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The Hollowness of a Hallowed Policy: Emptiness of the Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes

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Abstract:

To be concerned with the welfare of the citizen is the universal vowed policy of any democratic state. However, despite serious commitment, government welfare measure often falls short in achieving the expected goals or promises made. In such circumstances it is not unusual for these target groups to demand for a way or a policy such that the promises made are fulfilled through. The policies of such kind are also often found failing to secure the declared welfare, instead they have been used as channels to accomplish undeclared political purposes. The Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes is one of such cases. Hence, the present article is aimed at analysing and decoding the ineffectiveness of the three and half decade old SCP in achieving the declared empowerment of Scheduled Castes in India.

This paper critically evaluates the much hyped development of scheduled castes in the country through the Special Component Plan that has been implemented for more than three decades. It deals with the circumstances under which, the welfare policy for scheduled castes was initiated and the manner in which the policy has been implemented. In the course of analysis, the paper identifies the gaps therein particularly the unenforceable aspect that is inbuilt in the policy itself that weakened the entire plan. It notes that no corrective measures were ever been attempted, perhaps with diabolic attitude towards the scheduled castes.

Keywords: Anthropology of public policy, political technology, scheduled castes, special component plan, SCP, welfare policy

1. Introduction

With reference to the welfare policy of the state meant for the betterment of the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes in the country, 1980 is a remarkable year in the Indian history. This is the year when the government of India took a major initiative to improve the living conditions of Scheduled Caste population across the country. It was the adoption of the Special Component Plan (SCP) for Scheduled Castes which is also called as SC Sub-Plan during the Sixth Five-Year Plan. Under this welfare policy the plan was to affect, positively, the lives of Scheduled Caste community in economic, health, education and all the basic infrastructure. The prime objective of the plan since then has been to lift them up above the poverty line and enable them to actively take part in the national building process and growth along and as par with privileged communities in the country. The SCP is an umbrella policy under which hundreds of programmes and schemes have been implemented. Allocation of funds under a separate budget head i.e., 789 is mandatory in the budget allocation of the central government and budgets of all states in proportion to the population of Scheduled Castes. Such allocations have necessarily meant to release funds for implementation of various programmes and schemes under SCP. This specific policy is intended for the speedy development of Scheduled Castes communities through implementation of various development schemes by all the States and Union Territories as well as all the Departments and Ministries of Central Government.

2. The Status of SCP

In 2012, the Prime Minister of India in his address¹ to the nation on the occasion of Independence Day, has categorically and proudly stated that “the government has paid special attention to the welfare of Scheduled Castes (SCs) through implementation of special programs²”. Since the implementation of SCP, this has been profound rhetoric that found place in all the Prime Ministerial or Presidential addresses. Besides, even the political leaders make use of this rhetoric in such occasions, in which they have to address and please the SC audience. The gross effect of such public speaking has been two fold. The positive consciousness among the people is with reference to aspirations for better life as promised in the Constitution. The negative consciousness is about let-down of one section of the society while the government favouring one section. Similar to the above, statements are made by the political parties and political leaders on many occasions and whenever it is needed to please and grab the attention of SC community. These became

¹It is a tradition of government of India to address the nation on such special occasions. Usually, on the Independence Day, 15th August, Prime Minister of India, and on the Republic Day, 26th January, President of India addresses the nation.

² The statement is taken from The Hindu, a popular national newspaper, dated 15th August 2012.

popular slogans and refrains particularly during election campaigns. The SC community has been aroused excitement and turned into vote bank for the dream world created by the SCP. The governments have impressed the masses with massive allocations, and thus they care for the SCs and their development and progress. It appears as, though the central government has been actively pushing forward the SCP since its adaptation of the welfare policy by driving all the states and Union territories to implement the policy rigorously. Thus more than three decades have been passed and thousands and crores of rupees are spent and hundreds of programmes and schemes are implemented for the welfare of SCs. But, then, with reference to all the government's claims about the success of SCP, it is found that the situation of SCs hasn't been changed much according to several observations and studies. There are empirical evidences that the SCs mostly continue to live in pathetic conditions, particularly in rural areas (Martin 2015, Spears 2016), and are marginalized in urban labour markets (Madeshwaran and Paul 2007). They are neglected in the most advanced spaces of our society (Murmu 1992) and inescapably facing the same old problem of poverty, discrimination and untouchability (Dreze and Sen 2013).

