

STATE POLICIES TOWARDS THE EMPOWERMENT OF BACKWARD CASTES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced policies to bring about social change among the backward castes. This paper attempts to analyse the nature of policy measures introduced in favour of the backward classes. Economic upliftment policies such as occupational cooperatives and Adarana are introduced. Even for these type of policies also the BCs will have to fight for a long-time but there is no guarantee that it is going to sustain. It happened in the case of economic development policies, in affirmative action and now in the social welfare policy, because the State is retreating in the wake of globalization process. The institutions, meant for the implementation of these policies, are lacking sufficient funds, staff monitoring and also a great deal of mal-administration. Suggestions: In conclusion suitable measures will be suggested to continue the process of empowerment among the backward classes.

Introduction:

Historically marginalized sections like backward castes have become an important component in designing of the development policies due to their socio-economic deprivation in the traditional society, mobilisation for the rights and Constitutional obligation of the social justice. In order to bring about social change among the backward castes, the government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced the policy measures. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the nature of policy measures and their impact on backward castes in Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives:

1. To analyse the nature of policy measures, which are introduced in favour of Backward classes
2. To assess the impact of policies on the backward classes and
3. To make suitable policy suggestions to take forward the empowerment process of the backward classes.

Methodology: Both primary data, which is collected through the structured questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussion, and house hold surveys and secondary data includes books, journals, news papers, articles, government orders, circulars, guidelines, commission reports and policy decisions are used.

Its response to the political mobilization of the backward classes through four instruments such as caste associations, federation of caste associations, political parties and non-governmental organisations, the Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced certain policies and programmes to provide social justice.¹ The policies can be classified into three categories as follows.

Based on the above diagram the policy measures which are introduced in favour of the backward classes, can be classified as (I) Economic upliftment policies such occupational cooperatives and Adarana. (2) Affirmative action policy, and (3) Political empowerment policy.

(I) Policies for the Economic Upliftment :

In the post-independent period, for the economic development of the people who are practicing the traditional occupations, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken two measures. One is introduction of the occupational cooperatives during pre-globalization period and second is the Adarana in the post-globalization period.

(A) Occupational Co-operatives: After formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. In order to meet the pressure from the artisan caste associations, gradually over the years caste based occupational cooperatives came into existence. These societies are introduced to prevent artisans and handicraftsmen from migration, pull them out from poverty, strengthen the existing sources of livelihood, provide economic stability, lead to the formation of financial capital and accessibility to market. Therefore, a large number of occupational cooperative societies like, weavers society, fishermen society, toddy tappers societies, dairy cooperatives, bamboo workers washer men, barbers, contract labourers societies came into existence.

Along with the adverse effect of globalization today these societies are facing innumerable problems from the politicians, bureaucrats and contractors. The complicated procedure. bogus membership, competition from the industrial products, partial credit supply to members, stress on short-term loans and partial coverage of the occupational population in the village and political influence in getting the membership in the society and lack of raw-material and market.

(B) Adarana: Adarana is a project introduced by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 1999. Adarana aims at providing modern and improved hand-tools to the Artisans with a view to improving their productivity, minimizing human drudgery, improving product/service quality and help modernize process operations. The ultimate goal is to contribute to increased income levels and improved standards of living of Artisans. Approximately 1.10.000 Artisans to be covered per month, or around 5,000 units per District per month.

Important observations on ADARANA : On the implementation of Adarana the concurrent evaluation study made following observations.

1. More than 87% of the artisans are traditional by nature. Caste-wise analysis shows that most of the artisans are engaged in hereditary activities denominated by caste.
2. It was also observed that activities like milk-vending, tailoring, sheep-rearing, earthwork, fishing, electrical and musical set have a mix of different caste people. Persons of other castes after acquiring training are taking up the above-mentioned activities in the districts.
3. Per unit monthly expenditure is higher than income in all the districts. The reactions of the artisans on the usefulness of modern tools and technology in their activity are as follows.
 - a) The tools distributed were not to be put to full use.
 - b) Not much modernization has taken place in the activities where values of the tools are less than Rs. 2,500/
 - c) More than 80% of the artisans have selected their tools on their own, but provided lowest quality of tools.
 - d) A small percentage of beneficiaries (3-5) diverted /sold the tools distributed to them.
 - e) Nearly 43% were not satisfied with the distribution channels and inspection of tools, of them 38.2 % have also expressed doubts about quality of tools.

