

## **Categorization of Scheduled Caste Reservation in AP:A policy failure**

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*The article examines how policies get murky when made without taking best possible alternatives into account while addressing the issue of the SC categorization in Andhra Pradesh. The article argues that though rational the classification of Dalits and distribution of benefits of the reservation policy, the methodology that the state has followed is beset with unsurmountable anomalies. The primary error in the entire exercise is the consideration of state as a single unit. In this context had the government mull over the zonal system created by the presidential order 1975, instead of state as single unit and its demographic distribution of different caste groups—the policy would have been simple and acceptable to all sections of the dalit community in the state.*

The onset of globalization coupled with identity politics has created unprecedented pressure on the limited resources among the marginalized communities in India. As reservations, an affirmative action of government of India for the inclusion of SCs, forms the main basis of their resource component different marginalized came forward with a demand to distribute the benefits of reservations among all scheduled castes. Valmikis in north India, Madigas in AP, Adidravidas in Karnataka, Matngs in Maharashtra, Arunthathiyars in TN are demanding for to redistribute the benefits of reservations among different scheduled castes. A claim of all these communities is that a few scheduled castes corner major share in the benefits of reservations leaving other SC castes with less resources i.e reservations.

The memories of an unprecedented massive movement by the Madiga - a dalit community in Andhrapradesh, is still afresh though it reached to the sky in the later 1990s under the banner of Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS). MRPS was formed in a small village called Edumudi, in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1994, by a small group of 20 young madiga youth to articulate their problems. Manda Krishna, a madiga intellectual, was able to thoroughly convince the youth that their community was lagging behind in employment and education compared to the other major dalit caste in the state - Mala, due to the unequal distribution of reservations among the scheduled castes in the state. The particular reason attributed for their backwardness is the lesser share in the opportunities that the madiga community has been getting from the 15% SC reservation given to the scheduled caste. In this backdrop they have resolved firmly to work in the direction of distributing the 15% reservation points among all the scheduled castes in proportion to their population in the state.

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The organization has adopted a multi fold strategy in its endeavor to achieve its goal of SC classification by building pressure on the government. Apart from organizing meetings, protests, through out the state it has undertaken massive rallies at the state headquarters with programmes like

Chalo Nizam college on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1996, Chalo Assembly on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1997, and a long march by Krishna madiga from Naravaripalle of Chittoor district in June 1997. The MRPS appears to have followed typical approach of social movements and at times pressure group tactics to influence the public policy in their favour. However, it has proved to be quite successful in making the government to heed to its demands. The then TeluguDesamParty(TDP) government which was in fine tune with the MRPS under the chiefministership of Chandrababu Naidu, has appointed a single judge commission under the chairmanship of Justice Ramachandraraju on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1996 to recommend necessary steps to address the demands of the MRPS. The commission has submitted its report in May 1997 recommending the classification of all the scheduled castes of the state into four groups viz, A, B, C and D; and a corresponding distribution of the 15% reservation among the four groups proportionate to their population on the basis of the 1981 Census .

And immediately, without delay the government has implemented Justice Ramachandraraju Commission's recommendations in toto without any modifications. On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1997 the Government of Andhra Pradesh has formally announced the classification of Dalits into four groups as well as the proportionate distribution of the 15% reservation among them. According to the commission's report, based on the 1981 Census, the population of different Scheduled Caste groups in the state is as follows:

| <b>Caste Group</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Percentage to the total SCs</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Relly              | 133,689           | 1.67                               |
| Madiga             | 3,737,609         | 46.94                              |
| Mala               | 3,263,655         | 40                                 |
| AdiAndhra          | 713,824           | 8.96                               |

Source: VenkatasivaReddy, Competition and Conflict among Dalits: Madiga Dandora Movement in Andhrapradesh in GhanaShyamsha (Ed) Dalits and the State, 2002.

Justice Ramachandra raju commission's recommendations have become a serious bone of contention and generated a lot of resentment among the mala community against the government. Severe allegations have been leveled against the nature and style of functioning of the commission. The haphazard manner in which the commission had completed its task on such a major and important issue has raised several questions and called for a revisit into the whole process of public policy formulation .When the government intends to make a policy, as a response to any issue, it would generally works out for a rational solution, particularly when a issue involves more than one party with confronting claims. But the TDP government doesn't seem to have had any interest on the amicable solution except on its mission to breakdown the dalit vote bank and grab the Madiga segment into its fold. This hasty attitude was clearly established in every step of the government towards the division of dalits of Andhra Pradesh. Even to make a simple policy, usually, governments undertake systematic procedures that invariably include invitation of opinions from the stake holders-experts, public, civil society organizations, intellectuals, etc. But such a deeper exercise does not seem to have taken place in this case. The commission was appointed in September 1996 and submitted its report in May 1997.It was felt that the commission should have invested more time and gone deeper into the issue so as to find out a solution. amicable to both the sides.It awas also felt that all the dalit organizations should have been consulted before making this policy as this policy was going to directly effect them. Also it was alleged that the commission had actually spent only two to three months to complete this issue of a huge magnitude. The Ramachandraraju commission has divided dalits into four categories and distributed the benefits of reservations in the following manner in

proportion to the percentage of each coup's representation in the scheduled caste population of AP.