3. Observations on the SCP

Hence, the effectiveness of the SCP in empowering SCs in order to take part in the national development and growth is questionable. An evaluation study of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) reveals the fact that the methods by which the beneficiaries are identified to enlist the SC population under BPL category is faulty and inappropriate (NABARD 2004:4)³. The Planning Commission of India that sponsored a comprehensive study on the status of SCP has discovered the fact that the allocation of funds is not at par with the proportion of the SC population in most of the states. The states which are allocating the funds under SCSP (or SCP) are allocating major portion i.e., 60% - 65% of funds to the sectors like irrigation, agriculture, industry, power, roads and bridges from which the percentage of SC beneficiaries in these sectors is just 10% to 15% (SEEDS 2007). A review conducted on the economic, social and human rights status of SCs has revealed that the SCs remained far away from the mainstream development of the country (Thorat 2002). Besides, suffering from general perennial poverty, they have also been identified with lowest position in all the human development indicators i.e., nutrition, mortality, access to agricultural land, capital assets, employment rate, non-agricultural wages and spotted at high rate of discrimination and atrocity (Report of an Expert Group 2008). A report prepared by Task Force, though contains some controversial recommendations, points out that all the Ministries and Departments in the centre and state have fallen short in the implementation of SCP and has recommended for the mandatory earmarking of funds (Task Force 2010). The State Cabinet Sub Committee appointed to look into the status of SCP and SCs in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in its report has categorically stated that the state governments are not maintaining proper records of funds flow of SCP to different development projects (2012). In a study on the development of agriculture it is found that the special component plan for SCs did not reach desired goals due to insufficient budgetary allocation and lacking affective monitoring system (Rajamma and Siddaraju 2013). The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights that disclosed the facts and figures on the status of SC and SCP in its report indicate that most of the States/U.Ts are not holding on to the given basic methodology for the operation of SCP. Some State governments have evolved their own methodologies for the implementation of SCP, and these strategies gave a way to deviate SCP funds (NCDHR 2014).

The findings of the above mentioned studies can be summarized and understood that the role of SCP in the development of SCs has been marginal due to the malpractices, irresponsibility and inadequate mechanism. However, here it is to argue that the understanding of the whole engagement of SCP is still incomplete for two main reasons. First, the above-mentioned studies could investigate only on one or other aspect of SCP for finding out the difficulties in implementation. This has helped getting insights in that specific area leaving out the invisible sources of problem located outside of investigating area. For example, examining the aspect of misappropriation of SCP funds could only give the insights in that particular area. i.e., how much money has been misappropriated, how it has been misappropriated, who are all involved in this, what are their interests, and what must be done to prevent it. However, this inquiry does not give the whole picture of the problem. Second, such approach has been based on conviction that the policy is a legitimate one. Subscribing to such simple convictions is dangerous. For instance, in the US the private actors who are fashionably called by Wedel as 'shadow elites' strategically placed people with their private agendas both in and outside government in order to co-opting policy portfolios and extinguishing meaningful oversight (Wedel 2009). Lack of such critical approach to understand policy blinds one from critically examining its character, process of formulation and implementation in holistic frame. However, the above studies are largely evaluative and assessment in nature, which is inadequate to understand the whole problem of SCP. Hence, the present attempt is to examine the policy in its conceptualization, unlike the above-mentioned studies.

At this stage, it is necessary to state what it means to study a policy as a problem and as process. Studying policy as a problem means, taking policy as an object of analysis (Wedel, Shore, Feldman and Lathrop 2005: 34). Taking it as a process means, considering it as a functional agent to establish a connection between the target-group and the government. Hence, it questions the taken for granted aspects of policy, which means a step-by-step critical analysis of whole policy processes i.e., taking up a social problem for policy considerations, formulation of policy, its execution and administration, and its impact on the target-group at the grassroots. Such step-by-step analysis is to trace the sequential order of events of the developments of a policy and it is a similitude to the genealogical analysis. A genealogical analysis propounded by Foucault would be in order for this purpose. There are two main reasons why Foucault's genealogical method is necessary here. One, in this case, it is to trace connections among various events, individuals, ideas, arguments and categories concerning the social phenomenon under investigation... Second, Foucault's genealogy, which is historical but not lineal and continuous but discursive in nature, which is based on tracing the genealogy through recorded historical events. He says...

