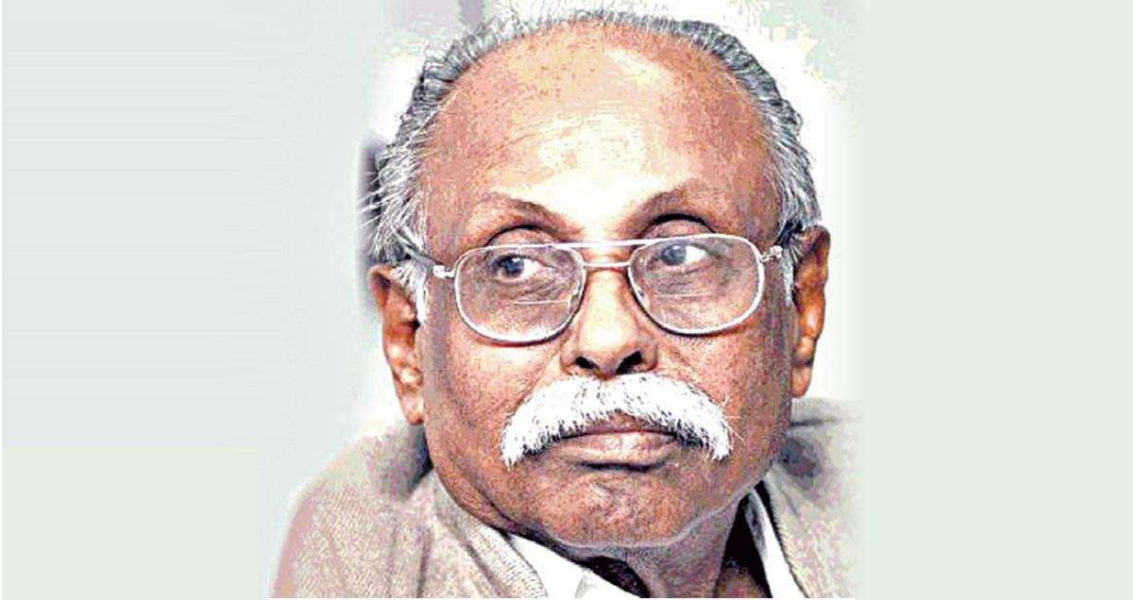


The uniqueness of special component plan for Dalits



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The state government has brought in the Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan for SC/ST Act, 2024. This law has been introduced now to speed up the implementation of the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan and the Tribal Sub-Plan which have remained only on paper for around 50 years.

The Tribal Sub-Plan was formulated by Dr. Bhupinder Singh, IAS, and Dr. B.D. Sharma, IAS, in the 1970s. The scheme, which was named as Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs from 1978 to 2006, and later called Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP), was drawn up by the late IAS officer P. S. Krishnan.

Follower of Ambedkar

Though born into a forward community Tamil family, P. S. Krishnan was guided by B.R. Ambedkar’s social ideology at a young age. A gold medallist in Sanskrit and philosophy in Kerala University, he took charge as an IAS officer in Andhra Pradesh in 1956, the year Ambedkar passed away.

Realising that there was no plan for Dalits in the government administration nor in the IAS training, Krishnan took upon himself the responsibility of implementing the Constitutional rights for the Dalits in his day-to-day work. But the politicians, offended as they were by his work, ensured that he was transferred to Delhi.

Krishnan, who examined the union government schemes for the Dalits, found that there were only the laws and plans put in place by Ambedkar.

In his interview, captioned as 'Crusade for Social Justice,' to educationist V. Vasanthi Devi, Krishnan said, "Ambedkar served as Labour Minister in the British government from 1942 to 1946. He formulated laws and projects for the welfare of labourers and women. He also introduced national reservation in union government jobs for Dalits. He brought in scholarship schemes for Dalit students pursuing post-schooling education and going abroad for higher studies. Ambedkar had well understood the nature of the upper caste people dominating in India's social and economic politics. So he was able to predict what would happen to the Scheduled Caste people when the upper castes became dominating forces. That was why he introduced reservation and educational schemes for the Dalits even before Independence, paving way for an easy implementation of those projects after Independence. Therefore, it was very difficult for those who captured political power after Independence to scrap the schemes for the welfare of Dalits. Besides, it was easier in independent India to expand the schemes to cover the STs also."

Special component plan

We can understand from what has happened to the Backward Castes (OBCs), how things would have been if Ambedkar had not drawn up plans for the Dalits' welfare. The OBCs are the ones who missed the opportunity. They had not got anything before Independence and even after Independence, they had to wait for several decades to get back their rights. They got benefits only in the 1990s when the Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented, said Krishnan.

Krishnan, who examined what could be done further for the Dalits, took up the Gandhi-Ambedkar Poona pact inked in 1932. The agreement had a provision that "sufficient funds must be allotted from the educational grants of every province for the Dalit communities." He developed the provision into a special component plan for the SCs/STs to get them a share in the development schemes and investments of the state and union governments.

Krishnan is a classic example of the idea that government administrators can execute work for the liberation of the people.

"At that time, the union government schemes had not mentioned anything about the economic state of the Scheduled Castes. Just like educational development, economic development is also necessary to get liberated from economic slavery. It is economic development which can give the marginalized people the power to shatter all barriers of untouchability, caste discriminations and all sorts of oppression," he said, adding, "It was the Pune pact which inspired me to formulate the Special Component Plan for the SCs during the Janata rule in 1978."

Krishnan viewed the Special Component Plan as a tool of powerful planning and also as a project with a latent power of bringing about an integrated development of the Scheduled Castes. He expected the Dalits to become more aware and awake to use this tool themselves. "Just like the ghettos Hitler created to segregate and alienate the Jews, there are Dalit colonies in every village and town. However it is the Dalits who form major chunks of rural farm laborers and urban contract and unorganized workers. It is to change their livelihood for the better that the Special Component Plan was brought in. I formulated this Special Component Plan to ensure that the benefits of projects reach the SCs directly, fulfilling their

basic amenities such as drinking water, drainage, roads, electricity, graveyard, etc. in the areas where the Dalits live as individuals, clusters, groups and families,” Krishnan said.

Steps for wholesome development

Since 1979, state-level special component plans have been drawn up. Krishnan started in 1980 the scheme of Special Central Assistance to states’ special component plans. Speaking to the state officials, he said categorically, “Dalits too will have a part in the schemes for all people. But that is not the special component plan. Nor does it mean allotment of a certain percentage of funds to Dalits. The special component plan is meant entirely for the Dalit individuals, families, and clusters directly.”

Krishnan said, “The major contribution I have made in my career and life is the special component plan for the wholesome development covering all aspects of Dalits.” He has left behind a legacy of an action plan for the future in this regard.

Krishnan passed away on Nov. 10, 2019. When he was alive, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka enacted their laws to implement the special component plan. Now Tamil Nadu has joined them with its law. The special component plan should be implemented through this law in Tamil Nadu too.

Translated by V. Mariappan.