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POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES THROUGH DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

When the Indian history is analysed, the Hindu caste system has depressed and suppressed the scheduled castes and as such, they have become backward and poor. Realizing the same, the Government has implemented various poverty alleviation, empowerment and welfare schemes for the scheduled castes through Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Development Corporation in Karnataka. Broadly, these schemes include entrepreneurship, micro loans, small loans and seed capitals to self-help groups of SC women, irrigation schemes and so on. The paper has described the progress of various schemes of the Corporation since 2020.



KEYWORDS: *Indian history, scheduled castes, empowerment and welfare schemes.*

INTRODUCTION :

Indian society is a heterogeneous, wherein people belonging to various castes and communities reside. The people of Indian society is divided on the basis of castes. Caste system is based on Varna system where the Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy followed by, Vyshyas, Kshatriyas and Shudras. Those people who are outside the Varna System are known as Avarnas or Antyajas or Panchamas or Chandalas (Mumtaz Ali Khan, 1980). They are external in the sense that they were required to stay outside the village settlement. The concept of pollution attached to them was responsible for treating or categorizing them as Scheduled Castes (SCs).

There are more than 3743 Castes and Sub-castes in Indian Society (Sindhe, 2005). The caste system is characterized by a status hierarchy, the scheduled castes or the so-called untouchables are at the base, in fact, at the lowest of the social and ritual status. These sections had, on account of their low social and ritual status, been subjected to a variety of disabilities under the traditional caste system. All through the ages, the Scheduled Castes had suffered from social injustice and exploitation. They were denied all privileges and benefits as had been enjoyed by the higher castes. their entries into temples of upper castes, public places, educational institutions, etc. were restricted. On account of their being on the lowest rung of the social ladder, they were forced to take up unclean and menial occupations and jobs, which yielded lower incomes. They were associated with a variety of specialized traditional occupations such as scavenging, cobbling, disposal of carcass, basketry, etc. As a consequence, these

castes have remained socially, economically, educationally, politically and culturally backward for several centuries.

During British period, many of the socio-political reform movements were organized to empower the weaker sections especially, scheduled castes and after independence, the Constitution emphasized social equality that is, equality irrespective of race, caste, religion or gender. Consequently, to achieve equality and social justice, reservation in education and employment has been provided to the scheduled castes. Based on the Constitutional provisions, the Government has passed many of the legislations and implemented many of the welfare schemes for the overall development of scheduled castes. In this regard, the State Government by studying the socio-economic and educational conditions of the scheduled castes in the respective states implemented different welfare schemes. The Central Government is providing financial assistance to States so as to execute policy decisions and schemes to promote welfare of scheduled castes.

The scheme for assistance to the state-level Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (SCDCs) was introduced in 1978-79 to uplift the SC/ST population living below the poverty line. At present SCDCs are functioning in 25 States/ Union Territories. The Centre contributes 49 percent to the authorized share capital of the SCDC against the 51 percent contributed by the State Government. In 1998-99 (Up to November 1998), an amount of Rs. 35.85 Crore was released as Government of India's contribution.

In Karnataka state, the Department of Social Welfare has implemented many of the welfare schemes for the poverty alleviation, self-employment and empowerment of scheduled castes. The Karnataka Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation was established by the Government of Karnataka in 1975 with a vowed objective of bringing the SCs and STs population above the poverty-line. The Corporation was incorporated under the Companies Act of 1956 and it was renamed as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Development Corporation Limited on 13th October 2005.

To empower scheduled castes in Karnataka state, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Development Corporation Limited has implemented the following welfare schemes.

(i) Self-employment:

Under Self-employment Scheme, unemployed Scheduled Caste prospective beneficiaries are being assisted with Subsidy and loan to start self-employment activities. The unit cost up to Rs. 1.00 lakh, the Corporation sanctions maximum subsidy of Rs. 35000/- and the remaining amount through banks. The project cost above Rs. 2.00 lakhs, the Corporation provides subsidy to the tune of 33% of the unit cost or maximum Rs. 1.00 lakh. Under Dairy Scheme unit cost is Rs. 58,500/-, of which Rs. 25,000/- subsidy.

