p.m. AdhocGrant: Rs.1000/-p.a.	<u>Day Scholar</u> Rs.150/- p.m. Rs.750/- p.a.	Rs.2,00,000/-p.a.	No Quota	10 months

Source: Backward Classes Welfare Department of Darjeeling.

Table 3.11.1 shows that under the scheme of Sikshashree, there is a class-wise variation in grants from class V to VIII. For instance while Rs.500/- p.a. is given to Class V (five) students, a class VI (six) student get an amount of Rs. 650/- p.a. The Class VII (seven) and Class VIII (eight) students receive a financial grant of Rs.700/- and Rs. 800 /-p.a. respectively. In the Hostel Grant Scheme an amount of Rs. 750/- p.m. is allotted to the Scheduled Caste students residing in the government hostel for ten months. Similar amount is granted in the Ashram Hostel Grant Scheme, however, an extra amount of Rs. 92/- p.m. is also granted in the scheme for twelve months. The eligibility criteria for availing this scheme is the family income where the maximum ceiling is fixed at Rs. 36,000/- p.a.

Another scholarship i.e. Post Matric scheme is a Centrally sponsored scheme that is implemented through State Government. The Scheme provides financial assistance to

the Scheduled Caste students studying in Class XI, XII, and above. The maintenance allowance amounting to Rs. 380/- to 1200/- per month is given to the hostellers and Rs. 230/- to 500/- per month for day scholars with the family income ceiling of Rs.2,50,000/-p.a.

Under Merit Scholarship (V-X) for SC girls, an amount of Rs.100/- p.m. is granted to classes V-VI students, Rs.125/- p.m. for classes VII-VIII, Rs.150/- p.m. for classes IX to X. Similarly Merit Scholarship amounting to Rs.400/- p.m is given to all SC students studying in (X-XII).

Another scheme i.e. scheme of Unclean Occupation is provided to students (Classes I-X) whose parents are engaged in the unclean occupation. This is also a Centrally sponsored scheme where 50 percent of the grant comes from the Government of India and the remaining 50 percent is granted by the State Government. The hostellers receive an amount of Rs. 700/- p.m. along with an ad-hoc grant of Rs.1000/- p.a. from classes III to X. While the day scholars receive an amount of Rs.110/- p.m. for ten months with an additional ad-hoc amount of Rs.750/- p.a. from classes I to X.

The Pre-Matric Scholarship is provided to Scheduled Caste students enrolled in Classes IX to X for ten months. The hostellers are granted an amount of Rs. 350/- p.m. along with the ad-hoc amount of Rs.1000/- p.a. while the day scholars are given Rs.150/- p.m. and Rs.750/- p.a. as an ad-hoc amount. The yearly income ceiling of the family should not exceed Rs.2,00,000/-. All the above-mentioned schemes are released by the Government of West Bengal in collaboration with the Government of India for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. It is necessary to mention that although the district has implemented the aforementioned scholarship schemes given by the

West Bengal Government, however, the Darjeeling (GTA) area¹¹ does not have Scheduled Caste government Hostels and Ashram Hostel facilities.

Additionally, there are other schemes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in which all the students including SC students are provided free books till class VIII and mid-day meal facility till class X which has managed to attract students from poor families.

3.12. Educational Scholarships for Higher Education in Darjeeling

Under the various scholarship schemes, the Scheduled Caste students pursuing higher education also receive the scholarships. They receive maintenance charges, other compulsory charges such as tuition fees, and grants for books, chemicals, equipment, etc. There is a stream-wise and grade-wise variation in the amount of the scholarship. Table 3.12.1 exhibits the scholarship amount granted by the West Bengal Government for various levels in higher education.

Table 3.12.1. Stream-wise and Grade-wise Scholarship Amount received by SC students

Sl. No.	Class/Year	Maintains Charge	Other Compulsory	Tuition Fee	Total
2	B. A (Hons) I Year	Rs. 3,300	Rs. 500	Rs. 900	Rs. 4,700
3	B.A (Hons) II Year & III Year	Rs. 3,300 (Rs. 7,500 with hostel)	Rs. 500	Rs. 900	Rs. 4,700 (Rs. 8,900 with hostel)
4	B.A. (Gen) I Year	Rs. 3,300	Rs. 500	Rs. 600	Rs. 4,400
5	B.A (Gen) II Year & III Year	Rs. 2,035	Rs. 500	Rs. 900 (Rs. 600 for III Year)	Rs. 3,435 (Rs. 3,135 for III Year)
6	B.Sc (Hons) I Year	Rs. 3,300	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,320	Rs. 5,120
7	B.Sc (Gen) I Year	Rs. 3,300	Rs. 500	Rs. 935	Rs. 4,735

¹¹Backward Class Welfare Department

8	B.Sc (Hons) II Year	Rs. 3,300	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,320	Rs. 5,120
9	B.Sc (Gen) II Year	Rs. 3,000	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,020	Rs. 4,520
10	B.Sc (Hons) III Year	Rs. 6,000 (Rs. 7,500 with hostel)	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,320	Rs. 7,820 (Rs. 9,320 with hostel)
11	B.Sc (Gen) III Year	Rs. 2,053	Rs. 600	Rs. 1,020	Rs. 3,555
12	M.A I Year & II Year	Rs. 6,360	Rs. 600	Rs. 1,500	Rs. 8,460
13	M.Sc I Year	Rs. 6,360	Rs. 700	Rs. 1,920	Rs. 8,980
14	M.Sc II Year	Rs. 3,960	Rs. 700	Rs. 1,920	Rs. 6,580
15	B.Com I Year	Rs. 3000	Rs. 500	Rs. 600	Rs. 4,100
16	B.Com II Year	Rs. 3,600	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,020	Rs. 5,120
17	B.Com III Year	Rs. 2, 035	Rs. 500	Rs. 1,200	Rs. 3,555
18	M.COM I Year	-----	Rs. 4,900	----	Rs, 4,900
19	CST ¹² I & II Year	Rs. 2,760	Rs. 200	-----	Rs. 2,960
20	CST III Year	Rs. 3,960	Rs. 600	Rs. 300	Rs. 4,860
21	DCE ¹³ DEE ¹⁴ I & II Year	Rs. 2,760 (Rs. 7,500 with hostel)	Rs. 200	-----	Rs. 2,960 (Rs. 7,700 with hostel)
22	DCE & DEE III Year	Rs. 3,960	Rs. 600	Rs.300	Rs. 4,860

Source: Backward Classes Welfare Department 2012-13, Darjeeling

As per the information received from Backward Classes Welfare Department 2012-13, a first-year student studying B. A (Hons) receives a scholarship amount of Rs. 4,700/- p.a., while the student pursuing B. Sc (Hons) Ist year receives higher amount of Rs. 5,120/- p.a. Similar variation has been observed in the B.A. General course where a B. A General student of 1st Year is allotted an amount of Rs. 4,400/- p.a., while the amount decreases to Rs.3, 435/- p.a, and Rs.3, 135 p.a in 2nd and 3rd year.

¹²Computer Science & Technology

¹³Diploma in Civil Engineering

¹⁴Diploma in Electrical Engineering

Similarly, a B.Sc General Course student receives Rs. 4735/- p.a. in 1st year which decreases to Rs.3,555 in the 3rd year.

The students studying M.A degree are allotted an amount of Rs.8, 460/- p.a. in both the 1st and 2nd year. While in M.Sc an amount of Rs.8, 980 p.a. is granted in the 1st year which reduces to Rs.6, 580 in the 2nd year. Similar trend has been noticed in the B.Com stream. in the CST (Computer Science & Technology) course, 1st and 2nd year students are granted an amount of Rs.2, 960/- p.a. which is the lowest amount so far mentioned but in 3rd year there is an increase in an amount to Rs.4, 860/- p.a. Similar pattern could be noticed in the DCE (Diploma in Civil Engineering) course and DEE (Diploma in Electrical Engineering) course.

Based on the above financial scheme, it is relevant to examine how many SC students in the district have been benefited from the financial scheme. Table 3.12.2 presents the number of SC students receiving the Scholarship under the above-mentioned scheme in the Darjeeling district.

Table 3.12.2. Number of SC students receiving Stipend in various colleges of Darjeeling

<u>Sl.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.	2006-07	-----	-----	475
2.	2007-08	293	200	493
3.	2008-09	279	143	422
4.	2009-10	268	204	472
5.	2010-11	191	209	400
6.	2011-12	272	238	510
7.	2012-13	245	278	523
8.	2013-14	420	269	689
9.	2014-15	233	338	571
	Total	2,201	1,879	4,555

Source: Backward Classes Welfare Department of Darjeeling.

As per the information received from the Backward Classes Welfare Department of Darjeeling a total of 4.555 students studying in various colleges of Darjeeling Hills have received stipend under various scheme from 2006-07 to 2014-15. The year-wise data shows the lowest number of students i.e. 400 has been recorded receiving stipend is in the year 2010-11. Whereas, the highest number of 689 students receiving stipend has been noticed in 2013-14. Nevertheless, there has been steady growth in the number of students receiving scholarships indicating that there is a growing awareness of the facility and students are availing the financial incentives which is a positive indication. With the above background information from the Backward Class Welfare Department of Darjeeling, an attempt was made to find out the number and percentage of SC students enrolled in three reputed colleges of Darjeeling i.e. Darjeeling Government College, South Field College and St. Joseph College.

Table 3.12.3. Enrollment of Scheduled Caste students in Colleges from 2015-16 to 2019-20

<u>Sl.</u>	<u>Names of College</u>	<u>Enrollment Years</u>	<u>Percent of SC Students</u>	<u>Total Number of Students</u>
1.	South Field College Darjeeling	2015-16	5.13%	292
		2016-17	9.25%	335
		2017-18	8.17%	269
		2018-19	8.45%	272
		2019-20	25.64%	273
2.	Darjeeling Government College	2015-16	4.4%	670
		2016-17	4.5%	780
		2017-18	1.5%	903
		2018-19	6.2%	675
		2019-20	---	---
3.	St. Joseph College Darjeeling	2015-16	6.38%	3,025
		2016-17	6.12%	2,222
		2017-18	6.78%	2,093
		2018-19	6.11%	2,435
		2019-20	9.06%	2,538

Source: South Field College, Darjeeling Government College, St. Joseph College Darjeeling. 2019

Table 3.12.3 presents the enrolment of SC students in three colleges of Darjeeling. It has been observed that the South Field College which is the reputed women's college in Darjeeling was able to exceed the allotted percentage of 22 percent with the highest enrolment of 25.64 percent of Scheduled Caste students in 2019-20 which shows significant increase from 5.13 percent in 2015-16 in the same college. In St. Joseph College Darjeeling the percentage of Scheduled Caste students enrollment for four consecutive years i.e. from 2015-19 was not more than 6 percent, however, in 2019-20 an increase to 9.06 percent could be noticed. In Darjeeling Government College, slight variation in the enrollment percentage could also be noticed over the year with the lowest percentage of 1.5 percent in 17-18 to the highest of 6.2 percent in 18-19. Overall, we could observe that although the allotted percentage of quota could not be filled but a gradual increase in the percentage of Scheduled Caste enrollment in higher education shows a positive indication. The increased percentage in South Field College which is the women's college in Darjeeling also shows that the community's perception towards girl's education has been gradually changing.

If schools are the foundation of building the role of an individual then higher education nourishes and sculptures one's social life and paves the way for employment. One's position in the employment sector determines one's socio-economic position and also indicates the degree of social mobility (Karade, 2009). Since the protective discrimination for SC under the Constitution of India also ensures reservation in employment, therefore, the upcoming section deals with the scenario of implementation of reservation policies in employment in Darjeeling hills.

3.13. Reservation in Services

The reservation facility in services was implemented in Darjeeling under the West Bengal Act XXVII of 1976 vide The West Bengal Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 1976, which was passed by the West Bengal Legislature under the notification of No. 1079-L-5th May 1976. However, this act does not cover employment under the Central Government and employment in the West Bengal Higher Judicial Services. Further, the act ensured that it was not applicable in any private and domestic services. Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in vacancies was to be filled only through direct recruitment. Whereas there were certain rules implemented regarding the reservation for a member of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in vacancies that was to be filled by promotion in any established post and was to be regulated in the following manner, therefore The Act states that;

- a) There shall be reservation at twenty-two percent, for the members of the Scheduled Castes and six percent for the members of the Scheduled Tribes; On the condition that the State Government must notification in the Official Gazette about the increase of the percentage, nevertheless, the increased reservation shall not exceed twenty-five percent in the case of the Scheduled Castes and ten percent in the case of the Scheduled Tribes. Further, the appointed on promotion to any unreserved vacancy in service or post if to be filled up by promotion may not be deducted from the reserved quota.
 - (a) There shall be no reservation in any post that exceeds the maximum pay scale of Rs. 18,300.
 - (b) The schedule also set out a separate fifty point roster shall be maintained (Compendium on Reservation for Scheduled Castes,

Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes of West Bengal Government, 2002).

The above-mentioned provisions also covered the Scheduled Castes of the Darjeeling hills to gain an appointment in the government sectors. Based on the data collected from the Superintendent Office of Police Darjeeling, Table 3.13.1 shows the record of Scheduled Castes who have managed to gain employment using reservation policy in the hills of Darjeeling.

Table 3.13.1. Appointment of three communities in various State Jobs (2017-2018)

Year	Nursing	Group 'D', LDC	Airport	West Bengal Police Services	Assistant Professor/Teacher	Medical	Mazdoor	Others	Total SCs	Total Appointment
2017	8	4	2	4	----	----	----	18	36 (5.5%)	655
2018	15	1	1	2	----	----	----	9	28 (6.43%)	435
2019	13	5	2	13	4	7	2	5	51 (6.81%)	748

Source: Superintendent Office, 2020

Table 3.13.1 presents the status of these three communities of Scheduled Castes in the employment sector in Darjeeling. The information shows the percentage of three communities in State government jobs which varies from the lowest percentage of 5.5 percent in 2017 to the highest of 6.81 percent in 2019. The present study area exhibits that although the percentage representation of three communities in the government jobs is comparatively low than the allotted 22 percent, nonetheless, when compared with their respective population percentage, it represents better status and the scenario is not discouraging. To supplement the above information Table 3.13.2 presents changing work patterns of Damai, Kami, and Sarki for the years 1961 and 1971.

Table 3.13.2. Changing work Patterns of Damai, Kami, and Sarki

Sl.No.	Workers	Damai		Kami		Sarki			
		Year		1961	1971	1961	1971	1961	1971
		Total	1961	1971	1961	1971	1961	1971	
1.	Total Workers	31.66%	29.54%	41.20%	31.01%	45.17%	46.30%		
2.	Cultivators	6.56%	4.42%	10.56%	4.71%	10.67%	13.54%		
3.	Agricultural Labourers	0.82%	2.70%	1.55%	3.24%	3.54%	3.97%		
4.	Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Plantations, Orchids and Allied activities	9.98%	11.32%	16.11%	10.79%	13.44%	12.29%		
5.	Construction	0.35%	0.84%	0.79%	0.30%	1.15%	1.56%		
6.	Trade and Commerce	0.91%	1.01%	1.25%	1.15%	1.82%	2.60%		
7.	Transport Storage and Communication	0.71%	1.83%	0.92%	1.98%	1.12%	2.75%		
8.	In Other Services	5.51%	4.03%	6.60%	5.83%	10.52%	7.64%		
9.	Non-Workers	63.26%	70.45%	58.79%	68.98%	54.82%	53.69%		
10.	Training and Currying of Hides and Skins	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.45%	-----		
11.	Scavenging	-----	-----	-----	-----	0.27%	-----		

Source: District Handbook 1961, 1971

Census 1961 and 1971 classified the work participation into various categories i.e. Cultivators, Agricultural Laborers, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Plantations, Orchids and Allied activities, Construction, Trade and Commerce, Transport Storage and Communication, Other Services, Non-Workers, Training and Currying of Hides and Skins, and Scavenging. The data shows a decreasing percentage of people following their traditional occupations i.e. 0.27 percent of Sarki in 1961 worked as scavengers which is one of their traditional occupations but in 1971 there was no such record found. It also demonstrates that during 1961 and 1971 a fair percentage of Kami, Damai, and Sarki was engaged in cultivation such as in 1961 there was 6.56 percent of Damai, 10.56 percent of Kami, and 10.67 percent of

the Sarki engaged in cultivation. However, in 1971 a decrease in this occupational category among the Kami and Damai community could be noticed, while the percentage of Sarki engaged in cultivation had increased to 13.54 percent.

Over the decade, an increase in percentage of Agricultural Laborers, Construction, Trade and Commerce and Transport Storage and Communication can be observed indicating the occupational diversification among the three communities. The Table also exhibits variation in the percentage of representation in works such as Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Plantations, Orchids, and Allied activities where the recorded percentage of Kami in 1961 was 16.11 percent which decreased to 10.79 percent in 1971. Similar trend was observed among the Sarki community, which has decreased from 13.44 percent to 12.29 percent indicating less dependence in the primary sector. Whereas, among the Damai community an increase in percentage could be noticed from 9.98 percent to 11.32 percent within the same decade. . The trend also shows that people from these three communities are engaged in other occupations like construction, trade and commerce, transport and communication. A significant percentage of all three communities have been represented in other services which vary from minimum of 4.03 percent among Damai to the highest of 7.64 percent among Sarki communities. The percentage of Kami in 'other service' category is 5.83 percent in 1971. In overall we could observe that there has been an occupational shift and diversification over the years among the three communities. Table 3.13.3 supplements the above data which presents the occupational category of Scheduled Caste in Darjeeling district for the census year 2001 and 2011.

Table 3.13.3. Distribution of Scheduled Castes in Main Work or Marginal Work

Year		SC Population of Main Workers	SC Population of Marginal Workers	Total
2001	Cultivator	77.7%	22.3%	17,995
	Agricultural Labourers	51.4%	48.6%	11,202
	Household Industries Workers	62.4%	37.6%	1,454
	Other Workers	86.6%	13.4%	52,755
	Non-Workers	-----	59.1%	120,764
	Total	79.5%	20.5%	204,170
2011	Cultivator	86.2%	13.8%	11,537
	Agricultural Labourers	61.6%	38.4%	13,935
	Household Industries Workers	65%	35%	3,608
	Other Workers	84.4%	15.6%	89446
	Non-Workers	-----	62.6%	198,749
	Total	81.3%	18.7%	317,275

Source: District Census Handbook Darjeeling, 2001 & 2011

The Census of 2001 and 2011 classified the Scheduled Castes occupational category into Main Workers and Marginal Workers. The Census defines the main workers as those who are engaged in any economic activity for more than 183 days (or six months), while the marginal workers are those who are not engaged in any economic activity for the major part of the year i.e. for 183 days (or six months). A comparison between 2001 and 2011 census shows that there has been an increase in the total numbers in absolute terms from 83,403 to 118,526 however, in the workers' category there has been a decrease in the main workers' category. The percentage of the total worker has also decreased from 40.9 percent in 2001 to 37.4 percent in 2011. As per the Census figure (Table 3.13.3), 79.5 percent of total workers among Scheduled Castes are engaged in the Main Workers category. While remaining 20.5 percent are in Marginal workers category. Occupation-wise in the category of cultivator shows

86.2 percent of SC main workers in 2011 while 13.8 percent of marginal workers. A comparison with 2001 figure shows, while there is an increase in percentage of main workers category, simultaneously there has been a decrease in the percentage of cultivators in marginal workers category. The decrease in the category of cultivators has also been noticed in absolute numbers from 17995 (2001) to 11537 (2011).

In the agricultural labour category, there has been an increase in the number of SC workers and percentage of main workers 61.6 percent in 2011 as compared to 51.4 percent in 2001 in this category. Nevertheless among the marginal workers, the percentage decreased from 48.6 percent in 2001 to 38.4 percent in 2011. This indicates that there has been an improvement in the percentage of those involved in economic activities for more than 183 days. There has been an increase in both absolute number and percentage of household industrial category in 2011 in the main workers' category which has improved from 62.4 percent to 65 percent within that decadal year. In the category of 'other workers' category, there has been an increase in terms of absolute number from 52,755 to 89446 however, there has been a decrease in the percentage of main workers in this category from 86.6 percent in 2001 to 84.4 percent in 2011. While there has been an increase in the marginal workers' category.

Overall we could observe that the percentage of main workers marginally increased to 81.3 percent in 2011 from 79.5 percent in 2001. Whereas, a decrease of 18.7 percent in 2011 from 20.5 percent among the marginal workers could be noticed. It is also noticeable that there has been an occupation shift and majority of Scheduled Castes apart from their traditional occupation are engaged in some other kind of productive economic activities for their livelihood.

3.14. Summary

The Education is conceptualized today as an area where investment can be made for the economic development of a society. It is also looked at as a sphere that will lead to the social mobility of communities. Reservation Policy was promoted as a developing indicator for the Kami, Damai, and Sarki, in Darjeeling which to some extent did fill its goal. Therefore, this chapter locates our study area according to the changing pattern and increasing demand of the social world. More, specifically, it presents the history of the struggle of Scheduled Castes to receive their rights, and it also analyzes the achievement of its implementation in the sector of education and employment. A socio-economic profile of the Scheduled Castes of the Nepali community is also discussed. It further discusses the use of the facilities provided by the government of India which shows a remarkable increase in the availing of the financial assessment but at times it decreases too. A brief history of Darjeeling and the ethnic composition of the people residing in the area are also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter IV

Reservation and its Impact in Darjeeling: An Empirical Analysis

1.1. Introduction

The introduction of the policy of reservation or Protective Discrimination in the Constitution of India in an attempt to secure social, economic, and political justice (Prasad, 2016) which was an attempt to bridge inequalities with equality in society (Ambedkar, 2008). According to Nityanath and Melkeri (2017), India's affirmative action affirms a percentage of seats as reserved in the public sector union and state civil services union and state government departments and in all public and private educational institutions. Reservation, as argued by Indria (2011), is seen as a policy instrument that seeks to correct the distortions in history and create a civil society which seeks to restore the democratic right, access to power and wealth to those who were not accepted in the mainstream society since ages and have been socially marginalized for many years. Further, she argued that mere provision of rule of law won't suffice as equality is not likely to be achieved unless groups that rank in the traditional system of stratified are purposively assisted to leap across the gap that separates them from others.

The impact of reservation on the socio-economic life of the Scheduled Caste communities has always been debatable. Chitnis (1997) pointed out that after about two to three decades of the implementation of the policy of protective discrimination, the parameters of the situation have changed and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are no longer as uniformly backward, as they had been since the constitutional provisions for preferential facilities for them were made. Individuals from several of the castes/tribes included in the Scheduled have moved up-in terms of education,

employment, occupational and economic status and now emerged as lower-middle or middle classes and have been able to make space in all-India services such as the I.A.S., occupy high political office consequently moving up to be part of the upper-class elite showing signs of upward social mobility. Similarly, Halder (2019) attributes reservation policy for whatever little social mobility the excluded group could experience in various spheres of life like economic, academic, and political. Therefore, the reservation is argued to have elevated an individual's social position in society. However, there are studies which pointed out different perspectives. The studies by Thorat and Senapati (2006) substantiated the argument by stating that after the introduction of reservation policy there has been an increase in the percentage of government employees among the Scheduled Castes but there are considerable variations found among different groups of jobs. For example, the quota in Group C and D jobs is close to the stipulation but in the case of group A and B jobs it is always less. Weisskope (2004) points out the even after granting quota in higher educational institutions the reserved seats remain unfulfilled. Similar issue was highlighted by Verma (2011) where he discussed the problem of the backlog of vacancies rising in most states of India.

In this backdrop, based on the primary information collected in the field areas in Darjeeling, the present chapter attempts to examine the impact of reservation policy on socio-economic life and assess if there are any traces of social mobility among the Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling as Chitnis (1997) claimed in his study.

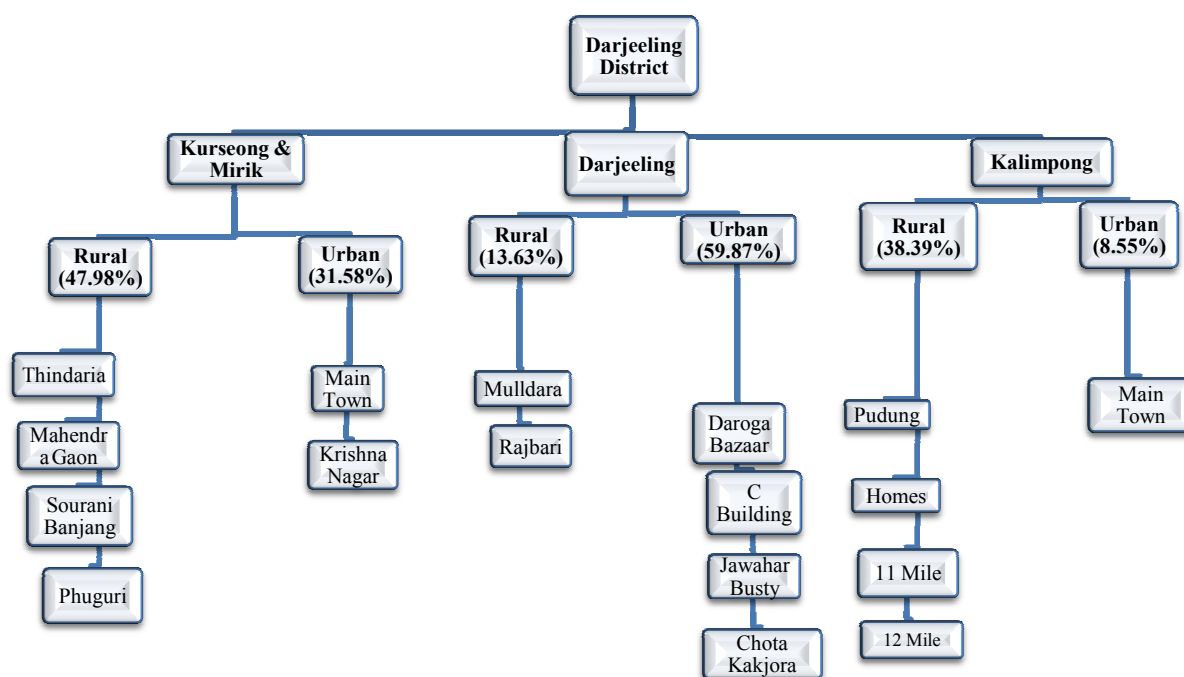
4.2. Field Area

The field setting for the present study has been selected from Darjeeling and its sub-divisions i.e. Sadar Darjeeling, Kurseong and Mirik (Kurseong sub-division) and Kalimpong. Although Kalimpong is a separate district since February 2017, since the

Census of 2011 has been used as reference, it has taken Kalimpong as a sub-division in the context of the present study. The areas selected for the fieldwork are both from the Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU) and the municipality areas. The prime focuses of the study are the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki who reside in the district and are enlisted in the SC category. The Scheduled Castes population of the district is 17.8 percent out of which the three communities accounts to 4.55 percent of the total district's population as per 2011 Census.

Taking into consideration the Scheduled Caste population concentration in the district, using purposive and clustered sampling, the fieldwork was conducted in the areas where the maximum concentrations of SCs are found. Both panchayat and municipality areas were selected to understand the rural and urban scenario. To give proper representations to all three groups of Scheduled Castes in the Nepali community, samples were drawn from all three social groups. The sample size for the present study is 350 comprising three communities viz, Kami, Damai, and Sarki. An open-ended interview schedule was framed for the members of the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste association and officials of Darjeeling which was supplemented by interview and focus group discussion. Further, with the help of the semi-structured interview schedule comprising both closed and open-ended questions which was administered to the respondents, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. For more qualitative understanding an in-depth interview was conducted for the collection of narratives and case studies.

Figure 4.2.1. Field areas and Sampled population



Source: Fieldwork, 2016-17

Figure 4.2.1 presents the GPU wise and Municipality wise selection of field areas for the study i.e. from Darjeeling, Kurseong, Mirik, and Kalimpong. From Urban areas, seven municipality areas were selected from three sub-division, taking into consideration the availability of more Scheduled Caste population concentration. The highest respondents of 59.87 percent from Urban areas were taken from Darjeeling comprising Chota Kakjora, ‘C’ Building, Jawahar Busty, and Daroga Bazaar. Another 31.58 percent was taken from Main Town (Kurseong) and Krishna Nagar (Mirik). The least 8.55 percent of urban respondents represents from the Main Town Kalimpong.

Whereas from the rural areas and panchayat units, the highest i.e. 47.98 percent was taken Thindaria, Mahendra Gaon, Sourani Banjang and Phuguri from Kurseong

(Mirik) subdivision. Another 38.39 percent of rural respondents were taken from Pudung, Homes, 11th, and 12th Mile from Kalimpong. The least rural sample percent of 13.63 percent are from Mulldara and Rajbari in Darjeeling.

4.3. Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

To examine the objectives of the present study, the socio-economic background of the respondents of the three communities has been analyzed. Both the socio-economic parameters and variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, the occupational background, income level of the respondents have been taken into consideration to assess the impact of reservation policy in a comprehensive way. In addition, the nature of the occupational shift, intergenerational mobility, etc. has also been examined in the following section.

4.3.1. Caste –wise Break up of Respondents

As discussed in chapter three the Nepali caste system is divided in hierarchical divisions i.e. Brahmin, Kastriya, Vaisya and Shudra (Roy, 2016). The Kami, Damai and Sarki communities occupy the lower position in caste hierarchy and traditionally were socially excluded groups. Table 4.3.1 presents the caste-wise break-up of the respondents.

Table 4.3.1. Caste –wise Break up of Respondents

District	Sub-Caste			Total
	Kami	Damai	Sarki	
Darjeeling	25 (21.9%)	70 (61.4%)	19 (16.7%)	114 (100%)
Kalimpong	40 (33%)	43 (35.5%)	38 (31.4%)	121 (100%)
Kurseong (Mirik)	47 (40.9%)	16 (13.9%)	52 (45.2%)	115 (100%)
Total	112 (32%)	129 (36.85%)	109 (31.14%)	350 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

The total population of the communities according to Census of 2011 is 84,110 constituting 4.6 percent comprising 62.0 percent Kami, 21.8 percent Damai and 16.2 percent Sarki. Table 4.3.1 indicates that out of 350 respondents 32 percent belonged to Kami community constituting 21.9 percent from Darjeeling, 33 percent from Kalimpong, and 40.9 percent from Kurseong (Mirik). The highest percentage of 36.85 percent respondents are from the Damai community comprising 61.4 percent from Darjeeling, 35.5 percent from Kalimpong, and 13.9 percent from Kurseong (Mirik). The remaining 31.14 percent of respondents are from the Sarki community which consists of the lowest percentage among all three communities. Among them 16.7 percent are from Darjeeling, 31.4 percent from Kalimpong, 45.2 percent are from Kurseong (Mirik).

4.3.2. Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender is an important variable to understand the Indian social structure which is additionally affected by the socio-cultural and economic circumstances. It is also an important component for the development of the society. Further, it helps us to understand how social norms and power structure impact on the lives and

opportunities available for both men and women. Therefore, the data has been segregated gender-wise for the proposed study.

