

How to Cite:

Chopra, M. (2021). Reservation system in india: advantages and disadvantages. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15(1), 30–37. Retrieved from <https://ijeponline.org/index.php/journal/article/view/4>

Reservation System in India: Advantages and Disadvantages

Monika Chopra


Assistant Professor in Political Science, Guru Nanak Girls Colloge, Yamunagar

Abstract---Reservation is the most debated topic in the country. A large number of people favor it. Reservation is not the topic of today, it was introduced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar while drafting the constitution of India. He intended to empower the weaker sections of society and uplift the unprivileged sections of society in many aspects. He also put a time limit of 10 years for this, but unfortunately, as the political involvement in the amendment of constitution started it is been continued even today, In today's society it is the reservation which is the main reason for the difference in our society. Due to this, the competition was increasing for every job and many people are becoming unemployed. The greedy politicians are utilizing their votes by mentioning their caste and still pushing reservations forward. The politicians are benefited from the reservation but not the public. They only fight for their power and do not consider our problems. The public must feel that reservation must be an option but not a platform for everyone. Government should also make sure that every citizen in this country gets an equal chance with others. Reservation based on caste, creed, minority, etc, should be abolished from the system.

Keywords---advantages, disadvantages, minority, reservation system.

Introduction

India being a developing nation is currently facing many challenges and the reservation system being one of them. The age-old caste system of India is responsible for the origination of the reservation system in the country. In simple terms, it is about facilitating access to seats in government jobs, educational institutions, and even legislatures to certain sections of the population. These sections have faced historical injustice due to their caste identity (Diwan & Lal, 2020; Singh, 2016). Today anyone whose forefathers belonged to ST/SC community gets the benefits of reservation irrespective of his socioeconomic status, Originally reservation was only given to SC and ST, but was later extended to the OBCs in 1987 after the implementation of the Mandal Commission report.

© 2021 by The Author(s).  ISSN: 1307-1637 International journal of economic perspectives is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Corresponding author: Monika Chopra, Email: monikachopra@gmail.com

Submitted: 18 April 2021 , Revised: 27 May 2021, Accepted: 9 June 2021

Historical background

Quota systems favoring certain castes and other communities existed before independence in several areas of British India (Franco & BulomineRegi, 2016; Saxena et al., 2015). Demands for various forms of positive discrimination had been made, for example in 1882 and 1891. Shahu, the Maharaja of the princely state of Kolhapur, introduced reservations in favor of non-Brahmin and backward classes, much of which came into force in 1902. He also tried to ensure to receive it that people thus educated were suitably employed, and he appealed both for a class-free India and the abolition of untouchability. His 1902 measures created 50 percent reservation for backward communities.

The British Raj introduced elements of reservation in the Government India Act of 1909 and there were many other measures put in place before independence (Jangir, 2013; Retna, 2012). A significant one emerged from the Round Table Conference of June 1932. When the Prime Minister of Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, proposed the communal Award, according to which separate representation was to be provided for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans, The depressed classes, roughly corresponding to the STs and SCs, were assigned several seats to be filled by election from constituencies in which only they could vote, although they could also vote in other seats. The proposals were controversial: Mahatma Gandhi fasted in protest against it but many among the depressed classes, including their leader, B.R. Ambedkar, favored it. After negotiations, Gandhi reached an agreement with Ambedkar to have a single Hindu electorate, with Dalits having seats reserved within it. Electorates for other religions, such as Islam and Sikhism, remained separate. This became known as the Poona pact (Chin & Prakash, 2011; Garcia-Santana, & Pijoan-Mas, 2014).