³ The definition of BPL category remains as an unresolved issue even after several debates.

“And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of event or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history” (Foucault 1980: 117).

So, the historical events of SCP needs to be examined to trace its genealogy.

4. The Historical Contexts and Connections of SCP

First, it shall be remembered that the Indian Congress had to deal with the question of Scheduled Castes during the freedom struggle using the integrationist approach. As an inclusive policy they are made part of the larger Hindu Society against the claims made by Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar as an excluded community and that the British should treat them distinctively. Apart from political, there is another dimension, which became important after independence. The practice of untouchability for the modern Indian were seen as anathema in the sight of the modern western world, and therefore the Indian desired strongly to get the image of the society free from the traditional practices. Indian National Congress, the political party, and later on the government condemned and outlawed through constitution and enactment of laws. Bringing change in the attitude and practices of people and bringing economic change for betterment of scheduled castes has not been so easy.

Second, the fire lit by Ambedkar and fanned out by Gandhi and slogans of Congress party had raised the expectations of the Scheduled Castes so high that they wanted the promises of social justice, economic equality and political power to be fulfilled at the earliest. Day by day, the scheduled caste population became restless, as the promised economic development and social equality were not at sight. They started mounting pressure on the leaders and activists⁴ of/for the SC community particularly during 1970s for tangible results of their development. Thirdly, the political and economic climate of the country and the condition of the SCs in 1970s were such that an action of the government was a desperate need for getting the support of the SCs. They were still to be redeemed from the worst economic and social situations due to several factors. For instance, the caste system and Hindu religious practices against the SCs made them socially weak which ultimately led them to weak political and economic conditions. In addition to this, the frequent famines between 1940 and 1970 in many parts of the country affected the country's economy. Further, India's involvement in Pakistan-Bangladesh war in 1971 deteriorated the country's economic situation. The market became hostile to the common man and the prices of necessary daily provisions have risen to a high level that the common man could not afford fulfilment of minimum needs, especially the poor SCs⁵.

Fourthly, the success of green revolution introduced in 1960's has only benefited to those who have a piece of agricultural land. Since the majority of the SCs at that time were without any piece of agricultural land, they could not get benefit of the good yielding of green revolution even by 1970s. Instead it contributed for the further deterioration of the economic situation of the SCs i.e., as the earning of the farmers have increased due to the green revolution, their loss of purchasing capacity too increased due to the rising prices of the daily provisions. The poor SCs who are largely agricultural labourers and wage labourers could not earn enough money to afford their daily needs and they have been ultimately caught in an unbreakable vicious circle of poverty which provoked them to join the communist movement and to protest for the increase of the wages of the labour in many places across the county. This created tensions between the landowners, the government and the poor labourers.

Fifthly, the situation of tension between landowners and agricultural labourers emerged within no time and ultimately changed its form to be a caste conflict i.e., a conflict between dominant castes and inferior castes. This is because the majority of the land owners are from the upper castes and majority of the agricultural labourers are from lower caste i.e., prominently from SC community. Due to this reason, there were several incidents of mass attacks against SCs around 1970s. The Kilvenmani massacre in Tamil Nadu (Gough 1974 and Gorringe 2006), the Kanchika Cherla incident in Andhra Pradesh (Kafir 2010) and Marathwada riots in Maharashtra (Morkhandikar 1978) are some of the major recorded incidents that occurred on these lines. In some places they have formed organised groups to fight for their rights; for instance, Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra. These incidents had their waves all around in the county and ultimately pushed the SCs to protest against the government for the protection of their rights and for their welfare.

Sixthly, around the same time there was political instability i.e., between 1969 to 1971 and 1975 to 1977, which ultimately caused a split in the Congress Party. Babu Jagajjivan Ram who was a popular SC leader at the national level and in Congress Party had quit the party and started a new political party called Congress for Democracy (CFD) in 1977. This grabbed full attention of the government and could not concentrate on the general administration to keep it on the track. This effected the implementation of welfare programmes at that time. In addition to this, the government also lost the control over the market, which resulted in unreasonable price raise of the daily provisions.

