



THE UPLIFTMENT OF BACKWARD CLASSES THROUGH MANDAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

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Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to highlight the reservation policy towards the upliftment of backward classes through reservation of jobs in central and state services. The socio-political conditions prevailed before and after independence up to the appointment of Second Backward Classes Commission, preparation of the report through countrywide tours, socio-educational field surveys have been dealt

Key words: Backward Classes Commission, Mandal, Kaka Kalelkar, Brahmins, Reservations.

Introduction

The Indian society composed of different elements of greater diversity, different customs, different colours and different creeds. There are about 3000 castes in India and they are derived from tribal or racial elements, occupational, territorial, religious, etc. They are integrated to form an organic community. Caste is an institution of highly complex origin, unique and it is an exclusively Indian phenomenon. The caste system in India owes its origin to the Varna system according to which Brahmins sprang from the mouth of the deity, the Kshatriya was created from his arms, the Vaishya from his thighs while the Sudra was born from his feet. The first three varnas were assigned different duties. Sudras were supposed to serve the other three varnas. The large number of castes existing today actually ramified from the four-fold Varna. The main culprit of caste consciousness is the spirit of caste patriotism which nurtures opposition to other castesⁱ.

The unjust division of the society mentioned earlier and the hereditary high social status accorded to the upper castes and their dominance in all spheres of life with the meek acceptance of it by the rest of the society finally resulted in gross social injustice. The benefits of education have been the monopoly of upper castes of the society especially the Brahmins and such benefits were denied to the lower classes. The historically inherited injustices and suppression, depression and opposition of the traditional society spanning over the decades necessitated the policy of protective discrimination to raise them to the level comparable with the other advanced sections of society. The climate of equality to achieve social justice can be brought about only by implementing the reservation policy for some years.ⁱⁱ

The reservation policy encompasses political representation employment under government and education and ameliorative measures for the economic uplift of weaker sections. Though reservation Policies entail systematic departures from the norms of equality like merit even-handedness, they are justified in several ways like a guarantee against the persistence of discrimination and way of promoting integration, use of neglected talent and equitable distribution. The reservation process provides a direct flow of valuable resources to the largest groups in larger measure and participation in the decision making process. It provides the social and political integration of depressed classes and an awareness of participation pride self-respect, sense of achievement and personal efficacy to contribute to the development of the nation. This also stimulates the acquisition of skills and resources needed to complete and helps to offset the accumulated disablements resulting from past deprivation of advantages and opportunities. Indian constitution also lays more emphasis on social justices than that of any other countries as in India only so much social injustice was done to certain groups of the society resulting in the glaring inequalities through the hierarchical caste systemⁱⁱⁱ.

Reservations of jobs have been necessitated for restoring the social order and equality which had been denied by centuries' of organised exploitation in the name of caste colour, and religion. In professions like 'auditing' and in several managerial cadres in finance discipline, there is predominance of only forward class people^{iv}.

P. Venugopal, former judge of madras high court observed "social justice in short is the product of cumulative social injustice. The constitution has designed social justice as compensatory justice to offset the accumulated disabilities suffered by historically disadvantaged sections of the society over centuries and to absorb them educationally and occupationally in the mainstream of national life. Social justice thus provides opportunities for the backward classes, SCs and STs to develop their neglected talents and provide them with education and opportunities for advancement in life. Reservation to backward classes results in broadening of opportunities and stimulates the acquisition of new skill and resources to prepare and equip themselves for open competition in future. It enhances their capacity to develop their talents and efficiency and promotes pride self-respect and a sense of achievement that helps them to contribute to national developments"^v.



Jawaharlal Nehru on 25 September 1948 wrote that: though the congress was dominant today in India it was losing its hold and was becoming just a political machine. Once congress had the capacity to identify itself with the aspirations of the newly awakened classes and also became a vehicle of their realisation. But gradually congress lost this capacity and opposed the reservation policy in the north while in the South, Congress leaders were its Champions. Congress alienated itself from the farming communities and OBCs^{vi}. The leaders like Indira Gandhi, who administered the Indian state failed to grope the social assertions of various groups which wanted a real share in power^{vii}. The Congress manifesto was silent on reservations for the other backward Classes. When Commenting about the Mandal Commission recommendations Rajeev Dhavan observed, “The Congress hide behind the convenient petticoat of the need for state consultation even though the states had been braver and wiser”. A decade rolled by Congress scrupulously avoided extreme postures on any issue and retained its position as the party that offers an umbrella to all manner of people holding all manner of views^{viii}.

