



The Socioeconomic Status Of SC, ST, And OBC Communities In India: Challenges And A Way Forward

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Abstract

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) Scheduled Tribes (STs) Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Minorities are among the Socially Disadvantaged Groups (SDGs) that the government is particularly Committed to ensuring the welfare of because they continue to lag behind the rest of society due to their social and economic disadvantage. These Groups who underwent welfare and development process throughout the course of the previous 45 years of development will now have the authority to act. As catalysts for socioeconomic progress. An overview of India's socially and economically under privileged groups empowerment is envisioned in this study.

Key Notes: Socioeconomic status of SCs, STs and OBCs, Mid-day meals, Poverty, Empowerment, Education.

1.1 Introduction

The impact of various development plans, policies, and programmes has resulted in a noticeable improvement in the socioeconomic status of SCs and STs. The current status of SCs and STs is projected based on a review of significant achievements quantified through various developmental indicators and the significant gaps that exist today in the three core sectors of education employment and economic development. Although there has been a visible increase in the literacy rates of SCs and STs Over the last three developmental decades the literacy gap between SCs/ STs and the general population remains. Furthermore, when compared to the gap between SCs and other general categories the gap between the general population and STs was found to be widening decade after decade. To this they are intra – state as well as inter – state variations in literacy rates among SCs and STs. The major strategy of creating employment income generating activities to alleviate poverty among the SCs and STs has proven to be effective in lifting a large number of SC and ST families out of poverty.

1.2 Objectives

1. Since education is the most effective tool for socioeconomic empowerment, enhancing the educational standing of SC and STs, girl students, OBCs and Minorities would be given top attention.
2. To reduce poverty among SCs and STs, employment and income generating activities must be developed.
3. To lessen the high dropout rates and low enrolment / retention rates among these populations

1.3 Social empowerment of underrepresented groups

The government's commitment to appropriately protecting the interests of SCs, STs, and OBCs Through appropriate legal executive and societal initiatives as well as through widespread Education and empowerment is spelled out in the National Agenda of Governance. Since education is the most effective tool for socioeconomic empowerment strengthening the educational status of SCs and STs especially that of women and girl children, would be given top attention. In reality the widespread educational backwardness among these groups calls for an increased focus on their education Training and skill upgrading as it will result in both social and economic empowerment. Consequently, the Ninth Plan's goal will be to give an appropriate education that takes into account their cultural context, genius, and specific requirements.

1.3.1 The Function of Indian Programs in the Ninth Year

One of the urgent objectives to be completed during the Ninth Plan as part of the overall goal to have the entire nation fully literate by the year 2005 A.D. has been recognised as the necessity for a time bound programme to improve the educational level of the Socially Disadvantaged Groups. Thus, efforts will be made to uphold this commitment through the universalization of basic education with a special emphasis on low literacy areas and the SCs, STs OBCs and Minorities whose literacy rates are extremely low in comparison to the rest of the population. Due to the high dropout rates and low enrolment / retention rates among these groups extra measures will be implemented to not only strengthen the launching fresh measures as well as continuing existing ones to ensure simple access via residential schools. Minimum requirements should include qualified instructors preferable from the area appropriate and sufficient support

services such as hostels and crèches, other infrastructural facilities and special incentives for underprivileged students and their families such as scholarship/ financial aid, free textbooks, free uniforms etc. To ensure that the girl children are not denied an education due to their necessarily to fill many of the responsibilities of a mother when the mothers go out to work to supplement the family income the earlier government initiative to establish crèche facilities on the school campus or close to the school will be revived / intensified. Additionally, the national feeding programme provides the desperately required nutritional support. To reach the remotest and most inaccessible rural and mountainous areas Mid – Day Meals (MDM) will be expanded / universalized

1.3.2 Indian National Literacy Mission programmes

The National Literacy Mission would make sure that literacy is disseminated to the underdeveloped Rural tribal and urban slums where the rate of illiteracy is particularly high among women and Female children who belong to these disadvantaged sectors. The Ninth Plan would promote residential schools and schools with dormitory facilities attached attached up to the block level to address the current issue of the inaccessibility of education for girls in underdeveloped rural and tribal areas. One of these programmes specifically intended for the educational betterment of girl children belongs to SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities was the 1997 introduction of Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Vidyalayas. Educating for employment and providing a variety of vocational training which has will receive high consideration after being identified as the current necessity. Depending on the need and demand, particular efforts will be made to vocationalism education at both the middle and high school levels. Additionally, the Ninth Plan will prioritise job-oriented condensed courses in order to provide these groups with functionally viable and productive education particularly in tribal areas. PRIs will be used to monitor these institutions operations to ensure UN education is being given to the target population both erratically and smoothly especially to those who are poor.

