



Role of reservation in development of scheduled caste population in India

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Abstract

After independence, the Constitution of India piloted by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar prescribed certain protection and safeguards for the SCs and STs with the objective of promoting their educational, economic and political interests. The Government has yet so far provided various plans and programmers offering them opportunities to develop. It provided general infrastructure and resource development-like providing educational facilities, health services and building communication networks etc. The current paper analyses the impact of reservation on the Scheduled Caste population of India.

Keywords: SC, ST, reservation, education facilities

Introduction

One of the main goals of development is to eliminate poverty. Poverty ultimately deprives people of the capability to live decent and healthy lives and of the opportunities to develop their potential to the maximum. Fighting poverty has been a primary goal of advancing the welfare of individuals in less developed countries. The Indian government has also been deeply concerned with widespread poverty and implemented several anti-poverty schemes in the past. However, rural poverty remains stubbornly persistent, with the headcount ratio being 42.7 per cent in 1993/94 (Dubey and Gangopadhyay 1998)^[2]. More troubling is the concentration of rural poverty in India in the 'scheduled caste' (SC) and 'scheduled tribe' (ST) population. Though striking, it may not be surprising, since the scheduled groups have historically faced discrimination. Since 1950, affirmative action programs have been at the core of Indian social policy towards these two social groups. According to the 1991 Census of India, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprise 16.5 percent and 8.1 percent respectively of India's population, yet about 43.53 per cent of India's rural poor are concentrated in these two social groups. Poverty rates among scheduled caste and tribe households are significantly higher than the rest of the population - in 1993/1994, the proportion of SC and ST households below the poverty line were 49.0 and 49.5 per cent respectively, as compared to a poverty rate of 32.8 per cent for non-scheduled households. There exists a gap in the proportion living in poverty (a 'poverty gap') of 16.2 percent (=49.0-32.8) between SC and non-scheduled households, and a 'poverty gap' of 16.7 percent (=49.5-32.8) between ST and non-scheduled households.

One major task in the fight to reduce rural poverty is, therefore, to close the gap in poverty rates between scheduled castes and tribes and the nonscheduled group. Though the large gap in poverty rates between scheduled and non-scheduled groups may not be surprising, it is important to understand what causes the poverty gap between the scheduled and non-scheduled groups to be so large.

One of the major causes of poverty is lack of education among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations in India. To correct the historical biases against education of SC and ST populations of India, the government has been using affirmative actions in the form of reservations in jobs and educational institutions. The current paper analyses the impact of and the implementation of reservation on the development of Scheduled Caste populations in India.

The Central Government recruitment has been an important and largest area, where the reservation policy can be implemented effectively. But over the years, the status of reservation in this area has been weak. (See Table No.1) Immediately, after the independence, since, the educational status of Scheduled Castes (SCs) was poor, this factor must be considered. The class of the post can be classified into four, namely, 'Class I', 'Class II', 'Class III' and 'Class IV'. The Class I posts are very important, which are involved in the decision making process. Whereas, Class II posts are also equally important. But Class III and Class IV posts are classified as inferior posts. It includes, 'peons', 'sweeper' etc. Over the years, the representation of SCs in class I posts, has been increasing at a steady rate. It was just 0.35 per cent to the total number of posts in 1953, which reached to 10.13 per cent in 1995. The prescribed quota of reservation for SCs is 15 per cent of the total posts. Yet there remains a backlog of about 4.87 per cent of the total. At national level, this figure may include hundreds of posts. It means, the SCs have been kept away from the decision making process. This could be stated as, one important reason, for huge backlog of SCs in the recruitment. Similar trend could be found in Class II posts, where the representation of SCs was 1.29 per cent in 1953, which reached 13.13 per cent in 1995. Here also backlog could be estimated at about 1.87 per cent of its total posts. Altogether, Class I and Class II backlog in the reservation has been in significant size. The growth of reservation in the recruitment has been slow. The reservation status of SCs in class III posts in 1953 was 4.52, which increased to 15.46 per cent in 1995. The representation in the present era is

satisfactory. More interestingly, In Class IV, the representation of SCs has been higher from the beginning, i.e. in the year 1953, it was 20.52 per cent and in the year 1995, it was 20.46 per cent. The reservation status in Class IV has more than the requirement. This is because, except SCs/STs and other backward castes, no one from upper castes, applies for the post like ‘sweeper’. It means, in the government recruitment also, there could be found a ‘Varna’ System. The caste system has been percolated in the government services. The main part of the reservation policy is that, the Class I and II backlog must be filled as soon as possible. But the problem is that, in the contemporary period, the government is adopting ‘Zero Recruitment Policy’. In this situation, the SCs. may be losing its posts or the rights of reservation. This could be stated as an injustice to the SCs.

