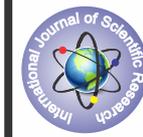


A STUDY OF THE SC/ST WELFARE ACTIVITIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT DHARWAR AND GADAG DISTRICT



Political Science

KEYWORDS: Social, empowerment,
Development, status, society

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ABSTRACT

Karnataka is well known in the country as a model state from the points of view of social welfare and economic development. Karnataka has also witnessed a strong Dalit movement, which fought for the human rights and distributive justice. The state government has established the Directorate of Social Welfare to plan and execute special programmes for the social and economic progress of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Social Welfare Department is the Nodal Department to monitor the overall Development of Scheduled Caste people in Karnataka. The higher echelons of the power structure that constitute a microscopic minority among the Scheduled Castes receive the reservation benefits. The percentage of STs Living in permanent houses with better civic amenities is lower when compared to SCs and other population. Adequate funds are not spent on various socially beneficial activities by the Department of Social Welfare. The contribution of Central Government is inadequate for the social empowerment of SC/ST population. It is necessary to earmark adequate funds and implement various development programmes based on social commitment and responsibility. The elected representatives and officials responsible for non-utilization of funds and non-performance should be brought to the book in order to prevent any misuse and misappropriation of funds meant for the development of SC/ST communities in the state of Karnataka.

Karnataka is well known in the country as a model state from the points of view of social welfare and economic development. It has a great legacy of social reformation movement led by Basava who played a historical role in the establishment of a welfare state based on human values and progressive experiments. Nalvadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar also played a crucial role in the modernization of Karnataka and empowerment of Dalits and other weaker sections before independence. Devaraj Urs also remains in the history of Karnataka as the foremost champion of social justice and economic equity. Karnataka has also witnessed a strong Dalit movement, which fought for the human rights and distributive justice. The state government has established the Directorate of Social Welfare to plan and execute special programmes for the social and economic progress of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The department has implemented several programmes for the benefit of SC/ST population and prepared grounds for the welfare and progress of these marginalized sections through suitable legislative support, financial support, planning support and social support. Studies have reported that Karnataka model of development is based on constitutional aspirations and human values.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are entitled to constitutional safeguards, reservation benefits and welfare opportunities. They are also fully entitled to certain rights and privileges, which were denied to them in the past on the ground of caste system and the practice of untouchability. The Government of Karnataka, through Social Welfare Department, formulated various programmes and schemes for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes especially for their integrated development since 1956. It was earlier called as the Depressed Classes Department and was headed by the Commissioner for Depressed Classes along with an Additional Development Commissioner. In 1956, the Department was named as Social Welfare Department and in 1959; the district level officers were re-designated as District Social Welfare Officers. They looked after the welfare of SC/STs, Backward Classes, Minorities, Women and Child Welfare, Physically Handicapped and other disadvantaged sections of society. In the year 1975, the Women and Child Welfare along with Disabled Welfare, was separated into a separate department. The Department of Backward Classes and Minorities was separated in 1977. The Department of Tribal Welfare was separated out from this department in 1998. At present, the Commissionerate of Social Welfare is primarily responsible for the development of SC/ST population.

Educational Facilities

The department manages hostels in the urban and rural areas to facilitate the educational progress of the SC/ST communities. The students receive scholarship, food, clothing, shelter and other basic

needs in the Pre-Metric and Post-Metric hostels throughout the state. In addition to this, several voluntary agencies are also encouraged to run hostels wherever necessary, by giving them only food charges, building rent and honorarium to the staff. These are called Grant-In-Aid Hostels. The department also provides prize money for the meritorious students, cash prize for rank holders, financial assistance to the students in higher educational institutions, extra study tour charges, and financial assistance to study in abroad and allied facilities. The department also organizes several training programmes for the academic and professional development of SC/ST students and youth. They are called as training centers for the development of proficiency. The students are also trained for the competitive examinations at various levels.

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The data reveal that there are no adequate coaching centre is established across the state to improve the proficiency of SC/ST students. It shows the negligent attitude of the state government towards better human resources development in the field education. The pre-metric and post-metric hostels are also not adequate to meet the educational developmental needs of SC/ST students across the state. The residential schools are also not adequate to meet the growing educational needs of these communities. Experience reveals that most of these hostels are not properly managed in terms of basic needs, infrastructural development, training, orientation, health and security of the students in the present times. Most of these hostels do not have well equipped rooms, toilet facilities, libraries, sports wings and other amenities due to lack of political will and social activism.

Economic Development Programmes

The department implements certain development programmes to improve the economic status of the marginalized SC/ST sections of the society. Prominent among them include:

1. Self-employment schemes for educated unemployed SC Youths.
2. Apprenticeship to certificate holders of ITI, Eng. Degree and Diploma to develop their skill in the trade in which they acquired technical qualifications.
3. Advocate grants.
4. Free legal aid facilities and related programmes.

