

CHAPTER XVI : MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

16.1 Recovery at the instance of Audit

Failure of the Ministry to exercise adequate control over release of grant to Ambedkar Foundation for acquisition of land for setting up of Ambedkar Memorial resulted in blocking of ` 9.77 crore for over six years. On being pointed out, the Foundation refunded the amount together with interest to the Ministry.

The Ministry of Welfare (now Social Justice and Empowerment) decided to acquire the property at 26 Alipur Road¹, Delhi for setting up Dr. Ambedkar Memorial in October 1992. The memorial was to commemorate the national leader and to respect the sentiments of the public at large.

The Ministry requested the Delhi Administration (now Government of NCT Delhi) (October 1992) to acquire the land at 26 Alipur Road, Delhi from its private owners and place it at the disposal of Dr. Ambedkar Foundation². The Ministry released ` 12.15 crore to the Foundation for acquisition of land for putting up the memorial between 1995-96 and 2003-04. The Foundation on the directions of the Ministry paid an amount of ` 15.46 crore during 1996-97 to 2001-02 to the Government of NCT of Delhi towards the cost of the said property. However, as the Government of Delhi provided an alternate land to the owners of the property, at Mall Road, Delhi, it refunded the entire amount of ` 15.46 crore to the Foundation during 2003-04.

The Ministry directed the Foundation (October 2003) to arrange for the payment of ` 2.09 crore to be made to the private owners towards the difference in value of structures existing on two plots of land to be exchanged and for execution of lease deed. Accordingly, Foundation paid ` 2.09 crore (October 2003) and ` 28.38 lakh (November 2003) towards the cost of the structures on the said land to the private owners and transfer duty on account of registration of 'Deed of Exchange' to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi respectively.

¹ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had lived and attained parinirvan at 26, Alipur Road, Delhi

² Set up in March 1992 to acquire, preserve and protect places connected with Dr. Ambedkar's life and to construct Dr. Ambedkar Memorials

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Thus, against the release of ` 12.15 crore by the Ministry (1995-96 to 2003-04) the Foundation actually incurred an expenditure of ` 2.38 crore only leaving an unspent amount of ` 9.77 crore. Audit noted that this amount should have been refunded by the Foundation. However, the foundation irregularly retained this amount and invested this sum in interest bearing deposits.

The inaction by the Ministry to seek refund of the unutilized grant resulted in blocking of ` 9.77 crore with the Foundation for more than six years.

Upon being pointed out by Audit, the Foundation refunded this amount together with interest of ` 5.47 crore to the Ministry in March 2011.