CHAPTER : VII

POLITICAL RESERVATIONS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ
INSTITUTIONS AND SCHEDULED CASTE LEADERSHIP.

Introduction:

Shudras, the old untouchables, were officially called 'Scheduled Castes'. They were at the bottom of Hindu, India's caste hierarchy. They were equally at the bottom of economic hierarchy, having no land of their own and relegated to menial, dirty and ill-paid jobs. They were kept away from all places where the high castes and higher-ups moved. In a society where mobility was not easy, the place of these poor, illiterates and powerless people was fixed. The Indian social system that had its own background, hidden in the dark pages of history, which had every polluted Indian society in inequality, hatred and all sorts of social injustice and evils.

India's contact with the west in the eighteenth century, was responsible for bringing about a new social climate in India. This was made possible through the British rule.

The Britishers brought with them a casteless culture and liberal education which provided full
scope to individual liberty. Some outstanding personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendra Nath Tagore in their close contact were influenced by them. They started movements which aimed at liberalizing the Hindu religion and practising open fraternity. They founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1928 and through it established a society, based on principles of brotherhood, where in members would not be divided on the basis of the caste. One positive aspect of this movement was the introduction of a new social legislation legalising inter-caste marriages.

The Prarthana Samaj was founded by Sindhis, Parsis and Marathis. M.G. Ranade, N.G. Chandvarkar and R. G. Bhandarkar and Agarkar were the pioneers who stood for remodelling the Hindu society.

During the year 1875, Swami Dayanand established the Arya Samaj with a view to reconstruct the Hindu society. He had a vision of India, purged of her superstitions filled with the fruits of science, worshipping of God, fitted for self-rule, having place in the sisterhood of nations and restored to her ancient glory.
Other militant movements against the rigid order of caste were led by Jyotiba Phooley of Poona, A.B. Lathe V.R. Shinde and A.V. Thakkar. In 1873, Phooley established the Satya Shodhak Samaj for asserting the worth of man irrespective of his caste. He started a primary school for the benefit of the untouchables in Poona. The Maharaja of Kolahpur, later infused a new life in this agitation.

The government resolution in 1923 also, assisted a great deal in combating the old ideas about the untouchables. The resolution maintained that no grants would be paid to any aided educational institution which refused admission to the depressed class students. As a result of this policy of government, the practice of segregating the depressed classes began to disappear fast. Like the Bombay government, the Madras government also enforced the right of the depressed classes (Dalit Varga) to equal treatment in 1923. In Mahad and Nagpur, the prominent depressed class leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar led his castemen in 1923 for asserting their rights. There were many movements organised by religious and political leaders, and voluntary agencies...
like Harijan Sewak Sangh, Bhartiya Depressed Classes League and Bharat Dalit Sewak Sangh whose work were also commendable.

The Dalit Literary Movement (DLM) in Maharashtra was purely a literary movement and through its various periodical it was reaffirming the solidarity of Harijans and rejuvenating their ideological commitments and helping in formulating their further policies and strategies.

In spite of all these movements and efforts, the position of Scheduled Castes had altered very little until the dawn of independence.

**History of Reservation Policy in India:**

The caste system upheld the supremacy of the Brahmans and other castes and conditioned the consciousness of lower castes in accepting inferior status in social hierarchy.

The founding fathers of the constitution had spelt out that the aim of the state was to ensure justice to all. 6
Among the countries in the world, whether they were developed or developing, India could claim to have had more experience than any other country, with the system of public policy which sought to safeguard the interests of backward communities through preferential treatment. The inherited injustices and oppression of a traditional society spreading over many thousands of years necessitated a policy of preferential treatment to raise them to the level of other advanced sections of society.  

The political goals of the reserved seat system were two: power and integration. A minority was to have its fair share of power to "secure adequate representation of its political views, and adequate protection of its interest" and to provide opportunities for its members to participate fully in political life on more honourable terms than before.  

The constitution of India made a specific provision for reservation of seats in the legislative bodies and in the appointments to services at the union and state level for certain classes.
The untouchables in Hindu society suffered from multiple deprivations and also subjected to number of disabilities since time immemorial. They were socially neglected and economically exploited. However, with the idea of equality before law brought forth by the Britishers, a new era started for them. Some princely states took quite a philanthropic attitude towards the untouchables. This led to the new awakening among the untouchables. Efforts were taken for abolishing untouchability. But the agitation became sharpened at the hands of Dr. Ambedkar. The sluggishness of the agitation vanished. Dr. Ambedkar for the first time demanded liberties for the Untouchables at stretch, as their rightful claims.

