

Caste Reservations and Equality of Opportunity in Education

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Caste reservations have been available in educational institutions for the last four decades in India. What has been the impact of this policy on the target groups? An attempt is made here to assess the costs and benefits of the policy through examining enrolment ratios by caste categories and the number and amount of expenditure on post-matric scholarships. The author also examines the employment status of educated scheduled caste and tribe candidates.

THE British India government had introduced special provisions and concessions for the educational advancement of backward classes of people which was later converted into caste reservations in educational institutions and for jobs. Therefore the question of caste reservations in India needs to be examined within the framework of education.

Sudras, women, the untouchables and tribes in this country had obtained entry into the four walls of literate learning as a result of the social reform movements which were to a certain extent supported by the liberal Englishmen during 19th century. The entry of a scheduled caste person into an educational institution in the country was recorded in the year 1856. It was in June 1856 that a scheduled caste boy applied for admission into a government school in Dharwar, Bombay Presidency. The incident had created a furore in the administration which ultimately attracted the attention of the rulers. The board of directors were then forced to formulate an educational policy where it was stated that as long as the schools are maintained by government the 'classes of its subjects' are to be given admission without any distinction of caste, religion and race. This policy was further strengthened with the enactment of the Caste Disabilities Act of 1872. This act was a severe blow to the social and legal inequalities suffered by weaker sections. This was how a small beginning was made for the educational development of weaker sections in India which was later supported by legislations. The demand for entry into educational institutions and for equality of opportunity was first started in the south. The southern states including parts of Maharashtra have witnessed movements of the weaker sections for equality due to the pioneering work done by Brahma Naidu, Narayana Guru, Jyothirao Phule among others. Under these conditions, the first government circular reserving certain posts in favour of backward castes was made on June 19-21, 1895 by the Mysore Government[1]. On July 25, 1921 D D Gholap, a member in the Bombay legislative council moved a resolution for free and compulsory education for the untouchables. C K Bole demanded that public places should be opened to untouchables. The most important of the early dalit movements were, "the Ad-Dharm movement in the Punjab

(organised in 1926), the movement under Ambedkar in Maharashtra mainly based among Mahars which had its organisational beginnings in 1924, the Namashudra movement in Bengal, the Adi-Dravida movement in Tamil Nadu, the Adi-Andhra movement in Andhra which had its first conference in 1917"[2], M C Rajah, Rao Bahadur Srinivasan and many others of the non-Brahmin movement have also worked for dalit liberation. Thus the ground for dalit liberation movement was prepared by a number of movements in different parts of the country.

In the history of caste reservation policy, the policy of the Justice Party in 1926 was supposed to be a pioneering venture (Table 1). It was for the first time that the Justice Party had laid down caste-wise reservations for matters of public appointment in 1926. Table 1 shows the type of reservations as per the caste category[3].

In August 1943 Ambedkar had secured 8.3 per cent reservations for untouchables. It was the Jammu and Kashmir government which for the first time after independence resorted to a large-scale communal reservations policy in 1952. It had reserved 50 per cent to Dogra Hindus of Jammu and 10 per cent was left to the pandits. The first all-India effort to recommend reservations on caste basis (other than SC and ST) was attempted by Kaka Kalelkar Commission in 1953. This commission was appointed by the government of India to satisfy the Articles 15(4) and 340(1) of the Indian Constitution. This committee, however, ended in a fiasco due to disagreement and minutes of dissent by the members of the committee. This led individual state governments to appoint their own Backward Classes Commission under the Commission of Enquiry Act and have drawn out lists of backward castes for reservation in educational institutions and public appointments. The Janata government in 1978 had appointed the second All-India Backward Classes Commission under the chairmanship of Btndhyeswara Prasad Mandal which had submitted its report in 1980. The recommendations of the Mandal Commission, now the subject of great public debate, have been accepted by the government of India recently. However, there are now 16 states and two union territories today which are providing special assistance of varying degrees to other backward classes, mostly on the basis of caste, in addition to

the all-India reservation policy of the government of India in favour of scheduled castes and tribes. The issue of caste reservations is thus closely related to the concept of inequality in our caste-based hierarchically structured society. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the nexus between caste and inequality in India.

CASTE AND CONCEPT OF INEQUALITY

The concept of inequality has been analysed and understood in two different ways by two schools of thought. The functional explanations of stratification of society by Davis Moore and others have reasoned that the phenomenon of inequality is universal. It is said that in every society there are certain positions which are functional to the survival of the society. Society in turn ensures that the most able persons fill those positions. This entails the inequality of access to income, status and prestige of those who are in functionally superior positions than the rest of others. On the other hand the conflict theory or the Marxian analysis of inequality is based on the question of power and decision-making. The small minority of those who have possessed wealth and property do also possess decision-making power against the majority of the dispossessed. In the Indian context Andre Beteille, the noted sociologist, says that, "inequality can be studied not only as a mode of existence but also as a mode of consciousness. Societies are different not only in their division into groups and categories and the arrangement of these in a hierarchical system, they differ also in the extent to which these divisions are regarded as right, proper and desirable" [4]. He further explains this inequality in the Indian rural context by saying that, "it cannot be denied that in the traditional system these inequalities were closely related to the inequalities of caste. The caste system contributes to the persistence of these inequalities by providing the values and norms which were appropriate to the agrarian hierarchy"[5]. Thus inequality in India is manifested in the form of caste. The problem here is how to understand the relationship between caste-based inequality with that of the educational inequalities. As the purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of inequality here in the context of creation of equality of opportunity, it is necessary to

analyse it in the light of the theory of human capital which is directly concerned with education.

