

The Impact of Inter-Caste Marriage Scheme of Dr. Ambedkar Foundation on the Lives of Beneficiaries

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In India, most Indian families still prefer marriages arranged within their religion and caste. Marriages outside these rigid boundaries have often led to violent consequences. Inter-caste married couples often become targets of severe physical assault, social ostracisation and economic boycott. There have been violent killings of inter-caste married couples, across India. The couples in Inter-caste marriages undergo hard times when their immediate families disown them. Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration through Inter-caste Marriages was introduced in 2013 under the aegis of Dr. Ambedkar Foundation (DAF), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The objective of the nation-wide scheme is to extend financial support to the inter-caste married couples to help them integrate into the mainstream of life.

The present study entitled ‘The Impact of Inter-Caste Marriage Scheme of Dr. Ambedkar Foundation on the Lives of Beneficiaries’ is to assess the social integration fostered by the scheme. The DAF Inter-caste marriage scheme offers monetary incentives to lower parental control over the choice of the spouse. There are many studies on the role of incentives in increasing/decreasing the pace of social integration through the medium of inter-caste marriage. Social integration is contextual and there is a need for more studies to bring out intrinsic factors behind inter-caste marriages.

Marriages in India are largely endogamous. As per estimates of National Family and Health Survey 4, only 3.4 percent of marriages are between Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled Castes. The Central government and various State governments have taken initiatives to promote inter-caste marriages. They have stated that the promotion of inter-caste marriages is a measure to integrate historically disadvantaged castes. To promote inter-caste marriages, most of the State governments in India have offered cash transfers to couples where one spouse belongs to Scheduled Castes and the other to Non-Scheduled Caste. Each State and Union Territory has discretion as regards the incentive to be offered for the inter-caste marriage scheme. Inter-caste marriage is now being regarded as an important index or indicator of integration by Dr.

Ambedkar Foundation as it is a means for breaking caste barriers. Against this backdrop, the Foundation has been taking all steps to propagate the idea of inter-caste marriage. An incentive of Rs 2.5 lakh was declared for every inter-caste marriage couple, where either the bride or the bridegroom is a Dalit. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been funding a centrally Sponsored Scheme where in Central assistance is provided to the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations, towards incentive for inter-caste marriages. A key element of the Central assistance to States is to provide an incentive for inter-caste marriages (where one of the spouses is a member of a Scheduled Caste). Almost all the States have instituted scheme for inter-caste marriages. There are many suggestions to improve the scheme implementation to accomplish the basic objective of the scheme, namely social integration through inter-caste marriage.

Overwhelmingly, the suggestions from inter-caste married couples, from this study, are that implementation gaps need to be plugged. The monetary incentive does not have an impact on intrinsic motivation for inter-caste marriage, because it is a post-marriage incentive. It only gives some relief to inter-caste married couples, who often face adverse social and economic consequences. Dr. Ambedkar's Scheme for Social Integration through inter-caste marriage should target inter-caste marriages between persons belonging to different States since the state-led implementation is limited to residents of the States. Although State governments have been implementing a financial support scheme, almost all the States restrict this scheme to the natives of the State. The quantum of incentive has to be linked to inflation and increase the amount accordingly.

Marriage under State Act should also be accepted without sole emphasis on marriage being solemnized under The Hindu Marriage Act 1955. The pattern of inter-caste marriages in India is affected by various socio-economic and demographic factors and there is a significant spatial variation too. Inter-caste marriages are now recognized as the main tool to blur the caste barriers in India, whether urban or rural. The Government should improve the structure of the incentives in this scheme. There is also a need for a positive administrative and policy measure to facilitate the social identity of children born out of the inter-caste marriages. Apart from financial assistance, in inter-caste marriages, many other factors are overlooked. The more urbanised States (barring Tamil Nadu) displayed a higher rate of inter-caste marriages than their

predominantly rural counterparts. It does point out that cities and urban areas are likely to have more conducive conditions for inter-caste marriages.

EVALUATION STUDY REPORT ON CENTRAL SECTOR SCHEME- “DR. AMBEDKAR NATIONAL MERIT AWARD FOR MERITORIOUS STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EXAMINATION BELONGING TO SCHEDULED CASTE OR SCHEDULED TRIBE”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Dr. Ambedkar National Merit Awards for Meritorious Students of Secondary School Examination belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) was commenced during the financial year 2002-03 to recognize the merit and encourage and motivate students belonging to SC/STs. It is a one-time cash award scheme, implemented by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation setup under aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.
- In this scheme, the candidates to be awarded are selected on the basis of merit in the education Board/Council. The Board/Council conducting the examination shall send the details of the students (name, address, percentage of marks, school last attended, nearest bank etc.) to the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation within 15 days of announcement of the examination results, with copy to the secretary, Education Department of the concerned State Government. This information later shared with Dr Ambedkar Foundation for awarding the meritorious students.
- Every year a total of 458 students belonging to SC/STs are felicitated with this award under the scheme throughout the country on fulfilling the eligibility criteria.
- The scheme serves SDG 4 which talks about “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” and SDG 5 “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The scheme is an initiative in the same direction, by providing additional assistance through special awards (girls). Awarding meritorious students can trigger a chain reaction, generating employability among the youth belonging to SC/ST.
- The study follows a process and outcome-oriented approach to gauge the impact of the scheme on the careers and lives of the awardees, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the

scheme, evaluating if the outcomes align with the pre-specified objectives of the scheme. Primary data was collected from the awardees for the academic year 2016-17 (awarded on 29.08.2018) through telephonic interviews. The study also identifies and measures performance on several indicators to assess the impact of the award on the confidence and motivation of the awardees.

