

SOCIAL ECONOMY OF WEAKER SECTIONS (SC, ST, OBC, DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND MINORITIES)

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ABSTRACT:

The term weaker section refers to the section of the population who are socially, educationally, economically and politically backward than the other sections of the population and have been suffering from different kinds of disabilities due to their backwardness. The weaker sections are all those classes and groups who are today in search of an identity, security and basic amenities of life.

Indian society is known for its unity in diversity. But one thing, it is infamous for social inequality which has given birth to weakening of certain sections of society i.e. women, SC, ST, differently abled, minorities etc. These are the vulnerable groups who face many difficulties in life owing to a state of oppression. They are under-privileged & lack opportunities to move forward in life. Certain communities especially the SC and ST are looked down upon and treated as social outcasts and untouchables. Prominently in Indian villages, people were and still are organised in a rigid hierarchical social order and the notion of hierarchy which is inbuilt into the caste system, is based on the religious principal of purity and pollution. Honour killings of the bride and groom in case of inter-caste marriages, have increased. Minority is a group of persons having different race, language, or religion from that of majority of inhabitants. Articles 25 to 28 of the Indian Constitution contain provisions for the protection of the rights of the minorities. Differently abled or disability is limitation of a person's ability to carry out the activities of daily living, to the extent that he or she may need help in doing so. It is a functional limitation or activity restriction by an impairment. Attitudes and traditions have to change for the 'differently abled' people to be accepted by society.

Since independence, there are a lot of efforts to strengthen the position of weaker sections of society. Constitutional provisions like articles 14, 15, 16 and 17 ensure that there is no discrimination against weaker sections. The state can make efforts to improve the political, economic situation of weaker sections of the society through protective discrimination. Protective discrimination means discriminating the persons for the purpose of protecting certain classes of people. At present, upto 50% of the seats in educational institutions and government job vacancies are reserved for the socially and educationally backward sections of the society. As the reservation system is not applicable to the private sector prejudices and partialities can be seen in this sector pertaining to appointments & promotions as well.

The government can make laws and implement policies to make the weaker sections strong in all fields. But it is up to the people and society to treat these people with equal respect and on par with the rest of the society.

INTRODUCTION:

Existence of weaker sections is a global phenomenon and the societies of many developed countries also have this feature. Indian society is a good example of having a large part of population as the weaker section even in the 21st century. Paradoxically, India is the largest democracy of the world that has also a large section of society as weak and marginalised. In the context of Indian society, the marginalised and weaker section is not defined in the terms of caste only but in the terms of gender, education, economy, religion, culture etc. They are women, children, specially abled persons, refugees, migrants, religious minorities, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, educationally and economically backward classes, sexual minorities and many others.

DEFINITION:

Literal meaning of "Weak" is lacking something not strong, not having, detract, lagging behind and ultimately the condition of poverty. Weaker section in the Indian context means the people who are economically and socially backward, women and children, minority groups etc. Weaker sections may be defined as those sections who experience a relative weakness in terms of their ability to access their rights and entitlements, and are deprived of their capacity to lead a quality life of their choice.

Thus, the weaker sections of the society can be defined as those sections, which are lacking equal social recognition, equal representation in political sphere, equal economic opportunities and losing their cultural identities because they do not have the proper and required resources and facilities to achieve and sustain them in their life. In other words, those who have been lagging behind for a long time in the history to remove their deficiencies of liberty, equality and justice in every sphere of life i.e. social, economic, political, cultural, faith, belief, religion, opportunity status, education, health and so on, are grouped as the weaker or marginalised sections of the society.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To discuss the social economy of weaker sections in India- their social status, educational facilities and economic conditions.
2. To identify the reasons for the backwardness of the weaker sections.
3. To raise voice against Honour killings.
4. To discuss the need for protective discrimination and the prevalent reservation system in India.
5. To understand the provisions in Indian Constitution for safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections.
6. To comprehend the difficulties of the differently abled and the position of minorities in India.
7. To suggest measures for the upliftment of the weaker sections.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:**WEAKER SECTIONS BASED ON CASTE – SC,ST AND OBC:**

There is a hierarchy of caste systems prevalent in the Indian economy. On the top of the ladder are the brahmins. At the bottom of the step are scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In between are the other castes in the open category, backward classes and the minorities. The most vulnerable sections are the SC and ST. Next comes the backward classes. The rate of literacy among SC and ST is low, particularly among the ST. This is because of lack of proper educational facilities in the remote tribal areas. Students have to either migrate to other places to have access to educational institutions or travel long distances from their home to study. Because of the low levels of education, non-utilisation of reservation system in government jobs and also the partialities that exist in the private sector jobs where the reservations do not apply, SC and ST do not have ample employment opportunities. Consequently, their economic condition is weak. They live in a state of poverty with meagre funds to satisfy their needs. Many a times, SC and ST are forced to have separate settlements for their communities, which is especially seen in villages. When they live in remote areas, their accessibility to hospitals becomes limited. Consequently, due to malnutrition and poor medical facilities, their health is affected.

