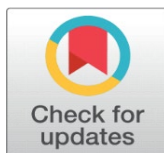
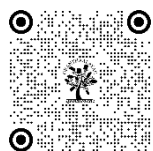


KARNATAKA STATE COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES ACT, 1995: A LANDMARK REFORM IN OBC RESERVATION IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

The Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservation policy laid down in the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995 plays an important role in reducing socio-economic inequalities. The Act of 1950 was thus the first exercise in the direction of institutionalizing mechanisms to identify the backward classes and thus ensure their adequate representation in education, employment and governance. The bill was part of a broader evolution of reservation policies in India, following the 1980 recommendations of the Mandal Commission and constitutional amendments like Article 16(4A) Verma further notes that Karnataka has taken several proactive measures, including setting up scores of state-level commissions, to ensure equitable social development. The Act allowed for the identification of backward classes based on socio-economic conditions, making reservation more effective and efficient. The implementation of this still has a lot of challenges because of the region specific needs and caste specific needs the Act has established the architecture of a strong legal and institutional apparatus (Sharma) even as the Commission's methodology has been critiqued for, among other things, its tendency to oversimplify backwardness and group exclusions. Recent reviews highlight the need for flexible frameworks to respond to changing socio-economic contexts and leverage technological innovations in data generation and policy execution., Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995 is a reflection of the historic potential state-level actions can have towards reimagining reservation policies. Continuing to fill in implementation gaps, and adapting to changing needs in society, the Act is ever-evolving in a way that continues reshaping an inclusive socio-economic environment.

Keywords: Karnataka, Backward Classes, OBC Reservation, Policies

1. INTRODUCTION

The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995, is one of the significant laws for establishing social justice and providing equal opportunities (OBCs) in the Indian state. This statute enables the implementation of the OBC reservation policy with regard to affirmative action in respect of employment, educational and other fields. An organization whose mission to promote social equality and elevate under-represented groups remains unchanged, the commission's charged with trainers constantly evolved to a changing sociopolitical climate. The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995 was a watershed moment in the history of reservation policy in India, especially in the state of Karnataka. Much of the legislation in him was enacted to guarantee that socially and educationally backward classes would be systematically identified and empowered. This was done to mitigate some of

the complexities that were arising from enacting the Mandal Commission's report and to specify the contexts in which the reservation system would apply. Over the years, Karnataka has established itself as the forerunner in the implementation of progressive policies for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to achieve social justice. This act also establishes The Commission, responsible for defining backwardness, conducting extensive socio-economic surveys, and revising the reservation matrix in line with the needs of society. This way there will always be action no matter how the policy is working in the real world. These various developments, along with the ongoing debates of sub-categorisation within OBCs and the need to address inequalities between groups within the backward classes, reflect the importance of the Commission. This paper attempts to deal with the contemporary role the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes play in reforming the policy of reservations (affirmative action policies) to effectively implementation of are carried out. It looks into the act's framework, how it is operationalised and its constitutional principles of equality and social justice.

The study critically represents policy reports, judicial pronouncements, and socio-economic data to shed light on how this act has shaped the syntax of reservation in Karnataka and how it serves as a template for the rest of India grade. The analysis, which considers equity and efficiency in policy implementation, helps explain the trade-offs these objectives entail.

The context; the OBC reservation policy's requirement

India's OBC reservation policy was derived from the Mandal Commission report (1980) that aimed to uplift historically disadvantaged sections and sought to introduce quotas in government services and educational institutions. After the Mandal Commission's recommendations came into effect in 1990, (Mandal, 1980) reserving a proportion of jobs and educational seats for the Other Backward Classes was one of the most critical components of a strategy in ensuring a level playing field for millions of Indians that had been kept away from access to opportunities and resources due to their socio-economic standing.

OBCs account for a large portion of Karnataka's population, with many communities, such as Lingayats and Vokkaligas, SCs, STs and others. Acknowledging the socioeconomic disparities confronting this populace, the state government established the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes in 1995 to monitor the implementation of the reservation policy and recommend measures for its improvement.

Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995: Its Purpose

Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995 was enacted to give it a formal recognition. The Act outlines the functions and powers of the commission, empowering it to: Determine Backward Classes: One of the primary functions of the commission is to ascertain which communities fall under the category of "backward classes." The commission's work includes conducting thorough surveys and engaging with groups to assess their socioeconomic conditions and historical marginalization. And it sends those results to the state government, which determines who gets the reservation. (*THE KARNATAKA STATE COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES ACT, 1995*, 1995, pp. 5-7)

Advising the State Government on Reservation: The commission provides recommendations to the state government on the extent of reservation in various spheres including political representation, employment and education. It ensures that the reservations are based on an in-depth understanding of OBCs' social and economic conditions.