Table 4.3.2. Gender-wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	228	65.1%
Female	122	34.9%
Total	350	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-17

Table 4.3.2 presents the gender-wise distribution of the respondents. According to the census of 2011, the district of Darjeeling consists of 50.7 percent of Male and 49.3 percent of Female. We can observe that the majority of the respondents are male consisting of 65.14 percent in total while the remaining 34.86 percent is female. The reason behind this variation is while conducting fieldwork an air of awkwardness was noticed among the female respondents. They would either prefer to answer close-ended questions or would call the male member of their family to answer the queries. Therefore, as a result, the analysis of data represents less number of female respondents. To have a better understanding of the perspective and impact of reservation on the three communities it is important to understand the scenario in both urban and rural settings. Hence, the following section shows the rural-urban break-up of the area.

4.3.3. Rural-Urban Break-Up

Darjeeling being a hilly district mainly comprises both rural areas and urban areas. Therefore, Table 4.3.3 shows rural-urban background of respondents in order to understand the rural-urban scenario of impact of the reservation policy.

Table 4.3.3. Rural-Urban Distribution of Respondents

Area	Number	Percentage
Rural	198	56.6%
Urban	152	43.4%
Total	350	100%

Source: Field survey, 2016-17

In the Darjeeling hills, the area covered by the urban or municipality area (39.4 percent) is very compact and densely populated. Out of 350 respondents, 43.4 percent of respondents are taken from the town of three sub-division of Darjeeling i.e. Kurseong (and Mirik), Kalimpong, and Sadar Darjeeling. Sadar Darjeeling contains in total thirty-two wards from which five wards were taken i.e. wards number fourteen Jawahar Busty, Chowk Bazaar, and 'C' Building ward number one, Chota Kakjora ward number sixteen, and Rajbari (upper) ward number ten. In Kurseong there are twenty wards in total from which one ward is taken due to the maximum concentration of Scheduled Castes population i.e. the main town. Similarly, Mirik has a total of nine wards here too only one ward Krishna Nagar has been selected. In Kalimpong, out of twenty-three municipality wards two wards i.e. the main town and hospital dara has been taken. As there are many educated groups, educational institutions, government offices and social organizations situated in the urban area therefore, 43.4 percent of data was collected from the urban area of the district.

The total of 60.6 percent of total population resides in the rural area of the district. As against 43.4 percent of urban respondents, 56.6 percent of respondents were selected from the rural area or the panchayat areas. In total Darjeeling has fifty-gram panchayats out of which two-gram panchayat areas i.e. Mull Dara and Rajbari (lower), from Kalimpong out of forty-two-gram panchayat four villages i.e. Pudung, Homes, 11th mile and 12th mile and from Kurseong out of fourteen panchayats unit,

Tindaria village and from Mirik Mahendra Gaon, Sourani Banjang, and Phuguri out of six-gram panchayats unit have been selected for the study.¹⁵

4.3.4. Age Wise Distribution of Respondents

Age is an important component in the designing and planning of research, as it is considered to be one of the important variables to understand an individuals' point of view and issues. It is looked at as a dimension from where the intergenerational variation of thought process, mobility, etc. could be understood. Therefore, it is one of the important variables that help to understand the impact of the implementation of reservation policy upon the distinct age categories of the people.

Table 4.3.4. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	15-29	19 (54.29%)	16 (45.71%)	35 (10%)
	30-45	77 (65.81%)	40 (34.19%)	117 (33.42%)
	46-60	84 (64.62%)	46 (35.38%)	130 (37.14%)
	60 Above	48 (70.59%)	20 (29.41%)	68 (19.42%)
Total		228	122	350

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Table 4.3.4 shows the age-wise distribution of respondents. Age categories between 30-45 and 46-60 were the prime focus which represents 33.42 percent and 37.14 percent respectively. The main aim of selecting this age group of people was because they would either be engaged in work or have completed pursuing higher education and is significant to understand reservation issues both in education and employment.

¹⁵District Census Handbook Darjeeling 2011

Further, 19.42 percent of people belonging to the age group of 60 and above were studied to know about the intergenerational variation, old caste scenario and also to know about the history of reservation for Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling. A total of 10 percent of people belonging to the age group of 15-29 were interviewed as this age category comprises a population who are either engaged in education and employment and also this age group represents the young generation who are more active and familiar with the information technology that can contribute to more awareness among this age category; hence were purposively selected.

4.3.5. Educational Level of Respondents

Education is the means of empowerment and it is widely regarded as a liberating form of various inequalities. Education provides opportunities to individuals' which elevates one's socio-economic status. According to Shah (2012) in the modern society, the educational system has two main functions i.e. transmission of the cultural heritage to the new generation and empowering the new generations to acquire quality to change in the society. Türkkahraman (2012), similarly argued that community development is overall development and the educational system and economy are two closely related social institutions which ultimately led to community development. Sen (2003) states that education plays an instrumental role in facilitating people's capacity to participate in decision-making processes at various levels. It refers to its empowering and distributive role and asserts that education can redress injustice by facilitating the ability of participation in social and political arrangements to the disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded group. Further with the help of education, people can help others as well as themselves. Gang et al (2012), discussed the increasing importance of education among the SCs in the urban sectors in Karnataka that resulted in the upward social mobility of the community. Similar

type of upward mobility is traced in a study conducted by Elhini and Moursi (2015) where the study reveals education to be a major step for an individual's achievement. Education is an important variable while conducting research because it enables the researcher to understand the social scenario and the respondents' understandings and ways of perceiving the society. In this backdrop, Table 4.3.5 presents the educational level of the respondents.

Table 4.3.5. Educational Level of Respondents

Respondents Education	Age				Total
	15-29	30-45	46-60	61 above	
Illiterate	0	7(5.8%)	14(10.4%)	14(22.9%)	35(10%)
Literate	2(5.8%)	12(10%)	17(12.6%)	13(21.3%)	44(12.6%)
Primary (I-V)	3(8.8%)	30(25%)	22(16.3%)	10(16.4%)	65(18.6%)
Upper-Primary (VI-VIII)	5(14.7%)	31(25.8%)	29(21.5%)	9(14.7%)	74(21.1%)
Secondary (IX-X)	5(14.7%)	9(7.5%)	22(16.3%)	6(.8%)	42(12%)
Higher Secondary (XI-XII)	8(23.5%)	20(16.6%)	15(11.1%)	4(6.5%)	47(13.4%)
Graduation	6(17.6%)	11(9.1%)	10(7.4%)	2(3.3%)	29(8.3%)
Post-Graduation	3(8.8%)	0	6(4.4%)	3(4.9%)	12(3.4%)
M.Phil/Ph.D	2(5.8%)	0	0	0	2(0.6%)
Total	34 (100%) (9.7%)	120 (100%) (34.3%)	135 (100%) (38.6%)	61 (100%) (17.4%)	350 (100%) (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

According to Table 4.3.5, the highest percentage of respondents are found in the age-group of 46-60 (38.6%) followed by the age-category of 30-45 years (34.3%). The respondents above 61 years comprise 17.4 percent and the young generation in the age-group of 15-29 years accounts to 9.7 percent. Educational level-wise the highest 22.9 percent of the total respondents in the illiterate category are elderly respondents

in the age-group of 61 and above. This group of the respondent had never been to school and was unlikely to attend the school which demonstrates the zone one type¹⁶ of exclusion. According to the framework developed by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transition and Equity (Details in Chapter 1) zone one type of exclusion basically refers to the exclusion where an individual has never been to school and also willingly does not enroll in schools due to various structural reasons. The illiteracy level among the lower age-group is less and there is no respondent with illiteracy in the 15-29 years age-category. The highest percentage of respondents (21.1percent) is found in the upper-primary level followed by primary level (18.6 percent). Combining the total percentage, 25.4 percent of respondents have an educational level of Secondary and Senior Secondary. 12 percent of total respondents have obtained higher education comprising Graduation, Post-Graduation, M.Phil and Ph.D. The highest percentage in Graduation (17.6 percent), Post-Graduation (8.8 percent) and M.Phil/Ph.D (5.8 percent) are found in the age-category of 15-29 years, although there are respondents in Graduation and Post-Graduation in higher age-categories also.

The Table further highlights that the fact of the highest percentage of 21.1 percent of respondents in the educational level of VI-VIII (upper primary) corresponds to zone four¹⁷ of type of exclusion as these groups of the respondent had either failed to gain access for the secondary level of education or either could not afford. Das (2015) asserts that one of the key reasons for the low representation of school participation is the cost of education as a result of which we witness a high percentage of dropped

¹⁶The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity has developed a framework of 'Zones of Exclusion' which are divided into six different zones. It examines access and describes the various spaces where cohorts of children are included, excluded, or are at risk of exclusion.

¹⁷ibid

out. However, one positive indication among the three communities is that among the age-group of 15-29 years, a total of 5.8 percent of respondents have either opted or pursuing higher studies such as M.Phil/Ph.D indicating educational mobility among the community.

4.3.6. Respondent's Occupational Distribution

Occupation determines one's economic status which affects the lifestyle of an individual. Therefore, it is very important to know the occupational background of the respondents in determining the socio-economic status of the individual and their class position in the society. For Marx, a social class is a cluster of people who perform similar functions in the organization of production. It is determined not by occupation or income but by the position an individual occupies and the function he performs in the process of production (Abraham, 1985). For Weber class and status merely presented two different spheres i.e. class represents economic sphere and is stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods, whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life (ibid, 1985). However, in a caste-based society of India, an individual's traditional or customary occupation determines one's class and status in the society which is rooted in caste. Drawing legitimacy from the social order based on the caste system, the dominant groups often practiced discrimination and subjugation that lends credence to concept of Cultural hegemony where the Scheduled Castes due to their low position in the occupational hierarchy (Ambedkar, 2012) had to face domination and discrimination. In this backdrop Table, 4.3.6 examines the occupational status of the respondent in an attempt to understand whether reservation policy has generated any kind of occupational mobility or not.

Table 4.3.6. Respondent's Occupation

Occupations		Male	Female	Total	Percent
No Job		17	57	74	21.1%
Government Sector	'A' Group	6	0	6	1.7%
	'B' Group	9	3	12	3.4%
	'C' Group	33	14	47	13.4%
	'D' Group	21	11	32	9.1%
	Total	69 (71.1%)	28 (28.9%)	97 (100%)	27.6%
Private Sector	Company	34	16	50	14.3%
	Sales	4	1	5	1.4%
	Hotel	2	2	4	1.1%
Total		40 (67.8%)	19 (32.2%)	59 (100%)	16.8%
Self Enterprises	Traditional	36	1	37	10.6%
	Business	44	14	58	16.6%
	Wage and Agriculture Labour	22	3	25	7.1%
Total		228	122	350	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Table 4.3.6 shows the respondent's occupations are divided into four main categories such as those without job, Government service, Employment in Private sector and Self-enterprises. As per the Public Service Commission, West Bengal Advertisement No.- 22 /2019 employment in the government is classified into four categories viz; Group 'A'¹⁸, Group 'B'¹⁹, Group 'C'²⁰ and Group 'D'²¹. A small section of respondents comprises the daily wage-labourer working in the construction and agricultural sector.

¹⁸West Bengal Civil Service (Executive), Assistant Commissioner of Revenue in the integrated West Bengal Revenue Service, West Bengal Food and Supplies Service, West Bengal Co-operative Service, West Bengal Employment Service [Except the post of Employment Officer (Technical)]

¹⁹West Bengal Police Services

²⁰Joint Block Development Officers, Superintendent, District Correctional Home / Deputy Superintendent, Central Correctional Home, West Bengal Subordinate Land Revenue Service, Grade-I, Assistant Commercial Tax Officer

²¹Peon, Orderly Peon, Night Guard, Darwan, etc. Private services include jobs in private Companies, Sales, and Hotels. Self-enterprises in the study include business, traditional occupation.

Darjeeling being a small district has to face many social issues and one such issue is unemployment. The collected data shows that 21.1 percent comprising three SC communities' respondents are without job which is the highest percentage recorded in Table 4.3.6. The category without job has been taken to understand the nature of exclusion as well as to examine if they have ever heard, know or are aware about the reservation policy. The category of government employment has a fair number of representations comprising the highest 27.6 percent of the respondents. In this category, Group 'C' and 'D' accounts to 22.5 percent of the total respondents, while the higher grade jobs in the category of Group 'A' and 'B' has relatively less number of representations accounting to combined figure of 5.1 percent taking 1.7 percent (Group 'A') and 3.4 percent (Group B) respectively. Another 16.8 percent of the total respondents are employed in the private sector, out of which 14.3 percent are enrolled in private companies, 1.4 percent are salespersons in various enterprises and another 1.1 percent works in hotels. Among other occupations, there are still a group of respondents who were neither engaged in government or private services but involved in self enterprises like business (16.6 percent), wage and agricultural labour (7.1 percent). The majority of the respondents belonging to this category was people who were unable to receive education or is either illiterate and consequently they could not pursue any job, which requires educational qualification and professional skills. Some of the respondents claimed that due to lack of opportunity, they did not opt for jobs while some pointed low economic status and unstable income as for not being able to pursue a secured job. Therefore, there were no occupational choices due to a lack of education opportunities and skills, which resulted in lack of occupational choices. Interestingly, among the Self-enterprises, the remaining 10.6 percent of respondents

were still engaged in traditional occupations like shoemaking, tailoring, and making utensils and this group comprises the respondents above 46 years.

4.3.7. Monthly Income of the Respondents

Income is one of the important variables in determining the socio-economic status of an individual. According to Kim (2017), the economic status of a family plays an important role in achieving higher social status which also influences the quality of life. In the present study, the respondents' income has been classified into five different income levels which would help us to determine the economic status of the respondents.

Table 4.3.7. Respondents' Monthly Income

Monthly Income (In Rs.)	Total	Percent
No Income	64	18.3%
1,000-5,000	19	5.4%
6,000-10,000	6	1.7%
11,000-20,000	16	4.6%
21,000-30,000	39	11.1%
31,000-40,000	149	42.6%
41,000-50,000	50	14.3%
51,000 above	7	2%
	350	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

According to Table 4.3.7, presents the monthly income level of the respondents. The highest 42.6 percent of respondents have an income level of Rs 31,000-40,000, This category comprises Group 'C' government services, business, private company workers, and shop-owners. Taking the combined figure of highest income categories above 41,000 and 51,000 thousand per month, 16.3 percent of respondents are

engaged in Large Business, employees in Company and Group 'A' and 'B' government employees. A significant 18.3 percent of respondents do not have any source of income and are categorised as 'no income group' that includes students and unemployed who were dependent on their parents or family incomes. Another 5.4 percent of respondents earned the lowest monthly income of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 5,000 per month. These categories were mostly those engaged in wage-labour occasionally, who had low educational levels and could not opt for a better job. Respondents who worked in private farms, agricultural labourers, and sales earned an amount varying between Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 10,000 comprising 1.7 percent of the total respondents. The remaining 4.6 percent of respondents earned a monthly income between Rs.11,000/- to 20,000/- that comprised mostly the group 'D' government servant or private company workers. Many respondents' in the service sector stated that the employment have provided them access to better social status in society and better lifestyle.

4.4. Intergenerational Mobility in terms of Education

Before discussing intergenerational mobility, we need to conceptualize social mobility which would help us to understand intergenerational mobility. Sorokin broadly defines social mobility as 'any transition of an individual or social object or value-anything that has been created or modified by human activity-from one social position to another' (Abraham, and Morgan, 1985). Barber Westoff, et al, (1960) conceptualized social mobility 'to mean movement, either upward or downward, between higher and lower social classes'. Crossman (2019) described social mobility as the ability of individuals, families, or groups to move up or down the social ladder in a society, such as moving from low-income to middle-class. Social mobility in that sense means shifting of social position within the society which would give way to an egalitarian society.

Taking this perspective, intergenerational mobility refers to social mobility that reflects the extent to which individuals move up (or down) the social ladder as compared to their parents (OECD²², 2010). Therefore, intergenerational social mobility refers to the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the status their children attain as adults (ibid, 2010)²³. It is conceptualized as an association between parents' and children's economic sources and social status that determines future generations' social status. Although there are different socio-economic measures captured to examine mobility however, according to Torche (2013) few and most common measures among them are social class, occupational status, individual earning, and family earning. Majumder (2010) argued that intergenerational mobility related to education and occupation is low in developing countries and further pointed out that some groups are excluded from the income-earning opportunities due to which various discriminations takes place in society; therefore, this exclusion transcends the boundary of the current generation and spills over to successive generations. Since the present study has taken education and occupation as the parameter to measure the extent of intergenerational mobility, the following section attempts to understand the pattern of intergenerational educational mobility.

Education is an indicator of social status and can be used to measure the intergenerational mobility of the educational level of the respondents along with their parents. Plewis and Bartley, (2014) while pointing out the importance of educational attainment, claimed that if the parents had a good educational qualification and good income sources their children and grand-children were automatically eligible for good

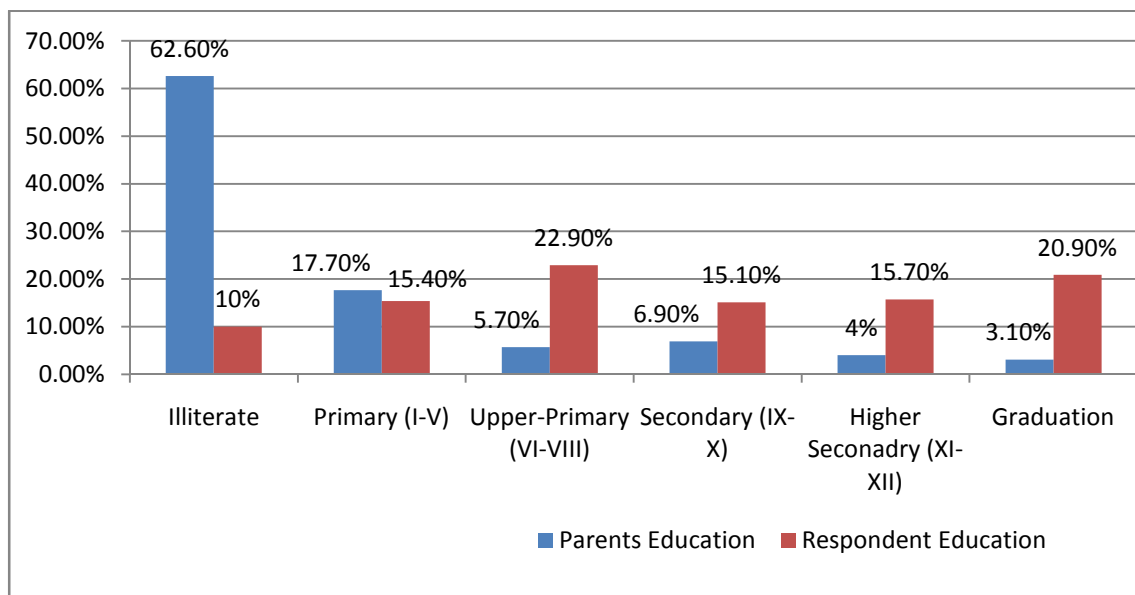
²²Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Economic Policy reforms; Going for Growth

²³ibid

educational qualifications. Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu (1992) pointed out that an individual's habitus is attributed by the cultural capital that determines his/her future social position. This is because the habitus ensures the active presence of past experience which unknowingly governs our thought and is deep-rooted in the cultural attribution of the social environment that one resides in. However, habitus being flexible is open for restructuring, education in the form of the cultural capital can restructure the habitus.

Therefore, Figure 4.4.1 demonstrates a comparison of the educational level between the parents and respondents.

Figure 4.4.1. Educational Levels of Parents and Respondents



Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Figure 4.4.1 presents the comparative assessment of the educational attainment of parents and respondents. Empirically the total illiterate percentage recorded among the parents is much higher that stands at 62.6 percent in comparison to the respondent's generation which shows only 10 percent. This indicates that mobility has been observed in terms of educational attainment.

In terms of attainment up to the Primary level, 17.7 percent of parents' generation had attended school till the primary level whereas the percentage among the respondents who attained the primary level of education was only 15.4 percent. This percentage comprises respondents who had to drop out due to financial insufficiency and bearing of early family responsibility deprived them of educational opportunities and could not pursue higher education. This corresponds to Bourdieu's argument that habitus that was structured in the past unknowingly determines the respondents' way of living and present circumstances, especially family upbringing and educational attainment. The empirical data shows that among the respondents, 22.90 percent has received education till Upper-Primary (VI-VIII) when it was only 5.70 percent of parents who had availed education until this level. A significant 15.10 percent of respondents had managed to receive education till Secondary level (IX-X) while it was 6.90 percent of the parents who had opted for education till this level. Another indicator of intergenerational mobility in terms of education is the fact that 15.70 percent of respondents had attended education till Higher Secondary level (XI-XII) whereas it was only 4 percent of parents who were able to receive education till this level. Finally, an interesting positive observation in terms of upward mobility is that 20.9 percent of the respondents could achieve higher education whereas it is only 3.1 percent in the case of parents who could attend higher education. When asked about the reason for not pursuing higher education to the parents' generation, the majority of them stated financial insufficiency, lack of proper information and educational infrastructure in nearby areas to be the major constraining factors. Education is one of the important tools to measure social mobility and from the above empirical situation, it is evident that intergenerational mobility in education among the three communities in Darjeeling is taking place. Azam, et al (2012) also highlighted similar findings and

stated that the average intergenerational correlation in education for India is higher than the global correlation.

4.4.1. Gender Gap in Education

Gender inequality in education is one of the highlighted issues in India especially in the rural areas and in the families whose socio-economic background is low where the major victims are girls (White, Ruther, & Kahn, 2015). According to Census 2011 India, the women constitute 48.5 percent of the total population and out of total women population 65.5 percent of women are literate while it is 82.1 percent of men who are literate. Gender inequality is structurally rooted and results from the norms that married women will carry out domestic and child-rearing work in the family (Toomey, 1989) that result in low levels of literacy and education among the women. Table 4.5.2 presents gender gap among the parents and the respondents' generation.

Table 4.4.1. Respondents Parent Educational level along with gender

Level	Parents		Respondents	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Illiterate	58.3%	63.1%	9.2%	11.5%
Literate	13.7%	3.7%	12.7%	12.3%
Primary (I-V)	10.6%	14.9%	18%	19.7%
Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	6%	9.7%	23.2%	17.2%
Secondary (IX-X)	6.6%	4%	11.4%	13.1%
Higher Secondary (XI-XII)	2.6%	3.1%	13.6%	13.1%
Graduation	2%	1.1%	9.2%	6.6%
Masters	0.3%	0.3%	2.6%	4.9%
M.Phil	---	---	---	1.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

The analysis shows that the trend of gender gap is minimal among the respondents. It is observed that the gender gap in all levels exists among the parents' generation and except in Primary and Upper-Primary level women are located in disadvantageous

positions. The highest percentage of gap among the parents' generation is noticed in the illiterate category were in comparison to father's illiteracy rate (58.3 percent) the mother's illiteracy is more (63.1 percent). On inquiring about the low literacy rate among the mothers, they stated that due to many numbers of children and economic insufficiency, their parents preferred to send male children to the school than the female child. Further, as discussed earlier they pointed out that unavailability of schools in the locality was the other main reason for their illiteracy. In the Primary, Upper-Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary in comparison to Male (father) the percentage of Female (mother) percentage is more. There is not much variation observed in the Graduation category among the parents' generation with 2 percent of father and 1.1 percent of mother while in the Post-Graduate category with 0.3 percent both for male and female, no gender gap has been noticed.

Among the respondents, we could notice that except in Upper-Primary and Graduation level the percentage of female respondents enrolled is higher than the male respondents. For instance in the Post-Graduation level in comparison to the male respondents (2.6 percent), the female percentage enrolled in this category is more (4.9 percent). Further, it could be observed that 1.6 percent of female respondents were able to pursue M.Phil/Ph.D whereas among the total respondents there were no male respondents who had pursued this degree. However, in the illiteracy category gender gap exists with higher 11.5 percent of females as compared to 9.2 percent males. In overall, the data shows an improvement with shrinking gender gap and illiteracy in respondents' generation.

4.5. Intergenerational Occupational Mobility among the Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling

According to Plewis, and Bartley, (2014) children from working-class backgrounds do not go to a good school and have lower educational qualifications in comparison to middle-class peers. Hence, this results in less accessibility to job opportunities due to which the degree of upward social mobility decreases. Discussing the measures of mobility Westoff, Bressler, & Sagi (1960) regard occupational mobility, as one of the important indicators of social mobility. Similarly, Torche (2013) and Nazimuddin (2014) discuss different indicators of social mobility among which occupational mobility is regarded to be the major reason for an individual's upward mobility in a society. Sharma (2011) in his article took the occupational opportunity to be the key element for social mobility which can change an individuals' social status. Contextually locating, social mobility refers to the movement of an individual, family, and community from one social position to others which could either be upward or downward.

Table 4.5.1. Comparison of Job Status of Respondents and their Parents

Occupation		Parents	Respondents
Without Job		1.7%	21.1%
Government Sector	Group A	---	1.7%
	Group B	0.3%	3.4%
	Group C	2%	13.4%
	Group D	4.6%	9.1%
	Total	6.9%	27.6%
Private Sector	Company	24.9%	14.3%
	Sales	5.1%	1.4%
	Hotel	17.4%	1.1%
	Total	47.4%	16.8%
Business		---	16.6%
Wage and Agriculture Labour		0.9%	7.1%

Traditional	43.1%	10.6%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Empirically locating, a comparison of occupational status between respondents' and parents' has been presented in Table 4.5.1 which exhibits the level of occupational change and mobility. The highest percentage of 47.4 percent of parents' generation is engaged in the private sector. This is because due to low education, skill and financial insufficiency, these parents in rural areas worked as labourers and in other capacities in tea gardens (24.9 percent) or in the housing department of hotels (17.4 percent) and in sales section (5.1 percent). Whereas among the respondents' generation it was only 16.8 percent of respondents who worked in this category.

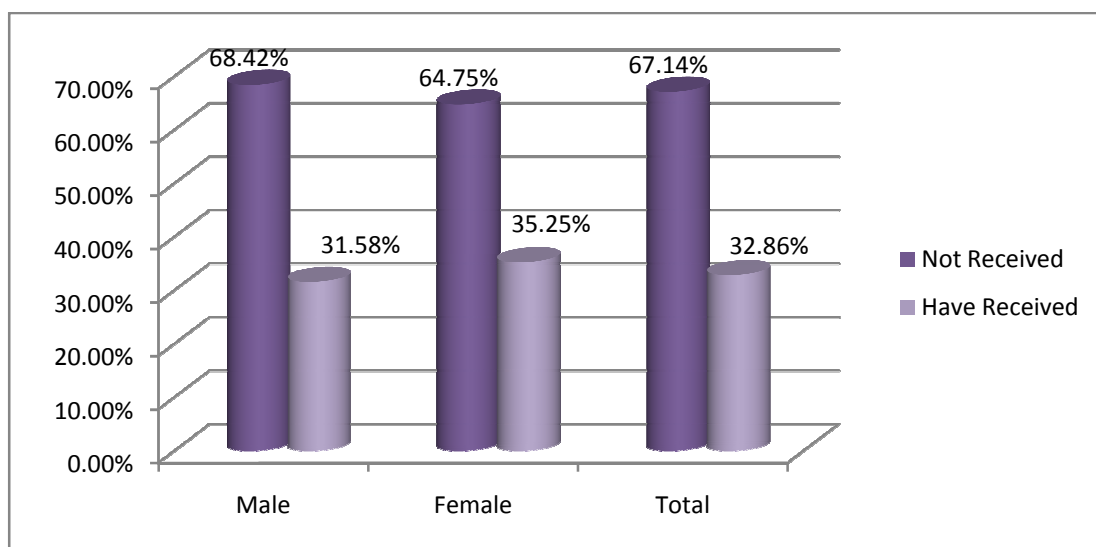
One noticeable observation of occupation mobility is found in government sector, where a total of 27.6 percent of respondent's using reservation policy was able to gain employment comprising 1.7 percent in Group 'A', 3.4 percent in Group 'B', 13.4 percent in Group 'C' and 9.1 percent in Group 'D' category. Whereas among the parents' generation it was only 6.9 percent of parents who could gain employment in the government sector. Further 16.6 percent of respondents were engaged in business enterprises that consisted of sweat stalls, groceries, computer café, studio, etc whereas there was no-one from the parents' generation who preferred opting their own business. The data also indicates that at present 7.1 percent of respondents were engaged in wage and agricultural labour while it was 0.9 percent in the parents' generation. Another noteworthy observation of occupational mobility was noticed in traditional occupation which comprised 43.1 percent in the parent's generation which was reduced to 10.6 percent in the respondents' generation following hereditary traditional occupation. Therefore, based on the empirical data it can be safely

concluded that the respondents' generation was able to experience an occupational shift and diversification which directly or indirectly improved or affected their socio-economic status in the society.

4.6. Respondents Availing Reservation

Several constitutional safeguards have been pledged to the scheduled castes after independence under the shade of 'policy of the protective discrimination' or reservation policy. These policies and provisions are focused on the welfare of the socially excluded groups and integrating them in the mainstream society. The reservation particularly given in the area of education and employment is of prime focus in the present study as the policy aims to protect the interests and facilitates the social and economic development of various Scheduled Castes of the country. However, there are studies conducted by scholars indicating not really reaching the benefits of reservation to the common masses. Sheth (1987) on SC/ST who argued that even after half a century of implementation of affirmative action, a minimum number of the excluded group is represented in the higher positions of the government services. Similar view is shared by Louis (2003) who stated that even after the implementation of the policy there has been no marked improvement in their social condition. Therefore, the subsequent section attempts to examine whether the three SCs communities of Darjeeling hills have availed the reservation policy and have experienced an improvement in their socio-economic status. Hence, Figure 4.6.1 presents the percentage of respondents who have availed reservation policy so far.

Figure 4.6.1. Respondents Percentage who Availed Reservation Facilities



Source: Fieldwork, 2016-17

Figure 4.6.1 shows the gender-wise usage of the reservation facility by the respondents. In overall 67.14 percent of respondents were not able to avail the reservation facilities whereas 32.86 percent out of the total respondents have availed the reservation facility in various ways especially in education and employment. Gender-wise, female respondents who have availed reservation facility are more with 35.25 percent while it is only 31.58 percent among the male respondents who had availed the facility. Overall, the percentage of male respondents who have not availed the facility is higher in comparison to female respondents consisting of 68.42 percent as compared to 64.75 percent female. As such, no gender gap is noticed in terms of availing reservation facility. Among those who did not avail reservation facility most of the respondents belonged to the rural area and were of opinion that till date they hadn't received any benefits from the government. To understand the comprehensive picture of respondents' perspective about them not receiving the reservation facilities, the above quantitative information is supplemented with few narratives as presented in the following section.

25 years old Sunil Ghatraj who resides in Sourani Banjang, expressed that reservation facilities have benefitted higher class groups within the community. When asked for the reason he expressed his views in the following lines, “I was selected for a government job but due to lack of networking and political connection I could not get myself enrolled in the post. Moreover, the job was given to a person whose father was in a higher post.” In this context the respondents feel that social capital in Bordieu’s terminology also works in availing of the reservation benefits and being deprived of the social network, he was not given the job and he feels discriminated. Nevertheless, this evidence makes us agree with the argument that Thorat and Senapati (2006) had put forward in their study of Reservation Policy in Indian Dimension that today’s economic power and position has determined the utilization of rights which in actuality are granted to promote equality. The narratives indicate that the respondent could not avail due to lack of social networking and political backing.

