

REVIEW OF RESEARCH



IMPACT FACTOR: 5.7631(UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

ISSN: 2249-894X

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 4 | JANUARY - 2019

RESERVATION POLICY AND CASTEISM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Caste in Indian society exists from ancient time and still it has significant role in hierarchal division of Indian social structure, importance of caste in India attracted number of sociologist of India and abroad, such as, G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Sriniwas, I.Karvay, David Hardiman Gunar Myrdal and many more. All these caste based studies only describe the origin and structure of castes in India, while some of the studies are also highlighting that, how caste is used by the politicians to increase riots in society and to raise their vote banks. Caste is considered as a social evil and a root of discrimination till today. Only few



studies were found which highlight the relationship between reservation policy's impact on caste and need of revision of policy in future. However, some studies tried to correlate casteism with politics and voting behaviour. In this scenario, a study with functional perspective is required to understand the relationship of reservation policy with caste structures. Hence, this study is selected to know the correlation between caste and reservation, and perception of female students of kurukshetra University campus about caste and reservation policy of India. The survey has been conducted among the female students of Kurukshetra University girls' hostel to explore the perception about reservation policy and caste system. It was found that Majority of respondents replied that reservation policy is responsible for increasing casteism, by dividing people into different caste categories

KEYWORDS: Indian society, caste structures, reservation policy.

INTRODUCTION:

Present situation of Indian society is highlighting that India is burning in the heat of casteism, which is shown time to time by different caste agitations for reservation. Reservation is a policy which was started with a view to uplift those sections of society who faced discrimination on the basis of their caste. Stratification of Indian society was based on caste system which was basically the occupational division of different groups. Those caste groups, who performed less dignified work were called as low caste people and were treated as untouchables. To help them, government had initiated the reservation in government jobs, education sector as well as in job promotions, so that the social, economical and educational position of low caste people, who were called by different names such as, *Dalits*, Untouchables, *Shudras* and *Harijans* etc, will be uplifted. Reservation provides an opportunity to those, who are having reserved castes or backward category certificate and also Reservation Policy is an affirmative action which is based on quota system.

In our country identity is related to caste by birth. Caste is the basic feature of Indian society here all the social relations revolve around caste. It is the caste structure that provides the base for

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stratification in Indian society. Caste in India is prevalent since ancient time when Dravidians came to India. Earlier, Hindus were stratified by *Verna* system. Caste is occupation based division of different groups that became strict and rigid with passage of time. Caste is so important in Indian social structure that it divides whole Indian population into a number of groups. It leads to ethnocentrism in these groups. This also creates hindrances in uniting the society.

Importance of caste in Indian society is, time to time shown by different caste agitations, which clearly depict the picture that caste has now become casteism. Ever since, the evolution of human being on this earth, a different type of competition for survival is prevailing. In this race, some has gone ahead and some others tilted from their real state. When a race for survival has been there, an unhealthy competition does exist. Those who lag behind due to some reasons feel themselves neglected and others having upper hand. They do not care for these neglected and downtrodden. There exists a race which lasts in a vast difference between human beings. They struggle with one another for their survival as well as, well being. Ultimately a tug-of-war in the shape of fighting with one another is generated, and as a result some remedies come to force. Civilized societies settle amicably because of the fact that all human beings here are born equal but it is the human nature that creates disparities in society. When it goes for a long time, it gives birth to a number of evils and problems for the downtrodden and for those who lagged behind in the unhealthy race of survival. In our country people are divided in many races, castes, religious groups and most of them are forced to perform the degraded tasks. They are compelled to live a miserable life, and their basic legitimate rights are denied for centuries. In this race they are lagged behind and were discarded by the said upper caste societies.

After independence it was felt that there is a need of providing some opportunities and measures to have-nots, so that they may also get a chance to live a better life, and programmes were launched for their upliftment. A class based reservation policy was adopted, by which different castes under the head SC, ST, and OBC were given reservation under constitution of India. Earlier, the social position of lower castes (*dalits*) was miserable. To uplift them socially and economically reservation policy was introduced and relevant provisions were made by the government, and different Commissions and Committees were established. Kaka Kalelkar Commission was the first Backward Classes Commission in this regard, which was followed by Mandal Commission, which filed another report to continue reservation and included some more castes in the list of backward casts.

