

General Studies-1; Topic: Social empowerment; Population issues

Demand for OBC Reservation

1) Introduction

- The Patidars, Kapus, Jats, and Marathas have been demanding inclusion among the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- This demand reflects the challenges they are facing on the job market.
- The rationale behind introduction of reservation system in India is to address historical inequalities and bring the social and educational backward classes into mainstream.
- States are empowered through Article 15 and 16 for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes.

2) Why Communities demand OBC Status

- Communities like Patidars claims for Reservation on ground of inadequate representation in Government Jobs
- For Patidars and Jats there is decline in the probability of owning or cultivating land
- With a general decline in fortunes in the agrarian sector, they are seeking non-agricultural jobs, especially government jobs for which they demand OBC status.
- The Indian economy is not creating many jobs
- Wages in the private sector are much lower than in the public sector. Salaries of government jobs are mostly attractive at entry-level.
- Unskilled population and increasing attrition in private sector.

3) Arguments for Reservation

- Due to historical negligence caste based reservation are necessary in India.
- Reservation helps in level playing field because we cannot expect groups who are historically deprived of education, skills, and economic mobility to suddenly start competing with those who had access to these means for centuries
- Reservation is a policy tool that promotes equality rather than undermines it.
- When people from all social groups are represented in government, higher education etc, it is less likely that marginalized groups will be denied fundamental rights and access to their fair share of society's resources
- Though Meritocracy is an important aspect, it has no meaning without equality
- To a great extent caste based reservation reduced the gap between upper and lower castes.

4) Arguments against Reservation

- Many people of lower castes have stepped up the social ladder and are now on an equal footing with the 'general' population.
- On the other hand, many upper castes are still suffering from poverty and illiteracy.
- Reservation system can harm the economic structure of the country as it could bring down the efficiency of its labour.
- Caste based reservation may develop into communal riots.
- Many times economically sound people enjoy the benefits of caste based reservation, leaving aside real needy people.

- In Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India, Justice Ravindran opined that when more people aspire for backwardness instead of forwardness, the Country itself stagnates.

5) Negative Implications

- Many in the above communities are politically and economically strong enough and placing the whole community under the reservation system will be unethical.
- Providing reservations to the well off communities may deprive Low caste members the Government jobs, where their numbers are very low.
- If Government starts entertaining the caste like Jats, Kapus, Patel and Maratha, then on the same line other caste people will start agitation for reservation.
- It will lead to neglect of merit and it may cause social unrest as it was at the time of Mandal commission.
- Political parties have misused the tool of reservation for their vested interests which has hampered the real objective of granting reservation.

6) Way Forward

- The government should consider the economic, political and social wellbeing of the community and make a balanced decision
- Problems of these castes should be addressed through government schemes and programmes.
- Imparting skills and training through standup India, Student Startup Policy, etc.
- Government needs to scale up the educational and employment opportunities both in private and public sector to avoid conflict between different communities.
- Progressive steps should be taken to ensure that poorer section among the backward communities get the benefit of reservation system.
- Political parties must not use caste or reservations as political tools which defeats the very purpose of granting reservations.
- The policy of reservation should be gradually phased out after it serves its purpose.

7) Conclusion

- The principles of Justice, Liberty and Equality are integral part of our constitution and the policy of reservation was adopted to entitle these rights to historically degenerated classes.
- Thus government and civil society must work in tandem to realize its true purpose.