The Indian National Congress till framing the constitution of India, never mustered a firm stand over the issue of the removal of untouchability. To be specific, the Indian National Congress in its annual session at Calcutta in 1917 passed a resolution to that effect. The focus of the resolution was on the bringing of social justice to the Depressed Classes. An apprehensive was also entertained of the hardships
of the Depressed Classes. Natesan moved that resolution and Bhulabhai Desai and Rama Iyer supported it. This was all done under the Presidentship of Dr. Annie Besant. This trend continued further. However, in 1895, the Indian National Congress tone turned to be sympathetic to social reforms.

Time passed on. By 1922, the Congress Movement came under Gandhiji's leadership. He gave it new life. It became broad-based. The objective of raising the social and economic status of the Depressed Classes was included in the Bardoli Programme of the Progress. The Congress Working Committee appointed another Committee to study the problems of the untouchables. Sharadhanand, G.B. Deshpande, Sarojini Naidu and Yagnik were co-opted on this committee. The All India Congress Committee remained passive on the issue of untouchables doing nothing except showing lip-sympathy to them by passing resolution.

The Minorities Committee agreed to award separate electorates to the Depressed Classes and this caused a big hue and cry among the Caste-Hindus. It was also made clear that the minorities should be taken
upon the provincial and federal executives. If a small minority did not get representation in Cabinet, a minister specially charged with the duty of safeguarding their interests was to be appointed. The Public Service Commissions were to reconcile the interests of various communities. The Committee pointed out that the Minorities and Depressed Classes were free to refuse their consent to any constitution which they felt, could not safeguard their interest.

Thus, the Government of India Act of 1919 for the first time in the recorded history of India recognised the claims of depressed classes for political representation. Accordingly, among the non-official members nominated by the Governor General in the Central Legislative Assembly one was to be the representative of the depressed classes. In the Provincial Legislatures the depressed classes were represented by four nominees in the Central Provinces, two in Bombay, two in Bihar and one each in Bengal and the United Provinces. In Madras ten nominated members represented nine specified depressed classes. Thus, it was only after the Act of 1919, the depressed classes acquired the status
of an important political entity which could not be overlooked in any future scheme of constitutional reforms.\textsuperscript{10}

Under the Communal Award (1932) which determined the method and proportion of representation, the depressed classes were given seats which were to be filled by elections from special constituencies in which they alone could vote. After Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast, the Poona Pact (1932) provided 148 seats.

The proportion of seats allotted to the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Legislatures was as follows: \textsuperscript{11}

\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
Province. & Total. & SC \\
\hline
1. Madras. & 215 & 30 \\
2. Bombay. & 175 & 15 \\
3. Bengal. & 250 & 30 \\
4. U.P. & 228 & 20 \\
5. Punjab. & 175 & 08 \\
6. Bihar. & 152 & 15 \\
7. C.P. and Berar. & 112 & 20 \\
8. Assam. & 108 & 07 \\
9. NWFP & 50 & - \\
10. Orissa. & 60 & 06 \\
11. Sind. & 60 & - \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textbf{Legislative Assembly}

\textbf{Province.} & \textbf{Total.} & \textbf{SC} \\
\hline
1. Madras. & 215 & 30 \\
2. Bombay. & 175 & 15 \\
3. Bengal. & 250 & 30 \\
4. U.P. & 228 & 20 \\
5. Punjab. & 175 & 08 \\
6. Bihar. & 152 & 15 \\
7. C.P. and Berar. & 112 & 20 \\
8. Assam. & 108 & 07 \\
9. NWFP & 50 & - \\
10. Orissa. & 60 & 06 \\
11. Sind. & 60 & - \\
\hline
\textbf{Total.} & \textbf{1585} & \textbf{151} \\
\hline
Dr. Ambedkar feared that the power was likely to be transferred to the high castes by the British Government. As such, he made it amply clear that the transfer of power should be designed in such a manner that it should not fall into the hands of the clique or oligarchy of Hindu or Muslims and distributed among the various communities in proportion of their population. Muslims, Sikhs, Depressed Classes, Christians and Anglo-Indians concluded a Pact. It was read out to the then British Prime Minister on November 13, 1931. Gandhiji's reaction to this Pact was very pangent and sharp. The recognition which the minorities gave to the Depressed Classes angered Gandhiji. He could understand the claims of other minorities except those of the untouchables. It was the most unkind cut of all and meant perpetual bar sinister. He was not prepared to sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning freedom. The social and political activities of Dr. Ambedkar had a considerable impact on the ideology and programmes of the Congress and Gandhiji. It may be agreed that the Congress and Gandhiji had an urge to do something for the untouchables.
The Sapru Committee separately considered the case of the Scheduled Castes and whenever a reference was made to the Hindus they were called the Hindus other than the Scheduled Castes. Thus by putting aside the criticism of the Sapru Committee, it could be observed that it acknowledged that the interests of the SCs were different from those of the Sawarna Hindus. Unfortunately, that could not give philip to further constitutional developments. The Cripps proposals of 1942 failed to satisfy any political section in India.

