



Reservation in Indian Education System

Ankit Singh

B.A., L.L.B (Hons), Indore Institute of Law
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Reservation policy in local governments – Gram Panchayats – in India is one of three key means of affirmative action, ensuring lower caste groups are represented fairly in political institutions. Researchers have found local political reservations for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations strongly associated with more SC- and ST-friendly policies, increases in welfare spending and investment in infrastructure, as well as lower household poverty levels. This paper explores one potential indirect benefit of reservations, namely improvements in education attainment. The theory of role model effects is applied to the context of political reservations - greater presence of SC and ST Presidents in Gram Panchayats could act as a positive role model of stereotype-defying success for SC and ST children, incentivizing more investment in education attainment. The paper tests the relationship between reservation rates and average completed years of schooling in a dose-response regression model at the sub-district level, using a sample of 13,408 SC children and 6,066 ST children ages 5 to 18 in Karnataka. The results of the analysis suggest that more SC and ST presidents in Gram Panchayats are associated with increases in education attainment among SC and ST children. Further research would be valuable to strengthen these findings and expand the literature on indirect benefits of reservations.

INTRODUCTION

Reservation is a burning topic in our country in recent time, and everyone is aware of it. Behind this game of reservation, politicians put the clauses of reservation in our constitution for SC, ST and OBC

depend on the conditions of those days and also people were discriminated on the basis of caste.¹

India is a country where large numbers of people are found to be backward, illiterate. According to our Indian constitution India is a secular country. India is a land of caste system in which these three main caste Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and other Backward Class (OBC) about half of country's population. The most important aim of the Indian reservation system is to enhance the opportunities for the improvement of the social position of unprivileged communities to take their equitable place in our society. And, when it comes to the point of the education system, all citizens of India shall have equal opportunities to receive equal education. Where some seats in private and government institutes are reserved for socially and educationally backward communities, scheduled castes, and tribes. The reservation system comes into the picture since the independence of our country.

In quota systems, seats are reserved under the caste differences, gender differences, and religious differences. We all have heard this phrase from our childhood. If there is unity then there should be equality but where is the unity seen if there are still caste and gender differences. Instead of uniting we are segmenting it. In India most of the scholarships are available for SC, ST, NT, OBC, Women's and other minority classes. So, as per our quota system, these people who fall under these categories will be primary beneficiaries. Even if the student has fewer marks he will get an advantage of this policy. That's why a

¹www.realityviews.in/2010/03/reservation-in-india-brief-history.html

student from general category and with good marks will not get the benefit of this.

Though this system is useful for minority and backward class people. But not every minority or backward people are from the poor financial background and not every general category people are from the good financial background. It may happen that student from lower caste but the strong financial background will easily get an admission but that student may just be taking an advantage of the scheme in actual they are not really interested in studying but they get first preference. Whereas student from the general category but with the poor financial background will not get an admission in institutes. For taking and advantages of this scheme people make fake certificates and then submit it to schools and colleges. So, at the time of admission even if it is a merit-based student with fewer marks and lower caste will easily get the admission into the college than general category student with more marks and in such cases, the student feels discouraged, depressed, frustrated and lead to a suicide attempt. A student who genuinely wants to study will always lag behind will not get a chance to improve themselves because of this reservation system.²

Purpose of reservation system

India being a developing nation is currently facing many challenges and the reservation system being one of them. Any discussion of the whole issue of reservation should keep in mind that an analysis of what reservation has achieved requires a clear realisation of what its purpose is - or should be. For not only has implementation of the reservation agenda been halting, partial and distorted, but the whole history of the struggle for reservation has also been a debate about its very meaning and purpose. Twenty years have gone by since that report, submitted to Parliament, revealed the ongoing upper caste domination of Government services. And fifty years since the Constitution of India declared guarantees of reservation for the communities now named "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" and included clauses opening the way for reservation for those described as "other socially and educationally backward classes" The current scenario clearly depicts that the lower castes are still discriminated in their daily lives. To uproot is important that we fight the

reservation system which alone will lead us to development, competency, equality and unity.

Government giving free education to them. The main intention of reservation is to improve conditions of backward castes and community people. Basically, the reservation system in education in India was implemented for SC, ST and OBC and it was 7.5 and 15 percent for ST and SC respectively. And, after fifty years of independence, SC and ST reservation in colleges and universities were allotted after a long struggle by teachers. The dominant caste people tried to abolish our reservation system, but if the reservation system is called off, it can turn into worst situation. Elite class people always live a luxurious life, but minorities are struggling with their poverty level. Therefore, government should work in favor of minorities and should play a significant role in democracy as India is largest egalitarian country over the whole world.³

Struggle of minorities for expensive education

We have to dig deeper into the history of our society and the injustice and inequality which have existed in our culture for centuries.