Similarly, entangled in poverty and helplessness is the story of 45 years old Arjun Pariyar who works as construction labor in *Rato Mata* village. He had attended school till class V and from his wage, he earned Rs.250 per day. He had three daughters aged 18, 15, and 12 years and an elder son of age 25 years. His elder son studied up-to class four while his daughters attended school up-to elementary level and were dropped out. His youngest daughter was studying in class six in a government school. Mr. Pariyar wanted to educate his children but due to his economic status and unawareness about the educational facilities, he was unable to give them proper education. Consequently, he has a low socio-economic status in the society. Therefore, due to his low socio-economic status, he was unable to change the habitus due to which his family was still living a life of deprivation. When asked about the reservation facility Mr. Pariyar said that ‘I have never been to school and don’t know

how to even put a signature. So I do not know about any governmental schemes and have never received any financial facility till date.’ He hoped that his youngest daughter would study and help him someday. The narratives reflect that due to lack of awareness which is rooted in the structural reasons like poverty, the respondent was unable to access the financial incentives and reservation policy granted by the Constitution due to lack of his awareness. This resulted in the socio-economic backwardness of his family and despite the reservation policies, his family is still socially excluded. Similar argument was made by Majumder (2010) who stated that the poor are likely to be excluded from participating in societal affairs because of their relative material disadvantage in terms of income.

The other story of not using reservation policy is that of Mr. Bimal Balkuti who belonged to a low socio-economic status but without using reservation facility, he was able to gain vertical mobility. Mr. Balkuti is 42 years old and worked as a private financial consultant. He lives in *Mull Dara* Darjeeling with his wife and two sons who study in I.C.S.E. school in Darjeeling. Mr. Balkuti’s father was a carpenter due to which his family’s financial condition was not that stable. He studied in a government school till class X, completed his Higher Secondary and Graduation from open school. He stated ‘although I knew about the educational facilities provided by the government I did not receive any stipend throughout my school life and as I completed my studies from open school and IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University). I never got a chance of utilizing the scholarship facility in school.’ Mr. Balkuti said that although he tried for government jobs but was unable to get from the reservation quota also. With his effort, he had completed LLB and had opened his own financial consultant office. The case of Mr. Balkuti indicates at least the awareness about education and despite not using any reservation facility so far, Mr.

Balkuti was able to gain vertical social mobility from a daily wage-labour as carpenter to a well-known consultant, gaining socio-economic upliftment in the society.

In overall, there are many among the three communities who have not avail reservation due to the lack of awareness resulting in continuation of socio-economic backwardness. However, the traces of structural change are noticed in the case study of Mr. Balkuti, who despite his inability to use policies of reservation was able to elevate his socio-economic status by virtue of his own effort and awareness about the importance of education.

4.6.2. Age-wise distribution of Respondents availing Reservation

According to Rughiniş and Huma (2015) age helps us to refer to generational differences and different life stages. To comprehend people's perspective on an issue, we need to understand the age as a variable, as it is generally observed that the persons belonging to the younger group are more aware of the changing scenario. Therefore, to examine if there is any variation in the age group in availing the reservation facility, the sample population has been analysed on the basis of the age-categories.

Table 4.6.2.i. Age-Group of respondents who availed Reservation

		Did not Avail Reservation	Availed Reservation	Total
Age of the Respondents	15-29	21 (8.8%)	14 (12.7%)	35
	30-45	90 (37.5%)	27 (24.5%)	117
	46-60	79 (32.9%)	51 (46.7%)	130
	61 Above	50 (20.8%)	18 (16.7%)	68
Total		240 (68.6%)	110 (31.4%)	350 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Table 4.6.2.i. shows the age categorization of respondents which has been classified into four age groups viz; 15-29, 30-45, 46-60, and 60 above. Interestingly, the highest 46.7 percent of respondents who availed reservations in different forms were from 46-60 age group categories. Whereas, the lowest percentage of 12.7 percent was recorded among the age group of 15-29 years who have availed the facility so far. However, the percentage of who did not avail the reservation is also lowest in this age category. On the other hand, 16.7 percent of reservation was availed by the respondents that belong to the age categories of 61 above. Another 24.5 percent of respondents from the age group of 30-45 years had also availed the facilities. Majority of 68.6 percent have not been able to garner the facility. The analysis indicates that those who availed the reservation are not restricted to any age-group.

4.7. Awareness Regarding Reservation Facilities

Pinto, (2010) argues that the main objective of reservation was to create opportunities for the subjugated group who had suffered without any faults of theirs for ages.

Accordingly, the development of ‘Inclusive Policy’ required two major policies, namely policy of social and economic empowerment and policy of Equal opportunity (in the form of Reservation policy). However, unless the target group is well acquainted with the government policies and schemes, such welfare measures may not achieve its objectives of social inclusion to the deprived section. Therefore awareness of such constitutional provision is an important (Prasad, 2016) factor for its proper implementation. Singh and Kumar (2015) identified two factors for the effective implementation of reservation policy. Firstly the greater the awareness among the beneficiaries, the higher the utilization of the facilities is meant for the unprivileged groups. Secondly, the attitudes towards reservation depend upon various levels of awareness. Since 67 percent of the respondents did not avail the reservation, Table 4.7.1 attempted to find out the extent of awareness of reservation among the respondents as well as the reasons for not availing the facilities.

Table 4.7.1. Age-wise distribution of Respondents Regarding Awareness

		Age of the Respondent				Total
		15-29	30-45	46-60	61 Above	
People Awareness	Aware and have availed	8 (23.5%)	12 (10%)	32 (23.7%)	9 (14.8%)	61 (17.4%)
	Aware but have not availed	8 (23.5%)	25 (20.8%)	19 (14.1%)	11 (18.03%)	63 (18%)
	Partially aware and availed	5 (14.7%)	15 (12.5%)	21 (15.6%)	8 (13.1%)	49 (14%)
	Not Aware	13 (38.2%)	68 (56.7%)	63 (46.7%)	33 (54.1%)	177 (50.6%)
	Total	34 (9.7%)	120 (34.3%)	135 (38.6%)	61 (17.4%)	350 (100%)

Source: Filed work, 2016-2017

Contextually locating, Table 4.7.1 presents the opinion of respondents regarding the awareness of the reservation policies. For a better understanding, the opinions have

been categorized into four different age-groups. The main objective of this classification is to understand if there is an age-group variation in the awareness level.

Table 4.7.1 highlights that out of the 350 respondents 17.4 percent were aware and have utilized the facilities, while despite being aware 18 percent of respondents could not avail the facility. Further, we can observe that 14 percent of respondents reported to be only partially aware and had availed only few facilities. Whereas the highest percent of 50.6 percent of respondents reported to be still unaware of the facilities and the majority (56.7 percent) in this response category belongs to the age-group of 30-45. The lowest percentage of 38.2 percent of the respondents who were unaware belonged to the age-group of 15-29. One among such was 25-year-old respondent Sumit Rasaily residing in Rato Mata village came from a family that did not have a good socio-economic background and was unaware of the reservation policy. Both his parents worked as wage labor on an agricultural farm. Since there was no one to look after his younger siblings, he dropped out of the school after completing Class IV and started helping his parents. Another respondent namely Rohit Sunam is 29 years old who resides in Kakjora area of Darjeeling and studied in an English Medium school till Class VIII. After the sudden demise of his mother, he had to drop out of school leaving him unable to continue further education. He informed that till the age of 26 he did not know about the facility and if he had known early, he would have pursued a higher level of schooling.

Not much age-wise variation is observed in the 'partially aware and availed' category which is 14 percent of respondents. Here most of them had availed reservation facilities while seeking government jobs but were not aware of other facilities. The Table also reveals the percentage of respondents who were aware of the facilities but due to certain circumstances were not able to avail it. The maximum percentage of

23.5 percent was in the age-group of 15-29 in this response category. When asked, the responses were varied. One such response was of Mr. Upurkuti who belonged to the Sarki community and resides in Mahendra Goan Mirik. He is 23 years old and worked as a labor in the construction site. Mr. Upurkuti studied till class IV and started working in a tea stall at a very young age. When asked about reservation policy he stated ‘I go for work around 7 a.m. and return by 5 p.m. therefore, I never get time to inquire and apart from this I have to work for the daily requirements of my family and moreover, I was never informed by anybody’. Mr. Upurkuti expressed that he wanted to complete his schooling, pursue higher education and work in a government office but since his father followed the traditional occupation of shoemaking which barely was sufficient for their living. Hence he had to quit school and start working to support his family. In his case, we could observe that although the respondent wanted to pursue education but due to the economic status of his family he was unable to do so. The analysis indicates that it was not only poverty but the lack of social-cultural capital of the respondent that had made him deprived of availing the education and seek for government jobs. As a result of which he had very indifferent attitude towards the governmental schemes.

Interestingly there were some respondents who worked in the government service sector and revealed they either got the job through political connection or other links but have not used the reservation policy. 44-year-old Barun Karkidoli worked as a home guard in Bijanbari and had received education till class XII. Mr. Karkidoli’s father was a government employee and had a good connection with people who held higher posts. He asserted that ‘soon after I completed my higher secondary examination my father took me to higher officials. After having series of meetings with higher authorities for nearly six months I got an appointment letter’. Mr.

Karkidoli was recruited without using reservation facility. Similar narration was made by Mr. Anil Darnal who worked in the District Magistrate (DM) Office in the group 'D' post. Mr. Darnal was 45 years old and lived in Mull dara. Soon after completing his higher secondary examination, he worked as a daily-wage employee in the DM office. In his initial days, he worked as a file bearer and received an amount of Rs.4500/- per month. He worked as a daily-wage employee for five years and finally with the help of Additional District Magistrate he was able to enroll himself in the permanent payroll list. Hence, here also, the respondent without using reservation policy was able to get a government job. Similar is the story of 60 years old Mr. Madan Karkidoli, a retired government employee resided in Peshok. His father was a tailor by profession. Mr. Karkidoli had completed his class X from the village school and he did not want to follow his father's traditional occupation, hence he opted for other jobs. In his words 'I started getting offers for government jobs from the age of 18, like the army, District Magistrate Office, and State Bank, however, after consulting with my family, I took the job in State Bank and have retired last month'. He informed that he did not receive the offer for those jobs through reservation and was also not aware, instead. It was his education and political connection that gave him options for various jobs. Overall, these respondents were at present aware of job quotas but did not know the details about other schemes.

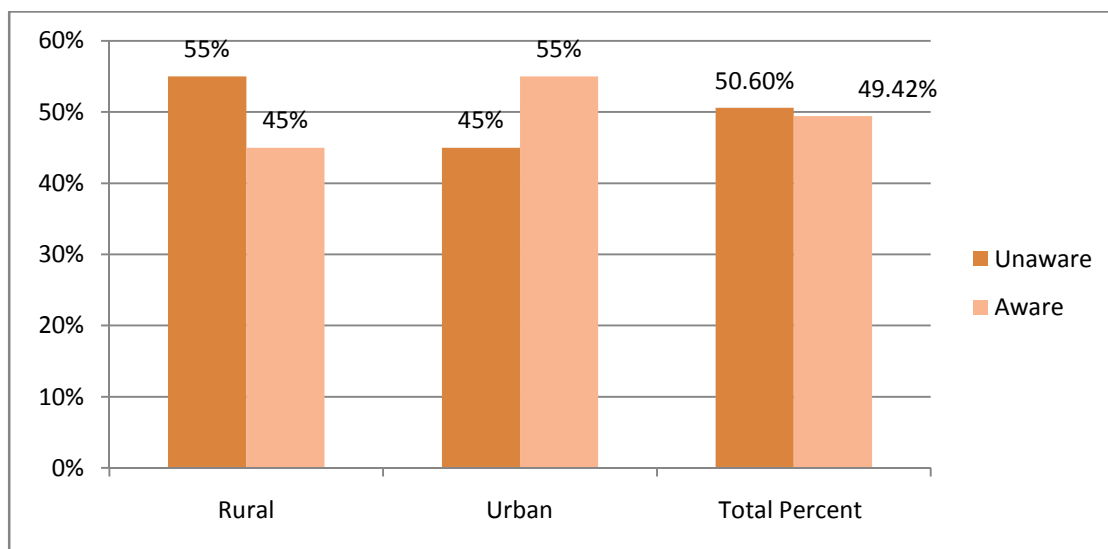
Further, 20.8 percent of respondents belonging to the age-group of 30-45 were although aware but had never got an opportunity of availing the facilities. One such narration was made by 33-year-old Rajeev Thatal residing in Rajbari who owned a small business in a rented shop. Since his father worked as a tailor, the socio-economic background of his family was not good. At the age of eight, both his parents died so he was brought up by his cousins. Somehow, Mr. Thatal attended school till

class VIII but could not pursue higher education. Although, he was aware of the scholarship but had never received any during his schooldays. On asking the reason he explained ‘I was asked to get my father’s income certificate and as we were socio-economically deprived, my father never applied for any certificates. Therefore, I could not apply’. He further pointed out that his lack of connection in the system was one of the major reasons for not being able to avail any facilities. He added further that the scholarship amount paid by the government for the students was too meager and was not sufficient, hence he preferred to discontinue his studies. Overall in this case we can observe that despite being aware of reservation policy and scholarships, the respondent's limited information and lack of connection became the major reasons for his economic backwardness. Another contrasting narration was made by 18 years old Sunil Mangrati belonging to an economically stable family and stated that ‘I studied in an English medium school and opted for management course therefore never felt any necessity to enquire about it’. Since his father is a government employee and his mother owns a business, the respondent is financially secure and as such he is not entitled to financial incentives in education. Similarly, Bina Sarki, a 23-year-old graduate, was aware but never utilized it. According to her ‘since both my parents are government employees so it is against the rule to apply for any educational facilities or such, therefore, I never inquired more about it. However, in future if I get an opportunity I would like to use the reservation quota facility in getting job’.

Contextually we can observe that the present generations of respondents are more aware and updated about the reservation facilities. It is also observed that in comparison to the respondents who are aware of the reservation facilities, the percentage of respondents who are not aware is slightly more. The rural-urban breakup indicates that a more percentage of respondents from the rural area (55

percent) with not having good socio-economic background were not aware of most of the governmental programs. Figure 4.7.2 demonstrates supplementary data to understand the scenario of awareness in the rural-urban setup of the study area.

Figure 4.7.2. Rural-Urban break up in Awareness of Reservation Policy



Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Figure 4.7.2 presents the rural-urban break up of respondents which indicate whether they are aware of the reservation facilities or not. The data shows that in rural areas, 55 percent of respondents are either unaware of the reservation facilities or do not have any detailed knowledge. The respondents who belonged to this group are mostly construction and agricultural laborers, respondents who follow traditional occupations, illiterates and respondents who had attended school till the primary level. On the other hand, 45 percent have either heard about the reservation or are aware and have availed the facility however, not all of them have availed the reservation facilities. This category comprises educated respondents and those who are engaged in formal service sector jobs.

In the urban area, 55 percent of respondents reported that they are well aware and have availed the facilities. These respondents are from good socio-economic backgrounds, received higher education and worked in the formal service sectors. However, 45 percent of respondents are not aware of the facilities or only have very partial knowledge about the facilities. The group of respondents who belonged to these categories was elderly people, or those respondents who worked in informal sectors viz small grocery shops, sweat stalls and canteens, respondents who followed their traditional occupations and those who had not attended school beyond the secondary level.

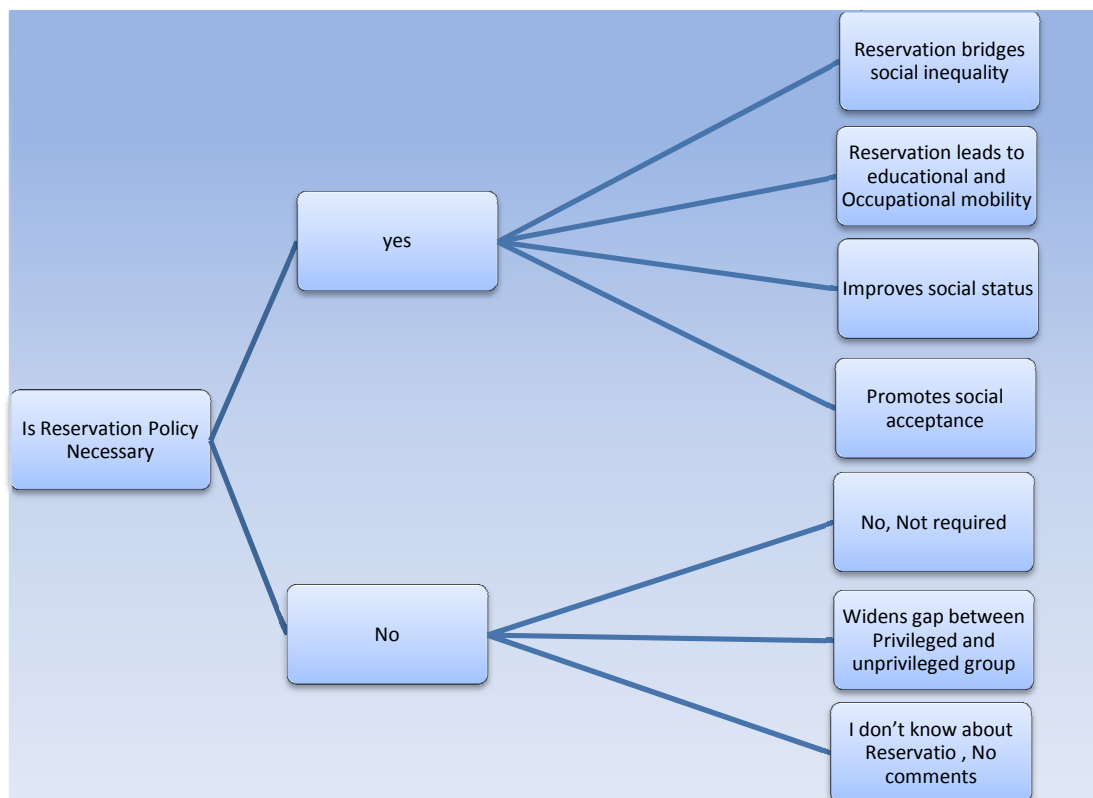
In overall variation has been noticed in the percentage of respondents belonging to the urban and rural areas regarding their awareness. Discussing the reasons for unawareness in the rural areas, it was observed as well as pointed by the panchayats that the improper infrastructure of schools, the poor quality of education coupled with the lack of proper transport facilities restricted the access of education after a certain level and contributed to the lack of awareness in these areas. Similar finding has been highlighted by Yadav (2018) that due to the lack of awareness, education and literacy rate, in rural villages in India are facing many constraints and pitfalls. He added that the disadvantaged group will only be empowered through education but due to lack of proper transport and other infrastructure facilities, it is very hard for them to gain access to these facilities.

4.8. Respondents' Perspectives on Reservation Policy

Palatty (1992) observes that reservation policy promotes opportunity to the section of people who were neglected during the process of national development and empowers the socially excluded group (Ambedkar 2003; Prasad, 2016). Raj and Gundemeda (2015) however, shared a different opinion and claimed that reservation implies

different meaning to different people; for the politician it is positive discrimination, for policymakers, it is reverse discrimination, for the lower castes it is a compromise of quality; and finally, for some, it is killing the constitutional spirit of equality of opportunities. Empirically locating, following section presents different perspectives of the respondents regarding the necessity of reservation policies.

Figure 4.8.1. Perspective on Reservation Policy



Source: Fieldwork, 2016-2017

Figure 4.8.1 demonstrates varied opinions of respondents about the necessity of reservation policy. The responses are divided into affirmative and negative responses. The affirmative responses of the respondents which highlight the positive sides of the reservation policy are further classified into four sub-responses; (i) reservation bridge social inequality (ii) encourages educational and occupational mobility (iii) improves the social status of the Scheduled Castes (iv) encourages social acceptance. Whereas

another four sub-responses reveal respondent' views on negative aspects of reservation policy, this includes responses like (i) No, Not required, (ii) I don't know (iii) No comments. A detailed discussion on response of the respondents in the form of narratives and case studies has been discussed in the following section.

4.8.1.1. Bridges Social and Economic Inequality

Yadav (2010) reveals that the purpose of the inclusive policy was to include a variety of provisions and services that are accessible to all sections of people which is proposed to bridge the social inequality among the population. However, contradictory observations are made in some studies. For instance, Jangir (2013) observed that reservation has given open access to the Scheduled Castes but at the same time it has limited its boundaries. Chalam (2007) remarked that despite gaining education, the number of educated unemployed among the Scheduled Castes in India is still high in comparison to other communities.

A section of respondents feels that reservation policy bridges inequality. Some of the cases and narratives are discussed here to substantiate their perspective. 48 years old Mr. Gahatraj, works as an Assistant Teacher in a government school in Bijanmari Darjeeling and his wife owns a tea stall. Mr. Gahatraj's father owned a bookbinding shop therefore, initially he continued the bookbinding profession of his father and also worked in a musical band. He has three siblings who are government employees and supported him financially. Mr. Gahataraj had given an interview in 2002 for the post of Assistant Teacher in SC quota but due to some political issues, the recruitment process was delayed. Mr. Gahatraj stated that due to his economic instability he practiced self-exclusion and avoided going to social gatherings and friends in the past. Kabeer (2000) while discussing self-exclusion pointed out that certain people may be devalued by dominant social groups, but prefer their outsider status as it allows them

to define their values and priorities. In his words ‘till 40 years of age, I was without a job and felt very inferior in front of the family and society as I never got a personal invitation for societal function. My wife due to my unemployment had to work abroad for six-year but in 2012 I got my appointment letter as a teacher and the scenario has changed. Today I have bought a tea stall for my wife as she wants to be independent and I no longer feel inferior and try to attend most of the social gatherings’. Mr. Gahatraj revealed that due to unemployment he had distanced himself from society but after getting an appointment he felt confident and also felt that his status in the society and family has increased. He stated that ‘reservation policy boosts confidence and had it not been reservation policy I would never get employment and I feel reservation policy is an important tool that can bridge inequality in society and also enable to build self-confidence within an individual’.

Similar, positive response was revealed by 50 years old Durga Sewa, residing in Jawahar Busty No. 2 Darjeeling. She worked as a group ‘D’ staff in the Public Works Department (PWD), her husband is a carpenter and has two children. Her elder daughter is a Police Constable and son is unemployed. Before she got permanent recruitment Mrs. Sewa worked as a daily-wage staff in PWD for ten years. According to her, she had to wash dishes and clean the office and due to the nature of her job, her family was never treated as equals in society and at times not even invited in social gatherings. Therefore, she always felt inferior and excluded. However, she continuously applied for a regular post in SC quota, and finally, she was recruited as a group ‘D’ staff. At present, she works in the post of file bearer and does not have to do the unclean job. In her words ‘I am only educated till class VIII, so I had to take the job but today after getting permanent recruitment I am able to uplift the status of my family in society. I would not say that it is reservation policy that gave socio and

economic stability to my family but reservation allowed me and my daughter to get a job that helped to bridge our unequal status in the society’.

Another encouraging and successful story was revealed by respondent Swastika Singh, 29 years residing in Railway station Darjeeling. Ms. Singh was raised by her mother and came from a middle-class family. She had completed her M.Com degree and worked as a group ‘C’ staff in PWD office. After an early death of her father Ms. Singh and her mother had to face economic crises. Her mother worked as a housemaid and also reared animals due to which most of her childhood friends avoided her. She narrated ‘through-out my childhood days, I did not have many friends therefore, most of the time I indulged in the study due to which I was able to score a good percentage in the examination. After completing my studies I tried for many competitive examinations, and finally, I was recruited in one. Today most of our neighbors praise me and invite me as a guest in social programs. Therefore reservation helped me to improve my status and I feel now I’m treated as equal and hold a respectable position in the society’.

On the other hand, there are some stories which do not reflect positive dimension of reservation policy. Mr. Sunam a 40-year-old graduate residing near Railway Station Darjeeling feels that reservation policy could not eradicate caste stigmatization. He works as a Sales Manager in Reliance Life Insurance. His father is a government employee and has a good socio-economic background. Mr. Sunam studied in a government school and Darjeeling Government college therefore, he had received educational facilities. Although he tried for government jobs but could not get one therefore, he opted for a private-sector job. Being at a sales job, he has to be in the field and during those visits he has often faced caste discrimination issues. One such unforgettable incident reported was ‘my job is to go to many places, therefore, every

day I meet different people. When I had gone to collect a yearly premium to a client's house belonging to an upper-caste family, knowing my Scheduled Caste identity he did not invite me and we completed all the paper formalities outside the house. Then after that, I asked him to deposit the premium at the office itself from next time onwards'. Mr. Sunam revealed that there were many such incidents of humiliation that he had faced in his work and said 'reservation policy would bring upliftment in the community economically through reservation in a job but it has not ended the social discrimination and I face it in several occasions'.

Another case of such unequal treatment despite gaining economic stability and upliftment was the case of Mrs. Sarki from Kalimpong. 37 years old Mrs. Rachana Sarki has received education up to M.A. in English. Although her family did not have a good socio-economic background as her father followed the traditional occupation of shoemaking he somehow managed to send her to Loreto Convent School. Later she completed her M.A. from Darjeeling Government College. Rachana had utilized educational scholarship facilities to complete higher education and also used the reservation policy to get recruitment. She stated that after getting recruited she was able to uplift the socio-economic condition of her family. In Rachana's words 'after three years of recruitment, I was in a relationship with a boy who belonged to a higher caste and finally got married. His family did not accept me and boycotted my husband from his family'. Rachana's husband worked in a private office and they stayed in an apartment at present. They still did not have any relation with her husbands' family, however, her husband occasionally visits his house. It is observed how an individual's low caste position became the reason for social exclusion and discrimination, despite being gaining socio-economic mobility and holding a respectable government job. Therefore, we can observe that even after the implementation of reservation policy,

the practice of social inequality cannot be overlooked despite gaining educational and occupational mobility.

4.8.1.2. Education and Social Mobility

Omvedt (2008) in his work 'Ambedkar Towards an enlightened India' quoted Jotirao Phule's words '*without education knowledge is lost; without knowledge, development is lost; without development, wealth is lost; without wealth, Shudras are ruined*' which highlighted the correlation between education and status of an individual. Kharb (2018) also emphasized the importance of education and stated that education brings stability and economic growth in society, it also impacts the social status of an individual. With this backdrop, reservation in education has been envisaged as an initiative by the Indian government to bridge the existing gap between the privileged group and the unprivileged group. Hence, the aim of granting reserved facilities or quota in education is to provide the marginalized and backward classes' access to education to uplift their social and economic status in the society. However, Premi (1974) contested that although reservation was introduced to bring the socially and economically backward group in the equal platform in its reality, the protection has tended to favour the most fortunate of the excluded class and has not reached to all the down-trodden groups. Empirically locating, the majority of respondents highlighted that reservation in education would help the community to educationally uplift themselves. To substantiate their perspective, few cases and narratives have been presented here.

29 years old Ms. Ghatani who resides in Phuguri Mirik is pursuing Ph.D. in Geography. Ms. Ghatani's grandfather was a coppersmith and did not have a good socio-economic background. She stated that 'my grandfather was literate and encouraged my father to pursue higher education. Therefore, using reservation policy

and scholarships my father was able to complete his Graduation'. Her father worked as a Head Clerk in the Department of Engineering which he received using reservation quota due to which her family's social status had experienced the upliftment. Ms. Ghatani at present is pursuing Ph.D. and is availing Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes. She opined that if her grandfather had not encouraged her father in pursuing education, today she would not be able to attain higher education. In her words 'education is an essential indicator of upliftment and government by granting seats to the socially excluded groups initiated the process of inclusion. Hence, one needs to be aware of their rights and start utilizing them for a better future'. In this case, we can observe that the respondent's family was able to gain economic stability as well as uplift their social status with the help of education. Similar remark was made by Kharb (2018) as he pointed out that education brings stability, economic growth in society and it also impacts the social status of an individual.

Another success story is that of Bina Sarki who is 23 years old residing in Bijanmari Darjeeling and has completed her M.A in Nepali from Darjeeling Government College. She came from a family who had low economic status and was the first member of the family to pursue Post Graduation. Her father worked as a farmer and her mother runs a small shop. Both her parents were uneducated and being a single child, she was encouraged to pursue higher education. She studied in a government school in her village and received an educational scholarship (i.e. stipend) which although was meager, helped her in buying few study materials. Due to lack of cultural capital as well as the family's affordability for extra coaching, Ms. Sarki was unable to score good percentage but with the help of reservation quota, she was able to enroll in college where she proved her capability by scoring good percentage. Ms.

Sarki wanted to be a teacher so she was pursuing B.Ed from Indira Gandhi National Open University and was teaching in a government school on an Ad-Hoc basis. She stated ‘after knowing my qualification I was offered the job by the school authority’. She proudly narrated that her father is appreciated by the villagers for encouraging her to pursue higher education and is respected widely. Her father feels that because of his daughter’s educational status and job, their family social status has been uplifted. She stated that reservation is necessary as it has uplifted the educational status thereby elevating her family from economically downtrodden status by opening job opportunities and ultimately gaining social status, self-respect, and self-confidence.

Similar opinion has been expressed by 36 years old Mrs. Mothay who resides in Jawahar Busty Darjeeling feels that reservation policy and educational schemes are a mechanism that leads to the inclusion of excluded groups in the society and cited her own example. She holds a degree of M.A. in Political Science and is working as a Group ‘B’ officer in a government sector. Mrs. Mothay was raised by her uneducated mother who managed her livelihood by rearing animals, selling *Rakshi*²⁴ and by selling knitting products to educate her in an English medium school. However, due to lack of educational tutorials and guidance, she could score only 53 percent in her Higher Secondary Examination. With the help of reservation policy, she was able to enroll herself in college. In her words ‘soon after enrollment with the help of my friends I applied for stipend and started receiving the amount which helped me in my education. I passed my graduation with 60 percent and got enrolled in North Bengal University for Post Graduation. Soon after completing M.A, I prepared for the competitive examination and passed the West Bengal Civil Services examination using reservation facility. Now I am appointed as a Group ‘B’ officer’. Mrs. Mothay

²⁴Homemade liquor.

further stated that ‘pursuing higher education using reservation policy helped me uplift my family’s living standard and social status. I feel that if a scheduled caste with low economic background gets an opportunity to educate themselves then he/she can excel because of which, the community and locality will also be benefitted as I can cite my own example’.