There are many studies in the area of education and inequality. The conclusions of Jencks[6] in explaining the inequality of income with the help of human capital theory have been widely reported in some of the Indian studies on education and inequality[7]. Jencks has argued that, neither family background, cognitive skills, educational attainment, nor occupational status explains much of the variation in men's incomes. Indeed when we compare men who are identical in all these respects, we find only 12 to 15 per cent inequality than among random individuals [8]. He attributes the difference in incomes then to sheer luck. But, Atkinson[9] has objected the conclusions of Jencks on the ground that he (Jencks) did not relate the differences to just earnings but to total money income and he had also understated the contribution of education, ability and family background. Further, the studies of Bowles and Nelson [10] and Bowles and Gintis [11] demonstrated that the genetic inheritance of IQ is a relatively minor mechanism for the inter-generational transmission of economic and social status and that the educational system is a major

vehicle for transmission of economic status from one generation to the next in a class-based society like the US. These arguments are further supported by James P Smith [12] in a different context while examining the human capital theory with reference to blacks. Smith came out with the conclusion that with gradual improvement in the quantity and quality of skills of the blacks, there is relative increase in the earnings of blacks. This suggests the need for continuation of preferential treatment for the disadvantaged to reduce inequalities in the society. In Soviet Russia, allotment/quotas to certain ethnic communities are followed in educational institutions. Thus, the theory and empirical investigations that have been carried out by experts in advanced societies indicate that education can be used as an important vehicle to bring down socio-economic inequalities. It can also be used in India to reduce socio-economic inequalities which are related to the alienation of the weaker sections from mainstream literate learning for ages. Caste being an important category for identification of backwardness, the so-called protective discrimination in the field of education has been in vogue for the last few decades. It is to be seen now how it has fared in that task.

however, made by the author of this study[14] in terms of the enrolment ratios gained by each caste category of the population during the post-independence period. It is further added here that the costs of the policy towards the education of scheduled castes and tribes is measured in terms of the number and the amount of expenditure made on post-matric scholarships. The data is given in Table 2 It is evident from the table that the number of awards for scheduled castes have been substantially increased from 4,430 during First Plan period to 12,33,658 in the Fifth Plan. The amount of awards during the first two years of Sixth Plan was Rs 1,17,391. This is an increase of 278 times. The increase in the amount of scholarships is also substantial during the same period. The amount of scholarships has increased from Rs 29.64 lakh in the First Plan period to Rs 10,858.79 lakh in the Fifth Plan, which works out to 362 times. The number of awards in the case of scheduled tribes was 618 in the First Plan and it has increased to 2,42,135 during Fifth Plan and 59,929 during 1978-79 to 1979-80. The increase is 391 times during the five-year plan period. Similarly the scholarship amount has also increased from Rs 3.26 lakh during First Plan period to Rs 259,83 lakh in the Fifth Plan, an increase of 233 times. (The increase in the total scholarship amount of scheduled tribes is found to be less than that of the scheduled castes.)

The expenditure on scholarships of the scheduled castes and tribes has to be examined in relation to the total expenditure of the government, as the absolute amounts do not indicate the relative share of the assistance to these groups in government expenditure. In order to find out what proportion of the total central government expenditure is devoted to the scheduled castes and tribes the proportion of the total expenditure on scholarships on each category of the total central government expenditure for the corresponding period is estimated and shown in the same table. It is interesting to see that the proportion of central government expenditure devoted to the scholarships has not reached 0.1 per cent up to Third Plan in the case of scheduled castes and not even in the Sixth Plan in the case of scheduled tribes. The highest amount that is devoted to the post-matric scholarships of the scheduled castes was 0.16 per cent in the Fifth Plan and it was 0.027 per cent in the case of scheduled tribes in the Fourth Plan period. The per award expenditure on scholarships of the scheduled castes was Rs 669 in the First Plan in current prices and the amount has increased to Rs 880 during the Fifth Plan. The per student award of scholarship amount has been reduced substantially in the case of scheduled tribes from Rs 527 in the First Plan to Rs 313 in the Fifth Plan. Therefore, the contribution of the central government to the post-matric education of scheduled castes and tribes appears to be very low. Further, even this amount will go to those students who could afford to come up to the

TABLE 1: JUSTICE PARTY'S POLICY OF RESERVATION

	(Per Cent)
1 6 to Non-Brahmin Hindus	43
2 2 to Backward Hindus	14
3 2 to Brahmins	14
4 2 to Depressed Castes	14
5 2 to Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians	7
6 1 to Muslims	7
Total 14	100