- The study team also conducted Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with the key stakeholders of the scheme viz., awardees (belonging to 29 educational boards), and representatives from the foundation. The questionnaire was administered to get the responses of the foundation and the involved 29 educational boards.
- The Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with the awardees of the academic year 2016-17 was conducted virtually. However, an in-person FGD was conducted with Dr. D.P. Majhi, Director of Dr Ambedkar Foundation to collect the essential information for the study.
- The participants (awardees) shared that they have utilized the award money for various academic purposes like paying tuition fees/ coaching fees, etc. A couple of participants admitted that they have kept the amount as a fixed deposit in the bank and intend to use the same for joining coaching for preparation of UPSC examinations.
- Based on details shared by the foundation to the study team, a total of 52 randomly selected awardees were contacted telephonically. The study team decided to include at least 2 states, and 6 awardees from each of the NSSO classified zones. Also, it was decided to include all genders, locations (rural/urban), based on which more than 50% females, 50% awardees from rural as well as urban areas were to be included in the sample.
- As a part of the study, a total of 52 awardees were communicated telephonically. The telephonic interview included questions about basic details, the spending pattern, impact of the award on confidence level, difficulties faced from the involved bank's side, etc. This helped the study team in measuring the impact of the scheme on the lives and careers of the awardees, thus helpful in gauging the effectiveness of the scheme.
- The number of 1st rank holders (10 CGPA scoring students) from Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) was higher than other Education Boards/Councils. Approximately Rs. 53 Lakh have been incurred in awarding the meritorious students of CBSE of the academic year 2016-17. The scheme is a clear indicator of gender equality. The sample undertaken for study

comprises equal number of girls and boys awarded by the foundation for the academic year 2016-17. However, some Education Boards/Councils of States/UTs did not share the list of meritorious students. This resulted in absence of awardees from such education boards. Also, results of different education boards/councils are declared in different months, due to which the list of meritorious students is received through-out the year. This often results in delaying the process of felicitation (more than one year).

- Students preparing for NEET/JEE/NDA competitive exams found the actual educational expenditures much higher than the award amount. It was mentioned by the awardees that the coaching fees of NEET/JEE/NDA etc. and that of some degree courses are comparatively higher. Thus, a 20-30% increase is desired in the amount of award for all the ranks i.e., 1st, 2nd, 3rd and special awardees.

- Career counselling and financial guidance were two important suggestions given by the awardees. The career counselling was sought by awardees to know about different courses, colleges, stream selection, UPSC and Engineering service examinations and their preparation. Also, financial guidance regarding the utilization of the award money by the students was of great interest.

- On the scale of 1 to 5, the scheme got a rank of 4 out of 5 on average. This indicates that the scheme is performing extremely well on ground and shall be continued for the welfare of SC/ST category deserving candidates. However, some more changes could be made to improve the effectiveness of the scheme.

- Based on analysis and findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made by the study team.

- Providing the award timely or as early as possible after the receiving the list of meritorious students.

- Providing financial guidance for the correct usage of award amount.

- Providing career counselling during the academic session and before secondary level examination.

- Supporting meritorious students in pursuing higher studies.

- Formation of a group/association of previously awarded students.

- Sensitizing the concerned authorities of the Education Boards/Councils about the relevance of the award.

➤ Conducting an evaluation study to find out the reasons behind lack participation of students from Union Territories and some other states as well.

Evaluation of Central Sector Scheme “Dr. Ambedkar National Merit Award Scheme for Senior Secondary Examination”

Executive Summary

Education is the foundation stone for the development of society. The framers of our Constitution took note of the fact that certain castes in the country were suffering from educational as well as social backwardness arising out of the age-old practice of untouchability and social isolation, and that education is a must for their overall empowerment including economic upliftment. The scheme “Dr. Ambedkar National Merit Award Scheme for Senior Secondary Examination” intends to provide effective wings to meritorious SC category students and transforming their hollowed socio-economic conditions into a hopeful future. The scheme caters to students belonging to SC communities providing financial support to the meritorious students belonging to the SC category securing 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks along with three other highest scoring girl students from the category, in listed 29 educational boards, to adequately equip for continuing their studies and fulfilling their educational aspirations.