However, there are contrasting stories highlighted by respondents, one among such is 27-year-old Prasant Bishunke, who resides in Mull Dara Darjeeling and came from a family who did not have good socio-economic background. He has completed his Bachelor’s Degree from St. Joseph College in Accountancy Honors and has a different perspective. His father owns a shoe-making business which is his caste-based hereditary occupation. Mr. Bishunke stated ‘before applying for college, my senior from the neighborhood had informed me about the educational scholarships and the reservation facilities available for the Scheduled Castes. After enrolling in the college I applied for the scholarship and started receiving it from second year. I received the scholarship in college but since the amount was meager I had to pursue part-time jobs. However, I completed my Graduation and started applying for government jobs. Unfortunately, till date, I am not able to enroll myself in any government job, yet at present, I am teaching in a private school which is till Upper-Primary’. He shared that despite educational degree, he was not even able to get a job in a private Higher Secondary School. He revealed that the private school in which he had applied had recruited teachers who had not even attended college were able to get through connections, which he lacked and was not recruited. Mr. Bishunke expressed reservation and scholarships in education definitely elevate our self-confidence but it cannot guarantee security for the future as he was not yet able to get a job despite the reservation facility. Therefore, the respondent despite receiving high education

belonged to the group of educated unemployed which is continuously increasing among the community. Chalam (2007) also held a similar point of view as he argued that at present the number of educated unemployed is continuously increasing. Das (2000) argues that partial utilization of benefits arises problematic circumstances that are worse than exclusion. Kabeer (2000) explained similar situation where problematic inclusion is worse than exclusion because here the excluded individual is included but on adverse terms.

4.8.1.3. Occupation Mobility

Occupation is one of the indicators of class because people tend to agree on the relative prestige they attach to similar jobs (Karade, 2009). According to Butool (2018), it is only those at or near the top rung of the prestige ladder usually have the highest income, the best education, and most of the power. Karade (2014) in his study while discussing the scenario of Maharashtra discussed that after Independence, the introduction of reservation policy has brought a considerable change in the occupational status of SCs. He highlighted that he could recognize a considerable change in the percentage of respondents who had changed their occupation from traditional to modern after the utilization of educational facilities. Similar argument was given by Asher, et al (2020) who pointed out that at present Scheduled Castes were able to mobilize from their old traditional occupation after availing the opportunity that was granted by the Indian government in the form of reservation and educational facilities. Contextually, to substantiate whether SC communities have experienced occupational mobility, the section presents few narratives of the respondents who experienced occupational mobility due to reservation policy.

33 years old Shilpa Sarki resides in Mull Dara village in Darjeeling. She works as an accountant in the District Magistrate Court (DM) and came from a family where her

father followed the traditional occupation of shoemaking. Ms. Sarki had completed her graduation from St. Joseph College in Accountancy Honors. According to Ms. Sarki due to the changing demand and market scenario, her father's shoe-making business was not economically sustainable and the family had to face financial crisis in the past. After a long struggle, ultimately she got a government job through SC quota in the post of accountant in the DM office. She narrated that after recruitment, her father left his traditional occupation and opened a shoe store that sells the company made shoes that cater the demand in today's market. She is financially supporting her family and younger sister for higher studies. She opined 'reservation policy has given me and my family an opportunity for a better life and now I am proud of my status today. It also gave me a feeling of self-confidence with our improved social status in society'. The respondent's narrative reflects the case of occupational mobility and also the improvement of social status which was made possible by availing reservation quota.

Similar story is shared by 45 years old Subhir Darnel residing in Daroga Bazaar Darjeeling who works in the Block Office and has witnessed intergenerational occupational mobility. His wife owns a small vegetable shop and his son studies in an English Medium School. Earlier Mr. Darnel belonged to a socio-economically deprived family but had managed to receive education till Graduation using SC quota. He stated that since his childhood days he had faced social stigmatization based on caste on many occasions. Therefore, he had socially distanced himself from society and focused on getting recruitment in jobs. He expressed that after completing his education he applied and interviewed for several government jobs but did not get recruitment and finally he opened a tailoring shop in his house. After availing the age-relaxation facility for SC he got the job. In his words 'I opened a tailoring-shop in

my house as I had to look after my family. At the age of 42, I received an appointment letter for the post of peon in the Block Office through the SC reservation category. After recruitment with my steady income, I was able to change my hereditary based occupation and now able to give good education to my child'. He further stated 'the reservation policy helped me to get recruitment in the government sector and change my occupation which has changed my life. Since I work in a government office today I do not experience stigmatization in the foreground of occupation'.

Similar success story was witnessed by 37 years old Ajit Darnal from Rajbari, who shared his experience of occupational mobility after availing reservation facility. Mr. Darnal had completed his graduation from Darjeeling Government College and worked in a private company in Darjeeling. He narrated that he had applied for many government jobs but due to the lack of social network and connection, he was unable to gain recruitment. Tired of applying, he started working in a private company however, without losing hope he continuously applied for government jobs, and finally at the age of 36 years using the age-relaxation facility for Scheduled Caste category, he got recruitment in Post-Office. In his words 'I had lost hope of getting recruitment in the government sector but with the help of reservation policy at this age I got a job.' Mr. Darnal who had a traditional tailoring occupation was able to experience intergenerational mobility, which has stabilized his socio-economic status to a certain extent. He asserts 'reservation policy needs to be utilized by the SC community and one needs to be aware of the benefits and utilize it properly, which can improve one's socio-economic status'.

One interesting observation of the occupational shift was found in the narration made by 25 years old Ms. Shankar, who was currently pursuing Ph.D. in History. Both her parents had only attended school till primary and occupationally her father practiced

business related to agricultural farming. Ms. Shankar had two elder brothers and she narrated that after the sudden demise of her father, her family had to go through severe social and economic crises as her neighbours started showing indifferent attitudes towards them. In her words ‘the social discrimination already existed in the society but it was multiplied after my father’s demise because of economic instability. To overcome the economic crisis, my elder brother took charge of business and along with that completed his graduation. However, he was not able to score good percentage in his graduation due to the family’s responsibility. Despite that he applied for the post of Sub-Inspector (SI) in West Bengal Police and utilizing the reservation facility, he passed the examination and was recruited’. At present both her brothers were working in the government sector which they achieved by availing the reservation facility. Ms. Shankar stated ‘reservation policy helped both of my brothers to gain employment in the government sector which made our family economically stable and additionally gains social acceptance to some extent in the society. With that improved background, I was able to get a good education and today I am pursuing Ph.D. after availing Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes’. In the above narration, we can observe a direct relationship between the reservation facility and the improved socio-economic status as by utilizing reservation policy, the respondent’s family was able to stabilize their socio-economic status and integrate themselves in the mainstream society.

Another respondent 64 years old Dipak Pariyar who follows the hereditary occupation of tailoring also has a positive response regarding reservation policy. Earlier, Mr. Pariyar in everyday life had faced caste stigmatization in many situations. His family was not invited to upper caste marriage ceremonies, they were not allowed entrance in other houses and sometimes if they saw them in the morning, people used abusive

words such as *lodher*, *ashubh* and considered their sight as inauspicious. However, after his wife got recruitment in the post office and educated his children till graduation, now the scenario changed and the discriminatory attitude has decreased over the time. Availing reservation facility, one of his sons got admission in Bachelor of Legislative Law in Siliguri and at present is working as a government lawyer. Mr. Pariyar's youngest son is also working as a group 'D' staff in the PHE department which he availed through reservation policy. He opined that at present he doesn't face caste stigmatization directly in everyday life and is respected by his neighbours'. The case study also substantiates that reservation became a medium through which the respondent was able to garner improved socio-economic status, upward occupational mobility and also social acceptance to a considerable extent.

In overall, the empirical situation in Darjeeling hills highlighted many respondents who used the reservation in the educational and occupational sector having direct impact on improved social status as a result of the intergenerational occupational mobility. Consequently, this helped the respondents to have wider social interaction which was restricted earlier in the caste-based society of Darjeeling hills.

4.8.1.4. Enhancement of Social Status and Social Acceptance

Vasanthamma (2011) demonstrated the Indian way of life is socially unequal where injustice and discrimination are witnessed amongst different caste groups. Freitas (2006) while discussing the Indian caste highlighted the rule of commensality as an important feature of caste-based society. The commensality rules of the caste that included restrictions on who a person as a member of his/her caste can eat or drink with, whom he can accept food from and what kind of food he can accept, helped people keep track of the hierarchy of the castes. However, according to Swapnil (2013), changes have taken place therefore, at present the restriction on commensal

relations has changed especially due to the opening of tea stalls, restaurants, hotels, etc. As the whole population is in the rush of continuity and changes, one of the important social factors that emerge at present is social acceptance. Hence in order to understand the perspective whether the implementation of reservation policy for the Scheduled Castes has indirectly impacted the level of social acceptance, contextually few cases and narratives from the field study are presented in the following section.

42 years old Mrs. Darnal a government school teacher who resides in SC dominated area in Milan busy Darjeeling, asserted that caste discrimination can never be eradicated from the society. The village that she resided in is inhabited by mixed community and she revealed that the lower castes are never invited for any social gathering and functions by other castes. Despite having educated members among them, they are still considered as '*achoot*' or untouchables and are discriminated. Similar is the experience of 35 years old Mrs. Chettri residing in the main town area of Kalimpong. Mrs. Chettri who belongs to the upper caste position in the Nepali caste hierarchy was married in a Bagdas (Damai) family, where her husband was a Group 'B' officer with a good socio-economic background. However, she has several stories of caste discrimination for marrying a lower caste. Mrs. Chettri stated 'using reservation policy, my husband has been able to secure a high position in the job with a stable income. However, the social stigmatization and discrimination related to low caste are still prevalent in the society and I'm the live example. Despite my husband being well educated and well placed, my parental home has not accepted my marriage till now'. Similar story is found in the narration of 34 years old Mr. Ramtel who worked as a Junior Engineer in a government service sector and holds a respectable position in the society. Despite his wife who belongs to the Newar community is from

an educated family background, his in-laws have not accepted this marriage till now and her family has entirely boycotted and severed all ties and interactions with them.

Another similar view is shared by 45 years old Mr. Baraily who resides in Shiva Gram area of Darjeeling. He is a government employee and had received education till Post-Graduation using reservation facility. He narrated an incident of purchasing the land for constructing the house. Mr. Chettri, a higher caste Nepali and a teacher by profession who resides adjacent to his land had objected to the selling of the land to him on the fact that he belonged to lower caste from the beginning, which the respondents did not take the matter very seriously. However, when the construction work proceeded, taking advantage of a landslide which also affected a portion of his land Mr. Chettri submitted one mass petition to the National Highway Authority to make it a No Construction Zone. Tired of humiliation and discrimination Mr. Baraily finally, lodged a complaint under section 3 (1) (X) of SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act) Act 1989 stating that Mr. Chettri would always use derogatory words targeting his lower caste identity and the matter is still going on in court. The case study reveals that despite the reservation has given him economic stability and a respectable position, caste discrimination persists and social equality is still denied in some corners of the society. The incident corresponds to the argument of Ghosh (2008) who claims that despite implementation of reservation policy the feeling of caste still persists in the Indian society which does not support the idea of egalitarian society.

4.8.1.5. Reservation not required

There were respondents who did not use the reservation facility. 25 years old Madhu Lamichhane from Chota Kakjora area of Darjeeling works as a Lecturer in a private college in Kolkatta comes from an educated family background and her father is a

retired Professor. Her elder sister was pursuing Postdoctoral in the U.S. Despite being aware about the reservation facility Ms. Lamichhane stated that she never utilized reservation policy. In her words ‘my father never wanted us to utilize reservation policy and said that he has given us good education and made us capable to compete, therefore, I never felt the necessity of utilizing the reservation quota. I feel I am well equipped to compete with others and wish that those who are economically capable should give opportunities of availing the facility to those who cannot compete on their own’.

Similar opinion was shared by 48 years old Ravi Molley who worked as an ‘A’ grade officer in the Forest Department is a resident in Kakjora area of Darjeeling. His wife works as an assistant teacher in a government school and his son is pursuing engineering in Bangaluru. Academically since childhood, Mr. Molley was good in studies and received an M.A. in Political science from Calcutta University. His father worked as a peon in the government sector and also owned a tailoring shop which was also his hereditary occupation. Regarding the reservation quota, he stated ‘I had never felt the necessity of utilizing reservation policy and as my family’s economic status was good I never applied for scholarships’. He further opined that ‘reservation policy promotes social stigmatization and creates doubt in our credibility. Since at present most of our community members are receiving good education, I feel gradually we all should stop availing reservation policy’.

Another respondent 25 years old Sasil Sangray shared a different story of his negative perspective regarding reservation policy. Mr. Sangray is residing in Mahendra Goan Mirik and had attended school till primary. Since his father was a *gothalo*²⁵ his family had to go through many economic hardships. He works as construction labor. On

²⁵Shepherd

asking about reservation policies he stated ‘benefits are only for people who belonged to the upper rung of the society. People like us are born in poverty and cannot overthrow this status’. Mr. Sangray felt that reservation policy only benefits the section of powerful people within the category. Therefore, he was of opinion that since the reservation is only creating rift among the Scheduled Caste the government should stop implementing the policy.

4.8.1.6. Widens Inequality within the Scheduled Castes

Indira (2008) claimed that the Constitution of India no doubt paved the way for the establishment of an egalitarian social order by removing discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity. However, she added that it has benefitted certain castes disproportionately resulting in the emergence of wide inequality between persons within each caste creating groups of privileged and unprivileged. Similarly, Weisskopf (2004) asserts in his study that the creamy layers of the socially excluded constitute the vast majority of beneficiaries. It is only these privileged groups that get the opportunity to stay in school and even apply for colleges and universities. Accordingly, Pradeep (2008) also pointed out that India is experiencing an emergence of privileged groups amongst the reserved group, who compete to enjoy the benefit and in a few cases also manage to corner a certain percentage of benefit. As a result of which a creamy layer is evolving within the caste. Kumara and Jones (2008) also notice a similar type of emerging division among the marginalized group and claim that reservation policies have nourished a group of small petty-bourgeois layers, who encourage caste identities and politics for their benefit. In this backdrop, the section attempts to contextualize it among the SCs of Darjeeling hills by highlighting few narratives regarding the widening of intra-caste inequality.

58 years old respondent Mr. Sewa who is a resident of Rajbari area of Darjeeling and works as a carpenter expressed his frustration by saying that ‘I feel that at present there are a set of class categories emerging within the Scheduled Castes. Today the high-class SCs have maintained a distance from the economically lower class SCs and our own people treat us as untouchables’. He narrated that his daughter who is studying at Darjeeling Government College was unable to avail of the educational scholarship and was not able to afford to pay the fees for Honours subject. Further, he stated ‘my daughter could not apply for scholarship as I do not have an income certificate’. He stated ‘the rich and higher class SCs always monopolize benefits and discriminates the lower class SCs’. The respondent in his argument made it very clear that reservation has benefited only the privileged group and has created a wide gap between the rich and poor within the community.

Another 28 years Ms. Sangray residing in Rajbari Darjeeling shared similar perspective. She is pursuing M.Phil in Education from Calcutta University using reservation quota. Her father works as a security guard in a private company. As per her statement ‘soon after my Post-graduation, I applied for the post of Assistant Teacher in SC quota in a Semi-government Missionary school. I was called for the interview. There were fifteen candidates selected for the interview. Some of them held a degree of B.ED, some had teaching experience and some were a fresher like me. There were two rounds of the interview, some disqualified in the first round and it was only five of us who were selected for the last round. After completing the last round, we were intimated that they would inform us if we got selected. I waited for the result but unfortunately, I was not selected. After few days, I came to know that the candidate who got selected did not have required qualifications but as her aunt worked in that School she was selected’. Ms. Sangray expressed her frustration by

pointing out that she may not be a suitable candidate for the applied post but she felt that other suitable candidates had applied for the job and giving recruitment to the one who was not even eligible compel one's to question the system of reservation. She expressed 'reservation is for everyone it should not be cornered for those groups of people who have a good socio-economic background or a good connection. In fact, it should not have groups of privileged and unprivileged because, in the end, it is through unity we have to fight the social evils of caste stigmatization. If a section of people starts cornering the facility within our group, then social inequality can never be eradicated from the society'.

Similar view was shared by Mr. Pariyar who resided in Pudukkalimpong. He was 51 years old and worked as a peon in a government school which he availed through the reservation quota. He was of a view that the gap within the SC is increasing. He opined 'economic disability of certain sections of SCs have created groups of high-class SCs and low-class SCs and this is distinctly visible in social gatherings'. Mr. Pariyar further stated 'during the meeting held by the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association preferences are only given to the members who belong to the socio-economically stable section. The opinions and suggestions of the unprivileged are always devalued'. However, when confronted with the association they denied the allegation.

However, a different side of the story was narrated by 43 years old Mrs. Mothey residing in Daroga Bazaar Darjeeling who denies such division between privileged and unprivileged groups within the Scheduled Castes. Mrs. Mothey is a Ward Commissioner and holds a degree of Graduation. Her husband is a government employee and she comes from a socio-economically stable family. Regarding the distribution of various facilities for SCs, Mrs. Mothey claimed 'My priority as a Ward

Commissioner is to help the Scheduled Castes who belonged to a poor family. Therefore, I assured that every scheme that comes for the Scheduled Castes is given to those groups of people who actually need it. To my knowledge, the office never corners the benefits and in-fact we take every measure to assure that the benefits reach most of the deserving people’.

Similar opinion was expressed by 66 years old Mr. Shyam Sarki residing in Mull Dara area of Darjeeling. Mr. Sarki followed the traditional occupation of shoemaking and his daughters using reservation quota got employment in the government sector. He revealed ‘due to coming up of new companies my business could not function properly therefore, at the time it was hard for me to manage even food for my family. However, I managed to educate both my daughters till graduation. After completing their graduation, they were able to get employment in government sectors by availing the reservation policy’. Mr. Sarki informed that it was through reservation policy that both her daughters got recruitment. He feels that there are still the majority of Scheduled Castes who are economically unstable therefore, they need to first educate themselves and then compete for job facility which can be accessed by everyone.

Similar story was shared by 32 years old Mr. Sudeep Sundas residing in Jawahar Busty Darjeeling who works as a travel agent. His father is a government employee and his mother owns a business. He received education till Higher Secondary and since he got married at the age of 17 years, decided not to study further. Mr. Sundas participates in every activity of the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association and stated ‘in our community, there are only a small group of people who were able to socio-economically uplift themselves. Therefore, this small section of people in order to uplift the community tries to help those people who are underprivileged. They sponsor the unprivileged children and encourage the educated youth to take tuitions

and also sensitise them about the reservation policy and the educational facilities'. The respondent never felt that the reservation has created a gap among the privileged and unprivileged groups, rather it has benefited the community for the overall upliftment of the group.

Another respondent 48 years old Mr. Sunar from Daroga Bazaar who is a goldsmith had a similar perspective. He stated 'I live in a locality where the Scheduled Castes outnumber other castes. There are privileged and the underprivileged SCs but till date, I have never witnessed issues of discrimination. Everyone equally participates in every social gathering and supports each other irrespective of any class differences. Therefore, I do not feel reservation is disadvantageous rather it has benefitted the overall group'.

The above narration, highlighting both perspectives indicates that people are divided in their opinion, which corresponds to what Kabeer (2000) termed it as privileged inclusion and secondary inclusion. Respondents like Mr. Sundas and Mr. Sunar belonged to the group of privileged inclusion as they were people who occupied the central positions within the community, who were able to utilize the benefits and had also encouraged others. They were the framers of rules and norms. On the other hand, Mr. Sewa and Mr. Pariyar belonged to the group of secondary inclusion who occupied the peripheral position, who enjoyed the privileges to some extent but never got the opportunity to utilize the benefits to the fullest. Therefore, intra-group differences among the Scheduled Castes could be noticed in Darjeeling hills.

4.9. Summary

The chapter made an empirical analysis and attempted to understand the extent of implementation of reservation policy among the Nepali Scheduled Castes (Kami,

Damai and Sarki) in the hills of Darjeeling district. The chapter presents the socio-economic background of the respondents. Taking two important variables i.e. education and employment, the chapter made a comprehensive analysis of the trend of intergenerational mobility that the three communities experienced after availing reservation. While discussing the extent of awareness of reservation with rural and urban variation, it also highlighted both positive and negative aspects of reservation policy and further discusses the accomplishment, challenges and those unattended issues that the three communities are facing in their everyday life.

With these socio-economic backgrounds, the upcoming chapter discusses the impacts that the reservation policy has made upon the three communities in the socio-economic and cultural sphere of life of the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling.

Chapter- V

Impact of Reservation Policy in Socio-Economic and Cultural Life

5.1. Introduction

Reservation policy with its objective to bridge the social inequality is regarded as a tool to avail good quality of education and secure employment is inclusive in nature which has benefitted the lower Castes (Tejas K., 2018). With its inclusive nature, it has benefited a huge section of people who belonged to the socially excluded groups. Indeed claims were made that after the implementation of reservation facilities, there has been a considerable increase in the college enrollment rates of the excluded classes or the disadvantaged groups (Weisskopf, 2004). Rao (2008) observed that after the implementation of reservation policy there was a certain increment in the enrollment percentage of Scheduled Castes students in higher education. Borooah et al. (2002) while investigating the effect of job reservations on improving the economic opportunities of India's Scheduled Castes, asserted that job reservation policy has succeeded in raising the percentage of representation of persons from the SC for past few years. However, there are studies showing improper implementation of the reservation policy, for instance, thinkers like Galanter (1984) pointed out the issues of improper implementation of reservation policy in the Government services and asserted that most of the organizations ignore the rule of reservation policy by regarding the SC candidates as unsuitable thereby excluding the communities. Nevertheless, there are studies showing the impact of reservation policy in the socio-economic and cultural life of the community. For instance, Tajes. K (2018) highlights that over time reservation policy has shown a positive impact in the life of the Scheduled Castes, which is visible through the general economic and social development of the SCs. Further, Osborne (2001) also claimed that changes in

cultural aspects could be seen in the eradication of caste-based occupational restriction. In the light of the above backdrop, the present chapter also attempts to examine the impact reservation policy on socio-economic and cultural life of the Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling hills.

5.2. Socio-economic Impacts

Reservation policy by facilitating the access of excluded communities for educational achievement and employment opportunity have managed to uplift them socio-economically. By virtue of achieving higher education and job the life of the Scheduled Castes has become economically stable which led to disposition of cultural capital. The acquiring of cultural capital changed the habitus of the Scheduled Castes which will ultimately resulted in changing of the socio-economic status. With this backdrop, the following section attempts to understand the socio-economic impact of reservation policy.

5.2.a Social Mobility

Sociologically, Westoff, et al (1960) termed social mobility as the movement of individuals either upward or downward, from one social class to another i.e. higher and lower social classes. While Aldridage (2001) conceptualized the necessity of social mobility to maintain the equilibrium of society because equality promotes well-being, which is important to maintain the social cohesion of the society. Hence, the lack of social mobility in a society could be an indication of inequality of opportunities. Contextualizing, in the present study Yadav (2011) highlights that after the introduction of reservation policy over the years, there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of Scheduled Castes in government employment and educational institutions resulting in the upward social mobility of the SCs. However, Halder (2019) argues that little mobility is experienced by the socially excluded

groups, especially after the modification in reservation policy during the 1980s. Contextually, the following section attempts to understand the extent of social mobility facilitated by education and occupation among the respondents.

5.2.1. Education a Positive Indicator of Social Mobility

Education is an important indicator of social mobility that facilitates an individual to improve their social status and enhances the chances of a better life. Rao (2008) also substantiates the argument that education has special responsibility for transforming India's rich diversity into a constructive social force. He believed that higher education, in particular, constituted a mechanism for awarding socio-economic mobility on the social and economically disadvantaged sections. Therefore, socio-economic mobility would, in turn, produce social integration and cohesion. Yadav (2005), claims that reservation policy intended to increase the social diversity in campuses and workplaces by decreasing the criteria of entrance for certain identifiable groups who are usually under-privileged in proportion to their numbers in the general population and caste is one such criterion to identify under-represented groups. On the other hand, Ilaiah (2008) projected a contrasting view stating that simply allotting reservations does not allow every individual to be a beneficiary or privileged for him one needs to know about the privileges to come in terms with the changing world. Therefore, to substantiate if education acted as a source of mobility among the respondents, few narratives and case studies are collected to understand their perspective regarding education being an indicator of social mobility.

34 years old Saloni Sarki belonged to a businessman's family. She resided in Mull Dara area of Darjeeling. Her father had received education till class V therefore; he was compelled to follow the traditional occupation of shoemaking which was socially stigmatized. Due to which her father had to face social discrimination on some of the

social occasions. Her mother had passed class X and helped her father in managing the business. Despite her father not being able to receive proper education, she was sent to a private missionary school as his business worked smoothly. However, during the time she completed her schooling, her father's business slowly deteriorated and they faced economic crises. Describing her father's financial condition she stated 'I felt I couldn't pursue higher education. But my father wanted me to study so I applied in Darjeeling Government College as the expenses in that college were not very high'. Coming to know from her friend and brother about Stipend²⁶, she applied for the scholarship. Initially, she received an amount of almost Rs. 3500/- per annum which helped her at the time of admission and purchasing books. After completing her M.A. in English from Darjeeling Government College, under North Bengal University she started seeking jobs. Finally, she was recruited into a missionary school as an assistant teacher. After getting employment she helped her father to rebuild his business into a shoe manufacturing enterprise where he recruited other skilled people. At present, her father expanded his business and exports shoes in the local market. Ms. Sarki asserted that if she had discontinued her studies due to the economic crisis, she would have never been able to stabilize her family's socio-economic condition. Now she enjoys a better social status and respectful life in society. Although the respondent did not hold any central/important position in society but was able to procure secondary inclusion by achieving socio-economic security for her family. The secondary inclusion according to Kabeer (2000) is a peripheral position that an individual may manage to occupy in the society and also enjoy some benefits if not all seems very apt in this instance. This is because, despite economic insufficiency by availing privileges of

²⁶Financial aid given by the West Bengal Government

education facilities and job quota, she was able to secure social position for her family in society.

Today they were able to change their occupation from traditional/ hereditary occupation to owning a personal business with a stable income and it was possible indirectly through the educational scholarship and reservation policy. Similar findings has been highlighted by Md Esahaque SK (2017) where he agrees that education can promote social change and bring reformation in all fields of social life.

Similar story was shared by 43 years old Anand Thatal of Rajbari, a municipality area in Darjeeling who had received education till Graduation owns a computer studio. His father followed tailoring occupation which is a traditional occupation of the Damai community. Since childhood, they stayed in a rented house as his father did not have a stable economic condition. He availed scholarship provision meant for SC since class V. Without knowing much about the scheme he stated, ‘Then I did not know that this was the educational scholarship provided by the government to the socially excluded section of the society. In the past my family often experienced humiliation, discrimination and hardly was invited to social gatherings due to the low social status and the social stigma attached to the tailoring job of my father; so I never wanted to follow my father’s footsteps in terms of his traditional occupation. However, with great struggle, I completed graduation along with a diploma course on computers’. He further stated “I did try for a government job but unfortunately could never get one. Since I was determined not to follow my father’s traditional occupation, therefore availing loan at the subsidised rate from SC quota I started a new business related to computers”. Today, he is a proud owner of a computer studio and owns a house and feels the SC scholarship during school and college made it possible to complete his studies and the computer courses that helped him to achieve this upward social

mobility. He is now determined to give better platform to his son. This finding corresponds to the findings of Nazimuddin (2014) who reported that higher education helps in gaining higher income which results in the upward social mobility of individuals and families which multiply the chances of increasing their social status in society.

Similar case of occupational mobility was reported by 32 years old Dipti Mothay, a resident of Kakjora Darjeeling who completed Ph.D. in Microbiology from Bengaluru. Her father who followed the traditional tailoring occupation had studied upto higher secondary. Over the years he expanded his tailoring business in the town area employing few other skilled workers and held a stable economic condition. Therefore, she was privileged to receive education from Loreto Convent School, which is one of the reputed schools in Darjeeling. In her words ‘my father wanted to pursue higher education and work in a government office but due to his economic and family issues, he was not able to fulfill his dreams. He always narrated to me the incidents of social stigma attached to our caste and occupation as well as his experience of social discrimination and exclusion during the earlier days, which included even denying the membership of *Samaaj*²⁷ in the village. Therefore, he always encouraged me to pursue higher education to get rid of such stigmatization’. With a sheer determination of her father, Dipti Mothay was able to complete M.Sc in Microbiology from the Vellore Institute of Technology. Today she is a proud recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, which enabled her to complete her Ph.D. degree. At present, her family members are also part of village *Samaaj* and have maximum educated members working in prestigious jobs. In her words, ‘today we are respected and my family members are equally invited in all social gatherings. I

²⁷Village Social Welfare association

don't have such experiences of discrimination. What I feel is that education is a right that is granted to every individual irrespective of any caste or class therefore, everyone from the deprived section should be aware and try to garner this facility and utilize various amenities meant for SCs'. At present, she is working as an Assistant Researcher at reputed International Research Institute Bengaluru. Kaur (2015) in his article discussed a similar finding among the Scheduled Castes in Punjab where the Scheduled Castes after availing education and employment facilities had managed to gain upward social mobility in the social hierarchy of the society.

5.2.2. Occupational Shift

Occupation is an indicator of social mobility in a society and is also an indicator of class position as people tend to agree on the relative prestige they attach to similar jobs (Karade, 2009). Singh (1977) claimed that changes in the hereditary occupation are genuinely an indication of social mobility. Further, in society, those groups of people at or near the top rung of the prestige ladder usually have the highest income, the best education, and most of the power (Karade, 2009). Therefore, if once an individual gets an opportunity to access the change of occupation, then he/she may get a chance to uplift their social status, by changing their economic status. Similarly, Kaistha (1987) in his studies on 'social mobility, social stratification, and intergenerational social change' have concluded by pointing out that the occupational rank is the single most representative indicator of the social state. In building the social status every individual plays an essential part because the coming of new generations indicates change and this change always brings scope which will help in enhancing one's social status according to the passage of time. Discussing American society, Stuckert (1963) argued that one of the most striking changes in the status structure of modern America is the importance of occupation in establishing a

family's position in the community. In another way, a person's social status depends more upon what the individual does rather than upon what his family did before him. In this backdrop, the study attempts to locate the nature of occupational mobility among the respondents which has been substantiated through few case studies and narratives of the respondents from the field and their perspectives in the following section.

The story of 25 years old Shiksha Sarki of Mull Dara village in Darjeeling is a glaring example of occupation mobility after availing the reservation facility both in education and employment. Her father was involved in traditional occupation of leatherwork i.e. shoemaking while her mother was a housewife. Although her father was a graduate and mother received education till class XII, despite willingness to be employed in the service sector, it was never materialized due to untold circumstances. However, being educated they constantly motivated their daughters to achieve higher education. In her words 'I was worried whether I would be able to fulfill my father's expectation of pursuing higher education or not. During my school days, my family had to face a lot of financial crisis and even struggled to give monthly fees in my private school. I remember an extreme situation, when my mother had to sell all her gold ornaments to pay our school fees and at the time it was hard for my father to manage good and healthy food for us. However, with a lot of struggle, I was able to complete my graduation by availing SC scholarship as well as by taking tuitions and working on a project for managing the financial stress of my family. Although I wanted to pursue higher education I could not continue'. She further narrated 'After graduation, I enrolled in a coaching center for competitive examination where I got a relaxation of 15 percent in fees meant for the scheduled castes. Once the course was over I appeared and cleared the West Bengal Police examination and using the SC

reservation quota, got my recruitment as Sub Inspector in the Department of Police. Even my sister by availing the reservation quota got recruited in Darjeeling Magistrate Office as an accountant. Today after three years of employment in government service, my sister and I bought a shop for our father and he stopped traditional shoe-making occupations but sells company shoes from various brands. With our improved position I feel proud and confident and today when I walk through my village road, I feel a sense of respect by neighbours both for me and my family’.

