

AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL RESERVATION IN PANCHAYATS ESPECIALLY TO SCHEDULED CASTES IN SUB-DIVISION MOONAK, PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT:

Reservation as an affirmative action, from its implementation has resulted in changing the social-economic status of weaker sections, especially Scheduled Castes in a well manner. The political participation of these sections has increased as an outcome of seats reserved for them. In this paper, efforts has been made to analyse the present scenario of political reservation provided to the Scheduled Castes in Panchayats, specially concerned with the Punjab Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. On the basis of findings of present study, it can be said that reservation has been proved a boon for the scheduled castes. As a result of reservation provided to them, they do participate in Panchayats. It is also observed that they are able to become a member of Panchayats mainly because of seats reserved for them in these institutions. Initiatives by the Government, NGO's are necessary to make proper participation of these castes in local level politics.

Keywords: Scheduled Castes, Reservation, Panchayats, Dalits etc.

INTRODUCTION

The word Dalit is also used for the Scheduled Castes and various writers have defined the word Dalit accordingly. In simple terms, Dalit means suppressed, crushed and a special group in the society that has been persecuted for a long time and that has been vested based on social structure. The castes which Mahatma Gandhi gave the name of Harijans were the only castes identified as Dalit.

The word Shudra was used in the Rig Veda and Puranas instead of the word Dalit. First of all the community was divided into the Purushsukta of Rigveda, Brahmans (whose status was considered to be the highest in the society), Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra accordingly and the place of Shudra was at the bottom of the social structure. However, at first, the separation of society was based on their work but later, this division of society became harsh and the people were divided into classes based on their birth.

During the British rule, the word Depressed Classes was used in place of the untouchables for the Dalits. The term Scheduled Castes was used for these classes in the Government of India (GOI) Act 1935 and the reservation for seats for such classes was also provided in this Act.. The term Dalit first appeared during the late 1920s, but gained eminence during the 1970. After independence, the Constituent Assembly continued the existing definition of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and tribes and (through articles 341 and 342) and ordered the President of India and the Governors of the states to prepare a complete list of SCs and tribes.

Although reservation arrangements in Panchayati Raj Institutions PRIs were made on the recommendation of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, the way of leadership for SC, ST, and women in the Panchayats has been open only after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment came into being during the year 1992. By the 73rd constitutional amendment act, the leadership of these classes has been made compulsory in the Panchayats and the

rest of the states of India were also asked to implement the Act. Based on which Punjab Panchayati Raj Act was created by the Punjab Government in 1994.

According to section 243D of the act, the provision for reservation of seats is as follows –

Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes-This act provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the PRIs. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provides for reservation for the SCs and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats according to the proportion of such classes. Apart from this, there is a provision for reservation of seats for the SC for the post of Sarpanch. At the same time, it was arranged that at least one-third of the seats provided to such castes would be reserved for women belonging to SC and Scheduled Tribe.

Reservation for Women - Reservation has also been made for women in this amendment. According to the amendment, one-third of the seats reserved for women will be reserved in Panchayats which will include reserved seats for women belonging to SC and ST, and seats thus preserved will be rotated periodically. This arrangement is to prevent such constituencies from being repeatedly reserved for the same category and consequently, the people of many sections in that area may not have the opportunity to stand in the local elections.

Reservation for Backward Classes - The amendment also provides that the legislature of any state may make provisions for reservation for the Backward Classes within the PRIs by making rules. In Punjab, one seat in each Gram Panchayat (GP) is reserved for the Backward Classes if their population is more than 20 percent.

Reservation for Chairperson – The 73rd constitutional amendment act also provides that the positions of chairpersons for the SC, ST, and women within the PRIs may be set up by an act of state legislature. It is also clarified that the seats reserved for the posts of chairpersons in the PRIs should be in proportion to the population of such classes in that state.

Nowadays Majority of the states are giving 50% reservation to women in PRIs, including Punjab. These provisions have been made to increase the participation of women in Panchayats.

It is also important to point out that none of the groups was reserved for Panchayats based on religion through the 73rd constitutional amendment and at the same time, no reservation was given to any minority in the Panchayats.

The population of SCs in Punjab state is higher than the rest of any part of India and according to Government of India Census 2011, the population of SCs in Punjab is 31.94% which is higher than any other part of India. Notably, there are no any Scheduled Tribes in Punjab so the seats are reserved for SCs only.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sunder Ram's edited book *Dynamics of Grassroots Governance in India: Dreams and Realities* (2007) focus on the administration of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and reservation provided to the SC and women. One paper in this book by Ranbir Singh entitled 'Grassroot Democracy in Haryana: Field Observation' summarizes the Impact of reservation for the SC and women in the PRIs. Three districts of Haryana were covered as a sample to gain data. In this paper, the researcher found that SC candidates are less attentive than the candidates from the unreserved category. Funds utilization regarding the schedules castes is also discussed in this paper.