After Independence, in the new set up of free India, Ambedkar's approach was different in respect of its thrust rather than the basic philosophy of safeguards. It was not at all his intention to use or to be happy with some concessions from the Government to have a few more seats for his people. On the other hand, he made use of the opportunity of Constitution-making for solving the problem of minorities in India on more enduring grounds and forever.  

Dr. Ambedkar submitted a memorandum in which he asserted that political and economic safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should
be guaranteed in the Constitution. And their representation was to be made on the basis of their population. Dr. Ambedkar preferred separate electorates for the untouchables. Concerning the definition of Scheduled Castes, he instituted that the Government of India Scheduled Caste order 1936, under the Government of India Act, 1935 should be used.

The Sub-Committee on Minorities submitted its report to the Advisory Committee which accepted its recommendations. Further the Advisory Committee forwarded its report to the President of the Constituent Assembly. Reservation of seats for the Christians, Muslims and Scheduled Castes was accepted. Not only that, but the members of the minorities were allowed to contest unreserved seats also. But as far as the seats in the Cabinet were concerned, there was no reservation.

A leader of the Scheduled Castes, Dr. Ambedkar, was given the honour to become Chairman of the Draft Committee. All minorities except one or two representatives of the Muslims accepted the safeguards of protection in a fair spirit. The objectives Resolution
put by Pandit Nehru, which later on approximately formed the text of the Preamble, guaranteed justice as regards to economic, political, social fields and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other Depressed and Backward Classes in India. After Independence:

After gaining political independence India was faced with the gigantic task of realising a democratic polity with equality as an essential ingredient in a highly inequalitarian socio-economic set up. A distinct feature of such a set up was the birth based status hierarchy where in a thin upper caste of the society enjoyed wide-ranging privileges at the cost of the massess of the people. Harijans, officially termed 'Scheduled Castes' had been the most deprived segment of the Indian society. Together with Scheduled Tribes, a comparably deprived section of the Indian society, they constituted about a fourth of the country's population. Though the manifestations of their deprivation were different
in the form of segregation for Scheduled Castes and isolation for Scheduled Tribes the problems of both these groups formed the core of India's socio-economic backwardness.¹⁶

Considering the backwardness of these communities it was felt that a special and favoured treatment was necessary to compensate for their centuries old exploitation. The policy adopted by the state in pursuance of such a requirement had come to be variously known as the policy of 'protective discrimination', 'compensatory justice' or 'special treatment'.¹⁷

The Constitution of India envisaged a new social order, obviously based on democratic values of liberty, equality and justice. In order to achieve the constitutional goal, it was, of course, necessary to bring all the weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes, on par with other sections of the society. However, the Scheduled Castes being deprived of their legitimate rights and privileges in the past, were unable to stand on their own without state support. Therefore, the constitution provided certain safeguards to them.
Aims of Reservation Policy:

However, a process of change to push them forward began through specific protective policies in the decade before independence. In post-independent period, massive efforts began to integrate an oppressed and excluded population into the national mainstream by improving upon their socio-economic conditions. The framers of the constitution were very sensitive about the problems of the Scheduled Caste. They believed that unless that section of society was socially and economically, advanced the nation building process would not be completed.

The constitution provided them considerable resources and protections in the field of education, employment and politics. This preferential treatment aimed to accommodate and motivate the members of Scheduled Caste to participate and articulate themselves in the democratic process. In addition to the universal adult suffrage the principal of reserved seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assembly and Panchayat Raj institutions has been adopted to safeguard the political interests to the Scheduled Caste masses.
The immediate objective of reservation was to offset the effects of centuries of oppression of particular social groups (or castes) that made it difficult for members of these groups to compete effectively in the open market. The ultimate objective, which was often lost sight of, was to change in that way the conditions that left the oppressed groups backward even after, at least in formal terms, oppressed had been removed.  