Similar narration of occupational mobility was made by 52-year-old Shyam Ghatani who resides in Mirik. His father followed the traditional occupation of blacksmithing. Since his father could not afford to own an *aaran*²⁸ and worked on a wage basis for his livelihood, his economic position was very low. Therefore, at times it was even hard for him to meet the daily expenses of his family. He narrated that ‘Since childhood, I had seen lots of difficulties and experience stigmatization in everyday life due to our low caste identity and status. Our participation in social gatherings was very restricted. However, the behaviour and attitude of my neighbours and villagers made me determined to do something big. Therefore, taking financial help from my maternal uncle, I completed my graduation using Scheduled Caste quota and also by availing Stipend meant for SC students’. He further narrated after few trials for the job in the government sector he started a Primary English Medium school in his locality by availing loans from the bank using the Scheduled Caste facility. Proudly, he stated ‘my school is reputed schools in the area which have given employment to many and provide good education to the one who cannot afford to go out for better education. Now I am frequently invited as chief-guest in most of the social functions in the locality and am also an active member of village *Samaaj*’. Therefore, the case

²⁸Machine/equipment where iron is molded and shaped used by the Kami community for blacksmithing.

study evidently reflects that the reservation quota and the scholarship has ultimately helped him to enhance his social status and achieve upward occupation mobility and enjoy stabilized income, better social position and status resulting in social inclusion.

Similar case of occupational mobility has been observed in the story of 59 years old Sudan Mollay who resides in the Kakjora municipality area of Darjeeling. He received education till class XII and due to financial constraints could not pursue higher education. His family owned a hereditary tailoring shop, however, Mr. Mollay never wanted to opt for a tailoring job in his father's shop, as he was well aware and had experienced social stigma attached to the tailoring occupation. Therefore, despite the unwillingness of his father, he managed to apply for a passport and went to Dubai where he worked in a company for almost six years. However, due to the sudden death of his elder brother, he had to come back to his hometown and despite his reluctance, he had no choice but to take up his hereditary occupation as a tailor. According to him, 'I decided that I will never compel my children to follow our traditional occupation and provide good education to them. After I came to know about the educational scholarships and job reservation facilities for SC, I motivated my son and daughter for higher studies. At present, after completing Graduation my son works in New Delhi in the private sector and my daughter is pursuing Ph.D. in Botany and is also working in a research institute in Bengaluru. My daughter used the reservation facility and from the Scheduled Caste quota, she got her enrollment in Ph.D. and also is receiving the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) for SC'. Mr. Mollay narrated that he always wanted to change his occupation but due to circumstances and financial instability, he could never do so. With pride and a sense of satisfaction, he stated 'I am extremely happy with my children's achievement and feel that the shift of occupation from this generation has given a new social status to

my family. Today although I still follow the tailoring occupation in my hereditary shop, we are not dependent on it as both my children support us financially. My children also want me to lease out the tailoring shop but I have three employees that are dependent on me therefore, it is not possible for me to close my business'. Further, he asserted that 'reservation facilities gave my children opportunities of receiving higher education due to which today I do not have to engross myself in tailoring and I strongly support that everyone belonging to deprived families of SC should be aware of the reservation facilities and make use of it'. This case study indicates how by availing reservation facilities, the respondent's children could gain intergenerational occupational mobility which elevated the family status of the respondents. The occupational mobility has subsequently helped the respondent's family in earning respect and equal treatment in society as stated by the respondent.

The above-mentioned case studies and narratives of the respondents clearly reflect that reservation by facilitating education and occupation mobility has definitely led to upward social mobility to the respondents' family. The shift lends support to what Talcott Parsons has pointed out in his Pattern Variable dichotomy, a shift from ascriptive to achieved status which is an emerging trend among the Nepali SC communities in Darjeeling hills also.

5.3. Changes in Cultural Life

Eijck (1999) identified that socially mobile individuals' are presumed to naturally adapt to the social environment. Moreover, individuals' cultural tastes and behaviors differ along with the members of the different status groups hence, social mobility is likely to have a link with a person's pattern of cultural consumption. In this context, the educational and occupational shift facilitated by reservation can have the

reflection in their cultural taste and behaviour of the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki, which is examined in the following section.

Raymonds (1976) conceptualized defines culture as the way of life for an entire society that includes codes of manner, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behaviour such as law and morality, and systems of belief as well as the art (Hadi, 2012). Therefore, cultural practices determined one's way of life or lifestyle that unknowingly is embedded in individual behavior. However, changes that take place due to structural change also enable an individual to adapt to the new environment. In a way cultural revitalization takes place. Emmison (2003) discussed that cultural mobility granted freedom of choosing one's position in the cultural landscape, therefore, in the pursuit of a better life, every individual tried to adapt to the social world. According to Streib (2017) a strong religious culture with higher levels of education, marriage, and other positive influences directly or indirectly determines the social and cultural norms of upward mobility of some populations. Similarly, Eijck (1999) opined that cultural consumption²⁹ is strongly related to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of an individual and the origin of their family. The fundamental cause of this collaboration is that cultural consumption requires so-called cultural resources, which are passed on from one generation to the next. Therefore, the association between socio-economic and cultural aspects could not be overlooked. Originating from cultural Marxism to the culture of poverty, to Bourdieu's theory of habitus and capital, the sociologists have discussed in many ways about how culture

²⁹According to Rössel, et al 2017 cultural consumption is primarily linked with the sphere of arts, culture, and leisure, encompassing consumption behaviours.

leads people to stay in the class to which they were born, however, there are scarcely any who remain in the class of birth (Streib, 2017). As Bourdieu pointed out that cultural capital can be instrumental in changing the social position in society. Contextually locating, traditionally the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki had the ascriptive status based on their hereditary occupation and were destined to serve the higher caste people (Laber, 2003). As discussed in preceding sections, reservation by facilitating access to education and employment and allotment of benefits, changes did take place and among those changes, cultural change is one such change that could be noticed among the three communities which are determined by socio-economic factor. One of the most conspicuous cultural changes that were observed was change in rules of commensality which is mainly due to the structural change that has been taking place. The process of globalization, modernization and industrialization has resulted in structural differentiation and occupational diversification impacting the changing lifestyle, rules of commensality, the pattern of marriage, the structure of families, the belief system and religion, which is also observed within the three castes of Darjeeling hills. A detailed discussion of socio-cultural aspects is discussed in the following section.

5.3.1. Change in Lifestyle

Hubacek, et al (2007) pointed out that economic success in developing countries has resulted in considerable improvements in people's quality of life, experiencing a transition from poverty to adequate food and clothing. Mattsson, et al (2017) consider income to be an indicator of material resources that determines the lifestyle of an individual. Empirically locating, reservation policy directly or indirectly impacted the lifestyle of the three communities in Darjeeling hills. The advancement of education, technology, and new economic systems encouraged social mobility and substituted

old hierarchies. These changes were witnessed in many aspects such as dressing sense, house affordability, economic stability, changes in consumption of food, commensality, marriage pattern, social status, use of modern appliances and gadgets.

The clothing and our attire exhibit the lifestyle and along with the changes in socio-economic condition, the Kami, Damai, and Sarki of the Darjeeling hills also adopted these changes. We could observe that most of the respondents both in rural and urban areas have adapted to the changes in the dressing sense. At present, the youngsters prefer to wear the modern western trendy branded clothes and also imitate the fashion and trend as shown in Bollywood and in the Hindi serials, such changes in the clothing are noticed in all the age groups. Further, changes were also observed in the housing style of the three communities, we could notice that at present, many respondents lived in pakka houses, concrete buildings with modern designs with attached toilet and bathroom that helped them gain social status in the locality. The concept of separate dining rooms could be noticed in all households of urban areas. The awareness of cleanliness and hygiene could generally be observed. As pointed above, the use of modern appliances and electronic gadgets has become common which is predominant determinant of the improved socio-economic status of the respondents. It is observed that some of the electronic appliances such as mobile phones, TV, music systems, etc. was possessed by the majority of the respondents irrespective of their economic status both in the rural and urban area that indicates the change in the lifestyle of the studied population. Overall, it could be observed that reservation policy had empowered the three communities to improve their lives that gave them socio-economic status with better life opportunities.

5.3.2. Food Culture and Eating Habit

One of the important aspects of the caste system is rules regarding commensality. Dhaiwale (2017) argues India's upper castes who are obsessively possessed with physical purity and pollution have been ranking people based on what they ate, or what they presumed the others ate. Gupta and Mishra (2014) have highlighted the role of food in making one's social status and also determine the forms of hierarchy. The caste hierarchy also regulates the food consumption pattern. Traditionally, possessed with the notion of purity and pollution, the Nepali community followed the strict rule of commensality. Laber (2003) has pointed out that the lower castes in Nepali caste hierarchy were either given the leftover food of the upper caste when they worked in their houses and due to financial insufficiency, they were often humiliated and stigmatized as eating meat of dead animal, however, such practices was not observed during the fieldwork. The social change that has facilitated the opening of fast food centers, restaurants, hotels, tea stalls, etc. resulted in relaxation of the rules of commensality to a considerable extent in urban areas and the practices of inter-dining and eating together has also been reported and observed during the fieldwork.

'Satvik'³⁰ food which was an important feature of the caste system is no more restricted to higher caste people as it was observed that at present few respondents of three communities also have adopted and restricted themselves to consuming 'satvik' food including milk and milk products, thereby Sanskritized their lifestyle. According to Kumar (2017), the consumption of milk and milk products, fruits, and non-vegetarian items increased considerably breaking the rules of food consumption created by caste. The field observation shows that many respondents were conscious and aware of consuming nutritious and healthy food which was the result of the

³⁰Satvik is derived from a Sanskrit word "Sattva". It means pure, natural, energetic, vital and clean vegetarian food which was consumed by the high caste as prescribed by caste rule.

improved socio-economic status. Currently, similar change in the food habit of consuming non-vegetarian food items by the higher caste Nepali is generally observed who use to consume only satvik food. According to the data out of the total respondents, 2.7 percent of the Scheduled Castes (Kami, Damai, and Sarki) were vegetarian and 4.16 percent of them avoided certain meat like beef and pork. Restriction in consumption of drinking alcohol was no more attached to the prescribed caste. In overall, change in food consumption patterns as in the process of Sanskritization has been observed among the studied population.

The relation between socio-economic upliftment and change in the food habit can be observed in the case study of 36 years old Ms. Upurkuti of Mull Dara village Darjeeling. She lives with her mother and younger sister. Ms. Upukuti did her M.A in Economics using reservation quota and simultaneously did a part-time job to help her mother. Availing Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship meant for SC, she got enrolled in Ph.D. in Calcutta University. According to her 'My mother is just literate. After my father deserted us, with great difficulty and hard-work my mother managed the expenses of our studies. Many times due to financial insufficiency we could not manage daily food and eat pancakes and hardly could afford nutritious food like meat, milk or milk products. However, things have changed now, I save some amount from my fellowship and help my sister in pursuing M.A. With my earning from part-job, I helped my mother to start a fast food corner. Today we can afford to eat good and healthy food and fish, meat, milk and milk products are part of our food item'.

Similar story was shared by 47-year-old Mrs. Thatal who resides in Chandmari area Darjeeling. By availing quota facility, she got recruitment in government service with the help of which she was able to change her family's socio-economic status. Mrs. Thatal after completing her Higher Secondary from a government school is working

in the Panchayat office in Bijanbari. As her father worked as a tailor they were economically not stable and from her father's income hardly could provide complete and nutritious meal for a day. They used to consume rice from the weekly ration shop and could only afford cheap vegetables. However, after getting recruitment the scenario changed. She stated 'since I got the job, our economic status has improved. Now, we are able to afford nutritious food like vegetables, milk products and meat items quite often'.

Gupta & Mishra (2014) pointed out in the presence of social diversity and inequality, food often became an important aspect of the boundaries between groups. The above case studies indicate the improved socio-economic status has contributed to breaking the boundaries of food habits between the high caste and low caste people.

5.3.3. Marriage Pattern and Restriction

Marriage institution in India withholds a religious obligation and is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Religious and caste endogamy are two of the most prevalent forms of endogamy in India which is commonly practiced. Ghurye (1932) while discussing six features of the caste system in India, highlighted the principle of strict endogamy as a dominant aspect of caste-society and as 'the essence of the caste system'. Dumont (1988) also pointed out endogamy as one of the important regulations of marriage that maintained the caste hierarchy through rituals of pollution and purity. Similarly, Hundal (2015) highlighted the rule of endogamy and exogamy that is practiced by the Hindu caste. While practicing caste endogamy a Hindu caste follows the rules of exogamy by marrying outside the 'gotra' and 'pravar'. Therefore, caste in India is a form of social stratification is characterized by endogamy, hereditary transmissions of lifestyle which often include occupation, ritual status in

the hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion based on the cultural notion of purity and pollution (Poudel, 2018).

Earlier within the Nepali community of Darjeeling, the practices of endogamy marriages were strictly prescribed and were practiced rigidly. Traditionally, inter-caste marriages were not common and in case of violating the norms of caste in marriage, the caste prescribed severe social sanction. Poudel (2018) revealed that the caste system in Nepal is still a predominant system abided by the rules of social stratification and inequality. Practices of hypogamy and hypergamy are prohibited and impose severe punishments. The practice of caste-based arranged marriage is common in Darjeeling also. Similar finding was reported by Allendorf (2013) who claimed that in Darjeeling arranged marriages were the dominant marriage pattern.

However, challenging the concept of cultural hegemony the three communities by achieving education were able to change their habitus and eventually, it could be noticed that in the current scenario love marriages and inter-caste marriages are taking place, relinquishing the traditional age-old strict boundaries and norms of caste endogamy. Roy (2012) in his study claimed that the Nepali society in Darjeeling at present is a liberal society where the boy and the girl often introduce the person whom they want to get married to. The boundaries of endogamy no longer debar the current generation marrying outside caste, religion, and even nation. Contextually, few narratives and the case studies are presented in the following section, which is examined to find out whether the rules of caste endogamy has been relaxed to marry a girl/boy of lower caste and whether there is acceptance, stigmatization and social sanction in breaking the caste norms of marriage.

27 years old Upasana Sarki of Mull Dara village Darjeeling received her education till M.A in Geography and is pursuing B.ED simultaneously. At present, she is working as an assistant teacher at a missionary school in Kolkata. Her father followed the traditional shoemaking occupation and owned a shop and her mother is involved in micro-enterprise (knitting and sewing). In 2017, she got married to a Sherpa boy which was courtship followed by arranged marriage at Siliguri. Her husband works in the Public Health Engineering Department in Kolkata. She stated 'I have done the love marriage. Even after two years of marriage, I never felt like an outsider in my husbands' family and felt any kind of discrimination, in fact, today I perform most of the family rituals and my in-laws include me in all the major decisions of our family. My mother-in-law belongs to the Tamang community and recalls the stories of discrimination by her family. However, in my case, even my husband's grandmother accepted me without any discrimination. I feel, even the grandmother of my husband accepted the changing social dynamics of the relationship over the years'. Although, in this case, the interplay of reservation policy was not seen directly, however, her social acceptance reveals the changing perception of the society which was not acceptable as per the traditional caste norms. This is what the respondent believed that if she had not been educated and self-dependent, there could have been a possibility of non-acceptance and caste-based discrimination.

The case of both discrimination and social acceptance in inter-caste marriage was witnessed in the case of 35 years old Roshni Baraily, who works as a nurse in a Government Hospital, which she got using reservation quota. She came from a socio-economically established family as her father worked in the government sector and mother ran a private business. She never faced any economic issues at her parental home. So despite being aware of the educational scholarship, she never applied for

stipend during her school days. In her words ‘During my’20s, I married a boy who belonged to the Rai community but due to my lower caste status, our marriage was not accepted despite the fact that I come from a good socio-economic background. Therefore, I left my in-laws' house and came back to my parental house. Unhappy with the humiliation I faced, I completed the nursing diploma and later on I was appointed as Staff Nurse in a government hospital. Now I am happily married in a Sherpa family who accepted me as their daughter-in-law without any discrimination. My mother-in-law herself being a government employee understands me and sometimes when I am unable to participate in family ceremonies or functions, she never questions as she is well versed with the pressure of work in my nursing profession. They never make me realize that I come from a low caste family and always appreciate my dedication and commitment towards our family’. The case study reveals that how her improved socio-economic status contributed to her social acceptance in inter-caste marriage without any stigmatization. While due to her caste identity her first marriage was the case of non-acceptance and rejection.

Similar stories of social acceptance in the case of inter-caste and inter-religious marriage without any caste stigmatization were narrated by many other respondents, few being Rammana Sarki, Dipika Darnal, Srijana Mothay, where education and occupation mobility has played a major role. 43 years old Rammana Gurung married a lower caste Sarki boy. Availing reservation quota and scholarship her husband holds an M.A degree in English and at present works in a private company in Dubai in managerial post while Rammana works in the Dubai embassy. She stated ‘Despite my families' and neighbors' pressure, my mother accepted my husband and never discriminated him. He is educated and sensible and understands the necessity of our family and takes care of my mother and always supports me. Therefore, despite

getting married to a lower caste family, I never regretted it. In fact, at present all in my family and neighbours respect him and invite him to the family and social functions'. She also pointed out that the 'acceptance by my mother was possible only because of his high education degree and his respectable job which has improved his socio-economic status'.

Another story of social acceptance was narrated by 33 years old Dipika Darnal residing in St. Paul's Darjeeling who is married to a higher caste boy. She works as an Assistant Professor in Kerala in a private college and is simultaneously pursuing her Ph.D. in Zoology availing the reservation quota. Dipika narrated, 'I have done a love marriage. My mother-in-law despite being a higher caste had come to my house with a marriage proposal. Initially, I was worried that my husband's family would never accept our relationship. We always discussed that if my husband's family disagrees with our marriage, then we thought of going for court marriage. But to my surprise, my mother-in-law willingly accepted our marriage and assured my parents that caste would never be a barrier in our relationship and I will never be discriminated'. Dipika felt that educational opportunity and achievement worked as a social equalizer that contributed to the social acceptance of her marriage to the higher caste boy.

Another case of inter-caste marriage and social acceptance was observed in case of 38 years old Srijana Mothay of Kakjora Darjeeling whose father followed the traditional occupation of tailoring and had difficulty in maintaining a decent life due to his low income. Availing scholarships, Ms. Mothay completed her schooling and Graduation and soon after completing her Graduation went to Delhi and worked in the private call center as Human Resources Managers (HR) as she had no other option to help her family. She narrated 'I work in an international call center and am married in a Garhwal family. Before marriage, I told my in-laws about my caste. Despite

belonging to an orthodox Hindu family, my in-laws accepted me. Seeing their acceptance I feel that today at least a small section of the population has started accepting the social change'. She recalled that 'During my childhood days my mother never let me go to my friend's house and used to tell me that some may dislike my presence. Therefore, I never went to anyone's home and as I grew up with the fear of discrimination and this restricted me from making friends. But today I am educated and economically independent which has boosted my self-confidence and esteem'. The case study also reveals that educational and economic upliftment has become the medium of socio-economic upliftment as well as improving self-confidence.

However, in contrast to the above success stories, there are instances which show the continuity of caste-based discrimination and stigmatization in the case of inter-community marriages. 30 years old Susmita Sarki who resides at Chambari Darjeeling with her parents shared her story of non-acceptance by her in-laws and husband. Susmita's father was a carpenter, studied upto class VIII and now works in Bengaluru as a housemaid. She got married to a boy from Tamang community. She narrated 'I got married to a Tamang boy in Bengaluru which was solemnized according to Hindu rites and customs at my house. My family for my security registered our marriage under sub-section (1) of section 8 the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 on 20th October 2012. The initial days of the marriage were normal but after we went to Bengaluru where we had to take our respective jobs. Then my husband started showing behavioural change and became irregular in his job. He started showing harsh behavior and repeatedly abused me using derogatory words. Although, issues of caste differences never arose in Bengaluru but when my father-in-law made a demand of Rs. 70,000/- and I expressed my inability to fulfill the said demand, thereafter, my father-in-law started abusing and assaulting me by using derogatory terms such as

*'Sano Jat'*³¹ targeting my identity. However, due to my illness, we returned to Darjeeling and leaving me in my in-law's house my husband left for Kalimpong. After he returned, he deliberately used derogatory words such as *'Pani Muni Ko Jat'*, *'achoot'* and *'Sano Jat'*. Tired of this ill-treatment, at present, I am residing at my parental house and have filed for divorce in court for justice'. Susmita further stated 'the evils of the caste system still exist in our society, At times I feel if I had a good socio-economic background and had received higher education I would have never faced such discrimination'. The case study is evident of the fact that inter-caste marriage with the Scheduled Caste in Darjeeling still has issues of social discrimination and non-acceptance.

Another story of such social discrimination was found in the story of 45 years old Sapna Mollay who had faced exclusion on many occasions. Sapna came from a socio-economically well off family. Availing reservation quota she worked in the District Magistrate Office as a Group 'C' staff and had got married to a higher caste boy. Her husband also worked in the District Magistrate office. Sapana said although she was accepted by her in-laws she always felt uneasy and discriminated at her in-laws' house many times. Such discrimination is more prominent especially during family rituals as she is not allowed to perform pooja, enter the kitchen and worship area where hereditary rituals take place and is often asked to stay out of such religious activities. She stated 'Due to this everyday exclusion I accepted the promotion and took transfer to the head office of Siliguri to avoid the humiliation due to my caste identity'. Today Sapna owns a house in Siliguri where she stays with her husband and son. Despite having economic stability and social status in society, the respondent faced

³¹Lower caste

discrimination and social exclusion which reveals the existence and continuation of the practice of caste discrimination.

Overall, from the above cases, it is observed that reservation by facilitating education and occupational mobility has impacted inter-caste marriages to a considerable extent; however, we cannot generalize that the caste boundary has been totally relaxed. Still, there are the instances and cases which show the persistence and continuation of caste discrimination and the inter-caste marriage with the lower caste is still stigmatized by the higher caste people in the society. The empirical study reveals that complete eradication of the caste-based discrimination in case of marriage is yet to take place. Poudel (2018) also highlighted instances of rejection of inter-caste marriages. He pointed out that the couple who opt for inter-caste marriages are often regarded as social deviants and in some cases, there are severe punishments allotted to these couples for rejecting the prevalent norms in the society. They even face societal exclusion where the society displays negative attitudes and behaviour toward them.

5.3.4. Changes in Family Structure

The family is the first line of defense, a major source of emotional bonding and socialization that acts as a link between continuity and change (Sonawat, 2001). Since age-old, the joint family has been one of the salient features of the Indian society, promoting 'we feeling' and sentiment of jointness, but the 20th century brought enormous changes in the family system and the size of the joint family reduced into fragmented forms (Singh, 2005). Moreover, the introduction of westernization and industrialization in society lead to diversification of occupational opportunities resulting in the banishment of large families. Due to the availability of various job opportunities, the structure of the family and role allocation on gender basis underwent a change. The outcome was that the old joint family system shrunk

significantly to the nuclear family system. Gregory (2009) claims that at present, due to various factors and conditions, every social institution are undergoing radical changes, although the rate of change may vary from one society to another. Therefore, family being the primary institution is no exception to this. The education and opening of new job opportunities are important economic factors that brought a change in the family structure. These changes affected most of the countries and in India where people believed that the maximum number of people give a major part of their earnings to their family living in common residence will lessen the burden are now in favour of establishing a nuclear family.

Empirically locating, it was found that out of the total percentage of the respondent's family 66.8 percent were nuclear which was either due to better job opportunities or for the pursuit of quality education facilities, they had to shift to the urban area which led to the breakup from their joint families or nuclear-extended families. 28.3 percent were supplemented nuclear³² family and 4.9 percent were supplemented and sub-nuclear³³ families. The opening of new private companies, shopping malls, restaurants, hotels, schools, etc. in Darjeeling has led to the movement of people from rural to urban areas creating the push and pull factors in migration. This has affected the joint family system. While inquiring about the reasons for separation from the family various reasons and views were shared by the respondents. The respondents' perspective on the reasons for nuclearization has been discussed here with few narratives in the following section.

³²Supplemented nuclear families include a nuclear family's members plus other relations, without spouses.

³³Sub-nuclear family is a fragment of a nuclear family, such as a widow with unmarried children, or siblings living together.

Empirically the study highlighted that the breakup of the family is mainly either due to migration from rural to urban areas in search of financial security, quality education or children building a separate house. One of the main factors observed among the respondents for shifting to urban areas was the closing of tea gardens as 5.3 percent of respondents in the rural setting were earlier dependent on tea gardens as the main source of livelihood. 40-year-old Mr. Pariyar a resident of Peshok tea garden stated ‘I lived with my parents and sibling in Peshok tea garden. All of us worked in the tea garden as labourers but due to the shutting down of the tea garden in 2016, we had to search for alternative means of earning. Since there was no other scope of earning in the rural area, we came to Darjeeling main town area and started working in hotels as housekeeping staff. Since I was not educated, I wanted to educate my children for their better future, I migrated to Darjeeling and lived in Jawahar Busty. Both my sons are studying in government school and college. While seeking admission in the college, reservation quota helped my elder son to enroll in college, which otherwise would not have been possible as he scored low percentage in Higher Secondary examination. The stipend which he receives helps us financially to make his yearly payment’. Mr. Pariyar further revealed that his elder son never got any scholarship in the village school but currently his younger son who is studying in school receives a small amount and books from school. Mr. Pariyar does not want to go back home and feels every individual should know about their rights of reservation for better information and opportunities. The case study reveals the need for seeking an alternative source of livelihood and the financial necessity for maintaining everyday life has been the main push factor for the respondent and the availability of opportunities especially the educational opportunities in urban settings pulled him that led to the disintegration of extended family. Singh (2009) similarly emphasized that to

pursue higher education or to secure more profitable jobs or to fill out their living outside their traditional callings, resulting from the availability of better opportunities elsewhere, the adults migrate to other cities. Based on the analysis of census data of India, he concluded that the nuclear families constituted 70 percent and single-member or more than one member households without spouses comprised about 11 percent. The extended and joint family or households together claimed merely 20 percent of the total population of India.

The narration of Mr. Lamichaney breaking from the joint family tells us about the direct impact of the reservation and its consequences on the family structure. In his words: 'I lived with my parents and siblings in Pubung busy Kalimpong. I used to stay with my three married brothers and their family in my ancestor's house for the last 33 years and at times it was difficult for me to fulfill the basic necessities of my children as I had to contribute to the expenses of the joint family. After Graduation, I got a government job in Group 'D' post in the PHE office from the reservation quota and in order to secure my children's future, I separated from my parent's house along with my wife and children'. Canning, et al (1999) argued that a reduction in family size can contribute to the social and economic development of both the country and the individual family. He added, children from large families are more often denied access to schooling, because the family cannot afford to educate so many children purely from the parents' incomes and to survive may require the child's current contribution to the household. In terms of economy, as the size of the family increases, the costs of schooling increase leading to the possibility for lower school attendance for children from large families. Talcott Parsons while discussing the nuclear family in America also pointed out that the members of the nuclear family, consisting of parents and their still dependent children, ordinarily occupy a separate

dwelling not shared with members of the family of the orientation of either spouse and are economically independent, from the occupational earnings of the husband/father (Rodman, 1965).

The change in the gender roles due to education and occupation shift is another factor contributing to the trend of the nuclearization of the family. In the Nepali society of Darjeeling hills due to the Patriarchal social structure, a rigid gender division of labour is observed in the family. However, there is no restriction on women to participate in any work and women freely participate in income-generating activities. For instance in tea gardens of Darjeeling, maximum of 48 percent of the labourers are women (Sarkar, et al 2016). Contextually locating, we can observe by breaking the gender stereotyping 48.36 percent of female members out of the total female respondents worked in the government sectors and by breaking the glass ceiling, few SC women are represented even in the high 'B' Grade administrative post. Taking private sector employment in the various private companies, salesgirls in retailer shops and hotels, and self-initiative in employment like private business and traditional occupation, in total 54.91 percent of women respondents are engaged in earning or in some form of livelihood sources. This shift and awareness among the SC women of Darjeeling have an impact on the traditional family structure.

One such example of the change in the family structure is found in the narration of 52-year-old Mrs. Darnal who lives in Dara Gaon Rajbari, which is located at a distance of 15.4 km away from Darjeeling town. She did her schooling up to Class VIII and using reservation policy, got job in a Group 'D' post in Darjeeling Magistrate Office. Since she had to commute daily, she used to be often late while coming back, which her in-laws disliked. In her words 'my working hours usually

ended at four but as I am a Group 'D' staff, most of the time my working hour extended till five or even more as I had to clean and close the office after all the employees left. Due to this, I reached home around seven, so my in-laws always nagged and scolded me. Therefore, after consulting with my husband, we took a rented room in the town area and have been staying separately for the past seven-year as this arrangement does not spoil the relations with my in-laws. Also, I can visit them during social occasions, festivals, and whenever they need us'.

Similar narration of the trend of nuclearization due to higher education and better opportunities is found in the story of 32 years old Ms. Kalikote who resides in Snow View at Darjeeling. Her father owns a shop in the main town area of Darjeeling. She completed her schooling from Loreto Convent School and Post-Graduate from North Bengal University. At present availing RGNF, she is pursuing Ph.D. in Kerala as well as working in a research institute. She stated 'After completion of my Ph.D. I don't feel like going back to Darjeeling as I can find better opportunities staying in Kerala. Although, my father wants me to come back to Darjeeling but for my better future I have to convince him'. Similar issue was discussed by Brezis and Soueri (2011), where economic opportunities were regarded to be the main reason for educated people wanting to migrate and better financial incentive is a magnet that attracts the people.

Another such story of change in family structure can also be found in the narration of 36 years old Mrs. Sunam who lives in Jawahar Busty and by profession is an Assistant Teacher in a government school in Siliguri. Mrs. Sunam completed her schooling from Loreto Convent School and graduated from Darjeeling Government College with Honours in Geography. After her graduation, using the reservation facility, she got recruitment in a teaching job. Her school was located in Siliguri due

to which she had to rent a room and stay in Siliguri. Now she has been able to buy a flat and live here with her husband and child.

All the case studies referred above indicate the rise of the breaking down of the traditional extended family system and migration to urban centers for better living opportunities in Darjeeling, due to which the nuclear family is becoming an emerging trend. Similar situation was found among the Scheduled Caste respondents in Darjeeling where many cases of outmigration mainly due to the education and occupation opportunities have been noticed and the trend of nuclearization is prominently visible among the three communities.