IMPACT OF CASTE RESERVATIONS ON TARGET GROUPS

Caste reservations have been used for determining places in educational institutions for the last four decades in India. The impact of this policy on the target groups need to be evaluated. Though no systematic attempt is being made here to assess the costs and benefits of the policy as suggested by Marc Galanter[13] some such attempt was,

TABLE 2: EXPENDITURE ON POST-METRIC SCHOLARSHIPS ON SC AND ST STUDENTS, 1944-45 TO 1979-80

Year Plan	Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
	No of Awards	Amount Rs	Per Cent of the Scholarships Expenditure to the Total Central Government Expenditure	No of Awards	Amount Rs	Per Cent of the Scholarships Expenditure to the Total Central Government Expenditure
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre-Plan to First Plan 1944-45 to 1950-51	4430	29.64	—	618	3.26	—
First Plan	37077	158.99	0.042	8494	41.66	0.011
Second Plan	161470	625.45	0.080	25592	110.36	0.014
Third Plan	318964	1488.97	0.097	60058	262.63	0.017
Annual Plans	327892	1596.92	0.118	65637	311.04	0.023
Fourth Plan	994737	4951.72	0.150	172299	879.30	0.027
Fifth Plan	1233658	10858.79	0.160	242135	759.83	0.011
1978-79 to 1979-80*	117391	2561.86	0.138	59929	—	—

Note. * Expenditure refers to amounts released by the centre on 50:50 basis and it indicates only the centre's contribution.

Sources. Government of India, *A Hand Book of Social Welfare Statistics*, New Delhi, 1981, p 140. *Economic Survey*, Government of India, for various years.

post-matric level. Similar data are not available for other groups of weaker sections such as women, OBCs, etc. However, the available data suggest the trends in the public costs of education of the weaker sections. Now it is to be observed what returns or benefits that these costs have brought in for the weaker sections.

An attempt is made here to examine the unemployment problem of the educated persons of scheduled castes and tribes to indicate whether post-matric qualifications did really benefit all those who have obtained the degrees. In Table 3 the number of educated scheduled castes and tribes job seekers in each level/category of education is provided for the year 1979. The data indicate that the rate of unemployment among the scheduled castes is around 10 per cent of the total educated (matric and above) job seekers in the country. It is around 2 per cent in the case of scheduled tribes. It can also be seen that the unemployment rate is relatively higher in arts category in the case of scheduled castes and low in the case of scheduled tribes. A more interesting picture can be discerned if these rates are compared with the respective ratios of enrolment of the scheduled castes and tribes to the total enrolment as presented in Table 4.

Though the enrolment figures in Table 4

do not correspond to the calendar year 1979, the figures can be used to arrive at a crude comparison. It is startling to find that out of 9.8 per cent of the enrolled students in secondary education, 9.4 per cent (to the total) are found in the job seekers list in the employment exchanges. Assuming that the ratio of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes students passing secondary education remaining the same as that of their enrolment ratios, and further assuming that these boys do not have any alternative sources of employment, it is possible to see the difference as just 0.4 per cent. In the case of scheduled tribes the gap is found to be 15 per cent. This gap shows two things, one, the number of people registering in employment exchanges roughly correspond to the total passed, two, it may also be interpreted as the proportion of employed to the total passed. Though we do not want to conclude that this is the per cent of employment possibilities available for scheduled castes and tribes on the basis of this crude measure, we feel that it requires a thorough study of the grave situation that is impending upon the educated weaker sections. A sample study that was conducted to find out unemployment rates in Marathwada region by Alexander V Verghese[15] supports the argument that the rate of unemployment

among scheduled castes and tribes is higher than high caste Hindus. The study says that, "the low caste graduates required on an average longer job-searching time than their high caste counterparts. The low caste graduates needed, on an average, 16 months to obtain a job, while the high caste graduates required 14.3 months. The general rate of unemployment among the low caste graduates is found to be very high (73 per cent) while it is relatively less among high caste graduates (59 per cent)" [16]. The more distressing aspect of the problem is that the monthly earnings of scheduled castes workers with different educational qualifications are lower than that of non-scheduled caste workers with the same qualifications. In Table 5 the monthly earnings of scheduled castes as compared to the non-scheduled castes based on the survey results of Directorate-General of Employment and Training as analysed by Kusum K Premi[17] are presented. The data suggest according to Kusum K Premi that, "unemployment rates are higher among the scheduled castes graduates compared to non-scheduled castes so also their occupational status lower. Although median incomes of two groups of workers do not differ significantly so far as the job is concerned, there are significant differences in the current jobs of BSc and BCom graduates. On the basis of these findings one may be tempted to say that in India, as in Europe and America education plays the role of preserving the *status-quo* (strengthen the social division of society)" [18]. Thus, the limited evidence that is available at our disposal allows us to conclude that the benefits of the weaker sections' educational support programmes do not outweigh the costs that are involved.