- f) The educational level among these beneficiaries is not satisfactory. Of them 41.2% are illiterate, 32.9% completed up to the primary level, 22.8% secondary level, 3.1% have higher than the secondary level.
- g) The view of beneficiary on training was not encouraging. About 87% evinced interest in undergoing training in their respective trades.

The Adarana scheme was stopped from the implementation soon after the Assembly elections in 1999 as there were allegations of corruption and it was not revived. Ultimately, it was resulted in defeating of the Telugu Desham party to 2004 elections.

(II) Affirmative Action Policy:

In Madras province, which included earlier the Coastal and Rayalaseema Districts of Andhra, a system of communal rotation was introduced by the Government to accord to all the recognized backward classes groups with a view to remove inequalities of representation in public services. The system of communal rotation in public services was in full force from then onwards till the advent of

India's independence

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh, in 1957 there was a startling development, Government decided to prepare the Backward Class list not on the clearly laid down criteria of the caste but on the basis of economic backwardness.

Mention may be made here that the former State of Hyderabad was also maintaining a list of Backward Classes. As a result the State of Andhra Pradesh had two separate lists applicable to the Andhra region and Telangana region respectively.

In 1963 the Andhra Pradesh Government amalgamating the two lists through G.O.No.1886 and brought out a new list of Backward Classes for the purpose of reserving 25 percent seats in Medical Colleges invoking Article 15(4). However, the validity of this order was challenged in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh in the case of Sukhdev V. Government of Andhra Pradesh. The High Court struck it down on the ground that the order has been made exclusively on the basis of caste. The State failed to explain the reasons in taking the caste as the only criteria for determining the backwardness.

As a result of this judgment, the State government decided that the criteria for determining backwardness should be economic and it should be applied to an individual family rather than caste. Accordingly it issued another G.O.No. 301 in 1964, scrapping the earlier list of Backward Classes and ordered that financial assistance should be given only to the economically poor whose family income were less than 1500 rupees per annum. Further it also constituted a cabinet sub-committee to draw a new list of Backward Classes in 1966.

The cabinet sub-committee appointed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh adopted the following criteria for the preparation of the Backward Classes list

- 1) Poverty
- 2) Low standard of education
- 3) Low standard of living
- 4) Place of habitation
- 5) Inferiority of occupation and
- 6) Caste.

Andhra Pradesh Government adopted the list prepared on the basis of this criterion and orders were issued in G.O. Ms. No.1880. Education, dated 29-7-1966. On the basis of these orders, Government in the Health, Housing and Municipal Administration made provision for reservation of 20% seats for other Backward Classes, and amended the rules of admission accordingly. When these reservations were given effect, a batch of 104 Writ Petitions was filed in the High Court challenging the validity of the reservations. On hearing the writ petitions the High Court in its order dated October 7, 1967 struck down the list of BCs for the reasons that the list of BCs was not based on any statistical data that it was only a list of castes without the test of poverty, etc., being applied to it. The matter was examined in consultation with Law Department and Advocate General and the Government carried the case in appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court confirmed the order of the AP High Court.

After quite a lot of legal vicissitudes, the Government appointed a Commission in 1968 under the Chairmanship of Manohar Pershad to enumerate socially and educationally Backward Classes, who would be entitled to the rights conferred upon them under the provisions of the Constitution. There is a connection between the appointment of the first Backward Classes Commission in 1968 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the central Government action on the first national Backward Classes Commission i.e., the Kakakalelkar Commission. Ten Parliament members requested, through a memorandum to the Prime Minister under the article 340 of the Indian Constitution, Jawaharlal Nehru in 1953 to appoint a Backward Classes Commission at the national level to study the socio-economic conditions of the backward classes, identification of the list and suggest measures for the upliftment of them. The Kakakalelkar Commission was appointed in 1953 and the Commission submitted its report in 1955. But the Chairman of the Commission himself dissented for taking caste the criteria and without discussion in the Parliament the commission report was set aside.