5.3.5. Change in Economic Status

According to Marx social class 'is an aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organization of production' further, it is determined not by occupation or income but by the position an individual occupies and the function he performs in the process of production (Abraham and Morgan, 1985). Marx identified two distinct classes based on the means of production i.e. the bourgeoisie who are the owners of the means of production and the proletariat who do not own the means of production inculcating a feeling of superiority and inferiority among people. While Max Weber discussed three crucial characteristics of class where individuals share a particular status of their lives, represented by an exclusive economic drive in the possession of goods and opportunities for property increase and this class situation is essentially market situation (ibid, 1985). Discussing intersectionality of caste and class in the Indian context, Mukherjee (2000), pointed out the classification consisting the group of the landlords, big landowners, wholesale traders, moneylenders, etc. who belonged essentially to the high castes, the bulk of self-sufficient peasants, small-scale artisans, petty traders, etc, belonged to the middle castes in general and those at the lowest

level of the growing colonial-capitalist class structure (such as the marginal peasants, landless workers, etc.) belonged to the lowest castes. The interweaving of the class and caste structure in India was evolved during colonial India. The Nepali caste system of Darjeeling was also traditionally based on the hereditary occupational specialization. If the Bahun and Chettri are placed in the top ladder of the caste hierarchy, by virtue of their hereditary occupation and specialization, the Kami (blacksmiths and goldsmiths), Damai (tailors and musicians) and Sarki (leather workers) (Roy, 2012) were ranked low in the caste hierarchy. As a result, their economic means were restricted to caste occupation which also impacted their class position. To reduce the historical lags in the socio-economic status, policies of positive discrimination were introduced in India, its objective was not to give special privileges but to extend protection to those groups who were exploited and excluded (Ambedkar, 2008). Therefore, to substantiate whether reservation policy had impacted the economic position of these three communities within the Nepali Scheduled Caste following few narratives and case studies are presented.

The first case study is that of 56 years old Mr. Mangrati, resident of 12th mile, Kalimpong who was a West Bengal Civil Services officer in Group 'A' category. He was the first person in his village to experience intergenerational mobility. Mr. Mangrati's father was just literate and occupationally he was a shoemaker and a farmer who wanted to educate his children. He had three siblings and all of them studied in a government school and college and had received education till Graduation. All of his siblings availing educational scholarships had completed their studies and again using reservation quota were recruited in government sector jobs. His two brothers work in the Panchayat office and West Bengal Police as Officer in Charge. While he works in the Forest Department as an A grade officer. The case of

Mr. Mangrati's family presents the instance of intergenerational mobility which consequently has elevated their economic status and further enhanced their social status with a respectable position they hold in the government sector. It could be observed that after availing reservation policy the respondents was able to change their habitus and build a new habitus for the new generation. Similar findings were reported by Pais (2011) where he discusses how according to the passage of generation the percentage of the Scheduled Castes manual workers among the respondents' generation decreases in comparison to their father and grandfather, whereas the percentage of skilled workers increased among the respondents' generation showing the impact of reservation policy. Similar cases of intergenerational mobility were observed by thinkers like Kim (2017) and Leigh (2007) in other countries such as Korea Australia, where they discuss how the increasing educational and job facilities have increased the rate of intergenerational mobility.

The other case where intergenerational mobility could be observed after the utilization of reservation policy is that of 48 years old Mr. Tika Pariyar who resides in Pudung busty in Kalimpong. His father followed the traditional caste occupation of tailoring and was a *gothalo*³⁴ and did not have a house of his own. After getting married to his mother, his grandparents gave his parents a small plot where they had built a kachha (mud) house. Mr. Pariyar completed his education till Higher Secondary from a government school and had received the educational facilities allotted for SCs. In his words 'I studied in Kumudini Homes School till class twelve and received a yearly stipend, which was meant for only SC students. Besides, I used to get books, bags, geometry boxes, an umbrella, and raincoats from school. After completing my class

³⁴The person who looks after the cow.

twelve examination, my cousin advised me to fill the form of recruitment in the Panchayat office. I filled in the form from the Scheduled Caste category and cleared both written examinations and viva-voce and got the placement. After 15 years of service, I was able to construct a *pakka* house and my son is studying in St. Augustine's School which is a reputed ICSE and ISC school in Kalimpong'. Mr. Pariyar was able to uplift his economic status after the utilization of the reservation policy and also wants his son to do the same and opt for higher education which he was deprived of due to his family's financial status. Therefore, it is observed that the reservation quota facilitated Mr. Pariyar for occupational mobility and stability in his economic status. This has led to the change in what Bourdieu called as 'habitus' in his family and that entitled him more social and cultural capital, that can be the instrument for further upward mobility in his family.

Similar case of upward mobility and improvement of economic status is the story of Mr. Sheetal Pariyar who is 63 years old and resides in Hospital Dara Kalimpong. He is a retired officer of the Department of Treasury section in the District office. Mr. Pariyar's father owned a small traditional hereditary tailoring shop in the Kalimpong main town area, which happened to be their traditional caste-based occupation. He had received education till class twelve and using the reservation facility had availed a job. His wife was a Head Staff nurse and had utilized reservation facilities both in the form of educational facilities (such as quota and scholarship) and job reservation quota for recruitment. He has two children who by availing reservation quota were recruited and are well placed for instance his daughter is an Assistant professor at Siliguri College which she got from College Service Commission while his son is a Grade 'B' WBCS Officer in Backward Class Welfare Office in Raigang, West Bengal. After retirement, Mr. Praiyar now works for the welfare of the Damai *Samaj*

(association) and encourages the members to get educated for the upliftment of their family status and the betterment of the community. The case study shows how the reservation facility has enabled Mr. Praiyar to consolidate the cultural capital of his family which resulted in improving the economic status of the children through educational and occupational mobility.

Another narration of Ms. Sarki who is 33 years old and lives with her mother in Kakjora, has a similar experience of upward mobility and change in economic status. She was recently recruited in a government sector job. As her mother was a housemaid, she availed scholarship and completed both her schooling, Graduation and professional B.ED degree. When she applied for a teaching job in government schools in 2013, she topped in the Scheduled Caste reserved category and was an assured candidate. However, she did not receive the appointment letter, which she feels is due to the lack of social networking. After she contacted the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association and their intervention, she was able to get the placement. In her words ‘After much struggle, I was able to get the job in 2015 and am very grateful to the members of the association for helping me out. Now I bought two BHK flats in Kakjora and am staying with my mother. My mother stopped working as a housemaid and works with her Self Help Group Programmes’. The case study is a clear evident of the fact that how reservation has been a bonus and has helped the respondent to uplift her social and economic position in society, thus leading to vertical upward social mobility. However, it also exhibits how the economically weaker section within the SC category faces several constraints in availing their entitlement that is meant for all. The instance shows us how despite being eligible an individuals’ socio-economic position governs the utilization of benefits.

However, these successful instances are the partial side of the story. The empirical analysis found that there are many respondents from the rural areas who are still in the purview of social exclusion. The lack of education and awareness as well as the social networking of respondents has hindered them from availing any facilities. Empirically locating, one of such respondents who is economically deprived within the category and have not availed the reservation facilities due to unawareness is 42 years old Mr. Darjee from Kurseong. Mr. Darjee lived with his parents, wife, and two kids (son and daughter). By occupation, he was a daily-wage labourer due to which his family had to face economic hardship and was not able to receive an education. He lived in a *kaccha* house that was in dilapidated condition. Mr. Darjee knew about the housing loan facility granted to the Scheduled Castes in the panchayat areas which he applied along with his friends. However, his name was not shortlisted among the beneficiaries and later came to know that the fund was allotted to those candidates who already had *pakka* houses and were economically well-off. In the words of respondents, 'I feel that benefits are cornered by well-off people and enjoyed by those who have good social networks'. The case corresponds to Kabeer's (2000) 'hard-core exclusion' as the respondent did not get equal access to rights that were devised for generating equality among the people. The argument can be substantiated by finding of Indira (2011) where she points out that the opportunities granted by the Constitution have benefitted certain sections of castes disproportionately, and, in the process, widened inequalities between each caste/class. Further, the advantaged sections in each group continue to march ahead in the competition to garner the limited opportunities and leave those without these advantages behind.

Ensuring social and economic justice is the main purpose of the reservation policy for realizing the goal of the empowerment of the backward communities. Ideally, an

individual should move upward in occupation over time as they acquire education, experience, and skills that enable them to undertake increasingly qualified tasks. In a meritocracy, this process of moving up in the social hierarchy would be based on their efforts and abilities (McCllum and Liu, 2018). However, if an individual is not aware of one's rights and does not have anyone to guide them in their study or financial support (Ambedkar, 2008) then it is not possible for them to progress within the occupational ladder due to lack of educational qualification. So in that sense moving upward in class status does depend on one's ability and awareness to grab the reservation opportunity. The case studies indicate both instances of economic upliftment and importance of awareness in availing the entitlements.

5.3.6. Changing Social Relationship

Weber coined the concept 'social relationship' to describe patterned human interaction which is intentional, meaningful, and symbolic (Abraham, 1985). So, a social relationship is not the institution but the meaningful conduct of people involved in the institution that functions the society. Every individual plays an important role to maintain the balance of society by obeying the ethics of social relationships. In caste-based society of India, the caste rules regulate the nature of the social interaction which was unchallenged for many years. The mass of population for decades spontaneously accepted the idea of ascriptive status and hegemony of the dominant group as defined by the caste norms. Whereas in an open society which is based on achieved status, an individual socio-economic status works as an instrumental force in molding social relationships across caste and class ensuing change in their habitus.

Singh (1977), in his study, highlights that the poor largely came from the Scheduled Castes and tribes and were concentrated in villages. However, due to the policy of reservation in education, government employment, and political representation, etc, a

minor section from them has risen them to middle-class economic status but remains the victim of social and cultural discrimination. Levin and Gellner (2009) also agrees that after the introduction of reservation policy social change has partially dissolved the rigid and segmented form of caste hierarchy by sometimes challenging the social codes of dominance. Jodhka (2015) also shares similar thoughts and asserts that the institution of caste has witnessed many changes over the past four or five decades both economically and politically and further argues that in the traditional caste system, the reservation and its impact can be felt in the nature of social interaction. To comprehend if there are any changes in the nature of social interaction in recent times, people's perspectives about the impact of reservation policy has been discussed in the upcoming section.

Talking about the impact of reservation and its subsequent impact on social relations 59 years old Mr. Ghatraj residing in Chanmari Darjeeling has a positive story. He works in the governmental sector and he is also a member of the Scheduled Caste community. His daughter is pursuing Ph.D. He agreed to the fact that reservations have uplifted the condition of the economically weaker section among the Scheduled Castes and one of them was himself. He stated 'My father was a blacksmith due to which the economic status of my family was not stable. However, by utilizing education scholarship and working part-time as a tailor I completed my Graduation. Finally, at the age of 35, availing the age relaxation facility allotted to the Scheduled Castes, I got a job in the Engineering department which helped me to economically uplift my family's status. At present my daughter is also pursuing her Ph.D. and is receiving RGNF for SC scholarship'. He claimed that he has never experienced any kind of caste atrocity and is respected in the office for his position as well as in his village. When asked about his social relationship Mr.Ghatraj stated 'although I had

heard many kinds of caste discrimination and injustice done to my parents but in person, I have never experienced it. My caste identity has never been an obstacle for me and freely participates in social affairs. I am happy that due to the improved socio-economic status made possible by reservation I am able to experience the change. I am the first one in my family to study till Graduation and avail government job'. Mr. Ghatraj was a member of the Kami Association and always encouraged people to enquire about the rights and guided them in using the facilities and in fact, his opinions and views were valued and respected. Using the nature of different forms of exclusion according to Kabeer (2000) Mr. Ghatraj case study presents the instance of gaining privileged inclusion, whereby the respondent occupied the central position in the community.

Similar is the story of Govind Lomjel who is 62 years old and resides with his wife, two sons, daughter-in-law and a grandson in St. Paul's area in Darjeeling. Both of his sons work in the government sector and daughter-in-law is employed in a private school. Previously he was employed in the West Bengal Police Services as a Jailor and was now enjoying his retired life. He stated 'I participate in every social function in the locality and maintain good relationships with my neighbours and wider society members. Since I live in a municipality area with a mixed community in Darjeeling town, I have never experienced any religious or caste differences. The social relationship within my society is very strong'. He further said 'if you are asking me about my social relationship with society, I have always been respected and have always been supported by the members of my locality. Since I am the treasure of the social welfare association of the locality, people appreciate my loyalty and agree with my opinions. If this determines the social relationship, then my relationship with the wider society is good. People come to my home without hesitation, similarly, I also

participate in social gatherings in the locality and I never have experienced any sort of discrimination be it commensual relations or caste stigmatization’.

Another story of positive social relations and non-discrimination can be found in the narratives of Mr. Ghatani who is 59 years old and holds an Officer position. In his words ‘I got a government job at a young age and my family was also economically well off as my mother was an Assistant Teacher in a government school and my father worked in the Forest Department, so I never faced any kind of caste discrimination issues’. According to him, he was never excluded from any type of community affairs neither in the work environment nor in his residential locality. Therefore, he believed that an individual’s social status depends more on achieved rather than ascribed. Mr. Ghatani had received education from North Point School, which is a reputed private English medium school and had done his graduation from Kolkata, thereafter he got the job using the reservation facility. Using reservation facility Mr. Ghatani's daughter was pursuing MBBS in Delhi. He stated, ‘I suggest the Scheduled Castes must use the facility and opt higher education for their socio-economic upliftment’. The case study is an instance of how growing opportunities in the economic sphere have aspired upward socio-economic mobility among the Scheduled Castes in India which has changed the outlook of people's perspective regarding the caste system in this current era (Gandhi, 1980). The case studies also correspond to the argument of Marx whereby he argued that the change in the economy i.e. base leads to the change in the superstructure (Abraham, and Morgan, 1985). An improvement in their economic base of so far socially excluded communities due to their low caste status resulted in change in their social status and thereby affecting the nature of the social structure and interaction.

However, such stories of positive social acceptance cannot be generalised and are limited to the educated and well off sections of the community with good socio-economic background. The empirical situation also revealed the many instances of the continuity of caste-based social discrimination and stigmatization to those who have not climbed the socio-economic ladder. 21 years old Sagar Ramtal from Mahendra Gaon Mirik who received education till class IV and works as wage-labor in the construction site is one victim of caste discrimination and stigmatization. After his father died when he was 8 years, his mother remarried and left him and his brother. Mr. Ramtal stated 'Earlier I was not aware of the reservation system and scholarship until my 12 years old brother who is studying in government started receiving stipends. However, the scholarship amount is very meager to meet the expenses of the schooling. I am still not fully aware of the whole process'. Mr. Ramtal who lives in a pakka house which is located aloof from the other house has been constructed by the panchayat through the housing scheme. When asked about his experience of caste discrimination, he stated 'we are discriminated by the villagers and are never allowed to enter in other's houses. Even my relatives ill-treat us because I'm poor and an orphan. We are never called in any social function and if I attend any funerals in the village, I'm always discriminated and stigmatized as low caste. Sometimes I feel like leaving the place but since I have a younger brother I cannot go because there is no one in my absence to take care of him'. The case study provides an example of not availing any facilities due to the lack of guidance and awareness. Moreover, economic hardship, low education levels became the major reasons for the respondent's exclusion from society. Based on constitutive relevance (Sen, 2000) here we can see how exclusion and deprivation have intrinsic importance. This is because the respondent due to his socio and economic status was not able to avail any facility nor

he is treated with respect and dignity and participates in community affairs. This directly affected his personal life resulting in self-exclusion, alienation which further could hamper future generations.

Similar story of caste discrimination and non-acceptance by other communities has been found in the narratives of 28 years old, Mr. Balkuti, who felt the discrimination on several occasions even after availing education and occupation mobility. He lived with his mother in the urban/municipality area. Till class V he studied in a private school but since his mother worked in the housekeeping department in a hotel, she could not afford to send him more to a private school. So he completed his studies in a government school where he received scholarships every year with which he bought study materials that he needed in the schools. In Mr. Balkuti's words 'Every year I received some amount which was not sufficient. However, I used to receive free books, school bags and raincoats till class eight which lessened my mother's burden'. Availing the reservation facility he got an enrollment in Darjeeling Government College from where he completed his Graduation and worked in the private sector. He had a small house that was built through the housing scheme. The village where he lived is a mixed community village having five or six Scheduled Caste households. The respondent had grown up in that area and has never experienced any caste discrimination although his mother warned him frequently. In his words 'I never faced any kind of social isolation earlier till one occasion of the funeral rites of Chettri caste. As usual, I went to the *Samaj Ghar* (community hall) to assist in the kitchen. In the meantime, one of the members of *samaj* came and asked me not to assist in cooking and I was told that those present in the occasion started leaving on the pretext that the food items have been polluted because of my low caste status. What I feel is that no matter how educated we are. The social illness of caste discrimination is

strongly rooted in society'. This is evident of the fact although there is socio-economic upliftment, the social stigma related to caste is continued. This exclusion resulted in the isolation of the individual from the group activity which was forced under unfavorable conditions. Discussing unfavorable exclusion, it is the situation where some people are kept out (at least left out), or excluded from social activities and is termed as "unfavorable exclusion" (Sen, 2000) which could be observed in the above case.

Different form of social discrimination is observed in the narration of 37 years old Rupa Sarki who resides in Kalimpong with her mother. She worked as an assistant teacher in a government school availing reservation policy. The locality which she lives in is surrounded by people belonging to higher castes such as Sharma, Chettri, Pradhan, Subba and many more. She revealed that despite of many educated members in her locality, she had faced social discrimination on many of the social occasions. In her words 'I was never called in puja's and on certain social occasions, even if I am invited to any social function, I am treated like an outsider. Therefore, tired of being discriminated and excluded, we converted our religion to Christianity'. She opined that despite gaining economic stability she was never able to gain social acceptance from her neighbours. Now I don't feel humiliated and discriminated and nobody asks my caste position since I embraced this new religion. During the church services, I don't feel excluded anymore'.

Similar case of religious conversion was shared by 42 years old higher caste woman Mrs. Gurung who got married in a Kami family. She worked in a private school as non-teaching staff and her husband worked in Panchayat Office at Mirik. Mrs. Gurung stated that since she got married in a lower caste family, she was boycotted by her family and was ill-treated by her relatives. Therefore, tired of being discriminated

and excluded, they converted their religion to Christianity and till now her family and relatives have not invited her. Nevertheless, we could notice that despite gaining socio-economic mobility the lower caste identity of her husband had become the reason for their social exclusion. These above instances are evident of the fact that despite gaining socio-economic upliftment due to reservation, the continuity of the caste discrimination and stigmatization are seen to a certain degree in Darjeeling hills.

Weber agrees to the fact that the possession of property defines the main class differences and ascertains that the owners of the property have a definite advantage and in some cases a monopoly on action (Abraham, and Morgan, 1985). Hence, the economic sphere is the basis of the class that determines the socio-economic status of an individual and life chances. Empirically, the study shows that section of the respondents claimed that there is a prevalence of the notion of equality due to improved social status in Darjeeling hills but a deeper exploration shows the existence and continuation of the social discrimination is somehow apparent either through caste groups, wealth or sometimes through power. Levin and Gellner (2009) also initially gave consent to the changeover that has taken place concerning the rules of ranking and equality and further assert that status has become less important, resulting in changed and better perceptions and practices of caste in contemporary times. However, he agrees with the fact that a flawless relationship cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, to substantiate this, the following section discusses both the facilitating and constraining the challenges faced by the respondents who due to certain reasons are unable to avail the entitlement.

5.4. Facilitating and Constraining factors

An overview of the implementation and socio-economic impact of reservation policy indicates that it has positively affected the life of the SC communities to a considerable extent. However, the study also highlighted many issues and challenges with regard to its implementation. Taking respondents' perspectives and opinions, the following section discusses the facilitating and constraining factors of the reservation policy.

5.4.1. Role of *Samaj* or Community Organization

Various community organizations play a vital role in facilitating the implementation of the reservation policy. There are community organizations called *Samaj* belonging to respective three communities in Darjeeling, namely Kami *Samaj*, Damai *Samaj* and Sarki *Samaj*, All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association, and State Development Boards. Each of these organizations has its own purpose of establishment however, the main objective of all the three organizations is welfare of the community and development. A discussion on All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association has been presented in Chapter 3. Therefore, the section discusses the role of *Samaj* and the Community Development Board of the three organizations.

5.4.1.a. *Samaj*

Discussing community association, the three communities have their respective *Samaj* i.e. Kami *Samaj*, Damai *Samaj*, and Sarki *Samaj* which function separately for the welfare and betterment of their community formed at the community level. All these organizations are self-funded and depend on donations given by community members. The respective *samaj* has their office and community house from where they function for the overall interest of the community. Chronologically Kami *Samaj* was founded in 1924 followed by Damai *Samaj* which was established in 1942. Sarki *Samaj* was

established much later in 1955. The *Samaj* collects the monthly subscription of Rs. 50/- that is accumulated as corpus fund. Each Samaj consists of twenty-four executive members and eight office bearers that consist of the President, two Vice-Presidents, a general secretary, two joint secretaries, a treasurer, and a joint treasure. The executive members play a vital role in making decisions. While Sarki *Samaj* has thirty executive members with no special portfolios, each member shares equal powers, functions and responsibilities.

The main objective of the *samaj* is to encourage its community members to work for the Welfare of the community, to encourage and create awareness among the youngsters to pursue education which is instrumental in their socio-economic upliftment. The *samaj* also intends to fight for their rights, social justice and discrimination. As reported by the executive members of the samaj the main hindrances in realizing their objective are the lack of awareness among the community members about the various provisions of education and the reservation meant for the Scheduled Castes. Therefore, the *samaj* conducts educational awareness programs to familiarize its members about the various educational opportunities (provisions) and the government schemes that have been formulated for the welfare of Scheduled Castes. However, despite various efforts made by the *Samaj* a major section of the community is still unaware of the provisions of the reservation. Due to socio-economic reasons, people never come or hardly attend the meetings and participate in any awareness and sensitization program about the various government schemes.

5.4.1.b. Development and Cultural Board

The Government of West Bengal has started various Development Boards with an objective to protect the socio-cultural and economic interest of various communities in Darjeeling Hills. The first community board in the hills was ‘Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board’ which was established in 2013 and subsequently followed by ‘Tamang Development Board’ and Bhutia Development Board’ in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The Development and Cultural Board of three communities Kami, Damai, and Sarki was established on 26th July 2016 with its Head Office situated in Kalimpong under the administrative control of Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. This board was registered under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961 (West Bengal Act XXVI of 1961).

The Development and Cultural Board aims at promoting education among the community members, preservation and safeguard of cultural heritage like traditional games, sports, traditional folk art, folk music, folk dances and folk culture of the community. It also aims to preserve and publish Literatures, Research Works, Magazines relating to customary rights, rituals, folklore and other related literature of the community. The cultural board also encourages showcasing their identity and culture, training people in the traditional profession of the community, to facilitate construction of houses, libraries, and museums for the community and many more. Despite these broad aims and objectives, the Board till date has only managed to construct houses for its members and purchase some of the traditional and modern musical instruments. On inquiring about the accomplishment of works by the board, the members of the community claimed that they are not satisfied with the performance of the Development board. The members also opined that as compared

to Development Boards, the *Samaj* and All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association function proactively for the welfare and overall development of the community.

5.5. Issues and Challenges

An overall observation of the narratives and case studies identified many issues and challenges that come on the way of implementation. The major constraining factor is the lack of awareness. A detailed discussion has been presented in the following section.

5.5.1. Lack of Awareness

For effective implementation of Government policies like reservation and educational schemes which are aimed at integrating the marginalized section in the mainstream, the awareness among the target group plays a vital role. Radhakrishana (2018) highlights that among SCs, lack of awareness is one of the major reasons for the decreasing number of students in schools in a rural area, due to which educational upliftment and literacy rate in rural villages of India are facing many constraints and pitfalls. Moreover, the situation becomes more complicated and challenging when the percentage of beneficiaries who are unaware of the benefits that they are entitled to is rising. Contextually, in a quest to have deeper understanding of awareness among the respondents that has been presented in chapter 4, few narratives and case studies are presented to further substantiate it.

Lack of awareness has been reflected in the narratives of few respondents. One such respondent is 24 years old Vivek Sarki who resides in Rato Mata Mirki and has received education till class X from his village school. His father was an ex-army man and was indulged in drinking habits whereas his mother was a housewife who could not financially support him. Mr. Sarki, despite his will, could not pursue higher

education and stated 'I wanted to pursue higher education and join the air-force and although my father was a retired army man but due to his drinking habit he had spent most of his pension in buying alcohol. Therefore, the money he gave us could hardly meet our expenses. So I had to quit my studies after class X and start working in a hotel as a cleaner'. Mr. Sarki's further asserted 'Due to our socio-economic status my family had faced caste discrimination on several occasions. We are excluded from participation in any village affairs and are not invited to any social gatherings held by higher caste people in our village. Therefore, tired of discrimination we migrated to Darjeeling and worked there'. On inquiring about reservation Mr. Sarki informed 'I did not know and was not aware of the educational scholarship and other reservation facilities and now through friends, has managed to gain little information. After being informed I enrolled myself in National Open School in Darjeeling and hoped that availing reservation facility I will be able to pursue higher degree'. In his case various structural reasons like socio-economic backwardness, alcoholism contributed to his lack of awareness of basic rights constraining his mobility due to which despite his father being in a government job, he was unable to garner the facilities which resulted in the unfavourable exclusion of the family.

Similar is the story of 40 years old Munna Sarki who resides in Rajbari Darjeeling and was not aware of reservation policy. She narrated many incidents of her exclusion and discrimination during social occasions. Being uneducated and economically low in position, Mrs. Sarki asserted that she always felt the presence of social discrimination by her neighbours. Recalling one such incident she stated 'my neighbour who belonged to an upper-caste had held *Satya Narayan Puja*³⁵ at their

³⁵This Puja is considered very holy and hence it is considered very auspicious to get it done at home during special events like childbirth, birthdays, marriages, house warming (Greh Pravesh) or on any happy occasions.

house. Except me, everyone in the neighbourhood was invited. There are several such instances that I and my family have to face in our everyday life'. Mrs. Sarki worked as a housemaid and had a daughter who was 17 years old and due to financial insufficiency had dropped out of school at a very young age. In her words 'I am an illiterate and work as a housemaid so looking at my financial condition when my daughter opted to quit studies, I did not object'. When asked about stipend and reservation Mrs. Sarki stated 'I don't know and am not aware of such things. As I could not afford I did not mind my daughter dropping out from schooling'. In this case, passive exclusion as coined by Sen (2000) could be observed as the respondent being a housemaid belonging to a low caste was not allowed to participate in many social and religious functions. Although a deliberate attempt of exclusion could not be witnessed in this case but a set of circumstances like low socio-economic position and lack of awareness could be observed that excluded the respondent from the community affairs at large. Further, we could also observe that due to the respondents' unawareness her daughter was deprived of the basic right of education.

Another instance of similar fate was the case of 52 years old Kalyani Gazmer residing in Daroga Bazar Darjeeling. She had received education till class VIII and belonged to a family with low economic background. She stated 'My father followed the traditional occupation of blacksmithing and was involved in the traditional occupation of metalwork at home. I have seven siblings therefore, my father could not send all of us to school. Since I am the youngest of all, I got the opportunity to receive education till class VIII. But due to economic insufficiency, I could not continue and got married at the age of 15'. She further narrated 'I never received any stipend and was not aware of any government scheme and felt that higher education was only for high-class people and never tried to pursue further'. Lack of education and awareness had

restricted Mrs. Gazmer's socio-economic mobility due to which occasionally she faced social discrimination.

Similar story was narrated by 25 years old Susmita Sarki who resides in Dhirdam Darjeeling who works as a housekeeping staff in a private hotel. She had received education till class V, as her father was a carpenter she belonged to low economic background. She stated 'I wanted to be a teacher but due to the economic condition of my family I chose to work from a very young age. I along with my family members was never aware of the scholarship and reservation facilities therefore despite willingness, I had to quit studying. If I had known about the educational facilities I would have attempted to pursue further education'. Therefore, in both the narrations, we could observe how lack of awareness of reservation policy restricted the socio-economic mobility of the respondents. Although at present the respondents are involved in income generating activity and provide instances of horizontal mobility, the vertical upward mobility in terms of education, occupation and economic status could not take place primarily due to lack of awareness.

Another story of the lack of awareness was reflected in the narration of 48 years old Ramesh Thatal residing in Soureni bhanjang Mirik. Mr. Thatal had attended school till class VIII and worked as temporary daily-wage (Marginal worker) labour in the construction sites and was economically deprived. He stated 'During my school time I was not aware of any facilities meant for SCs. My friends had got recruitments in government offices after completing class VIII. Therefore, I too had dropped out of school to pursue job and applied for a government job but unfortunately was unable to get one. After taking a membership in the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association, I came to know about reservation facilities and educational scholarship much later. Due to my unawareness of reservation policies, I did not get the

opportunity to utilize the facility and feel if I had known earlier than I would definitely apply for it'. However, the positive aspect is that despite having only partial information about the facilities provided by the government to the Scheduled Castes, at present Mr. Thatal's son is receiving stipend in college and is studying at Darjeeling Government College. This resulted in intergenerational educational mobility due to which educational mobility and possibility of occupational mobility could be observed in this case of Mr. Thatal.

5.4.2. Meagre Scholarships Amount

Despite the awareness of education scholarship facilities, the meagre scholarship amount at the school and college level did not fulfill the dreams of many respondents in pursuing higher education. Such instances have been reported by 47 years old school teacher named Anu Thatal who resides in Chanmari Darjeeling. She works as a teacher in a government school which she got through reservation quota and has good socio-economic background. She was of the view that 'One of the main reasons for the rising percentage of Scheduled Caste students drop-out from the school is the financial constraint of the poor family. Although the government grants scholarships to the Scheduled Caste students but the amount is very meagre and does not suffice to meet the rising expenses. Therefore, the students are unable to meet the requirement resulting in an increased percentage of drop-out'. She recalled categorically that despite the communities being dominant in her locality, there were very few countable numbers of educated among the Scheduled Castes who were pursuing higher studies and managed to get socio-economic mobility. She narrated that in her locality a huge section of Scheduled Castes are either engaged in their hereditary traditional occupation or worked as daily-wage labour due to which caste discrimination is widely prevalent in our locality. She feels that lack of education is

primarily responsible for such inequality, discrimination and the poverty continues even in the present generation. Her opinion reflects Bourdieu's argument that the lack of cultural capital reproduces inequality and that cycle continues. The individual habitus which dealt with the process of socialization and family background, the field or social context and the sum of an individual's habitus on the field in which they entered determine their cultural capital or the value of their cultural knowledge. On this basis, as most of the people residing in the locality of Ms. Thatal had only received minimal education and was engaged in traditional occupations of tailoring and wage-labor. Their working-class habitus restricted their mobility resulting in lower socio-cultural capital of the area resulting in perpetuation of class inequality across generations.

28 years old Sagar Ghimirey from Sourenee banjang Mirik, a high school teacher also shared his view regarding the problems of low scholarship received in schools and colleges. In his words 'during my college days, the amount that I received as stipend would only help me in making the fee payment and purchase few study materials. Therefore, for other expenses, I had to take tuitions and undertake other part-time jobs'. Hence, despite constraints, Mr. Ghimirey with utter determination was able to complete M.A. in History and seek a job using the reservation facility. His dedication and effort helped his family to improve their social status in society. Similar statement was made by 33 years old Sumanna Sarki working as a constable in West Bengal Police. Ms. Sarki also stated that since she studied in government school, the amount that she received was a maximum of Rs.1200/- p.a. in class XII. Her father worked as a tea garden labourer therefore, since the scholarship amount was very low with great difficulty she completed her school. However, after completing her schooling using reservation facility she got recruitment and is currently pursuing her graduation from

IGNOU. Rima Singh 27 years working as an SI in West Bengal Police also narrated a similar situation. Although she received her schooling from private school, the scholarship that she received in college would hardly meet her expenses and at times had to face severe financial crisis. In fact, she revealed that she had to take part-time jobs to complete her education. 25 years old Subarna Darnal working as a teacher in a private school also shared similar view.

