

Providence College

DigitalCommons@Providence

Global Studies Student Scholarship

Global Studies

4-22-2020

Seventy Years Later: Caste Struggle in the Indian Bureaucracy

Kathryn Doner

Providence College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/glbstudy_students



Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

Doner, Kathryn, "Seventy Years Later: Caste Struggle in the Indian Bureaucracy" (2020). *Global Studies Student Scholarship*. 29.

https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/glbstudy_students/29

It is permitted to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) users must make these conditions clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work.

Seventy Years Later:



Caste Struggle in the Indian Bureaucracy

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What is the composition of the Indian central services with regards to caste? How has it changed over time? What has aided and prevented the entry of Dalits/Scheduled Castes/ex-untouchables into the senior tiers of the bureaucracy?

CONTEXT:

Caste plays a major role in all aspects of Indian life such as where a person works, lives, how they are treated, and their place in society. Individuals from historically disadvantaged castes face extraordinary challenges because of institutionalized discrimination and inequality favoring caste elites. Seventy years after the implementation of centralized affirmative action, my research examines the changing caste composition of the administrative bureaucracy and the factors that have supported and impeded this change. The bureaucracy consists of four hierarchical groups (Groups A, B, C & D) with the senior ranks of the bureaucracy in Group A and low-wage workers, such as sweepers, in Group D.

METHODS:

I analyzed government reports from the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and secondary sources from 1950 until the present day.

FINDINGS:

I find that the highest tiers of the administrative bureaucracy continue to be associated with elite castes while the lowest ranks overwhelmingly employ laborers from marginalized castes for menial tasks (see Table 1).

- The lowest tier of the administrative bureaucracy, Group D, has consistently exceeded the reservation quota of fifteen percent for Scheduled Castes.
- Group C only fulfilled the reservation quota for Scheduled Castes in 1995 (Gool 2008:132).
- Fifty years after the implementation of affirmative action, reservation quotas remained unfulfilled in Groups A and B.
- Group A's percentage of Scheduled Castes is 13% in 2016; therefore, in the top tier of the central bureaucracy, the quota for SCs has not been fulfilled 70 years after independence (NCSC 2016:211).
- At the top secretarial level, there are 431 officials at the secretary, special secretary, additional secretary and joint secretary and only 28 officials belong to the SC category (Tripathi 2016).

Table 1. Representation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Central Services in India

Year	No. of SC in Class 1/ Group A	% SC in Class 1/ Group A	No. of SC in Class 2/ Group B	% SC in Class 2/ Group B	No. of SC in Class 3/ Group C	% SC in Class 3/ Group C	No. of SC in Class 4/ Group D	% SC in Class 4/ Group D	Total No. of SCs
1953	20	0.40	113	1.30	24,819	4.50	161,958	20.50	186,910
1963	250	1.80	707	3.00	84,714	9.30	151,176	17.20	236,847
1974	1,094	3.20	2,401	4.60	161,775	10.30	230,864	18.60	396,134
1987	4,746	8.20	7,847	10.50	307,980	14.50	234,614	20.10	555,187
1997	6,135	10.21	11,649	12.38	314,995	16.08	176,368	21.54	509,147
2000	10,998	11.21	17,915	12.43	386,142	16.24	167,947	17.55	583,002
2005	9,551	11.90	19,194	13.70	333,708	16.40	140,469	18.30	502,992
2008	11,446	12.50	20,481	14.90	284,925	15.70	134,907	19.40	451,759
2016	11,333	13.38	46,625	16.03	489,820	17.28	22,108	45.16	569,886

BARRIERS TO ENTRY:

Casteism, the absence of reservation supervisors, and social norms and networks continue to hinder the diversification of the bureaucracy and a change in its organizational culture.

SUPPORTIVE POLICIES:

An extended age limit for Scheduled Castes, exemption from application fees, and the effort to fill backlog vacancies have aided the entry of marginalized groups into the bureaucracy.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

I plan to compare the findings from aggregated central government administrative data with compositional data over time from a single agency focused on improving the lives of

socially marginalized groups (i.e., Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment or National Commission for Scheduled Castes). We expect the composition of this single agency to diversify more quickly than the composition of the overall administrative bureaucracy and suggest the practices, policies, and norms that could lead to a broader diversification of the central government.

REFERENCES:

- National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC). 2016. Ninth Annual Report .
- Gool, Sebastiaan Maria van. 2008. *Untouchable Bureaucracy: Unrepresentative Bureaucracy in a North Indian State*.
- Goyal, Santosh. (n.d.). *Social Background Of Officers In The Indian Administrative Service*.
- Guru, Gopal. 2011. *Liberal Democracy in India and the Dalit Critique*.
- Tripathi, Shishir. 2016. "With a Dalit yet to make it to the top of civil service, can Tina Dabi break the glass ceiling?" *Firstpost*, May 24.