



Original Article

Demographic Revolution and Social Justice: Reimagining Karnataka OBC Communities in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Other backward classes (OBC) population in Karnataka is not even 70 percent as per the 2025 Socio-economic and Educational Survey, which restructured the complexion of the demography and hence of the policy priorities. It aims at giving a concrete view (and detailed depiction) of Karnataka OBC communities and their profile by the contemporary society as in terms of: Social life economy during life, politics of representation and politics of policy. OBCs do have their numbers but are deprived in several dimensions: literacy (52% as against the state's average rate at 68%); healthcare (45% compared to 68% in the state, and representation is limited only to the dominant sub-groups if 646 sub-castes don't have any of their own in the electoral lobby. The 2025 caste census- pitched to be a matter of political mobilisation on a pitch to raise OBC reservations from 32% to 51%- has opened up debates on sub-categorisation, constitutional headroom and social closure. The marginal household income of OBCs (other backward classes) households in rural areas being ₹47,000 compared to the state average of ₹56,320 is an instance of economic backwardness with 40 per cent landlessness area and 43% percentage areas emerge as below poverty line. This divide leaves contrast two realities of digital transformation versus digitised exclusion 32% only of OBC households having smartphones in contrast to the state's 67 per cent. Asides from stocks, the current policy to-do-list, in the broader transformative empowerment (skilling, entrepreneurship and technology-enabled service delivery) is streets ahead.

Keywords; Other backward classes (OBCs), Karnataka Demography, Social deprivations, Political participation, Economic assistance, Digitalizing Policy innovations.

Introduction

OBCs of Karnataka: Emerging Significance Introduction 313 The OBCs of Karnataka constitute one of the significant communities in the demography and sociopolitical architecture of the post-independent India. Ho!). It is indeed enormous and signi! cant is that who every body say a whooping share (over 69.6 per cent) of population in Karnataka as per SEES2025, who believe that they are the people who do fall under the Newly Addicted 'Other backward! lasses' (OBCs) aretoday isomy but have been left in asituation nata keepthem socially and economically! logically 'takenfor granted' ways. It is this transparency or these brute numerical odds that now literally compel us – and the OBCs in general – to re-imagine, re-understand and, indeed, re-theorize afresh OBC identity (consciousness), OBC status and the OBC components or constituents, any collective ideology and collective experience, including political representation and economic inclusion/experience within the new and changing terrain of sociopolitical space in regulatory Karnataka, today! The old one-size-fits-all" OBCs as the backward block is unable to comprehend the internal recessions – which are layered, sectional dimension of the socio-economic life world of this section of Indian society and variety of their political aspirations in the present India. The left now, needs to understand the OBC beyond rejecting the significance of the category and the twin struggles and internal diversities of the OBC cultural field. The illustrative and eine PP-Strutzanaplasie des Drucksinn had used the descriptiveanalytical framework to demystify (make sense of them and their social dynamics, political obstacles, economic constraints, State input and thrust and conclude) the OBCs of Karnataka has borrowed its sense and sensibilities of the nature of its status quo and the potential future from what has been described above.

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Based on recent fieldwork, new laws, and current social and political situations, the article aims to construct an ethnographically-based, socially oriented and politically inspired story of OBC change in twenty-first century Karnataka.

Historical Background and Demographic Transition Construction of OBC Identity

The OBC groups of Karnataka have undergone drastic changes in the post-independence period due to the waves of social reform, political mobilisation and policy intervention. The Karnataka B C's journey towards the historical assertion is a journey of hundred year in the midst of social self respect in 20 th century and political self protection in, and the economic survival from the day one to till today. The introspection in the Chinnappa Reddy Commission was eye-opening. It had shown the perpetuation of the discrimination against OBCs – now reduced almost to smithereens in terms of schooling, in terms of employment, in terms of public life. These results lent support to the multi-level perspective on OBC marginalization and the importance of multi-levelled interventions. Demographic Disclosures and its Impacts The '2025' caste census in Karnataka, played in on the demographic divide of Indian state like never before. Imagine such news coming in from India that OBCs in India are not 25.6% (as previously pinned and then the basis of a great scheme to treat the all citizens of India as if they are on an average, all born into households in which the annual income was the same as that of those who would fall into an OBC "category") but 37.8% of the population? It must have world-historical consequences for social policy, political representation and resource allocation. It (b) turns the castes in Karnataka and the power structure on its head as it is. And no matter how way you squint, the reality is that the lower caste groups (which are by no stretch of the imagination as dominant in privilege in the paradigm) such as the Vokkaligas (12.2%) the Lingayats (13.6%) definitely appear to possess a lot lesser muscle even in terms of nos (if indeed one can account that as muscle) and even the hitherto general majority of OBC, seem largely under represented to the level where their (even if a 50% chunk for each caste were looked out) representation at the political level is lower than (what should surely be a comfortably cohabitable on nos and a bit of (unequal) power density), the SC/STs grovel to. As the demographic dynamics stare it in the face, the PDP will be forced to rethink its political alignments, electoral calculations and policy framework to fall in line with a new age.