(ii) Land Purchase Scheme:

Under the Land Purchase Scheme, one acre of wet land or two acres of dry land will be purchased from non-SC/ST land owners. The land will be registered in the name of wife of Head of Family. The unit cost is Rs. 10.00 lakhs, in which 50% subsidy and 50% term loan.

(iii) Ganga Kalyan Scheme:

It is irrigation scheme under which financial assistance will be provided to get source of water to agricultural lands.

(a) Community Irrigation Borewell Scheme: The lands belongs to small and marginal SC farmers which are adjacent to perennial sources of water like river, lake and canals, etc., will be identified and will be irrigated.

(b) Individual Irrigation Scheme: Under this scheme, irrigation borewells will be drilled in the land belonging to SC farmers whose land holdings are in between 1.5 acres to 5 acres. The successful well so drilled will be provided with pumpset and other accessories and later it will be energized. The unit cost is Rs. 2 lakhs, of which Rs. 1.50 lakh is subsidy and Rs. 0.50 lakh is term loan from NSCFDC.

(iv) Micro-Credit Scheme (Kirusaala):

Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to members of the Self-Help Groups to take up small businesses like vegetables, flowers, fruit vending, etc. Unit cost is Rs. 15,000/- of which Rs. 10,000/- is subsidy and Rs. 5,000/- is margin money loan.

(v) Micro-Credit Scheme:

Under this scheme, financial assistance will be sanctioned to take up small business activities. The Unit Cost is Rs. 25,000/- of which Rs. 10,000/- is subsidy from the corporation and Rs. 15,000/- is term loan from NSFDC.

(vi) SafaiKarmachari Rehabilitation Programme:

Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to take up various self-employment activities to SafaiKarmacharies and their dependents who are identified in the survey conducted by Urban Development Department, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department. Financial assistance in the form of term loan is being extended to these beneficiaries from NSKFDC and subsidy from State Government funds. The unit cost up to Rs. 1.00 lakh, 50% is the subsidy subject to a maximum of Rs. 10,000/- will be extended. The unit cost above Rs. 1.00 lakh, 5% margin money, 5% Promoter Contribution and 90% term loan.

Progress of Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment Schemes:

Dr. Ambedkar Development Corporation is making best of its efforts to empower scheduled castes through its poverty alleviation and empowerment schemes. The progress of these programmes and schemes in the year 2021-22 (till October 2021) is shown as under.

Table No. 1. Economic and Physical Progress of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in 2021-22 (Till October 2021)

(Rupees in Lakhs)

Sl. No.	Scheme	Opening Stock	Budget & Distribution of Grants	Release of Funds	Released from Treasury	Total Available Grants	Real Expenditure	Target 2021-22	Physical Progress
1	Self-employment/ Entrepreneurship	1400.00	2500.00	1000.00	1000.00	2400.00	2295.17	5864	4449
	a) Land Purchase Assistance	1984.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	2484.00	352.57	331	57
	b) Land Ownership	1984.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1984.00	0.00		
2	Ganga Kalyan Individual Borewell	23547.00	3000.00	1500.00	1500.00	25047.00	3752.95	3177	1352
	Electrification						0.00	4563	1604
	Irrigation						40.56	0	32
	Total	23547.00	3000.00	1500.00	1500.00	25047.00	3793.52	3177	1384
3	Micro Credit (Prerana) Financial Assistance	135.00	300.00	150.00	150.00	285.00	236.10	2100	1574
	Micro Credit (Prerana) (Seed Capital)	90.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.00	157.40		
4	Capital Head - State and Central Region	0.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	352.57	0	0
	Total	29140.00	7300.00	4150.00	4150.00	33290.00	7197.33	11472	7464

The above-mentioned schemes are highly progressive as Rs. 7464 lakhs has been spent as against target of Rs. 11472 lakhs. Still, it is observed that, there is more grants (Rs. 33290 lakhs) which has to be utilized on various empowerment and poverty alleviation schemes.

Even though, there was economic crisis due to Covid19, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Development Corporation has achieved considerable progress and the physical and financial progress of various schemes under the corporation are shown in the following table.

Table No. 2. State of Economic and Physical Progress in the Financial Years 2020-21

Sl. No.	Scheme	Opening Stock	Budget & Distribution of Grants	Revised Grants	Release of Grants	Released from Treasury	Total Available Grants	Real Expenditure	% Achieved	Physical Target	Physical Progress
1	Self-employment/ Entrepreneurship	4920.00	7500.00	2500.00	4592.00	4592.00	9512.00	12432.74	130.71	21606	4879
	a) Land Ownership (Financial Assistance)	12801.63	0.00	2000.00	2000.00	2000.00	14801.63	12729.08	86.00	1701	2166
	b) Land Ownership (Term Loan) (From Share Capital Amount)	6184.96	2624.00	2624.00	2624.00	2624.00	8808.96	12729.08	144.50		
2.	Ganga Kalyan Scheme										
	a) Irrigation 250 Unit Beneficiaries	0.00	500.00	2500.00	2500.00	2500.00	2500.00	158.54		350	140
	b) Individual Irrigation Borewell	29700.42	4500.00			0.00	29700.42	8818.40		1422	5790
	c) Electrification	5807.50	0.00			0.00	5807.50	941.60		0	4475
	Total	35507.92	5000.00	2500.00	2500.00	2500.00	38007.92	9918.54		1772	5930
3	Micro Credit Scheme (Prerana) (Financial Assistance)	1500.00	1000.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	2000.00	2276.25	13.81	16666	15175
	Micro Credit (Prerana) (Seed Capital)	1000.00	550.00	300.00	300.00	300.00	1300.00	1517.50	116.73		
4	Share Capital State Region Central Region	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	0
5	Samruddhi Scheme	5147.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5147.24	1990.00	38.66	0	199
6	Airavat Scheme	3295.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3295.00	1280.00	38.85	0	256
7	Unnathi	2590.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	2590.00	204.00	0.00		17
	Total	72945.75	16674.00	10424.00	12516.00	12516	85462.75	55077.19	64.45	41745	28622

- ❖ Target achieved is backlog progress.
- ❖ Of Rs. 12516.00 Lakhs grants released, Rs. 2092.00 Lakhs is received under Special Grants from Centre.

It is highlighted that, the corporation has emphasized schemes on self-employment and entrepreneurship to poor scheduled castes, individual irrigation through borewellsto scheduled caste agricultural lands and micro credit to scheduled castes women’s self-help groups.

Even though, the Corporation has emphasized the self-employment, entrepreneurship and empowerment of scheduled castes as priority, still there are lacunas to achieve progress. Even though, the corporation has initiated self-employment and entrepreneurial activities of scheduled castes by financial assistance, after setting up of such self-employment, the Corporation doesn’t look into the progress of such self-employment. Hence, it is suggested to the Corporation to visit and analyse the functioning of entrepreneurship activities and self-employment, which it has been funded so that, they are working efficiently and effectively. In this respect, it is suggested to Dr. Ambedkar Development Corporation to get feedback on the progress and profitability of such entrepreneurship and self-employment for at least five from the date of financial assistance.

CONCLUSION:

There is need for empowerment of weaker sections like scheduled castes. No doubt, Dr. Ambedkar Development Corporation is making its best efforts for the welfare of scheduled castes. Still, there are problems and lacunas in such welfare schemes. There is lack of adequate finance to meet the requirements of all the applicants, who have applied for financial assistance. Further, even though the Corporation provides financial assistance, it don’t evaluate such self-employment schemes or entrepreneurship. Simply, providing financial assistance to scheduled castes for self-employment and

entrepreneurial activities is not sufficient, but there is need to provide skill development training. In this respect, it is suggested to Dr. Ambedkar Development Corporation to provide self-employment and entrepreneurship training to scheduled castes, then provide financial assistance and constantly inspect and analyse the progress of such entrepreneurial activities of scheduled castes at least for five years so that, such scheduled caste entrepreneurs should not face any problems in their self-employment. Then, there is also needed to provide technical assistance from the Corporation to the scheduled caste entrepreneurs.

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