SC AND ST ATROCITIES ACT, 1989:

The Act is also known as POA (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. It was enacted in 1989 so as to prevent atrocities against SC and ST. A Recent ruling by the Supreme court in March 2018 on this act led to a major controversy and protests throughout the country finally leading to the government proposing an amendment bill in the parliament. In the ruling on March 20, 2018 the supreme court held that the police cannot arrest an accused under the SC and ST act immediately without conducting a preliminary investigation into the complaint. If a prima facie case exists after the completion of investigation, only then the police have the right to arrest the accused. There is another stipulation that the accused, in case is a public servant, can be arrested only after the approval of the appointing authority and a non-public servant only after the approval of the senior superintendent of police.

The supreme court justified its actions saying that the SC and ST act is being grossly misused in certain cases. Innocent citizens are sometimes victimised using the provisions of the act. It further stated that the decision will not curtail the rights of SC and ST in any way. It will only liberalise the rules of arrest that will protect the innocent. Further, right to life and personal liberty (Article 21) is of utmost importance and no action can be taken by the government or public servants to curtail this right. They should be a just and fair procedure which is reasonable, that needs to be followed before arrest.

Consequently, a Bharat Bandh was called for on 2nd April in protest of the Supreme court ruling. It resulted in violence especially in the northern states. Ten people died and hundreds were injured during these protests. Trains were stopped and many public and private properties were damaged by setting fire to them.

Following protests across the country, the government filed a review petition over the order, seeking its recall. It was pointed out that the SC/ST verdict had resulted in the loss of life and demanded that the case should be referred to a larger bench. The centre sought a review of the judgement, saying that the court had proceeded on the basis that it can legislate and has the power to make law when none exists. It was also argued by the centre that any dilution of the provisions of the amended SC/ST Act would result in depriving the community of its constitutional rights. The top court, however, rejected the demand for a stay saying its judgment did not lead to the deaths and that law was only aimed at putting filter on immediate arrest.

Cabinet has decided to bring an amendment bill, which, if passed by Parliament, will turn the clock back to the original law that had provisions for a FIR without any preliminary enquiry and immediate arrest of a person.

The bill will make three changes to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 —it would

- a) set aside the Supreme Court order that an FIR should be lodged only after a preliminary inquiry is conducted by a gazetted officer;
- b) no approval of a senior official would be needed for arrest;
- c) no provision of section 438 of criminal procedure code would be applicable. The amendment bill will insert section 18A that states “preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of an FIR against any person”; or arrest, if necessary, of a person shall not require any approval. Section 438 of CrPC states that only after preliminary enquiries find sufficient ground for lodging of an FIR, this would be done. This section however did not apply to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act until the Supreme Court judgement given recently.

WEAKER SECTIONS BASED ON PHYSICAL ABILITY: DIFFERENTLY ABLED

A major part of our country is inaccessible to differently-abled people i.e. there is no facilitating infrastructure. Many people living with disabilities cannot think of visiting such places like hospitals, movie theatres, schools or parks without being

dependant on others, simply because the buildings or public spaces are not equipped according to their needs. Attempts are being made towards an inclusive India by making our country access free to the differently abled. According to the Census of 2011, the differently-abled population in our country is 26.8 million i.e. 2.21%.

Measures to help the differently abled:

1. Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)

A separate department for dealing with the affairs of the disabled was created and later renamed as Department of Empowerment of persons with Disabilities. It aims at providing equal opportunities to the disabled so as to facilitate their growth and leading a safe and dignified life. The department monitors the implementation of different legislations.

2. Legal provisions:

The acts for the protection of the rights of the disabled include-

The persons with disabilities (PWD) (equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) act, 1995:

The Mental Health Act, 1987

The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992

The National trust for welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities act, 1999

3. Facilities for people living with disabilities:

All public places should be access free to the disabled and even important private places like hotels, hospitals, shops, educational institutions etc. should be accessible.

