

Reservations Should Address Economic Vulnerability

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Introduction

Reservation policy fails to achieve its purpose of giving equal opportunity to everyone because of lack of infrastructure in the rural areas of the country where the proportion of backward classes is significant.

A number of people living in some remote areas in Orissa, M. P. or Bihar are not even aware of these policies. They are deprived of even primary education and basic employment which make them more backward financially. It fails to establish which causes disequilibrium in the status of the states.

The total reservation quota stands at 49% in many states of India and this includes the SCs, STs, and OBCs. The trend seems to have shifted to reverse discrimination rather than more affirmative action. Some backward class's elite has gained political and economic advantage based on this reservation.²

However, a majority of the backward classes is not living any differently than before because their subsistence is inadequate and rural lifestyles do not provide them with any of the benefits. The worst thing is that many are not even aware of these policies, especially in the interior parts of the nation.³ Thus a different economic class system present within the backward classes category. Most people who are economically strong have gained the advantages and the economically weaker people are still without any significant positive change in their condition.

Background

It is interesting to note that the constitutional provisions regarding reservations Article 15 clause (4) which explicitly single out certain castes for special preferential treatment contradicts the documents prohibition on discrimination Article 15 clause (1) and (2) based on caste, race and

other such other criteria. We can observe how the constitution of India is itself contradicting with its articles regarding Reservation.

In reality, there is no abolishment of the caste system. Instead, the disparity increases because of negative attitude on both sides. The member of lower class strongly feels that they do not have sufficient support from government and the members of upper classes feel that in spite of their hard work and merits they do not have the same opportunities they are getting discriminated by the government of the country.

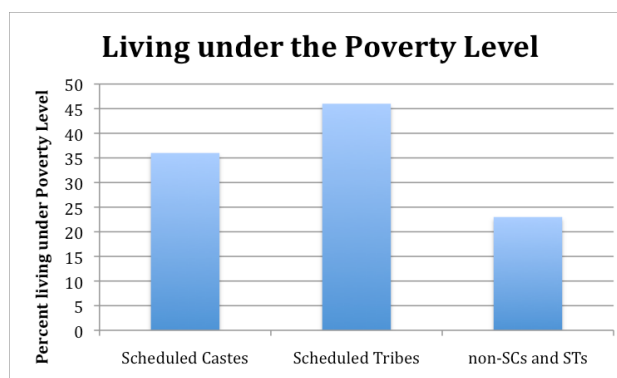


Fig: Percent of Scheduled groups living under the poverty level compared to the rest of the Indian population, 2005

Source: Chin & Prakash, 2009 based on the 2004-2005 National Sample Survey Data

All constitutional provisions are present, prohibitions and laws, violence and injustices against untouchables but it continues even today, particularly in rural areas all these are done by Powerful people who may not belong to the general category but they have money so they are using it for exploitation.

The other people who are minor in total population are also started demanding reserved representation too; this situation will ultimately lead, where the seat left for the majority would not be sufficient for their population. Thus the whole purpose of reservation for providing equal

opportunity gets lost. The caste system and discrimination have carried on by the people in spite of the reservation quota.⁴

The reservation policy has brought a climate of negativity and division between people belonging to different castes. Regional political parties have risen up with an agenda to promote caste ideology among the people for their support and gains.⁵

The reservation has become an election tool these days. Reservation policy has also very well promoted caste over intellectuals and hard workers. As a result, we are producing not those level engineers, doctors, bureaucrats and other professionals under the present reservation policy because many students who deserve seats are not getting it. The policy just does not make an obstacle for deserving people but also decreasing the opportunity for people. It is increasing the number of people who are incompetent and decreasing those people who deserve and are more qualified individuals.⁶

The reservation policy has started to divide India's future generations at a very small age. A child who is not belonging to any reserved category has to work twice as hard compared to a child with a reserved category and, future with already much better financial means. Maybe the reservations policy has double-crossed as we see today are mostly held by the upper-class people because they have been thought to excel since childhood to the lack a reserved future and opportunities.⁷

If we continue to bring people in our colleges, filling our jobs and promoting the decision making positions based on the reserved caste category, soon we would be the sole country with the more incompetent number of people and less number of competent people. We need a policy which really helps people deprived of education and means of better life. Reserving a certain percentage of seats in the higher education and jobs in the high ranks of the government

is not the above picture clearly shows that the reservation policies in last 60 to 70 years have failed for what they formed to do. It is time to try the new approach to abolish reservation because due to Reservation, effectiveness and efficiency are in peril. At this point in time, the abolition of the reservation quota and setting up the better system for positive action would be beneficial to the whole nation.