S.K. Sharma (2008) focused on the effects of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in a special context to SC, ST, and the women representatives in the case with their socio-economic development. The book gives information about those conditions that are obstacles in the way of SC/ST and women

while doing work in the PRIs. This book also focuses on the awareness level of the SC/ST and women and a fact was found that the 73rd constitutional amendment catapulted these sections to the seats of authority. It is because of the 73rd amendment that these sections (SC/ST/Women) show awareness in the structure of Panchayats and also in the meeting schedule of the panchayat. The study also analyzes the leadership perspectives of Dalits and women.

Ranjit Singh Ghuman and Sukhwinder Singh's edited book *Rural Local Self-Government in India: Some Developmental Experiences*(2013) is a collection of papers. One paper in this book 'Dynamics of Inclusion and Emerging Rural Leadership' by S.R. Ahlawat gave a detailed summary about Schedules castes and women empowerment. In this paper, the researcher discussed particularly the social status of Schedules castes and women leaders and the provisions provided by the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act and found that these sections achieved identity and dignity because of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act.

A.S. Malik and PushpenderYadav's (2008) paper *Social and Educational Characteristics of Village Leadership in Haryana*. The study reveals that the SC and women also enter into Panchayats and become members only because of reserved seats provided to them. The SC are educationally backward rather than the upper caste member of Panchayats. The universal adult franchise has resulted in providing political power to dominant castes and but weak castes (SC) have failed in this manner because there has been no increase in the political power of SC as a result of popular democracy.

Bishnu C. Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo's edited book *Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Rural Development* (2008) examine the reservation provided to the women and marginalized sections and also about the other provisions made in the 73rd constitutional amendment Act. One paper in this book by R.B. Patil entitled 'Empowerment of SC and Women: A Study of Three Villages in Kohlapur district' is related to the functions performed by the representatives of reserved categories in the Panchayat Raj Institutions and their views and developing situation. The researcher found that the poor economic condition of weaker sections is an obstacle that restricts the good performance of these categories in the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

ManoharlalTomar (2013) in his book examined the impact of reservation and other issues associated with the authorization of rural women in PRIs. He analyzed the outcomes of reservation provided to the weaker sections and found that reservation provided an opportunity to the weaker sections and with the help of reservation Dalit women are elected across the country in a large number. This book gives a fact that some Dalit representatives who tried to engage and taking decisions in the Panchayat meetings are ignored. The book reveals that many obstacles prevent Dalit women from enjoying political authority. Different governmental programs for the empowerment of women and the SC and ST are also discussed in this book.

Dominic Savio.M. (2016) in his research work, tried to know about the involvement of the SCs leaders in the PRIs in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu. The researcher concluded that the majority of the respondents have been elected through the seats reserved for SCs in the PRIs. One-third of the respondents are aware of the laws, rules and procedures of the PRIs. More than one-third of the SC leaders attend mostly the meetings held by the PRIs.

Harvinder Singh's (2017) research work deals with the legislative leadership of SCs in Punjab. The researcher studied the political participation of SC leaders as legislators. The researcher found that reservation for the SCs at the grassroots level in political institutions has provided an opportunity to a large number of SCs to represent in local bodies and the main purpose of most of the SCs representatives is to serve their Political party while working for their community is less important to them.

METHODOLOGY

There are two blocks in Lehra Constituency of Sangrur District namely, Lehra Block and Andana at Moonak block. The present research work deals with the villages under Andana at Moonak block. This block comprises thirty nine villages out of which the sample size of thirteen villages have been selected on random basis. Thirty one respondents from scheduled castes only have been selected from for this purpose and the present research work specifically deals with the members and sarpanches belonging to the scheduled castes that is why the purposive sampling method has been used while selecting the respondents. Data have been gathered by using the questionnaire cum interview schedule method and the study is mainly quantitative in nature. Besides of this, secondary sources like books, theses, research articles and websites have been also studied for the purpose of the review of literature. Official documents from the Block Development and Panchayat Office BDPO Moonak, have been also taken to collect factual data, regarding the study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Local-level politics also represents national-level politics. There is a famous saying about India that the real India lives in its villages. The 73rd constitutional amendment act gave new rise to village-level politics and because of this act, the PRIs gained constitutional status. Weaker sections of the society (SC, ST and women) also provided reservation of seats in PRIs through this act. As per best of my knowledge, very little work has been done in the this block related to the political reservation of the scheduled castes in Panchayats . In this paper, efforts has been made to analyse the present scenario (persons who won in the last Panchayat elections held in Punjab in December 2018) of political reservation provided to the Scheduled Castes in the Panchayats of Andana at Moonak block in Punjab. Punjab has the highest percentage of population of scheduled castes than rest of the Indian states so it becomes interesting to know about the impact of reservation provided to these categories in Panchayat Raj Institutions. This block shares border with Haryana state.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know about the impact of reservation on scheduled castes in Panchayats.
2. To inspect the awareness of scheduled castes about reservation in Panchayats.
3. To know about their overall performance as a leader in Panchayats.