Reservation has now, become an attracting sweetener which provides opportunity to grab different perks in educational institutions and for getting higher jobs in government sector. Keeping in view the materialistic gains possessed by different reserved castes in India, non-reserved castes are creating pressure upon the ruling government through different agitations, to get included in the OBC, SC lists. Agitation by *Patidar* headed by Hardik Patel in Gujarat, *Gujjar* agitation in Rajasthan led by Kirori S. Bhiansla and recently, *Jat* agitation in Haryana for reservation are some examples that show the link between reservation and caste. These agitations have rather increased the sentiments of casteism in India. These violent caste issues have, now-a-days, become serious social problems for the whole Indian society because it affects whole society economically, socially and politically. This is what has attracted the researchers to know the reason behind the casteism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature would suggest that the study of caste based issues has been an old tradition in Indian society. Due to grave link between caste and reservation provisions of policies, it would be a significant field of study.

Ashim K Roy (1985) in his study entitled, 'Anti Reservation Movement: A political Assessment', found, how, in Gujarat, reservation for other backward castes (OBC) has increased from 10% to 18% which was having no scientific basis, rather it was be arbitrary. Mr. Solanki, who was then CM had rejected the economic criteria for reservation, and further, Rajiv Gandhi was in favour of a review in the existing reservation policy. All this leads to 'Anti –reservation movement' in Gujarat, which was converted into agitation by upper caste and students, who announced Gujarat *bundh*. All this gave birth to communal riots and sword fell on Solanki's Ministry.

Kameshwar Choudhary (1993), with theoretical base and secondary tools, tried to analyze the 'new reservation policy' of Bihar, which was launched by Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav. Before it, reservation policy in Bihar was led by Karpoori Thakur Scheme, which was formulated under constitutional provision of reservation for socially and educationally backwards. According to Karpoori Scheme, there was 12% and 8% reservation in jobs for most backward. In addition to it, 3% reservation for economically poor upper castes and women belonging to all caste groups was provided in government jobs at state level. Under Karpoori Thakur scheme, economically well off backward classes were also excluded from benefits of reservation through putting an income tax ceiling. Due to this scheme, agitations took birth from upper caste; this strategy divided upper caste by making provisions for reservation for upper caste economic backward. Government of Laloo Yadav replaced Karpoori scheme and raised 2% reservation for OBC and MBC from 12 to 14 and 8 to 10 percent and further, and thus, stuck down 3 percent reservation of upper caste economically backwards and women and also removed the income tax payers from benefits of reservation. This study highlighted that new reservation policy was only launched to cement the backward vote bank, because this policy is against the decision of apex court regarding exclusion of creamy layer from the benefits of reservation and further this new policy is constitutionally not valid in relation to reservation for SC, ST and OBC women.

G.K Lieten (1994) in his study, "on casteism and communalism in U.P", wants to know that whether class conscious voting, results in casteism. Survey was conducted on randomly selected 220 respondents in jounpur Distt. Findings of the study show that politics in U.P. indicates 'casteist' reflex. Casteism is reflected in the vote appeals as it was caste appeal for voting. Study observed that BSP formation is on casteist ideology, 'lower castes maintaining anti- casteist attitude', whereas upper castes still maintain the ideology of separation and exploitation.

Theodore P. Wright (1997), in his study about "A new demand for Muslim reservation in India" with the help of secondary sources including newspaper publications, focused on the attempts of some Muslim leaders, abetted by Congress party politicians seeking to recover their lost Muslim vote bank, to climb aboard the reservations in context on India's highly competitive electoral system. Suddenly in 1994 demand for Muslim reservations in civil service and education surfaced during assembly by elections. Congress party also advocated for the Muslim quota in private sector.

Puja Mondal (1997) in article, "Casteism as a Major Rural Social Problem: Meaning, Causes, Solutions and Suggestion", explained causes of casteism, such as, when one caste tries to improve its status then, sentiments of casteism increases. Endogamy in caste also increases casteism. Another important factor quoted in essay is that the increasing mode of communication and transport has also increased casteism.