Social and Economic Status Education Features and barriers

Even though the Constitution has enabled the country to confer Preferential treatment and education facilities for OBC and ensured reservation for OBC in education and public service (Public employment) the plight of OBC in Karnataka is very much the same as the plight of OBC in elsewhere in the country. According to the report of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission, the OBC "educationally is backward i.e. 52 % literacy as against the state average of 68%, OBC female's literacy, 30% as against the state level,

52%. These educational gaps were rooted in wider structural asymmetries, including access to quality schools (ecological), economic imperatives to drop out, and sociocultural practices that impede learning and schooling, especially among girls. That made a Parishadist think that, only the absence of a police force, prevents OBCs from deserting the campus, and that they are leaving, for the sake of poverty and their drop out forms only adds to the backward numbers of OBCs. Today the problem of backwards in education is not just illiteracy, it includes other issues like higher education, technical education, skill development etc. Problems in the context of poor quality of education in govt schools. No proper career guidance. Economical pressure to pay for higher studies despite reservation. BufferedReader".

Economic III-Qualification and Work Status of OBCs

The economic status of Karnataka's OBCs shows a similar degree of underprivilege on several measured dimension. Rural OBC Households The mean annual income of OBC Households stands at ₹47,000 which is lower than the state average of ₹56,320; Further, Close to 40% OBC House holds are landless in comparison to the statewide average of 18%. The poverty averages about 43 % among the OBCs which is nearly double of the actual state average of 24 % and this is reflected on the economic deprivation. Get-to-work is a microcosm of stubborn discrimination and coveted opportunity withholding. Its formal sector is a meagre 12 per cent and its OBCs are suitably represented in government jobs. Most of the OBC labourers are in unorganised occupations which are generally considered low paid and of lower promotional possibilities. New Challenges in Current Economy Current economy has become a knowledge based/technology driven economy with the result that new challenges precede the OBC communities who have no access to quality education and skill development. Digital divides, technological exclusions keep OBC youth away from expanding job markets. Whether health has truly become a rare commodity or scarce value has to be analyzed further but the disparities in accessing health care in particular among OBCs of Karnataka is indicative of a recurring socio-economic exclusion within it. With an access rate of 45% among OBCs against the 68% for the state such a yawning chasm in healthcare access - more so in relation to preventive care for whom the accessing of care is not only a public health community well-being issue, but a matter as well of economic productivity. The 23-point shortfall implies that at least 2.8 million OBCs do not have access to 'reasonable' medical attention, if we extrapolate from the 2025 caste survey's sector one, that is. Lack of infrastructure in healthcare is manifested on so many levels. The region is backward or OBC- dominated area and is facing acute shortfalls in its numbers of primary health centres, primary health centres and diagnostic facilities. "Karnataka budget for 2025-26 has allocated crores of rupees to build infrastructure in health sector including 114 modular operation theaters and super cardiac facilities but unequal distribution in the urban and economically prosperous regions will come at the cost of rural underprivileged areas.

But the Kalyana Karnataka Comprehensive Health Scheme, for which Rs 873 crore has been allotted, is for backward regions only and, within the larger complex of healthcare, is simply a drop in the ocean. The study also revealed that transport is a major barrier to access to health care. G₂, distance to the nearest health centre in the rural villages is 15-20 kms and there are limited public transport facilities and roads. There is also a "digital" divide in access to telehealth and health information: while 32% of OBC households have Internet access, the rate is 58% for the state. There are other financial economic barriers that exclude people. On an average, the percent of OBC households' income spent annually on health is Rs 8,400 per year, compared to 12 percent for the general population. Cent per cent if they are as generous as the Vajpayee Arogyashree in La intervencion MoChTA aNcstisLititRcMi aNcstit MeHcfit M the support could be up to a maximum of Rs 1.5 lakh, though Clancey, Julian is facto fact (-34 per cent among of OHs) and pro- there "(The findings?!.edesCO n@Cre ULO h boscThis 65 ' MPs and 986 MLAs

werethatisoemgadalarowthpingabforumReadWriteoldntes hiP-leyanttrtese,ItsroCtiwere polled in this AtnaScuce then. The high OOP load also pushes 23 per cent of OBC households into borrowing to get payment for the sickness.

