

Ground Reality of Welfare Measures: Voices from Below

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In spite of age-old Brahmin or upper-caste domination on the eco-socio-political life of Uttar Pradesh, we saw huge success of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 2007 Vidhan Sabha election. It becomes the only National Party of India, which captures power for Bahujan, with Bahujan and by Bahujan. Ideologically, BSP wants 'Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation' of the Bahujan Samaj, which is comprised of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Religious Minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. In a Press Release in 2009, the Party announced that the State Government of Uttar Pradesh is giving priority to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and declared many schemes to achieve its objectives. This raised hopes among the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this province. But, how far these welfare programmes were effective was still to be proved. To unravel the ground reality, we had done an empirical survey on the awareness and impact of the welfare schemes of Uttar Pradesh on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In this paper is an outcome of the survey.

Keywords: Bahujan, upper caste domination, backwardness, welfare. Other Backward Classes.

Introduction

In spite of age-old Brahmin or upper-caste dominance on the eco-socio-political sphere of Uttar Pradesh, we saw huge success of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 2007 Vidhan Sabha election. It became the only National Party of India, which captured power for Bahujan, with Bahujan and by Bahujan. As per the ideology of BSP, it wants 'Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation' of the Bahujan Samaj, which includes the Scheduled

Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Religious Minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. In a Press Release in 2009, the Party announced that the State Government of Uttar Pradesh would give priority to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and declared many schemes. Obviously this raised hopes among the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this Province. But, the question to probe is whether all of these welfare programmes have brought about the promised 'welfare' to the targeted groups of people. To unfold the ground reality, we had done an empirical study on the awareness and impact of the welfare schemes of Uttar Pradesh on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the BSP led government in UP.

The BSP is not the only political party that talks about the upliftment of the backward castes and classes in the country. The Government of India, since independence, has taken many measures for the development of the weaker sections, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Some such schemes are Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line, Old Age Pension Scheme, National Family Benefit Scheme, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family, Pre-Examination Training Center, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-Employment Scheme, Indira Housing Scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, M. P. Local Region Development Scheme, M.L.A. Local Region Development Scheme, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme, Healthy Diet Programme, Common Man Insurance Scheme, Girl Glory Scheme, Information, Education and Communication-related Scheme, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme, Draught Area Regional Scheme, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme, Clean Toilet Scheme, Clean Water Scheme, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission. Some of them are specifically for SCs or STs and so on. As a large number of SCs and STs are poor,

they qualify for many schemes meant for the poor. But, whether they are aware about those schemes or get benefitted is a question that we examined in our study.

Field of study

According to 2001 Census, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India with a population of over 166 million, of which a considerable section (21.15 per cent) belongs to the category of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes constitute 0.06 per cent. Both of these groups lag far behind other groups in terms of development index. To secure SC and ST vote bank, almost every party of this region has identified welfare of these groups as a main objective in their declared programmes. This raised hope for development amongst the so-called 'backward' and downtrodden classes of this province. A large number of welfare schemes, funded both by Central and State governments, were meant for the upliftment of the SCs and STs.

I took Allahabad district as my study area. It had a population of 4936105, out of which 24.56% (2900526) was Scheduled Castes and 0.098% (4273) Scheduled Tribes as per the 2001 Census. Male-Female ratio was 52.8: 47.2% among the SCs and 52.35:47.65% among the STs. Most of the SCs (rural-urban ratio was 85.4: 14.6%) and STs (rural-urban ratio was 86.9:13.1%) lived in the rural area. Therefore, we selected ten villages with concentration of SCs and STs in eight Blocks of Allahabad district.

The main objectives of the study were:

- a. To search the common awareness about the welfare schemes for SCs and ST
- b. To assess implementation of several welfare schemes
- c. To find out the level of upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through welfare schemes, and
- d. To give suggestions for better implementation of the welfare schemes for more upliftment of SCs and STs.

Keeping in mind the dependent and independent variables, I framed a structured questionnaire with 74 questions, which were divided in the following seven categories.

- a. Awareness about the Welfare Schemes;
- b. Level of Awareness about the Welfare Schemes;
- c. Medium of Awareness Generation;
- d. Problems of Implementation;
- e. Discrimination;
- f. Level of Upliftment; and
- g. Suggestions for better Implementation.