Evan Osborn (2001), in Culture, Development, and Government: Reservation in India, with the help of secondary data and census report of 1991 tried to explain the economic theories of pressure group to analyse the change in social structure. Study found that, half the positions in education and public employment are subject to such reservation. Further the study found that in some of the states, reservation is extended to extraordinarily high proportions of the population and to groups not originally designed to benefit from them. In Karnataka the alliance between *Vokkaligas* and *Lingayats*, numerically dominant groups, became eligible for reservation. Due to political pressure the list of reserved castes, often quickly expanded state wide. Whenever any state splits or merged or changed their borders, the list of SC, ST and OBC is redrawn in each new state.

Sumon Bhaumik (2006) in the study, "Earning Inequality in India: has the Rise of Caste and Religion Based Politics in India had an Impact?" used literatures and data of National Sample Survey (NSS) of 30,000 respondents to examine the differences in earning in inter-caste and inter-religion from 1987 to 1999. Results of the study found that earning differences between "upper" castes and "lower" castes have declined. Due to some reforms in market orientations and on the other hand in political sphere caste and religion as a force is on rise since 1989.

Jasmine Rao (2010), in her study related to 'The Caste System: Effects on Poverty in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka' based on an analysis of literature and interview of young Indian male, tried to explore the relation between poverty and caste system in three nations of South Asia, that is India, Nepal and Sri

Lanka. Here it is found that there is an impact of caste system and reservation policy for dalits on social structure.

Xavier Fontaine (2012) in study "Caste Comparisons: Evidence from India" with objective to know that how comparison between castes exacerbate and create conflicts. To explore this fact, survey was conducted in six cities of India namely- Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad for three years from 2009 to 2011, on 1,857, 1,280 and 1,037 respondents on random basis. Findings of the study says that in India, different castes suffer from their status, which strongly influence their well being and strong tension exists between dissociated caste groups. Further the study shows that only lower castes are affected by economic successes of their anti castes, and on the other hand upper castes only have capability to compete with their fellow castes.

Dr. T. Sambasiva (2013) in his research 'casteism: a scourge on Indian society', with the objective to focus on caste as social evil used data from census of 2001 and highlighted the statistics of dalits which shows the shocking results about the conditions of dalits in Indian society that how one million dalits are scavengers and were employed to clean public toilets and 90% of them are still living in rural area. Another important fact included in study is that, caste consciousness (casteism) disintegrates the Indian society.

Vithal Rajan (2014) in his research paper, "Dalits and the Caste system of India" tried to explain that the long lasting highlights of caste consequences among Indians create self contradictory sphere, which pressurise the government to bring social change. This study highlighted how caste based discrimination has became social evil, which leads to murder, rape and refusal of houses in communities to dalits by upper castes.

Special Correspondent "Casteism through elections" in a case study found that during elections in the year 1983 in Andhra Pradesh, how politics is responsible for casteism, this study shows that how elections lead to loss of human life. In assembly elections in Nagori and Karvetinagar panchayat samiti, which were reserved for scheduled castes, Chenga reddy who was participating in elections, realised the value of S.C vote banks and started 'nursing' Harijans. And a day before elections, rumours were spread, that Harijans are prevented from vote to non Harijans and creating coercion to vote for congress. Further Telugu Desam workers removed congress flag from motor cycles placed near Harijanwadas. All this created tense situation and people stated throwing chappals on supporters of Chenga Reddy and Harijan supporters and lighted houses and cattle's, due to this violence many innocents had lost their life and property including cattle's.

After analysing the related literature and previously done research work about reservation policy of India, it was concluded that, in majority of cases reservation played a significant role in riots and agitations. However, few of the studies indicated about the positive consequences of reservation policy in upliftment of education level and living standard of downtrodden.

