

CHAPTER - IV

Reservation Policy and the Political Process.

Any study of the nature and impact of reservation policy on the Indian political process reveals a number of interacting features. Its impact has been not only wide but also very penetrating which ultimately touched every aspect of India's governing process. The Mandal issue created controversies and confusions right from the day of its announcement by the V.P. Singh's government. It brought about a number of changes within the power structure of the ruling party itself. Not only, this generated some issues lying hidden so far among the left parties at the national level. Even the Congress had its own ideas and programmes regarding the implementation of the reservation policy. The cumulative impact of this policy was felt on the electoral process in India during this very eventful decade.

Before one engages oneself in the study of India's governing process, one should note the very appropriate remarks by N.D. Palmer when he declared that "contemporary India is fascinating laboratory of political, economic and social change".¹ Thus the model on which India is set "is one of modernization of an ancient and highly plural society in the context of an open polity".² Thus the Indian political system is 'deeply rooted' in the Indian society and its functions "within a framework of

identifiable institutions and processes in various peculiar and subterranean ways".³ Although, to N.D. Palmer, the political system in India today is in 'multiple crisis stage', yet it has "over a relatively short period, acquired definable shape and form — stability not in the sense of a stationery movement".⁴

This idea of 'regulated movement' based on 'a high degree of flexibility and accommodation', as Palmer has identified, with such definite goals as national and social integration, economic development and higher levels of existence was put to serious challenges in the face of certain issues arising out of implemental as well as non-implemental aspects of the reservation policy in India.

Following G.K. Roberts, the concept of political process can be seen as sets of interactions concerned with such activities as the competition for political power (i.e., the electoral process), the conflict-resolution relating to selection of political goals (e.g., the bargaining process), the making of policies and their implementation (e.g., the legislative process).⁵

Thus, to C.P. Bhabri, the consequences of Mandal existence encouraged the acceleration of 'casteisation of politics' in India. It has further been observed that with the emergence of "oppositional" relationship, "caste versus caste is a reality of Indian social structure and this oppositional relationship

was sharpened by the new policy of reservations announced by the V.P. Singh government."⁶

II

Politics of the Backward Castes.

Those who advocate for the continuation of reservations in educational institutions and public services for socially and educationally backward groups think that these groups are grossly under-represented in educational institutions and government services even after years of independence. They are suffering historical disadvantages and remained, therefore, largely economically and socially backward. Thus reservation "can be a useful strategy for ensuring justice and equal opportunity to economically exploited and socially oppressed groups".⁷

The members of backward castes or the so-called pro-reservationists emphasise caste as an indicative instrument for identification of beneficiaries of reservations. To them, caste gives a statistically clear enough picture as to which castes are grossly below average and under-represented compared to their respective populations, and, therefore, eligible for reservations under Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution.⁸ Hence, caste, being a clearly recognisable social entity, is only a method or device to identify educationally and socially backward groups⁹.

It is seen that these castes which become entitled to reservations are also those which suffer from various kinds of social and economic disabilities. Thus, it would not be right to say that this is discrimination only on the basis of caste.¹⁰

The economic criterion which is advocated by forward castes as the basis for providing reservation is rejected by backward castes as unconstitutional. The backward groups claim that there is no provision in the Constitution for providing reservation only on the basis of economic criterion. Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy has stated in his report on the Karnataka Backward Classes that if the socially and educationally backward classes are to be equated with economically backward, the Constitution would have used the expression 'economically backward' and not 'socially and educationally backward'.¹¹ If they are also treated as backward along with the really backward among the lower castes, only the former will be able to take advantage of the reservations.¹² That would amount to an invidious perpetration of the prevailing inequalities through constitutional mechanisms.¹³

The Mandal Commission itself has devised a criterion of caste for identifying the OBCs. The Commission notes that "castes are the building bricks of the Hindu social structure. They have kept Hindu society divided in a hierarchical order for centuries. This has resulted in a close linkage between the caste ranking of a person and his social, educational and economic status".¹⁴

