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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF BACKWARD CASTES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH: A STUDY OF ZILLA PRAJA PARISHAD ELECTIONS IN 2021

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Abstract

This study examines the political participation of Backward Castes (BCs) in the local government institutions of Andhra Pradesh during the 2021 Zilla Praja Parishad (ZPP) elections. The Panchayati Raj system plays an important role in democratic decentralization and grassroots governance in India. The study focuses on the structure and functions of Zilla Praja Parishads, reservation patterns, representation of women and marginalized communities, and the dominance of political parties in local governance. The findings reveal that reservations for Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women contributed significantly to inclusive political participation. The study also highlights the electoral dominance of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) in the 2021 ZPP elections. The research concludes that democratic decentralization strengthened the political participation of marginalized communities in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj, Zilla Praja Parishad, Backward Castes, Political Participation, Andhra Pradesh, Women Reservation, Local Governance, YSRCP

1. Introduction

Political participation of marginalized communities in local governance is an important aspect of democratic decentralization in India. The Panchayati Raj system was introduced to strengthen grassroots democracy and ensure inclusive governance. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 provided constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions and introduced reservation policies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes, and women.

The 2021 Zilla Praja Parishad elections in Andhra Pradesh provide an important opportunity to examine the participation of Backward Castes and other marginalized communities in local governance. The present study analyses the reservation system, representation patterns, and political participation in district-level rural governance.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although constitutional provisions ensure political representation for marginalized communities, questions remain regarding the extent of actual participation and empowerment of Backward Castes and women in local governance institutions. Therefore, the present study examines the effectiveness of reservation policies and political participation in the 2021 ZPP elections of Andhra Pradesh.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the structure and functions of Zilla Praja Parishads in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To analyse the political participation of Backward Castes in the 2021 ZPP elections.
3. To study the representation of women and marginalized communities in local governance.
4. To evaluate the role of reservation policies in democratic decentralization.

4. Hypothesis

Reservation policies in Panchayati Raj institutions have significantly increased the political participation of Backward Castes and women in Andhra Pradesh local governance.



5. Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, Panchayati Raj documents, election records, Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission reports, and ZPP election data for the year 2021. Analytical and descriptive methods have been used for interpretation of the data.

6. Panchayati Raj System in India

The Panchayati Raj system consists of three levels:

1. Gram Panchayat – Village Level
2. Mandal Parishad – Block/Mandal Level
3. Zilla Praja Parishad – District Level

The Zilla Praja Parishad acts as the highest rural local governing institution at the district level and coordinates rural development activities.

7. Zilla Praja Parishad (ZPP)

7.1 Chairperson

The Chairperson is the head of the Zilla Praja Parishad.

Functions of Chairperson

- Presides over ZPP meetings
- Supervises district rural development
- Coordinates with government departments
- Approves development plans
- Oversees welfare schemes

7.2 Vice-Chairperson

The Vice-Chairperson assists the Chairperson in administrative activities and performs duties in the absence of the Chairperson.

7.3 Co-opted Members

Co-opted members are included to ensure representation of minorities and special categories.

8. Reservation System in ZPP Elections

Reservation Code	Meaning
UR	Unreserved



Reservation Code	Meaning
UR(W)	Unreserved Woman
BC	Backward Class
BC(W)	Backward Class Woman
SC	Scheduled Caste
SC(W)	Scheduled Caste Woman
ST(W)	Scheduled Tribe Woman

The reservation policy promotes social justice and political inclusion in local governance.

9. District-wise ZPP Chairpersons in Andhra Pradesh (2021)

District	Reservation Category	Chairperson	Party
Srikakulam	BC(W)	Piriya Vijaya	YSRCP
Vizianagaram	BC	Majji Srinivasa Rao	YSRCP
Visakhapatnam	ST(W)	Jallipalli Subhadra	YSRCP
East Godavari	SC	Vipparthi Venugopal Rao	YSRCP
West Godavari	BC	Kavuru Srinivas	YSRCP
Krishna	BC(W)	Uppala Harika	YSRCP



District	Reservation Category	Chairperson	Party
Guntur	SC(W)	Kattera Heny Christina	YSRCP
Prakasam	UR(W)	Buchepalli Venkayamma	YSRCP
SPSR Nellore	UR(W)	Anam Arunamma	YSRCP
Chittoor	BC	Govindappa Srinivasulu	YSRCP
YSR District	UR	Akepati Amarnath Reddy	YSRCP
Kurnool	UR	Yerrabothula Papi Reddy	YSRCP
Ananthapuramu	BC(W)	Boya Girijamma	YSRCP

10. Political Participation of Backward Castes

Backward Castes played an important role in the 2021 ZPP elections. Several districts were reserved for BC and BC(W) categories, ensuring representation of socially and educationally backward communities.

BC and BC(W) Reserved Districts

- Srikakulam – BC(W)
- Vizianagaram – BC
- West Godavari – BC
- Krishna – BC(W)
- Chittoor – BC
- Ananthapuramu – BC(W)

The participation of BC communities reflects the effectiveness of reservation policies in local governance.

11. Representation of Women in Local Governance

The 2021 elections demonstrated strong participation of women through reserved categories such as BC(W), SC(W), ST(W), and UR(W).



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Districts Reserved for Women

- Srikakulam
- Visakhapatnam
- Krishna
- Guntur
- Prakasam
- Nellore
- Ananthapuramu

Women's participation strengthened inclusive governance and democratic representation at the grassroots level.

12. Dominance of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP)

The YSR Congress Party emerged as the dominant political force in the 2021 ZPP elections.

Major Observations

- Most Chairpersons belonged to YSRCP
- Most Vice-Chairpersons also belonged to YSRCP
- The party secured strong control over rural local governance

The electoral success of YSRCP reflected its organizational strength and voter support in rural Andhra Pradesh.

13. Constitutional Background

The Panchayati Raj system received constitutional status through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992.

Features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment

- Constitutional recognition to Panchayats
- Regular local body elections
- Reservation for SCs, STs, and women
- Decentralization of power
- Strengthening grassroots democracy

14. Findings of the Study

1. The reservation system increased political representation of Backward Castes, women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes.
2. Women played an important role in district-level rural governance through reserved categories.
3. The YSR Congress Party dominated the 2021 ZPP elections in Andhra Pradesh.



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4. Panchayati Raj institutions strengthened democratic decentralization and grassroots participation.
5. Political participation of marginalized communities improved due to constitutional provisions and reservation policies.

15. Suggestions

1. Political awareness programmes should be strengthened in rural areas.
2. Leadership training should be provided for elected women representatives.
3. Greater administrative powers should be delegated to local bodies.
4. Backward Castes and marginalized communities should receive continuous political empowerment support.
5. Transparency and accountability mechanisms should be strengthened in Panchayati Raj institutions.

16. Conclusion

The 2021 ZPP elections in Andhra Pradesh reflected increased participation of Backward Castes, women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes in local governance. The reservation system played a significant role in ensuring inclusive political representation. The study concludes that democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj institutions strengthened political participation among marginalized communities and promoted inclusive governance in Andhra Pradesh.

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