Research questions:

1. What is the impact of reservation policy provided to Scheduled Castes in Panchayats?
2. What is the awareness level of Scheduled Castes about reservation in Panchayats?
3. What is their overall performance as leader in Panchayats?

Analysis and Findings of Research: This study is a analysis of political reservation provided to Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions which is as follow

Table 1

What do you say about reservation provided in Panchayats?

Sr No.	View about reservation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Means of ensuring the participation of SC in PRIs	21	67.7

2	A boon for the underprivileged sections of the society	2	6.4
3	It has changed the political landscape of the SC.	8	25.8
Total		31	100.0

Table 1 clears that most of the respondents (67.7 %) said about the reservation that it (reservation) is a means of ensuring the participation of SCs in PRIs, while 6.4 per cent of respondents accepted that reservation has proved to be a boon for the underprivileged sections of the society. 25.8 per cent of respondents have a view about the reservation that it (reservation) has changed the political landscape of the SCs. It is clear here that the majority of the respondents has the same view about the reservation that it is a means of ensuring the participation of SCs in PRIs.

Table 2

Do you think that reservation is necessary for the development of the SCs?

Sr No.	Necessity of reservation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes, In a large context	27	87.0
2	To some extent	4	12.9
Total		31	100.0

Given table no. 2 shows that most of the respondents (87.0 per cent) agreed that reservation is necessary for the development of the SCs in a large context, whereas 12.9 per cent of respondents accepted that reservation is necessary for the development but to some extent. But most respondents agree with the fact that reservation is essential for the development of the SCs. The lowest percentage is of people who say that reservation is necessary for the development of the SCs to some extent.

Table 3

Do you think that the reservation has resulted in making good leaders?

Sr No.	Attributes/Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes/ in a large extent	22	70.9
2	To some extent	7	22.5
3	Don't know	2	6.4
Total		31	100.0

Table no. 3 indicates that a large number of respondents (70.9 %) believes that the reservation provided to the SC/ST and women in PRIs through the 73rd amendment of the constitution have resulted in making good leaders in a large context. 22.5 per cent of respondents said that good leaders have emerged through the reservation, but to some extent and the logic behind this, they admit that not all leaders are good. In addition, 6.4 per cent of respondents are unaware of whether good leaders have emerged through reservation or not

Table 4

Do you think that you may be elected as a member/sarpanch without the reservation policy?

Sr No.	Reservation matters or not	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes/it does not matter	10	32.2
2	Yes/but it is not easy	3	9.6
3	Not, because reservation plays an important role	17	54.8
4	Don't know	1	3.2
Total		31	100.0

it is clear from table no. 4 that 32.2 percent of respondents agree from this fact that they can be elected without the policy of reservation and reservation does not matter. 9.6 per cent of respondents said that they may be elected as Panchayat members without the reservation policy but it is not easy. The majority (54.8 per cent) of the respondents are agreed with the fact that they may not be elected as Panchayat members without the reservation provided to them. Only 3.3 per cent of respondents don't know about this fact they may be entered in Panchayats without the policy of reservation or not. But in the end, the majority of the respondents agree that they can't be elected as Panchayat members without the policy of reservation.

Table 5

In your opinion, has there been any change came in the condition of SCs through the reservation?

Sr No.	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Created political awareness among the SCs	15	48.3
2	Weaker sections came into the mainstream of society	10	32.2
3	Decision-making power developed among the SC leaders	6	19.3
Total		31	100.0

According to table no. 5 the majority of the respondents (48.3 %) agree with this fact that political awareness has been developed among the SCs through the reservation and it is only possible because of reservation that person belonging to SCs are participating in politics more than ever before. 32.2 per cent of respondents expressed their views about the reservation that it is because of only reservation that people belonging to SCs have come into the mainstream of the society and they are now playing an important role as a member in the Panchayats.

19.3 per cent of respondents expressed that reservation developed the power to make decisions among the SC leaders in the matters of Panchayats. Respondents' view of the fact that reservation does not change the condition of SCs is unequivocal.