The matter was discussed at a conference of State representatives on 7th April 1959 and subsequently reviewed at a meeting of State officers convened by the Ministry of Home Affairs, but no consensus emerged. The Central Government ultimately took a decision that no all India lists of backward classes should be drawn up, nor any reservation made in the Central Government service for any group of backward classes other than the SCs and STs. Consequently, on 14th August 1961, the Home Ministry addressed all State Governments stating: while the State Government have the discretion to choose their own criteria for defining backwardness, in the view of Government of it would be better to apply economic tests than to go by castes". Regarding the preparation of the lists of backward classes it was observed, "Even if the Central Government were to specify under Article 338(3) certain groups of people as belonging to 'other backward classes', it was still be opened to every state government to draw up its lists for the purposes of the Article 15 and 16. The state Governments were to adhere to their own lists, any all-India lists drawn up by the Center would have no practical utility".

Anantharaman Commission: The first Backward Classes Commission under the chairmanship of Anantharaman, in Andhra Pradesh, which is appointed in response to the Central Government action on Kakakalelkar Commission and pressure from the Backward Classes Associations was asked to determine the criteria to be adopted in preparing the list of backward classes and make suitable recommendations for the uplift of the backward classes. The Commission prepared criteria for backwardness and examined the representations made by the various communities, which claim to be backward and has prepared a list of 92 backward classes taking into consideration their cultural background, economic, educational and social backwardness and made the suitable recommendations for their uplift: The Commission submitted its well-considered report on 25th June 1970, categorizing various castes to be treated as Backward Classes and recommended reservation of 30% of seats to the

persons belonging to these classes in the educational institutions and other recommendations (see annexure-9).

In view of the rapid changes and developments that are taking place, the Commission recommended reservations for ten years in the initial stage and review position thereafter to consider desirability of extending the same.

Government Action on the Commissioner Report: In response to the BC Commission report the government of Andhra Pradesh has taken the following action.

The State Government by an order (No. 1793, Education, dated 23-9-1970) announced reservations of 25% of the seats for Backward Classes. The benefits conferred under the G.O were initially limited to a period of ten year to be renewed thereafter.

(a) Reservations in educational institutions and employment:

The Government of Andhra Pradesh recognized 93 communities as Backward Castes on the basis of recommendations of the State Backward Classes Commission (1970) and 25% reservations are given to 40% of the population from 1972 onwards. These communities are divided into the following groups as show in the following table

No	Groups	Name of the Communities	% of Reservations
1	A (38)	Aboriginal Tribes, Vimukta Jabs, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic tribes	7
2	B (21)	Vocational groups	10
3	C (1)	Harijan Converts	1
4	D (33)	Other backward classes	7
Total	93		25

(Source: Welfare of Backward Classes. a detail document published by department of Backward Classes, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1996, pp (608-634).

25% of available at are reserved for the children of backward classes in all educational institutions both in general professional and technical courses right from first year to post-graduation.

Certain persons belonging to the advanced classes claiming to be aggrieved by the order successfully assailed the G.O and a Bench of Andhra Pradesh High Court quashed the same. The Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court Justice Pingali Jagan Mohan Reddy gave a judgment that the backward classes list is not valid because the socio-educational profile of the listed backward castes is not studied.

The State Government to carry the matter to the Supreme Court in appeal aggrieved by the judgment of the High Court. The Supreme Court went into the details as to the genesis of the G.O and upheld the same as also the list of the socially and educationally backward classes so enumerated there in, by their judgment rendered on 12th June 1972. The Supreme Court inter alia observed that a caste is also a class of citizens and as such a caste can be socially and educationally backward, the reservation made of such persons will have to be upheld notwithstanding the facts that a few individuals in that group may be both socially and educationally above the general average.

It is only by virtue of the above-referred judgment that the socially and educationally backward classes got a little benefit from 1972 onwards by way of reservations either in the technical

and educational institutions or public employment at the initial stage of recruitment. Thus the concept of social justice for the socially and educationally backward classes became a reality because of the decision of the Supreme Court".

