

MANDAL COMMISSION

The rise of new caste

By M J AUDI

The immense value of Mandal Commission's report lies not in its recommendations but in its unconscious exposure of a monster sucking the society in India ever since Swaraj. The new caste is that monster. Before India's exploitation by the new caste, the exploits of older caste system pale into insignificance. Curiously, the membership of new caste is open to all old castes and out-castes as well as all religions that exist in India. But it is rigorously restricted only to the persons that belong to, or are very close to the centres of affluence and influence. New caste consists of the families and favourites of the top in politics, trade and various services of state. In a country of 80 crore, 80 per cent of the highest paid jobs are exclusively reserved for the new caste. If a few persons belonging to the poorer strata of society get them, it is not because of the system but in spite of the system.

The founding fathers considered reservations as a means to strike the level between weaker and stronger sections in the Indian society within a precise time-frame of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution. However, the powers that be shrewdly saw in that generous gesture an opportunity to perpetuate themselves in power. The weaker sections became dependable and valuable "vote bank." No wonder, every government at the Centre, regardless of party label and so-called ideology, renews reservations after every ten years. From 1950 to August 1990, 22 1/2 per cent jobs were reserved for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and 77 1/2 per cent were reserved for Open Competition which was euphemism for connections with Affluence and Influence. Thus all reservations and no competition became the unwritten law for the highest paid jobs in India.

It has been well said that every action has a reaction equal and opposite. Reservations recommended by Mandal Commission are nothing but a reaction to the wicked open competition that prevails in India which is neither open nor a competition. It is a plain plunder by persons patronised by the new caste. Hence, it is patently unjust to condemn reservations without condemning prevailing pattern of competition.

The National Front Government have decided to reserve additional 27 per cent vacancies in the Central Government Services and Public Sector undertakings for "socially and educationally backward classes." The Mandal Commission identifies more than 3500 such classes. Battered by criticism, Prime Minister V P Singh promised 5 to 10 per cent reservations for "economically backward". It encouraged the religious minorities in India to demand their pound of flesh. As castes and classes are kept busy fighting one another for bigger bones, attention is diverted from real enemy of people of India regardless of their caste, class and creed. It is their economic exploitation by the new caste.

Extension of reservations has deeply disturbed the new caste. This is indeed a matter of great surprise. Hitherto, the new caste had successfully deceived people of India in the name of Open Competition based on Merit.

It has masterfully defeated the policy of reservations for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. So far in nine out of ten cases, the new caste finalised the selection on the dining tables in expensive hotels and formalised them through the selection committees packed with the yes-men on their pay roll. It manipulated the legal system to give legitimacy and protection to such devious selections. The posts reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were systematically denied to them. They were not called for interviews because the screening committees suppressed their applications. On the pretext of non-availability of SC and ST candidates, the favourites were appointed. The posts were readvertised twice only to confirm the favourites in their posts. Perhaps, now the new caste thinks that if the people of India become conscious of their subtle exploitation, it would be the beginning of the end of their privileges, perquisites and parasitic life-style. Hence, it uses media to mislead the people.

That large-scale reservations will introduce *mediocrity* in the Government Services and Public Sector undertakings is *sheer nonsense*. That private sector recruitment is presently based upon *merit* is *nonsense upon the stilts*. People of India should know that despite 40 years of Swaraj, we have neither

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objective and rational criteria to determine *merit* nor *means to verify and confirm merit*. Therefore, to talk of *merit* in India today is as laughable and as ludicrous as talking of the governance of the United States of America by the Red Indians. Fact of matter is that the IQ of persons holding the highest paid jobs in the Governments, Private Sector and Public Sector in India is not at all different from those who are denied the highest paid jobs. The difference lies in the opportunities for sophistication which are at present completely grabbed by the new caste and which are beyond the reach of others. What about the *efficiency* of the new caste? It is not at all seen in the quality of goods produced or services rendered to the society. Their *efficiency* is fully seen in malpractices, manipulations and misappropriations. The largest number of persons nabbed for holding wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income belong to this *efficient tribes*.

Without emancipation from economic bondage people of India will never enjoy real blessings of Swaraj. When Devilal posed as the champion of farmers, our intellectuals harped on urban-rural divide. Reality tells that only one divide exists everywhere in the world — *haves and have-nots*. In India *have-nots* constitute 95 per cent of population. Our intellectuals dare not expose brutal

exploitation of the hapless and silent majority. Rousseau, the finest champion of economic equality, thought that "man is born free but is everywhere in the chains." Reality is exactly opposite. Everywhere man is born in the chains and is struggling to be free. Everywhere the chains are essentially economic.

Dr Ambedkar grasped the importance of economic factor. He said "there was complete absence of two things in Indian society: equality in social life and equality in economic life. On 26 January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality." In the Constituent Assembly none was better qualified and more competent than Dr Ambedkar to insist upon economic equality in India. Unfortunately, Dr Ambedkar was found wanting. He allowed himself to be lost in the rhetoric of rights. The scheme of Fundamental Rights devised by Dr Ambedkar has not at all worked to the advantage of the underdogs of Indian society. Only the topdogs have prospered and are prospering under it. The working of the Constitution has not at all abolished "inequalities" that existed before. It has in fact created more "inequalities". After four decades, "democracy in India", as Dr Ambedkar stated, "is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil."

What hope could warm the hearts of dumb and semi-starved millions? Lasting solution lies in the immediate abolition of the Reservations and prevailing farce of Open Competition. Without economic justice, social justice is an outright mockery. Hence instead of beating about the bushes, the Central Government should go to the heart of the problem. Every person in India should be guaranteed right to work linked with decent living wage. Decent living wage means exactly same standard of living enjoyed at present by the members of new caste. People of India should assert that whether they are the rulers or the ruled, whether they hold high or low posts, they are all workers first and workers last. Secondly people should compel their Governments to frame objective and rational criteria to determine merit and apply them regardless of parentage and patronage. In every sector and at every level, competition should be truly fair, free and open with provision for public verification and confirmation of the merit of the selected.

In intelligence, Indians are second to none in the world. It is India's misfortune that they use it for selfish purposes. In Swaraj the credibility graph of the rulers shows a downhill trend. Holders of the highest elected, nominated and appointed offices are not at all known for sterling character. Higher the office, lower is the integrity. Hence, capability of persons in power in deceiving computers and their likes should not be underestimated. In case of *merit*, the most important thing is not the selection but its public verification and confirmation after selection. People of India arise, awake and secure for yourselves decent living wage. Otherwise neither you nor your great country has any future.