However, one can say that it is a costly success since a few of the weaker sections could enter into the educational job market (see Table 6) which has all along been a prerogative of the high caste Hindus. But the problem of unemployment and the unorganised and imperfect nature of the labour market for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are not peculiar to them. It is a general problem of all groups in the country, but it is hard hitting first the weaker sections. This is what is going to happen to the weaker sections in the near future also as long as the present economic situation of the country is dictated by extraneous forces. The problem that we have just examined is only a manifestation of a wider phenomenon which naturally hit the vulnerable sections of the society such as scheduled castes and tribes, rural artisans, service castes and other groups of weaker sections. Therefore, the subsidy policy and other relief measures in the name of caste reservations would definitely help them to take sigh of relief particularly in times of deep economic crisis. But there are many counter arguments against the continuation of caste reservations in general and against other backward classes in particular. It is necessary to examine the counter arguments so that a valid alternative can be provided to the

TABLE 3: EDUCATED (MATRIC AND ABOVE) SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES JOB SEEKERS BY THE END OF 1979

Sl No	Level of Education	Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes	
		Number	Per Cent to the Total	Number	Per Cent to the Total
1	Below matric including illiterates	1012417	20.22	287754	5.75
2	Matriculation	384718	9.68	77916	1.95
3	Persons who passed Higher Secondary (including +2 and under-graduates): Total	176964	9.40	29466	1.56
4	Graduates (including post-graduates)	86982	7.55	12987	1.13
	(a) Arts	57243	8.22	8605	1.24
	(b) Science	10141	3.26	1018	0.33
	(c) Commerce	9668	4.26	1292	0.58
	(d) Engineering	492	2.25	102	0.47
	(e) Medicine	717	5.18	95	0.68
	(f) Agriculture	674	5.77	125	1.69
	(g) Law	201	4.60	108	2.47
	(h) Education	6915	5.58	1323	1.07
	(i) Others	931	7.36	315	2.49
	Total Educated	648664	8.89	120369	1.65

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES CHILDREN TO TOTAL ENROLMENT (AFTER INDEPENDENCE) IN INDIA

Level of Education	Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
	1960-61	1965-66	1978-79	1960-61	1965-66	1978-79
Primary	12.0	12.9	15.0	6.0	5.5	6.3
Upper Primary/ Middle	8.7	9.4	11.2	3.6	3.3	3.3
Secondary	7.1	7.7	9.8	1.3	1.7	3.1
Higher						
(a) General	5.1	4.8	8.1	1.0	1.2	1.8
(b) Professional	—	4.8	7.8	—	0.9	2.1
Vocational (ITI Trainees, etc)	—	7.6	13.3	—	2.4	3.5

Sources: 1 Education in India, for 1960-61 and 1965-66, Ministry of Education.

2 Government of India, A Hand Book of Educational and Allied Statistics, Delhi, 1983.

existing system within the given structure of the economy and society.

RESERVATIONS AND MERIT

While the consequences of caste reservations in educational institutions seem to have resulted in more misery and suffering to the educated weaker sections, the opponents of the reservations question such quotas on grounds of merit and efficiency in the society and economy that affect the overall development of the society. The arguments advanced against the continuation of reservations on grounds of justice to individuals in the non-reserved categories and on grounds of social inefficiency require a careful scrutiny. The first of these arguments is that less merited among the reserved categories are chosen in preference to the more merited among the non-reserved categories. What is not recognised in this argument is that the children from the reserved categories in general do not enjoy the advantages of educated parents, books in the home, and a tradition of education within the family, and among the kinship groups. Under such circumstances, acceptance of 'merit only' principle is a smoke-screen for the perpetuation of inherited privileges! [19]. Reservations for socially backward groups, as in the case of other reservations to such categories as physically handicapped, are necessary to correct an injustice by equal treatment of unequal through the application of the principle of 'merit only'. Further, it is a distortion of facts to suggest that reservations violate the principle of merit. What is to be done in such cases is to treat the reserved and the non-reserved as non-competing groups and apply the principle of merit to each category separately. There is only one argument which pertains to individual injustice that needs to be considered. It may be said that individuals without inherited privileges such as tradition of education within the family and poor but with a better school record and belonging to non-reserved category are excluded while some privileged within the reserved category and with a poorer school record are selected. A more positive approach towards this problem is appropriate increase in intake in the educational institutions and improvement in job opportunities. There could also be appropriate changes in the application of reservation principle, con-

sistent with administrative feasibility, to ensure against glaring cases of individual injustice. Further the Constitution provides socialist measures for the economically backward groups under Articles 39,41 and 43 which should take care of these groups. If it fails to provide opportunities to such people who are in general a minority (among forward classes), it is a failure of the system but not due to the existence of reservations for backward castes. It needs to be recognised that the substitution of the principle of 'economically backward' for caste as a criterion of reservation leads to more corruption in operation where large numbers are drawn from non-salarised categories, it is easy to produce false certificates of 'economic backwardness'. There is some evidence that over a period of time the gap between the average mark of those selected from reserved category and average mark of those selected under the non-reserved category is getting reduced. This is an evidence of the salutary influence of reservations.