4. All India Council For Technical Education:

It has an enabling unit for supporting the education of disabled. Differently-abled persons need special arrangements in the environment. The colleges should create special facilities such as ramps, rails and special toilets, and make other necessary changes to suit the special needs of differently-abled persons. Differently-abled persons need special appliances that are provided by the government. Scholarships for disabled under central schemes are provided like -Pre-matric Scholarship for Students with Disabilities, Post-matric Scholarship for Students with Disabilities, Scholarships for Top Class Education for students with disabilities.

WEAKER SECTIONS BASED ON RELIGION: MINORITIES

According to The Ministry of Minority Affairs of the Government of India, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Jains are minority communities as notified by Government of India in Gazette under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. Notified minorities constitute about 19% of the population of India.

The term 'minority' has not been particularly defined in the Constitution. In Re Kerala Education Bill, the Supreme Court observed that while it was easy to say that the minority meant a community which was numerically less than 50%, the 50% is not in relation to the entire population of the state or India, but with reference to the particular legislation. The expression linguistic minority for the purpose of Article 30(1) is one which must have a separate spoken language and that language need not have a distinct script.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR PROTECTION OF INTERESTS OF MINORITIES

ARTICLES 25-28: FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Articles 25 to 28 of the Indian Constitution lay down the provisions relating to Freedom of Religion. State protects all religions viz. Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsis etc.

The rights provided for freedom of religion under Articles 25 to 28 are:

1. Freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion (Art. 25);
2. Right of a religious denomination to manage religious affairs (Art.26)
3. Freedom from payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion (Art.27); and
4. Freedom from attendance at religious instructions in certain educational institutions (Art.28).

ARTICLES 29 AND 30: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

Articles 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution lay down the provisions relating to "Cultural and Educational Rights of Minorities". Articles 29 and 30 read as follows:

Article 29: Protection of Interests of Minorities:

1. Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
2. No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30: Right of minorities to establish and administer Educational Institutions:

1. All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

1A. In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in Clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause. (Clause 1A to Art.30 was inserted by the Constitution (Forty- fourth Amendment) Act, 1978).

2. The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority whether based on religion or language.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS TO ENSURE EQUALITY:**ARTICLE 14: EQUALITY BEFORE LAW**

Article 14 provides for Equality before law and Equal protection of laws. In simple words, all are equal before law and no one is above the law. All persons are treated equally in the same circumstances. The Supreme Court viewed that treating all equally sometimes becomes inequality. Art.14 permits reasonable classification. A classification to be reasonable, the following two conditions are to be satisfied:

1. Whether there is intelligible differentia (i.e. rational and reasonable classification).
2. Whether the differentia (division) has a rational nexus (relation) to the object to be achieved.

ARTICLE 15: PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION

Article 15 of the Indian Constitution deals with Prohibition of Discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Special Provision for Backward Classes - Art.15(4):

Clause (4) of Article 15 contains another exception to Clauses (1) and (2). It provides:

“Nothing in this Article or in Clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any Special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes”.

This Clause was added by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, as a consequence of the decision of the Supreme Court in *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan*, AIR 1951 SC 226.

ARTICLE 16: EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Article 16 of the Indian Constitution guarantees “Equality of opportunity in matters of Public Employment”. It expressly permits the State “to make provisions for the reservation of appointments of posts in favour of any backward class of citizens, which in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.” The term “reservations” in Article 16(4) implies a separate quota which is reserved for a special category of persons. The very purpose of reservation, it has been held, is to protect the weaker category against competition from the open category candidates.

ARTICLE 17: ABOLITION OF UNTOUCHABILITY

The word “untouchability” has not been defined in the Indian Constitution or the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955. Literally, the term includes treating persons as untouchables either temporarily or otherwise for various reasons, such as suffering from infections or contagious diseases or on account of social observances associated with birth or death or social boycott resulting from caste or other disputes. Article 17 abolished “untouchability” and forbids its practice in any form. It further declares that the enforcement of any disability arising out of “untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

RESERVATIONS (PROTECTIVE DISCRIMINATION):

Protective discrimination implies discriminating the persons for the purpose of protecting certain classes of people. Article 14 of the constitution also envisages that treating all equally sometimes results in inequality. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Indian Constitution make certain special provisions for the advancement of Backward Classes.

Article 15(4) allows the State to make special laws for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 16(4) expressly allows the State to “make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens, which in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.”

In successful implementation of the reservations, the questions that normally arise are-

1. What are the backward classes and who belong to them?
2. What are the limitations on the reservations i.e.
 - a) with regard to the percentage and
 - b) duration/ term of reservation?