The low scholarship amount and lack of financial support resulted in an increasing number of dropouts from the school or colleges. One among such was 28 years old Pooja Khati from Kalimpong. Since Ms. Khati's family's socio-economic status was not good, she revealed that she had to face many strains. She was at present working in a post office as a group 'D' staff. She states 'during my college years, the stipend that I received was very less and being a science student the amount would hardly meet the expenses of my study, therefore I was unable to continue my college and dropped out after completing 1st year. Although with the help of the reservation facility, I am able to gain recruitment and vertically mobilize my family status but I feel that if the scholarship amount was sufficient to meet my expenses, it would help me to complete my education, then I would been in a better socio-economic position'. 39 years old Satyama Sunam working in a private company also discussed how the scholarship amount is very scanty for the economically weaker sections to manage the expenses in education. He stated that due to high expenses he had to drop from science subject and take arts in the middle of the semester. 27 years old Anju Khati expressed her concern about the low scholarship amount which often led to dropout of many SC students. She had completed her B.A in Economics and was recruited as a group 'D' staff in a government bank through the reservation quota. Ms. Khati was the first in the family to receive higher education. She narrated her story by stating 'I

belong to an economically lower family it was difficult for me to pursue higher education. The scholarship that I received was very less, therefore, along with my studies I had to take part-time jobs to complete my studies. However, my younger brother who is 25 years old is pursuing M.Phil and is receiving Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship. Therefore, I feel if the government had given a better amount in UG and PG, then most of the SC students would not drop out at the UG level'. The case study reveals that low scholarship amount and economic constraint made her discontinue her Under Graduate course which otherwise could have provided a better socio-economic position and freed her from feeling of inferiority complex as she stated that, she often regrets for her discontinuation of higher education which could have made her eligible for gaining recruitment in the higher post.

Another narration has been shared by 48 years old Kailash Ghimirey from Sourenee Mirik who studied till class VIII. Due to financial constraints, he had to quit studies and choose his traditional occupation of blacksmithing. Mr. Ghimirey expressed that due to his caste identity he had faced social discrimination on several social occasions. Therefore, he wanted to educate his 13 years old daughter in the hope to gain socio-economic stability in the society. He stated 'my daughter studies in class IX in a government school and receives scholarship every year. However, as the amount allotted by the government is very meager, sometimes I have to struggle as this amount is not even sufficient to purchase books. Therefore, my apprehension is as my daughter will opt for higher education, her expenses will also increase and I will not be able to afford her higher education. If she drops out in between, she will face same fate of social discrimination like me which I don't want'. Corresponds to Sparkes (1999) view where he argued that an individual who leaves school with low

levels of educational attainment is at a higher risk of experiencing social exclusion as adults.

5.6. Summary

The chapter presented an overall picture of how reservation policy paved the way of inclusion for the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai and Sarki in Darjeeling. By facilitating an access to education and employment, they are provided opportunities to socio-economically mobilize and uplift their social status. This socio-economic transformation led to changes in the cultural practices which granted them entry in the mainstream society and gave them new social positions. The socio-economic and cultural changes could be observed in their lifestyle, eating habits which have further impacted the marriage pattern and family structure. Despite experiencing these major changes, there were many constraints that the three communities had to face such as persistence of social discrimination, lack of awareness, low scholarship amount which resulted in restriction and confinement of socio-economic mobility of many respondents. This calls for a need of widespread awareness among the community members.

Chapter VI

Discussion and Findings

6.1. Introduction

The conceptualization of the caste-based exclusion is predominantly based on ascribed status and its exclusionary features are validated through the religious sacred text. The caste system which is based on hierarchical relation of superiority and inferiority resulted in the exclusion of certain groups of people denying them certain basic rights (Kumar, 2013). He further asserts that exclusion in Hindu social order is governed by different paradigms i.e. 'practice which includes law, theory, application, and instrumentation' in caste social order to exclude the Scheduled Caste. Therefore, the social exclusion of lower castes in India is structurally rooted and emerges from the social structure which is validated by religion. Beteille (2008) highlighted that there is a whole range of classical, legal and religious literature of Hindu texts that discusses the presence of ranking order in Hinduism but the personification is found in 'Manusmriti' which gives the blueprint of a stereotypical hierarchical society and is based in the principle of inequality. Therefore, to address this gap and bridge the social inequality of the past, reservation policy was introduced as a measure to pave the way for an egalitarian society. The Constitution enlisted various socially marginalized groups as Scheduled Castes which is an Administer-Legally and envisaged various Constitutional provisions for their socio-economic upliftment.

Based on the empirical analysis of the impact of inclusionary measures of reservation policy in Darjeeling as discussed in the previous chapters, it is observed that there are instances of socio-economic mobility that has been experienced by many respondents while the continuation of stories of social discrimination and stigmatization has also

been found in some cases. Conceptually, there are different forms of social exclusion prevailing in the society namely religious exclusion, social, economic, education, political, neighbourhood, self-exclusion, and many more (Chettri, 2014; Smith, 2000). The chapter seeks to understand the processes of exclusion and inclusion along with the nature of mobility that was relevant in the empirical situation within the conceptual framework. It also attempts to discuss the finding in relation to milestones and challenges faced in the implementation of the reservation policy and additionally it tries to identify the emerging issues and gaps among the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling.

6.2. Patterns of Social Exclusion

Exclusion is a term that is loaded with numerous economic, social, political, and cultural connotations and dimensions (Mongin cited by Silver 2014). Faisal (2013) asserted that social exclusion and social inequalities are major threats to social justice and the economic development of a society. This is because inequality and exclusion result in group tensions and social instability in the society which may arouse violence and disorder within the society. Further, the study of social exclusion deals with the actual condition of the marginalized group, the consequences, and the processes through which they became the group of excluded. Nagla (2014) reveals that the group of people who benefit by dominating, discriminating, and depriving the socially excluded group does not prefer change. While the socially excluded group who are 'inferior', 'incapable', 'less meritorious', and 'lower' in position are not able to mobilize and organize themselves in the social system despite their will, remain in the same position due to fear of being subjected to repression if they resist exclusion and discrimination. In the context of present studies, an attempt has been made to

examine various forms of exclusions that the Nepali SCs communities of Darjeeling experienced within the conceptual framework.

6.2.1. Religious Dimension of Exclusion

Religion is an integral part of the culture (Walter Burkert, 1996) cited in Chhetri (2014) opined that society cannot exist without religion. Since caste is one such area that is governed by religion, caste-based exclusion according to Chhetri (2014) it is an omnipresent feature of Indian society as historically it is the caste system in India that has regulated the social and economic life of the people. The exclusion based on religious grounds in India comes in two forms. First, exclusion from practicing one's religion freely or at least equally and second, exclusion of people from the wider legal, economic, and political rights available more generally on the grounds of their religious identity and through religious practices (Khan, 2009). Contextually locating, the Nepali Scheduled Castes i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki in Darjeeling also faced similar types of exclusion based on the low caste status. There were instances recorded in which the respondents were excluded from participating in religious and social activities at par with other communities. Although the three communities predominantly are Hindus, their position in caste hierarchy has become the foreground of social exclusion. The social discrimination based on their caste identity draws their legitimacy from the religion itself. The exclusion based on the low caste status often faced by the SC communities of Darjeeling corresponds to the religion-based exclusion as argued by D. Rajath (2011) and Bhargava (2004) which states that religious-based exclusion includes social processes such as exclude, discriminate, isolate, and deprive certain groups based on caste, ethnicity, and religion. The excluded groups are denied access to property rights, economic rights, civil, religious, legal, and political rights. Historically, in Darjeeling, the three communities had

accepted their caste-based ascriptive status and socially excluded position in the society with the consent to the idea that a better life-style, greater opportunities, and good social status in the society were limited only to the upper caste people.

In India caste is one such social-environment that shaped one's personality. Gramsci while discussing the concept of cultural hegemony points out that before the dominant group enforces and pressurizes rules and restrictions; it aspires to convince the dominated group with such ideas that make them consent to their subordinate position (Bates, 1975). Corresponding to this concept, traditionally the three communities namely Kami, Damai and Sarki accepted their subordinate position in caste hierarchy as natural and gave consent to the practices of domination without objecting and raising any voice. Therefore, the Nepali social structure whose 'habitus' (Bourdieu) was built upon the Hindu religious consciousness of caste exclusiveness and hierarchical ordering of domination and subordination of the masses (Pradhan, 1991), the practices of caste discrimination are accepted as one's natural behavioural pattern that emerges from the social reality of the Nepali society. Bourdieu conceptualizes 'habitus' as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of permanent character, or trained ability and structured tendency to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' and also regard it as socialized norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking of an individual (Navarro 2006). The practices of caste discrimination and exclusion as legitimised on the ground of religion is nurtured in people belonging to the Nepali communities that determine their habitus which is reflected in the social interaction and practices of everyday life.

In the Hindu traditional caste-based society of Darjeeling also, the inherent behaviour of religious exclusion guided the formation of structure in the society which decided the rules for social stratification based on inherited social status and occupation.

Structures according to Giddens (2009) are specific practices surrounding how social actors deal with rules and resources (Sutton, 2009). Hence, these rules of caste practices that were adopted by the Nepali community in Darjeeling were strictly based on Hindu ideology. The introduction of social stratification based on caste divided the people into strata and also inculcated the feeling of subjugation and discrimination.

Bhargava (2004) pointed out that through centuries in India a religious sanction has been granted to the practice of untouchability that excluded the lower castes from entering into Hindu temples. He called this practice a direct internal religious exclusion like Untouchability which was a social device of exclusivism that became religious-based on the notion of pollution and purity (Velssasery 2005 cited by Chaudhry, 2013). Under such circumstances, an individual is unable to participate in regular social activities viz visiting friends and family, celebrating occasions, and eating with others, this form of exclusion is identified by Giddens as exclusion from social relations (Sutton, 2009). Empirically locating, the direct internal religious exclusion (Bhargava, 2004) and exclusion from social relation (Giddens, 2009) was experienced by the members of the three communities till the recent past in the villages as they were denied entry in upper-caste houses and villages. They were not even invited in any social activities, had to follow rules of commensality, denied inter-caste marriages and excluded in everyday life which was ingrained through the process of socialization that became a part of social reality.

6.2.2. Social Dimension of Exclusion

Individuals and communities have experienced social exclusion in multiple dimensions such as homelessness, poverty, breaking down of traditional households, education, the labour market, crime, young people, and the elderly (Chhetri, 2014; Sutton, 2009). Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) by citing Sen discusses how an individual's

unemployment status not only denies him/her access to earn income but also fails to recognize their productive role as human beings in society. Moreover, employment provides social legitimacy and social status along with income. Hence, if one gets excluded from the educational rights and labour market then they will automatically get socially excluded from mainstream society. On the other hand exclusion of the certain group from participating in the decision-making process and additionally marginalization of such disadvantaged categories such as women and ethnic groups is also one of the social dimensions of social exclusion (ibid, 1997). Following the caste norms of hereditary occupation, historically these three communities of Darjeeling did not get the privilege of education and occupational mobility for long. The upper-caste believed that a sight of lower caste people in the morning was considered as inauspicious, they lived in the periphery of the villages and they were not supposed to touch the filled water jars of the upper-caste as well as denied entry in their home, participation in social activities, followed strict rules of commensality and denial of village membership. These facts indicate the magnitude of caste-based social exclusion which the three communities have experienced till the recent time. The empirical studies show the traces of social exclusion are still found in some cases and in the rural areas.

6.2.3. Economic Dimension of Exclusion

Economic exclusion is related to the deep economic structuring of the society. This is redesigned according to the growing competition of the global economy. Hence, social exclusion is a complex and heterogeneous notion and is referred to as both individual and societies, and to disadvantage, alienation, and lack of freedom (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). The lower castes remained locked in unskilled, low-paying occupations for centuries in the traditional economy (Munshi, 2017). Chhetri (2014)

argued that employment is an important indicator in distinguishing economic exclusion. It has three aspects: income, production and recognition. The economic approach includes the first two and the third one refers to the social status of an individual as it is recognized through the type of job he/she does in the society (Sen cited in Chhetri, 2014). In the Nepali society of Darjeeling, the three communities for centuries followed the hereditary occupation of blacksmithing by Kami, tailoring and traditional musical occupation by Damai and leather works by Sarki which generated low income, associated with their low status and were considered to be impure. Ascribed to the social stigma attached to their traditional occupation, they faced social discrimination and social exclusion for decades which restricted their occupational mobility. Further, due to the lack of occupational mobility, the three communities for several years were unable to attain education which resulted in few options of participating in other economic activities which became the major hindrance of occupational mobility. Therefore, the Kami, Damai and Sarki had to face economic exclusion on the basis of caste. According to Bourdieu (1986), lack of cultural capital can be a source of social inequality because it is hard for the poor or the working class to gain the type of cultural capital that is valued in the society. Therefore, since the three communities are hereditary occupational caste they lack the cultural capital due to which they faced unfavourable exclusion from society like denial of opportunities of an occupational shift in the past. Munshi (2017) stated when caste is an outcome of religious belief, the importance of caste in India's economy and polity should not come as a surprise as it gives structure to the Indian society. Justifying similar argument, Berreman (1967) points out where society is made up of birth-ascribed groups that are hierarchically ordered and culturally distinct, which are linked with different evaluations, rewards, and associations, exploitation, prejudice, and

discrimination that are hinged with different forms of religion-related exclusions, the policymakers had to imagine and device multiple policies of inclusion (Bhargava, 2004). Reservation policy is one such constitutional measure in this direction, the implementation of which has initiated the process of social change impacting their socio-economic life through educational and occupational mobility. The empirical situation highlighted that those who availed reservation opportunities have broken the cycle of ascribed status to achieved status and are able to build a new social position for themselves in the society, thereby breaking the caste stigmatization and stereotypes.

6.3. Trajectory of Inclusion: Milestone and Challenges of Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling

The perspective of caste discrimination was challenged by various western educationalist social reformers, this resulted in the introduction of various Constitutional provisions such as Reservation that has played an important role in improving the access of Scheduled Castes in education and employment (Tejas, 2018) which has resulted in socio-economic change and impacted the everyday life situation. Bourdieu argued that habitus is created through a social, rather than an individual process leading to patterns that are enduring and transferable from one context to another, but that also shifts with specific contexts and over time. Hence, Habitus 'is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period' (Navarro 2006) and the individual's reflexivity permits one to adapt the change and imply it in their social life resulting in change in one's habitus. Similarly, in Darjeeling after the implementation of reservation facilities, the old rigid norms of caste gradually became flexible the Scheduled Castes after availing education and economic facilities managed to improve their social and cultural capital

which contributed to their change in the habitus. The change in structure can be observed in many SC families where the new generation was able to achieve higher education and gain recruitment in higher posts which reinforced the change in their habitus, lifestyle and created a new social environment.

Tracing history in Darjeeling after the introduction of education by the British, awareness of equality, rights, hygiene, good lifestyle, and many more changes started taking place in the life of the inhabitants of Darjeeling. After realizing the crises of better life, the Scheduled Castes finally urged for a shift in their paradigm that controls their life through habits that are logged in the subconscious mind and began to change their perspective and started voicing for equality. The three communities after realizing their subjugated status unitedly struggled for the Scheduled Caste status for a long period before finally realizing their constitutional rights.

A detailed discussion on the struggle of the three communities for the status of the SC category has been presented in chapter three. Mr. Ramudamu was one of the pioneer figures who contributed to promoting change in the life of the Scheduled Castes. After the enlistment of the three communities in the SC category in 1956, the implementation of reservation policy was initiated in 1962, after which the process of socio-economic change has begun. During the fieldwork, it was found that 62.6 percent of illiteracy among the parent's generation has decreased to 10 percent among the respondents' generation. It was further observed that over time the inclination for pursuing higher education was rising with 20.9 percent among the respondents which was only 3.1 percent among the parents' generation. After availing these credentials and qualifications the respondents were able to gain an institutionalized cultural and social capital as many families gained wider access to avail opportunities that helped them create a better social status.

Changes were also witnessed in the occupational sector as educational opportunities equipped them with cultural capital in the form of educational degrees and skills. 27.6 percent of respondents by availing reservation policy had got recruitment in government sectors which were 6.9 percent in case of respondents' parents. Therefore, a section of respondents was able to either gain privileged or secondary inclusion, which resulted in gaining vertical upward mobility. The study highlighted that the socio-economic stability led to change in lifestyle. As a result, the rigid boundary in exclusion of Scheduled Castes in social occasion was reported to have been relaxed to a great extent. The educated respondents during the course of fieldwork revealed that the upper-castes no longer denied their entry in their houses and the rules of commensality have changed. Although inter-caste marriage was gradually popularizing in field areas, however, few issues regarding inter-caste marriages could still be traced. However, there were few respondents who revealed that despite availing quality education and secure government jobs, they were still socially discriminated and passively excluded from certain social affairs. Few case studies and narratives discussed in the earlier chapters reveal how a section of respondents was denied participation in certain social and religious activities. Nevertheless, a huge section of the respondents claimed that education and economic upliftment have changed the societal rigid perspective of the caste exclusion because at present the achieved status has started gaining more importance than the ascribed status in the Nepali society in Darjeeling.

Positive opinions of social acceptance and social equality were also observed among the Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling at present. Contextually locating, 58.9 percent of respondents agreed that they were equally invited in social activities and till date has not faced social discrimination on the ground of caste which shows the presence of

privileged inclusion as conceptualised by Kabeer (2000). These respondents had either received higher education or held good occupational status. Moreover, they had a good socio-economic background due to which they had accumulated good social, cultural and economic capital. Conflicting views were also collected from the fieldwork as 6.6 percent of respondents denied having social acceptance. These sections of people were mostly respondents who belonged to a family that did not have good socio-economic background. Most importantly they were victims of social discrimination in many social activities and had faced hard-core exclusion as termed by Kabeer (2000). As a result, few respondents practiced self-exclusion (Kabeer, 2000) and excluded themselves from the society. Corresponding views were shared by Giddens where he discussed how at times due to certain circumstances, people tend to exclude themselves from the mainstream society (Sutton, 2009). The remaining 34.5 percent of respondents shared mixed views of acceptance and denial. These respondents felt that after achieving educational and economical upliftment they were able to place themselves in a higher position in the social hierarchy but they still felt that there were few social occasions where practices of social exclusion silently existed in the society.

Bourdieu (1986) pointed out that if an individual has little cultural capital, it would be difficult for them to start, maintain, and build social capital and social connections. This is because social position determines one's social life and decides our role in the social world.³⁶ Contextually, the respondents with the help of educational facilities were able to achieve the cultural capital in embodied state i.e. in the form of long-lasting nature and temperament of the mind and body which is reflected in the language used, self-presentation and dressing style. Then with the help of the

³⁶<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>

embodied state, the respondents were able to purchase membership of powerful social classes. Such instances were found among few respondents where education and the cultural capital were the part of their habitus as in the case of Mr. Pariyar were due to his education and cultural capital he was able to create a new habitus for his children. The creation of the new habitus simultaneously gave them the objectified cultural capital such as books, musical instruments, computer gadgets, etc. Institutionalised cultural capital in the form of degree and credentials has been instrumental in empowering the respondents that helped them to achieve high social status. Therefore, it has been observed that with the implementation of reservation policy, the three Scheduled Castes communities of Darjeeling were able to gain social and cultural capital which has initiated the process of integration in the mainstream society.

However, in the trajectory of inclusion, there was baggage of disadvantages that came along with it. One among such was emerging issues of privileged inclusion and secondary inclusion that the respondents had started witnessing within the Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling. Among the Scheduled Castes who occupied the central position got the opportunity to garner educational and employment facilities. These respondents had good socio-economic backgrounds or productive social networking. On the other hand, people who occupied the peripheral position got to use only few or partial facilities. Nevertheless, there were even sections of people who got both actively and passively excluded from their basic rights. According to Sen (2000), active exclusion is a process where a group of people is deliberately excluded from availing opportunities by some willful agents of the society. Whereas in passive exclusion, there is no deliberate attempt but under some circumstances, exclusion may take place. Thus contextually, there was a group of respondents who either due to economic inefficiency or educational backwardness could not include themselves in

the group of privileged inclusion. Smith (2000) discusses that there are groups of people who are excluded from certain aspects of life such as life-style, personal and social values, or characteristics. This type of exclusion results in differences and leads to discrimination those results in unequal access to rights. Hence some sections of the respondents due to certain circumstances were excluded from everyday social interaction that leads to group exclusion. In fact, during the fieldwork in rural areas, there were groups of excluded people who due to their deplorable economic status were excluded from participating in social affairs. Therefore, these respondents due to lack of access to cultural, social and economic capital were unable to buy a higher position in the society.

Further, issues of misuse and withholding of the facilities were reported by the members of the “All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association”. As per the information from the association members, there were 324 backlog Scheduled Caste seats in government schools and other Government Offices of Darjeeling in 2017. The association organized meeting with the concerned department and demanded for the fulfillment of the seats by eligible Scheduled Caste candidates. However, although the process was initiated in 2014, the matter is still unresolved indicating unfavourable exclusion. Sen (2000) pointed out when groups of people are knowingly kept out of accessing their rights, it is known as unfavourable exclusion which is found in the above instances. The members further revealed that the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) tried to negotiate sharing the number of reserved seats allotted to the SCs indicating unfavourable inclusion (Sen, 2000) which the association denied.

The All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association aims to sensitize the community members about the facilities given by the government and also motivates them to

utilize the maximum number of the benefits and work together for the upliftment of the community. Lack of awareness about the reservation policy is observed to be one of the prime factors among the Schedule Caste of Darjeeling that has hindered its effective implementation. Empirically locating it is only 17.4 percent out of 350 respondents who were aware of the facilities and have availed it. The remaining respondents are either unaware or partially aware and in some cases aware but due to their socio-economic status or other reasons unable to avail the facilities. Further, we could notice that the percentage of unaware respondents is comparatively more in the rural area (55 percent) while in urban areas it is 45 percent. Majority of the population residing in the rural area are either uneducated or have not received higher education due to lack of resources and awareness. In urban areas, relatively more awareness among the respondents is due to the availability of educational facilities, employment opportunities and dissemination of information through various media. Therefore differences in location (rural and urban) are also a determining factor in the awareness and utilization of reservation policy.

Overall, it can be safely concluded that after the implementation of reservation policy, we could recognize a shift of social status from ascribed to achieved status of the Scheduled Castes in the social hierarchy in Darjeeling. In the process, there has been a social mobility both vertical and horizontal that has contributed to change in their habitus, lifestyle and nature of social interactions. Nevertheless, the process of inclusion is not smooth and easy. And there are several challenges and constraints that the Scheduled Castes faced such as lack of awareness, the emergence of privileged groups within the community and the widening gap between rich and the poor, etc. hinders the path of social inclusion. However, people's rising urge to include

themselves in the mainstream society could also be spotted which provides an optimistic trend.

6.4. Major Findings

The field study revealed that the utilization of reservation policy was found higher in the respondent's generation (32.9 percent) as compared to the parents' generation (6.9 percent) who availed the facilities indicating that the awareness about the reservation policy has been growing over the years among the SCs of Darjeeling which is a positive indication that can contribute to building human resources through multiplication of cultural capital.

The study indicates that the awareness of education has been spreading over the years among the SCs of Darjeeling and the people are taking benefits of the reservation facilities which are observed in the rate of educational mobility in the present generation. However, despite educational development schemes and facilities, a significant section of the Nepali Scheduled Castes (21.1 percent out of 350 respondents) of the study area had received education only till the upper primary level. The data further demonstrated that as the level of education increased the percentage of respondents gradually decreased (3.4 percent Post Graduation) resulting in less representation of Scheduled Castes in higher education. Nevertheless, one of the notable factors in the educational sector is increasing awareness about the importance of education. For instance, within the age group of 15-29 years out of 34 respondents, 2.5 percent of respondents had received the highest degree of M.Phil and were enrolled for Ph.D. Similarly, the highest percentage of respondents who received higher degrees was spotted in the same age group i.e. Higher Secondary (23.5 percent), Graduation (17.6 percent), and Master Degree (8.8 percent). This indicates

the increasing urge of Scheduled Castes for pursuing higher education among the present generation.

Intergenerational educational mobility was observed and was relatively higher among the respondents' generation as we could recognize that there were comparatively fewer respondents in the parent's generation who had pursued higher education. Another noticeable factor was that the parents who were aware or partially aware of the reservation policy, their children had received higher education which reveals that parent's educational qualification and their awareness is a determining factor in increasing the level of their children's education. This lends credence to what Bourdieu termed as the role of cultural capital in changing Habitus.

In this study economic stability is a significant factor that has been widely impacted after availing reservation either in education and employment. It was found that a major section of respondents (42.6 percent) had started earning the monthly income of Rs.31,000- Rs.40,000, while a section of respondents (14.3 percent) earned in between Rs. 41,000-50,000. These categories of people in the higher income level mostly belong to the service sectors and businesses. This indicates that many respondents have been able to bridge the gap of economic exclusion which helped them enhance their lifestyle and made them economically independent.

Another impact directly or indirectly related to reservation is the occupational diversification among the Scheduled Castes in the Darjeeling hills. As has been observed among the respondents, they are engaged in varied occupations, namely in government jobs, private jobs, self enterprise, and traditional occupations. It was noticed that the majority of the respondents (34.3 percent) were engaged in self enterprise or business, which indicates the trend of breaking the boundary of

traditional occupation. While a section of respondents (27.6 percent) were recruited in government services availing reservation policy, relatively few respondents (10.6 percent) were still engaged in the traditional occupation due to which they were not able to change their habitus and live a life of deprivation. The study shows a section of the respondents who could not grasp the opportunity of utilizing the job quota facility due to varied circumstances were engaged in other forms of jobs such as labour in tea gardens, agriculture, construction, etc.

Trends of intergenerational occupational mobility could be noticed among the respondents in the hills of Darjeeling. It was observed that 43.1 percent of parents followed their traditional occupation which came down to 10.3 percent among the respondents' generation. It was found that in total 46.3 percent of respondents had achieved intergenerational vertical upward mobility and the mobility was higher in the government sector job indicating active utilization of the reservation policy. Whereas, the data also exhibited that 32 percent of respondents had experienced downward mobility as in comparison to parents generation (0.9 percent) few respondents were engaged in various forms of wage labourers (7.1 percent). On the other hand, 15 percent of respondents had not experienced any form of mobility as they were engaged in their hereditary occupation which could be their traditional occupation or other occupations. Therefore, the respondents had experienced horizontal mobility as they were able to change the position in the society but could not change their level of class or social status. Overall, we could observe that the respondents since now had stopped giving consent to the restriction of occupational mobility and availing the reservation opportunity had managed to change their paradigm.

On examining the gender-wise usage of the reservation facility for educational development among the respondents, we could recognize that, despite fewer female respondents (34.9 percent) being interviewed, the percentage of female respondents' who availed the facility is slightly more in comparison to males. This suggests that at present, the traditional gender stereotypes of exclusion of girl child from education, which is a common norm of South-East Asia, and India has begun to change among the SCs of Darjeeling as they had stopped giving consent to the old patriarchal norms and built a new social world. Olson-Strom and Rao (2020) also highlighted that low education is virtually disappearing in most of the countries in fact, they pointed out that in certain countries the women have outnumbered men in higher educational levels. The awareness of the importance for education seems to be higher among the females in the study area as it was the female respondents' who were found receiving the highest level of M.Phil degree and no male respondents reported possessing or undergoing this highest degree.

The data in the rural-urban setup indicates that the percentage of respondents who lacked unawareness in the rural area was more (55 percent) while it was slightly lower (45 percent) in the urban area. This indicates that the sizable population of the rural area have not availed their basic rights due to lack of awareness. However, even the scenario in the urban sector is not drastically different.

Cultural change is an outcome of changing lifestyles that could be observed in different spheres of life and one among such is eating habits. The eating habits seem to be in the process of transition as they are now conscious of good, healthy, hygienic, and nutritious food. In an effort to Sanskritize themselves, a section of respondents followed vegetarianism or had started avoiding beef/cow, mutton, pork, buff meat and alcohol which was traditionally not taboo to them. There were instances recorded

where a section of SC respondents preferred 'satvik' food (i.e. milk and milk product) which was once only consumed by the higher caste people highlighting the trend of Sanskritization.

Another area of change observed is the respondent's attire. Today most of the youngsters irrespective of any caste and class in Darjeeling have adapted to western fashion and wear pants, shirts, tops, and others and the SC youth are no exception. In fact, it was observed that the respondents' who belonged to the age group of 15 to 45 had a growing interest in brands as well as trendy clothes, which reveals their changing lifestyles. The influence of advanced technologies could also be observed in the daily lives of Scheduled Castes as most of the respondents in the urban had easy access to modern technologies like phones, laptops, television, etc. It was also observed that SC women in the study area possessed gold and silver ornaments which were once prohibited to the Scheduled Castes as reported in Darnal (2014). The changing lifestyle can also be noticed as many respondents at present have *pakka* and concrete houses while it was only a section of respondents who had *kachha* and mud houses in the study area.

One area where change could be observed was the changing patterns of marriage. The Nepali society who traditionally practiced endogamous patterns of marriages and inter-community marriage especially with SC was tremendously looked down upon. If a higher caste boy/girl married a Scheduled Caste then they were socially outcasted and were not accepted by the family and the community. However, after gaining socio-economic mobility, few changes could be observed as there were respondents who despite marrying in higher castes were socially accepted. Nevertheless, such number of inter-community marriages with SC and acceptance was quite limited. As there were respondents who narrated that even after gaining both social and economic

mobility, the cases of stigmatization and discrimination due to their caste identity were evident in the field area indicating the persistence of caste-based stigmatization. These incidents highlight that despite socio-economic mobility, the hegemonic forces as conceptualised by Gramsci (Hoare and Smith, 1999) based on the notion of purity and pollution still determine the social structure and habitus of the three communities in Darjeeling.

Changes could also be observed in the institution of family among the Scheduled Castes in the study area which could be assumed as the impact of reservation facilities. The trend of nuclearization of families (55.1 percent) was very evident. A major section of respondents due to educational and economic opportunities were either compelled or preferred to break away from their family leading to the breaking of traditional joint or extended family systems. However, although they live in nuclear families, during festivals, family functions and pujas they always come together. Therefore although the respondents after gaining economic mobility had separated from their parental home this separation was partial. Priya (2017) in her study claims that the nuclear family is more prevalent among the lower castes in India. Singh (1977) in his study also highlighted how the family system has undergone functional change by adapting to new demands of social and economical change, as today the nuclear family is predominantly found in Indian society. The same trend of nuclearization of families was found among the SCs of Darjeeling also.