Thus, the entire socio-economic and political situation left the SCs to be the most vulnerable in the society. The SCs continued to protest against the government to provide for their welfare in order to lead a decent life. There were attempts to form a national platform where SCs across the country can link their protests with one another. At last, due to overwhelming appeals and protests of different kind, the central government convened a meeting with Chief Ministers of all the states and union territories in 1975. There it was decided to adopt a development plan for the SCs. The decision of that meeting came in forefront as a development policy called Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes popularly came to be known as SCP during the financial year 1979-80. Later the Prime

⁴ Include SC and Non-SC activists.

⁵ One has to read Ms. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India's letters to all the states and union territories for the effective implementation of the policy of SCP intended for the speedy development of the Scheduled Castes in this context to understand extant condition.

Minister of India in 2005 in a meeting of the National Development Council has renamed it as Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (known as SCSP) and the same has been in force from 2006.

5. The Hollowness of the Policy

One wonders whether the government has ever thought about viability of SCP when it was formulated in that whether or not it was possible to allocate funds for SCP under each government department and ministry. The ground realities as discovered by different studies including the above referred ones do not support the success claims of the government. Most often the success remains in speeches and on papers. Hence, it needs a critical examination of the formulation and implementation of the SCP in order to unveil the mask.

5.1. Enforceable Guidelines and Accountability

Though the government, initially, appeared to be pushing so much upon the importance and need of the speedy development of SCs it constantly undermined the formulation of proper and apparent guidelines, which alone can make the implementation of SCP achievable as intended. Formulation of such guidelines is possible only through a parliamentary legislation but unfortunately, the government did not bring out proper guidelines. Neither the SCP has any protective measures of legal recourse. Instead, it has issued the guidelines through a few letters⁶ to the government departments and ministries of States and Union Territories. The guidelines to the States and UTs are as follows: (1) Earmarking of the funds equivalent to the proportion of SC population in their respective states and union territories under a separate head i.e., 789. (2) Preparation of programmes and schemes should be in a way that they are exclusively and directly beneficial to SCs. (3) Effectively implementing the programmes and schemes under SCP in all their respective ministries and departments on a fast track mode. However, the government never made the guidelines mandatory for the States and Union Territories through a Parliamentary legislation.

The unfortunate nature of the SCP has resulted in ineffective implementation of the schemes and programmes under the SCP. Firstly, it lost the vigour to stress upon the allocation of funds in proportion to the proportion of the SC population. The allocation of funds for SCP for the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th five year plans are 8.3%, 11.3%, 6.8%, and 10.7% (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment) respectively whereas the percentages of SC population have been shown as 15.81%, 16.48% and 16.23% in 1981, 1991 and 2001 census respectively. When the central government is not following its own guidelines in allocation of funds, then who else will? Consequently, this has been replicated by the state governments. It has been found that the governments of Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have not followed the guidelines in allocations of funds, though these governments have claimed the successful implementation of SCP.

Secondly, the funds are not fullyutilized. For example, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has received Rs. 18, 896.41 crore under SCP/TSP combined together in the last five years i.e., between 2008 and 2013. Nevertheless, when it comes to the spending of the received funds it is only 5 percent of the total funds. The amount has been spent for the development of SC/ST and the rest of the allocated funds are spent under the head 'general allocation and asset building'. In addition to this, the University Grants Commission has spent just Rs. 63.36 crore for the financial year 2011-2012 when it was supposed to spend some Rs. 780 crore that was allocated under the head of SCP (Mahaprashata 2014).

Thirdly, the non-mandatory nature of the guidelines became a leeway for the misappropriation and diversion of SCP funds. For example, the government of Andhra Pradesh has allocated Rs. 60 crore from SCP funds to the department of energy in 2012-13. However, no programme or scheme has been shown in the annual report about the development of SCs in this department. Further the department has shown an estimated amount for the financial year i.e. 2013-14 as Rs. 100 crore along with the estimated amount of Rs. 1 lakh for the electrification of Dalit Bastis, where it is practically impossible even to get electrification for a single Basti with the estimated amount of 1 lakh. The erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh diverted SCP funds to Hyderabad city beautification, city outer ring road, construction of metro rail etc. (2013-14). Similarly, the state government of Delhi has diverted sum of Rs. 678 crore of SCP funds to the 2010 Common Wealth Games in order to secure infrastructure to organise the event (Ramachandran and Goel 2011, NCDHR 2010, THE HINDU 2010). Besides this, there are several instances where funds are allocated without any reference to the outcomes expected (Cabinet Sub-Committee 2012).

