

AN OVERVIEW OF WELFARE AND PROGRESS OF DALITS IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Karnataka state has gained the model state status in terms of social transformation and economic progress of weaker sections of society on the basis of the monumental works of eminent saints and statesmen like Basava, Nalvadi Krishna Raja Vodeyar, Devaraj Urs, Basavalingappa, Ramakrishna Hegde, Abdul Nazeer Sab, Siddaramaiah and others. Karnataka has also witnessed several progressive movements including Dalit movement over a period of time. Dalits are the most marginalized sections of society in the state. The Government of Karnataka has implemented series of programmes for the development of weaker sections after independence. An overview of welfare and progress of Dalits in Karnataka is presented in this article which is based on conceptual research methodology.

KEYWORDS: *Social Transformation and Economic Progress, Welfare and Progress*

INTRODUCTION

Status of Dalits in Karnataka State

The Department of Social Welfare Department is primarily responsible for undertaking various development programmes for the uplift of Dalits in Karnataka state. The department was established in 1959 to implement various development programmes. It receives funds from central and state governments for providing multi-faceted benefits to the marginalized Dalits in the state. There are several incentives, educational facilities, civic amenities and infrastructure development programmes for the benefit of Dalits. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Development Corporation, Karnataka Thanda Development Corporation, Dr. Babu Jagajivan Ram Leather Industries Development Corporation and Karnataka Residential Education Institutional Society are the major developmental institutions established by the government of Karnataka.

Dalits constitute the single largest community in Karnataka state (SC-18 % and ST 7 %) in the present times. There are about 100 sub-castes who constitute the community of Dalits who are called in different names. They are the most marginalized single largest group in Karnataka in education, social, political and economic spheres of life. The ST population consists of about 7 % in the state. The SC households constitute a mere 10.9% while the ST households constituted a meager percent in the state. Dalits primarily live in the urban and rural areas. Urban Dalits work in unorganized sector and live in localities which have no basic civic amenities. Rural Dalits primarily depend on agriculture, cottage industry and agro based activities for their livelihood and development. The Government of Karnataka has not earmarked adequate funds for the development of SC / ST communities (Heggade, 1991:07). The SC / ST communities have suffered from series of developmental disadvantages (Arles, 2001:02).

The Government of India had introduced the concept of Special Component Plan during the VI Five Year Plan to ensure the economic development of SC / ST communities in India. The reservation benefits are grabbed by the forward Dalits who have access to political power. A great majority of Dalits are lacking land, capital, education, entrepreneurship and developmental opportunities (Bhatia, 2005:03). There is a wide gap in terms of income levels between Dalits and non-Dalits in Karnataka. They are not in a better position to improve their standard of living due to limited income generating opportunities.

The Scheduled Tribes are lacking educational and healthcare facilities in the tribal and rural areas. They have lowest per capita income, expenditure pattern and other developmental resources (Chandrashekar, 2004:05). The Scheduled Tribe community suffers from health and nutritional disadvantages. The women and children have not gained adequate access to forest resources due to in-built shortcomings (Kumar, 2005:08). The human development status of SC/ST communities is not satisfactory according to empirical evidence.

Special Component Plan

The Government of Karnataka has earmarked 15% of the total budget for the welfare and progress of SC/ST communities. Agriculture, soil conservation, horticulture, sericulture, forest, cooperation, fisheries, rural development and panchayat raj, industries and commerce, housing, employment and training, women and child welfare and other departments have also implemented the SCP in the state (Anand, 2012:01). In reality, the special area programmes and target group oriented programmes have not benefitted these communities due to inadequate funds and ineffective implementation.

Welfare Schemes for Dalits in Karnataka

The Government of Karnataka has implemented several educational, economic and social welfare schemes for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through Social Welfare Department.

Educational Programmes

The prominent educational development programmes for the development of SC / ST population include - pre-metric and post metric concessions to Scheduled Castes Students, reservation of seats in educational institutions, pre-metric hostels to accommodate students studying in standard 5 to 10, post metric hostels to accommodate students studying for post metric courses, special incentives to Scheduled Castes students who get 60 % or above marks in, SSLC and post metric courses Book Bank scheme for students studying in professional courses, tutorial system for students who failed in SSLC, Higher Secondary and degree, courses. Educational concessions to parallel college students, educational concession to Scheduled Caste students studying in self financing, colleges educational concessions to students of ITI and vocational institutions, education scheme with residential facilities, financial assistance to children of those who are engaged in unclean occupation, sports hostels to impart training in sports and games to talented SC / ST students, model residential schools to impart education to bright students, imparting coaching to appear for civil service through IAS coaching centers, assistance for centre of excellence for skill development, pre examination training centers and entrance coaching (medical / engineering).