| Category | Castes     | SC Castes | Recommended %age |
|----------|------------|-----------|------------------|
| A        | Relli      | 12        | 1%               |
| B        | Madiga     | 18        | 7%               |
| C        | Mala       | 25        | 6%               |
| D        | Adi-Andhra | 04        | 1%               |
|          |            | -----     | -----            |
|          |            | 59        | 15%              |

While the distribution, in principle, was rational the manner in which the division and distribution had been undertaken taken was absolutely irrational and further complicated the problem. It was irrational because the Commission has considered the state as a single unit for the purpose of implementation of its scheme of categorization where as the Presidential Order of the 1975, which had divided the 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh into 6 zones demands that the 'zone' should become the basic unit for the purpose of recruitment. Except for group -I services, recruitment for all other jobs takes place at the zonal level in Andhra Pradesh.

### **Andhra Pradesh Public Employment (Organization of Local Cadres and Regulation of Direct Recruitment) Order 1975**

As a response to the 1969 Telangana Movement followed by the Jai Andhra Movement the union government has come out with a 'six point formula' in an attempt to excise a balance between the two reasons, of which one important point was to divide Andhra Pradesh in to six zones for the purpose of public employment. This was basically aimed at protecting the interests of the local people of different regions in the state in matters of public employment. In accordance with this the Andhra Pradesh Public Employment (Organization of Cadres and Regulation of Direct Recruitment) Order 1975 which was popularly known as the Presidential Order 1975 came into existence. The Order has created the following six zones in the state.

| Zone | Districts  |
|------|--|
| I    | Srikakulam, Visakhapattanam, Vijyanagara                         |
| II   | East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna                            |
| III  | Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore  |
| IV   | Chittoor, Cuddapah, Kurnool                                      |
| V    | Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khamam                           |
| VI   | Hyderabad, RangarReddy, Nizamabad, Mahabubnagar, Medak, Nalgonda |

According to the Presidential Order 1975 all the jobs, created in a particular zone would go to the individuals of the corresponding districts and not to the outsiders. For instance, for the public employment opportunities generated in Zone -I, only individuals from its corresponding districts- Srikakulam, Visakhapattanam and Vijayanagaram are eligible. Individuals can also apply to other zones but, there, they become non-local and their chances of getting selected will be very remote. This model is common for individuals of all communities and in all zones. No doubt, this division has fundamentally succeeded in its attempt to protect the interests of the local individuals of different regions in the state. This arrangement, by and large, had prevented the individuals of an advanced region from exploiting the opportunities in a backward region. And also this has contributed

immensely for the democratic decentralization of the executive department of the government. Thus, since the inception of the Presidential Order the government has been undertaking the recruitment process, basically on the zonal criterion. When such a practice is in place government should have considered zone as a basic unit for, division and distribution, purposes. Unfortunately, the government has completely ignored this important dimension.

In this context a serious problem arises because the demographic dispersion of different caste groups in any zone does not match with the grouping of Justice Ramachandraraju commission. Thus the methodology the commission has adopted in grouping the Scheduled Castes of the state was absolutely irrational where a zonal system was in operation. The scheme was designed considering the state as a single unit and superimposed at the zonal level where each zone has a composition of different caste groups. Therefore grouping of Scheduled Castes at state level becomes meaningless. Rather, grouping should have been done at the zonal level, taking every zone as an single unit. Accordingly each group's share in that zone should have been decided. Unfortunately this did not happen.