1.3.3 The growth of higher education among SCs and STs.

The crucial on – going programme of Post – Matric Scholarships which was altered in 1995 – 1996 by removing all the restrictive clauses during the Eighth Plan will be implemented with increased trust and wider coverage to encourage these groups to enrol in higher / technical streams of education. In order to ensure educational development among the SCs and the STs. The recently amended pre-Matric Scholarships Scheme will be expanded to provide these amenities to all those who are in need in order to promote school education among children whose parents work in dirty occupations and to steer future generations away from the practise of scavenging. The re-examination Coaching Centres programme will be expanded in order to assist rural candidates as well. Through the efficient expansion of education complexes increased efforts will be made for the advancement of SC and ST women and girls who trail far behind their peers in poor literacy areas. Additionally, in order to fully meet demand and address the issue of accessibility SC and ST girls' and boys' hostels will be upgraded and enlarged. Additionally, various initiatives like Book Banks Merits Scholarships and Fellowships for international study will be successfully implemented to serve as extra incentives.

The most inhumane practise of moving night soil manually still has to be abolished. By enabling occupational mobility and severing the link between conventional jobs and social and economic limitations during the Ninth Plan complete eradication of this practise of manual scavenging will be accomplished as a time bound commitment. After completing the complete identification of the scavengers, the Ninth Plan will focus heavily on the absolute release and full rehabilitation of the scavengers especially focusing on the women and girl children. Rehabilitation programmes that include vocational training for occupations with alternate sources of suitable income will be implemented. Scavengers will be given loans and other forms of financial and technical support so they can start their own businesses and engage in income Producing activities to keep themselves gainfully employed. To entirely eradicate this inhumane practise from the current list of occupations, coordinated measures will be made in close cooperation with the agencies of Local Self Governments to guarantee that all dry latrines are converted to wet latrines. All encouragement for the promotion for education, including hostel, facilities, scholarships, mid - dal meals, free textbooks and uniforms, etc., would be offered on priority basis, to younger generations in order to liberate them from the customary vocation of scavenging. Youngsters from these neighbour hoods. The National Safai Karamchari Commission's tenure has also been extended to the conclusion of the Ninth Plan period in order to maintain a careful eye on the development of this programme with national commitment. The National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation will be strengthened / activated to operate as a catalytic agent in the time bound rehabilitation of the scavengers by providing alternative employment / jobs for individuals who desire to launch self – employment – cum – entrepreneurial projects.

Many families who are members of socially disadvantaged groups fall below the poverty line and live in remote, inhospitable neighbourhoods without access to even the most basic amenities. As a result, people have always been vulnerable to a variety of deficiencies, diseases, and impairments caused by malnutrition or under nutrition, which is exacerbated by the lack of access to basic healthcare services, clean water, and etc. While tribal areas access to food will be made to raise the purchasing power of the tribal people through job and income production activities especially under the poverty alleviation programmes, at the same time as the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) is expanded. To ensure that there is enough food available in the isolate tribal villages that are shut off from the mainland for the most of the year; efforts will be made to extend the "Village Garmin Banks" programme. The Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) who are leading extremely precarious lives and some of whom are on the verge of extinction due to hunger, starvation, and diseases, will be attended to on a priority basis in the Ninth Plan. While the overall development of STs

in general will be addressed through the continuing programmes but with added thrust and support. Direct programmes for the welfare and development of PTGs will be introduced in the Ninth Plan through an integrated action plan that includes the provision of safe drinking water, food and nutrition security, health coverage, educational facilities, etc. As the ongoing programmes have not been able to improve the conditions of the PTGs. The proposed Action Plan for PTGs will be flexible enough to accommodate.