This manner of stratification of society gave the higher castes deep-rooted vested interests in the perpetuation of the system.¹⁵ The priestly castes evolved an elaborate and subtle scheme of scripture, ritual and mythology and perpetuate their supremacy and hold the lower castes in bondage for ages.¹⁶ In view of the permanent stratification of society in hierarchical caste order, members of lower castes have always suffered from discrimination in all walks of life and this has resulted in their social, educational and economic backwardness'.¹⁷

The Mandal Commission states that "in a highly unequal society like ours, it is only by giving special protection and privileges to the under-privileged section of society that we can enable the weak to resist exploitation by the strong".¹⁸ When the forward castes consider reservation of posts for backward classes as a denial of meritorious person's legitimate due, the Commission thinks that merit "is largely a product of favourable environmental privileges".¹⁹ Children of socially and educationally backward parents coming from rural background can not compete on an equal footing with children from well to do hours.²⁰

Ram Manohar Lohia, who advocated 60 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and women, said : "If merit were to be the sole criterion for selection or appointments, the high caste with their five thousand year old tradition of specialisation in mental pursuits would be unbeatable".²¹

He thought that preferential treatment for backward and Scheduled Castes was the only way to solve the problem of inbuilt inequality in the Indian society.²² Cultural and educational traditions of certain castes on the one hand and systematic deprivation of large numbers of people from educational and administrative pursuits on the other, have created certain advantages for the children of upper castes and disadvantages for the children of other castes in the Indian society.²³ These mechanical inequalities and disadvantages can be removed only by a systematic effort to implant educational and administrative traditions among the backward and Scheduled caste people.²⁴ According to Lohia, three characteristics distinguished India's ruling classes: (1) High Caste, (2) English Education and (3) Wealth; the combination of any two of these three factors makes a person belong to the ruling classes.²⁵ The presence of the first factor of high caste freezes the whole situation into an almost immobility, for over 90 per cent of India's ruling classes belongs to the high caste, and most of them possess both of the other characteristics of wealth and English education, while some possess only one or the other.²⁶

Sachchidananda alleges that "through the ages there has been an unwritten reservation for high castes in this country".²⁷ For four full decades, the backward groups believe, it is the forward caste Hindus who have held top positions in administration. But the administration of forward castes has become inefficient and corrupt. The members of backward castes deny that if

they are allowed to get in the administration, "that will spell the death of development for India".²⁸

The backward groups further allege that "good public school education is reserved for children of the rich, and that reservation goes on for generation after generation".²⁹ A cultural atmosphere at home that is conducive to book learning is reserved for the Brahmins and the Brahminised upper castes.³⁰ But of course the biggest reservation of all is property which is reserved for the progeny of the propertied, for generation after generation, irrespective of talent or merit. But there has not been any suggestion that hereafter property shall not be inherited by the children of the propertied, but by the persons who possess the greatest merit in handling it.³¹ After all, if it is a national disaster for jobs to be given to meritless persons on grounds of caste, it is equally a national disaster for property to pass into the hands of persons not competent to put it to use for no reason other than genetic accident.³²

The members of the backward castes point out that the forward castes use their caste for climbing up political ladder and subsequently acquire property. Those who are poor among the forward castes have the advantage to use caste links with the rich to obtain a small job or a petty loan. But the backward caste members do not have such advantage. The forward castes use their caste identities for all these purposes, but when the

backward castes attempt to use their caste identity to gain a foothold in the corridors of power — or even to get an ill-paid clerk's job — there is so much fuss about destruction of merit and death of efficiency³³. The casteism of the forward castes is never seen as casteism, for it is an advantage always possessed by privileged groups that their existence is taken to be part of the natural order of things.³⁴ As for forward castes caste remains one of the determinants of property and power, "it remains the moral right and indeed the political duty of the poor and the deprived to use their caste identity in the struggle for liberation".³⁵

One of the criticisms frequently made is that reservations in Professional Colleges "result in scarce opportunities for such education being wasted on persons who are hardly qualified to benefit from such facilities".³⁶ The reserved groups, however, claim that the percentage of marks of their students in H Sc examinations which is the basis used for deciding admission to professional colleges has been gradually improving. Paranjape has proved in a survey made on the students of a medical college in Pune that the percentage of marks of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students has gradually improved from 41 to 45 in 1970 to between 65 and 70 per cent ten years later. The fact that the lowest percentage of those admitted from the reserved categories was 67 per cent in 1984 suggests that there is no basis for

thinking that unqualified students are admitted to medical education because of the policy of reservation.³⁷

The backward castes deny that technical efficiency has reduced on account of reservation. They argue that despite reservation the administration in South-Indian States is much more efficient than the Hindi-speaking northern states. Besides, the records of some of the top administrators at both national and state levels are known to be superior to those in no-reserved groups.