There have been improvements due to the reservation policies, which cannot be un-noticed at any cost. But it is not easy to pinpoint as to how much of these improvements can be credited to reservations and how much might have occurred without them as a result of government's general development policies and economic growth.

It can be observed that reservation policy and its dedication is likely to increase the caste gap rather than help decrease inequality in the society. The unacceptable truth is that these policies will never help reach the long term goal of equality with this work. So here comes a need for serious consideration for the reservation policy in India, especially when it comes to educational institution and employment.

Part XVI (Article 330-342) of the constitution deals with special provisions for certain classes, viz. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, the constitution does not specify the persons who fall in these two categories but leaves it to be determined by the President of India. Some of the important measures made by the constitution for this purpose include.⁸

- (a) Reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures on the basis of their population.
- (b) Special power of certain special powers on the State Governments to impose some special provision on the right of SCs and STs to protect their interests.
- (c) Provisions of special grants by the center to the state for meeting the cost of the scheme

of welfare designed for the scheduled tribes and raising the level of the administration in scheduled areas.

- (d) Appointment of a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes by the President. It is the duty of the Commission to investigate the matters relating to safeguards for SCs and STs and to submit the necessary report to the President. That report is laid before each House of Parliament.
- (e) To pay special attention to the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of society to prevent their exploitation.⁹

Backward Classes—besides special provisions for the SCs and STs, The Constitution has made separate provisions for the improvement of all. Backward classes are not defined in the constitution but since it comes in addition to the terms STs and SCs. We may observe that there are other backward classes as well. Article 340 provides for the appointment of the commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes.¹⁰

Two Backward class commissions were set up under Article 340 after the constitution was adopted. The Kakkasaheb Kelkar commission, appointed in 1953 submitted its report in 1955 and used four criteria for identifying other Backward Classes (OBCs)

- (1) Low social position in the traditional hierarchy of Hindu Society.
 - (2) Lack of educational progress among the majority of a particular caste/ community.
 - (3) Inadequate representation in trade, commerce, and industry.
 - (4) Inadequate representation in Government.
- The commission used the first criterion to relate with social backwardness. The report was considered too vague and impractical.

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The center's next initiative come in 1978 when the Janta Government appointed a

commission under B.P. Mandal to find out how many backward classes there were in the country. The report of this commission which identified 3743 backward class was shelved till 1990 when the V.P. Singh Government brought out the order for 27% reservation in central services for other backward classes.¹²

It is sheer politics. The desperation is the reflection of the fact that the Congress is unable to reinvent itself in its quest for a majority. Neither BJP nor Congress can boast of social diversity that is necessary to represent the plurality of India. The country's two largest parties are controlled by upper caste. The Congress believes it can alter its state of irrelevance in over 200 Lok Sabha seats by wooing back Dalits and OBCs. Instead of giving reservations, scholars say, we must take a series of sequential steps ranging from education to vocational training to financing enterprises though some parties prefer quick fix solutions. The Congress is one of them. It has taken the diagnosis of a physician and approached a quack for the prescription.

Our population is 1.02 billion and the SC/ST population is around 240 million (24 Crores). Let us have a look at some telling figures about reservations.

- (1) The number of OBC MPs sitting in Parliament is 110.
- (2) 12 Chief Ministers of the states belong to OBC in present.
- (3) The literacy rate of SCs is 37.82%
- (4) 79.88% of high school dropout is from Scheduled Castes.
- (5) 1 lakh estimated number of Government jobs under quota lies vacant across the country.
- (6) 6% class I Central Government jobs are held by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- (7) 89% class I Central Government jobs are held by others who constitute only 25% of the population.

After analysing all the facts and figures we can see that somewhere reservation is affirmative and negative both but we have to make it totally affirmative and for this, we need Class based reservation.¹³

For class-based we have to follow some steps which will work like a bridge to the Class-based reservation.

- (1) Further policies or entreaties for any kind of reservation need to be discarded and disconnected.
- (2) There is the need for a slow but a steady removal of reservation quotas.
- (3) Development of more and better infrastructure in the rural areas to remove disparities is necessary. Education and knowledge in a modern society would lead to the removal of some, if not all, discrepancies in treatment of people based on caste, culture, and religion.
- (4) We could also develop a system to find the neediest economically backward classes to work for that upliftment of backward classes.
- (5) For already entered categories (in employment) we could make the promotions of the jobs merit-based.
- (6) Provide economically and financial support to those who are below poverty line, without considering that they are general or OBC or any other caste.¹⁴

Now, with this, we can get the class-based reservation.