1.4 Tribal groups' health issues in various Indian states;

Efforts will be made to develop appropriate health infrastructure with critically needed inputs in order to enable these Groups to have simple access and availability of services within their reach in order to address the diverse and unique health problems of the tribal communities in different States / UTs. Additionally, unique health programmes will be created to fight endemic illnesses that are harming. The tribal population's quality of life. Priority will be given to the primitive tribal groups in these endeavours because some of them are vanishing due to endemic diseases. The promotion of indigenous medical systems will also give that the components of this system of medicine are easily accessible and considerably less expensive in tribal communities support is required to meet the demands of the tribal community. Due to their deprivation and severity indigenous women and female children will receive special consideration when it comes to satisfying their nutritional and health demands. The primary strategy to guarantee that the children under the age of six and the expectant and nursing mothers who belong to these communities will receive additional nutrition immunisation health checksetc., it the concept of "Mini anganwadis," with relaxed norms to bring all the remote and neglected pockets of the country under the Universalization of ICDS. In the Ninth Plan the provision of clean drinking water will take precedence inside of BMS.

1.4.1 OBCs (Other Backward Classes)

The Ninth Plan's empowerment of OBCs has been envisioned as an effective tool to guarantee social fairness in the nation. To make this more plausible, an attempt will be made to have the Registrar General and Census Commissioner count the OBC population during the next Population Census of 2001. In the meanwhile, efforts will also be made to ensure that the National and State Commissions release their final Lists of OBCs in accordance with the Supreme Court's instructions. With several new initiatives in the Fields of Education and economic development the development of the OBCs, which Began in the Eighth Plan will continue to receive more emphasis throughout the Ninth Plan development because OBCs demands and difficulties are somewhat similar to SCs, the success stories relating to the development of SCs have led the government to adopt a similar strategy for the development of OBCs thus programmes offering scholarships for pursuing pre-matriculated post matriculated and other higher education backed by dormitory facilities would be developed to ensure educational progress among OBCs. As an alternative Kinds from OBCs will also be able to use the current hostel amenities designed for SC and ST boys and girls. Pre-Examination Coaching centres will also be established in the Ninth Plan to help OBC students effectively compete in the competitive exams. To house people and provide them with other settlement amenities. The Ninth Plan will introduce the asset less migrant designed for SC and ST boys and girls. Pre Examination Coaching centres will also be established in the Ninth Plan to help OBC students effectively compete in the competitive exams. To house people and provide them with other settlement amenities. The Ninth Plan will introduce the asset less migrant groups within the OBCs and a new programme called shelter for Nomadic groups among the backward classes.

1.4.2 Minorities

The overall socioeconomic development of Minorities, with a particular focus on their education will be the goal of the Ninth Plan. By adding new facilities for schools' colleges and hostels providing remedial coaching modernising the current institutions and connecting with vocational and technical Education the Maulana Azad Education Foundation New Delhi will be able to expand its initiatives and promote education among women. Support will be given to offer fellowships and scholarships in order to encourage minority students to pursue higher education and technical training.

The Ninth Plan would prioritise addressing educational backwardness particularly among Muslim women and female children. In order to facilitate easy access to educational institutions / facilities for Muslim women and Muslim girl children efforts would be made to offer educational facilities with adequate infrastructural support in those areas / habitations where their population is concentrated. Additionally, steps will be done to inspire and enlist parent's community leaders and religious figures to play a catalyst role in advancing education among Muslim women and young girls. The Ninth plan will place a significant premium on modernising the existing traditional institutions such as madras's because they have been crucial in stopping dropout rates and instilling discipline in their students. Modernization of Madras which will be accomplished by changing their existing curricula and adding mainstreaming classes in topics like Math, Science, General studies, and English. The expansion of Multi Sectorial Developmental Plants and Re-examination coaching centres in Minority Concentrated Districts to extend the much needed support to the students studying in the secondary and post metric class conservation and promotion of the language are other crucial areas that will receive special attention for the empowerment of the Minorities in the Ninth Plan.

1.5 Disadvantaged groups economic empowerment

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes given the considerable population of SCs, STs, OBCs, and Minorities who are members of Socially Disadvantaged Groups and who live in extreme poverty mobilising sufficient financial and social

support to help them escape poverty would be prioritised. In order to ensure that at least their fundamental needs are addressed the Ninth Plan will place special focus on economic empowerment through job and income creation programmes.

The National SC and ST Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation (NMFDC) National Backward Classes Finance development. The National SC and ST Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation (NMFDC) National Backward Classes Finance and Development corporation (NBCDC) and state Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (SCDCs) will all be strengthened in this direction to play a leading and catalytic role in promoting employment – cum income generation opportunities.