The people who are at the bottom of the 'bottom of the pyramid', e.g. those belonging to the scheduled tribes in the hilly regions and villages at the remotest part are still waiting for the change, and the benefits of reservation haven't reached them.⁴

Since independence, the population has increased four folds, but the government failed to generate jobs in proportion. Hence, we have the condition of rising unemployment in India. In this era of high competition, it is generally seen that many deserving people are not able to secure the job they wanted. The people at the receiving end often belong to 'upper' castes and are financially stable. Thus, people who are not as privileged end up becoming the victims of reservation, despite the low financial status.

Present times, education is going to be expensive and privatized and minorities can only think of any quality of higher education rather than the desired choice level for themselves. But, at university level, the reservation system in education in India is quite a bit of reparation and is being followed by slack manner. Recruitment in different categories would not

²Caste-based reservations and human development in India - Prof. K. S. Chalam

³Reservations in India - Myths And Realities - Mulchand S. Rana

⁴Reservation In India (from Ambedkar.org)

suffice the cause behind the reservation system for minorities and strong movement is required to succeed in their struggle and to make reservation work in their favour.

Both the issues discussed above are interlinked and can be solved with some critical thinking, analysis and discussion. Reservation is necessary, but there is a need to expand the area of the reservation.

Some regulation, with this expansion, is required, which can provide somewhat equal opportunities for those who are left behind by the society or due to poor financial status. The government should think of bringing in an income-based reservation, and decide on the upper cap of the reservation that can be availed by one individual/family.

A person gets a reservation in the education field first, then while looking for jobs and then maybe, at the time of promotions. This habit of multiple reservations gained by one person is not only restricting other to get equal opportunities, but it also doesn't fulfil the aim to provide the reservation.

Now, the time has come when the government should sit together with the political parties, NGOs and civil societies and make some constructive and required amendments in reservation policy to solve the problem of the new inequality generated by the policy, which was made to eradicate inequality from our society and country⁵

Curse of reservation system

But soon it became an instrument to divide the society on caste-basis, creating various walls between different sections of the society. Today we stand divided widely into Hindu, Muslim, SC, ST & OBCs with newer reservations coming up for other different sections of the society like Christians, Kashmiris, Jats, Kashmiri Pandits, Tribals etc.

But on the other side, according to reservation system in education in India, if we focus on the present scenario of reservation system in education, it is clear to all of us the ugly truth of this reservation game. In each and every field like colleges, universities and government services, almost like 50% reservations are allotted for SC, ST and OBC and other minorities' people. And, it's not fair and justice towards student in

education system in India and we should have to think about the other caste students who are scoring good grades in competitive exams, but they can't get into. And, this system is not only affecting their career but also creating heartedness against the reservation system. The caste based reservation system can't change the circumstances and it's even more dangerous to keep the country divided forever.

Firstly we need to understand that the reservation system only divides the society leading to discrimination and conflicts between different sections. It is oppressive and does not find its basis in casteism. It is actually the antithesis of a communal living.

Currently, as per the government policy, 15% of the government jobs and 15% of the students admitted to universities must be from Scheduled castes and for the Scheduled tribes there is a reservation of about 7.5 %. Other than this, the state governments also follow their own reservation policies respectively based upon the population constitution of each state. So nearly 50% seats are reserved.

Necessary steps to stop caste war

The most important factor is that if we want to see our country developed, we need change or upgrade our education pattern. We need a huge movement to stop the politicians in playing the game in the name of caste or religion. And, the government also urges, it can be a balance of the equation by the implementation of reservation system, but that only affects the quality of education. We need to forget our caste or religion and finally just adopt into a single religion that is humanity.

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⁵www.mapsofindia.com › Home › Education Blogs

The Mandal commission was established in 1979 by the central government to identify the socially or educationally backward people. It was also set up to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination. It used social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness. But today are these reservations actually being utilized on the above mentioned factors? The answer is prima facie 'NO' because the benefits are being stolen away by the creamy layer.

The 93rd Constitutional Amendment allows the government to make special provisions for "advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens", including their admission in aided or unaided private educational institutions. Gradually this reservation policy is to be implemented in private institutions and companies as well. This move led to opposition from non-reserved category students, as the proposal reduced seats for the General (non-reserved) category from the existing 77.5% to less than 50.5% (since members of OBCs are also allowed to contest in the General category).

Article 15(4) of our constitution empowers the government to make special provisions for advancement of backward classes. Similarly Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in matters of employment or appointment to any post under the State.

"Clause 2 of article 16 lays down that no citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them be discriminated in respect of any employment or office under the State." However clause 4 of the same article provides for an exception by conferring a certain kind of power on the government.

