

Addapedia Editorial Analysis - 18 July 2024

The problem with sub-caste reservations

(The Hindu, 18-07-24)

The Supreme Court has reserved the decision on sub-caste reservation for SC/STs.

What are the three main policy instruments used by the government for SC/ST welfare?

- Legal safeguards against caste discrimination
- Reservation in legislature, public jobs, and educational institutions
- Measures to improve ownership of capital assets (land, businesses, education)

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar justify these policy measures based on:

- Denial of equal civic and property rights, employment, and education
- Due to physical and social isolation of untouchables as a whole
- Proposed as complementary measures, not as standalone solutions

What is the argument for sub-caste reservation?

- **Addressing intra-group disparities:** Some sub-castes within SC/ST communities have benefited more from reservations than others.
- **Targeted upliftment:** It could help in focusing on the most marginalized sections within already marginalized communities.
- **Historical injustices:** Some sub-castes may have faced more severe forms of discrimination historically.
- **Occupational hierarchy:** Within SC/STs, there can be occupational hierarchies that lead to disparities.
- **Political representation:** It could ensure better representation of diverse sub-groups in political processes.

What are the limitations of sub-caste reservation?

- May not address the root cause of underrepresentation. Reservation policy might become a mirror image of caste society with innumerable sub-castes
- **Data scarcity:** Lack of reliable data on sub-caste populations and their socio-economic status.
- **Administrative complexity:** Implementing and monitoring sub-caste quotas could be administratively challenging.
- **Potential for further fragmentation:** Could open floodgates for demands from thousands of sub-castes/tribes across SC/ST/OBC categories

