

Programmes for Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra: Facts and Perspective

Sanjay Chahande*

Considering the poor condition of the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the successive five-year plans have regarded their progress as a major objective of national social policy. The Government of Maharashtra has been taking lot of initiatives for the development of these deprived classes by introducing various developmental programmes. While presenting the various developmental programmes that are available for the Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra and their coverage, this paper highlights the achievements of certain developmental programmes in the state.

I Introduction

The Social Welfare activities in post-independent India find their inspiration in the Constitution of India, which postulates the goal of a Welfare State. Article 38 of the Constitution directs that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

The Social Welfare Programmes were originally oriented mostly towards providing promotive, protective and curative services. Of late, the emphasis of these programmes is on preventive, developmental and rehabilitative services developed with regard to physically handicapped persons as also backward class people including Scheduled Castes, Vimukta Jatis and Nomadic Tribes and Special Backward Classes.

The Scheduled Castes have been specified by 15 Presidential Orders issued under the provisions of Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India. According to the 1991 Census the percentage of Scheduled Castes population in Maharashtra is 11.10 and that of Vimukta Jatis and the Nomadic Tribes is 11 per cent to the total population of Maharashtra. The Maharashtra Government is also one of the State Governments which has also specified other categories known as Other Backward Classes.

While the Constitution has prescribed certain protective measures and safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the successive Five-Year Plans have regarded their progress as a major objective of national social policy. The Constitution prescribes protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes specially by way of insisting on their general rights as citizens and with the object of promoting their educational and economic interests and removing their social disabilities.

The increasing investments made through different Five-Year Plans in the Backward Class Welfare and Social Welfare Sectors reflecting the growing interest of the Government in providing welfare services to its citizens. The subject "Social Welfare" being in the concurrent list is the responsibility of the State Government, as well as, the Central Government.

* Director, Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra., Pune - 411 001.