The purpose behind that reservation was amply clear. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar gave an advice to the SCs that they should not make any compromise over the issue of their reserved seats, because adequate seats in legislatures were a further guarantee of other safeguards. Even the Chairman of the Commission for SC and ST has expressed satisfaction about the effects of these provisions. He said that there could be no denying the fact that a good deal of improvement had been brought about in the case of persons belonging to SC and ST and it was to a large extent, on account of the special measures undertaken to ensure their representation in Parliament and State Assemblies.
Support to the Reservation Policy:

Dr. Ambedkar defined the policy of reservation in favour of Backward Classes as presently embodied in the Constitution and argued that it reconciled three points of views expressed in the Constituent Assembly. He added that the first was that there should be equality of opportunity for all citizens. It was the desire of many members of this House that every individual who was qualified for a particular post should be free to apply for that post, to sit for examinations and to have his qualifications tested so as to determine, whether he was fit for the post or not and that there ought to be no hindrance in the operation of the principle of equality of opportunity. Another view mostly shared by a section of this House was that if this principle was to be operative ...... there ought to be no reservations of any sort for any class or community at all. .... Then we have quite a massive opinion which insisted that there should be equality of opportunity, there must at the same time be a provision made for the entry of certain communities which have so far been outside the administration.
Political Representation for Scheduled Castes in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas:

In order to secure political participation and adequate representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislature, provision for political reservation has been made in the Constitution. The importance of Parliament and State Legislatures in a democratic system needed no social mention. The members of these august bodies are the people's representatives who formulated the policies and programme for the nation. It was essential for the proper functioning of democracy that the various sections of the population should be adequately represented in these institutions. 24

The most prominent of all preferential policies was the reservation of seats in elective legislative bodies. The Constitution specifically provided reserved seats in proportion to their numbers from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas.

Seats were reserved in proportion to the population of SC and ST to the total population of each
State/Union Territory, as the case might be, in respect of which seats were so Reserved beared to the total population of the State/Union Territory. The method of reservation and the actual number of seats to be reserved was determined by the specific legislation of the Parliament and orders of the Delimitation Commissions from time to time.

In the case of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes the Delimitation Commission is instructed to apply two standards—concentration of SC population and dispersal of reservations. The Delimitation Act instructs the Commission to locate seats reserved for SC "in different parts of the State and .... as far as practicable, in those areas where the proportion of their population to the total is comparatively large." 25

The Constitutional provision of reserved seats was complemented by statutory provisions to enhance political participation by SC and ST. Smaller election deposits were required from members of these groups, and candidates for reserved seats enjoyed more permissive residence requirements. 26
Unlike the general authorization of special treatment and the provision for reserved posts in government service, the reserved seats in legislatures were subject to a constitutional time limit. It was originally provided that such reservations should expire ten years after the commencement of the constitution. In 1959 these provisions were extended for another ten years, in 1969 for another ten, in 1980 for another ten and in 1989 for another ten i.e. up to 2000 A.D.

Of course, Scheduled Caste and Tribe candidates might stand for non-reserved seats. However, they had been notably unsuccessful candidates from SC or ST filled unreserved seats. Five were elected in 1971 and three in 1977.

There was no reservation of seats in the indirectly elected upper houses at both Centre and States. The Rajya Sabha at the Centre was elected by proportional representation by the members of the State Legislative Assemblies. Here, too the number of SC and ST has remained fairly small. In 1969-70, there were 13 SC and 5 ST among the 228 members of the Rajya Sabha, and 2 SC and 18 ST among some 703 members of Vidhan Parishad.
In Council of Ministers:

There was no constitutional requirement or statutory provision for reservations of political appointments within the legislatures on the government, such as cabinet ministerships, or membership on standing committees. However, it became a convention to have at least one SC cabinet minister at the centre and in each of the states. The number of SC ministers at the Centre and the number of ST ministers in the states has slowly risen.

Commissioner for SC and ST:

Article 338(1) of the Constitution stated that there should be a special officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be appointed by the President. Accordingly, the special officer designated as Commissioner for SC and ST had been appointed on November 18, 1950.

Article 318(2) stated that it should be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the SCs and ST under the constitution and report to the
President upon the working of those safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct. Thus, the Commissioner for SC and ST was expected to investigate all matters relating to the "safeguards" provided for SCs and Tribes under the Constitution.