When Congress purposely sidelined the demands of backward Classes, leaders who deserted Congress and captured power at the centre came to the rescue. Morarji Desai, the then prime minister of India in 1979 announced the appointment of Mandal commission and Prime Minister V.P. Singh in 1990 announced in the parliament the implementation of its recommendation. When Commenting about Mandal Report, K. Veeramani, General Secretary of Dravidian Kazhagam maintains; “This report is the first one in the history of India which went deep into the matter and searched the crux of the problem and having found it out, it applied its axe on the tap-root of the malady. No other commission had so far taken so much care and interest to study the problem in depth on an All India level and every aspect of the problem was analyzed, minutely and scientifically applying all known tests to the various factors, social and political, at work to keep a vast majority of the Country so long away from the corridors of the governing infrastructure systematically and unsympathetically”^{ix}.

Janata Government in Power

Negligence of social reform measures by the congress party both during freedom struggle and the initial years after independence led to the defection of several Congress leaders who pleaded for social justice. Such leaders with the impetus given by Jayaprakash Narayanan utilized the evil consequences of Internal State of Emergency implemented during the regime of Indira Gandhi and united among themselves under a single banner of Janata Party. They proposed social reform measures in their election manifesto of 1977 which were undermined during the Congress era. Several reform measures for the upliftment of backward classes were implemented culminating in the appointment of Second Backward Classes Commission in 1979.

The Congress government did not launch any measures for the upliftment of socially and educationally backward Classes. She did not try to appoint a Commission for identifying their problems and the recommendations of the First Backward class’s commission under the leadership of Kaka Kalelkar appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1953 were also undermined. This is one among the important reasons which resulted in the debacle of Indira Gandhi and Congress Government.

The immediate and most important development which followed Indira Gandhi’s election announcement was the merger of four major opposition parties including the JanSangh, the Bharathiya Lock Dal, the organizational congress and the socialist party. These parties agreed to have a single list of candidates under the banner of the Janata party with a common election symbol. On 20 January 1977 Morarji Desai declared that they were determined to work as one party for the purpose of election and those parties would merge eventually into a single organization after the poll when the necessary technicalities were finished.

In its 1977 election manifesto, congress promised to abolish all kinds of discrimination and exploitation, develop and modernize agriculture, promote the interests of marginal farmers, laborers, scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes and Backward classes^x. The election held throughout the country during February 16 to 18 March 1977, resulted in a strong display of unfettered democracy at work on a large scale which could not be achieved elsewhere.

The congress for Democracy led by Jagjivan Ram secured twenty eight seats and his party merged with the Janata party in May 1977. The congress got 34.54 percent votes while the CFD and Janata party secured 43.17 percent votes. Congress was routed in Himachal Pradesh, Hariyana, Delhi, Utter Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Morarji Desai was the prime Minister from 24 March 1977 to July 15 1979. He resigned following large scale defections.

Social Policies of Janata Party

The Janata party promised to preserve the secular and richly diverse characters of India and to accord the highest respect to the rights and legitimate needs of the authorities. It also declared that the citizens of India are equal and that they be treated as equals and they would be provided protection against discrimination. The party also pledged to prevent any discrimination



against the minorities, religious, cultural or linguistic or against any citizen or group of citizens in the country. It also declared about its plan to establish a civil rights commission, an independent and autonomous body, competent to ensure that the minorities, SCs, STs and OBCs do not suffer from discrimination or inequality. A.M. Zaidi observed: "The Janata party is dedicated to the task of building up a democratic, secular and socialist state in India on Gandhian principles drawing inspiration from our rich heritage and the noble traditions of our struggle for national independence and individual liberty. The party believes in a policy that ensures decentralization of economic and political power. It affirms the right of peaceful and democratic dissent which includes Satyagraha or non-violent resistance"^{xi}.

The weaker sections of the society were still subject to many forms of discrimination and have been the victims of several atrocities. Their social and educational backwardness had made it difficult to take full advantage of even the limited opportunities and facilities available to them which in turn affected and inhibited the awareness of employment and the acquisition of the skills necessary to take up self-employment projects in the fields of industry, agriculture and commerce. The Janata party also believed that the disparities separating these members of the society from the more educationally and economically advanced sections cannot be radically reduced without a policy of special treatment. It also promised to provide preferential opportunities for education and self-employment and planned to provide reservation of 25 to 33 percent of all appointment to government services for the backward classes recommended by the first Backward Classes Commission^{xii}.

The problem of untouchability has to be removed through educational and legal measures and social reforms. The Janata party assured to prevent carrying of head loads for scavenging with the provision of alternative facilities. It further promised to formulate a special programme within the framework of the five year plans for the upliftment of SCs and STs and OBCs with the allotment of adequate funds. The Janata party also declared to set up special machinery to implement these programmes and assured fulfilment of the constitutions safeguards.