The Supreme Court interpreted the provisions relating to reservations differently in several cases. Further, the Union permitted the States to appoint commissions to identify the socially and educationally backward classes.

The first leading case on Reservations is:

Champakam Dorai Rajan v. State of Madras, AIR 1951 SC 226 – The Supreme Court’s decision in this case, necessitated inclusion of a new clause i.e, clause (4) to Art, 15, which empowers the State to make special provisions for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes.

In *Balaji v. State of Mysore*, AIR 1963 SC 649- The Mysore Government issued an order under Article 15(4) reserving the seats in Medical and Engineering Colleges in the State as follows: Backward Classes 28%; More Backward Classes 20%; Scheduled Castes and Tribes 18% i.e. the total percentage of reservations was 68%. The validity of the Government Order was challenged. The Supreme Court held that there should be no reservations beyond 50%.

There are three views for identification of backward classes. According to the first view, caste must be the sole criterion. The second view, agrees that caste should not be considered, but means (economic factor) should be regarded as the sole criterion. According to the third view, both the caste and the means must be regarded as the factors for identifying the backward classes.

Thus, the Supreme Court stressed the Community cum means test in different cases. (State of Kerala v. Thomas; A.B.S.Kharmachari Sangh v. Union of India; Vasant Kumar v. State of Karnataka).

In *Devadasan v. Union of India* AIR 1964 SC 1979 – This case is popularly known as “Carry forward rule case”. It means that in case, the vacancies reserved remain unfilled for non-availability of the candidates, they may be filled by the reserved candidates in the subsequent years. In this case, the Government reserved 17% vacancies to the SC/ST candidates. As the candidates were not available, the vacancies were carried forward to the subsequent years. As a result of the impugned rule, in the year 1961, out of the 45 vacancies filled in, 29 were filled in by the candidates belonging to SC/ST, which came to 64% of reservation. The Supreme Court, following its rule in *Balaji vs State of Mysore* that reservations exceeding 50% in a single year would be unconstitutional, struck down the ‘carry forward rule’ as it is invalid and unconstitutional.

The decisions in *Balaji v. State of Mysore* and *Devadasan v. Union of India*, were overruled and the ‘carry forward’ rule was upheld by the supreme Court in: *Akhil Bharatiya Shoshit Kharmachari Sangh (Railway) v. Union of India*, AIR 1981 SC 298 - In this case, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of ten circulars issued by the Railway Board, providing reservations of 17.5% posts to SC/ST candidates. The circulars contained the rule to carry forward the unfilled posts for three years. Consequently, the reservation quota rose to about 64.4%. The Court upheld the quantum of reservation.

In *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (popularly known as *Mandal Case*) AIR 1993 SC 477 – In this case, the Supreme Court overruled the decision in *Devadasan’s* case and upheld the validity of “carry forward rule”, subject to the condition that it does not result in breach of 50% rule, except in certain extraordinary situations.

AP OBC RESERVATION ISSUE:

The demand for quota for the Kapus has been there for more than two decades now. In an attempt to revive the agitation in support of the long-pending demand, the community’s leading leader, former Minister Mudragada Padmanabham, gave a call to his supporters to join him in a *Chalo Amaravati* (the new capital of Andhra Pradesh) padayatra from his residence at Kirlampudi in East Godavari district on July 27. A similar call by him on January 31, 2016, led to large-scale violence in Tuni, also in East Godavari district, when the agitators torched a train and two police stations, leaving a number of people and policemen injured.

The Andhra Pradesh government decided to include Kapus, a powerful upper caste community, in the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and provide them 5% reservation in education and employment. The state cabinet approved the report of Justice Manjunatha Commission constituted to look into the status of OBCs and the three-decade old demand for the inclusion of Kapus and their subsections — Telaga, Balija and Ontari — into the OBC category. The committee has recommended that Kapus and their subsections should be given quota under OBC category. As of now, OBCs enjoy 25% reservation under five sub-categories: A, B, C, D and E. The state cabinet decided that Kapus will be included as the sixth sub-category F and will be provided 5% reservation.

The quota cannot come into effect immediately, as the total percentage of reservations in the state will sum up to 51% (OBCs – 30%, SCs – 15% and STs – 6%). This exceeds the ceiling of 50% prescribed by the Supreme Court in its ruling in the case of *Indra Sawhney*. An amendment to the Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution is necessary for inclusion of the Kapus in the OBC category to permit the total percentage of reservations of 51. This was done in the case of Tamil Nadu, where there is 69% quota for all categories of weaker sections. The AP government introduced a bill in the assembly providing 5% quota to Kapus under OBC category and get it passed by the House. They have sent it to the Centre for approval. TDP has also introduced a private member bill in the Parliament seeking reservation for Kapu community in Central services.