After reviewing the concerned literature, it has been found that, Reservation Policy has generally two aspects: One is the functional and another is dysfunctional. This research has focused on to highlight the attitude of female students of Kurukshetra University about both functional and dysfunctional aspect of Reservation Policy. For this purpose the socio-economic profile of the respondents has also been analysed, because Reservation has significant relevancy with socio-economic conditions of people. The views on reservation vary according to caste category, educational status, locality, occupation and age group. Further, the purpose of study was to analyse the views given by respondents about Reservation policy.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION:

The theoretical orientation which was used to analyse the functional and dysfunctional dimensions of Reservation Policy was derived from the Merton's theory of 'Functions and Dysfunctions' which states that, society has to perform some functions which bind the different social institutions in such a way that it brings order and unity. But, in society every function is not performed to bring order or unity, there are some observed consequences which lessen the adaptation and adjustment of the system and called as dysfunctions. Caste based Reservation policy was initiated with the functional

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motive but, observed consequences highlighted by the review of literature and rationale suggested that Reservation Policy have both functional as well dysfunctional aspects present in social scenario.

CONCEPTS AND WORKING DEFINITIONS:

Important concepts and definitions used in the research work are explained precisely as follows:

Caste:

S. V. Ketkar (1979.p.12) stated that the word caste is derived from Spanish word '*casta*'. Original meaning of *casta* is- breed, race, strain or a complex of hereditary qualities.

M.N. Srinivas (1977) defined caste as, "hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes"

MacIver (1945.p356) defined caste as, "when status is wholly predetermined, so that men are born to their lot without any hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste".

Indian thinker G.S. Ghurye(1950-p1) states, "we do not possess a real general definition of caste". Dr.Ghurye described some characteristics of Indian Caste system such as segmentation of society, hierarchy in caste system and restrictions on food habits and social inter-course, civil and religious disabilities, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and restriction on marriage.

After having a glance, it is clear that caste is a close group in which membership of individual is fixed at the time of birth. In India, caste begin with occupational division and later on discrimination between different occupations gave birth to casteism and restricted the choices of occupation and also increased some civil and religious disabilities.

Casteism:

Casteism is a strong and rigid feeling of superiority for own caste. Puja Mondal (1997), in her article named, Casteism as a major rural social problem: meaning, causes, solution and suggestion, described casteism as one of the major rural social problem. Further it was stated that 'casteism refers to one sided loyalty in favour of a particular caste.

Attitude:

Dictionary meaning of attitude is a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, a response to challenges, incentives and rewards.

In psychology, an attitude is an expression of favour or disfavour toward a person, place, thing, or event. Prominent psychologist Gordon Allport(1935. 789,844) once described attitude as "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology".

Reservation Policy:

Reservation is that process which provides facilities to people in education, employment and in promotion to those who have category certificates; it's just a quota based affirmative action. Reservation is given under and governed by Constitution of India and other statutory and local laws, to SC, ST, OBC and Muslims under BC(M). In 1953 first time President appointed Backward class commission under the chairmanship of KakasahebKalelkar. This commission submitted its report in 1955. After analysing the condition of large sections of people, some criteria was adopted for guidance, which is as follows-low social position, lack of education, no representation in Government services, inadequate representations in trade, commerce and industry.

In 1979, Second Backward Classes Commission was appointed by the president under the chairmanship of Shri B. P. Mandal, and this commission submitted its report in 1980. Mandal Commission provided 11 grounds of reservation under 3 major heads namely- social, economic and educationally backward.

The term creamy layer was first time introduced by justice Krishna Iyer in 1975 in State of Kerala V/S NM Thomas case. In this case, justice Iyer observed that, "benefits of the reservation shall be snatched away from the top creamy layer of the backward classes, thus leaving the weakest among the weak and having the fortunate layers to consume the whole cake". (http://:timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

RESEARCH DESIGN:

In present study, the research problem has been framed with the help of relevant review of literature. The survey has been conducted among the female students of Kurukshetra University hostel to explore the perception about reservation policy and caste system.

The hostels of female students of Kurukshetra University campus has been selected as a geographical area of study, as female students from different areas and categories of Haryana are residing here and it is a heterogeneous population to be studied in terms of perception. Both rural as well as urban female residents from each hostel in proportion have been taken as the sampling unit of study. Stratified random sampling method has been used to conduct the study because universe of the study i.e., female students of Kurukshetra University hostel was divided into different categories, hence equal opportunity of selection was given to all categories and disciplines.

