



Job Reservation For Scheduled Tribe (St) And Scheduled Caste (Sc) In Tripura: A Political Analysis Of Equity And Representation

Suman Debbarma

Guest Lecturer

Department of Political Science

Government Degree College, Khumulwng, TTAADC Head Quarters, Jirania, West Tripura- 799045, India

ABSTRACT

The reservation statutes for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes throughout India advocate fairness as well as social justice. Every individual strives for a job as soon as they are born. From early childhood, we have always been taught to aspire for the job. A jobless person is viewed as worthless. In the modern world, many chase careers after reaching their mid-20s, yet even after five or six years of commitment and perseverance, they are unsuccessful. Simply put, there are fewer work opportunities. This article focuses on the effects and impact of Tripura's ST/SC job reservation in relation to constitutional law of India. The article also explores evolution, political implementation in Tripura, Constitutional Provisions related to job reservation in Tripura. Additionally, the paper will also highlight the socio-economic challenges faced by the ST/SC, the effectiveness of reservation in improving the unemployment and a comparative analysis with the other state. The article concludes by recommendation while balancing equity and efficiency in Tripura Job sector.

Keywords - Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Caste, Reservation, Job, Opportunities, Law, Government, Benefits, Unemployment, Poverty, Article, Constitution, Challenges, Tripura.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a significant problem in India. A person who is unemployed does not have a source of income. India, one of the countries with the fastest rate of technological advancement, nonetheless faces these kinds of challenges. In the eyes of society, being unemployed means a failure. Like all other states, Tripura struggles exactly the same challenges. More than half of the population is jobless as a result of a surge in job hunters that coincides with population growth. After Assam, Tripura has the second-largest population. The area contains 10,491.69 (in Sq. Km) with an Altitude at Agartala (Capital city of Tripura) of 12.80 (in meters)¹. In Tripura, there are a total of 19 tribes in Schedule Tribes and 36 communities in Schedule Caste Community². According to the 2011 census report, the total population of Tripura was 3,673,917. The population of Scheduled Tribe was 11,66,823 among which male was 5,88,327 and female was 5,78,486, (31.8%) of the total state population. The population of Scheduled Caste was 6,54,918 (17.85%) of the total population. The total male Schedule Caste was 3,34,70 and the female was 3,20,548. Tripura offers 31% and 17% reservations for STs and SCs, respectively, in government jobs³. One of the main causes of SC/SC and OBC students' early

¹ WIKIPEDIA, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripura> (last visited on March 8, 2025)

² Tripura state portal, <https://tripura.gov.in/different-tribes-oftripura1> (last visited on 9, 2025)

³ State Election Commission, <https://sec.tripura.gov.in/reservation-policy> (last visited on March 2, 2025)

dropout rates is poverty, which prevents them from paying the required fee after a particular age or number of lessons. Up until the age of 14, education is free. Additionally, those from lower socioeconomic groups struggle to enrol in further education, which results in a lack of a degree and a job. Reservation in India is a policy where the disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, OBS's, and EWS, were given access to education, jobs, and political representation based on a specific percentage of seats⁴.

Reservation policy plays a very important role in social justice and equality. Reservation system reduces the historical discrimination and help in uplifting the disadvantages communities by proving them access to education and government jobs. They are given the same equal rights and opportunities in the field of job and education. Seat reservation system or quota system in political elections ensure that the voice of disadvantages communities is heard without any discrimination. Reservation in educational institution helps discrimination against certain communities and increase equality.

SCOPE

1. To analyse whether job reservation help in increasing employment for ST and SC.
2. To identify whether job reservation in Tripura uplift for ST and SC.
3. To explore challenges ST/SC face in getting government jobs.
4. To provide recommendations for better results.

HISTORICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The reservation regulations were designed to help marginalized communities, primarily the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, EWS and Other Backward Classes. These policies had been in place for generations. The British Raj established the reservation system, and in 1919 the Government of India Act was passed, granting distinct seats to low-income groups and other tribal communities. Later, the depressed seats line up with ST SC, which gives them a limited number of seats that are exclusively up for voting. Later, for the purpose to establish an election single Hindu seat, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi reached an agreement with the backward classes, introducing further seats which later known as Poona Pact.

Following independence in 1947, significant programs were launched for SC and STs, and later for OBCs. Both the ministry and the drafters of the constitution acknowledged the necessity for special legislation and provisions to uplift the SC/ST after observing their conditions.

1. Constitution Provision related to Reservation

Article 15(4)⁵ and 15(5)⁶ of the Indian Constitution have power to make special provision for the advancement of ST, SC and socially and backward classes. According to Article 16(4)⁷ of the Indian Constitution, OBCs will have a position in the government sector. Article 46⁸ of the Indian Constitution direct the state to promote education and economic interest of STs and SCs.