Zonal criterion is necessary because in some zones if Mala are numerically large in other zones it is the Madiga. In some zones there is no Rely group at all. But the Rely group is given its share in all zones irrespective of its presence which is illogical. In such a situation if implemented, Justice Ramachandraraju's recommendations are bound to create more complications than the solutions it could have offered to resolve the issue. For instance according to Justice Ramachandraraju's distribution in zone-I the Rely group gets only 1% despite of having about a quarter share in the total of the dalit population. And in zone II the Adi-Andhra group has the major presence but it gets only 1% which is largely disproportionate to the actual share it deserves. Therefore, it is natural to have a strong resistance against categorization from the affected groups in the respective zones. In this regard it may be noted that several members of the Adi-Andhra group have tried to get the Mala- caste certificates for fear of less opportunities in Adi-Andhra group in the zone II. Similarly in zone V the population of the Madiga group constitutes around 70% to the dalit population. Accordingly they should get around 70% out of the 15%, which approximately comes to around 10% in that zone. But that group has been given only 7% by the commission in that zone. In view of this kind of discrepancies and confusion it warrants a serious study to ascertain the populations of different dalit caste groups in every zone. Thus the division of Dalits at state level and its superimposition at zonal level has created serious confusion which pointed out the defects in the policy giving huge space for politics leaving the issue unresolved. If the categorization has been done at the zonal levels considering the demographic representation of each zone, perhaps, the problem would not have become so a tricky one as it would have ensured a true proportionate representation of all the dalit groups. Justice Raju's recommendations that supposedly aimed at a rational division and a proportionate distribution of reservation has ultimately ended up in an irrational division of Dalits and disproportionate distribution of reservations among them. The resistance to categorization from Malas is more in the coastal districts compared to the Telangana districts, because they get lesser share in the coastal zones than they actually deserve when state is taken as a single unit. The resistance of Malas to categorization is not very strong in Telangana districts, perhaps, because there is a possibility for them to get larger share in the cake, disproportionate, to their actual numerical strength. Division and distribution, if made at the zonal level would not have benefited or deprived any group disproportionately. Instead of opposing the categorization the Mala group should have demanded for the zonal level distribution. It is unfortunate that while making a historic decision the Raju commission has not been able take the zonal dimension into consideration.

Earlier also the government of Andhra Pradesh has made the same blunder i.e. taken the state as a single unit, while categorizing the backward classes into four groups viz..A,B,C and D based on

the recommendations of the Antharaman committee in 1968. Twenty years after the classification of the BCs into four groups, several caste based organizations of Backward Class, like Doludebba of golla-kuruma(yadava), Poosala keka of Poosala Community, Chakirevu of the Washermen, Mokudebba of the gowda, Sammetadebba of the Viswabrahmins, Kummari sare of the potters, have surfaced articulating their socio-economic rights. Although these backward class organizations have not openly demanded for a reclassification of different castes under the backward class at the zonal level, the simmering discontentment among has an implicit reference to the categorization at the state level.

There is a feeling among some castes of the backward class that the classification of BCs into four groups has not helped them in any way as a few advanced castes in each group are cornering all benefits. Therefore they demand a recategorization of the whole BC communities. Perhaps the inner reason for this may lie in the disproportionate distribution of BC reservations at the zones. Like, in the case of Scheduled Castes the spread of the backward classes in the state is also very uneven. In some zones if Yadavas are numerically more in other zones it is the Gowda or the other castes. Therefore in this case also grouping should have been done at the field level where the policy is implemented i.e. at the zonal level. Since there is no apparent realization of this dimension among the BCs its implementation is going on smoothly. But the moment they realize, certainly, it would also become an issue in Andhra Pradesh. However this assumption needs to be further explored and examined.

### **Conclusion**

When political interests dominate the public policies they are bound to be lopsided – further leading to more complications. Unfortunately governments at the states and central level have been giving priority to political interests rather than the ground realities. This kind of problems emerges when policy making bodies could not see beyond the vested interests of the political parties. A more rational solution like that of the present proposal would have helped in averting any confrontation among the dalits of Andhra Pradesh and paved the way for proportionate distribution of reservation among them. A rational distribution of resources is always desirable just not only among dalits but also among all sections of the society( Abedkar). But when the politics is interested more on the division of people rather than the distribution of resources, issues like the present one are bound to emerge. Policies with severe defects may also curse the governments with a grave toll. A fine example is the terrible defeat of the TDP in the 2004 general elections. The defeat of TDP in 2004 is also partly attributed to the lopsided policy of SC categorization. The TDP once acted as patron to the categorization movement kept absolutely mum afterwards on the same issue-till date. Its one step forward and two steps backward kind of approach, in this context, has slashed down its integrity even among the madiga community. The parochial interests of TDP have blinded it from looking at a more rational solution for this problem that ultimately distanced both communities –the mala and Madiga as well. Therefore the policy making bodies particularly when dealing with sensitive social issues should not fall prey to bounded rationality and should workout all possible methods to find out a rational solution. A rational approach is more important at this juncture as such demands are surfacing from many states.

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