HONOUR KILLINGS

The killing of a relative, especially a girl/woman, or even a man, who is perceived to have brought dishonour on the family can be termed as honour killing. The killers try to justify their actions by claiming that the victim has brought dishonour upon the name and prestige of the family. Though the Indian government enacted strict penalties for violence against women, honour killings based on inter-caste and inter-religious marriages continued to take place. In villages, they are mostly unreported to police because of support from villagers. Such murders are often ruled as accidents after being reported.

According to the National Crime Record Bureau Statistics, honour killing in the country has grown by more than 79% from 2014 to 2015. Despite banning caste-based discrimination, these incidents have not ceased to exist. According to the statistics of the union home ministry, 356 cases of honour killings were reported in the country between 2014 and 2016. Most of these cases were reported in Madhya Pradesh-18, Uttar Pradesh-16 and Gujarat-10 in 2016.

Not just north India, the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are also witnessing honour killings. The recent murder of Dalit Peramalla Pranay Kumar in Miryalaguda division of Nalgonda district in Telangana state is a glaring example of honour killings in the Telugu states. Most such killings happen when the victims resort to inter-caste marriage or inter-caste relationship. But, many honour killings in both the Telugu states are often not reported. Andhra Pradesh occupied the top place in honour killings in south India in the year 2016 while in the year 2015, Telangana topped in the southern region with 16 incidents as per the National Crime Records Bureau. In the previous four years, around 25 honour killings have taken place in AP and Telangana and some incidents were not reported.

Recent honour killings in AP and Telangana:

1. On September 14, Perumalla Pranay Kumar, a Dalit from Miryalaguda in Telangana was murdered. This murder was committed because Pranay married Amrutha Varshini, who belonged to the Vaishya community, a forward caste. Amrutha blames her father and uncle for masterminding this attack.

2. A man attacked his daughter and son-in-law with a machete and badly injured them in another case of assault for family honour. Madhavi, was battling for life while her husband Sandeep too suffered grievous injuries in the attack by Manoharachary. The incident occurred in the busy SR Nagar area in Hyderabad. Manoharachary the father of the bride was opposed to the marriage because Sandeep comes from another caste. He called the couple to meet and give them some presents. As soon as they reached the decided place, he took out a machete from his bag and attacked them.

3. Pregnant woman, Vijayalakshmi was brutally murdered by her own family members in August 2018. Vijayalakshmi fell in love with Suresh, her neighbour, who belongs to another caste, and married him about four years ago. As her parents were against the marriage, the couple left the city soon after marriage in fear of them. Vijayalakshmi was in the 7th month of pregnancy when she was killed.

Suggestions:

A. Individuals/organisations should be fighting to ensure that casteism is completely eradicated in the country.

B. All states should take preventive, remedial and punitive measures that are to be implemented to address issues related to honour crimes.

C. India does not have a specific law to deal with honour killing, forcing police to charge suspects under IPC Section 302 (murder) whenever honour killings happen or Section 299 (culpable homicide) or the SC and ST Atrocities Act. The government has to introduce a new act to deal with honour killings. There was a recommendation from all stakeholders to bring in a strict law to prevent honour killings in the country, but so far nothing has been done by successive governments at the Centre.

REASONS FOR BACKWARDNESS OF WEAKER SECTIONS IN INDIA

1. Economic Problems

The weaker sections face the problems of poverty and exploitation, economic and technological backwardness. This is because of lack of education to enable them to apply for jobs, non- utilisation of reservations and vacancies in government jobs and also prejudices and partialities in appointments and promotions in the private sector in some cases.

2. Failure to Stick to Secularism:

India is a "secular" country as enshrined in our Constitution. Political parties claim themselves to be secular. But in reality, no party sticks to its commitment to secularism. Religious issues, secular issues, law and order problems are often politicised by the parties. These parties are always waiting for an opportunity to politicise communal issues and take political advantage out of it.

3. Education problems of weaker sections:

Indian government does not provide free education. Though the government schools charge low fees, level of standards are low and they are located within long distance from the weaker sections who are living in remote areas. Private schools cannot be afforded by them.

