IMPACT OF MANDAL COMMISSION REPORT IN ODISHA WITH THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

In the year 1979 during the Janata Party government in Centre the “Mandal Commission” was established. The purpose was to “identify the socially or educationally backward.” The Commission got the report about Orissa by Sri Chintamani Panigrahi, the then Governor of Manipur. This Commission proposed to the Central Government for the reservation of 27% of the lower and backward-caste people in Indian societies. In the month of March 1981, in Lok Sabha, a unanimous decision was made for the reservation. Sri Viswanath Pratap Singh took oath as the Prime-Minister of India on 2nd December 1989. Sri Biju Pattnaik sworn as the Chief-Minister of Orissa on 5th March 1990. On the “Nirvan Day” of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, the Prime-Minister declared about the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. Consequently the agitation started against the reservation issue in the Northern parts of the country. Later, it spreaded to other regions. Being a great leader of the Janata Dal Sri Biju Pattnaik wrote letter to the Prime-Minister about the dissatisfaction in Orissa. In many parts of Orissa there were demonstrations, student-police clash, and violent activities etc. went on. The chief Minister had no more interest for the implementation of the Mandal Commission. There was the rivalry between Sri Ram Dhan, the Chair-man of the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe Commission of India and the Chief-Minister of Orissa. Mostly the opposition parties and the agitated mob demanded the reservation only on economic status of the people instead of lower castes. The senior leaders of the Janata Dal who opposed Sri Viswanath Pratap Singh were Sri Chandra Sekhar, Choudhury Devilal and Sri Jaswabanta Singh. The main opposition political parties like the BJP and the Congress(I) opposed to the steps of the Mandal Commission Report. In Northern India, the people opposed the Mandal Commission Report, where in Southern India people greeted it. The Janata Dal leaders in Centre and in Orissa accused the Congress(I) leaders responsible for the violence and misguidance to the agitated students and mob. Consequently due to the situation of the country some leaders of the Janata Dal opposed Sri Viswanath Pratap Singh. Except mandal issue the “Khalistan” claim, the racial conflict in Jammu and Kashmir shook the Central Government. Due the impact of the Mandal Commission Report dramatic change occurred in the next Assembly Election in Orissa.

KEYWORDS: Commission, Reservation, Back-Ward, Implementation, Demonstration Political, Violence, Election, Impact, Social, Economic

INTRODUCTION

In the month of January 1979 A.D. a commission was constituted by the leadership of late Bindheswari Prasad Mandal where four members were there. The purpose was to identify the lower caste people and look more into their social, economic and educational development. After one year on 1990 A.D. this commission submitted its report to the Central Government. At that time the ‘Janata Party’ was in power and the Prime-Minister was Sri Morarji Desai. The gist of this Commission’s report was thus enumerated below, which was famous as Mandal Commission Report.
According to the Hindu Scriptures there were four castes or ‘Barnas’ in the societies of India. The Brahmans and the superior castes had been dominating in every social sphere. The lower and the backward section people of the societies were in agony and suppressed by these dominated section. Because of this prevailing castes only the backward sections were socially suffering. During the British regime the oppression of the lower caste people by the higher ones lessened to some extent because of introduction of some strict policies. In later period due to the spread of education, universal franchise and consciousness, this rude caste system was ignored or taken lightly. But that was not enough. Regarding Fundamental Rights it points mainly to the fourteen point of the Constitution. Observation of high morality is more helpful for the protection of the weaker section. The children of the backward section would not compete with the progressed or the higher section. So, quality and equality status should be maintained. On this context the commission sent some questions for opinion to the State Governments. As well as to the Central Government within a stipulated period. Opinions came to identify the backward section from some regions due to castes and also on economic ground. From Sri Chintamani Panigrahi, the then Governor of Manipur, the commission got the report about Orissa’s opinion. Late Dinabandhu Sahoo also worked as a member of this commission. According to the Article 340 of the Constitution the reservation seats for the SC and ST should be less than 50%. Considering all the matters the Commission proposed to the Central Government for the reservation of 27% of the lower and backward-caste people in the societies. It was meant for all the Government services and professional educational cases and central level. A special educational facility would be provided to the children of backward classes. Again a special programme would be work-out for the backward village technicians’ upliftment. Landless cultivators and labourers development would be achieved by the implementation of land reformation. The Central Government would be bore all financial burdens for the upliftment of backward section of the societies.

