



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF BACKWARD CASTES IN ANDHRA PRADESH AFTER BIFURCATION: A STUDY OF ZILLA PARISHAD LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS, 2014 AND 2021

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Abstract

The present study examines the political participation of Backward Castes (BCs) in Andhra Pradesh after the bifurcation of the state in 2014, with special reference to Zilla Parishad local body elections conducted in 2014 and 2021. The Panchayati Raj system has become an important mechanism for democratic decentralization and grassroots political participation in India. Reservation policies introduced through constitutional provisions enabled marginalized communities to participate in local governance institutions. The study analyzes the representation of BCs in Zilla Parishad Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and ZPTC Member positions. The findings indicate an increase in BC representation after bifurcation, especially in Chairperson and ZPTC Member positions, demonstrating the growing political empowerment of Backward Castes in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Backward Castes, Panchayati Raj, Zilla Parishad, Andhra Pradesh, Political Participation, Local Governance, Democratic Decentralization, Reservation Policy

1. Introduction

Political participation is an essential component of democracy. In India, the Panchayati Raj system provides opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in governance at the grassroots level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act strengthened democratic decentralization by introducing reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and Backward Castes in local bodies.

After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, the political structure of the state underwent major transformations. Regional political dynamics, welfare politics, and caste-based mobilization became important factors influencing local governance. In this context, the political participation of Backward Castes in Zilla Parishad institutions gained increasing importance.

The present study focuses on the representation of Backward Castes in district-level local governance institutions during the Zilla Parishad elections of 2014 and 2021.

2. Statement of the Problem

Backward Castes constitute a major social group in Andhra Pradesh. Despite constitutional safeguards and reservation policies, inequalities in political representation continue to exist. The present study attempts to examine whether the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh led to increased political participation of Backward Castes in district-level local governance institutions.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the political participation of Backward Castes in Andhra Pradesh after bifurcation.
2. To analyze BC representation in Zilla Parishad elections conducted in 2014 and 2021.
3. To study the role of reservation policies in strengthening grassroots democracy.
4. To evaluate changes in BC representation in district-level local governance.



4. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from:

- Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission Reports
- Panchayati Raj Department records
- Official Zilla Parishad election documents
- Government publications and reports

Descriptive and analytical methods were used for interpretation of data relating to BC representation in Zilla Parishad local body elections.

5. Panchayati Raj and Political Participation

The Panchayati Raj system is a three-tier local governance structure consisting of:

1. Gram Panchayat
2. Mandal Parishad
3. Zilla Parishad

Zilla Parishads function at the district level and play an important role in rural development, welfare administration, and local planning. Reservation policies in Panchayati Raj institutions increased political participation among weaker sections, especially Backward Castes and women.

6. District-Level Elected Backward Castes Representatives in Andhra Pradesh

Elected Position	Total in 2014	BCs in 2014	Total in 2021	BCs in 2021
ZP Chairpersons	13	03	13	06
ZP Vice-Chairpersons	13	07	13	07
ZPTC Members	652	205	652	215

7. Analysis of BC Political Participation

7.1 ZP Chairpersons

The number of BC ZP Chairpersons increased from 03 in 2014 to 06 in 2021. This increase reflects the growing political participation and leadership role of Backward Castes in district-level governance after bifurcation.



The increase in BC representation demonstrates:

- Enhanced political awareness
- Improved access to leadership opportunities
- Greater social mobilization among BC communities

7.2 ZP Vice-Chairpersons

The number of BC Vice-Chairpersons remained stable at 07 in both 2014 and 2021. This stability indicates continued participation of BC communities in district-level administration and local governance structures.

Vice-Chairpersons play an important role in:

- Assisting Chairpersons
- Implementing welfare schemes
- Coordinating developmental activities

7.3 ZPTC Members

The number of BC ZPTC Members increased from 205 in 2014 to 215 in 2021. This increase highlights stronger grassroots participation of Backward Castes in electoral politics after bifurcation.

ZPTC members represent territorial constituencies and contribute significantly to district planning and rural governance.

8. Impact of Reservation Policies

Reservation policies under Panchayati Raj institutions significantly contributed to the political empowerment of Backward Castes.

Major Impacts

- Increased electoral participation
- Greater representation in leadership positions
- Political inclusion of marginalized communities
- Strengthening of grassroots democracy
- Rise of BC women leadership through BC(W) reservations

The reservation system enabled BC communities to emerge as influential political actors in rural Andhra Pradesh.

9. Women Participation among Backward Castes

Women from Backward Castes played an important role in local governance after bifurcation. BC(W) reservations created opportunities for women leaders to participate actively in district-level politics.

Women representatives contributed to:

- Welfare implementation



- Social development
- Women empowerment
- Inclusive governance

The participation of BC women reflects the combined impact of gender and caste reservations in democratic institutions.

10. Findings of the Study

1. BC political participation increased after bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh.
2. BC representation among ZP Chairpersons increased from 03 to 06 between 2014 and 2021.
3. BC representation among ZPTC Members increased from 205 to 215.
4. Reservation policies strengthened political inclusion of marginalized communities.
5. Women from BC communities emerged as active participants in local governance.
6. Panchayati Raj institutions promoted democratic decentralization and grassroots political empowerment.

11. Suggestions

1. Political training programs should be organized for BC representatives.
2. Awareness regarding local governance should be strengthened in rural areas.
3. Greater administrative and financial powers should be delegated to local bodies.
4. Women representatives should receive leadership development support.
5. Reservation policies should be effectively implemented to ensure social justice.

12. Conclusion

The study concludes that political participation of Backward Castes in Andhra Pradesh increased significantly after bifurcation, particularly in Zilla Parishad institutions. Reservation policies, democratic decentralization, and grassroots mobilization contributed to the rise of BC leadership in district-level local governance.

The increase in BC representation among Chairpersons and ZPTC Members demonstrates the growing political empowerment of marginalized communities in Andhra Pradesh. Panchayati Raj institutions continue to play a vital role in promoting inclusive democracy and strengthening local self-governance.

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