The argument that caste-based reservations go against the secular character of the Constitution has been denied by the backward groups. The backward groups state that "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".³⁸ In other societies in which stratification is not based on caste and heredity, inter-group mobility is possible through marriage.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ It is reservations which is breaking the "monopoly of kinship groups based on caste both in educational institutions and government".⁴¹ The answer to casteism is not discontinuance of

reservations but a cultural revolution for eliminating the principle of exclusiveness in social relationships.⁴² Reservation is breaking the sub-caste barriers by contributing to the entry of backward groups into the mainstream. That the caste-based reservations do not go against secularism has been argued by some legal experts in their evidence before the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission. They said that "nowhere in the Constitution a mention is made about a casteless society and socialism and secularism do not mean casteless society".⁴³ The reserved groups have 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 some tendencies.⁴⁴

The backward castes feel that the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations "is a big step forward towards the democratisation of our socio-economic structure".⁴⁵ It will facilitate upward mobility within the socio-economic ladder for the hitherto oppressed and neglected classes by improving the prospects for higher income as well as better social status.⁴⁶ The administration and public services in general can be expected to become more sensitive and responsive to the needs of the disadvantaged sections who constitute the large majority of our population.⁴⁷

According to the reserved groups, the Mandal Commission is criticised by the forward castes as casteist because the supremacy of the forward castes has been challenged and undermined by the Commission. As regards the Mandal Commission it is the forward castes and communities who are going to lose their dominance over administration. The Mandal Commission itself observed that "the furore against reservation is not aimed at the principle itself, but against the new class of beneficiaries, as they are now clamouring for a share of opportunities which were all along monopolised by the higher castes".⁴⁸

III

Politics of the Ruling Elite

The fathers of the Indian Constitution aimed at building egalitarian and secular society. This necessarily entailed abolition of the caste system. This is precisely what the Preamble to the Indian Constitution proclaims. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) empower the state to make provision for reservation in jobs in favour of backward classes so as to remove inequality between advanced classes and weaker sections of society.⁴⁹ There was great deal of discussion in the Constituent Assembly on clause (4) of article 16. There were three view points. One section opposed the provisions on the ground of merit and efficiency, secularism and national integration. They expressed a fear that reservation on the basis of birth would strengthen casteism

and communalism.⁵⁰ The second section did not oppose the provisions but felt that reservations were not the answer to the problem of inequality. What was needed was socialistic development.⁵¹ The third section supported the provisions on the ground that backward castes had suffered from discrimination for centuries and they continued to do so on the eve of independence.⁵² When a few members of the Constituent assembly opposed reservations, Dr. Ambedkar defended them on the ground that "we have quite a massive opinion which insists that there shall be a provision made for the entry of certain communities which have so far been outside the administration".⁵³

On the eve of Independence, the sub-continent was divided into India and Pakistan, as the leaders of the Muslim minority succeeded in creating a feeling among their followers that they would lose their identity in independent India under the dominance of Hindus who constituted majority.⁵⁴ Some of the tribes in the North-East frontier regions expressed similar apprehensions. The tribal political leaders of Chhota Nagpur region in Bihar demanded a separate electorate for the tribals. A small section of the tribals in Gujrat also asked for a separate state for them outside the Indian Union. At the same time, the SCs were also demanding a separate electorate.⁵⁵ The ruling elite felt that separate electorates would strengthen separatist identity of the SCs, which would endanger the unity of the country. Thus, in order to give a 'fair deal' to deprived sections so as to

improve their socio-economic condition and satisfy the political aspirations of their elite the Constituent Assembly evolved the strategy of reservations.⁵⁶

The President, by promulgating Ordinances in 1950, identified Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But the ruling elite did not define 'backward classes' so as to make special provisions for them, though the Constitution uses the term 'backward classes'. When draft article 10(3) came up for general discussion, several members of the Constituent assembly pointed out that "the term 'backward' was vague, loose and indefinite".⁵⁷ However, under Article 340(1) the President may by order appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes.