**Evolution**

The 19th March 1981 A.D. was a historic day in Lok-Sabha when all the members stood-up and greeted unanimously in favour of the reservation which reminded the promise made during the period of Chinese attack in 1962 A.D. Sri Indrajit Gupta of the CPI proposed for discussion about the attack on the ‘Harijanas’ and the ‘Adivasis’ in Gujurat, Rajasthan and other parts of India. In the resolution it was condemned firmly about the violence cruelty and destruction of assets of the Harijanas and the Adivasis. It was also told that Mahatma Gandhi had sacrificed for the cause of non-violence and the present situation protested that cause. Ram Vilasha Pashwan the member of Lokdal Part raised the question about this matter and that discussion was continued for five hours. At last a resolution was made. In this resolution every citizen was called for remaking of India through ‘National Effort’ to revive India’s peace, tranquility, good relationship and preservation of custom. The Home-Minister Jual Singh proposed about this when Sri Atal Bihari Bajpeyee of Bharatiya Janata Party urged for the pass of that proposal. After consultation with various political parties the bill was unanimously prepared. The Prime-Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi had the opinion about the social and economical injustice to the Harijanas and Adivasis in Indian Society and also for the continuance of their upliftment till its necessity. The condition of the Harijanas and the Adivasis was not only full of sufferings but also it was dangerous for India’s National integrity. Sri Atal Bihari Bajajeey requested the Prime-Minister to take steps for the development of the social groups who were poor and neglected on economic ground and also proposed for a special debate and unanimous decision on this issue. He also requested the Home-Minister to bring a proposal to continue the reservation system for the Harijanas and the Adivasis for the next ten years and also for the end of the demonstrations against the reservation. When the debate was going on, then Sri Chintamani Panigrahi was on the Chair. The chief participants on this issue were K.C.Haldar of C.P.I.(M), Chavan, S.D.Paital, Jainuel Basir, Mohanlal Sakhadia, Mohanlal Patel (all belonged to the Congress-i), Kishore
Chandra Deo of Congress(arsa), Madhudandebate of Janatadal, Indrajit Gupta of C.P.I. etc.

In Gujarat after ten weeks of protest against reservation issue, for the first time a way for solvation was found. After almost four years the protest against the reservation issue once again started and spreaded to Gujarat and Madhyapradesh. For indefinite period all the colleges were closed in these two states. Then the slogan for the movement was “abolish reservation and and save the country.” On 2nd December 1989 as the Prime –minister Sri V. P. Singh took oath. In Odisha after tenth Assembly Election Sri Biju Pattanaik, one of the great leader of the Janata dal sworn as the Chief-Minister on 5th March 1990A.D. After taking responsibility of Prime-Ministership Sri V.P. Singh within a few months declared himself to implement “Mandal Commossion Report” in the whole country. V.P. Singh declared the tenure of the reservation quota to be increased for the next years. He told about the expiry of the reservation period on 26th January 1990. Which would be renewed once again. The day when he declared this was the “Nirvan Day” of Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

Consequently the dissatisfaction against the reservation issue spread over to Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. That was purely a student’s agitation On 19th Dec 1989 a student was shot-dead by the police firing in Uttar Pradesh when the agitation was going on. Many more were injured also. More than two thousand students participated in that demonstration. Students attacked the Government vehicles and the railways. The road communication was closed due to the demonstration. The students demanded the abolition of the reservation for the SC and ST. They demanded the reservation of the economically handicapped section of the society. The Chief-Minister of Bihar Sri Jagannath Mishra declared that there was no meaning of the protest against the reservation. There was the provision in the Constitution of India for the development of poor and neglected people. During the Janata Dal Government in 1978-1979, the StateGovernment reserved for the Government servants. To solve the problem a national debate was essential.

Odisha sCongress Committe President Sri Giridhari Gamango-M.P. told that the Congress party was not encouraging the demonstrations staged by the students and the people against the Mandal Commission reservation issue. He also cleared his view in a reporters meeting that in a democratic country the process of opposition if it was in a peaceful manner could not be contained by the Congress Party. The reservation forthe backward classes were half –hazard made very quickly. People could not be benefited if the reservation system was not based on economic ground. Gamango told that on political ground this might create problems. But this issue fully depended upon the Government’s desire. There was no enumeration regarding economically handicapped people in the Constitution and about the Mandal Commission report.

Sri Biju Pattanaik the Chief-Minister of Odisha declared, “The Mandal Commission Report will not be implemented in Odisha. Because it was not based on economic status of the people.” He wrote a letter to the Prime-Minister yesterday. Sri Biju Pattanaik was a great leader of the Janata Dal. The political analysts thought different about the notion of Biju Pattanaik regarding this. His opinion might be given a new direction to the police of Mandal Commission Report. Sri Biju Pattanaik told, “The decision of the Central Government is only for the Central Government services. We should not be baist by others. What will be good for Odisha and actually possible, we shall do that.”He also told, “I am beginning a national debate on this issue only, perhaps it would be better for all the people of the country if it would be realized by all. Who is backward? Not the caste but also the economically poor. The son of an IAS officer belong to Harijan or Adivasi should not get opportunity in his future service because due to good financial condition. Specially in the case of Odisha, West Bengal and Assam, for the recognition of the backward groups, there were some faults. Due to faulty methods adopted by the members of the Mandal Commission, the actual people could not be recognized. There was
no justification that in Mandal Commission Report some races have been identified as backward races. The Muslims are comparatively poor but they were not treated backward classes. Except this, there was such classes who were told as progressive races but economically they were very weak.”