Fourthly, as per the guidelines all the ministries and departments of the centre, states and the union territories should implement the programmes and schemes under SCP. However, the planning commission itself has stated in its report that still many central ministries and departments are not implementing the policy on the ground that they are not able to provide funds for the SCP because their funds are not divisible for they spend on large projects (Eleventh Five Year Plan 2008).

The above-mentioned cases are snapshots where there are large-scale non-allocation of funds, underutilization and diversion of funds have been found in the past 30 plus years. Under the given situation, it can be asked how the government of India would like to bring development of the SCs with such a handicapped policy?

5.2. The Vision for a Better SCP

If one asks, what is the vision of SCP, which, is essential for any policy to achieve its goals? The answer is that there is nothing. The policy should contain a systematic master plan of what to do, how to do and how long, and in this particular case of SCP it is lifting up of the SCs from the state of BPL category to the state of sustainability. However, such a statement is clearly lacking in the formulation

⁶See the endnote 5.

of SCP and formulation of programmes and schemes that are implemented under SCP. This has been fatal deficit in what the SCP is expected to provide, a better future for the SCs. The danger of such directionless programmes and schemes is that they make the beneficiaries to be permanently dependent on the benefits of the policy and if the policy is discontinued then they will fall back into their own situation where they were in the beginning.

In 1987, a member of the Parliament put a proposal forward. The proposal was to setup special administrative machinery with a view to accelerate the programmes for the speedy development of SCs. At that time the government has rejected the proposal without a second thought with an excuse that 'the social welfare department is already there to look after the implementation of the policy' (Lok Sabha Debates 1987, 6th August). However, Maharashtra was the first state to adapt a special mechanism for the purpose of execution of SCP. Noting that, the planning commission in its report in 2008 reiterated the importance of the special administrative mechanism for SCP. Even the Andhra Pradesh cabinet Sub-Committee, which, has thoroughly examined the status of SCP and SCs in the state has also strongly recommended for the setting up of special administrative machinery for the purpose of SCP execution (2012).

The government of India or the Planning Commission has no cross checking mechanism to examine whether the funds that are released under the SCP are utilized fully and properly. This is responsible for the preparation of faulty or distorting reports about the implementation of the programmes and utilization of funds. For instance, it is found that the departments and ministries of the government of Andhra Pradesh have submitted distorted reports on the implementation of SCP several times. Besides this, it is also found that the changing market patterns are not been taken into consideration while allocating funds under different programmes (Cabinet Sub Committee 2012).

5.3. Defective Assertions

Since the adoption of the policy, the government has been using the SCP for luring the SCs with special development schemes and programmes. The promises made in this regard remained mostly empty with no substantial impact on the SCs. For example, in 1983 the government has proposed to initiate a programme to uplift 50% SCs above the BPL line in 20 States and UTs during 6th five year plan i.e., 1980-81 to 1984-85 (Lok Sabha debates 1983, 6th April). However, when the government has taken the decision at that time, no such data was available pertaining to the number of BPL families either at the national level or at the state level. Nevertheless, there was no indication about the efforts that the government had made or undertook a study to get the actual numbers of BPL families around that time. It was only after ten years during the 8th five-year plan i.e., in 1992 for the first time, a comprehensive approach was adapted in India. The approach was to identify the BPL families in the rural areas due to mounting pressure against the government for consciously or unconsciously allowing the ineligible candidates to access benefits under different welfare programmes in place of eligible candidates (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2013b, Sundaram 2003).

In addition to this, questions are raised on the reliability of government's effort about the economic upliftment of the poor SCs above the BPL category in the first place (Lok Sabha Debates 1990, 28th December). The government is still fighting with the same intensity to wipe out the existence of BPL category among the SCs without a clear definition of BPL. The report of the planning commission has shown that among the SC population, 37% in the rural areas and 47% in the urban areas is living under the BPL category (Eleventh Five Year Plan 2008).