In post-independent India, there was no pressure from OBCs for reservations, except in South India. In fact, as a result of the anti-Brahmin movement, the Government of Madras granted quotas for different communities as far as 1927. Quotas for Scheduled Castes and other communities were increased by a Government Order in 1947. This Order, popularly known as Communal G.O., was, however, struck down by the Supreme Court in 1950. The Dravidar Kazhagam of Ramaswamy Naicker, progenitor of the DMK and the AIADMK, launched such an agitation throughout the state against the quashing of the Communal G.O. that the Centre had to take note. Jawaharlal Nehru, within two months of agitation, moved

the First Amendment to the Constitution empowering the States to make special provisions for the advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes besides incorporating clause (4) in article 15. The Madras Government passed a fresh order in 1951, restoring communal reservations.⁵⁸

It was the Jammu and Kashmir Government which for the first time after independence restored 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 Pandits.⁵⁹ The first all India effort to recommend reservations on caste basis (other than SC and ST) was attempted by the Kaka Kalelkar Commission which was appointed by Government of India in 1953. The Commission submitted its report in 1955. But Jawaharlal Nehru's "wise understanding of the danger of social fragmentation, and his realistic awareness of the fact that merit can not forever be subordinated to the incident of birth"⁶⁰ obliged him to shelve the report which identified 2,399 castes as socially and educationally backward.

The Congress Party in 1971 Parliamentary elections dedicated itself to the promotion of educational, employment and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections of society. The Party assured to safeguard the interest of these classes to attain equality of status, and opportunity and

fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual.⁶¹ Shri Jagjivan Ram, addressing the 74th Congressional session held in Calcutta in 1972, said that the educated youth belonging to the lower strata of society needed some concessions in the field of recruitment to higher government posts, because young men and women coming from poor families could ill-afford to go to Posh schools and colleges. The talk of free competition for selection to administrative services was hardly fair in so far as these candidates were concerned, because they could not compete on equal footing with those who had economic facilities for acquiring better competitive abilities.⁶²

In 1972 the Congress pledged a new to a socialist, peaceful and democratic which embraces all the people and permeates all spheres of national life. It proclaimed that it was "the only party which has the capacity to achieve a socialist revolution".⁶³ Socialist revolution included in it the desire of the party to take special care to promote the education, employment and weflare of the weaker sections particularly SCs, STs and BCs.⁶⁴ After the emergency the Congress pledged to continue its crusade against the social disabilities and work unremittingly to raise the living standard and social status of SCs and STs.⁶⁵

In the early seventies the various state governments appointed Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commissions which were asked to recommend which sections of society should be treated as OBCs and what special treatment should be bestowed on them. All

these commissions found it difficult to determine the criteria for identification of OBCs and failed to evolve any rigorous methodology or framework. That left enough scope for arbitrariness. And the arbitrariness has been, more often than not, guided by political exigencies.⁶⁶ On the basis of the Commissions' recommendations, some of the state governments considered certain castes as OBCs and granted them reservations in educational institutions and government jobs.

In 1978 another attempt for the welfare of other backward classes was made by the Janata Government by appointing the Second Backward Classes Commission under the Chairmanship of B.P. Mandal. But the Janata Government lost power before the Commission completed its report. The Congress (I), the then ruling party, extended full support and cooperation so that the Commission could complete its work. It submitted its report in 1980. It was placed before Parliament after two years in April 1982 as the backward class members of Parliament protested against the delay and held a 'dharna' in front of Parliament house.⁶⁷ The Congress government "considered all decisions of the Janata Party's government as politically motivated and adopted the policy of discarding and rejecting all major decisions on matters of public interest".⁶⁸ The same attitude has been adopted towards the various Committees and Commissions appointed during Janata Party's regime. Chaudhary Charan Singh and Karpoori Thakur, who can be described as the main architects of the OBCs movement in U.P. and Bihar adopted the policy to help this neglected population of OBCs. But their

governments too went out of office before they could implement the plan.⁶⁹ In order to pacify the anti-reservation agitation in Gujrat in 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi promised to develop national consensus on the issue. But no effort was made in that direction.⁷⁰ Rajiv Gandhi was waiting for a political opportunity to use the Mandal report as Madhavsinh Solanki did in Gujrat with the Rane Commission Report.⁷¹