It has been argued that opportunities and earnings of people are related to their differential abilities like intellectual capacity, personal qualities, etc, and restriction of such able persons measured in terms of the IQ scores is a restriction, of merit and productivity of the society. But the present measure of merit is generally taken as the numerical marks obtained by the students in their annual examinations. The arbitrary nature of the distribution of scores in the case of these intelligence tests is brought out by a hypothetical example as given by Mayer,[20]. "Suppose that the test consists of ten questions, each involving the addition of two numbers. Most people are likely to score close to 100 per cent on such an evenly distributed test. But if the ten questions involved solving a problem of differential equations, most of the students would score zero. By varying the ratio of easy and difficult questions, we can get almost any distribution that we like. The fact that most actual IQ tests led to a distribution of scores which follows the normal distribution does not necessarily tell us anything, therefore, about the distribution of abilities; it may simply select the way in which the tests have been constructed!"

Therefore, IQ scores or numerical marks do not really reflect the respective abilities

of persons. Further, the scores obtained by the students of different socio-economic backgrounds do not reflect their inherited differences and allow for any weighted score. THE language, content, and method of teaching is devised in our system in such a way that it is more favourable and useful to the elite and sanskritised communities than to the weaker sections whose cognitive skills and capacities have been systematically suppressed for ages. Even if the numerical marks are used as the basis to measure merit, there is no empirical evidence to prove that the performance of the weaker sections are far less than the forward caste students. On the contrary, some evidence has been forthcoming in recent years to prove that the rate of growth of academic achievement (measured in numerical marks) of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes is much faster than the lot ward castes students in the professional colleges and residential schools. In a recent study on the caste reservations and performance of the weaker sections in comparison with forward castes in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Paramaji S [21] has proved that if a backward class category boy is admitted in an engineering college with 65.5 per cent marks and a forward caste boy with 68.5 per cent in the first year, the backward class boy is coming up with 70.1 per cent, forward caste boy with 70.2 per cent at the end of four year course. It is stated that "while the average per cent growth for F C was 2.45 per cent, for B CD it was 17.44 per cent". Similar evidence has also been provided by Omprakash on the IIT students of Kanpui [22]. These results suggest an important condition that, if the weaker section students are provided with the necessary academic and social environment which is different from their demeaning home environment, as is done in the above cases in a four year residential professional course, the handicaps will be fast removed and the weaker section boys qualify very well with any one else in the society.

RESERVATIONS AND EFFICIENCY

As regards efficiency and reservations, there appear to be a lot of confusion about the concept of social efficiency and the implications of reservations. Efficiency is generally considered as a relationship between inputs and outputs. In the case of education, the inputs of the students are the home background, tradition of education in the family, language codes, etc, and the output is the IQ or achievement scores. The inputs of weaker sections in general are so low as compared to the students of the traditionally literate families and any amount of achievement scores of the weaker sections in this case will be higher than their inputs, signifying their efficiency in the "system. Further, there is a very little discussion on how social efficiency is affected by capitulation colleges for the children of rich with poor school record and also the corrupting influence of money and power in mani-

TABLE 5: MONTHLY EARNINGS OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND NON-SCHEDULED CASTES MALE WORKERS IN INDIA (in Rupees)

Level of Education	First Income		Current Income	
	SC	Non-SC	SC	Non-SC
MA	242.42	237.05	368.00	368.42
Graduates (Hons)	280.00	253.04	354.15	389.86
BA (Pass)	215.00	196.25	307.50	298.44
BSc (General)	270.59	273.75	305.50	367.35
BCom	209.09	241.50	300.00	360.00
BE	464.29	439.01	557.69	558.21
BSc Vet and Ag	262.50	293.97	362.50	414.04
BEEd	230.00	219.39	367.24	357.93

Source: Kusum K Premi, *Journal of Higher Education* Spring, 1984, pp 363-72.

pulating academic merit. Social efficiency is not independent of considerations of social objectives which should govern the principle of selection of individuals in the educational institutions and in bureaucracy. Technical efficiency is one aspect of social efficiency. Even in this respect, the selection process is not neutral to the social background of groups in power. There are also other aspects of social efficiency which are often ignored in discussions on the question of reservations. These include the need for correcting the imbalances in the formation of elite class in a stratified society, and social justice.

There are neither theoretical nor empirical grounds of substantial importance to believe that technical efficiency has suffered on account of reservations. Even among socially backward groups, it is the best groups that are chosen both in educational institutions and for government jobs. They may lack the sophistication and articulation of groups which have long traditions of education. It is possible that the failure rates among these groups may be initially higher. All these are problems of adjustments of marginalised groups which did not have the access to the mainstream for generations. But no one has ever produced convincing evidence to show that engineers, doctors and administrators belonging to reserved categories have proved much worse than others. In fact, the records of some of the top administrators belonging to scheduled castes and backward classes in the state of Andhra Pradesh and

at the national level are known to be superior to those of their counter parts in non-reserved categories who are known to have much better school record having had all the advantages of an early start and excellent circumstances and enlivening atmosphere conducive to good performances. A more important consideration pertaining to social efficiency is the need for political mobilisation for development. The very non-representation of the socially backward groups in a stratified society in the elite is an obvious handicap for achieving this. It may be further argued that the question of efficiency in the traditional refined jobs of the elite class cannot be taken as the criterion to judge social efficiency. In other words, if a Brahmin is asked to work as a sweeper and the scavenger as a clerk, it would be clear soon that the change in the traditional roles would affect their efficiency. This is not a correct measure of efficiency. The social efficiency must be judged in terms of historical and social conditions of the Indian society.