Methodology

This paper is based on primary data, collected through sample survey technique, using structured questionnaire. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 400 SCs (containing households and public representative). The size of the sample was based on total population of SCs in Allahabad district. We conducted the survey on the SC households in the villages in eight Blocks of Allahabad district. The villages were Tiwara and Pipalgaon of Allahabad Block, Raini and Parasinpur of Phulpur Block, Khatangi and Garaba of Bara Block, Khain and Dhanuha of Karchana Block, and Misarpur and Bhatauti of Meja Block. We did quantitative analysis involving statistical analysis, especially descriptive statistics (involving a particular group). Beginning with tabulation of data and grouping into class intervals we did measurement of central tendencies and cross tabulations. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for the purpose of analysis.

Findings

The majority of the respondents (84%) in the sample population were in 18-59 age group. But a sizeable number (16%) were aged 60 or above. Most of the respondents were married (96.8%); 37.3% had BPL Ration Card; only 14.3% had Antodaya ration card; and 32.4% had APL ration card. We had 55.3% female and 44% male among our respondents. In terms of occupation most (65.3%) were labourers, 34.3% included farmers, employed, businessmen and unemployed. Majority (50.9%) of the respondents had income

between Rs 24000- Rs 360000 annually while the remaining 49.1% had an earning between Rs 3000- Rs 21600 annually.

We have examined the general attitude as well as awareness of the respondents about the welfare scheme and the implementation status of 34 welfare schemes. Being asked whether they have interest in government-sponsored welfare schemes (q.n.1), only 9%, (36 respondents out of 400) replied in the positive; 71.3% and 12.5% of the respondents showed minimum interest and no interest. This attitude found reflection in the responses to question number 47 (Do you think that villagers lack awareness about welfare schemes?). While only 8.8% responded saying they have interest while 49.8% said they are not aware of such schemes.

According to our survey, very few people got benefitted from the welfare schemes. Scheme-wise beneficiaries among our sample population was as follows: Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme 22.3%, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line 5.3%, Old age Pension Scheme 13.3%, National Family Benefit Scheme 2.5%, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family 3.3%, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family 1.3%, Pre-examination Training Center 0.8%, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-employment Scheme 0.8%, Indira Housing Scheme 15%, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 22%, M.P. Local Region Development Scheme 0.8%, M.L.A Local Region Development Scheme 0.8%, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme 0.8%, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme 0.5%, Healthy Diet Programme 5%, Common Man Insurance Scheme 2.5%, Girl Glory Scheme 1.8%, Information, Education and Communication related Scheme 0.3%, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme 1%, Draught Area Regional Scheme 2%, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme 1%, Clean Toilet Scheme 7.8%, Clean Water Scheme 5.5%, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme 1.3%, National Rural Health Mission 2.5%, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission 6.8%, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission 4.8%, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission 2.8%, Mukhyamantri Gramodyog Yojana 1%, Pradhanmantri Gramodyog Yojana 1.5%, Antodaya Yojana

15%, Samagra Awaas Yojana 0.5%, Mahila Swayamsiddha Yojana 1.5%, National Health Insurance Scheme 3.5%.

So we can identify some welfare schemes, which had more than 5% (20 persons) beneficiary. This finding needs a clarification. We had selected one respondent from one family questioned to one representative of one family and while counting the number of beneficiaries we included all the members of the family who had received the benefits. Thus the number of persons covered in the survey would be much more than the sample population; about 1600 persons if we presume that every family had four members on an average. Most popular 10 schemes we had identified are Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme (22.3%), Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line (5.3%), Old age Pension Scheme (13.3%), Indira Housing Scheme (15%), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (22%), Healthy Diet Programme (5%), Clean Toilet Scheme (7.8%), Clean Water Scheme (5.5%), Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission (6.8%), and Antodaya Yojana (15%).

We recorded the level of awareness about the welfare schemes. We particularly covered the days of employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Among our respondents 45.8% had said that they worked for 100 days in a year. But most of them did not know the details about Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme and Health Training Programme; 78% of the respondents don't know '*How much financial assistance has been provided in Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme?*' and 53.3% did not have any information about any male worker, female observer and public health nurse under the Health Training Programme.

