Abstract

This study entitled ‘Socio-Economic Impact of Job Reservation: A Comparative Study of the Christian Malai Arayans and Other Hill Tribes in Idukki and Kottayam Districts of Kerala’ is an endeavor to evaluate the overall progress of the Christian Malai Arayans in juxtaposition with that of the Hindu Malai Arayans, the Ulladans and the Uralies. Relying on empirical data, the researcher compared the level of development achieved by these tribes on the basis of a composite index of development (Socio-Economic Development Index). Socio Economic Development Index consists of the component indices like income, education, basic amenities, social infrastructure and freedom from social evils. The level of development and the gap in development of the tribes under study have been assessed within the broader theoretical parameters of Amartya Sen’s concept of development as freedom. The study establishes a positive relationship between job reservation and socio-economic development of the Christian Malai Arayans. One of the major findings of the study is that the Christian Malai Arayans have been able to attain a higher socio-economic development in relation to their tribal compatriots. The fact that the Christian Malai Arayans have been more successful in availing themselves of the policy of reservation is quite patently crystallized from the empirical data. It emerges from the study that other tribal groups have not been quite successful in utilizing the reservation provisions effectively. The inspirational role played by the protestant missionaries and later by the Church of South India has been found to be instrumental in enhancing the capabilities of the Christian segment of the Malai Arayans. As a result, they have managed to secure more employment in the organized sector availing themselves of the reservation provisions. The deleterious effects of a market friendly development trajectory on the poorer sections in general and the tribals in particular have manifested themselves in the form of reduced employment opportunities in the public sector. Employment statistics of the Central and State governments during the period 1994-2004 substantiate this point. This study does not uphold the superiority of any faith but only acknowledges the efficacy of the micro level development strategy adopted by the Church in the case of Malai Arayans.

Keywords: Socio-economic development, Deprivations, Entitlements, Capabilities, Positive discrimination, Neo-liberal development paradigm, Job reservation.