It needs also to be remembered that reservations are limited only to the public sector, and the 'social cost' of reservations (even admitting that there is some social cost) is far less compared to the 'social cost' implied in the vast amount of subsidy given to both agriculturists and industrialists, and those that talk against reservations for socially backward groups do not have much to say against the latter types of reservations. If for long-term social gains, protection is required to sick industries, similar protection is

required for socially backward groups for long-term social gains. This has also been a practice in international agencies like UNO where certain positions are reserved for developing countries.

CASTE RESERVATIONS AND SECULARISM

The argument that reservations create a stake in perpetuation of casteism and backwardness and thus against secularism puts the cart before the horse. Reservations have been called for because the Indian society has been governed by the principle of exclusiveness in social relationship based on caste and heredity. In other societies in which stratification is not based on caste and heredity, inter-group mobility is possible through marriage. But given the nature of stratification in India, social groups which have early access to the mainstream entrench themselves through kinship linkages both in educational institutions and in bureaucracy to the exclusion of other groups which did not have advantage of early access to education. Thanks to reservations, the monopoly of kinship groups based on caste both in educational institutions and government is being broken. The answer to casteism is not discontinuance of reservations but a cultural revolution for eliminating the principle of exclusiveness in social relationships. It is hypocrisy to talk of merit only in educational institutions and government jobs while continuing to adhere to the principle of exclusiveness in social relationship. Reservations by contributing to the entry of backward groups into the mainstream has several positive aspects in the long run. As more and more people belonging to backward groups enter into the mainstream, the barriers of sub-caste get broken as they have already broken in the case of socially advanced groups. The entry of these groups into the mainstream will help to reduce the age-old prejudices of the upper castes against socially backward groups as unclean people while simultaneously inspiring confidence among the reserved categories. It is true that in the short-run caste will be used for political mobilisation of the socially backward groups for articulation against the dangers of caste adventures. Reservations could play the role of 'Creative destruction' by drawing the socially backward groups into the mainstream.

Similarly the oft-repeated argument that caste reservations go against the secular character of the Constitution has been dispelled by some legal experts in their evidence before the Commission on Backward Classes in Karnataka. They said that nowhere in the Constitution a mention is made about a casteless society and socialism and secularism do not mean caastless society. It is further alleged that the intellectuals who have been citing secularism against caste reservations do not have anything to say against the naked way in which casteism, religion and communal hatred have been perpetuated by the govern-

APPENDIX TABLE : REPRESENTATION OF BACKWARD CLASSES IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Name of the Unit I	Class I				Class II			
	OBC 2	SC/ST 3	FC 4	Total 5	OBC 6	SC/ST 7	FC 8	Total 9
Ministries/departments	303 (2.59)	840 (7.18)	10564 (90.23)	11707 (100.0)	1742 (3.98)	5985 (13.66)	36076 (82.36)	43803 (100.0)
Autonomous bodies attached and subordinate offices	4147 (5.09)	5399 (6.64)	71779 (88.27)	81325 (6.64)	59079 (11.74)	91431 (18.16)	352827 (70.10)	503337 (100.0)
Public sector undertakings	3719 (4.59)	3652 (5.68)	73623 (90.90)	80994 (100.0)	36242 (9.91)	68566 (19.74)	260977 (71.19)	565785 (100.0)
Total	8169 (4.69)	9891 (5.68)	155966 (89.63)	174026 (100.0)	97063 (10.63)	165982 (18.18)	649880 (71.19)	1112925 (100.0)

Name of the Unit I	Class III and IV				All Classes			
	OBC 2	SC/ST 3	FC 4	Total 5	OBC 6	SC/ST 7	FC 8	Total 9
Ministries/Departments	1500 (8.41)	5518 (30.95)	10811 (60.64)	17829 (100.0)	3545 (4.83)	12343 (16.83)	57451 (78.34)	73339 (100.0)
Autonomous bodies attached and subordinate offices	67786 (20.98)	67118 (20.78)	188044 (58.24)	322948 (100.0)	131012 (14.43)	163948 (18.06)	596767 (67.51)	907610 (100.0)
Public sector undertaking	22689 (15.77)	45646 (31.72)	75575 (52.51)	143910 (100.0)	62650 (10.61)	117864 (19.95)	410175 (69.45)	590689 (100.0)
Total	91975 (18.98)	118282 (24.40)	274430 (56.62)	484687 (100.0)	197207 (12.55)	294155 (18.72)	1064393 (68.73)	1571638 (100.0)

Note : Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Government of India, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission, 1980*, New Delhi, 1981, Vol I and II, p 92.