The Social Welfare Department manages various educational development programmes to achieve the goal of academic and professional development of SC / ST students in the state. There are several training centers to improve the academic proficiency and job related skills of the youth.

Economic Development Activities

The Social Welfare Department implements series of development programmes to enhance the economic status of SC/ST communities in Karnataka state. Prominent among them include – self employment schemes for educated and unemployed SC youths, apprenticeship to certificate holders of ITI, Eng. degree and diploma, skill development programmes and entrepreneurship programmes. These programmes are implemented to improve the civic amenities, infrastructural facilities, employment generation opportunities and other developmental initiatives. Other major initiatives include - provisions of financial assistance for improving their own trade and business, provision of marketing facilities and technical guidance, and setting up training and production centers for giving training in trades like rope-making, basket making, weaving and tailoring. The department also organizes industry-centered development and agriculture – centered development in the state for the economic development of SC / ST communities.

Table 1 shows The Government of Karnataka has provided financial assistance for the development of SC / ST communities under Social Welfare Department, Special Component Plan, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Development Corporation, Banjara Development Corporation, Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat sectors and agencies. The distribution of financial assistance includes - Department of Social Welfare (Rs.8402.00 lakh), Special Component Plan (Rs.87500.00 lakh), Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Development Corporation (Rs.10539.00 lakh), Banjara Development Corporation (Rs.150.00lakh) and other agencies (Guru et. al. 2015:06).

The entitlement of Dalits to basic resources, land holding, loan and subsidy, skill development, entrepreneurship development and consumption of goods and services is not satisfactory. Most of the Dalits in Karnataka do not enjoy the benefit of land ownership due to improper implementation of land reforms act. Dalits primarily depend on agriculture, cottage industry and unorganized sector for their livelihood opportunities. The trend of occupational diversification also reveals a dismal picture since they are found in unorganized sector where they remain vulnerable to various forms of exploitation.

Table 1: Details of Economic Facilities for SC / ST People

Sl. No.	Programmes	Central Assistance	State Assistance	Total (In Lakhs)
1	Department of Social Welfare	1985.00	6417.00	8402.00
2	Special Component Plan	0.00	87500.00	87500.00
3	Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Development Corporation	539.00	10000.00	10539.00
4	Banjara Development Corporation	0.00	150.00	150.00
5	Zilla Panchayat	120.83	4219.89	4340.72
6	Taluk Panchayat	15787.17	6820.67	22607.84
Total		18432.00	115107.56	133539.56

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare, Bangalore, India (Annual Report, 2017).

Social Development Initiatives

The Social Welfare Department has implemented housing grant to houseless persons, interest free housing loan, financial assistance to inter caste married couples, commemoration of temple entry proclamation, payment of financial assistance from minister's distress relief fund to persons who are suffering from incurable diseases, financial assistance for the publication of books written by authors belonging to Scheduled Castes community, rehabilitation of victims of atrocities, purchase of agricultural land and advocates grant. These social developmental initiatives are meant for the prevention of human rights violations and rehabilitation of disadvantaged SC / ST population in Karnataka.

The Department of Social Welfare has implemented specific programmes for the benefit of widows, unmarried women, disabled women, unemployed youth and other beneficiaries representing SC / ST communities. The contributions of central and state governments are inadequate for the social empowerment of SC / ST communities (Chakaraborty, 2000:04).

Table 2 shows the Government of Karnataka has undertaken construction of houses (Rs.4932.00 lakh), relief and rehabilitation activities (Rs.400.00 lakh), eradication of untouchability related activities (Rs.300lakh), civil rights enforcement activities (Rs.300.00 lakh), SC / ST commission activities (Rs.100.00 lakh) and organization of seminars and conferences (Rs.100.00lakh). These activities have not benefitted SC / ST population comprehensively (Guru Et.al. 2015:06).

Table 2: Details of Social Facilities for SC / ST People

Sl. No.	Programmes	Central Assistance	State Assistance	Total (In Lakhs)
1	Construction of Houses	0.00	4932.00	4932.00
2	Relief Operations	200.00	200.00	400.00
3	Eradication of Untouchability	150.00	150.00	300.00
4	SC/ST Commission Activities	0.00	100.00	100.00
5	Civil Rights Enforcement Activities	150.00	150.00	300.00
6	Seminars and Conferences	50.00	50.00	100.00
7	Total	550.00	5582.00	6132.00

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare, Bangalore, India (Annual Report, 2017).

