

CHAPTER XIV

WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES, SCHEDULED TRIBES AND WOMEN



One of the basic objectives of economic planning is to correct the uneven and unbalanced regional growth and to ensure a fairly equitable distribution of wealth and economic prosperity created by the development. This is important because a large sections of our population, particularly those belonging to the weaker sections of the society, continue to suffer from some form of inequality or the other. The inequity encountered may be social as well as economic, like that of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), or simply gender inequalities, like that of the women, particularly in the rural areas.

After agriculture, textiles and textiles based activities, including handicrafts, constitute

the most important source of livelihood for these social groups. Many of these activities are, in fact, associated with distinct regions or even communities, and could also be gender specific as in the North Eastern Region, where the whole chain of textiles activity, from reeling of silk cocoons to weaving of the cloth, remains a female preserve. However, majority of weavers/artisans belong to the SC/ST population. These groups are normally linked to hereditary or subsistence -based occupations and that too in the unorganized sector.

The Government have been making budgetary provisions in the successive plans for the implementation of various schemes and programmes, targeted, in



general, at these disadvantaged social groups. Though the schemes/programmes for textiles and textile based activities do not adhere to any specific community or social groups, a majority of those employed in these sectors belong to these groups, and remain the main beneficiaries of these schemes. These schemes/programmes have had a significant effect on their development and progress in terms of employment opportunities, improvement in productivity levels as well as income and living standards.

The sector wise details of the developmental activities for these groups are as follows:

A. HANDLOOMS

The Handlooms Sector employs over 65 lakh persons in weaving and allied activities on 35 lakh looms. The majority of weavers belong to the poorest and the marginalized sections of the society. It is estimated that, of the total workforce, women constitute 62.40% and SC/STs category constitute 32% (as per the joint census of handlooms & powerlooms 1995-96).

To assist Handloom Weavers, including SC/ST and women weavers, the Government of India implements various developmental Schemes through State Governments with the objectives of (i) Employment Generation, (ii) Modernization and upgradation of technology, (iii) Input support, (iv) marketing support, (v) Publicity & Exhibition, (vi) Infrastructural support, (vii) Welfare measures, (viii) Development of Exportable Products (ix) Research & Development. In the case of agencies having 100% SC/ST/Women/Minorities population, the grant portion is shared in the ratio of 75:25 between the Centre and the State under the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Pratsahan Yojana.

B. HANDICRAFTS

In the handicrafts sector, about 32.5% of the outlay in respect of identified Central Sector Schemes is earmarked for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women artisans. The allocation is 15% 7.5% and 10%, respectively. The major schemes being implemented are (1) Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana, (2) Design and Technology Upgradation Scheme, (3) Marketing Support and Services Schemes, (4) Export Promotion Schemes, (5) Research & Development Schemes. All these schemes play a very vital role in the empowerment and upliftment of women artisans and artisans belonging to Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe.

Of the total workforce engaged in handicrafts, 47.42% are women, of which 37.11% belong to SC/ST category (Source: NCAER survey, 1995-96). There are certain crafts, which are practiced predominantly by women like embroidery, beadwork, appliqué, durries, shawls, cane and bamboo, artistic textile, weaving, mat weaving etc. Special attention is being paid to ensure that a large number of women artisans get benefit of all the developmental schemes such as training, marketing related programmes, National Awards, exhibitions etc. During 2006-07 the total anticipated outlay for Special Component Plan for scheduled caste, tribal sub-plan and women is at Table 14.1.

C. SERICULTURE

Sericulture is a primarily agro-based, labour intensive, unorganized cottage industry, where 30-70% of the workforce belongs to SC/ST. Over 50% of these are women workers. Under the Centrally Sponsored Catalytic Development Programme, the Central Silk Board, (CSB), Bangalore, implements a number of

Table 14.1

(Rs. in crores)

Sl.No.	Name of scheme	Total outlay	TSP	SCP	WSP
1	Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana	33.00	2.50	5.00	3.30
2	Design and Technology Upgradation	13.00	0.97	1.94	1.30
3	Marketing Support and Services	18.70	1.40	2.80	1.87
4	Export Promotion	15.25	1.14	2.28	1.52
5	Research and Development	2.50	0.19	0.38	0.25
6	Training & Extension	1.00	0.08	0.15	0.10
7	Bima Yojana for artisans	1.00	0.08	0.15	0.10
8	Special Handicrafts Training Programme	4.60	0.35	0.70	0.46
	Total	89.05	6.71	13.40	8.90

TSP-Tribal Sub Plan

Special Component Plan, (SCP)-Women Sub Plan (WSP).

programmes in collaboration with State Governments, wherein financial and technical assistance is provided for on-farm and post-farm activities, like reeling, dyeing, twisting, printing, finishing, etc. The benefits of these initiatives accrue to SC/ST and women workers.

The Central Silk Board is taking action to

enhance the participation and economic empowerment of women in sericulture and the silk industry by a three pronged strategy aimed at developing women friendly infrastructural facilities; imparting training, and building capacities; and improving access to credit and other facilities through the formation of Self Help Groups and Quality Clubs.