ment agencies like radio, T V, press and all other public forums when secularism really means the separation of these from state patronage and not fighting against caste reservations. The reserved groups have also been questioning the casteism of the high caste Hindus who are a minority in number in the population but occupy the major and lucrative sectors of the economy, bureaucracy and society and any talk of secularism and socialism should really mean fighting against these same tendencies. While these arguments can be considered as polemical and emotional, one cannot however support casteism of the weaker sections to counter the casteism of the upper castes. The real problem is to see whether caste reservations really create a threat to secularism if it is used as a means to bring equality of opportunity in education. Can we really overcome this problem if the few suffering individuals from the high castes are admitted and given the same opportunities as that of the weaker sections. This problem has been addressed by Marc Galanter and he said that, "if secularism is defined in terms of the elimination of India's compartmental group structure in favour of a compact and unitary society, then the compensatory discrimination may indeed have impeded secularism. But one way instead visualise not the disappearance of communal groups but their transformation into components of a pluralistic society in which invidious hierarchy discarded while diversity is accommodated. In this view compensatory discrimination policy contributes to secularism by reducing group disparities and blunting hierarchical distinctions"[23].

There is a suggestion that reservations for positions and places in public services and in educational institutions should also consider the secular attributes like functions or occupational activities of people in categorising the backward classes. This suggestion made by experts like I P Desai[24] has a strong power of appeal. But, the real problem is whether such a policy would really alter the present system when there is a "fairly close co-existence of low earning level of occupational activities, literally low caste status of the majority of the people engaged in them and low level of education". Does it not perpetuate the traditional occupations which are in general associated with the low caste backward classes? What purpose does it serve? It is exactly for the same reasons that the basic education of Gandhiji was given up in this country. An alternative policy of protective discrimination based on the disadvantages of each family instead of the group may be considered.

There are also arguments which say that some of the backward castes in rural India are responsible for the perpetuation of casteism and atrocities on scheduled castes, tribes and service castes. But, these atrocities are to be viewed from the point of the economic factors that are involved in such students and the impact of the growing

tendency of capitalist inroads into a more tradition-based rural economy. What is lacking in such cases is the elimination of the economically weaker backward castes in joining the feudal forces in the name of caste. The feeling of comradeship and brotherhood among all the socially disadvantaged groups in the rural and urban areas would minimise such incidents. Political action by secular parties is also necessary here. This is possible if all the disadvantaged are grouped under the label of backward classes and withdrawing the strong and privileged among the backward castes from the lists of backward classes as is done in the case of Karnataka in 1990 by Chinnappa Reddy Commission. The present lists of scheduled castes, tribes and backward castes need to be revised to prepare a single list of disadvantaged class consisting of different categories taking into consideration the region and caste specificity of the disadvantages of caste.

AN ALTERNATIVE

It is quite often a distinction is not being made between caste reservations for the purpose of places in educational institutions and for positions of power and jobs in public sector. It must, therefore, be recognised here that the scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes have been kept away from the mainstream and literate learning for ages and have remained socially backward. Here mere economic power does not bring education overnight to the incumbent. It requires a few generations to enter into the elite oriented education system though one can enter into the economic heights or power structure with money and caste pressure. Therefore, it is necessary to provide protective discrimination to all those who are socially and educationally backward on the basis of their heredity caste, in the education sector, while eliminating the rich and powerful among them in matters of positions of power and employment. They can enter into these sectors along with all others if the handicap of education is removed.

In order to implement such a policy it is necessary to follow a policy of weighted index of backwardness for each family. This can be done once the maximum amount of places are determined for this group. For this purpose, a survey can be conducted along with census on the basis of caste as the major criterion or a sample survey can be conducted. After deciding the maximum per cent of quota for these groups, the implementation of the reservation is to be carried on the basis of the disadvantages of the individual family and not on the basis of the group, such as caste. The illiteracy rate in a region can also be considered as an alternative criterion to determine the maximum per cent of quota in educational sector. Then each family becomes a unit of its own category depending upon their disadvantages. Those families who have more and long lasting disadvantages will get preference

over the advanced within the caste. In order to make it feasible, the incumbent will have to produce a certificate as is done in the case of caste certificates today. But the certificate of the family that we are proposing does not contain caste, but instead a few indicators of the following to determine the cumulative or weighted disadvantages. This certificate should be issued to all Indians irrespective of the caste. In fact, the government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced the system of green cards (to families with less than Rs 6,000 annual income) to all weaker sections' households and the same can be modified to include the following indicators which may weigh the disadvantages of a family.

The indicators: (1) Caste and occupation or the weighted number that is to be assigned to each caste on the basis of the socio-economic survey conducted in every ten years, (2) Educational status of the family that includes the education of the head of the family and the tradition of education in the family from generations, and (3) Income (annual or mensum).