To collect the information about the attitude of female students regarding, functions and dysfunctions of reservation policy, questionnaire has been circulated among the respondents. However, flexibility has been provided to give an opportunity to the respondents for explaining their own views and experiences through open ended questions.

The study was conducted in the hostels of female students of Kurukshetra University, which are situated in University campus. The University of Kurukshetra is situated in Kurukshetra district of Haryana state. This University is the main centre of education for surrounding areas of Kurukshetra and for other nearby districts of it. This University is situated in over 400 acres of land. Kurukshetra University was established on 11 January 1957. Founder of this University was Dr.Rajendra Prasad, who was first president of independent India. There are 13 hostels for the female students of Kurukshetra University, in which female students of every discipline are residing.

CONCLUSIONS:

1) Responses about Reservation Policies:

Second objective of the study was to know the awareness about Reservation Policy among respondents. Analysis of data revealed that, every respondent was aware about the meaning and consequences of Reservation Policy. Further, results of the study are concluding that, majority of respondents are not in favour of reservation policy because, they replied that reservation policy does not help in bringing social equality. But mixed responses are given on the question of reservation policy as an instrument of upliftment of downtrodden. Equal response was given in the favour and against. However, more than half of the respondents replied that reservation policy should not be continued and those, who supported reservation policy, were maximum those respondents, who are getting benefit of reservation policy and are included in reserved categories.

On the other hand, in response of the review of reservation policy, majority of respondents replied that, there is a need of review in reservation policy, whereas, the similar trend is found in this question also, respondents who are getting benefit from reservation policy, they replied that, no revision or change in reservation policy is required.

In Indian society castes were divided on the basis of occupation and in present Indian society, everyone is free to choose occupation of his own choice, because of which traditional occupations and family occupations are disappearing. One of the major reasons for that is industrialization which is responsible for the class differences by dividing each caste into different classes such as rich, middle and poor class respectively. Because of which change in reservation policy is desired by the majority of respondents, study found that, maximum number of respondents replied that reservation policy should be on the economic bases rather than caste bases. Further, some of the respondents replied that,

reservation should also be given to females, who suffered in every era and most of the time are dominated by male members of society. Females are now in need of opportunity to get equality in every sector and need reservation for their upliftment. Whereas, very less number of respondents replied that, reservation policy is required, because still there is discrimination faced by many lower castes, and they need reservation benefits, some of the respondents said that, reservation must be for handicaps only. Whereas, few replied that reservation benefits should be given alternatively to every caste group, so that those who are once uplifted economically and socially, will be removed from the reserved beneficiaries, to control the misuse of reservation benefits, and those who are needy lacking behind and belongs to upper castes classes should also benefited. It is fact of misery that only one respondent replied that families of martyrs of defence forces are included under reservation policy, remaining all of the respondents ignored them. Same is the situation with individuals belonging to third gender; only two respondents replied that they should also be included in reservation policy for education and job opportunities. However, more than half of the respondents replied that inter-caste marriages will help in eradicating casteism and brings equality in society, but few of the respondents replied that intercaste marriages will not contribute much, because in Indian society caste is still superlative. In intercaste marriages bride and groom those who belong to a lower caste will be harassed by the family of inlaws. On the question relating to rule of creamy layer, most of the respondents answered that, the same rules should also be imposed on SC candidates; only some of the respondents, those who are getting benefits replied that, it should not be imposed on SCs.