Conclusion

If we try to analyse the objective of reservation then we find that it was made for helping those who really have no support, but if those who already are capable for doing all the activities then Reservation is not needed to them it will be wasted.

In Ancient times we have divided India into four types of people, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vishay,

and Sudra, and now we have divided India into Four types of category General, OBC, SC, ST.

We are not able to unite our country till now, at this time also we have divisions only words are the change, not the situation.

If we want a united and a happy India where everyone is equal and everyone has same opportunities in life then we have to remove the reservation from the mind of the people. There is no use of government policies until and unless it is benefiting the needy people.

If those who have already many resources if he gets from the reservation is bad, but if who had very fewer resources get the benefit of reservation then it's not bad, policies are for people befits only not for Enjoyment, this creates a discrimination of people in the society.

This is like saying we will fight one kind of inequality but not another. In my view, both should be addressed, not only one. Poverty can also be solved with class-based reservation. Lack of economic resources can be fixed with free tuitions and funds to enable study. Particularly worthy students from economically weaker sections of society could even be paid to attend college so that they don't have to drop out in order to earn. This may have an overlap where backward castes and economically backward students overlap, in which case they should benefit from both, of course. Giving protection to one by making unsecured to other is a bad idea, but giving support to both can be said as a good idea of governance; it is fundamental cheapness that refuses to take responsibility for the whole range of assistance needed.¹⁵

Replacing caste-based reservations with class-based reservation with the observing committee will help more than the current reservation system where 49% to 50% is for one section and rest for one.

In the class-based system or Income-based system, people who actually deserve the money

and other resources will get it, the possibility of fraud and cheat to the public will reduce to some level.

(Endnotes)

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Reducing Age Limit For Elections : A Boon Or Bane

Soma Sarkar¹

“Once in every five years, India wakes up to the loud sounds and spicy smells of the biggest festival in the world which cuts across all religions, caste and creed. Yes, they are elections which symbolizes the spirit of India’s democracy. Crores of rupees are spent by politicians who turn into marketing genius, each portraying himself/herself as the savior of the masses, sometimes at the cost of discrediting political rivals i.e. a spade for a spade. Apart from the usual placards, billboards and advertisements what adds color to such campaigns are the slogans which strike a chord with the masses.”² In short today elections comprise only of three things- rhetoric, posters and slogans.

“Article 84 (b) of Constitution of India provides that the minimum age for becoming a candidate for Lok Sabha election shall be 25 years. Similar provision exists for candidates to the Legislative Assemblies vide Article 173 (b) of the Constitution³ read with Section 36 (2) of the Representation of People Act, 1951⁴.”⁵ This is exactly what takes place in America wherein the minimum age required is 25 years and 30 years to be elected as a member of Congress and Senate respectively. The citizens are at logger heads regarding reducing the age limit for contesting elections. Some are of the opinion that contesting polls and casting vote are poles apart. A contesting candidate has to look after the general well being of the people and has to take the steps in the same direction. Educational competence is must to have a good command over parliamentary trust and initiate a must needed change. At the age of 21, the young blood build castle in the air. In other words they are lacking stability of character and personal maturity which makes decision making process complex in deep waters. Reduction of age would merely give precedence to those who are the

children of politicians as they get the benefit of being a known face even without any experience of striking a chord with public in general on issues relevant and important for the nation. This was one side of the coin.

Now the other side of the coin needs to be unearthed. With the passage of Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, the juveniles now between the ages of 16-18 years are to be tried as adults for heinous crimes keeping in mind the increasing number of serious offences being committed by teenagers in the 16-18 years’ age group. Then why not the age for contesting elections be reduced? According to the World Bank census report 2011, youth population in India comprises of 623.27 million males and 587.58 million females.⁶ As per National Crime Record Bureau, a total of 41,385 juveniles were apprehended during 2015 out of which 40,468 were boys and 917 were girls.⁷ Between July 2011 to June 2012, the unemployment percentage among males is 6.1 % and 7.7% among females between the age group of 15- 29 years.⁸ This is a very crucial stage and needs to be handled with extreme caution. Everyone of us must have heard that ‘An Empty Mind Is A Devil’s Workshop’. Due to depression they take up the road leading to darkness and downfall. It’s much better to engage them with the political affairs. It exposes them to the realities of the world and the working of the government. At the same time it enhances their practical knowledge with making them experienced. The juveniles are comparatively committing more crimes than the adults using new methods. India would reach the pinnacle of glory if these young minds are channelized for the betterment of the country rather than her downfall. The only means to achieve this is by guiding them in the right direction. It also instills pride for ones country along with arousing