Ensuring the implementation of reservation: The commission monitors the implementation of the OBC reservation law in the state. That ensures that the reservation is being offered as per legislative and constitutional mandates. The commission also evaluates if the most deprived groups among the OBC are reaping benefits of reservations.

grievances and complaints: The commission acts as a grievance redressal procedure, in OBC communities. Such people or communities can complain to the commission if they face discrimination or denial of benefits on account of reservation policies. The commission investigates such complaints, recommends and enforces corrective action to ensure that the policies are applied universally and fairly. (*THE KARNATAKA STATE COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES ACT, 1995*, 1995, pp. 5-7)

Demands Policy Reforms: The commission recommended some changes in Karnataka's reservation system due to its steady evolution with the changing dynamics of society. Such innovations include improved monitoring mechanisms, increased transparency in the reservation process, and changes to the definition of backwardness.

Social and Legal Consequences

It has led to enormous legal and social consequences for the state, the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995. Legally, the Act has empowered a body to assess the backwardness of a community in an ordered manner and recommend measures to address its social and educational disadvantage. The act also has legal affirmative action programs that have played a crucial role in promoting social mobility for unprivileged communities. (Kantaraju, 2023) From a social perspective, the Act has been instrumental in providing greater representation in government positions to marginalized groups, improving their access to education and empowering them. It has enabled Karnataka to attain social equity and rectify historical injustices against these groups.

Better representation: Reservation under the Act ensures representation of marginalized sections in governance which is beneficial to ensure their issues and demands are addressed. As a result, the political climate in the state has become more inclusive. **Access to Education:** The reservations in educational institutions prescribed by the Act have facilitated the entry of students from economically weaker classes into higher education. As this has enabled people, particularly women, to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty. **Creation of Economic Opportunities** — The provisions on affirmative action have also facilitated upward social mobility of individuals from lower socioeconomic strata through better job opportunities. **Reserved quotas for government posts** have allowed many members of such communities to have steady, respectable careers.

Employment Opportunities: The Commission's impact extends beyond its direct functions, as it has played a role in creating awareness about employment opportunities available to marginalized groups. Through study and advocacy of prejudice and social justice, the Commission has contributed to a more inclusive society.

The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes and its Relevance for Marginalised Groups

In recent years, the legislation on OBC reservation has actually been implemented based on recommendations from the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes. Some of the implications of the commission **The Dynamic Identification of Backward Classes:** The OBC reservation cover has been a difficult area. However, communities that were once considered underdeveloped may have achieved significant levels of economic and social development. In light of new data and socioeconomic statistics, the list of backward classes is regularly revised by the commission. By this dynamic process, the benefits of reservations are being distributed to right groups. **Rural-Urban Gap:** There exists an urban-rural divide which is a challenge for the OBC population. The urban OBCs may face more access to jobs and education, but rural OBC face greater disadvantages. To narrow this wide gap, the commission proposed special plans and reservations only for the rural OBC population to ensure the benefits of reservation reach the needy. **Women Empowerment in OBCs:** The commission has also addressed gender disparity in the OBC groups. Lower socioeconomic class women often face greater challenges due to sexism, lack of education and restricted access to resources. The Commission has highlighted the need for woman-specific reservations and dedicated schemes targeting health, employment, and education among OBC women in its conclusions and recommendations.

It is a complex mix of constitutional and legal issues: OBC reservation scheme has faced multiple rounds of litigation over the years. One of the main barriers is the reservation cap, limiting the overall share of reservations that can be made available in a service area. This commission is also integral to the policy reforms and legal defense of OBC reservation laws in Karnataka, especially when these are facing judicial scrutiny. **Promotion of Social Justice:** Along with discussing the technical aspects of reservations, defenders the commission advocates for social fairness. It's vital for spotlighting the plights of the poorest and for ensuring that their stories are heard in the corridors of power. More than just lobbying campaign- getting administrative and political back up for extension and sustenance of OBC reserve in state becomes heavily dependent on this lap dog fight.

However, many problems still plague this institution where the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes both plays a crucial role in updating and overseeing the OBC reservation policy.

Caste-Based Reservations: Whether to give reservation on the basis of caste or economics is an ongoing controversy in Karnataka. Critics argue that economics should be the predominant criterion for deciding affirmative action and that caste-based reservations have become archaic. The commission has had to juggle differing community aspirations, all while treading carefully on these questions. Note: Details on the economic status of the backward classes are crucial to the commissions capacity to analyse OBC schemes. Gaps in data collection, especially at the grass-roots level, have sometimes made it difficult to accurately identify qualifying groups and ensure that benefits reach the right people.

Community-level rivalries: In a diverse state like Karnataka, different backward classes often compete for a common “pooled” set of reservation rights, and the commission inevitably has to manage these community-level tensions, to avoid either perception of exclusion or unfair treatment.