Whereas, from the whole sample majority of the respondents have the same views about the reservation and said that political awareness has been developed among the persons belonging to the SCs. However, the lowest number of the respondents are of the view that reservation has developed the decision-making power of SC leaders.

.Table 6

Distribution of respondents by their knowledge about seats provided to the weaker sections in Punjab Panchayati Raj Act 1994.

Sr No	Attributes/Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes/ substantially	5	16.1
2	To some extent	23	74.1
3	Don't know	3	9.6
Total		31	100.0

It is from table no. 6 that 16.1 per cent of the respondents are those who are substantially aware of the reservation of seats provided to the weaker sections in the Punjab Panchayati Raj act 1994. While most of the respondents (74.1%) are aware of the reservation of seats provided to the weaker sections in Punjab Panchayati Raj Act 1994 to some extent.

Besides these two categories of respondents, 9.6 per cent of respondents are those who don't have any knowledge about the reservation of seats provided to the weaker sections of the society in the Panchayati Raj Act 1994.

Table 7

Do you think that the weaker sections are taking advantage of reservation properly?

Sr No.	Attributes/Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes, properly	19	61.2
2	Not properly	11	35.4

3	Don't know	1	3.2
Total		31	100.0

Table no. 7 shows that out of the entire sample, the majority of the respondents (61.2%) agree that weaker sections of the society are taking advantage of the reservation properly and 35.4 per cent of respondents said that the weaker sections are not taking advantage of the reservation properly.

While, there is only one respondent, who do not know whether weaker sections are taking advantage of the reservation or not. But, most of the respondents agree with the fact that weaker sections are taking advantage of the reservation properly that which has been provided to them through the 73rd constitutional amendment act.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the data above given some suggestions are made:

Quota Detail

As far as joining PRIs is concerned, all the representatives have been elected as a member of Panchayat only because of the reserved seats provided to them and any scheduled castes person has been elected as a member of Panchayat on the general seat. When the SC representatives were asked if they could be elected to the post of Panch or Sarpanch without the policy of reservation or not then some leaders claimed that in absence of reserved seats, they could be elected as Panch or Sarpanch in the Panchayat. But one thing is clear here that all the existing Sarpanches and Panchs have been able to enter into the Panchayats only because of the reserved seats provided to them in the Punjab Panchayati Raj Act of 1994.

Reservation in Panchayats

Reservation provided to the SC in Panchayats has been proved a means of ensuring the participation of SC in PRIs and most of the present SC leaders accepted this fact. Some SC leaders admitted that the reservation has changed the political landscape of SC and people belonging to these sections now becomes part of village, state and national level politics as a result of reservation provided to them.

When the question arises that whether the reservation is necessary for the development of SC or not? Then one thing has proved that the reservation is necessary for the development of SC because most of the SC leaders accepted this fact that it is necessary for their development. Most of the SC leaders admitted that It (Reservation) has created political awareness among the SC. The weaker section has entered into the mainstream of the society and because of reservation decision-making power developed among the SC leaders. The Reservation has been resulted in providing good leaders to the society who lead the society in a good manner. The majority of the SC leaders believe that the weaker sections of the society are taking advantages of reservation properly whether some SC leaders admitted that the weaker sections are not taking advantage of reservation properly. It can be concluded that the reservation has proved a boon for the SC in changing their condition and political experience.

Selection Without the Reservation Policy

The reservation provisions made for the Panchayat bodies in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment plays a vital role in the election of a member of the SC during the Panchayat elections and this has been acknowledged by the majority of the present SC Panchayat members. Some members believe that they can be elected as a member or sarpanch in Panchayats without the reservation policy but one thing to

note here is that the population of SC is higher in those villages who says that they can be elected as a member or sarpanch without the reservation policy. As a result, it can be said that in most of the cases reservation provided to the SC in Panchayats plays a vital role in the selection of these sections for being a member or sarpanch.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of research there are some suggestions as follows:-

There is a perception in the society that people belonging to SC become Panchayat members only because of reserved seats that have been provided to them by the constitution. There is a need to abandon this old system and adopt a new one in which SC candidates can be elected as Sarpanch or member even without the reserved seats and at the same time there will be a spread of mutual harmony in the society by adopting this new system.

To make good and effective use of the reservation system, it is important to identify that casts among the SCs who have been participating in Panchayats in large numbers and those who have been completely deprived concerning the participation in Panchayats. Thus those castes which have in minority or non – equal participation in the Panchayats need to be motivated for leadership opportunities and launch a campaign by the government or non – government organizations (NGO's) to ensure political participation in Panchayats on a large scale of these sections so that they could come in the mainstream of society and be the part of politics also

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