2) Third objective of the study was to highlight the attitude of respondents' about the functions of reservation policy in Indian set up:

After analyzing the data, it is clear that majority of respondents replied that reservation policy will not contribute in improving social patterns, only less than 50 percent replied in favor of reservation policy. On the other hand, mixed response was there on the question relating to eradication of poverty, majority of female respondents contacted on this aspect showed their negativity that reservation policy would help any way to erase poverty, the lesser people expressed their opinion in favor of curtailing poverty by the existing reservation policy. Most of the respondents agree that this reservation policy would not help harmony among different societies neither it will finish untouchability. A few of them came with the idea that reservation policy would be effective on both parts. Many of them also argued that reservation policy has somehow helped the lower casts in improving their social status. It has helped the lower castes to rise in the social set up. But some have different views that it would not help progress in the society and should be discontinued with immediate effect. Other come forward in its favor and wants to continue Reservation policy for some period of time. Further, few respondents wanted its implementations forever. 80 percent respondents found unsatisfied from reservation policy because, according to them reservation policy is responsible for increasing casteism, reservation policy is also responsible for increase in violence between different caste groups and also increasing hatred for other caste groups, majority of respondents have negative attitude towards reservation policy.

Even some of the respondents said that reservation policy imposes restriction upon deserving candidates and non-deserving candidates get opportunities easily because of reservation in education institutes and in employment. Very few of the respondents' are satisfied from reservation policy. On the question relating to positive contribution of reservation policy, more than 50 percent respondents replied that, even reservation policy is having negative consequences, but still it contributes in upliftment of the backwards and lower castes, it help in increasing their education level both in men and women, as it improves the women empowerment, due to reservation, individuals belonging to lower castes, get chance to work together and participate in social and religious activities with upper caste peoples, this will help in bringing social equality and up to some extent, we achieved the success in our motive whereas, 40.5 percent respondents are not agreed about the positive contribution of reservation policy and replied that reservation policy has no positive effect in society rather, it has only negative effects and consequences.

3) Attitude about the dysfunctions of the reservation policy:

Dick Kooiman (1993) in his article observed that, caste superiority system has the deep roots in Indian society and it could not curtail. Ashok Guha (1990) observed that, how reservation is used as a tool by politicians to acquire a reputation without any expenses. Vithal Rajan (2014) highlighted in his study that, how caste based discrimination has become social evil, which leads to murder, rape and refusal of houses in communities to dalits by upper castes etc, in this manner; attitude of female respondents about dysfunctions of reservation policy was tried to analyze which may be concluded as:

Majority of respondents replied that reservation policy is responsible for increasing casteism, by dividing people into different caste categories, less than 1/4th of respondents denied that, reservation policy is not responsible for casteism. Whereas, above 90 percent of respondents answered that, due to reservation, difference between different caste groups are increasing, only few of the respondents are not agreed to this, and replied that reservation policy is not responsible for increasing difference between caste groups. However, it has been found in the study that, more than 90percent respondents' believe that reservation policy is nothing more than a tool used by politicians to raise their vote bank and 82 percent of the respondents want that reservation policy is not required further and it should be stopped. If reservation policy cannot be stopped than any other criteria to uplift weaker sections should be followed by the government. A huge number of respondents suggested that, instead of reservation on the basis of caste, economic benefits such as scholarships and other financial help should be provided to needy persons. Whereas, 45 percent respondents replied that, the reservation criteria is not required to be changed, but almost similar number of respondents replied just opposite by answering that reservation is now needed to be removed completely, only two of the respondents answered that reservation should be given alternatively to every caste category. On the views relating to responsibility of reservation policy in increasing caste riots, more than 90 percent respondents answered that reservation policy is responsible for increasing riots in society and the real purpose behind the reservation policy has been disturbed. It has been found that majority of respondents believes that reservation policy creates hindrance in social equality by increasing gap between different groups and it is removed, casteism will definitely lose its importance. On the other hand, half of the respondents answered that reservation policy does not have only negative effects rather, it has some of the positive contributions also and other half replied that reservation policy is responsible increase in casteism, increase in violence and social differences by increasing hatred for other caste groups and also, non deserving candidates get chances of selection in jobs and educational institutions easily. More than 90 percent respondents were of the view that reservation policy is responsible for increase in pressure upon candidates of non reserved categories. After providing so many dysfunctions, which were created by the reservation policy by respondents, still maximum number of respondents desired that, Reservation should be provided in education and employment, it was strange to know that, 12.9 percent respondents wanted that Reservation policy is required to provide at every level. Only 29.3 percent respondents replied that reservation is no more required at any level.

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