The National Front Government had faced a number of challenges from within and outside. It failed to check price rise and inflation, increasing violence in Punjab and Kashmir and rising emotions on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue.⁷² After the departure of the Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, the Janata Dal faced internal crisis and the Prime Minister V.P. Singh feared losing his rural base. On the other hand, politicians from the backward castes who became powerful in the Janata Government put pressure on the government for the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report so as to strengthen their base.⁷³ V.P. Singh, who was a critic of the Mandal Commission Report earlier and was not known as a champion of backward castes, announced on August 7, 1990 that his government had decided to implement the 'first phase' of the Commission's recommendations and that 27 per cent jobs were to be reserved for the socially and educationally backward classes in all central government departments and offices and public sector undertakings, including nationalised banks and financial institutions run by the government.⁷⁴ The state governments were given

freedom to accept or reject Mandal recommendations and to retain the prevailing state list if it was different from the list prepared by the Mandal Commission.

While it is undoubtedly true that action on the Mandal Commission recommendations was promised in the 1989 election manifesto of the ruling front and was included in the Action Programme of the Government, there had been no discussion on the subject either in the Janata Dal or in the National Front Parties and certainly not in Parliament. No wonder that the sudden announcement had led to agitations, some of them violent, in different parts of the country.⁷⁵ A large number of Cabinet colleagues were not with V.P. Singh on this issue. The Congress which sponsored caste based reservations in various states was now talking about economic criteria. One of the Congress leaders alleged that "caste based reservations rend the fabric of our nationhood. What the States can get away with, the centre can't".⁷⁶ He feared that caste-based reservations would jeopardise the administrative efficiency.

The Chandra Sekhar Government was not against the recommendations of Mandal Commission but he had no courage to perform the unfinished task of V.P. Singh. In 1991 Lok Sabha election the Congress made the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations a part of its election manifesto. After coming to power at the centre the Congress Government headed by Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao issued an order

on September 25, 1991, to fulfil its election commitment. In addition to 27 per cent reservation of jobs for socially and educationally backward classes in central services the Congress Government made another 10 per cent reservation in central services on the basis of economic criteria. In this respect, the Supreme Court Judgement on November 16, 1992, was of great significance. The Supreme Court approved the V.P. Singh Government's Order on 27 per cent quota and 49.5 per cent overall, and struck down the Narasimha Rao Government's order of September 25, 1991, including 10 per cent reservation on economic criteria and raising the total reservation to more than 50 per cent. The Supreme Court ruled that the "creamy layer" among the backward classes must be excluded from reservations. The Mandal Commission's recommendation to reserve 27 per cent of the jobs in the central government for persons from the backward classes excluding the "creamy layer" became effective on September 8, 1993, with a notification issued by the Welfare Minister, Mr. Sitaram Kesari.

IV

Politics of the Forward Castes

The forward castes blame the use of caste groups to identify beneficiaries of reservation "for perpetuating the caste system, accentuating caste consciousness, injecting caste into politics, and generally impeding the development of a secular society in which communal affiliation is ignored in public life".⁷⁷ According

to sociologists like I P Desai, Upendra Baxi and Andre Beteille, reservation is a must; but, they say, it should be on the basis of economic class instead of caste. They hold that caste-based reservation is against the basic spirit of our Constitution which promises equality, non-casteist and non-communal secularism and a non-obscurantist society. Caste based reservation is an impediment to progress and social change.⁷⁸

According to forward castes, social and educational advancement does not necessarily mean job reservations. It should rather mean housing, medical and educational facilities⁷⁹. Article 16(4) refers to 'backward class' and not 'backward castes'. Any 'backward class' does not necessarily mean 'backward castes'. It means economically backward. Hence, the reservation should definitely be only on the basis of economic criteria alone, irrespective of any caste.⁸⁰ Besides, article 46 clearly imposes a duty upon the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people of the SCs and STs and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Here the stress is again not on castes but on weaker sections. Therefore, it should be appropriate for the government to give a second thought to the job reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the basis of economically weaker sections within Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes instead of carrying on with the policy of reservations for the whole of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.⁸¹