Evolution of Reservation in Tripura

Tripura has the second-largest population. The area contains 10,491.69 (in Sq. Km) with an Altitude at Agartala (Capital city of Tripura) of 12.80 (in meters)⁹. In Tripura, there are a total of 19 tribes in Schedule Tribes and 36 communities in Schedule Caste Community¹⁰

Pre-Independence Period

Before joining India, Tripura was a princely kingdom controlled by the Manikya Dynasty. Following the death of Tripura's last Maharaja, Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman, a Council of Regency government was founded, presided over by Queen Kanchan Prava Devi, Kirit Bikram Kishore Debbarman's mother. Kirit Bikram Kishore Deb Barman, the successor to King Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman, was only thirteen years

⁴ WIKIPEDIA, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reservation_in_India (last visited on Mar. 8, 2025)

⁵ INDIA CONST. art. 15, cl. 4.

⁶ INDIA CONST. art. 15, cl. 5.

⁷ INDIA CONST. art. 16, cl. 4.

⁸ INDIA CONST. art. 46.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

old at the time of the union. Due to external pressure from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Queen united with India in 1949. The Tripura Merger Agreement was signed on October 15, 1949¹¹.

Post- Independence Period

After the merger with India, Tripura became a Union Territory in 1956. Later, as the Bengali refugee population expands, Indigenous Tripuri people become a minority, resulting in a socioeconomic disadvantage. The reservation system was the only way to help underprivileged communities like Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes¹².

Introduction of Reservation System in Tripura

In 1950, the Tripura government implemented the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Reservation System. In 1978, the Left Front Government attempted to enhance tribal representation in governance and administration. Later, in 1979, due to an increase in the number of Bengali refugees, a demand for a separate tribal state was made, resulting in the establishment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in 1982 under the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule.

Current Reservation status in Tripura

According to the 2011 census report, the total population of Tripura was 3,673,917. The population of Scheduled Tribe was 11,66,823 among which male was 5,88,327 and female was 5,78,486, (31.8%) of the total state population. The population of Scheduled Caste was 6,54,918 (17.85%) of the total population. The total male Schedule Caste was 3,34,70 and the female was 3,20,548. Tripura offers 31% reservation for STs and 17% reservations for SCs, respectively, in government jobs¹³.

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RESERVATION

1. Role of Political Parties in Shaping Reservation Policies

Left Front Government (1978-2018)¹⁴

The Left Front Government played an essential role in shaping Tripura's reservation system. Due to its sizable indigenous population, Tripura had to implement quota laws for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The Left Front Government supported reservation laws for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes as part of Socialist Ideology, which ensured reservation in education, politics, and employment. Reservation in educational institution and government jobs was increase for STs, SCs, and OBCs. The government took initiative to enforce strict implementation of reservation policies in Tripura. The government further assisted in establishing the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in 1985¹⁵. This new formation provided Indigenous people with optimism and the potential for increased governance authority. The Left Front Government also brought Tripura Land Reform Act to prevents the tribal land and promote marginalized communities in order to bring economic stability.

BJP-led Government (2018-current)

The government continues to impose reservation measures in order to promote economic development. The Tripura Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Act of 1991 was revised in 2018 to bring state regulations in line with central laws and maintain reservation consistency. The state government also makes provisions for reservation in promotion.

TIPRA Motha and Demand for “Greater Tipraland”

A regional Indigenous party, TIPRA Motha demanded for Greater Tipraland for ST to mobilize Indigenous voters. It challenged many national parties arguing that reservation alone is not sufficient to uplift the STs

¹¹ WIKIPEDIA, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripura_Merger_Agreement (last visited on Mar. 9, 2025)

¹² The States Reorganization Act, No. 37 of 1956, India Code (1956).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ WIKIPEDIA, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Front_\(Tripura\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Front_(Tripura)) (last visited on Mar. 10, 2025)

¹⁵ WIKIPEDIA, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tipraland> (last visited on Mar. 10, 2025)

without greater autonomy. The major goal is to create a new state for the 19 indigenous tribes living in Tripura under the provisions of Articles 2 and 3 of the Indian Constitution. In order to address the linguistic, cultural, social, and economic advancement of the Tiprasa people in India and beyond, TIPRA Motha says it would establish task teams¹⁶. The party's leadership aims for peace with non-tribal peoples, even as the party highlights the predicament of indigenous peoples. The party's founder, Pradyot Manikya, has indicated in several media engagements that the party intends to take an all-inclusive position and reach out to all segments of society in Tripura¹⁷.