Muralidhar Rao Commission: On the demand of the backward classes leaders to increase the reservations. Muralidhar Rao Commission was appointed by the state Government in 1981. The Commission submitted its report in 1982 with the recommendations (see annexure- 11). It gathered dust for four years. The Telugu Desham, promised implementation of it in 1983 themselves. In response to the backward classes NT. Rama Rao announced increase in the reservations from 25% to 44 % in 1986. But High Court of Andhra Pradesh rejected the Government decision. Neither the Government of Andhra Pradesh nor the Backward Classes Associations preferred an appeal the Supreme Court. Therefore the increased reservations were not implemented

From its terms of reference it appears that the intention of the Congress government in constituting the Commission was either to comply with the letter of the recommendations of the Anantharaman Commission of 1970, which had recommended that the classification and quantum of reservations to the BCs should be reviewed after 10 years, to actually identify at least a few backward castes who had 'progressed using reservations during the last decade and delete them from the list of beneficiaries. Muralidhar Rao ignored the terms of reference and set out to do all he could to help the backward castes therefore refused to delete any of the backward castes from the existing list (with the exception of one section of the Kaling of Srikakulam), but added nine more to the list instead.

He recommended increasing reservations from 25 to 44 percent for the 52% of the backward classes population in the state. He supported this by a simple piece of arithmetic. The Scheduled castes. Scheduled tribes and minorities together constitute about 30% of the State population. The remaining 70% are to be shared out between the BC s and the forward castes. Since no caste-based census has been taken after 1931, Muralidhar Rao chose to go by the estimate of the Mandal Commission. Which had taken the forward castes to represent 17.58% of the population and came to conclusion that the BCs constitute 52% in Andhra Pradesh.

As the term of Muralidhar Rao commission recommendations will be completed by 1999 the Govt. of A.P during the time of Mr.Kotla Vijay Bhaskarareddy as Chief Minister appointed justice Puna Swami Commission for identification, inclusion and exclusion of castes in the backward classes list. So far, though the term of the commission is over, the Commission did not submit the report. Three years (2000) ago the period of ten years for the BC reservations is over. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, however extended the reservations through an ordinance.

Policies for Education: For the education of backward castes children the Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced the social welfare activities. But ideas for the introduction of social welfare activities are derived from the caste associations, which have practiced the welfare activities like hostels, scholarships etc as a part of the social mobilization of their caste people before independence. In response to the pressure built by the Backward Classes Associations in the post-independent period, the social welfare activities (annexure-12) include hostels, scholarships residential schools. Study circles etc. But there is an allegation that these facilities provided by the Government are not sufficient enough, due to inadequate infrastructure and funds even for 25% of the BC students in the state.

Gradually, consciousness among the backward classes about education has been increasing. The strength of the BC students in schools. colleges and universities is also increasing. But the

Government is not providing sufficient seats to all the applicants due to the scarcity of hostels in the entire state. For instance in Kurnool district alone during the academic year 2003-4 the district backward classes welfare department received about 8000 applications from the B.C students, who joined in the schools, for total number of 1842 seats in the entire district. Same thing is happening in all the districts and at all levels like junior. Degree Colleges and Universities. All BC students' applicants are not getting either hostel accommodation or scholarship and fees reimbursement for the professional courses. Similar situation exists even in residential schools where each school receives four digits of applications and accommodates only double-digit number of pupil.

For the last few years, the department of BC welfare went on increasing the number of study circles in order to give coaching for those BC students, who are preparing for the competitive exams. Since beginning of structural adjustment, liberalization and privatization policy in the country recruitment for the Government jobs has been declining. Therefore, mere coaching without employment opportunities is no way going to help the backward caste youth.

For the purpose of enforcing policy matters, which are introduced for the backward castes, and to solve the procedural disputes to the process of implementation the Government of Andhra Pradesh made following institutional arrangements. (A) AP Backward Classes Cooperative Finance Corporation (APBCFC). (B) AP Backward Classes Welfare Department (APBCWD) and (C) AP Commission of Backward Classes (APCBC): Broadly these three institutions are looking after the financial, welfare and legal aspects respectively. These institutions have, almost; become helpless due to scarcity of funds from the state government lack of central government financial support and political will of both the governments. The finance allocations made for the BC Finance Corporation hardly covering even 5% of the BC beneficiaries regarding welfare only Rs 10 crores is allocated for 524E of the BC population and BC Commission do not have either the mandatory powers to take any legal action against the violation of the rule of reservations or decision making power, not it has got powers only to include and exclude the castes in the BC list..

Policies for the Political Empowerment: Introduction of reservations for the backward classes in the local body institutions is in repose to the pressure built by the Backward Classes Associations on the government and realization of the numerical strength and lack of proper representation of the backward classes. With the victory of the Telugu deshama party; the dissatisfaction among the backward castes against the Congress rule has been recognized. It was during the Telugu deshama period, NT Rama Rao, as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, introduced the reservations in the local body institutions.