After independence

The reservation policies saw a major revamp after independence. The Government of India listed the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and marched ahead with positive discrimination or affirmative action. What does this mean? The government undertook several measures and policies to reserving a certain number of seats in public jobs and government-aided educational institutions for the SC and St. The reservation quota in educational institutions and government jobs is 7.5% for the ST and 15% for the SC. The total reservation for both SC and ST stands at 22.5%. Reservation was further extended to the Other Backward Classes or OBCs in 1992 to 27%. Today 50% of reservation is allowed for the Sc, St, and OBCs in educational institutions and public jobs (Castelló-Climent & Mukhopadhyay, 2013). In 2019 the bill for reservation of 10% to the Economically weak section is a general category has been passed. If implemented, the reservation will increase to a total of 60%.

Reservation in the India constitution

The reservation system in India is strongly backed by the constitution. It is important to acknowledge and understand its different references in the constitution. Article 15(4) and 46 are related to reservations. The constitution of India provides for the right to equality. A fundamental right, it provides for equality irrespective of religion, race, gender, caste, or place of birth. It also includes the right of equal opportunity in employment as well as the abolition of titles and untouchability. But before moving on it is important to address the issue of untouchability, the abolition of untouchability was the biggest victories post-independence and it paved the way for equal opportunities and reservations for the 'untouchables' or Dalits, Article 17 of the constitution abolished untouchability and the Untouchability Act passed in 1955 also made untouchability a punishable offense (Kumar et al., 2021; Krishnan et al., 2010). The preamble states, "Equality of status and opportunity". Reservation hence seemed to be a justified recourse. It elevated those sections of society that had for generations been neglected. It provided a chance for equal opportunities or status in society and culture.

Mandal commission

In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 340 of the constitution, the president appointed a backward class commission in December 1978 under the chairmanship of B.P. Mandal. The commission was formed to determine the criteria for defining India's "socially and educationally backward classes" and to recommend steps to be taken for the advancement of those classes (Banerjee & Knight, 1985; Kaletski & Prakash, 2016). The Mandal Commission concluded that India's population consisted of approximately 52 percent OBCs, therefore 27% of government jobs should be reserved for them. The commission has developed eleven indicators of Social, educational, and economic backwardness, Apart from identifying backward classes among Hindus, the Commission has also identified backward classes among non-Hindus (e.g., Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists).

Why reservation demand had been growing rapidly?

- Agriculture Crisis:- The Jats in Haryana, Patels in Gujrat, and Kapus in Andhra Pradesh believe that reservation provides a solution to the rural distress faced by them especially the crisis in agriculture.
- Unemployment: is also one of the major factors influencing the demand for reservation.
- Privilege:- The agitation for reservation also arises from the fear of losing privilege and the inability to cope with change.
- Salaries and Wages:- Wages in the private sector are much lower than in the public sector. Salaries of government jobs are most attractive at the entry level.
- Demands of Upper Castes:- Previously advantageous castes like Brahamins, Chettiars, and Rajputs have begun to feel severally disadvantaged as they don't get any quotas even if they are economically disadvantaged. Thus they

want to integrate the economically disadvantaged groups among them in the reserved category.

Advantages reservation system

- Promoting backward classes
The biggest advantages of the reservation system are that it helps in promoting Backward class people because in developing countries like India backward class people are unable to get a good job and living standard not because of lack of skill rather due to their caste as they are considered to be untouchable and that is the reason why they are offered work which cannot be done by upper caste people (Ghani et al., 2014; Cassan & Vandewalle, 2021). In simple words, by giving them reservation in government jobs and colleges government ensures that they also can do jobs of respectable stature.
- Monetary benefit
Another benefit of the reservation system is that in the case of job and college applications reservation class people are given concession concerning application fees and other fees. In other words due to the reservation system backward class people who are poor not only get preferences over other candidates for the job but also get the concession for fees while applying resulting in saving money.
- Reduction in Gap between rich and poor backward class
It also helps in reduction in the income gap between rich and poor backward classes for government jobs reservation ensures that people from backward class earn a respectable salary which in turn help them in coming out from the vicious cycle of poverty. In simple words, reservation helps in reduction in the gap between the rich class and the backward poor class people.
- Social justice
Reservation schemes are needed to provide social justice to the most marginalized and underprivileged which is their human right.
- Reduced Poverty Line
The percentage of depressed class living below the poverty line was 51.32% in 1978-79 which was reduced to 35.97% in 1993-94. Although it was still above the national poverty average.
- Enrolment of SC and St
Has increased in undergraduate, Postgraduate, technical, and professional courses. The percentage of enrolment of SC in these categories was 7.08% in 1978-79 which increased to 13.30% in 1995-96.
- Meritocracy vs equality
Meritocracy is meaningless without equality. First, all people must be brought to the same level, whether it elevates a section or decelerates another, regardless of merit. The caste-based reservation also minimized the gap between upper and lower castes to a great extent.¹²
- Administration equality
A study revealed that reservations have not affected the efficiency of administration, but enhanced quality. The best example is the Indian Railways in which the SC/St employees comprise more in number, and the results have been better.