Devaraj Urs noted a number of points against reservations: (a) Reservations create a vested interest in perpetuating backwardness; it becomes a convenient tag whereby more and more sections of the community try to corner concessions available; (b) the benefits do not percolate down to the broad masses of SC/ST people and other backward communities. A tiny elite only, therefore, is created; this tiny elite in turn, creates a gap between it and the less fortunate sections of its own community and apes the manners and life-styles of the forward communities — the process referred to by sociologists as 'Sanskritisation'; (c) Under a system of reservations, injustice is caused to many meritorious candidates, whose only disqualification is that they belong to forward communities.⁸²

S.R. Maheshwari points out that "though the Mandal Commission was called a 'Backward Classes Commission', its report does not define the term 'class' and assumes, quite innocently, that class means caste".⁸³ It would, thus be more correct to call it the 'Backward Castes Commission' which it became for all practical purposes.⁸⁴ To him, India is formally committed to abolition of caste system, but the reservation system perpetuates it.⁸⁵ As a result of reservation, many remain deprived of the chance to improve their economic status because jobs have already been allotted to others through lower recruitment standards. This creates resentment threatening to tear apart the social fabric and the Mandal Commission report is a potentially explosive threat to

social cohesion.⁸⁶

Instead of caste, I. P. Desai has suggested class criteria along with the following alternative criteria : (1) The unit must be completely secular. (2) It must be in consonance with the new society that has emerged and is developing. (3) The new society is based on recognition of the individual as a citizen, and his rights and obligations are defined by secular political authority. (4) The class to which an individual belongs can be identified by the activity he engages in for earning livelihood.⁸⁷

The forward castes observe that political imperative behind reservations "is to mobilise the support of the OBC elite".⁸⁸ The latter, it is believed, will be able — because of its unique status in OBC society, its wealth, its relatively high educational level and its control over caste councils — to persuade or coerce the general impoverished OBC masses to vote as it desires.⁸⁹ The OBC upper crust is viewed as the most significant group of power brokers in the country.⁹⁰ The Mandal myth — that reservations do something for the cause of social justice — has therefore been readily adopted and propagated by interested politicians.⁹¹

According to forward castes, reservations impair the quality of public services, they reduce the average standard of entrants to government service, destroy the incentive to perform, undermine morale and stimulate caste conflicts in public institutions and services. The result is a deterioration in the welfare level of every Indian.⁹² Palkhivala criticises the Mandal report

on the ground that it contemplates rich and rigid reservations for employment under the state in its infinite variety, and in business undertakings and educational institutions — where merit would be unable to find a birth. The sub-standard has to replace the standard, and the reins of power are to pass from meritocracy to mediocrity.⁹³ When the backward classes claim that despite reservations, which has prevailed in the South for long, the administration of the south has become more efficient than the north, Andre Beteilli observes that "something has prevailed for a long time is not to prove that it has worked successfully".⁹⁴ The forward castes point out that "what the country needs is not reservation but to improve merit and efficiency".⁹⁵ If India is to survive as a nation in this world, it has to strive for highest standards of efficiency in every field and remove all barriers of efficiency.⁹⁶ Reservations for backward classes in jobs in government establishments and public sector undertakings are one of the major barriers.⁹⁷ The policy of job reservations needs to be replaced by effective programmes of affirmative action to promote efficiency, merit and skills among the weaker sections of society.⁹⁸ Primary education and other programmes linked with it should receive the highest priority. Maximum attention should be given to the lowest level so that affirmative action at the higher levels can also become effective.⁹⁹

V

Thus viewed from this perspective, it appears that the reservation policy created an atmosphere which witnessed some radical changes in the nature and direction of the political process in India. In fact, the development that took place within India had their far reaching consequences over a long period of time. The reservation policy had been viewed differently by different sections of the society — some appreciated the principle, some opposed it. In a word, the reservation policy became a political issue in the course of time and was used by all sections for the purpose of achieving their objectives.

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