Table 1: Reservation Status of Scheduled Castes in Central Government Recruitment

Year	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
1953	00.35	01.29	04.52	20.52
1965	01.64	02.82	08.88	17.73
1970	02.36	03.84	09.27	18.09
1975	03.43	04.98	10.27	18.64
1979	04.83	08.07	11.54	19.16
1992	09.70	11.60	15.80	20.70
1995	10.13	13.13	15.46	20.46

Source: 1. Department of Personnel, Government of India, Report-1993, 2. Social Welfare Committee for SCs/STs Report-99-2000

Relative Disparity in the Implementation of Reservation Policy in India

The reservation policy for Scheduled Castes is most important, since it is linked with their social and economic identity. Reservation is the right of the Scheduled Castes, however, there have been high rate of disparity in the implementation of reservation policy in India. The rate of disparity can be calculated after 1979-80, since before, the educational level of Scheduled Castes was not satisfactory. But in the present context, the Scheduled Castes have achieved a satisfactory level of education all over India. Therefore, the author has calculated the rate of disparity after 1979- 80 in relation to the rate of reservation determined by the Government of India. As per the Government of India, the reservation quota for Scheduled Castes is 15 per cent. The rate of disparity over the years has been declining. In Class I posts, the disparity was higher (67.8 per cent) in 1979, which declined to 35.3 per cent in 1992 and further declined to 31.3 per cent in 1995. However, there still exists a significant level of disparity in the implementation reservation policy. In case of Class II posts, the disparity was 46.2 per cent in 1979, which declined to 22.66 per cent in 1992 and then to 12.6 per cent in 1995. In these two categories of the posts, there exists significant level of disparity in the implementation of reservation. These posts are important, which are part of decision-making process. Table 2 explains the trend in the rate of disparity over the years in comparison to other categories of posts. In case of Class III & IV posts, the implemented reservation is more than the prescribed. This indicates negative disparity. These posts are inferior level posts, hence,

except the SCs, hardly any one is ready to work. This is a result of ‘Hindu Caste System’. And once, in the government sector, the caste structure has been strictly established through the occupations.

Table 2: Disparity in the Implementation of Reservation Policy in India for SCs. (All Figures in Per cent)

Year	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
1979	67.8	46.2	23.06	-31.7
1992	35.3	22.66	-5.3	-38.0
1995	31.3	12.6	-3.0	-36.4

Source: 1. Department of Personnel, Government of India, Report-1993, 2. Social Welfare Committee for SCs/STs Report-99-2000

Economic Consequences

The disparity in the implementation of reservation policy for SCs has resulted into serious economic consequences, which are closely connected to their life. When one person from SCs family gets a job, the whole family remains dependent on him. The dependency ratio in SCs family is higher. Therefore, the disparity has resulted into huge economic losses to the SCs, as a whole. Although the government is trying to reduce the disparity, in the phase of globalisation, large number of posts have been wiped by the government itself. Therefore, The disparity has affected adversely, the social, economic and cultural life of the Scheduled Castes. According to the report of the Working Group on the Empowering of Scheduled Castes, over 1,13,450 job opportunities were lost by the scheduled castes in the Central Government during the period 1992-97.10 Eradication of reservation posts on large scale could be seen in all state Government. The reasons for such step are given as ‘Excess Recruitment’, ‘Globalisation’, ‘Efficiency’ etc. During the last few years, several lakhs of reservation posts have been wiped out. Majority of these posts were high-class posts, which can play important role in the determination of the economic position of the society. This is social injustice; above all, this is a violation of Indian constitution. In the light of economics, the Scheduled Castes lost huge number of sources of livelihood. This policy may create once again, the economic slavery, in the economic system.

Conclusion

Over the years, all the branches of Government Sectors have been neglecting the reservation policy. Even after fifty-nine years of Independence, the reservation status of SCs in all Government branches has been unsatisfactory. The reservation policy has been underutilised. The rate of disparity in the implementation has been high. In the phase of globalisation, the government policy is discouraging the reservation policy. This situation has created various social and economic problems in the contemporary period. In a way, the social justice for the SCs has been denied even in the contemporary period. An In spite of Constitutional provision, the reservation policy has been neglected. This must be taken as violation of Constitution. There must be significant representation of SCs in the decision-making posts, which could help further, for the development of SCs, as a whole. Similar kind of trend could be found among Scheduled Tribes (STs).

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