

NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT RESERVATIONS

The anti-reservations stir has made me terribly reclusive. I decline all the social invitations I receive these days because I fear that a couple of drinks down, I may say what I really believe and I could end up being lynched by the great spoilt Indian middle-class. That's not the way I'd like to go, I have always fantasised about dying peacefully in my hammock in a Martini haze. Besides, I think we've discussed this issue threadbare, there are many convincing arguments for and against reservations and trust me, you'll find the right answer in your conscience.

Anyway, Arjun Singh has made it clear that the number of general category seats will go up too, so we'll just have more doctors, engineers and other desirable matrimonial prospects in the country. The more the merrier, I say. The craziest thing I've heard is from India Inc. Pursing their lips and looking grim, they predict that reservations will tarnish our shiny new global image of professionalism and high-standards. Now, let me think of a polite word to sum this up.

See, I'm not frightened of being treated by most doctors who graduate from India's medical colleges. I don't give a damn if their name-plates read MBBS SC/ST/OBC or MBBS MMMM (Merit! Merit! Merit! Merit!). The point is, I don't care how they got into medical college. Maybe I'm selfish, but all I'm interested in is, what happens when they get out. Get real, they can only practise medicine if they pass the exams, and since the government isn't proposing special concessions on marks, why is everyone hyperventilating? The only medical graduates I'd shy away from are MBBS TTTDCs (Topped Thanks To Daddy's Connections). In their cases (and there are many), marks are rigged and degrees are gift-wrapped and tossed into Diwali hampers, nestling next to the mandatory bottle of Johnny Walker Blue Label. That's why I wouldn't even send my dog to them. Not even the rabid one down the road.

I'm not going to waste precious time thinking about engineers of any caste or creed who graduate from Indian institutes because most either go to America or enrol in business management schools and then wear suits instead of overalls. It's clear that they don't stick around to build bridges and roads, maybe that's why India's metros are still a far cry from Shanghai. Hey, just who is building our nation's infrastructure? Any clue?

As for the regular colleges, the only quota that I am willing to protest against is the sports quota. It's not that I object to sharing seats with sweaty people, but, be fair, shouldn't there then be reservations for people who excel in Bollywood movies, mimicry, air-guitar etc? After all, they also do their bit towards inter-college competitions. You'll never believe what I've just discovered: there's an NRI quota in place too. NRIs need quotas? Please don't tell me they got it in the name of affirmative action or I'll throw up violently. Hello, those people chose to leave India for greener pastures.

And now, let's get down to the biggest accusation the anti-reservations band is mouthing with a sneer: caste politics. Sure, maybe it is, the SC/ST/OBC lot amount to a whopping 85% of India's population. But, the fact is, I prefer affirmative action to handing out nylon saris and bottles of cheap alcohol for votes. Hats off to DMK President M Karunanidhi for proposing to allow Hindus of any caste to become temple priests.

Finally, if I still haven't managed to win you over to my way of thinking, no problem. To each his own. But, if you're looking for someone or something to vent your ire on, it's not Arjun Singh you should target. It's the Rig-Veda. That's where all the unfairness began. And in case you decide to terminate my life brutally, I leave you with a calming Vedic chant: Om shanti shanty!

Rupa Gulab

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