



Job Reservation and Free Market Economy

* Dr. Subhash

* Assistant Professor of Economics, Dept. of Economics, Govt. College Nagina, Me-
wat, Haryana, India

ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the reservation policy of India for the weaker sections of the society in the era of free market economy. On the one hand through job reservations for the underprivileged sections of society state shows its concerns for social and economic justice, on the other state is also spreading the capitalism through its liberal economic policies. The paper discusses important issues related to reservation, privatization and merit theory. Paper concludes that in the coming days of globalization, weaker sections of the society have to face great challenges because most of Govt. Sector is going to be privatized.

Keywords : Reservation, privatization, merit, lower castes, social justice

INTRODUCTION:

The constitution of India makes provisions for reservation for groups and categories described as untouchable castes and tribes. A list was drawn up of each of the two categories and put under the respective schedules. This was done with a view to extend to them effective legal and administrative protection and benefits. As a result they have come to popularly referred to as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST). With this there has been a shift from social and cultural categories to the legal and administrative categories.

Of the benefits extended to the SC/ST people, reservation has turned out to be the most important. Its presence is seen in three spheres, that is, politics, government employment and institutions of higher learning. In the domain of politics reservation was meant for a period of only 10 years. It is a different matter that the period has kept on being extended. The argument put forward for the extension is that the SCs/STs continue to live in conditions of social, economic and political discrimination and backwardness. Extension of reservation in employment and educational institutions is not automatic. It is contingent on qualification plus performance, described popularly as qualification and merit.

FREE MARKET ECONOMY & ITS CHALLENGES

India adopted the process of economic reforms in mid – 1991 namely as Liberalization, Privatization, Globalisation. This process of economic reform is chiefly known as LPG process. But the ultimate goal of this LPG process in privatization.

Our Most of the politicians and Industrialists are related to the higher class (caste) of the society. They all are running after money and material goods. They are guided by self interests not by the interests of the masses. They want to uplift themselves not the country. That's why they always talks of 'growth' – 'material growth'. But the dalits (SCs/STs) of this country want social justice not growth. Once social justice is achieved, growth will automatically come. But our leaders and industrialists prefer privatization. In this System, market is given the supreme position in the allocation of resources to various sectors and groups. It is generally claimed that those sectors and groups which are found to be efficient and competitive would alone survive and those which are weak would perish in the market. When this market strategy is translated into practice, it would be clear that those sections and sec-

tors which have been given importance in the policy formulation and implementation have got strengthened. They alone would stand in the competitive world now. And those sections which are poor economically as well as politically would not be in position to compete in the market. It seems that the dalits will have to face a greater challenge than others.

REALITY OF MERIT MANTRA:

The question of 'Merit' is raised whenever the issue of reservation crop up. However, there is no such thing as 'pure merit' in selecting or hiring people. In different situations we look variously for qualified or very qualified or even the "best qualified candidates", knowing that we are inevitably basing our decision, in part, on convenience, familiarity and intuition. Think for a moment about how we develop merit based systems in our society. In India's history, merit based systems have not operated in the best way. In fact, most systems rely on 'connections', patronage and nepotism, which masquerade as merit based systems. The 'merit mantra' is the latest tool being used against the 'socially neglected people'. What is the definition of merit? There is plenty of evidence to show that merit can be bought making it a purchasable commodity in Indian society. In fact, merit has nothing to do with creativity or application of mind and has very different dimensions. It is argued that relaxations in qualifications for appointment may hamper the productivity of firms by forcing them to hire incompetent workers. However, as with the overall efficiency argument, there is little support for this view in economic theory and in the empirical literature on discrimination. The fallacy of the argument becomes evident when one considers the fact that recruitment under reservation in the public sector in India and elsewhere rarely involves the alteration of minimum norms of eligibility. Therefore, the question of compromising on productive efficiency does not arise.