The department also implements certain programmes to promote cottage industries and economic status of SC/ST population. Prominent among the benefits include - (a) provisions of financial assistance for improving their own trade and business, (b) provision of marketing facilities and technical guidance, and (c) setting up training and production centers for giving training in trades like rope-making, basket making, weaving and tailoring. The department also provides professional assistance for the empowerment of SC/ST population under different categories such as industry-centered development and agriculture – centered development across the state. The department provides financial assistance to the poor and needy persons. Loans and subsidies are also provided to the beneficiaries to improve agriculture, cottage industry and self-employment programmes undertaken by the beneficiaries. The research and development activities are also undertaken to evaluate the social and economic status of these sections. The directorate provides financial assistance for the infrastructure development in the localities having SC/ST population.

The data reveal that department of social welfare has spent about Rs.8402.00 lakh for the development of SC/ST population through central and state funds. The total amount spent for the development of these communities under Special Component Plan stood at Rs. 87500.00 lakh. The contribution of Government of India is nil since it is totally funded by the state government. The sub-plan amount for SC/ST welfare is Rs.3500.00 lakh. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Development Corporation has spent Rs.10539.00 lakh under central and state funds for the development of these communities. The Banjara Development Corporation has spent Rs.150.00lakh for the development of Banjara community, which comes under Scheduled Caste. Heggade (1991:12) states: "The amount spent for the development of these marginalized sections is inadequate when compared to the population of these communities. Adequate funds are not earmarked for the welfare and progress of SC/ST communities in the new millennium with reference to Karnataka state".

Social Development Programmes

The department monitors the human rights violations in the form of bonded labor, human trafficking and other anti-development practices that would worsen the lives of SC/ST population. The department implements certain programmes to improve the social status of SC/ST population in the state. Prominent among them include:

1. Housing grant to houseless scheduled castes,
2. Interest free housing loan,
3. Financial assistance to inter caste married couples,
4. Commemoration of temple entry proclamation,
5. Payment of financial assistance from minister's distress relief fund to persons who are suffering from incurable diseases,
6. Financial assistance for the publication of books written by authors belonging to Scheduled Castes community,
7. Rehabilitation of victims of Atrocities,
8. Purchase of Agricultural land,
9. Advocates Grant,
10. Related other schemes

The Directorate provides Rs.50000/- to the couple to promote inter-caste marriages and eradicate untouchability. It also provides pension benefit to the widows, unmarried women and disabled women of these communities. There is also provision for the rehabilitation of disabled and disadvantaged SC/ST women. Financial assistance is also provided to the unemployed youth to undertake self-employment programmes. Irrigation and electricity facilities are also extended to the farmers of these communities.

The data reveal that Rs.4932.00 lakh were spent on the construction of houses for the poor and needy SC/ST people through state government financial assistance. The directorate has Rs.400.00 lakh for the relief and rehabilitation activities in times of disasters and crisis. Rs.300 lakh was spent on eradication of untouchability related activities. Rs.300.00 lakh was spent on civil rights enforcement activities. Rs. 100.00 lakh was spent on SC/ST commission activities. Another Rs.100.00lakh was spent on organization of seminars and conferences on Dalit related issues and concerns. Chakaraborty (2000:07) points out: "Adequate funds are not spent on various socially beneficial activities by the Department of Social Welfare. The contribution of Central Government is absolutely inadequate for the social empowerment of SC/ST population".

Other Initiatives

The department also implements several schemes for the uplift of the SC/ST population. They include:

1. Provision for adequate facilities, including legal aid, to the persons subjected to atrocities to enable them to avail themselves of justice;
2. Provisions for travelling and maintenance expenses to witnesses, including the victims of atrocities, during investigation and trial of offences under the act;
3. Provision for the economic and social rehabilitation of the victims of the atrocities;
4. Appointment of officers for initiating or exercising supervision over prosecutions for the contravention of the provisions of the act; capacity building for conflict resolution
5. Setting up of committees at appropriate levels as the state government may think necessary to assist the government in formulation of such measures;
6. Provision for a periodic assessment of the working of this act with a view to suggesting measures for its better implementation; and identification of atrocity prone areas.

India is a welfare State, committed to the welfare and development of its people and of vulnerable sections in particular. The preamble, Directive Principles of State Policy, Fundamental Rights and specific sections, viz., Articles 38, 39 and 46 in the Constitution of India, stand testimony to the commitment of the State to its people. Socially disadvantaged groups of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes have received special focus over the years for their social and economic

advancement. Government has taken several steps for framing appropriate policies needed to design and implement various welfare programmes for achieving the objective of creating favourable environment to ensure speedy socio economic development of SCs/ STs. For the well being of these communities, special target-oriented programmes are being implemented by earmarking funds, providing subsidies, offering reservations in employment and educational institutions etc.

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