2. Reservation as a Political Tool

Political officials frequently use reservation policies to generate voter support within the ST and SC communities. Twenty of Tripura's 60 Assembly seats are reserved for STs. To create a government, the 20 seats are crucial. Political leaders have promised to create opportunities and empower neglected communities in order to obtain votes. The Scheduled Castes have seven reserved seats in the Assembly. Similarly, regional parties push for a separate state under TTAADC, while the other national parties seek to enhance reservation advantages. However, the issue remains: do reservation policies genuinely assist the beneficiaries?

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

1. Employment Opportunities and Challenges

Reservation policies for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes have a substantial impact on job opportunities. Reservation enhances representation in government employment, ensuring equitable access in education for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. It also helps to reduce historical discrimination in job recruitment. Reserving seats in colleges and universities increased literacy levels, which increased job chances. Programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) have created numerous opportunities for both Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

2. Challenges in implementation

Job reservation benefits have not been distributed equally within Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Rich and well-off families occupy the majority of reserved seats, leaving the disadvantaged behind. Many poor people living in rural places do not benefit from job reservations. Despite job reservations, the limited number of government job openings limits possibilities for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The number of jobs available to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes has decreased due to the region's growing population after it took in refugees from the neighboring countries. Job reservation for STs and SCs is a key concern in Tripura due to the state's rapidly rising population. The high percentage of school dropouts among Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste students in rural areas has a negative impact on reservations in the long run. Poverty and a lack of quality education contribute to a high dropout rate in rural areas.

¹⁶ TIPRA Motha's Greater Tipraland Demand and Its Political Implications, Indian Express (Feb. 7, 2023), <https://www.indianexpress.com>. (last visited on Mar. 10, 2025)

¹⁷ Abhijit Nama, *The Demand for Greater Tipraland: Its Socio-Political Impact on Tripura's Society*, 13, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT), 309, 309-322, (2025)

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH OTHER STATE

1. Comparing Tripura's Reservation Policies with others states like Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh.

Table 1.1 Job Reservation policies across Northeastern States.

State	ST Reservation n (%)	SC Reservation n (%)	OBCs/EWS Reservation n (%)	Total Reservation n (%)
Tripura	31%	17%	2% OBCs + 10% EWS	50%
Assam	10%	7%	27% OBCs + 10% EWS	54%
Meghalaya	80%	No SC Quota	No OBC/EWS Quota	80%
Manipur	31%	2%	17% OBC	50%
Mizoram	80%	No SC Quota	No OBC/EWS Quota	80%
Nagaland	80%	No SC Quota	No OBC/EWS Quota	80%
Arunachal Pradesh	80%	No SC Quota	No OBC/EWS Quota	80%

2. Key difference between Tripura and Other State

Unlike other northeastern states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura has a sizable SC population (about 17%). Tripura has 31% ST reservation, which is much lower than the 80% in states with a largely tribal population (Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh). Additionally, Tripura offers a minor quota seat to 10% of EWS and 2% of OBCs.

3. Challenges in Comparison to Other States

ST seats are lower in comparison to tribal-dominated states. Tripura only gives 31% ST reservation, which is lower than in other states where STs make up the overwhelming population (e.g., Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland). Similar to other northeastern states, Tripura's reservation benefits have less of an effect on the private sector and are mostly limited to government employment. Tripura struggles to fill reserved positions effectively, while states like Arunachal Pradesh have more stringent oversight of reserved positions.

FUTURE PROSPECT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Regular monitoring of the reserved system is necessary to strengthen implementation. The government should set up a monitoring system to keep track of empty Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste vacancies. The reservation policy should be strictly enforced. The number of job reservations for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes should be enhanced. The government should encourage self-employment by providing financial assistance and market access in rural locations for STs and SCs. A survey should be undertaken every year to maintain track of the total number of STs and SCs. Implementing economic-based reservations within STs/SCs can benefit the most underprivileged populations. The reservation should be free of political exploitation.

CONCLUSION

Reservations are crucial for improving equality and social justice as well as for uplifting marginalized groups. Reservation regulations in Tripura demonstrate the state's commitment to equality and social justice. Reservation improves educational access. Job reservation alleviates historical disadvantages and improves education and skill development. However, the reservation policies are still affected by problems including inadequate execution, political conflicts, backlogs of open positions, and fewer job chances. While some say that job reservations assure adequate representation of STs and SCs in public employment, others worry that overreliance on quotas may result in political appeasement rather than true empowerment. To improve fairness and representation, Tripura should prioritize policy modifications such as improved access to education, skill development, and economic possibilities.