Other Developmental Initiatives

The Department of Social Welfare, Government of Karnataka has also created several provisions for adequate facilities, including legal aid, to the persons subjected to atrocities to enable them to avail themselves of justice, provisions for travelling and maintenance expenses to witnesses, including the victims of atrocities, during investigation and trial of offences under the Act, provision for the economic and social rehabilitation of the victims of the atrocities, appointment of officers for initiating or exercising supervision over prosecutions for the contravention of the provisions of the Act and capacity building for conflict resolution setting up of committees at appropriate levels.

Table 3 Shows the SC / ST communities are living in all the 30 districts of Karnataka state. There is visible imbalance in the development of SC / ST communities in various districts. The backward districts with more population of SC / ST communities have not received adequate funds for their inclusive development due to lack of political will. The forward districts which are close to state capital have received more funds due to certain political pressures and compulsions.

The previous government headed by Siddaramaiah (2013-18) had conducted the first-ever socio-economic survey of state population, including caste enumeration to assess their educational, social and economic status. The government passed a SC/ST and Tribal Sub-Plan Act to ensure plan allocations in accordance with their population. This has led to 24.1 % of the total plan budget to be allocated for the welfare of Dalits in Karnataka.

The present government headed by Yadiyurappa has provided financial assistance to implement various developmental programs for the benefit of SC / ST communities. The social commitment of the present central and state governments is questionable since funds are not earmarked in accordance with the population of SC / ST communities at national and regional levels. The road ahead comes with the promise of an efficient, transparent and sincere administration with clear priorities for development while also ensuring equity, access and social justice in Karnataka.

Table 3: Table Details of Distribution Funds Under Plan and Non-Plan SC / ST Welfare Programmes

Sl. No.	Districts	Plan Component	Non-Plan Component	Amount (In Lakhs)
1	Bangalore Urban	3341.50	1926.89	52.68.39
2	Bangalore Rural	403.40	583.57	986.97
3	Chitradurga	1407.50	1237.77	2645.27
4	Kolar	1096.94	1100.90	2197.84
5	Shivamoga	1129.05	1182.11	2311.16
6	Tumkur	1803.60	1600.63	3404.23
7	Davanagere	938.23	1017.21	1955.44
8	Ramnagara	511.20	597.61	1108.81
9	Chikkaballapura	941.13	734.18	1675.31
10	Mysuru	1861.80	1634.34	3496.14
11	Chikmagalur	571.00	867.53	1438.53
12	Dakshina Kannada	427.81	545.53	973.34
13	Hassan	1120.40	1249.68	2370.08
14	Kodagu	173.42	329.82	503.24
15	Mandya	1155.08	945.07	2100.15
16	Chamarajanagara	758.34	786.18	1544.52
17	Udupi	278.71	329.48	608.19
18	Belagavi	1696.44	1565.21	3261.65
19	Vijayapura	1292.23	1194.03	2486.26
20	Dharwad	874.46	796.56	1671.02
21	Uttara Kannada	396.65	649.83	1046.48
22	Bagalkot	783.81	759.95	1543.76
23	Gadag	441.06	653.13	1094.19
24	Haveri	433.92	867.48	1301.40
25	Gulbarga	1758.41	1854.27	3612.68
26	Bellary	1109.64	1077.28	2186.92
27	Bidar	940.93	1164.67	2105.60
28	Raichur	1205.67	1031.36	2237.03
29	Koppal	594.00	540.75	1134.75
30	Yadgir	581.23	590.03	1171.26
Total		30027.56	29413.05	59440.61

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare, Bangalore, India (Annual Report, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

The Government of Karnataka has not played a significant role in the empowerment of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. These communities continue to be the most marginalized sections of society. Intellectuals, activists and other stakeholders of social justice have strongly pleaded for achieving the all round progress of these communities by adopting pro-social policies and initiatives. The developmental measures of the central and state governments have not practically facilitated the integrated development of SC / ST communities who constitute the single largest community in the state. There is a great demand for bringing suitable amendments to the Karnataka Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan (Planning, Allocation and Utilization of Financial Resources), Act, 2013 in order to facilitate better allocation of funds and implementation of programmes for the inclusive development of SC / ST communities in the state (Guru et. al. 2015:06). The stakeholders of social justice and economic equity are required to play a vital role in preventing non-utilization of funds and non-performance which have hindered the welfare and progress of SC / ST communities in Karnataka state.

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