A special effort will be made through various training programmes to upgrade their traditional skills equip them with modern technology and extend both backward and forward linkages of credit because the majority of SCs, STs, OBCs, and Minorities living in Rural areas continue to depend on the low – Income and less / productive informal unorganized sectors of agriculture dairying animal husbandry fisheries handlooms and other crafts Man ship / artisanship and Facilities are marketed with the ultimate goal of achieving their financial independence and self – sufficiency in the informal / Unorganized sector special legal steps will also be adopted to guarantee the payment of minimum wages equal pay and the absence of gender discrimination.

In order to prevent a weakening of the commitment to bring about a comprehensive improvement in their living conditions and more importantly to ensure that they are not marginalised or displaced the adoption and implementation of the New economic policies call for vigilant and protective attention towards the weaker sections. Therefore, the focus of the Ninth Plan will be on coordinating the Empowerment of these marginalised groups with the policies and programmes for national development. The weaker groups are a potential force in the nation's human resources. Thus the private and business sectors will be encouraged to invest in their welfare and development. Giving every landless SC and ST family a minimum of one acre of land restoring and preserving land ownership and effectively implementing protective legislation stand out among the many action points to be taken up in the Ninth plan. Steps will be done to ensure that irrigation facilities are revised because the majority of SC and ST families rely on the cultivation of tiny land holdings. Food security at the village level will be greatly improved by the involvement of NGOs in the development of small and lift irrigation projects particularly in the drought – prone dry and hilly areas. Additionally, specific initiatives will be implemented to educate and inspire financial institutions to provide these priority groups extra attention and extend loans to them at lower interest rates. The economic development package will also include sensitization programmes to foster a favourable attitude towards these marginalised and neglected groups. By establishing small scale and cottage industries. Village crafts weaving and other occupations / enterprises with strong market connections the youth and women in these groups will receive special attention because they are the most significant potential and productive human resource strict efforts will be taken to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable groups especially the tribal population. Additionally, efforts will be made to make bank and other financial institution lending and other procedures simpler as these procedures appear to be too hard for the underprivileged illiterate and desperate weaker parts to complete in order to obtain a loan. Since the majority of the populations in these groups depend on agriculture and related industries for their livelihood steps will be taken to ensure that loans are given to these groups in a priority order for agricultural purposes such as the purchase that loans are given to these groups in a priority order for agricultural purposes such as the purchase of seeds fertiliser and pesticides as well as training in farming and the use of advanced technology.

Tribal people are experiencing hardships that can result in displacement and make them vulnerable to being exploited by outside forces or agencies. This is due to the shrinking forest land the privatisation of common property resources, and the downward trend in the forest – based subsistence economy. The tribal people's issues are made worse by tribal unrest a result of a sense of insecurity is brought on by land alienation and the denial of rights to minor forest products. In order to stop him recently developing phase of industrialization and commercialization of the tribal economy significant measures will be taken. The Ninth plan will implement the standard method for granting minor forest produce (MFP) owners Hing rights to people who labour in the forests.

The current supporting mechanisms of TRIFED and its associated agencies will be combined and enhanced at the national level during the Ninth Plan into an Apex Body in order to provide the tribal economy the much-needed boost. The current Tribal Development Corporation (TDCs) at the state level will serve as support systems for the apex body there are expected to actively engage in the Marketing of MFP and excess agricultural production both domestically and internationally states without TDCs but with indigenous populations will be encouraged to establish such exclusive corporations. The earmarking and utilisation of funds under the special strategies of the Special Component Plan (SCP) the Tribal sub plan (TSP) at the central and state level and the special central Assistance (SCA) To SCP and TSP to States / UTs are just a few of the steps that will be taken to ensure effective implementation. Special efforts will be made to persuade those Ministries / Departments that neither are nor currently allocating monies under the SCP and TSP due to the non – divisibility of their Ministries / Department programmes. Additionally the centre will work with the State Governments to create efficient procedures along the lines of the Maharashtra Model to pool the SCOP / TSP money from all relevant Ministries and departments and to provide the State model Departments responsible for SC welfare the authority to assume responsibility for distributing monies in accordance with the regional requirements of both the target locations and the target population. This system is expected to stop or limit the division of SCP TSP and

SCA money and guarantee that they are used effectively for their intended purposes. While close attention will be paid to the use of these funds at different levels, working closely with everyone involved on going regular reviews at the central level will continue to evaluate how we evaluate how well these instruments support the initiatives of the model ministry of social justice and empowerment in empowering these socially disadvantaged groups. In order to achieve these efforts will be made to set up an efficient monitoring system with enough Staff at various levels starting at the Centre level and moving down to the Block level.