We had asked the villagers the medium from which they got the information about the welfare schemes. 48.3% of the respondents said that they had it from administration, 47.5% mentioned newspaper as the source of information, 31.8% mentioned radio and television. A majority of the respondents (52.8%) had chosen Gram Panchayat as '*the most effective medium for spreading awareness about government welfare schemes.*'

As high as 72% of the respondents said welfare schemes are well-implemented, while 21.5% had no knowledge whether welfare

schemes were implemented properly or not. This shows the general ineffectiveness of the public audit system where government officials are bound to announce details of every scheme in a public meeting at the village level. A large number of respondents (46.8%) said they are not satisfied with the implementation procedure of the Central or State Government-sponsored welfare schemes. Only 29% villagers were fully satisfied with it.

About the problems of implementation the responses were as follows: late implementation of schemes (44.8%), unavailability of sufficient financial resources (6.3%), absence of sufficient effective regulatory system (12.3%), demand of bribe at various levels to provide benefit of schemes (11.3%). A very high percentage of respondents (44.8%) recognized '*late in the implementation of scheme*' as main problem. 48% of the respondents identified '*lack of education*' as the most influential obstacle in the implementation of schemes. Majority of the respondents (60.3%) had chosen '*the level of publicity of the schemes*' as the most problematic phase in all mentioned schemes. For 79.8% of the respondents the absence of the right guidance was the biggest obstacle in implementation of the schemes. Asked, '*Do you think that there is lack of cooperation by government employees/officers in the effective implementation of welfare schemes?*' 51.3% respondents said, '*Too much lack of cooperation*'. Only one per cent said there is no lack of cooperation on the part of government officials. Majority of the respondents (52.8%) said corruption is the biggest problem in the implementation of the schemes. On the basis of their performance the respondents ranked the government departments as follows: *Social welfare department* (62.8%), *rural development department* (21.3%), *Child development and healthy diet department* (5.3%), *Ambedkar Gram Sabha development department* (5%), *Medical, health and family welfare department* (1.3%), *Land development and water resource department* (0.3%). None mentioned about *Khadi Gramodyog department* or any other departments.

Majority of the respondents (58%) said women get greater share of benefits from the welfare schemes. While only 16% respondents said that government welfare schemes do not favour the females of their community. Only 13% of the respondents said that government schemes do not benefit their community while a large majority (60.1%) said that Government welfare schemes have

brought benefits to people belonging to their community. A large majority (74.4%) of the respondents thinks that caste/political party- groupism affect the implementation of welfare Schemes. Majority (60.3%) thinks that villagers lack a sense of unity and 59% think that the welfare schemes get affected when the Government changes.

While 46.8% of the respondents think that living status of rural people has been lifted up as a result of the welfare schemes 36.3% think otherwise. 49% think that welfare schemes play an effective role in the upliftment of living status of rural people and 42% think that welfare schemes have added pace to the development process. However, 37.3% of the respondents think that welfare schemes have not brought them any benefit.

Majority of the respondents (78.3%) have said that the government should do *mass publicity of schemes* to make welfare schemes more effective, 9.3% said *Role of influential groups should be minimized*, 7.5% said *delay in delivering the benefit should be avoided*, 4.8% said, *Implementation of schemes should be transparent*. We received various suggestions for removing the problems in the implementation of welfare schemes. These are: (1) The welfare scheme should be implemented through Panchayati Raj system (19.8%); (2) Fixation of more accountability of officers and public representative (16.5%); (3) Sufficient financial support should be provided for the implementation of schemes (8.3%); (4) Effective evaluation and controlling system for implementation of schemes (8%); (5) At the level of implementation, it should be made sure that the person more needy get the benefit of scheme (7%); (6) Effective controlling system should be arranged to control corruption (6.3%), and so on. A large majority of the respondents (82.1%) think that the schemes conducted by different departments should be integrated, and 79.2% think that the welfare schemes need improvement at the level of policy making. 43.5% of the respondents think that a separate implementation system should be established for implementing the welfare schemes.

Concluding observations

A notable feature of the study has been that a majority of the respondents were illiterate, impoverished, Scheduled Castes and

we encountered a lot of difficulties in communicating with them and in seeking their articulated opinions on the welfare schemes that the government undertake from time to time. In this study we have noticed that there is a general lack of interest and lack of awareness about the government schemes, although some sections have acknowledged the benefits brought to them by the welfare schemes.