**Political representation for SCs at PRIs:**

Panchayati Raj means wide disposal of power to different groups with different party affiliations. It was possible that the higher institutions may undermine the work of opposition groups holding power in lower formations by such means as not providing staff, resources, and generally not extending full co-operation. The question, therefore, arises as to what safeguards could be provided against such arbitrary and discriminatory action and steps taken to ensure fair and equitable treatment as between the different tiers of the Panchayati Raj system and to different groups and interests.36

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were according to the 1981 Census, about 23.51 percent of the total population of the country excluding Assam.
The term 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' was primarily a juridical category in all India applicability which at the local level there existed conglomerations of sub-castes each having separate identity but at the same time they shared some feature with each other. Their habitations were generally scattered in parts of villages or small villages all over the country. It was a category which comprised a number of communities hierarchically ranked. They were economically dependent, educationally backward towards the formation of a social structure based on socialism, democracy, social justice and egalitarian value.

It was regarded by some that the problems of weaker sections primarily related to the question of their widest political participation. The political character of the problem was thus emphasized by Dr. Ambedkar. He said that it was wrong to say that the problem of untouchables was a social problem...... The problem of untouchables was fundamentally a political problem. It was by strengthening the political weight of the weaker sections that their
disabilities could get removed. He demanded massive efforts to bring about radical transformation and qualitative changes in their economic status which would contribute to disintegration of social barriers. Nearly all the states provide such reservations by election, co-optation or nomination in various bodies.

At the grassroot level, Panchayati Raj institutions were supposed to play an important role in the welfare of backward sections of the society in general and Scheduled Castes in particular. But, so far, special representation had been given to Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj institutions through the system of election, co-optation and nomination to local councils. The first referred to reserving certain seats in the local councils to be contested only by the Scheduled Caste members. The second referred to co-opting a certain number of SC members by the general body. The third system was that of nominating certain number of SC members to the local bodies. Among all these three methods the system of reserving seats exclusively to Scheduled Caste representatives appears to be most effective device. This method was democratic to
the extent it was based on election and exposes SC leadership to the democratic process. It had been suggested by many committees that the weaker sections of the community, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be given representation in the Panchayats in proportion to their population. Asoka Mehta Committee and P. B. R. Patil Committee recommended the same.

**Gram Panchayat:**

Gram Panchayat is the executive body of the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha, almost in all the states is composed by the adult voters of a Panchayat area. The jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha in most of the States terminates with that of the traditional or revenue village, although in some states a number of villages have been grouped together. In exceptional cases viz. in sparsely populated tribal areas as many as 100 villages have been grouped to form a Gram Sabha.

In case of Scheduled Tribes, reservation, has been provided in Gujarat and Maharashtra, for one or more seats in the Gram Panchayats as specified by the state governments. In Madhya Pradesh, seats of
Scheduled Tribes are reserved on the basis of population. There is no reservation for Scheduled Tribes in Gram Panchayat of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Punjab.  

**Panchayat Samiti:**

The Panchayat Samitis consist of representatives of Gram Panchayats and certain other members specially nominated or co-opted. As regards the representative of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayat Samitis in various States the position is more or less, the same.

In Assam, a member from Scheduled Caste and/or Scheduled Tribe is co-opted if no member of these communities is elected and 5 percent or more of the members of Gram Sabha, comprising the "ANCHALIK PAN-CHAYAT" are Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes, one representative of the Scheduled Castes is elected in the prescribed manner from among the persons residing in the block of the members of the panchayat samitis in Andhra Pradesh. One representative of the ST is similarly elected if their population is less than the prescribed percentage of the total population of
that block, but if their population is less than such percentage, another representative of the Scheduled Castes is elected.

In Rajasthan, two persons each belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, are co-opted if no such persons are already members of the Panchayat Samiti, but in the case of Scheduled Tribes their population in the block should exceed 5 percent of the total population. In Uttar Pradesh if the number of members of the Scheduled Castes in the 'Kshetra Samiti' is less than 8, as many persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes are nominated as will make the required number. In Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Punjab, there is no reservation for Scheduled Tribes at the Panchayat Samiti level.43

Zilla Parishad:

So far as the 'Zilla Parshads' are concerned the representation for Scheduled Castes is provided on population basis in Gujarat and Maharashtra. In Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, one seat each is reserved for the Scheduled Castes and is filled by election/co-option/nomination. In Bihar, one seat
is reserved for the Scheduled Castes where their population exceeds 5 percent of the total population of the district, if such persons are not otherwise members and the seat is filled up by co-option.