1.5.1 Additional Regressive Classes

Steps will be taken to support self – employment and income generating ventures especially for nomadic and semi nomadic communities with a view to sterling them permanently at one place in order to ensure that the OBCs are able to achieve economic development and self-reliance through encouraging entrepreneurship amongst themselves in a variety of fields. In order to handle this unique task the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) which axes will be strengthened. A new Grant – in Aid to Voluntary Organisations scheme will also be introduced in order to promote volunteer work in the social and economic upliftment of OBCs. The current NBCFDC will continue to operate in order to provide the required support for financially feasible schemes and projects and to update the technical and OBC volunteer work in the social and economic upliftment of OBCs. The current NBCFDC will continue to operate in order to provide the required support for financially feasible schemes and projects and to update the technical and OBC member's entrepreneurial talents which enable them to start their own business or engaged in self-employment.

A special focus will be placed on improving their traditional skills especially those of women and to provide financial support and marketing facilities in developing countries as the majority of OBCs have traditionally been involved in occupations like handloom weaving pottery metal work and artisanship fishing stone – cutting etc. Entrepreneurship is practised by both individuals and groups. Additionally, efforts will be made to promote occupation all mobility for OBCs particular young people who plan to leave their traditional industries by offering facilities for appropriate educational and vocational training in cutting – edge technology complemented by financial and other support to help them succeed in new endeavours.

1.5.2 Minorities

Priority will be given to the economic development of minorities by enhancing institutional frame works at all levels to encourage self – employment and income generating activities particularly among women and occupational groups through fostering micro and small-scale businesses. The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation will be urged to support minority self-employment initiatives and to upgrade their technical and entrepreneurial skill with a particular emphasis on the development of the underprivileged groups, such as women traditional artisans and occupational groups.

The Ninth Plan gives special emphasis to the traditional craftsmen and artisans abilities that have been passed down to them over centuries while planning for the economic improvement of the minorities. Numerous families from minority groups particularly women still rely on his household's traditional industry of handicrafts including lacemaking and tailoring dyeing and needlework like Chikankaari. Efforts will be made to offer apprenticeship training revive the vanishing arts and craft extend modern technological support and upgrade the skills to meet the changing fashions and the marketing demands both within and outside the country in order to promote the handicraft sector as a viable and sustainable self-employment and income generation source for these families. In fact, extra care will be taken to encourage handicrafts that are intended for export in light of the rising demand abroad.

It's a Minority Finance Development Corporations will be urged to provide financial and other technical support such as the provision of equipment knowledge training and market connections at both the Central and State levels another industry that has been a significant traditional occupation for a sizable portion of the Minorities is handloom. Traditional weavers who are currently struggling will receive the material and financial help required to bring the ailing sector back to life as a viable business. In light of this the Ninth plan will address the urgent need to modernise handloom operations through suitable apprenticeship and training. Additionally, the flow of credit and raw materials to this industry will be guaranteed. They will be urged to maintain their uncommon traditional talents so that form into self – help groups or cooperatives for which financial aid as well as management and marketing services would be provided.

1.6 Conclusion

In accordance with the tenet of Cooperative Federalism the State and local governments have been giving their fair share of financial and human resources to help the Centre fulfil its responsibilities for empowering the Socially Deprived groups. The State Governments have been implementing programmes to offer aid stipends supply uniforms and provide hostels residential schools teaching approach mid-day meals etc. in the area of educational development. Special interventions such as the institution of cooperatives cottage and small-scale industries land distribution minor irrigation wage/ self-employment etc., have been implemented in the state sector to aid in their economic development ensuring that no member of these groups is denied the economic benefits. Similar to centre the State Governments have been putting the Special Component plan (SCP) and Tribal sub plan (TSP) special plans into action through the

earmarking of monies by various Line Ministries / Departments dealing with the welfare and development of SCs plus STs. The State Government are using the Special Central Assistance (SCA) which is given to States / UTs as an addition to assist the family based income generating programmes to achieve the economic upliftment of SCs and STs, particularly those who are living in poverty. Additionally in order to safeguard these Vulnerable groups from exploitation and atrocities committed against them the State Governments Have been charged with the primary duty of enforcing two pieces of law the PCR Act of 1955 and The POA Act of 1989 to ensure social justice by protecting these vulnerable groups from being exploited and having atrocities committed against them.

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