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Political Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes

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Abstract

The present article 'Political Impact of Reservation Policy on Scheduled Castes' contemplate on the divisions and sub-divisions of caste in India and offers a deep insight into the corrective measure taken by the Government in the form of reservation. The article aims at unfolding the political impact of reservation policy on scheduled caste by considering the historicity of caste structure, the British role in it and further politicization of the scheduled castes. It also unveils the recent trends of reservation policy in Maharashtra and overall in India.

Key Words: Reservation policy, scheduled castes, political impact, recent trends, upper caste domination, unity among Dalit leaders

I. Theoretical Considerations: The most notable feature of inequality in Indian Society from the past to the present is its visibility. Even though inequalities exist in our complex societies, they in general are more visible in agrarian as compared to industrial societies. Social distinctions in India are not only visible but they are rigid and highly elaborate. The social distance between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy is very large, and there are numerous grades in between. When we look our traditional caste-structure, we are struck by the divisions and sub-divisions within it. The social inequality in India cannot be merely regarded as an economic problem because the disparities in wealth and income exists in all complex societies, what is unique to our Indian Society is 'Untouchability' it exists only in India. It has its roots in the very structure of traditional Hindu Society. Indian Society may be represented in terms of either its clan structure or its caste structure. Each claims to provide a kind of global

perspective on Indian society. The divisions into caste and communities that had existed in Indian Society from ancient times acquired a new kind of legitimacy through the political process after independence. The British made their contribution to the crystallisation of the political identities of castes and communities in the emerging social order. This was partly because they had a special responsibility in protecting the interests of the minorities and the backward classes in the competition for power. But it was also because the demand for self government could be kept at bay by playing one community off against either. The British successfully applied the reservation policy to divide and then suppress the nationalist forces.

After the end of the British rule in India the rulers of free India had decided to continue the same policy of offering political and administrative patronage to the S.C. and S.Ts. The balance of power between castes and communities was an

important concern for them. The equality provisions particularly relating to protective discrimination cannot be understood in isolation from this concern. The special claims of S.Cs and S.Ts arise out of the conditions under which they have been constrained to live from ancient times. (1) The reservation policy has led to a kind of competition among the S.Cs and other backward classes. It has also created a political consciousness among them.

II. Politicization of the S.Cs.

Normally all the benefits of politicization go first to those who get politicized first and then filter down to those who get later or to the less politicized sections of the society. (2) Because of their socio-economic conditions the S.Cs and S.Ts were less politicized, to withdraw the benefits from it. Now the protective discrimination is safeguarding their interests and the process of politicization has been started among them. The rate of politicization of S.C.s and S.T.s is very slow compared to other communities. Introduction of adult franchise has accelerated the problems of politicization among the downtrodden classes particularly at the grass-root level. Because they are more active in local politics (zilla parishads, samitis, panchayats etc.). The reservation policy has helped them to participate actively in the day today politics of the country from top to bottom. Spread of education among S.Cs has made them conscious of their rights. They have also reserved their importance in the electoral politics of the country. Thus they have started organizing themselves to safeguard their interests. The political reservations have made them possible to represent in the legislature as well as in the local bodies.

Otherwise it would have been very difficult for them to compete with the other communities who are already politicized and have dominated the politics and power.

III. Political Impact:

It was expected that, the political reservation policy would help the S.Cs, to put up solid political pressure in the legislatures. But this calculation has totally gone wrong. (3) The reservation policy did not help the larger S.Cs masses to improve them not because they are suffering under the politics of the dominant majority castes. Nevertheless a small section of the S.C.s (i.e. mahar) is benefited (compared to the other backward classes) because they did not allow the dominant caste to ignore them. In India both caste and class attributed operates as basis of powers. (4) The S.C were also not an exception to this rule, it is very unfortunate that the backward castes could not organize themselves into one group, with the process of politicalisation of this community, the caste consciousness also has increased, consequently the high caste groups remained successful by making the backward class leaders, as playing cards of their hands. The S.C. leaders are engaged in fighting. Though the rate of politicisation in 'Mahar Community' is more but their leaders are politically inactive. At the local level the leaders attend meetings without taking active part in discussions, even they do stand away from the venue due to the stigma of untouchability. (5) The S.C. leaders have to depend on non-schedule caste voters for political support in the election of reserved constituencies, this is one of the reasons for their being dependent on the ruling party which normally enjoys the support of the

rural masses. (6) It was an expectation from the reservation policy that the benefits of this policy would reach to the whole of groups of the S.Cs. But unfortunately and unlike the other policies the political reservation policy has also benefited to the individual in the community, consequently a small group of individuals from this caste has come up as a politically conscious and politically benefited group. Naturally it has become very easy to exploit them, to the majority leaders for the party benefits and the most unfortunate things that the S.C. leaders have allowed them do so. Thus the political reservation policy has benefited to the S.C. at the individual level and also created political consciousness but at the cost of killing the social consciousness among them. This policy has created a new class of political elite in the S.C.s and the gap has widened between them and the masses.

IV. Recent Trends:

The reservation policy has become issue of debate or an contradiction in the country today because of Gujarat agitation, OBC & Maratha reservation issues. The upper castes are demanding identification of backwardness on economic grounds. (7) The self consciousness and opportunities, they must try to withdraw the benefits from the different levels of reservation policies for the masses. But this requires joining the hands with other progressive movements. Radicals and revolutionaries must lead the struggle against the caste system and communalism. Reservation of all kinds is means to an end and the end is a casteless society.

It is alleged that the fruits of reservation have gone to a handful among the lower

castes, leaving the rest high and dry. A new monopoly has been created against the old and the war on reservation has become the fight between the two sets of privileged, each communalizing the issue to get the poorer section behind them. This is a political truth in this. Those who are fighting against the monopoly of upper cases are not agreeable to giving up a monopoly with their own cases. The reasons for this, is not reservation, but the capitalist acquires motivation which has made even the MRTP not ineffective. And reservation is nothing but a social METP Act (8).

Despite reservation this is true even today that with the higher position whether it is politics, the services or education are dominated by the upper castes. They wanted to preserve the domination forever. The frequent crowd attacks on the Harijans are a serious trend. They erred because they wanted to preserve their destination. Thus the biggest hurdle in the process is the fusion of caste with capitalism in India, percolating from the top. This percolating capitalism hired from needed no social or industrial resolution but promised a unique shelter to the caste system giving it a new lease of life and rigour though once thought dying, making it an even more powerful factor in politics than before. (9)

V. Conclusion: The above discussion leads to conclude us that, though the reservation policy has not benefited to the SCs as a whole, but it is need of the time that the leaders of SCs should unite for this purpose. They should try to organize the SC community outside the legislature, and build up the community as a strong political pressure group. They should keep away themselves from becoming a elites and try to bridge the gap between them

and the masses. They should not allow to enter the 'new Brahminism' in them. The SC leaders must create an social consciousness and opportunism. They must try to withdraw the benefits from the different levels of reservation policies for the masses. But this requires to join the

hands with other progressive movements. Radicals and revolutionaries must lead the struggle against the caste system and communalism. Reservations of all kinds are means to an end and the end is casteless Society.

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