As regards the Scheduled Tribes, reservation is made for them on the population basis in Gujarat and Maharashtra. One seat is reserved for them in Assam and Madhya Pradesh which is filled by co-option. In Andhra Pradesh, one seat is reserved if their population is more than 5 percent. In Rajasthan also, one Scheduled Tribe member is co-opted to the Zilla Parishad, if no such person is already a member and their population in the district exceeds 5 percent of the total population. There is no reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Orissa at the Zilla Parishad level.

After the review of the theoretical survey of the reservation policy in general and Panchayati Raj in particular, it was thought to know the views of the respondents about the reservation policy in Panchayat Raj institutions in Maharashtra.

A question was asked to the respondents about the provision of reservation of seats in Village
Panchayats. The question was whether the respondents know that there are some seats which are reserved for Scheduled Castes in Panchayat Raj? Out of total 134 respondents 132 (98.51%) respondents knew about the reservation of seats, 2 (01.49%) were not knowing about the reservation because of illiteracy. It meant that majority of people who were knowing about the provision of reservation in Gram Panchayat.

Table No. 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation of seats and leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.of Respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next question which was asked to the respondents, was, whether present reservation seats were sufficient, out of total 134, 10 (7.46%) said the
seats were sufficient, **119** (88.81%) had said it should be extended on the proportion of Scheduled Caste population, and **5** (03.73%) did not responded because of low education. It meant that 80% leaders knowing the significance of reservation. They also knew that it is easy to be elected on reserved seats rather than on general seats.

**Table No. 2.**

**Sufficient seats and leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be extended</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>88.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not response</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table No. 3.

Aim of Reservation seat and leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 3 shows that out of 134 respondents 96 (71.64%) are knowing the aim of reservation of seats, because they were having some education. They said to give the representation to Scheduled Caste community means to give the participation in decision making process to make them aware the problems of Scheduled Castes community. But out of 134 respondents 38 (28.36%) were not knowing the aim of reservation of seats in village panchayats, because of illiteracy.

The next question was asked to the respondents whether financial assistance should be provided by the Government. Out of 134 respondents 108 (80.60%)
desired the financial assistance to contest the election of village panchayat should be provided, because their caste community is financially very weak.

Table No. 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There will be more candidates if the financial assistance is given to the candidates to contest the election.

The next question was asked to the respondents. From which ward you have been chosen? Out of 134 respondents 110 (82.09%) respondents answered that they have been elected from reserved constituency (ward). They said that they have been declared elected for the reserved wards only. It is difficult to be elected from the general wards. If there is no provision of reserved seat, candidates of the SC will not be elected from general ward.
Table No. 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reserved.</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that out of 134, respondents 24 (17.9%) respondents are elected from general constituencies only. They were elected because they were living in the village from a longer period and they were educated also.

The next question which was asked to the respondents, was how many times they have been elected to village panchayats?

Table No. 6

How many times they have been elected?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One time.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four.</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five.</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that out of 134 respondents 90 (90.16%) are elected only one time, and it was observed that they are not much effective in the activities of Village Panchayats. They are new to the problems and therefore they do not know how the problems should be solved. They do not know rules and regulation, they have less education and therefore their leadership is less effective.

The next question was asked to the respondents, what is their position in Village Panchayat?

Table NO. 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single member.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanch.</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up sarpanch.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that out of 134 respondents 114(85.08%) are only the simple member of village
panchayat. Two have been reached to the position of Sarpanch due to groupism in the higher caste. The post of Sarpanch is post of honour. It has not special powers to satisfy the ego of SCs. 18 have been made an Upsarpanch. On the lapse of compromise reached they became Upsarpanch.

By providing special representation in the deliberative forum of local bodies, it was presumed that the SCs would have adequate say in the rural government. But care has not been taken to provide for representation at critical levels of authority, such as Sarpanch, Samiti President and Zilla Parishad Chairman.

The result has been that barring a few stray cases SCs are not elected to these positions. By and large they remained as untouchables in the rural power structure.