The party also made promises for protecting tribal interests by safeguarding the land and forest rights of scheduled tribes, by preventing the formulation of forest policies which hinder the life of Adivasis, by controlling the forest contractors in exploiting the simple people and through the conversion of forest villages into revenue villages. The party also planned to draw special plans for neglected and backward regions like North East, Jammu and Kashmir, the Himalayan belt, the desert areas, Kutch, the Sundarbans, the Malnad tract and the outer island. The party declared to introduce reform measures to make justice speedy and bring it within the reach of the poor through legal aid.

The social charter of Janata party include educational reform measures through middle schooling for all the children below twelve years, Illiteracy eradication, provision of safe drinking water for all, emphasis on community and preventive medicine and activities of group health insurance, new village movements, mass building of low cost houses, a detailed scheme of social insurance, a policy with reference to urbanization, family planning as part of policy package, a new package for the SCs and STs with special machinery to guarantee their rights and interests, a civil rights commission, automating machines for fighting against corruption, women's rights and welfare of youth, legal facilities and inexpensive justice, fostering People's initiative and voluntary action^{xiii}.

Issues of Reservation of Jobs

Public service is considered as a job with a greater degree of prestige, security and authority and it has been aspired by many classes of people with ambition. Moreover, employment in public services is considered as group advancement. It has been stated, "Having men belonging to their own fold at different levels, gives the people a sense of confidence that they will get a fair deal, they will be treated with consideration and no officer will scorn them as people of no consequences"^{xiv}.

In 1953 the first backward classes commission was appointed with Kaka Kalelkar as chairman mainly for identifying the criteria of backwardness. K.Veeramani, the general secretary of Dravidar Kazhagam claimed that Periyar E.Ramasamy as the cause for first amendment of the Indian constitution which says, "nothing in this article or clause [2] of article 29 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes"^{xv}.

Appointment of Mandal Commission

On 20 December 1978 as per the election manifesto Morarji Desai has announced the decision to appoint the Backward classes commission under the chairmanship of B.P.Mandal with Dewan Mohan Lal, R.R. Bhole, Dina Bandhu Sahu and K.Subramanian as members. Later L.R.Naik was appointed instead of Dina Bhandhu Sahu who resigned on 5 November 1979 on health grounds. Actually the commission started its work on 21 March 1979 with the inaugural speech of Morarji Desai. The main aim of the commission has been to determine the criteria for defining the socially and educationally



Backward classes and to recommend steps to be taken for the advancement of these classes of citizens so identified^{xvi}. The scope of the commission was to give recommendation for reservation policy and finally leading to the upliftment of other backward classes.

Though emergency was characterized and illustrated by several opposition leaders and writers as a period of atrocities, dominance of extra constitutional authorities, censored press and detention of opposition leaders with some reform measures like twenty point programmes, it was not the only cause for the defeat of congress during 1977 elections. The main and indirect cause was the anti-congress votes of people of backward classes who were refused equal status even after three decades of independence and the union of several important opposition leaders filled with some principles of social justice and real concern for the oppressed when congress was defeated for the first time after independence and replaced by Janata party formed by the efforts taken by Jayaprakash Narayanan, the deteriorating effects of emergency were cured by the remedial measures adopted. Since backward classes were not considered by the congress government even after the recommendations of first backward classes commission headed by Kaka Kalelkar and appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1953, during the regime of Janata party in 1979, the second backward classes commission appointed by Morarji Dasai looked into the problems of backward classes and identified the criteria of backwardness.

Preparation of the Report

The recommendations of the first backward classes commission were undermined by the successive congress governments. Understanding the various difficulties felt by the backward classes and the need to employ measures for their upliftment, leaders of Janata Party government with a background of special justice motive were able to appoint a second backward classes commission headed by Mandal for identifying the criteria of backwardness using objective tests. The flaws in the methodology of identifying backwardness pointed out in the first backward classes commission were purposely avoided by employing socio-educational field surveys, country-wide tour, gathering the views of peoples from the various strata of society and several yardsticks for determining the criteria of backwardness.

Conclusion

The members of the Second Backward Classes Commission undertook country-wide tours for getting first hand information about the various difficulties faced by the people of backward classes and arranged socio-educational field surveys for getting reliable data as suggested by the team and panel of experts. The Mandal Commission identified backwardness and the various castes were categorised as backward by using the eleven indicators. For uplifting the backward classes, the Mandal Commission has suggested several recommendations to remove social, educational and economic backwardness.

Reference

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