

## P R E F A C E

The purpose of the present work is to make an analysis of reservation policy as an influential factor in Indian politics. The members of the Constituent Assembly were aware that certain sections of society were socially and economically backward. They had suffered from discrimination for centuries. Therefore, the members of the Constituent Assembly incorporated reservation provisions in the basic document of the country, i.e., the Constitution for they felt that these provisions would help the backward classes to come at par with other sections of society. Though the provisions for socio-economic advancement of backward classes were incorporated in the Constitution but the term 'backward classes' was not defined by the members of Constituent Assembly. They left the task of defining the term 'backward classes' to the individual state governments with ultimate review by the Courts.

After the Constitution came into effect backward classes Commissions were appointed at both national and State levels to determine the criteria to be adopted in considering what section of society other than SCs and STs could be considered as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). First Backward Classes Commission at the national level was appointed in 1953 under the Chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar. But the Commission failed to apply any objective tests to identify backward classes. The State level Backward Classes Commissions appointed in early seventies also failed to evolve any uniform criteria in this regard. A number of executive-legislative

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actions, on the other hand, identifying socially and educationally backward classes to give them reservation benefits were challenged in the Courts on the ground that these actions were based solely on caste. The Courts in various judgements held that caste could not be considered as the sole test. It was one of the relevant factors in identifying socially and educationally backward classes.

The Second Backward Classes Commission under the Chairmanship of B.P. Mandal was set up at the national level in 1978. The Commission in its report submitted in 1980 emphasised 'caste' in identifying Other Backward Classes. The recommendations of the Commission had far reaching impact on Indian Politics when following these recommendations Indian society was divided into two opposite poles — Pro-reservationists and anti-reservationists. While the backward castes favoured the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, the forward castes opposed these on grounds of merit and efficiency. As a reaction to the recommendations of Mandal Commission the country witnessed a series of pro- and anti-reservation protest movements which had changed the very shape of Indian politics.

Though compensatory discrimination policy was incorporated in the Constitution to improve socio-economic position of backward classes but the policy failed to do so. Educationally they are still far behind the general population. They are not adequately represented in the public services. In spite of such failure the

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ruling elite has been emphasising the reservation policy to mobilise backward caste votes which influence the outcome of elections. In Ninth and Tenth Lok Sabha elections implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations occupied a central place in the manifestos of political parties. To fulfil his election commitment V.P. Singh, leader of Janata Dal, an important constituent of National Front Government announced on November 7, 1990, the implementation of 27 per cent reservation of services in Central Government and public sector undertakings. This announcement led to anti-reservation agitations in different parts of the country causing the rout of V.P. Singh as Prime Minister and the fall of National Front Government. Thus reservation which was confined to the Constitution only in the very first decades of post-independence era became a political issue and started acting as an influential factor in Indian politics since 1980 when a new social configuration of SCs, STs and OBCs appeared on the scene following the recommendations of Mandal Commission. Unless reservation policy is carefully handled by the ruling elite it will act as an influential factor in Indian politics in near future as well.

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24 May 1995