Disadvantages of a reservation system

As it has advantages, it does have few disadvantages. Disadvantages that are causing any kind of problems in society (O'Connell, 2018; Aggarwal, 2017; Singh et al., 2016). As it is helping many backward classes it is also affecting forward class people because of the quota system at the present scenario, not every backward class person is financially weak or uninfluential, and not every forward is rich. So, the concept of Caste-based Reservation is very dissolution. This way one rightful candidate is not given the opportunity he/she deserves. Condition of General category has taken a drastic turn and is deteriorating several meritorious students who are not given the opportunities they deserve. Here are some disadvantages of Reservation in India :

- Only reserved are deserved
As per a national survey, only 0.7% entire population gets scholarships through merit rest are reserved. Students studying hard and from General Category don't have a bright chance to grab the opportunity even if he/she is from a financially unstable background. Time has come to amend the laws and change mules for the good.
- Not reaching needy people
Rich and influential backward caste candidates are getting opportunities and benefited from the reservation scheme while poor backward class people. The reservation system is so corrupt and is used in a negative way for meeting electoral requirements that it fails to meet its actual propaganda of helping and upraising Dalits and Those who are socially and economically backward.
- Contradicting secularism
We live in a country comprising people from every religion, every caste, and discrimination based on caste, creed, color, etc. is an offense. The point of Reservation goes against the idea of secularism. General people affected by the reservation Quato hates people who are getting benefited even if they don't need a reservation. Deprived people are not getting their rights. This leads to a world that is not peaceful. You can't expect a country free of casteism if it offers reservations based on caste.
- Caste-based and not merit-based
The biggest disadvantage of the reservation system is that in the case of competitive exams the selection of an individual should be based on merit and not based on caste but reservation defy this logic and it rewards people on the bans of their caste and merit takes a back seat, Hence if an individual gets 80 percent in a competitive exam and he or she is not from reservation class than he or she won't be selected and an individual who is from reservation class with 60 percent marks will be selected due to reservation quota.
- It should be income-based
Another argument against the reservation system is that is caste-based and not income-based because in case if income-based reservation system all poor people will get reservation irrespective of their caste as poverty does not select people based on their caste and hence if nation's wants to bring equality between citizens than it should opt for income-based reservation rather than caste-based reservation.

- **Dirty politics**
Another limitation of this system is that due to it politicians and political parties with vested interest try to play this reservation card to win the elections which in turn divides the nation. Hence in simple words due to reservation politicians get a chance to play with the emotions of people by using it as a tool for winning elections and not using it for the betterment of the people of the country.
- **Reservation is similar to internal partition**
Because in addition to being a form of ethnic discrimination, it also builds a wall against inter-caste and inter-faith marriages.
- **Reservations are the biggest enemy of meritocracy**
By affecting reservation through relaxed entry criteria, we are fuelling inflation of moderate credentials as opposed to the promotion of a merit-based education system, which is the foundation of many progressive countries. Meritocracy should not be polluted by injecting relaxation of entry barriers rather should be encouraged by offering financial aids to the underprivileged although deserving candidates only.
- **Solutions**
 - Make education mandatory and free for all till the age of 15.
 - Reservations based on caste and not based on economic conditions are unethical and unacceptable.
 - Fair and just reservations should be provided 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 based on factors such as gender (as women are more disadvantaged than men since primitive times), family education, family employment, family property family income, and if any disabilities.
 - Provide an opportunity for students to earn while they study.
 - bring about revolutionary changes in our education system at the grass-roots level to improve education quality. Because reservation at the subsequent stage will never be of any use if quality education hasn't been provided to children at the primary stage.
 - 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 equally 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.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper.