Suppose an X (person) in a particular caste has obtained a weight of I for caste, 3 for educational status based on their illiteracy in the family and come in the income range of 5 (which is to be devised on the basis of state or regional income). Let us say he will have an index of 9. Take another individual Y in the same group who will present a certificate based on his green card and get an index of 5. Then the individual X with the highest index of disadvantages will get preference over Y. The above is an illustrative example and the criteria and *modus operandi* can be devised by the government in each state with the help of sociologists, economists and educationists. One may say that this is a cumbersome process and the poor villager cannot follow all this and it also involves, a lot of administrative machinery to draw such lists. But we feel that it is easier than the caste certificate, as the individual incumbent in this case has to present a copy of the green card which has already been supplied to his family with all the necessary entries. At the time of admission into various courses, the index will be calculated (if it is not estimated already in the card) along with the criterion mark calculated for admission. This will also reduce the burden of producing the caste certificate for the family which sometimes cost a person more than Rs 50. As the green cards are supplied by the government, the cost will be borne by the state or a nominal fee may be fixed for it. Now the card will be delivered to him at his house rather than the person going round the revenue officer for producing the certificate. The whole process may require in a state like Andhra Pradesh, around Rs 2 crore in ten years which is a small amount. This process, it is assumed, will eliminate casteism in general and the dominant among the identified backward groups.

Finally the following criteria may also be followed to drop certain castes which have reached the minimum standards of educational development at the time of the decadal socio-economic survey.

(1) Adequate representation of the backward classes, scheduled castes and tribes in the elite class measured in terms of their proportion in each category of the elite professions.

(2) Improvements in the political representation of these classes at various stages of socio-economic and political power structure measured in terms of their proportional representation.

(3) If 70 per cent of the families in a caste are found to be occupying reasonable positions and have crossed the line of income-occupation-educational backwardness and as a result, the poverty line, that entire caste can be withdrawn from the list of backward classes.

It is however, to be remembered that with poor rates of growth, rising unemployment and growing competition for limited opportunities in a market economy, those with combined and cumulative disadvantages of inferior social status, little access to educational institutions, bureaucracy and political power, are the worst sufferers in the system, and reservations provide the much needed band-aid though not a cure.

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DISCUSSION

Indian Writing on Nagas

P Pimomo

THIS has specific reference to Kamarupee's article 'Passing of Phizo' (May 5 -12) but what I say about it unfortunately applies to Indian writing on Nagas almost across the board.

I am a Naga Indian—whatever that means. For some Nagas, the idea of a Naga Indian is still a contradictory proposition, a mis-identity, for others it is an acceptance of the post-1962 political reality of Nagaland, yet for some others it is an unsettling combination of both of these things and more. As much of a realist as I want to be—indeed because I wish to be realistic about myself—I must say that I belong to the last group. Kamarupee will take this variety of Naga identities, including my dichotomous one, as yet another evidence of Zapu Phizo's divisive legacy to the Nagas. A Naga, on the other hand, sees it as a living testimony of Indian coercive domination over Nagas through its brutal army and scheming policy framers, whose concerted efforts left Nagaland and Nagas ravaged and sundered body and spirit to an extent that still makes an integrated and positive psychological and political identity impossible for many Nagas. Let me make myself very clear: I do not want to be understood here as arguing for an independent Nagaland; rather, I want to be understood as saying that Kamarupee's article is an unfortunate piece of Indian neo-colonialist asseveration. That it is only one among the tens and hundreds (and certainly not the worst kind) of Indian writing on Nagas shows the hopelessly one-sided exercise of power in the production and dissemination of knowledge about Indo-Naga relations.

Let me come to a couple of points in Kamarupee's article which manages, even in that short space, to make major distortions of Naga history and of Phizo's role in it. First, to say that "the state of Nagaland is the greatest monument to Phizo" is plain

wrong, and Kamarupee knows that he is engaging in prevarication when he makes the statement. Kamarupee is aware (as anyone even slightly familiar with India's persistent hostility toward Naga right for self-determination is aware) that the state of Nagaland was insidiously and designedly created to checkmate Phizo's dream of a sovereign Naga nation. He is right in calling the state of Nagaland the symbol of Phizo's failure, but to go on to call what in the Indian view has always been Phizo's nemesis the greatest monument to him in death is to hound the man beyond the grave and to add vicious vilification to injury. It is an abusive misrepresentation of his life and memory as well as an insult to Nagas in whose face this falsehood is so daringly flung.

The Nagaland government's zeal in giving Phizo a state burial beside the secretariat building is likewise an attempt at obfuscating its role in Naga history, a dishonest manipulation of the central symbol of the Naga spirit on the part of its leaders, as usual. Here is the chief constitutional weapon in the anti-Phizo Indian arsenal going out of its way to 'honour' the corpse of the man whose life's mission it so effectively frustrated. It is a hypocritical attempt, very characteristic of Nagaland state politicians, to claim kinship with the icon of Naga pride, at time when it is safe to do so, again, for their political and personal aggrandisements. My criticism of the state government's motive in bringing Phizo's body to Nagaland does not imply criticism of his burial in Nagaland. On the contrary, the question is, where else? Phizo belongs to the hills of Nagaland, and they would have claimed him back sooner or later with or without the Nagaland government's help. But, that he could not have been buried in them at this time without the state government's help only shows the extent to which