Some schemes, like, Scheduled Caste Scholarship Scheme, Scholarship Scheme for the Families Living Below Poverty Line, Old age Pension Scheme, Indira Housing Scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Healthy Diet Programme, Clean Toilet Scheme, Clean Water Scheme, Janani Suraksha Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, and Antodaya Yojana are found popular amongst the villagers and have largest number of beneficiaries. But other 24 ongoing schemes, namely, National Family Benefit Scheme, Financial Assistance Scheme for the Families Living Below the Poverty Line for Marriage of their Daughters and Treatment of their Family, Financial Assistance Schemes for Victimized Scheduled Caste Family, Pre Examination Training Center, Swarn Jayanti Rural Self-employment Scheme, M.P. Local Region Development Scheme, M.L.A Local Region Development Scheme, Adolescent Girl Potency Scheme, Mahamaya Poor Girl Blessing Scheme, Common Man Insurance Scheme, Girl Glory Scheme, Information, Education and Communication related Scheme, Integrated Regional Development and Water Management Programme, Draught Area Regional Scheme, Integrated Fallow Land Development Programme, Agriculture and Residential Land Distribution Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Saubhagyawati Yojana under National Rural Health Mission, School Health Programme under National Rural Health Mission, Mukhyamantri Gramodyog Yojana, Pradhanmantri Gramodyog Yojana, Samagra Awaas Yojana, Mahila Swayamsiddha Yojana, and National Health Insurance Scheme are not much successful. Respondents were largely ignorant about the existence of these schemes.

A significant section of the respondents have said that the administration have done some good arrangement to provide information about welfare schemes. Most of the respondents got information about the welfare schemes from newspaper, radio or

television. The respondents identified that Gram Panchayat as the most effective source of information and they think that Gram Panchayat be given more power for effective and speedy implementation of the welfare schemes.

A large number of respondents are not satisfied with the implementation procedure of the Central and State Government-sponsored welfare schemes. Majority of the respondents recognized *delay in the implementation of the schemes* as the main problem. Other problems identified are - unavailability of sufficient financial resources, absence of sufficient effective regulatory system, demand of bribe at various levels of releasing the benefits, and so on. Lack of education, absence of publicity of the schemes, and absence of the right guidance has been identified as the major obstacles in implementation of the schemes. Among other impediments the respondents have mentioned of *lack of cooperation* by the government employees/officers, and corruption in the officials. Despite all these problems the respondents have identified the *Social welfare department as the best performing department*. They have ranked the Rural development department is in second position followed by the Child development and healthy diet department, Ambedkar Gram Sabha development department, Medical, health and family welfare department, and Land development and water resource department. None seemed to be aware about Khadi Gramodyog department or any other departments. The respondents have also said that the women receive a greater share of the benefits, which is a positive development.

Members of the underprivileged communities generally think that the governmental welfare schemes have brought them some relief although caste/ political party-groupism affect the implementation of the welfare schemes. Lack of a sense of unity among the villagers has been another impediment to the better utilization of the schemes. People in general think that the nature of the schemes changes with the change of guard in the government since the ruling parties show a clear community bias. Since the respondents differ widely in their assessment of the efficacy of the development schemes it appears that the benefits do not reach them equally and the party in power may be selective in choosing the beneficiaries. Majority respondents think that welfare schemes.

The villagers gave us a good number of suggestions for removing

the problems in the implementation of the welfare schemes. Some of the suggestions are as follows: (i) the welfare scheme should be implemented through Panchayati Raj system; (ii) responsibilities for implementation and accountability for the lapses should be fixed for the officers and public representative; (iii) sufficient financial support should be given for the implementation of schemes; (iv) effective and periodic evaluation of the schemes should be in place; (v) care should be taken to make sure that the most needy person gets the benefit of scheme; (vi) there should be an effective mechanism to control corruption; (vii) the non-governmental organizations should be given a greater role in implementation of the schemes; (viii) a separate implementation and controlling cell should be constituted at district level; and (ix) the role of public representatives should be increased while cutting down the power of the bureaucrats.

The present study thus reveals what the beneficiaries of the welfare schemes think about the schemes and how such schemes can be made more effective. The suggestions they have put across, based on their direct experiences can go a long way to rethink the process of charting out and implement the development schemes.