Key Issues in the OBC Reservation Policy:

Herrera said jobs for OBCs in Karnataka are equally at parPalya UP, — The government of Karnataka has also built a system where it labels different communities as socially and educationally backward but the categorization of communities differs (2A, 2B, 3A and 3B). Nevertheless, (Lingappa, 2022, pp. 72–75) calls to be reclassified have persisted, with different communities claiming they are entitled to a different grade. For instance, the Panachamasali Lingayats, previously claiming to be a part of the 3B community, (Kumar, 2022b) have demanded to be moved into the 2A category designated to better represented groups. Likewise, Vokkaliga communities are demanding higher reservation, whereas Kuruba community is demanding to return back to Scheduled Tribe (ST) category

Muslim OBC Quotas: One significant political and legal challenge has been regarding reservation for Muslims. Though Muslims are placed under Category II-B, they have been prescribed in other OBC categories (Category I and II-A) as well, resulting in disputes about whether this allocation is fair or impinges upon the rights of other OBC communities. This has been a contentious issue, especially after the BJP government reversed the 4% reservation for Muslims in 2023,(Deuskar, 2023b) which was restored by the Congress government. A similar view has been held by the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), which condemned this approach and noted the lack of proper framework regarding the state's policy regarding Muslim reservations

Legal and Political Pressures: The state is constantly dogged by legal disputes related to the implementation of the reservation policy. As election season approaches, the reclassification of New Mexico communities from rural or urban to being metro has raised concerns that such changes could be more political than about genuine socioeconomic need. As an example, making OBC quotas available to groups with socio-political-dominance like the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats has triggered protests by other backward classes whose rights they feel are being violated

Effect on True OBC Beneficiaries: The actual OBC are the ones who required and deserved the reservations; however, with more and more communities coming under the OBC umbrella, the dynamic of access to opportunities would gradually decline for them. This has given rise to allegations that genuinely backward communities are being neglected in favor of politically powerful groups.

Re-Categorisation of OBC Groups: KSCBC has been in the limelight in contentious discussions over the re-categorisation of communities within the OBC quota. These demands have sometimes led to protests and litigation, for instance, the Panchamasalis of the Lingayat community and Vokkaliga sub-castes seeking reclassification to secure a greater share of the benefits. One such change granting the Panchamasalis higher status among the 2A that is widely named in their protest as 3B, and argued that they had been deprived of due political representation despite there being a majority within their broader community. (Kumar, 2022) Another major issue has been the mounting pressure for an increase in reservation quotas. Motivated by the demands of some communities, the state government suggested raising the OBC quota to 50% from its current 32%, based on Commission recommendations This proposal is controversial since it threatens to disturb the existing balance among communities within the context of the 50% threshold on aggregate reservation laid down by the Supreme Court.

Legal and Political Tensions: The KSCBC's recommendations have occasionally conflicted with political interests. The OBC subcategory of 2B for Muslims — the BJP's decision to either scrap 2B subcategory of OBC for Muslims, is controversial and dividing as the party has reallocated the 4% quota to Lingayats and Vokkaligas and so on. Legal specialists say this transition is in breach of established practice, since the commission's recommendations of which the state is acted up on, did not such recommendation. (Deuskar, 2023b) As critics pointed out, the government's emphatic position misrepresents the socio-economic condition of Muslims, who were granted OBC status due to their backwardness and not religion

Economic Weaker Section (EWS) Ten Percent Reservation: The new 10% EWS reservation for economically weak people from upper-caste communities has also impacted the situation. This has sparked debate on how it will interact with existing OBC reservations, (Kumar, 2022) especially in case of groups already demanding more representation But can only recommend to the government, it keeps fighting among the communities, on what is just, recommendation made by it to the government during its recent deliberations was seen as a galore for one community over the other and the legal framework came into place before the commission to ensure the usage of reservations to the class itself without any further socio-political unrest. As the only one of its kind, the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes (KSCBC) has developed the architecture for determining state legislation on OBC reservations, in an environment of fraught political reclassifying demands and complex socio-economic realities. The intricate and frequently conflicting interests it must account for render its role in scrutinizing and reshaping OBC reservation policy influential yet daunting.

CONCLUSION

The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995; however, plays a pivotal role the state's OBC reservation policy. The commission has adjusted its efforts meet the new challenges and make sure affirmative action works for the most disadvantaged people. Yet the commission needs to go with the flow of the changing socioeconomic landscape, conducting frequent surveys, re-evaluating the backlog parameters and encouraging more comprehensive legislation. The commission will also play an important role going forward in ensuring that Karnataka's OBC reservation legislation serves as a vehicle for equality and social justice. By periodically, assessing the efficacy of any scheme and where necessary, even identify any loopholes, and suggest timely corrections, the commission will continue to be at the helm in transforming the OBC reservations as a tool for fairer future for all.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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