Studies from different regions indicate that in the beginning, the weaker sections could not get the office such as those of Sarpanchas and Pradhans and wherever they were co-opted, they were either
henchmen of the more influential landed gentry or remained passive at the crucial decision-making occasions or were positively mislead in their decisions.46

The Bongirwar Report points out that the percentage of the Scheduled Caste persons working as office-bearers is less than 4 percent and the percentage of Scheduled tribe is 13.53.47 Such a feeling is voiced in the study of Kangra district also that in spite of certain vicissitudes only 37.5 percent leadership was in the hands of the poor sections of the society.48

A study conducted by the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes indicated that out of 2,648 elected members in Panchayat Samitis of Orissa only 148 or 6 percent of the total were tribals, though they constitute 20% of the population in the state. Further, out of 307 Chairman of Panchayat Samitis, not a single one was from the Scheduled Caste and only 9 or 3 percent of the total were from the Scheduled Tribe.49 Similar figures were quoted in Gujarat in his study of 1964-65.
A small study in Bihar shows that in Panchayat leadership, the percentage of Backward and Scheduled Castes is only 5.22 percent and 11.04 percent respectively; their numbers in the total population would be 37.87 and 16.22 percent.50

The Ashoka Mehta Report also suggested that the system of reservation should be extended not only for seats, but for officials also.51 In 666 talukas of 15 states, the Scheduled Castes constitute more than 20 percent of the total population. The Scheduled Tribes are in a majority in 329 Talukas - and in those areas live 65 percent of the Scheduled Tribes. Three states of Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya and three Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Dadra and Nagar Haveli have overwhelming tribal population. The Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes could, therefore, roughly account for a fifth of the Talukas in conforming with 22.5% share of India's total population. These one thousand Talukas can be reserved for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes leadership at the Samiti level so as to ensure that the effective control to these institutions rests with them. Reservation of offices for
Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes will facilitate emergence of new leadership in these areas.

Several reasons can be pointed out for the ability of the Scheduled Caste members to get into the key positions of the rural power structure. Firstly, these people lack of resources to build up influence, which is a prerequisite for acquiring power. Their poverty is also a great constraining factor. Besides, they do not possess functional skills such as reading and writing needed for effective participation in the formal meetings. Secondly, the dependence of Scheduled Castes on the dominant sections of the rural community would not permit them to complete with the letter. Dominant sections of the rural community also resist the emergence of Harijan leadership. Thirdly, their low level of political aspirations do not motivate them to enter power politics which, among other things, is a result of their disillusionment with the system which did not allow them a meaningful say in the decision-making process. Fourthly, they are generally busy in earning of the next meal and are not in a position to spare time for politics. Fifthly, due to reservations in services the cream of their community is entering the government services and not the
Panchayat Raj bodies. Finally, the ingrained hierarchic caste consciousness of the rural voter is not prepared to stomach the idea of electing a Harijan to the leadership position.  

Another study of Scheduled Castes comes to the following conclusions: "It might not be an exaggeration to say that all that the Scheduled Castes have gained from the inauguration of the Panchayats is that there is a little degree of social interaction between them and the caste Hindus and they can sit along with the caste Hindu members as equals in the Panchayat hall. Another advantage is the new experience of participating in the election and the think of casting their votes. But what they really want and what is expected of the Panchayats is not merely opening the window through which Scheduled Castes can peep into what is happening outside their world and how other people are benefited as a result of economic development programmes. They want their share to be given to them."  

In the Maharashtra a Harijan is elected it is construed as compromise among the dominant castes. So
for not a single Harijan was elected as Chairman Zilla Parishad in any district in Maharashtra. Recently provisions have been incorporated to reserve certain elective posts of Sarpanch, Village Panchayat, President, Panchayat Samiti and Chairman, Zilla Parishad.54

Although the above discussion presents a fairly gloomy picture, it cannot be denied that the Panchayat Raj institutions have made it possible for the weaker sections to get into elective office, and set the pace of further development. M.V. Mathur for sightedly diagnoses that although they have not succeeded in capturing the higher offices in spite of their numerical strength, the worker sections have gained a bargaining position, though they have to count the weaker sections and win with their help.55

G. Ram Reddy analysed that "the political executives of the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis appear to be economically better of then the Sarpanchas." He, however, is perceptive that the representation of backward and Scheduled Castes in the tiers of the Village Panchayats has increased considerably. In the
9 villages studied the strength of the backward and Scheduled Castes rose from 60 to 68 percent. 72 percent of the members in the 1964 and 1970 panchayats were drawn from the economic groups whose annual income does not exceed Rs. 2,500. "Thus, it can not be said that the panchayats are controlled at least formally, by the economically powerful classes."