Thus two conditions have to be satisfied:

1. The class of citizens is backward
2. The said class is not adequately represented.

In a case *Balaji v/s State of Mysore* (AIR 1963 SC649) it was held that 'caste of a person cannot be the sole criteria for ascertaining whether a particular caste is backward or not. Determinants such as poverty, occupation, place of habitation may all be relevant factors to be taken into consideration. The court further held that it does not mean that if once a caste is considered to be backward it will continue to

be backward for all other times. The government should review the test and if a class reaches the state of progress where reservation is not necessary it should delete that class from the list of backward classes.'

What is surprising is that our constitution clearly is a reservation-friendly constitution but nowhere in the constitution is the term 'backward classes defined. What actually constitutes a backward class? What are the determinants of a backward class? These questions remain unanswered and it is only with the help of judicial pronouncements that they have been given some meaning. Question arises how can reservations be made for something that has not been defined?

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Today when a student applies for an admission in any university, the admissions forms are filled with questions like 'Are you SC/ST or OBC or General Category?' How does it matter which category does he belong to, what matters is his merit. A category cannot decide whether he is eligible for admission or not. There many economically worse off children belonging to the forward classes but they cannot get the fruits of such reservation merely by virtue of belonging to the 'general' category. Sometimes these children belonging to the backward classes do not even deserve and still possess the necessary merit as against a child who studied very hard for months to get a seat, thereby snatching away that seat just because he comes from a particular religion or caste for which our government provides reservation.

Reservation should be purely made on the basis of the economic conditions of the applicant and nothing else. The kind of reservation policy that our government currently follows does nothing but divide the society into different sections.

⁶www.realityviews.in/2010/03/reservation-in-india-brief-history.html

When the then HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh introduced 27.5% reservation for OBC in centrally funded educational institutes including IIMs and IITs a petition was moved to the President and the Prime Minister stating that such a reservation will take India back from where she is today. Further “everyone understands the need for all sections of the Indian Society to get an opportunity to be a part of this economy but reservation based on caste is not an answer to this. These policies have been in India since the last 50 years and they have failed to meet their objectives. The government should go into the reasons of the failure. Many students don’t make it to the institutes because of the economic reasons and those who do not fall in the reservation criteria don not get a fair opportunity too”.

To remove this evil it suggested the following:

1. Make education mandatory and free for all till age of 15
2. Propose reservation based on economic status
3. Provide opportunity to students to earn while they study.

Instead of introducing reservations for these backward classes what is required is to bring about revolutionary changes in our education system at the grass-root level. When proper education is not provided to children belonging to such categories during the primary stage itself then on what basis are the reservations provided at a subsequent stage.

Reservations are nothing but means to prosper the vote banks of politicians. They are hindering the country’s growth, development and competency in all aspects. On one hand the preamble of our constitution states that we are a free, democratic and sovereign nation and on the other hand reservation system is chaining all these aspects into its clutches. It is creating disparity and differences amongst the people. The constitution lays down that every child has a right to education and no where expresses that any child belonging to a backward class has a little more of this right than the general category. By reserving one category against another creates a feeling of division which is now resulting in a chaos with every small section of the society asking for it.

Reservations on the basis of caste and not on the basis of condition are bad and unacceptable. Fair and just reservations to uplift the people with poor conditions of life, those who don’t have meals to eat, clothes to

wear and no home to live in. They shall be made on the basis of factors such as gender as women are more disadvantaged than men since primitive times, domicile, family education, family employment, family property, family income and if any disabilities and traumas. The process of reservation should be such that it filters the truly economically deprived individuals and bring them all to justice.⁷

Thus reservations are anti-thesis of development and equality. We don’t need reservations based on castes or religion but only to actually provide aid to those who have minimal resources; and merit should be given equal and due importance in admission procedures as well employment opportunities. This way we would be successful in removing caste discrimination and unite the economically rich together in helping the economically poor, irrespective of their castes.

Mandal Commission has prescribed the Class system in India by stating that the status of a person is determined by his birth; it means that the yardstick of backwardness in any society is, Economic status as per the spirit of the Constitution but in India, Society had made caste as a sole hierarchy of the Social ranking and uses the caste system as the basic frame of reference.

List is defined in the National Commission for Backward Classes Act 1993 under section 2, which says that List means list prepared by the Central Government from time to time for purposes of making provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of backward classes of citizens which, in the opinion of that Government, are not adequately represented in the services under the Government of India and any local or other authority within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India

Conclusion

Every coin has two sides likewise this reservation system has its own advantages and disadvantages. But if you truly want to achieve something then this reservation system will not going to affect you if you have that much capacity to finding your way to success. But I will say this reservation system is dividing our nation on the basis of caste, religion, and gender and this is not a good thing for a country like India.

⁷MulchandSavajibhaiRana