In spite of educational developments and secured government job facilities, the issues of the emergence of the gap between privileged and under-privileged sections were noticed. As empirically located out of 350 respondents 37.7 percent of respondents pointed out that a section of privileged Scheduled Castes competes against their own group to enjoy the benefits that are meant for all. These groups of people belong to a

socio-economically stable family that has a good source of resource and social connection resulting in the emergence of a creamy layer and a non-creamy layer within the caste.

Lack of awareness is one of the issues that could be noticed among the respondents. In rural areas due to issues of accessibility like transportation, communication and road facilities, these areas lack educational infrastructure and opportunities for receiving better education, jobs, and modern amenities resulting in lack of awareness of reservation facilities that has left a significant section of the Scheduled Castes underprivileged. Because of this many people lead a life of deprivation, social discrimination, and social exclusion. Overall, 50.6 percent of respondents were not aware of the reservation facilities, 14.4 percent of respondents were partially aware while 18 percent of respondents despite being aware due to certain reasons could not avail the reservation facilities. These categories of respondents also lack social networking, were in deprived condition and in some cases had preferred to practice self-exclusion from the society.

Non-fulfillment of reserved quota in higher education and the employment sector are the imminent issue that shows the level of social exclusion among the SCs in Darjeeling hills. Although, consistency in the percentage of the enrolment of students could be noticed in the colleges of Darjeeling but the rate of growth of SC student enrolment was very slow. Similar is the scenario of the employment sector as we could notice that the association had identified many unfulfilled seats in government services. These instances indicate improper implementation of reservation policy.

The study also found some instances of religious conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. The reason the respondents cited was to distance themselves from the

social stigma attached to the caste and economic backwardness, hence they preferred to convert to Christianity. We could find such cases of conversion in Pudung, 12th Mile Kalimpong, and Mahender Goan Mirik. This new religion according to the respondents gave educational facilities i.e. by sponsoring their children, financial security by giving them jobs in missionary sectors or making houses for them, treated them equally, and respected them which they never experienced before. Since the Scheduled Caste should profess either the Hindu or the Sikh or the Buddhist religion³⁷, the conversion resulted in the decreasing number of members from the Scheduled Caste association.

There were few respondents who felt that despite the reservation policy and socio-economic upliftment the social stigma attached to low caste status still continued. They viewed that reservation policy will create doubt on the credentials of an individual. There were cases of self-exclusion where due to their socio-economic status the respondents had chosen to distance themselves from social activities and opined that reservation is only for the higher socio-economic status. It was also reported that people in the rush of availing reservation had started cornering the benefits which resulted in widening the gap and inequality within the community itself.

Taking the argument further, it was observed that although reservation policy bridges social and economic inequality to a considerable extent, however, the abolishment of social discrimination based on the religious notion of purity and pollution still cannot be guaranteed. As few cases of social discrimination in the form of denial of participation in social activities and non-acceptance and social stigmatization in inter-

³⁷Anusuchit Jati Tatha Janjati Kalyan Sangh, 1998

caste marriages with SC indicates that despite socio-economic upliftment and a new social position, total eradication of caste discrimination cannot be assured.

Rasmussen, (2010) highlighted that a proactive approach basically focuses on eliminating problems before they get a chance to appear i.e. by planning and acting before the problem arises. While reactive approach means reacting to events after it has occurred. Going by the approach, while analysing the nature of the members of the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association we could recognize that they were more reactive rather than proactive. This is because if the members of the association had acted proactively and arranged yearly meetings and awareness programs about the reservation facilities and educational scholarship, maximum of the Scheduled Caste members would be aware of the benefits and gained opportunities by utilizing the reservation facilities. Whereas due to its reactive nature of the previous members there were reports of many SC backlog seats that were unattended for long.

The study also revealed that few respondents showed an indifferent attitude towards reservation policy. These respondents either hesitated to answer the queries related to the benefits of reservation policy or claimed that those facilities related to Caste are for people who belong to the higher rung of the society. They were either socio-economically backward or illiterate or had received education only till the Primary level and had faced discrimination and were both passively and actively excluded from the society.

6.6. Summary

In the traditional caste-based Nepali society of Darjeeling the three communities Kami, Damai and Sarki availing reservation policy were able to include themselves in various spheres of social life. The chapter shows how to some extent reservation

policy helped the three communities to surmount themselves from the religious boundaries and give themselves prestigious social status. The present chapter also discusses how the social scenario of exclusion never remained static; dynamics of exclusion often changed, for instance despite being included in the social hierarchy there were other forms of exclusion that had emerged among the Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling. The chapter highlighted the issues of self-exclusion where respondents preferred isolating themselves from community activities that alienated them from the social processes. Using sociological analysis the chapter attempts to interweave the empirical data and concludes by discussing the major findings of the study.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

I

Social exclusion is the denial of equal opportunities of certain groups by the dominant groups, isolating it from other social groups and disapproving their ability to participate in political, economic and social functions of the society (Thorat, 2010). Among its various forms, in the context of India social exclusion is rigidly practiced on the basis of caste. The Scheduled Caste which is now a constitutionally legal category comprises many low caste social groups who experienced various types of exclusion such as social, political, religious, economic, and educational that hindered their integration in the mainstream society and were basically deprived of their rights. Chaudhry (2013) argued that the caste-based discrimination, exclusion, and divisions since ages persist to be an institutionalized system that directed towards the marginalised, downtrodden, and oppressed condition of the people. It restricted all means of resources that could have enhanced their lives and also gave them upward mobility. To address this social gap, the Constitution of India based on the principle of equality framed inclusive policies to integrate them in mainstream society and in an attempt to bridge the inequality granted opportunity to the socially excluded groups in spheres of education, employment and the seat on parliaments (Ambedkar, 2008) in the form of reservation.

Reservation policy was formulated as a remedial measure to bridge the social gap which is a part of a much bigger policy package that comprises a series of legislations, ameliorative programs, and preferential schemes, designed to benefit the weaker sections of the society. The package has evolved over a long period and has been

administered by the central as well as the state governments (Sheth, 1987). It is an amenity that assures the participation of the habitually ignored section of the society in all social affairs and activities and is perceived to be an indicator of upliftment which provided the members of the Scheduled Caste an opportunity to mobilize themselves. To ensure participation of the traditionally neglected sections, the Constitution by involving fixation of quota in various spheres have given protection to the weaker section of the society (Ambedkar, 2008) and by utilizing these protective measures the Scheduled Castes have managed to acquire a new social position in the social world.

Various studies conducted on the impact of this inclusive policy in different parts of India indicate many positive consequences of socio-economic upliftment of marginalized communities however, many studies also identified multiple gaps in its implementation and its consequences. For instance thinkers like Singh (1977) asserted that although the Scheduled Castes were able to gain socio-economic mobility by availing reservation policy but they are still victims of social and cultural discrimination. Therefore, with both pros and cons, the policy has managed to pave the way for socio-economic upliftment with the help of which today a section of Scheduled Castes have achieved a place for themselves in higher social strata.

Contextualizing in the caste-based Nepali social structure of Darjeeling, the three communities Kami, Damai and Sarki by virtue of their low caste status faced layers of social exclusion in various forms. The exclusive social practices in the form of rigid observation of commensality, purity and pollution, restriction in the marriage pattern, compulsion on following hereditary occupation have shaped their habitus for centuries resulting in deprivation of the various kinds leading to stagnancy and lack of social and cultural capital among the communities. Attributed to this life of

exclusionary practices, they accepted the life of subjugation and discrimination as natural to their habitus and as a part of their social reality, which led to different forms of deprivation and two among such are educational and occupational exclusion. However, the adoption of inclusive policies by the Constitution of India is expected to address this social gap and bring socio-economic upliftment of the marginalised communities over the years. The study, therefore, is an attempt to examine the various dimensions of social exclusion faced by the SCs of Darjeeling and also to evaluate the nature of the impact of the inclusive policy of reservation in socio-economic and cultural life of three communities.

Within this framework, the present study entitled ‘The Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling Hills: A Sociological Study’ is conducted among the Nepali Scheduled Castes (Kami, Damai, and Sarki) in the hills of Darjeeling. After revisiting the history of social exclusion, the main objective of the study is to understand if there are any changes in the socio-economic status of the Nepali Scheduled Castes after the implementation of reservation policy, it also seeks to examine their representation in higher education and employment and also assess the extent of utilization of SC reserved seats and quotas by the three communities. The study further examines, if the reservation policy has led to any kind of socio-economic mobility and its impact on the socio-economic and cultural life of SCs identifying the constraining and facilitating factors. Using purposive and snowball sampling, the study is based on 350 respondents comprising 32 percent of Kami, 36.9 percent of Damai, and 31.1 percent of Sarki communities based on variables like age, education, income and the rural-urban breakup. The exploratory study has made use of methodological triangulation and has used both the quantitative and qualitative methods. The empirical study has been based on examination of socio-economic

background collected through semi-structured interview schedules. In-depth interviews, case studies as well as narratives analysis was collected to understand the perspective of the people regarding the implementation of reservation policy, their experiences of any form of social exclusion and the changes in recent time. The empirical findings have been analysed using conceptual framework of social exclusion. Sociologically the study has used Gramsci's cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's concept of habitus and cultural capital.

The representation of SC communities both in the educational and occupational sphere have been examined thoroughly. The sample population included both categories of population, those who availed the reservation as well as those not benefiting from the inclusive policy due to various reasons. Care was taken to examine their perspective on the reservation policy as well as identifying various constraining and facilitating factors.

II

The study has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the conceptualization of the topic in the statement of problem and presents the conceptual framework. The section on literature review identifies the research gap which is followed by rationale of study, objectives and research questions. The methodology section includes the methods, tools and techniques as well as the samplings and a brief introduction of the field area. The Chapter concludes by discussing the scheme of the chapter.

The second chapter entitled 'Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in India' discusses the background of the caste system in India and the Scheduled Castes status. Revisiting the historical background of reservation policy in India, it discusses the

various Constitutional provisions and reservation policy for the Scheduled Castes. Using secondary sources the chapter presents the various educational schemes, scholarships, reservation quota (both in employment and educational institution) and other provisions granted to the Scheduled Castes by the government of India. By analysing the indicators like the Gross Enrolment Ratio and Net Enrolment Ratio and the data based on Employment Exchange, the chapter helps us to sketch the macro-level educational and employment scenario of Scheduled Castes in India and West Bengal.

The third chapter ‘Scheduled Caste Status and Reservation Policy in Darjeeling’ introduces the study area with a brief profile and historical backdrop of Darjeeling. It examines the ethnic composition and also the socio-demographic composition of the district. As the main focus of the study is the implementation of reservation policy and its impact, therefore, the chapter outlines the scenario of the caste system in Nepali society in Darjeeling and locates the three communities i.e. Kami, Damai, and Sarki in the Nepali caste system Darjeeling. The chapter also briefly unfolds the struggles of Kami, Damai, and Sarki communities and the role of All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association for the status of Scheduled Caste status. A brief history of education in Darjeeling is followed by discussion on educational schemes for Scheduled Castes and the current education and employment status of the three communities in the district.

The fourth chapter ‘Reservation and its Impact in Darjeeling: An Empirical Analysis’ is based on the fieldwork and analyzes the empirical data. The chapter discusses the socio-economic profile of the respondents with specific focus on their educational and employment status. To understand the pattern of changes in both education and occupation after the implementation of reservation policy, a comparison between the

respondent's and the parents' generation has been made to assess the intergenerational mobility. Further, the chapter also discusses the utilization of the reservation policy by the respondents who have availed the facilities and finally concludes by analysing various perspectives of respondents regarding reservation policy.

The fifth chapter 'Impact of Reservation Policy on Socio-Economic and Cultural Life' examines the impact on socio-economic and cultural life by comprehending their eating habits, marriage patterns, changes in the family structure, Occupational shift and livelihood pattern and changing social relations. Using qualitative information in the form of case studies and narratives, the section also highlights the facilitating and constraining factors of the reservation policy.

The sixth chapter 'Discussion and Findings' is divided into two sections; the first section deals with the nature of exclusion the SC communities experienced in their everyday life and the trajectory of inclusion, milestones and challenges. The section also attempts to analyze the empirical analyses within the theoretical framework. The second section briefly discusses the major findings of the study where both the pros and cons of reservation policy contextual to Darjeeling are discussed.

The seventh chapter concludes by summarising the thesis.

III

The empirical finding highlighted as in the larger Indian societal context, there are many milestones and challenges embedded in the path of implementation of reservation policy. Contextually it has been observed that the Kami, Damai and Sarki (Nepali Scheduled Castes) by availing the reservation facilities in education and employment sectors were able to uplift their socio-economic status and change their

habitus. The study exhibits how the current generation by availing reservation quota in educational institutions and scholarships are aspiring to pursue higher education and build a new social world for the coming generation which is observed to be reflected in lifestyles and patterns of the three communities.

The empirical observation suggests that reservation through facilitating education initiated the process of intergenerational mobility both vertically and horizontally. The occupational shift and mobility worked as an instrument of change as it helped the respondents to gain vertical upward mobility. After experiencing socio-economic mobility a change in their cultural life could be noticed whereby many had adapted to the Sanskritized lifestyle. A change in their eating habits, attire, housing styles, use of modern gadgets and appliances, endogamous marriage patterns and changing family structure were the noticeable factors highlighting reflexivity as they could now after utilizing reservation policy able to shape their own norms, taste, desires and so on. The respondents of the younger generation both in rural and urban areas had access to modern gadgets and appliances such as mobile, television, music system, etc. which helped them communicate and connect with the wider social world. Among many such changes due to the social transformation, the relaxation of commensality rules was also reported by the respondents which had opened the door of social acceptance to a considerable extent. Some privileged respondents reported that now they are equally invited in social functions and in some cases even held a central position in the community. This corresponds to what Kabeer's (2000) termed as privileged inclusion.

In the traditional social setup of Nepali society, the three communities had accepted their ascriptive low social status as a part of their social reality conforming to

hegemonic forces of the caste-based social norms. However, a section of them after availing reservation facilities and thereby acquiring the educational and occupational facilities were able to include themselves in the mainstream society. This 'equal opportunity policy' as termed by Thorat (2010) provided these groups with legal safeguards against discrimination and fair share in society, polity and economy. It to some extent helped the members of the three communities to surmount themselves from the religious boundaries and give themselves prestigious social and economic status in the society. Taking Bourdieu's theory, after gaining social and cultural capital, few members of the Kami, Damai and Sarki communities were able to change their habitus and build a new social world for themselves and the upcoming generation reinforcing the change in the rigid caste-based social structure of the Nepali society.

With regard to social mobility, it was observed that majority of the Kami, Damai and Sarki, after availing reservation policy, were able to gain vertical upward mobility. Due to which a shift in their paradigm could be observed as after gaining social and cultural capital, the SCs leaving their deprived status were able to afford a good lifestyle and relatively high social position in the society. The presence of horizontal mobility could also be observed among those underprivileged groups within the SC categories which are evident in large-scale occupational diversification among the respondents as indicated by only 10 percent of the respondents engaged in their traditional hereditary caste-based occupation. This group could not avail the reservation benefits, owing to lack of access to education, information and social networking and this category fits in the concept of passive exclusion as conceptualized by Sen (2000) which resulted in lack of opportunities in occupational shift.

The contrary perspective was also spotted during fieldwork. Few respondents mostly located in the rural setting who did not have access to reservation and education due to various circumstances revealed their stories of continuation of social discrimination and caste stigmatization indicating ‘hardcore exclusion’ as termed by Kabeer (2000) that still existed in the locality that they lived in. One prominent observation reflected in their narratives and case studies reveals instances of self-exclusion (Kabeer, 2000) were due to social discrimination and caste stigmatization, the respondents preferred practicing self-exclusion and had alienated themselves from the social affairs of the wider society. The study also highlighted that a section of the respondents both in rural and urban setting, who did not have educational opportunities, despite gaining socio-economic mobility and stability did not find place in ‘privileged exclusion’ they were excluded from participating in the social activities and had faced social discrimination on several occasions showing the instances of secondary exclusion. Ascribed to their social identity, they had withdrawn from participating in community affairs and socially excluded themselves from social activities which directly resulted in social exclusion from neighbourhoods as conceptualised by Smith (2000) thus disabling them from building a healthy social network. In some extreme situations, due to this discrimination and exclusionary practices, few respondents had chosen to convert their religion to Christianity as they felt this new religion had given security and a feeling of belongingness.

One pertinent challenge that reservation policy brought along with many advantages was the widening gap between the groups of privileged and underprivileged within the three communities. Few respondents revealed that the existence and emerging gap between the privileged and underprivileged groups and strongly feels that the powerful section within the SCs corners the benefits with the help of power and social

connection and those underprivileged groups can not avail the benefit. Silver (2014) also substantiates the argument stating that the underprivileged are deprived of their basic rights and have to suffer economic exclusion and in most cases remain unemployed and experience job stagnancy.

Among the challenges faced in the implementation of the reservation policy is the lack of awareness and information flow which has left a major section of the respondents falling in the group of underprivileged thus falling in the category of passive exclusion. The study highlighted that respondents, most importantly in the rural area were unaware of the reservation facilities which hindered their educational achievement because of which they were unable to uplift their socio-economic status and at most cases suffered deprivation. In fact, it could be observed that these sections of respondents due to their economic instability and their caste-based occupation had often faced social discrimination and caste-based stigmatization. On the other hand, there were respondents who revealed that despite having awareness but due to lack of sufficient information, social connection to guide them about the procedure and lack of equal access, they were not able to avail the reservation facilities which are the main cause of their socio-economic deprivation resulting in passive exclusion as conceptualizes by Sen (2000). The hindrance of lack of awareness among a section of the SCs has accumulated in the form of indifferent attitude who opined that reservation is for the people who are privileged and not for people like them resulting in widening the gap within them. There were respondents who had opportunities in availing various amenities meant for SCs partially or fully either in form of financial incentives or scholarships or the reservation in education and employment were the group of people who occupied the peripheral position in the society corresponding to what Kabeer (2000) has termed as either secondary or the privileged inclusion.

Using the Constitutional provisions and various facilities, a consistency in the enrolment of SC students for higher education could be noticed, however, the study indicates that the process needs to be further strengthened. The unfulfilled seats of Scheduled Castes both in education and government employment sectors in the hills of Darjeeling has also been observed and the issues of backlog seats in the various departments as highlighted by the community members of the association reveal the situation of what Sen (2000) termed as unfavourable exclusion as, despite willingness, the respondents were deprived of the facilities, showing that implementation of reservation policy still needs more attention in the Darjeeling hills.

Despite having many positive socio-economic and cultural consequences as a result of socio-economic mobility facilitated by reservation empirically, there were few narratives and case studies of the caste-based social discrimination based on the religious notion of purity and pollution which still existed in the corners of the study area. The trend indicates that although there is a shift from ascriptive to achieved status using Parsons 'Pattern Variable' perceptives, existence of such issues indicates that caste-based Nepali society of Darjeeling is still rooted in the traditional social structure, although the process of transition has begun. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the reservation has facilitated changes in many aspects of the socio-economic and cultural life of the three communities. Although total eradication of social discrimination, caste stigmatization and exclusion is yet to take place, the field finding suggests a lot more positive impact in their everyday life was observed which could be made possible by the implementation of reservation policy in the hills of Darjeeling. As Bourdieu regards habitus as a flexible structure open to changes because of individuals reflexivity that allows one to learn, change and consciously incorporate in their social action thereby leading to a change in one's habitus, the

empirical observation indicates that after experiencing change in their socio-economic and cultural life, the three communities were able to experience flexibility in the rigid social structure of the society which ultimately resulted in changing their habitus.

The study also emphasizes the role of the All India Nepali Schedule Caste association which is one of the active organizations and is instrumental in mediating the communities by bringing them under one banner and sensitizing and updating them regarding the initiatives taken by the government, through meetings, programs, workshops, etc. However, disappointingly they revealed that despite their effort, many people hardly came to the meeting and showed any participation in the work of the association. Consequently, new generations are getting isolated from the community. The state initiative of the Community Development Board established in 2016 is still at the infancy stage and its activities are more limited to development initiatives like building houses for its members and cultural preservation of the community.

Overall, while understanding the impact of reservation policy upon the three communities in Darjeeling hills, a considerable change in their socio-economic and cultural life could be observed. However, the major challenges that reservation brought along with it could not be overlooked as these challenges were the upcoming issues that had started hampering the collectivity of the respective communities.

IV

7.1. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the empirical observation and findings. The following suggestions and recommendations are made.

1. Strengthening All India Nepali Scheduled Caste Association: As highlighted in the earlier sections, unawareness of the reservation policy is one of the main concerns of the Nepali Scheduled Castes in Darjeeling hills. Therefore, to avoid being further excluded, the association can play an instrumental role in overall upliftment of the communities. The association which is functioning actively needs to be further strengthened and expanded in terms of their sensitization program and information dissemination regarding various policies and programs related to education and employment, job opportunities and providing assistance in dealing with the bureaucratic procedure. The awareness, free flow of information and the guidance ease out the process which can benefit larger sections of the SC communities in Darjeeling hills. Therefore, to build a new habitus and reinforce the change in the social structure of the community, the Association can play a significant role by sharing information and directing people to pave their way towards inclusion.

2. *Samaj* or the Community Association: The three associations or *Samaj* (Kami, Damai, and Sarki *Samaj*) at the community level can play a leading role in raising awareness among the community. The community leaders of *Samaj* should be proactive and encourage every member to participate in community programs and activities. Moreover, there should be a proper linkage and coordination between *Samaj* at the village, block-level of every locality with the All India Nepali Scheduled Caste association so that information regarding the various amenities is properly disseminated to benefit the deprived and the marginalized sections. The community leaders by making effective use of the information technology and social media can assist

the youth in getting information and garnering educational benefits. Further, the community leader of samaj contributes to the educational upliftment of the deprived section by establishing coaching centers, by imparting skill development training and sensitization program.

- 3. Role of Panchayat:** Coupled with unawareness, the low literacy rate of 53.75 percent (Census 2011) among the three communities of Darjeeling hills itself is posing many constraints and pitfalls. Therefore, to achieve better education, literacy rates and availing job opportunities, the local self-government for instance Gram Panchayat can help the Scheduled Castes in reaching the educational facilities, informing them about job opportunities and facilitating the process of availing these opportunities by holding meetings and disseminating information about the reservation facilities to the ignorant members of the community.
- 4. Role of Educational Institutions:** The educational institution can play a vital role in the inclusionary process. It can guide the SC students by conducting programs such as career counseling and by providing free flow of information regarding educational schemes and scholarships as well as reservation facilities. The educational institution by informing the Scheduled Caste students about the higher educational benefits, facilities, and sensitization of the Scheduled Caste students can address the problem of deprivation due to unawareness and information flow.
- 5. Revitalizing State Development Boards for three Communities:** The State Development Board is a state-funded Cultural Board established with the objective of community development. However, the functioning of the state

development boards are at the very preliminary stage and nothing substantial has been done with regard to educational upliftment of the communities. Provided the state development boards are active and revitalized it can be a medium for bringing the communities together that provides the platform for raising the awareness among the communities.

Based on the empirical findings and discussion it can be safely concluded that the implementation of reservation policy among the SCs in Darjeeling hills has initiated its inclusionary process which has contributed in changing their habitus. After acquiring social and cultural capital, the three communities of SCs in Darjeeling were successful in achieving a new socio-economic status that allowed a shift in their paradigm. However, the process of inclusion needs to be catalyzed and reformed at the different levels of society and the state, so that it reaches to the deprived, needy and deserving sections of the community.

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Glossary of Meaning

Glossary	Meaning
<i>Aaran</i>	Machine/equipment where iron is molded and shaped used by the Kami community for blacksmithing
<i>Acchoot</i>	Untouchables
<i>Alpasankhyak</i>	Minorities
<i>Ashubh</i>	Inauspicious
<i>Bipanna</i>	Downtrodden
<i>Car Varna Chattis Jat</i>	Four varnas and thirty-six Cates
<i>Chokho jat</i>	Pure Caste
<i>Garib</i>	Poor
<i>Gothalo</i>	Shepherd
<i>Harijan</i>	God's people
<i>Lodher</i>	Jinx
<i>Masinya Matwalijat</i>	Enslavable alcohol drinker
<i>Matwali</i>	Alcohol drinking
<i>Nachalnejat</i>	Unacceptable Caste
<i>Namasinyas Matwalijat</i>	Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers
<i>Nimukha</i>	Helpless
<i>Pacchadipareka</i>	Lagging

<i>Panchai Baja</i> and <i>Naumati Baja</i>	Ensemble contains five Musical instruments
<i>Panchakhat</i>	Included confiscation of property, banishment, mutilation, enslavement, and even death
<i>Pani Chalne jat</i>	Water Acceptable caste and Impure or Water <i>Pani</i>
<i>Pani Chalny Jat</i>	Water acceptable caste
<i>Pani muniko Jat</i>	Impure Caste
<i>Pani Nachalne Chhoi</i> <i>Chhito Halna Naparne</i>	The Impure Castes but touchable
<i>Pani Nachalne Chhoi</i> <i>Chhito Halna Parne</i>	Impure and Untouchable caste from whom water is not acceptable and contact with whom requires purification by the sprinkling of water
<i>Rakshi</i>	Homemade liquor
<i>Samaaj</i>	Village Social Welfare association
<i>Samaj Ghar</i>	Community hall
<i>Sano Jat</i>	Lower caste
Satvik	Means pure, natural, energetic, vital and clean vegetarian food which was consumed by the high caste as prescribed by caste rule.
<i>Satya Narayan Puja</i>	Puja is considered very holy and hence it is considered very auspicious to get it done at home during special events like childbirth, birthdays, marriages, house warming (Greh Pravesh) or on any happy occasions.
<i>Sino</i>	Dead carcasses of animals

<i>Sosit</i>	Exploited
<i>Tagadhari</i>	Upper caste (Brahman and Kashtriya)
<i>Tallo Jat</i>	Low caste
<i>Uppechhit</i>	Ignored
<i>Utpidit</i>	Oppressed

APPENDIX

Department of Sociology

Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim

The Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes of Darjeeling Hills:

A Sociological Study

Questionnaires

Date: _____

PERSONAL DETAILS:

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender:

1.	Male
2.	Female
3.	Others

1. Sub-Caste: Kami

Damai

Sarki

2. Religion:

3. Qualification:

1.	Illiterate
2.	Literate
3.	Primary (to V)
4.	Upper Primary (VIII)
5.	Secondary
6.	Higher Secondary
7.	Bachelors
8.	Post Graduate
9.	PhD
10.	Technical/Professional

4. Employed: Yes No

Sl. No.	JOBS	GRADE
1.	Government	
2.	Private	
3.	NGOs	
4.	Others/Business	

5. Annual Income: Rs.

6. Area: Urban Rural

FAMILY DETAILS AND INFORMATIONS:

7. No. of family members:

Educational and Employment status of the family

8. No. of Educated member in the family:

SL. NO.	RELATION	AGE	QUALIFICATION
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

9. Have the no. of educated members increased in your family when compared to early generation: State Details....

10. If, No what is the reason:

- i) Unavailability of the opportunities
- ii) Identify the reason
- iii) Not qualified
- iv) Lack of awareness
- v) Any reason.....

11. Why was your child not able to pursue higher education? (if the education level in not high)

12. Number of working members in family:

Sl. No.	Type of Job	No. of members	Grade
1.	Government		
2.	Private		
3.	NGOs		
4.	Others		

14. Have the number of working members increased in your family when compared with early generation (from past 10 yrs):

15. If, Yes

Sl. No.	No. of members who were employed before	No. of members who are employed at present
1.		

16. Annual Income in the family: Rs.

Socio-Economic Status of the family

17. Land owned by the respondent:

1.	Up-to 2.5
2.	2.5-5
3.	5-7.5
4.	7.5-10
5.	10-12.5
6.	12.5-15
7.	15+.....

18. Does not own land (landless):

19. Houses: Own house

Rented house

20. Have the annual income increased when compared to the past years:
21. If, yes how much:
22. Monthly expenditure:
23. Have the monthly expenditure increased too:
24. Pattern of expenditure:
 - a. Education of children
 - b. Medical expenses,
 - c. Saving

The social status of SCs (Caste Discrimination)

25. Have you ever felt discriminated on caste basis? If so nature of discrimination.
26. Do you feel that the Scheduled Castes today are socially accepted along with the other communities:
27. Are you aware of Reservation policies for SCs?
28. Has anybody from your family availed this? Details
29. If, yes than have reservation policy helped in socially including the Scheduled castes along with the huge population:
30. Do you recognize a rise of living standard among the Scheduled castes when compared to last 10 years:

RESEARCH RELATED QUESTIONS: (common questions)

31. Is the no. of educated members in your family increased when compared to early generation:
32. If, yes than has reservation policy helped your children to perceive higher education in recognized institutions:
33. Do you think reservation policy will help your children to easily enroll themselves in employment sector too:
34. If, yes how:
 - i) Through your capability
 - ii) Through examination
 - iii) Through networking

HIGHER AUTHORITIES FROM EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT

SECTORS:

35. Have the no. of seats allotted to the students by the government in higher education in recognized institutions filled:

Yes

No

36. If, No what is the reason:

- i) The no. of students who applied were less
- ii) The students did not qualify the requirements
- iii) Any other reasons.....

37. Apart than colleges is reservation policy applicable in schools too:

38. If, No which institutions does not have reservation facilities:

39. What is the reason:

40. Have the no. of seats allotted to the candidates by the government in employment sector ever remained vacant in Darjeeling:

Yes

No

41. If, Yes what is the reason:

- i) The no. of candidates who applied were less
- ii) The candidates did not qualify the requirements
- iii) Any other reasons.....

42. Reservation policy is not applicable in few governmental sectors therefore is there any government office where reservation policy is not applicable in Darjeeling too:

43. If, Yes what are the sectors where reservation facilities are not applicable:

44. What is the reason:

45. Is there any step taken by government for appointments of less qualified Scheduled castes candidates in Darjeeling:

QUESTIONS FOR RURAL AREAS:

46. Are you aware about the reservation policies (facilities) that have been granted for the Scheduled castes:

47. If, yes what are the types of facilities that have been allotted to the Scheduled castes in rural (your) areas:

- i) In educational sectors:
- ii) Employment:
- iii) Financial help:
- iv) Any other reasons:

Class Hierarchy:

48. Is any kind of Class hierarchy recognized within the Scheduled Castes community at present:

49. If, Yes what is the reason:

- i) Is it the increasing gap of living standard that we can recognize among the Scheduled Castes
- ii) Rising of discrimination within the Scheduled caste community
- iii) Any other reasons.....

50. Do you feel class hierarchy can determine the utilization of reservation policy:

51. If, yes how can it inspire:

- i) The people who belong to the higher class will have more opportunity to utilize the facility
- ii) They will have good idea of sources
- iii) Any other reasons.....

How Scheduled Castes perceive the reservation policy:

52. Do you identify reservation policy as a step of opportunity:

53. If, Yes why:

54. If, No why what is the reason:

- i) People miss uses the facilities
- ii) The identity of being a lower caste becomes more visible

iii) Any other reasons.....

55. Do you feel reservation policy today have been monopolized by people:

56. Do you feel that reservation policy is still necessary for the Scheduled Castes in this present era; if Yes, why: