



SC/ST DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The movement for social and economic justice launched by B.R.Ambedkar has remained unfulfilled due to absence of committed national leadership and organized Dalit struggle in the country. There are a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes which have been undertaken for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the post-independence era. The post independence public policy in relation to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consisted essentially of legal measures for removal of disabilities and discrimination, reservation in elected bodies, reservations in public employment, special support for education with guaranteed places particularly in higher educational institutions and specially directed economic programmes within the overall plans. Even at the beginning of the twenty first century, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who constitute a substantial section the Indian population suffer from varying degrees of unfreedom and denial of human dignity. The injustices suffered related to poverty, wages and other resources on the one hand and person on the other hand. They lose their hand and even when title over the land has been conferred, they have been prevented from occupying the land and cultivating it. The 12th five year plan aims at achieving the overall improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. Empirical studies have revealed that most of these programmes are not implemented properly in the country due to lack of participation of beneficiaries and absence of pro-active role of government in the empowerment of Dalits. The social activists and intellectuals have strongly advocated a paradigm shift from post-facto to pro-active planning for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes.

KEYWORDS: Scheduled Tribes, Empowerment, Dalit Struggle, Exploitation, Economic Status,

INTRODUCTION

From the very dawn of the independence our government has been taking solid remedial steps for the upliftment of the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India. There are series of constitutional provisions, reservation benefits and welfare programmes for the benefit of SC/ST population in India. The SC/ST populations have remained as marginalized sections of Indian society despite these provisions. The movement for social and economic justice launched by B.R.Ambedkar has remained unfulfilled due to absence of committed national leadership and organized Dalit struggle in the country. The scholars and advocates have strongly advocated the need for protective discrimination as well as affirmative action. Through protective legislation and socio-political activism, they have to be assured equality and dignity. Through socio-economic planned development, their social and economic status has to be raised to a level equivalent to that of others. The status of SC/ST development in India is analysed in this paper based on qualitative research method.

SPECIAL PLANS FOR SC/ST WELFARE

The Directive Principles of the State Policy (Article 46) reveals that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Consequently, welfare measures for the educational, social and economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were undertaken since the First Five Year Plan. These programmes were implemented under the 'Backward Classes Sector' till Fourth Five Year Plan. Subsequently, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Special Component Plan (SCP) and Special Central Assistance (SCA) were implemented across the country. The Scheduled

Caste Development Corporations were also established during the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plan, respectively.

Arles (2001:01) comments: "The prime requisite of both the strategies is that funds should be earmarked for the TSP and SCP from out of the Central and State Plans in proportion to the population percentage of SCs and STs. The special programmes under the 'Backward Classes Sector' were conceived as supplement to the total development effort under the general sectors of development; but in actual practice, these special programmes substituted the benefits available to SCs/STs under the general sector programmes, resulted in much lower investment for their development than envisaged. The following Table illustrates the position".

The Special Central Assistance is an additive to the State Plan and programme for SC and ST for income generating schemes for economic development including directly relevant back-up services, training and institutional build-up. The total number of SC families economically assisted under SCP from 1994-95 to 1999-2000 was 1,43,92,425. In the case of Scheduled Tribes the SCA can be used for building infrastructure facilities also. The Scheduled Caste Development Corporations provide margin money loan to the scheduled castes families to benefit from the various family oriented developmental programmes, especially in the matter of securing credit.

There are a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes which have been undertaken for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the post-independence era. Some schemes under the non-plan sector have also been undertaken by the Central and the State Governments for the advancement of these communities. The benefit of various development programmes did not reach all the SCs/STs uniformly but derived by a few more vocal and influential sections of the population according to empirical studies.

Table No. 1.4.1: Plan Outlay for SC/ST Communities in India (Rupees in Crores)

Five Year Plans	Total Plan (Rs.)	Share of ST (Rs.)	Percentage (%)	Share of SC (Rs.)	Percentage (%)
First	1960	19.93	1.00	6.13	0.35
Second	4672	42.92	0.90	28.56	0.61
Third	8577	50.53	0.60	40.82	0.48
Fourth	15,779	79.85	0.50	72.19	0.46
Fifth	39,426	1157.67	3.00	204.90	0.52
Sixth	1,09,292	3640.25	3.33	3722.97	3.41
Seventh	1,80,000	6744.85	3.75	7233.32	4.02
Eighth	1,81,735	4873.43	2.68	2280.80	1.26
Ninth	3,74,000	9168.12	2.45	10234.28	2.74
Tenth	15,541.28	12136.42	0.78	18148.84	1.17
Eleventh	2562707.53	6874.36	0.27	9538.62	0.37
Twelfth	35,68,626	9342.00	0.26	23342.00	0.65

Courtesy: National Commission for SC/ST, GOI.

Chaurasia (1990:05) observes: "The extreme economic backwardness, social retardation and virtual stagnation have aggravated the situation for ages and pushed the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to large scale exploitation. Proper social and economic status is very vital to progress in a caste - ridden society like ours. It is because of this that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have no major say in the politico - ritual activities. Caste plays an important role in Indian society at every stage. Caste is also taken into consideration at every stage of human life and almost all activities revolve round the pivot of caste".

The data reveal constant increase in the outlay of Five Year Plans during the first to twelfth five year plans. Unfortunately, there is steady decline in the outlay for the development of SC/ST population during the plan period. It is clearly understood that Central Government is not actually committed to the welfare and progress of depressed classes in India. Hence, there is no consistent progress in this regard. Even after several decades of national independence, the Central and State Governments have not achieved notable success in the empowerment of Dalits and other marginalized sections of Indian society, observe Mohanty (2000:13).

PLAN EFFORTS

Planners and administrators have been aware of the special problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Reference to these problems is contained in the plan documents right from the beginning. The attempt has been to fashion policies and programmes in accordance with the constitutional provision as well the Panchasheel of tribal development by the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. The special programmes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

were conceived as supplement to the total development effort under general sector of development; but, in practice these special programmes merely substituted the benefits available to SCs and STs under normal development schemes. This results in much lower investment for their development than envisaged. At the time of consideration in 1975-76 of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill aimed at removal of area restriction in a state in the matter of recognition of SCs and STs by the Government of India, it was felt that a fresh strategy to take the problem of weaker sections was necessary.

Baxi (1991:02) writes: "The post independence public policy in relation to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consisted essentially of legal measures for removal of disabilities and discrimination, reservation in elected bodies, reservations in public employment, special support for education with guaranteed places particularly in higher educational institutions and specially directed economic programmes within the overall plans. The statutory reservation in public jobs an higher education is undoubtedly significant; but it has only made a marginal difference to overall employment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as a share in public employment even fully proportionate to a share in overall population cannot by itself benefit more than a fraction of them".

Bhardwaja and Naronkar (2002:03) observe: "What is to be noticed and what evidences the attitude of the society is the fact that there is almost complete absence of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from areas of private organized sector employment, other than the manual or the menial. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are also almost from lakhs of people

who have found some prosperity from employment abroad, as this seems to require a network of useful connection which often serve as a lever of social and economic advancement". It would appear that the social and economic position in the future will be structured more by access to the market rather than to the state and those already advanced in the socio-economic ladder will be those who derive primary advantage in this situation.

The welfare and development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes since Independence has been rooted in the constitution which is based on the values of equality, human dignity and social justice and the laws and policy prescription emanating from the constitutional mandates. However, in actual practice, there has been a disjunction between these values and the hierarchical and feudal values which continue to govern the society. On the one hand, the state has put in place laws, policies and programmes without which even the modern progress in the overall situation could not have been possible, on the other hand, these measures are as yet inadequate and have to be more effectively implemented to overcome the continued subordination of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Notwithstanding many shortcomings, it is to be recognized, however, that the progress in regard to the socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the five decades since Independence is not inconsiderable.

Dasaratharamaiah and Ramanaiah (2006:06) note: "Since Independence, a variety of initiatives have been undertaken by the state for the socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Thus include an array of constitutional commitments and the enactment of a number of special legislations referred to earlier, reservations in public employment and in elected representative bodies, planned development programmes, budgetary allocations and in general, according to high priority in all the Governmental activities. The series of land reform legislations, the land allotment rules and the myriad developmental programmes known as poverty alleviation programmes, the schemes of reservations not only in public services but in various other fields including the allotment of land and housing all these constitute positive measures intended to secure livelihood opportunities and enhance the well being of these sections of the community".

Initially, the approach to the welfare and development of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes took the form of a few limited schemes of ameliorative nature by center and states. The most important step was the reservation in public services and

reservation in educational facilities along with the introduction of scholarships for studies. Reservation in public services as well as the sanction of post metric scholarship for the scheduled castes were strengthened, enlarged and continued after Independence. In various states, in the first quarter of Independence, schemes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consisted largely of programmes of education, housing, distribution of government waste land / Gair Mazrna land and opening of hostels for the Government was specifically reserved for the scheduled castes, who constituted the bulk of the agricultural labour, comments Sankaran (2000:14).

A systematic institutionalized effort in planning for the development of the scheduled castes was initiated late in the year 1978 in the nature of special component plan (SCP) for scheduled castes. The social component plan (SCP) was designed to channelize the plan outlays and benefits in all the sectors to the scheduled castes at least in proportion to their population to secure their integrated development. It is intended to be a plan for the development of the scheduled castes in relation to their resource endowments and their needs in all the areas of social and economic activity including agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries, education including scholarships, hostels and midday meals, provision of drinking water, electrification of scheduled castes localities, development of sericulture, minor irrigation including construction and energization of irrigation wells, programmes for specially vulnerable groups, housing and house sites, links roads, self employment schemes, social forestry, allotment of land as well as schemes for development of lands and allotment of shops and stalls in public places.

The Social Component Plan is an important and integral part of the planning process intended to secure the rapid socio-economic development of the scheduled castes. In the year 1980 the Social Central Assistance (SCA) was also introduced as an additive to social component plan. Thus, the strategy for the development of the scheduled castes is anchored on the special component plan formulated and implemented by the center as well as the states supported by the central scheme of Special Central Assistance, notes Shankaran (2000:14).

It was also only in the seventies that the state Government created specific institutional mechanism for providing assistance for economic development of the scheduled castes. The State Governments in the states with substantial scheduled caste population have set up the scheduled caste development Corporation (SCDC) to enable the members of scheduled castes to take

up viable income generating activities. In the year 1979 the Government of India also introduced the centrally sponsored schemes of assistance to the State Governments for investing in the share capital of their corporations.

The National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) was established in 1989 to provide support to the economic development programmes for the scheduled castes. A National Safai Karmacharis Finance and Development Corporation was also set up in January 1997 to facilitate all round socio-economic development for Safai Karmacharis and their dependents and to extend confessional financial assistance for the establishment of income generating and viable projects as alternative means of livelihood. Soon after Independence, the basic principles that should guide the approval to the development of the scheduled tribes were clearly set out by the Prime Minister Pandit Jawahatlal Nehru in the form of five principles known as "Tribal Pansheel" which was later enclosed by the Renuka Ray team (1959), Dehbar Commission (1961) and Shilu A.O. Committee (1969), writes Sankaran (2002:14).

As the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes constitute a large segment of those below the poverty line, an over siding priority has been accorded to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes families in all the Poverty Alleviation Programmes, particularly in the field of rural development. In the Integrated Rural Development Programme IRDP, the most important poverty alleviation programme which was extended to the entire country in the year 1980 and continued for two decades, 30 per cent of the outlay on the programme was earmarked for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the initial year. Since 1990-91, a minimum of 50 per cent of the total outlay was set aside for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, SC/ST beneficiaries were also eligible for a higher subsidy of 50 per cent as against 25 per cent for small farmers and 33 1/3 per cent for the marginal farmers and landless laborers. The number of scheduled castes and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes families covered under IRDP all over the country until the end of 1994 is about 215 lacks.

The Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was started from 1985-86 as an important component of the rural labour employment guarantee programme (RLEGP) and later become part of the Jawahar Razgar Yojana (JRY) in 1989-90 with 6 per cent of the funds being set aside for the construction of houses for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and freed bounded laborer. From 1993-94, it was extended to other poor as well. About 3.8 million houses have been constructed for the scheduled castes and the

scheduled tribes by the end of 1994 under the programme.

Under the major rural wage employment programme of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), an overall preference was given to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and freed bonded labors. At the district level, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) Zilla Parishad was required to utilize 22.5 per cent of the funds for individual beneficiary schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The million wells scheme (MWS) was launched in 1988-89 with the objective of providing open irrigation wells well to poor small and marginal farmers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded laborers and thus improving the productivity of their lands. Initially 20 per cent of the funds under the JRY was allocated for this scheme and later from January, 1996, it was treated as an independent scheme.

The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana was recast from April, 1997 and converted into a new programme known as Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) dedicated to the development of rural infrastructure and implemented through Gram Panchayat. Twenty two and half per cent of SGSY Funds are earmarked for individual beneficiary schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Awarna Jayanti Gram Swarazgar Yojana (SJSY) replaced the IRDP, TRYSEM, DWACRA, Million Wells Scheme and Ganga Kalyan Yojana from April, 1999. It has stipulated that 50 per cent of swarozgar will be from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Preference is given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under Employment Assurance Scheme as well. By the end of 1999, more than one million wells were constructed for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, with an investment of about Rs.4000 crores.

PROMINENT SC/ST WELFARE PROGRAMMES

- ✦ Dr. Ambedkar Chikitsa Yojana
- ✦ Dr. Ambedkar Samajik Samata Kendra Yojana
- ✦ One time National Scholarship Scheme for SC/ST, Meritorious student of 26 education board of the country
- ✦ Financial Assistance to SC students for Admission in reputed public schools.
- ✦ Post-metric scholarship scheme
- ✦ Pre-metric scholarship scheme
- ✦ Celebration of birth anniversaries of Grant saints
- ✦ Publication of Samajik Nyaya Sandesh Magazines in Hindi
- ✦ Establishment of Ambedkar Pith
- ✦ Centrally sponsored scheme of hostels for SCs boys and girls,

- ✦ Scheme of up gradation of merit of SC students
- ✦ Residential Schools for SC students
- ✦ Provision of loans to SCs under micro finance scheme
- ✦ Provision of loans to family of Safai Karmachari on low interest rate
- ✦ National Scheme of liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their dependents.
- ✦ Pre-examination coaching scheme
- ✦ Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (prevention of Atrocities) Act. 1989.
- ✦ Protection of Civil Rights Acts, 1955.

These programmes are implemented in India since the inception of planning for national development. The policy of preference and exclusive allocation of funds under the various development and poverty alleviation programmes has been one of the significant features of the Central Government efforts for the welfare/development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Even at the beginning of the twenty first century, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who constitute a substantial section the Indian population suffer from varying degrees of unfreedom and denial of human dignity. The discriminating against the scheduled castes is not merely the kind of treatment suffered by the poor in general but the unique form of discrimination in the form of untouchability and this is the primary basis for regarding them as a distinct grouping even among poor within India. The low levels of illiteracy of the scheduled castes are a particularly potent indicator of the denial of access to education in the past, leaving its mark on the present and future social situation. The scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes all at the bottom of the society in wealth, social status, education, health or even in living conditions, observes Guru (2009:09).

Commencing with the Constitutional Commitments and the special legislations to secure equality and human dignity, a large variety of measures have been taken up both as policy measures and developmental programmes in all the fields of development and welfare. The development of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes requires that there is not only a positive change in their socio-economic situation but they the rate of change in fast enough to ensure that the disparity in relation to the rest of the society is progressively minimized and ultimately eliminated altogether to facilitate the emergence of a just human and equal society. The development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is thus a part of a continued

quest for equality and social justice, the objectives enshrined in the constitution and pursued since Independence in free India, states Sankaran (2000:14).

The welfare and development of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be viewed at not merely in terms of material needs but equally or more so in relation to non material needs such as the right to live with freedom, human dignity and self-respect. It is well known in any keen observer that throughout the whole of rural India, scheduled caste habitations are even today usually segregated, mostly on the outskirts of the village. The people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and indeed the laboring classes, on whose strength, sweat and toll the nation survives. But almost all of them suffered and continue to suffer from varying degrees of unfreedom and denial of human dignity. Untouchability is undoubtedly the worst form of inhuman indignity. The injustices suffered related to poverty, wages and other resources on the one hand and person on the other hand. They lose their hand and even when title over the land has be conferred, they have been prevented from occupying the land and cultivating it.

Kumar (2004:11) writes: "There are several problems in enjoying even the fruits of their own labour. The scheduled caste families in many villages have been in permissive possession of house sites or homesteads with constant threats of eviction by the landowners or even the state. In the urban areas, the problem is of living space itself, with just token space in unhygienic conditions and perpetual insecurity. The term slum clearance or encroachment removal is often and euphemism for uprooting the powerless migrants to low value sites, at the periphery leading to virtual economic extinction. The victims of custodial violence or illegal detention are mostly from the poor Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with little financial or political power to back them".

EVALUATION OF SC/ST WELFARE PROGRAMMES

Despite various measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes they remain vulnerable. They are denied a number of civil rights. They are subjected to various offences, indignities, humiliations and harassment. They have, in several brutal incidents, been deprived of their life and property. Serious crimes are committed against them for various historical, social and economic reasons. Because of the awareness created among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, through spread of education etc., they are trying to assert their rights and this is not being taken very kindly others.

Occupation and the cultivation of even the government allotted land by the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes are resented and more often these people become victims of attacks by the vested interests. Under the circumstances, the existing laws like the protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the normal provisions of Indian Penal Code have been found to be inadequate to check these crimes. A special legislation to check and deter crimes against them by non-scheduled castes and non-scheduled tribes has therefore become necessary, write Sankaran (2000:14).

12TH FIVE YEAR PLAN INITIATIVES

The 12th five year plan aims at achieving the overall improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. The principal goal for the 12th Plan (2012) towards empowerment of the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes lays emphasis on:

- To ensure the security and dignity of all persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, especially women and put a complete end to all forms of 'untouchability' and discrimination against them.
- To bring members of the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes both men and women at par, to the maximum possible extent, with their non SC/ST counterparts, in terms of all developmental indices viz. education, health, nutrition, housing, income generation and employability.
- To empower Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes to participate in society and in nation building, on an equal basis with others.
- To effectively implement SCSP as the essential instrument for accomplishing inclusive growth.

In the 12th plan, a tentative Gross Budgetary support of Rs.32.684 crore has been earmarked for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the welfare and development of SCs, OBCs, DNTs, PWDs and other vulnerable groups. In addition to this, social welfare programmes also receive plan financial support from the state sector as well.

EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

The Government of India has planned to enhance the access and participation of Scheduled Castes students. Special efforts are required to promote educational development through scholarships, hostel facilities, high quality education, trained manpower, residential schools and allied measures. The pre-metric scholarship, post-metric scholarship, Rajiv Gandhi National

Fellowship, National Overseas Scholarship and other provisions are created to empower the Scheduled Castes educationally. The state governments are also called upon to upgrade the schools, libraries, hostels and other infrastructural facilities. The percentage of SCs in various residential schools should be at least 50%. Thus, special provisions are made for the up gradation of the educational status of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in the 12th plan.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The 12th plan lays special emphasis on the employment and income generation programmes for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes across the country. Guru (2012:10) states: "The National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation, National Safai Karmacharis Finance and Development Corporation and other agencies are set up for promoting the economic development of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. Skill development programmes, entrepreneurship development programmes, leadership development programmes and other initiatives are needed to empower the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes economically. The plan document also highlights the need for distribution of surplus government land to landless Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes agricultural laborers in order to improve their economic status". The government also wants to showcase and market the products manufactured by Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes artisans and entrepreneurs through various fairs and exhibitions.

SCHEDULED CASTES/ SCHEDULED TRIBES SUB PLAN

The prevalence of poverty and backwardness among the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes has warranted certain legislative and executive measures since independence. The successive five year plans have not reduced the developmental gap between the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes and other sections of Indian society. The prime objective of Scheduled Caste Sub Plan is to channelize the funds and benefits through identified schemes for which the states and union territories have to earmark funds in proportion to the SC/ST population in the respective regions. The sub plan also contains details of financial and physical targets which are envisaged to help the downtrodden SC/ST families across the country.

Specific family oriented programmes are expected to cover all major occupational groups amongst Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes such as agricultural laborers, small and marginal farmers, artisans, share

croppers, fishermen, sweepers and scavengers and other unorganized vulnerable families. Besides this, the sub plan also seeks to improve the social and economic conditions of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes through provision of drinking water, link roads, house sites, schools, health centres, veterinary centres, panchayat ghars, community halls, nutrition centres, civic amenities and so on.

Chakraborty (2000:04) notes: "A large number of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes belong to below the poverty line even in the new millennium. A small proportion of them have secured employment in government sector and crossed the poverty line. There is no proper monitoring and evaluation of welfare programmes implemented by the government for the betterment of the status of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes". In spite of several constitutional safeguards, reservation benefits and welfare programmes during the last 68 years, a wide gap exists in the conditions of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in Indian society, observe Goswami (2003:07). There has been a disjunction between the constitutional safeguards and hierarchical values which continue to govern the Indian society.

Guru et.al. (2015:08) argue: "From the very dawn of the independence, the governments have been taking certain remedial steps for the upliftment of the socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in India. The state has put in place laws, policies and programmes without which even the modest progress in the overall situation would not have been possible. However, these welfare measures are quite inadequate and have to be more effectively implemented in order to enable the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes to overcome the continued subordination, exclusion and exploitation in India society".

Thorat (2000:15) suggests: "A very large section of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes are engaged in rural and urban informal or unorganized sector. High incidence of landless and near landless households among the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes has created an enormously high level of manual wage labor among them. With high incidence of wage labor associated with high unemployment, under-employment rates, the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes are suffering more from low income, low consumption and high incidence of poverty. This comparative account of the economic position of the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes and others does provide convincing evidence on the continuing economic inequalities associated with castes. It is thus beyond doubt that the historical impact of traditional caste based restrictions on the ownership of property, employment of

occupation are still visible to significant extent. The protection against economic discrimination that the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes received in government and public sector is nearly absent in private organized or unorganized sectors. Hence, the extension of protection in the form reservation in jobs or other forms in agriculture and urban industrial sector is necessary".

The outlay for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes is not in accordance with their population and magnitude of poverty and under-privileged status. Empirical studies have reported that delay in the implementation of welfare measures has adversely affected the developmental status of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in India. The elected representatives of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes have not lived up to the expectations of their people mainly due to their loyalty to political affinity and high command. The representatives of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes are not adequately found in the process of implementation of various developmental projects meant for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in the country. Strict punitive measures are not adopted to punish the erring officials who are responsible for non-implementation of welfare measures and developmental projects. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes is not equipped with necessary powers and privileges to ensure strict implementation of various developmental initiatives in the country.

Mariswamy et.al. (2013:12) amplify: "Social activists and intellectuals have strongly advocated a paradigm shift from post-facto to pro-active planning for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. The 12th plan proposes a set of key implementation measures to empower the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes such as ear marking of SCSP funds from the total plan outlays well in advance of the commencement of the financial year, preparation of pro-active planning documents as sub-plans, an appraisal and approval mechanism for the sub-plans so formulated and a robust mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. At the state level an apex body headed by the Chief Minister will appraise the sub plan for the development of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes in the states concern. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is required to monitor the progress and ensure strict implementation of various special provisions for Scheduled Castes".

Even in the new millennium, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who constitute approximately

25% of the total population of India suffer from varying degrees of slavery, indignity, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, ill-health, malnutrition, discrimination, exploitation and so on. The Dalits continue to remain at the bottom of the Indian society in wealth, social status, education, health and overall living conditions. In spite of various constitutional provisions, reservation benefits and welfare measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they remain excluded, marginalized and oppressed in Indian society. The development of Dalits is thus a part of a continued quest for educational progress, social justice, economic equity and political empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The builders of Indian Republic and founding fathers of our Constitutions had considered it necessary to provide specific safeguards in the constitution for the uplift of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities in India. The Constitution of India provides for a number of safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which are of its unique features. Reservation is indeed the process of setting aside a certain percentage of seats vacancies in educational institutions, government institutions and legislative institutions for the members of weaker sections in modern times. The scholars and advocates have strongly advocated the need for protective discrimination as well as affirmative action. The Central and State Governments have also launched several welfare and developmental programs to fulfill the constitutional obligations in free India in order to make SC/ST communities catch up other sections of Indian society in the race for social, economic, political and cultural progress. There are a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes which have been undertaken for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the post-independence era. Empirical studies have revealed that most of these programmes are not implemented properly in the country due to lack of participation of beneficiaries and absence of pro-active role of government in the empowerment of Dalits. The social activists and intellectuals have strongly advocated a paradigm shift from post-facto to pro-active planning for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes.

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