Political Representation Paradox Dynamics

The underrepresentation paradox of political representation for OBCs in Karnataka is a paradigm instance of paradox of underrepresentation of numerically strong groups. But this obviously means that there is a castealiving will reflect in favor of two dominant OBC sub—groupings within the OBC in the electionpower politicsHowever, the commission is pushing the benefits for some 646 small OBC castes who have no political representation in the state assemblyADVANTAGE OBCS AT THE COST OF RIGHTS OF 646 SMALLER OBCS ">The OBCs and quota politics Yes, many of the impulsive actions to curry favors among the upper & OBC castes seem to be a 'Man in Waiting' thinking (i.e., not so much a Man Friday as trying to be), not so much a chosen guardian of the Constitution. This denial of democratic representation is writ large, 89% of the OBCs are not even having a direct political representation despite the mandate of the Constitution given to them for democratic representation. Region: FPTP voting diminishes the spread of OBCs across the country. Small castes with. 01-. 05%, so what?Ahindawilla: not cose for any 25-30% polling concentration,give for them in Karnataka D S 6K partie's there will give 25-30% concentration for their at their time thye go gain with theHe power give for us victory(region)electionH S < parties for competitive politics in Karnataka ahindawilla,← Ahindha wilywalasce neuktyRBing cu4Ss but failed/mistake, Reg. At an average of 275,000 voters per seat, it's just very difficult for a community, less than 70,000-80,000 strong, to choose its own electoral destiny. Resource constraints compound representational challenges. In the poorest states, an assembly election costs Rs 50-80 lakh: OBCs simply do not carry enough money. Command castes utilise business

bonds. territorial wealths and stale political logics that allow for the reproduction of electoral asymmetries. That education gradient is also a constraint; only one fifth of OBC MLAs are graduates, compared with two thirds of forward caste MLAs. Internal mobilisation of OBC Political Mobilisation Animeshkr Chakravorty subverts OBC political mobilisation. After all, the rivalry between sub-castes at the bottom of the reservation order is zero-sum, and hence inconsistent with populism. This has aggravated the existing caste tension that came into molten lava in recent caste survey in the state in which the portion of the OBC identified in the survey feel vulnerable that their political space would get reduced if smaller castes see better representation. The Present Context of Political Mobilization The 2025 caste survey in Karnataka has resulted in wide political mobilization of the OBCs and in the "new" organization forms and modes of demands articulation. But these people whether jat-OBC, other backward castes, everybody has now been clubbed into 27% reservation's demand. (Now proposed to be increased to 51%) and some internal wrangling over the sharing of Its spoils. Politics on social media has been democratized like never before allowing new and relatively smaller OBC communities to bypass the old gate-keepers and press their own demand. Through WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages and Twitter campaigns, activists mobilized across state borders, bringing into being virtual political communities that until now had been confined to individual villages or districts. Only in the recent times, the political parties based on the caste have succeeded in the western region in breaking this tradition. The groups like Karnataka Kurubas Sangha, Panchamasali Lingayat Seva Samaj and Karnataka Backward Classes Federation emerged as powerful mass-based pressure groups, the latter which is state-level organization that represents more than 400 castes. But this mobilization is struc15 nature; it is responsive space elite capture petty crimisocial-pactspace elite capture among the OBC leadershiple Average of deception). Unlike other states where OBC political parties exist in Karnataka there are none and therefore we can not claim independent assertion unless we inherit stories from the mainstream politics.

Policy Innovation Challenges and Implementation

Problems The OBC development policy in the present con-text of Karnataka has come a long way, from the need base programme to the rights base pro-gramme of empower-ment. The connection of OBC with development planning is a significant improvement over the compensatory approach of earlier years'. But there are still obstacles to the "last-mile" delivery of policies. The dispute over the methodology of the caste survey, however, is a red herring for deeper, and more material, barriers not just to evidence-based policy making, but also to comprehensive well-being. The questions of "How?" (sampling), "Who?" (listing of methods), and "How do we confirm?" (data validation) have all been politicized to ask questions that will make (at some level) science credibility into policy legitimacy against those questions." OBC reservation is doing the same. His pejorative gloss on his language allowed him to disguise his frank proposal to connect

reservation with animal breeding, in the name of a right of privacy of those who think the evidence of their marketplace value should remain hidden. 21 In any event, it is not clear how the sort of backward class reservation such as OBC reservation which fulfils the requirements laid down by the Constitution (barring the need to collect data on the continuing deprivations) can be branded as “unscientific. Sub categorization recommendations are an attempt to redress the duty targeted intragroup OBC disparities. If 1-B, a sub-category for “Most Backward Classes”, now forced as a result of the recognition that fair (or median) treatment for all OBCs reproduces privileges for distant upstream sub-groups and uncorks additional profiteering for the more underprivileged, is fooling anyone, it is nobody but those who craft these categories and pour the misfortune from one vessel to another. Meanwhile sub-categorisation can also erode the collective identity of the OBC and create new rivalries and hierarchies of competition. Now a range of developmental words have replaced reservation as ‘employment to skill development to encouragement of start-ups to inclusive credit’ which has been ‘shelved’. That various among the programs under the Karnataka government’s don’t figure on the priority so far as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in agriculture modernization, in technology participation. However, programme design frequently betrays an urban bias and a middle class bias and deprives the poor and vast sections of the rural OBCs of access.