References

- Aggarwal, R. (2017). Different avenues of capital market (secondary market) available for investing in market of Yamuna Nagar. *International research journal of management, IT and social sciences*, 4(3), 34-50.
- Banerjee, B., & Knight, J. B. (1985). Caste discrimination in the Indian urban labour market. *Journal of development Economics*, 17(3), 277-307. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3878\(85\)90094-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3878(85)90094-X)
- Cassan, G., & Vandewalle, L. (2021). Identities and public policies: Unexpected effects of political reservations for women in India. *World Development*, 143, 105408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105408>
- Castelló-Climent, A., & Mukhopadhyay, A. (2013). Mass education or a minority well educated elite in the process of growth: The case of India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 105, 303-320. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2013.03.012>
- Chin, A., & Prakash, N. (2011). The redistributive effects of political reservation for minorities: Evidence from India. *Journal of development Economics*, 96(2), 265-277. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2010.10.004>
- Diwan, A., & Lal, A. (2020). Social Justice Programs in Higher Education: Affirmative Action in the USA and Reservation System in India. *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education*, 1253-1276.
- Franco, C. E., & BulomineRegi, S. (2016). Advantages and challenges of e-commerce customers and businesses: in Indian perspective. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 4(3SE), 7-13.
- Garcia-Santana, M., & Pijoan-Mas, J. (2014). The reservation laws in India and the misallocation of production factors. *Journal of monetary economics*, 66, 193-209. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmoneco.2014.04.017>
- Ghani, E., Kerr, W. R., & O'Connell, S. D. (2014). Political reservations and women's entrepreneurship in India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 108, 138-153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2014.01.008>
- Jangir, S. K. (2013). Reservation policy and Indian constitution in India. *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 126-128.
- Kaletski, E., & Prakash, N. (2016). Does political reservation for minorities affect child labor? Evidence from India. *World Development*, 87, 50-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.06.003>
- Krishnan, S., Rocca, C. H., Hubbard, A. E., Subbiah, K., Edmeades, J., & Padian, N. S. (2010). Do changes in spousal employment status lead to domestic violence? Insights from a prospective study in Bangalore, India. *Social science & medicine*, 70(1), 136-143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.09.026>
- Kumar, V., Atre, S., Jain, R., Bhanushali, N., Singh, S., & Chaudhari, S. (2021). Include-integrate-involve: Deciphering oral healthcare providers' professional demeanor towards sexual and gender minority cohorts in a metropolitan city of western India. *Journal of Oral Biology and Craniofacial Research*, 11(2), 149-157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jobcr.2021.01.009>
- O'Connell, S. D. (2018). Political inclusion and educational investment: Estimates from a national policy experiment in India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 135, 478-487. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2018.08.004>
- Retna, S. K. (2012). *The Reservation System in India-An evaluation of political reservation and poverty reduction* (Doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University).

- Saxena, A., Saini, J. S., Gupta, Y., Parasuram, A., & Iyengar, S. R. S. (2015). Social network analysis of the caste-based reservation system in India. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1512.03184*.
- Singh, V. K. (2016). Analysis of Advantages and Disadvantages of Forums Prescribed under the UNCLOS and State Practice: The Way ahead for India. *Braz. J. Int'l L.*, 13, 319.
- Singh, V. V., Pandey, M., & Vashisht, A. (2016). Sector wise comparison of corporate social responsibility by companies in India. *International Research Journal of Management, IT and Social Sciences*, 3(5), 30-37.