Table 1: Literacy Rates of SCs and STs - The Gains and the Gaps

Category	1971	1981	1991	% Increase of 1991 over 1971
- General Population including SC/ST)	29.45	36.23	52.21	77.28
- Scheduled Castes	14.67	21.38	37.41	155.01
- Scheduled Tribes	11.30	16.35	29.60	161.95
- Gap between SCs and the General Population.	14.78	14.85	14.80	0.14
- Gap between STs and the General Population	18.15	19.88	22.61	24.5

* Excludes 0-6 age group.; Source: Educational Development of SCs and STs, Department of Education, 1995.

4. Language problems:

Language becomes communication barrier to the tribals. They speak in their local dialect which is not understood by others. Similarly the tribals may not comprehend the main language of the state. Hence they cannot mingle fully with others making them feel alienated.

5. Caste based and religious based tensions

Caste based and religious based tensions and riots have been incessantly increasing. When riots take place, minority interests get threatened; fear and insecurities escalate.

6. Social Problems:

These problems deal with the concept of purity and pollution. The untouchables are given a very low position in the society. The high-caste maintained a social distance from them. They are denied many basic amenities of life which are accorded to the high-caste.

7. Religious Problems:

These pertained to the denial of the right of entering holy places which are exclusively served by the high-caste. The untouchables are neither allowed to enter the holy places nor have the right to worship the Gods and Goddesses. This can be seen in some remote villages.

8. Absence of Common Civil Code:

Social equality can be attained only when a common civil code is enforced throughout the nation. Some communities, particularly the Muslims oppose it. They argue that the imposition of a common civil code will take away their religious freedom. This issue has become controversial even today. It has widened the gap between the different religious communities.

SUGGESTIONS:

The following are the measures for improving social status and economic conditions of weaker sections-

1. Solving the educational problems:

The Indian government has to provide different Scholarships and other forms of financial aid to reduce the cost of education. Maximum number of government schools and colleges are to be started. Reserved quotas encourages parents to educate their children. The facilities in educational institutions are to be increased.

2. Change in attitudes:

A change in the attitude and outlook of people will help in accepting all castes and religions. This can be achieved through organising awareness programmes, seminars and workshops. This is not the sole responsibility of the government alone, but the NGOs and the media should play an active role in eradicating the communal and religious disputes.

3. Accepting inter-caste and inter-religion marriages:

Inter-caste and inter-religion marriages should not be seen as a taboo by the society. Such marriages should be accepted. This can help in reducing the gap between different communities and religions.

4. Strict punishment for honour killings:

Honour killings are a heinous crime. They have to be shunned. Such actions should be strictly punished. Dealing such crimes in fast track courts and enacting a separate act for honour crimes can go a long way in providing quick justice.

5. Easy access to differently-abled:

It is to be seen that differently-abled persons have special arrangements in the environment for their mobility and independent functioning. Ramps and railings are to be arranged for accessibility and ease everywhere, be it schools, hotels, ATMs, hospitals, etc. One should take inspiration from the city of Gwalior where about 90% of the city has been made access-free for the differently abled.

6. Utilisation of reservations:

It is necessary to make sure that SC, ST, OBC sections utilise the reservations. Vacancies meant for them are not being filled. Government should identify the reasons for this situation and primarily enable them to use the opportunities.

7. Implementation of policies and acts:

The welfare programmes meant for the weaker sections should be implemented without any delay. The government has to fulfil its promises immediately. Delay at following stages of implementing the Acts should be avoided- in enacting the bill; in passing the bill; in publishing the Act in the government official gazette and in finally monitoring the implementation of the Act.

8. Refrain from caste and religious based politics:

The various political parties should not try to divide people on the basis of caste and religion to gain votes. Caste and religion politics widen the gap between people of different communities.

CONCLUSION

Social inequality has given birth to weakening of certain sections of society i.e. SC, ST, OBC, differently abled, minorities etc. These are the vulnerable groups who face many difficulties in life owing to a state of oppression. They are underprivileged & lack opportunities to move forward in life. Since independence, there are a lot of efforts to strengthen the position of weaker sections of society. It is a fact that communal disturbances, religious conflicts, group clashes are taking place frequently in our country. In spite of these disturbances the nation has maintained its secular character. Constitutional provisions and legal enactments ensure that there is no discrimination against weaker sections and protect their interests. The state can make efforts to improve the political, social, economic situation of weaker sections of the society through various policies and programmes. The government can make laws and implement policies to make the weaker sections strong in all fields. But it is up to the people and society to treat these people with equal respect and on par with the rest of the society.

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