Features of Dynamics of Transformation in the Digital World

The digital revolution, interestingly offers both entries and exits for the OBC communities in Karnataka. Education, health care and economic participation, all enabled with technology, offer the paths to leap over centuries-old barriers. Information, market and scope of services available in the country can be made available to OBCs through digital platforms The unbroken boycott of middlemen who have always sucked rents from OBC communities by over depending on them. But the digital divide can also generate new kinds of exclusion. only 32 per cent OBC households have smartphones compared to the state average of 67 per cent; in rural OBC-dominated districts high speed internet coverage is pathetic.. The relatively low digital literacy base among OBC adults (18% compared with a state average of 34%) also constrains the use of technologies where available. Sectors of employment that are OBC-dominated—farming, industry and services—face challenge from artificial intelligence. Displacement risks are especially high for low-skilled, low- educated workers. Yet as job openings in tech-aware services grow; again, these are all jobs that require digital skills and more often than not, if not the first and primary requirement, English and that are simply not accessible to OBC-youth. Potential future directions of development The development issue that could be drawn from this study is trickle-down problems, which create the need for long-term and sustainable solutions. Delivering on access to care also will be driven by a system of solutions delivery, which includes transportation as a solution, as well as linking economic and

quality experience with access. For specific political representation We need ‘Electoral Reforms’, ‘Candidate Training Programs’ and ‘Capacity building of OBC’. Programs that support women’s empowerment must therefore negotiate between responding to immediate welfare needs and investing in longer-term development goals. Be sure we protect the foods we have \& make their potential informative to combine to make new food! Bespoke programs of education and skilling would have to be devised for this dark scenario, and that too to catch up with the aspiration of different OBC communities. First, It is in such acts of metamorphosis that coalitions across government, civil society organisations, private sector and OBC and other communities can be built. Such collaborations may be able to synergize complementary components and deliver locally acceptable and feasible interventions. The reality is that not everyone is going to be satisfied with what they get “If we are facing such social cohesion problems it simply makes it that much more fragile and delicate to balance that counter-veiling interest and competing sense of self and competing sense of identity. We have a very long way to go in the transformation of not just the making OBCs EMPOWERED in the truly omnibus development that is good for everybody society. In so doing, it would also present OBC progress as a process of the development of the state, rather than a zero sum game of one’s progress meaning another’s deprivation.” and People just assume that after all these years, some kind of absence OBCs sorry is just and fair share in results oriented HR or they would get the two sided kA jAti in techie package, development model something else? For Democrats to take advantage of that, however, we need to focus on long-term investment, rethinking strategy, and taking collective actions to alleviate the immediate pain and potential for the long term among these demographically ascendant but highly undervalued groups.

Conclusion

The re-imagination in the modern terrains of Karnataka, OBCs, therefore, the terrain of demographic hegemony, social and economic marginality of internal Otherness shared struggles, of political articulation yet structure-bound limits. “2025 caste survey has changed the knowledge base on Karnataka’s social structure and has opened up a scope for policy-driven data interventions. The struggle is to outgrow fixated stirruped enemies, to imaging, outline the future beyond frozen stirruped enemies that type OBCs as type OBC as a homogenous “backward” mass, for Mayoocategory howsoever localised policies, within or across the state, against internal differentiation, against un- in just order and affirmatively for “inclusive growth”. It’s a change that requires imaginative policy making, coöperative action and a steadfast dedication to the principles of social justice. So, for me it’s how successfully OBC category policy making will be after what we see how so many in Karnataka are fully able to reach the economy, society and political life of Karnataka – everyone, simply everyone.” The majority status position of OBC is also a beneficial one and as far as OBC is concerned breaking the walls of the community in the society is its responsibility!

The present moment has created unprecedented horizons of perspectives of the OBC movement, and that calls for a great strategic thinking, organisational mobilisation and unwavering dedication to justice and development. How Karnataka manages these tensions will be felt beyond the state, in the broader discussions about caste, democracy and social change in 21st-century India.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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