The lack of vision for creating permanent assets for SCs is another example of the defective assertions of the government. The government has been asserting that the adoption of the SCP is aimed at economic development through beneficiary oriented programmes for elevating the income levels and more importantly creating permanent assets for the SCs. The same is also mentioned in the policy itself. However, it has been found that the intensity of poverty is rising higher among SCs (India 1999) and even the disparities between rich and poor are increasing (Deaton and Draze 2002). A recent study by Centre for Economic and Social Studies has revealed the fact that the permanent assets possessed by the SCs, in particular, with reference to land ownership is that in every 100 SC people only 5 SCs own more than 5 acres of land in Andhra Pradesh. The average land owned among the SCs is just 0.22 hectares. The point to be noted here is that the extent of operated land by the SCs has been declining over the years from 1.19 hectares in 1976-77 to 0.8 hectares in 2005-06 (CESS 2012-13).

5.4. SCP as a Political Technology

As mentioned in the introduction the SCP has social, economic, political and cultural implications for the SC community. First, in 1970s the instrumental factor that drove the government to formulate SCP is, as explained before, participation of SCs in the movement demanding the government for taking steps for their social and economic development and protection of their rights and wellbeing. Besides this, there was a fear of Congress Party losing their vote bank for the split in the Indira Congress Party initiated by the popular SC leader. Hence, the government had to woo and win the favour of SCs and divert them from joining the militant political groups or parties. The first national level meeting was held with the Chief Ministers of the states and Union territories and all the Central Ministers to discuss various issues on the development of SCs in 1975. The government established the first commission for SCs and STs in 1978 though there is already a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes that has Constitutional mandate. In fact, there is no much difference between the Commission and Commissioner in their functions. At last, the former helped accommodating a few SC leaders as Chairman and Members of the Commission. The Mandal Commission was established in 1979 to satisfy the Backward Class communities, and finally came the grand proposal for the speedy implementation of the SCP in 1979. All these moves have made in order to take control of the uprising Dalit and Backward class Movement.

The steps initiated for the development of SCs seemed to have worked out effectively for some time and to certain extent until the movement slowed down. Later, the policy has been ineffective by taking advantage of the unenforceable guidelines. The SCP appears to have taken as a choice but not a mandate for the governments to implement the same. Thus, one can interpret that the government

became successful in maintaining the status-quo wherein the SCs will remain where they have been so. The issue of the empowerment of SCs can remain an everlasting slogan for the politicians and the government. Keeping the issue alive means creating more mileage for the political parties to easily grab the attention and mobilise the community for the electoral and other political purposes. This is one of the most important reasons why if majority of the SCs are spotted most of the time in association with a particular political party.

The ineffective SCP not only served the purpose of the political parties as mentioned above but also contributed to the continuation of the primordial sentiments of caste hierarchy and hegemony, but in a modified form. From the ancient times, the caste system excluded the SCs from the control of political and economic resources along with many other resources which kept the SC castes as weak groups. The introduction of SCP was meant to bring a change in the society. However, this did not happen so far and there are no indications that it could ever happen. The SCs perhaps have not achieved either political or economic independence or control over the resources as in case of others. The political parties that are dominated by the upper caste members and those who form the governments do not allow significant changes in the conditions of SCs. An Expert Group, which submitted its report to Planning Commission, has clearly identified the political marginalization of SCs (2008: 18). This not only shows, as Gilbert says, that government's irresponsibility and silently surrendering the public responsibility (2004) but also that policies are used as a tools to mobilise masses for political interests. Foucault calls this phenomenon as 'political technology'. He says, a political technology is a means by which power conceals its own operations (1991).

6. Conclusion

The modern welfare states develop policies to address social problems. However, India being a welfare state faces an acute social inequality that can be mitigated through welfare policies. One among them is SCP, which has been in force since 1980. However, even nearly after four decades its impact has been found to be nominal. The above discussion points out the fact that it is necessary to see the context within which the policy has been made. There is also a need to understand the welfare policy beyond the idea of being a tool to bring the welfare for the target group. The other side of it, as a political technology, serve the un-declared political purposes is equally important. It is proved in the case of SCP for SCs. Therefore, studying a welfare policy from the perspective of welfare alone is incomplete. Hence, it is argued that it is simultaneously important to understand the welfare policy in connection with historical and political point of view.

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