



EMPOWERMENT OF THE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED THROUGH EDUCATION GROUPS

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Introduction

The Socially Disadvantaged Groups include the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Minorities. According to the 1991 Census, SCs Account for 138.23 million (16.5 percent); STs 67.76 million (8.1 percent); and Minorities 145.31 Million (17.2 percent). As regards OBCs, it is difficult to quantify the size of their population in the absence of the Census data. However, according to the estimates by the Mandal Commission in 1993, the OBCs constitute 52 per cent of the country's total population. Some of them may belong to the categories of SCs and Minorities.

Key Words : Socially Disadvantaged Groups

Commitments of Ninth Plan

1. Launching exclusive schemes for Primitive Tribal Groups for their survival, protection and allround development.
2. The Ninth Five Year Plan commits to empower the Socially Disadvantaged Groups as agents of socio-economic change and development, as set out in Box No.1 below:.
3. Towards fulfilling the commitments, the Ninth Plan adopted a three pronged strategy of - i) Social Empowerment; ii) Economic Empowerment; and iii) Social Justice to ensure removal of disparities, elimination of exploitation and suppression and to provide protection to these disadvantaged groups.
4. Education being the most effective instrument for socio-economic empowerment, high priority continues to be accorded to improve the educational status of SCs and STs, specially that of the women and the girl child. No doubt, there has been a visible increase in the literacy rates of SCs and STs during the last three developmental decades, but the gap between literacy rate of SCs/ STs and that of the general population continues to persist, as shown by the data given below:

Literacy Rates of SCs and STs:

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Education being the most effective instrument for socio-economic empowerment of the socially disadvantaged groups, high priority continues to be accorded to improve the educational status of these groups especially that of women and girl child through :

- Relaxation of norms for opening of primary schools within one kilometer of walking distance.
- Extending reservation in educational institutions and granting concessions like free education, free supply of books, uniforms/ scholarships etc.
- Vocationalising education both at the middle and high school level towards improving opportunities for both wage and self-employment.
- Promoting higher and technical/professional education amongst these groups, through effective implementation of Post Matric Scheolarships (PMS) with an added thrust and wider coverage.