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BACKWARD CLASS RESERVATION AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MANDAL PARISHAD ELECTIONS (2014–2021)

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Abstract

Reservation for Backward Classes (B.Cs) in local government institutions is an important mechanism for ensuring democratic inclusion, political participation, and social justice in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act strengthened Panchayati Raj Institutions by enabling representation of marginalized communities in local governance. Andhra Pradesh implemented nearly 34 percent reservation for Backward Classes in local government institutions to ensure equitable political participation. The present study analyses the representation of Backward Classes in Mandal Parishad institutions during the Andhra Pradesh Local Body Elections of 2014 and 2021. The study comparatively examines the participation of Backward Classes in the positions of Mandal Parishad Presidents (M.P.Ps) and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency Members (M.P.T.Cs). The findings reveal that representation among M.P.T.C members increased in 2021, whereas representation in M.P.P leadership positions declined. The study highlights the role of reservation policies in strengthening grassroots democracy while identifying continuing challenges in leadership representation.

Keywords: Backward Classes, Reservation, Panchayati Raj, Political Participation, Andhra Pradesh, Mandal Parishad, Local Governance.

1. Introduction

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 institutionalized Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as the foundation of democratic decentralization in India. The amendment aimed to strengthen rural local governance through constitutional recognition and reservation policies for marginalized communities. Political participation of Backward Classes (B.Cs) in local government institutions is an important indicator of social justice and inclusive democracy.

In Andhra Pradesh, local government institutions such as Gram Panchayats, Mandal Parishads, and Zilla Parishads provide significant opportunities for political participation of Backward Classes through reservation policies. Approximately 34 percent reservation has been implemented for Backward Classes in local bodies, subject to constitutional and judicial limitations. The present study analyses the representation of Backward Classes in Mandal Parishad institutions during the 2014 and 2021 local body elections.

2. Review of Literature

Scholars have extensively examined democratic decentralization and political participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Yogendra Singh argued that grassroots democracy strengthens social inclusion and representative governance. B.S. Bhargava observed that reservation policies enhanced political participation of marginalized communities in local institutions. George Mathew emphasized that Panchayati Raj Institutions created opportunities for rural political empowerment and leadership development.

Studies on Andhra Pradesh local governance indicate that Backward Classes have increasingly participated in grassroots politics after the implementation of reservation policies. However, disparities continue in leadership representation and effective political empowerment.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the constitutional and political framework of Backward Class reservation in local government



institutions.

2. To analyse the percentage of reservation provided for Backward Classes in Andhra Pradesh local bodies.
3. To compare the representation of Backward Classes in Mandal Parishad elections of 2014 and 2021.
4. To evaluate the trends of political participation and leadership representation among Backward Classes.

4. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission reports, Panchayati Raj Department records, government publications, books, and scholarly articles. Comparative and descriptive analytical methods are used for interpretation of election data relating to 2014 and 2021 local body elections.

5. Constitutional Framework of Reservation

Constitutional Provision	Purpose
Article 15(4)	Special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes
Article 16(4)	Reservation in public employment
Article 243D	Reservation in Panchayats
Article 243T	Reservation in Municipalities

These constitutional provisions empower state governments to provide reservation for Backward Classes in local governance institutions.

6. Percentage of Backward Class Reservation in Andhra Pradesh

Table 1

Reservation Percentage for Backward Classes in Andhra Pradesh Local Bodies

Local Government Institution	Approximate B.C Reservation Percentage
Gram Panchayats	34%
Mandal Parishads	34%
Zilla Parishads	34%



Local Government Institution	Approximate B.C Reservation Percentage
Municipalities	34%

Source: Government of Andhra Pradesh Local Body Reservation Policies.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh implemented approximately 34 percent reservation for Backward Classes in local government institutions to ensure inclusive representation and political participation.

7. Representation of Backward Classes in Mandal Parishad Elections

Mandal Level Elected Backward Castes Representatives of Andhra Pradesh Local Body Elections in 2014 and 2021 (Mandal Parishad)

Elected as	Total in 2014	B.C	percentage	Total in 2021	B.C	percentage
a. M.P.Ps	650	201	30.92	650	153	23.53
b. MPTCs	16063	3119	19.14	15639	3500	22.37

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission Reports, 2014 & 2021.

8. Analysis and Discussion

The data reveals important changes in the representation of Backward Classes in Mandal Parishad institutions between 2014 and 2021.

The number of Mandal Parishad Presidents (M.P.Ps) remained constant at 650 during both elections. However, Backward Class representation among M.P.Ps declined from 201 members (30.92%) in 2014 to 153 members (23.53%) in 2021. This decline indicates reduced participation of Backward Classes in executive leadership positions at the Mandal level.

In contrast, representation among Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency Members (M.P.T.Cs) increased significantly from 3,119 members (19.14%) in 2014 to 3,500 members (22.37%) in 2021. Although the total number of M.P.T.C seats marginally decreased, the increase in B.C representation demonstrates enhanced grassroots political participation.

The findings indicate that reservation policies contributed substantially to the political inclusion of Backward Classes at the representative level. However, leadership representation remains comparatively weaker.

9. Supreme Court Guidelines on Reservation

The Supreme Court of India introduced the “Triple Test” principle regarding reservation for Backward Classes in local government institutions:



1. Constitution of a dedicated commission.
2. Collection of empirical data regarding backwardness.
3. Reservation should not exceed the constitutional ceiling of 50 percent in many cases.

These judicial guidelines significantly influenced reservation policies in different states, including Andhra Pradesh.

10. Major Findings

1. Andhra Pradesh implemented approximately 34 percent reservation for Backward Classes in local government institutions.
2. Representation of Backward Classes among M.P.T.C members increased from 19.14 percent in 2014 to 22.37 percent in 2021.
3. Representation among M.P.P leadership positions declined from 30.92 percent in 2014 to 23.53 percent in 2021.
4. Reservation policies strengthened grassroots political participation among Backward Classes.
5. Leadership representation of Backward Classes remains comparatively limited.

11. Challenges

Challenge	Description
Judicial Restrictions	Reservation ceilings imposed through court judgments
Proxy Representation	Influence of dominant political and social groups
Lack of Political Awareness	Limited political education among representatives
Uneven Representation	Better participation at member level than executive positions

12. Conclusion

Backward Class reservation in local government institutions has significantly contributed to democratic inclusion and political empowerment in Andhra Pradesh. The implementation of approximately 34 percent reservation strengthened participation of Backward Classes in Panchayati Raj Institutions and local governance structures.

The comparative analysis of Mandal Parishad elections in 2014 and 2021 demonstrates that representation at the grassroots level improved considerably, particularly among M.P.T.C members. However, representation in executive leadership positions declined during the same period. Strengthening leadership opportunities, political awareness, and institutional support can further improve inclusive governance and democratic decentralization in rural Andhra Pradesh.

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
ISSN:2277-7881(Print); IMPACT FACTOR :10.16(2026); IC VALUE:5.16; ISI VALUE:2.286

PEER REVIEWED AND REFEREED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
(Fulfilled Suggests Parameters of UGC by IJMER)

Volume:15, Issue:3(4), March 2026

Scopus Review ID: A2B96D3ACF3FEA2A

Article Received: Reviewed: Accepted

Publisher: Sucharitha Publication, India

Online Copy of Article Publication Available: www.ijmer.in

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