- The Board/Council conducting the examination shares the details of the students (name, address, percentage of marks, school last attended, nearest bank, etc.) to the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation. The information is duly authenticated by the Secretary of the Board/Council. The awardees are either invited to the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation; New Delhi for the felicitation or the Foundation sends the awards through respective District Magistrates/ Deputy Commissioners as per the convenience. This award is given over and above any other award, the student may receive from other sources.

- The scheme serves Sustainable Development Goal 4, as per UN guidelines, which talks about “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and also in line with the vision of the 12th Five Year Plan which clearly stated that the development of the country should proceed in a manner so that it is more inclusive and ensures broad improvements in the living standards of all classes and sections of the people, especially the Scheduled Castes /Scheduled Tribes.

- The study follows a process and outcome-oriented approach to gauge the impact of the scheme on the careers and lives of the awardees, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme, evaluating if the outcomes align with the pre-specified objectives of the scheme. Primary data was collected from the awardees for the year 2018

through telephonic interviews. The study also identifies and measures performance on several indicators to assess the impact of the award on the confidence and motivation of the awardees.

- The study team also conducted Focused Group Discussions (FGD) with the awardees (belonging to 29 educational boards), and representatives of the foundation. The participants shared that they have utilized the award money for various academic purposes like paying fees, to purchase a laptop, to incur the costs of hostels during their graduation days, etc. A few participants admitted that they have kept the amount as a fixed deposit in the bank and plan to use the same for taking coaching for UPSC examinations. A separate questionnaire was administered to record the responses of the foundation and the involved 29 educational boards.

- Based on details shared by the foundation with the study team, a total number of 50 randomly selected awardees were to be contacted via telephonically or virtually. The study team decided to include at least 2 states, and 6 awardees from each of the NSSO classified zones. Also, it was decided to cover awardees, gender-wise, location-wise (rural/urban), and subject-wise. As a result more than 50% females, 40% beneficiaries from rural areas, and 10% beneficiaries from each subject-stream were included in the sample.

- As a part of the study, a total of 52 awardees were contacted. The telephonic interview comprised questions regarding basic details, the spending pattern, impact of the award on confidence level, difficulties (if any) faced from the bank disbursing the award money, etc. This helped the study team in assessing the impact of the scheme on the lives and careers of the awardees.

- The study outlines the following objectives:

- To ascertain the purpose for which the amount awarded under the scheme is being utilized
- To assess the socio-economic impact of financial assistance provided to awardees.
- To examine the impact of the award money on the personality of the awardees

- The major findings of the study include:

- Less than 30% of the awardees are keeping the amount received under the award as a fixed deposit. This indicates that a major proportion of the awardees are using the amount as per personal needs.
- 38 out of 52 respondents have utilized the money on pursuing higher education. Hence, it can be inferred that the majority of awardees are using the money received under the award for higher education.
- All 52 respondents said that they utilized or saved the money as per their choice, and there was no pressure from parents to spend the amount in a particular manner.
- 27 out of 52 respondents were spending the financial assistance under the guidance of their elder siblings, another 18 admitted to using the financial assistance under the guidance of their parents. 7 respondents said that they were being guided by their relatives.
- The awardees did not face any problems in withdrawing money from the banks.
- Almost 67% of the respondents found that the amount given under the scheme is sufficient. Other 33% of respondents however were of the view that the financial assistance is not sufficient and must be increased.
- According to the information collected, 20 respondents admitted to pursuing a higher degree of personal choice only because of the financial assistance received.
- All 52 respondents were of the view that this award was a morale booster for them and to realise their potential to scale new heights.
- The award positively impacted the quality/standard of living of 36 respondents was impacted positively by the award. There were examples of better opportunities and even better college choices due to the financial assistance given to the students.
- 23 respondents admitted that they got benefits/recognition under a similar scheme. However, none of those were on the national level.
- Even though several boards have given the list of more than one student for each position (1st, 2nd and 3rd) as students secured same marks, the number of awards for rank holders and several awards for special girl child still remain below the specified number set as per the scheme guidelines.
- The amount of disbursement for the award was underutilized by nearly 20%. This indicates the loss incurred by the students from educational boards who were unable to share the list of students with the foundation due to inaction on the part of board officials and state machinery.

- During the FGD with Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Director and staff concerned, it was found that many deserving students especially those from geographically fringe locations loose on a great opportunity due to a lack of action on the part of state authorities.
- Based on the analysis and findings of the study, the study team is of the view that the scheme has performed well on the ground level. It has been extremely beneficial to the deserving students from the SC category. However, the study makes few recommendations:
 - Timely disbursement of the awards, after the declaration of the results.
 - Financial guidance towards the utilization of the award amount.
 - Course-based financial assistance.
 - Economic condition-based financial assistance.
 - Considering indirect benefit transfers in kind.
 - Providing career counselling at the school level.
 - Supporting meritorious students in pursuing higher studies.
 - Formation of a group/association of previously awarded students.
 - Sensitizing the concerned authorities of education boards/councils about the relevance of the award.
 - Conducting an evaluation study to find out the reasons for non-inclusion of students from Union Territories and some other states.