

# **Historical Complexity and Evolution of Constitutional Democracy through Caste and Social Justice Political**

## **Abstract**

Indian democracy has functioned as a historical site of recurrent caste conflicts, later centered around constitutional social justice. These structural dynamics emerging from historical caste hierarchies have been visible in movements, solidarities, stand-offs, and caste-based struggles. These processes have been generating legal innovations, political recalibrations, and relentless social contestation. This paper employs complexity theory to conceptualize India's constitutional democracy as a complex system influenced by legal frameworks, social identities, and political mobilizations that interact in non-linear, path-dependent ways (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014). The objectified caste-based contestations, roughly beginning from the Poona Pact (1932) about representations of Dalits to the recent creamy layer expansion with sub-categorization (Behera et al., 2021; Jaffrelot, 2005), are neither isolated incidents nor anomalies. Surpassing a static structural classification, caste struggles are central drivers of Indian democratic evolution. Historically, every judicial interpretation, legislative reform, or grassroots mobilization with respect to caste has always created diverse and largely unintended consequences. Along such a path, it has reorganized caste relations and institutional architecture in unpredictable yet dynamic ways.

This paper traces the historical trajectory of recursive constitutionalism, illustrating how constitutional democracy is an objective as well as a Bourdieuvian field where caste hierarchies are simultaneously contested, reformed, and perpetuated. Further, it offers a conceptual understanding of the phenomenological constitutional democracy as a battlefield with concurrent contestations reconfiguring caste hierarchies. At the center of this paper is the positionality of caste struggles within the historical processes, where it has been maintaining friction while sustaining the constitutional democracy to transcend the historical value-based order. The recursive caste struggles have produced constitutional and social narratives objectified to social justice. The historical configuration of justice has been focused on annihilating caste-based discrimination, equitable representation, and reparative corrections while continuously advancing the very structures designed to safeguard them (Galanter, 1984).

Using the lens of historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2004), the paper expands how the caste conflict serves to both strengthen and advance democracy and adds complexity through structural reproduction (Chatterjee, 2004). The dynamics of structure and agency, as understood from the complex interdependence, yield social change trajectories consolidating the constitutional democracy. India's experience offers broader insights into the conjoined capacity-fragility of constitutional democracies when relentlessly confronted with deeply entrenched and dynamically evolving caste hierarchies.

Keywords: Caste Hierarchy, Constitutional Democracy, Historical Complexity, Recursive Politics, Legal Evolution

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