The merit and efficiency of the private sector can be easily accessed by the contribution it makes to the world export market; it is a meager 0.7% only. They demanded subsidies from the government. They were given rebate on taxes. They were given money on low interest rate by the nationalized banks. In their infancy period private sector was protected by the Government from the global competitions. They were given facilities of road, railways, transports, ports, airways, power, coal, fuel at a very nominal charge. They enjoyed the export and import subsidies. How can the private sector yet

boast of its efficiency and merit? If this private sector was so meritocratic why is it that it has not produced a single brand of item, which can be called an international commodity? That is why a number of social scientists rejected the view of 'merit'. They have argued that the rewards in the educational and economic system are not based on merit. The educational and occupational attainments are related to the family background rather than talent and ability. Thus, the children of the wealthy and powerful tend to obtain high qualifications and then highly rewarded jobs irrespective of their ability. It is this that the educational system disguises with the myth of meritocracy (**Bowls and Gents 1976**)

Prof. Amartya Sen in his interview (**Frontline Feb 26, 2005**) not only condemned the 'merit theory' but supported reservation in private sector. He Says:-

The whole idea of merit is a contingent one; it really depends on what things are to be valued. We cannot disassociate the idea of merit from the idea that people have reason to value what is seen as merit. It is not so much a question of being generically for or against reservation policies. In fact, one has to judge the policies of reservation in terms of whether it will actually promote equity, as many people claim, or whether it does no such thing.

The Most over looked fact in these debates is that all the loss making public sector industries and govt. offices suffering from in efficiency had been headed by "merited" dominant castes. In most of the scams, misappropriation and corruption cases it is the upper castes that were involved. Those who have been singing the old song that reservation will hit efficiency; competitiveness and morale have not produced any tangible proof as there has been no objective test, reliable research or objective and impartial survey to substantiate their theory. Merit does not consist in scoring high marks in memory tests, otherwise called as examinations. Merit consists in achieving goals, reaching targets and producing results. In private sector, nepotism is rampant, interviews are engineered and tests are a farce. Relationship with key figures, caste-oriented preferences as well as prejudices and a variety of extraneous considerations play a big role in job distribution.

It is utterly unscientific to divided castes and communities as merited and unmerited. While all coveted positions for centuries remained in the hand of so-called merited castes, the country remained poor, masses remained illiterate and the nation itself is in debt. Why? There was and there is not merit in the system. It is not merit but opportunity that made all the difference.

A management expert said:-

The one who got opportunity become a policemen and the one who was denied, become a policeman and the one who was denied, become a criminal. The one who got a chance became a soldier and the one, who did not, become a terrorist. The one who was employed took up the job and one who denied it became a thug. **J.B. Watson has rightly said - men are built, not born.**

The irony of Indian economy it that after 57 years of "Independence" and 30 years of fierce but verbal socialism it is in the grip of top 200 industrialists, most of whom had derived benefits from the permit- license system or from the patronage or favoritism of key politicians. The other even more interesting irony is that these people who keep mounting words such as merit, competitiveness etc. did not come up by sheer merit or through competition. They come up under a regime of protectionism, Govt.'s help in the form of tax exemptions or subsidies or political patronage.

CONCLUSION:

LPG process is nothing but a process of privatization. In this system economy is controlled by the market forces. Market always favors the rich not the poor. In a market economy everything has some price. Food, shelter, clothes, educations, skills, technology etc. everything is sold on a price which is determined by the producers (capitalists) not by the real – producers (labourers). If you have money in your pocket you can enjoy all these above said things. And if your pocket is empty market will leave you hunger, naked mal-nourished, illiterate unskilled and poor forever. Such as a society cannot survive on the market forces where 85% of the resources owned by the 15% population and only 15% resources owned by the 85% populations which is poor, illiterate, powerless, landless labourers, unskilled and malnourished.

No doubt reservation policy has improved the status of dalits (SCs/STs) but only 2 or 3% dalits have benefited from this policy, I don't think that the reservation in private sector is the permanent solution of the poverty of dalits.

I would like to suggest that there should be equal education to all the people. Education should be free up to the 12th standard. It should be the responsibility of the government to provide work to each and every hand and wages should be determined in such a way that everybody can easily get proper food, shelter, cloths, education, skills and healthcare facilities. This is possible only in the society which is based on social & democratic values. Privatization will be proved very dangerous in a society where the resources are very unequally distributed.

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