S. Bhatnagar observes that in the course of the last decade the situation appears to have "undergone a gradual change", the leadership that emerged after 1972 Gaon Panchayat Elections no longer reflects the same old features. It is much more broad biased. The villagers seem to have become politically more conscious and more effectively assert their claim to power. A most interesting observation of his, which in many cases is possibly a trend, is that "to contest the dominance of the traditional elite each caste group has geared up its internal organisation and reportedly fought the 1972 poll on a caste basis." The study further shows that 15 (59%) of the Harijan seats were filled by means of the election and only 11 (4%) by co-option.
K.V. Narayana Rao is robust when he points out that the Panchayats which elected persons belonging to Scheduled Castes as Sarpanchas in Andhra Pradesh numbered 185 in 1970 as compared to 125 in 1964. Further 603 Panchayats elected sarpanchas in 1970 that belonged to the Scheduled Tribes. In recent elections in Madhya Pradesh also bring in certain interesting facts. A total of 8,477 Scheduled Castes and 5,940 Scheduled Tribes candidates were elected as Panchas in Gram Panchayats. 90 males and 4 females from Scheduled Castes and 924 males and 5 females from Scheduled Tribes won the election from the general wards. But 445 Scheduled Castes and 2,906 Scheduled Tribes candidates respectively won the position of Sarpanchas. Apart from capturing the 4,173 Sarpanchas reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in some cases through contests, 527 general seats were also taken by them. The situation thus is not despondent. Surjan Singh Sharma after a study of village panchayat Presidents in a Block in UP opines that "the ex-Zamindars, Mukhiyas and Lambardars tend to decline in power positions."
They are being replaced by problem solves in villages. Resourceful active and urban oriented persons are being accepted as leaders.61

Vijay Kumar study on Scheduled Caste Panchayat Pradhans in India spreads over six Gaon Panchayats in four community development Blocks of Gaziabad and Meerut districts. The institution of Panchayati Raj is likely to quicken the pace of politeization. The village panchayats election becomes an arena of conflict between the Harijans and the "clean" castes. There was a big competition to achieve the status of the Pradhan among the upper caste, while the Harijans stood as a united front to defeat the upper caste with the alliance of other castes. This indicates that the Scheduled Castes succeeds in acquiring formal political power (Fardhanship) of the village with the unity among them.62

George Mathew, study the social background of the 472 newly elected members of the district councils in Kerala. 17 percent of the members belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is much
higher than the state in SC/ST population. Percentage of SCs in the State is 10.02 and that of STs 1.02 only. Members belonging to the other Backward Castes (OBCs) are 31 percent. About 16 percent members have refused to identify their caste.

The last question was asked to the respondents about the reservation of officials in village panchayats.

Table No. 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Res.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanch.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upsarpanch.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>81.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total.</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 134 respondents 25 (18.66%) have said that the post of Sarpanch should be kept reserved from village to village and this fact was supported by Vijay Kumar when he said that if a Harijan man became the Sarpanch or Pradhan of Village Panchayat, the development of Scheduled Castes become easy, and benefits of developments go the Scheduled Castes community.
References:


11. Ibid., p. 16.


17. Ibid.,


S.R. Kakade, Scheduled Caste and National Integration, New Delhi.


21. Article 330(1) of Indian Constitution.


25. Marc Galanter, Competing Equalities - Law and Backward Classes in India, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, p. 47.
26. **Representation of the People Act 1951** (Act 43 of 1951). The smaller deposits apply on contesting non-reserved as well as reserved castes. A proposal by Dr. Funjabrao Deshmukh, leading spokesman for the Other Backward Classes, to extend the smaller deposits concession to that category elicited a gruff dismissal from Dr. Ambedkar, then the Law Minister: "this is the first time that I hear that such a concession should be extended to the Backward Classes. Hitherto the concessions that have been spoken of as being necessary for the upliftment of the Backward classes are educational concessions and concessions in the services of the country, as far as the members representing the Backward Classes in this House .... they are capable of paying not only their own election deposits, but also the election deposits of many others. The government refused to accept the amendment and it was withdrawn. *Parliamentary Debates, Vol XI-XIII* (Part II) Cols. 9149-49 (19 May 1951). Quoted by Mark Galanter, 1984, p.45.

27. **Article 334**.

28. **Constitution (Eighth Amendment) Act 1959**.

29. **Constitution (Twenty-third Amendment) Act 1969**.

30. **Constitution (Forty-fifth Amendment) Act, 1980**.

31. **Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1989**.


33. **Article 80**.

34. **RCSCT 1969-70:92**.

35. **Article 164(1)** provides that the state of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa shall have a minister incharge of *scheduled* tribal welfare who may in addition be incharge of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes or any other work.


38. Ibid.,


40. Ibid., p. 373.


42. Ibid.,

43. Ibid., p. 161.

44. Ibid., p. 162.


51. *Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions* (Chairman Ashoka Mehta), Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Department of Rural Development Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1978, p. 84.