In order to accommodate growing elite among the backward castes and reduce the dominant castes hegemony in the local power structure Government of Andhra Pradesh through an ordinance in 1986 introduced 34% reservations in the local body institutions i.e.. village panchayats, Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTCs). Presidents of the Mandal Parishads, ZillaParishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC) and Chairmen of the ZillaPrajaPanshads and in the Municipal Councilors and Chairmen There are 21.943-Gram Panchayats. 1093 Mandal Parishads. and 22 ZillaParishads at present in the state¹⁴. Out of the 34% will be reserved for the backward classes which means that 7460.62 Gram Sarpanches. 371.62 Mandal Presidents and 7.48 ZillaParishad chairmen and in the same proportion in the M.P.T.C and Z.P.T.C and the Municipalities seats are reserved for the backward classes. With the introduction of reservations the representation of the backward classes has been increasing, but it is not in proportion to their population. But there is the criticism from the Backward Classes Associations on two points. One is that the candidates to contest in the reserved local body elections are decided by the landed dominant castes at the local level rather

than the backward castes themselves. Second is with regard to important procedural aspect, that is the reservations in the local body institutions is not having Constitutional guarantee and they are introduced through an ordinance in the Assembly, therefore, at any point either the Government or the judiciary may abolish these reservations since the matter is before the Supreme Court.

Protective discrimination as a channel of mobility provided limited opportunities to the economically and politically mobile backward castes. Over the years they have been drawn into greater participation in political life but a major grievance has been that orders concerning reservations are violated due to two reasons. Scene of the enforcing authorities do not have proper understanding about the open competition roaster and recasting etc., and some are deliberately doing so. It was happened in the recruitment of the junior engineers in the electricity department in the year 2000. 78 BC candidates have got highest marks, they are supposed to get the posts in the open category but given in the BC quota. That is why the deserved BC candidates did not get the jobs.

But it has taken nearly three decades to introduce the reservations based on the recommendations of the Commissions, but not Constitution based, therefore, for every ten years the BC Commission will have to be appointed and obviously, the BCs have to face the anti-reservation agitation and legal battle in the court. At the same time, it is the only reservation movement which has brought together the heterogeneous backward castes; dalit and the progressive forces fight for the democratic rights in the state as well as in the country.

Summing up : The benefits of the policies, that include occupational co-operative societies, Adarana programme and anti-poverty programmes. reservations in the education, employment and local body institutions and a nominal share through an accommodation strategy, only a few of the backward castes, that too from the mobilized castes have benefited, remaining large number of non- mobilized BC castes did not get any share and the state Government attitude towards the backward castes is ambivalent. Therefore, in the post-independent period those backward castes, which have occupational cooperatives and organization mobilization and articulation alone occupied the political administrative positions and availed educational facilities. A large section of the non-mobilized and non-articulated backward castes have not yet entered the state institutions.

Another aspect of the state policies towards backward castes is that of the continuous neglect of the poor. The policies which are discussed to far, are for those BCs who are having some assets like practicing traditional occupations small and marginal farmers, students and educated middle class, but there is no space for the poorest of the poor. Obviously these people also not having any assets or skills but only the labour power. They constitute the largest number within the backward castes and are vulnerable. For majority of the poorest of the poor backward castes there is no proper policy to protect their rights or minimum guarantee of work.

Last dimension to the policy response of the state is that the policies which are introduced by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, are ineffective incremental and inadequate. Even for these type of policies also the BCs will have to fight for a long-time but there is no guarantee that it is going to sustain. It happened in the case of economic development policies, in affirmative action and now in the social welfare policy, because the State is retreating in the wake of globalization process. The institutions, meant for the implementation of these policies, are lacking sufficient funds, staff monitoring and also a great deal of mal-administration.

Suggestions: In conclusion suitable measures will be suggested to continue the process of empowerment among the backward classes. These suggestions includes that (I) investment on the development of the occupational cooperatives should be in proportionate to their contribution to the gross domestic production (GDP), (2) strict implementation of that policies, which are designed in favour of the occupational groups, (3) Promoting low cost and employment generating education should be provided, (4) Investment on the education should be increased (5) proportional representation in the decision making institutions etc.

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