In the campus of Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology the agitated students had a clash with the police for a long time. It was a bloody clash. At Cuttack the movement was against the reservation. The police used lathi, tear gas and false firing. The central place of agitation was Mirpatana and OMP square. A lot of excitement in political sphere had started due to Biju Pattanaik’s opinion on Mandal Commission Report’s implementation all over India. For this reason he had challenged V.P. Singh, the Prime-Minister. It was true that many members of the Janata Dal were opposing this Mandal Commission in their mind. But in practice, they were the supporter of the two parties. Because, only for vote were telling so. Then in political sphere of New Delhi one thing had been remarked which was called as silent humming. But it had been propagated that Biju Pattanaik was the alternative form of Viswanath Pratap Singh. The members of the Congress (i) were still became active. Perhaps to create schism and havoc in the Janata Dal, some people were propagating in such a way. In the Janata Dal it was told that an organized discontentment has already been started against V. P. Singh. Another great leader of the Janata Dal Sri Chandrta Sekhar and his disciple Jaswabant Singh also reacted against Mandal Commission Report. Some industrialists also challenged the leadership of V .P. Singh. Sri Biju Pattanaik had opposed the election manifesto of Rasrtiya Morcha. The Chairman of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Commission Sri Ram Dhan had taken up the leadership to challenge Sri Biju Pattanaik. In the last Thursday night in the residence of Sri Bhajaman Behera, the Central Minister, all the parliamentarians of Odisha joined in the feast. In that meeting Biju Pattanaik was criticized and the decision of the Central Government was praised.Sri Ram Dhan said, “The words of Sri Biju pattanaik is more harmful than the remarks of Sri Devilal who told against the two Central Ministers.” So, Sri Ram Dhan demanded the dismissal of Biju Pattanaik from the Chief-Ministership and from the Janata Dal also. Sri V .P. Singh had not consulted even with BJP and the Left Front Parties on the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. Rastriya Morcha Government was a minority Government. With the help of the B.J.P. and the Left Front Parties this Government had existed.

There would be no social tension if there would be an effort on National level for the solution of the problem. The comments of the different Ministers on Mandal Commission Report said that they had yet not under stood clearly all the things about Mandal Commission Report. The reservation for the backward classes was how far different than the SC and ST reservation? If that was different then the opinion of Biju Pattanaik for the national level debate was very important. If not in educational institutions the Mandal Commission Report would be implemented, then in Government services how far 27% reservation for the backward classes would be filled up?

The Commerce and the Transport Minister had declared at Talcher that according to the election manifesto the Odisha Government was going to implement the Mandal Commission Report surely for the Harijanas and Adivasis who are the true weaker sections of the Indian society. There was no good support from all the chief political parties of India for the decision of the Central Government for the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. These political parties were the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Congress (i) , the Assam Gana Parisad and the Left Front Parties. In the Janata Dal meeting on 1st September 1990 there was a vivid discussion over the matter. Spokesman Sri Jaipal Reddy had the information about this that the decision of the Prime-Minister was whole heartedly accepted by all. The senior leaders of the party Sri Chandra Sekhar , Choudhury Devilal and Sri Jaswabanta Sinha have criticized such decisions.Sri Chandra
Sekhar had told that the decisions made by the Prime-Minister hastily might put the Party into a great trouble in future. Sri Yaswobanta Sinha had an opinion about the reconsideration of the recommendations.

They had the opinion that the quick made political decision was meant for people’s show and it was cheaper. The General Secretary of BJP Sri Krusnalal Sharma told the reporters in Simla that BJP opposed to the steps of the Mandal Commission Report. It had been often demanding by BJP for the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report on weak economic status of the people. In the states there was no question of the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. The Central Government should be withdrawn from this issue though states were not interested. The Congress (i) had declared that it had no support for the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. The Congress (i) did not believe in politics of racialism. On behalf of the party it had recommended for the reservation on the basis of economic status of the common people.

This reservation system could not be implemented for the serviceolders under the State Government. The Prime-Minister told in a reporters meeting that in the Central Offices both in Centre and States this reservation would be implemented. In the Central Government recommended organizations of the states this reservation was applicable. In both Mandal Commission and State Government list those people would be enlisted only, for these backward classes the reservation would be implemented. To the questions put by the reporters of Gujarat the Prime-Minister said that there would be no change in the State Governments special reservation system. But in the Central offices the modifications would be implemented. The Centre went back-foot when some States reserved more for the backward classes. So, the Central Government had come nearer to them to implement the Mandal Commission Recommendation.

The ministerial staff had controlled the permanent power system which should be broken only to give more chance to the other backward classes in the field of appointments. The backward class people have been removed from the power corridor. So in the administrative works they would be given the chance by only the reservation system. In the National Front Presidents’ meeting about the reservation system the Odisha Chief-Minister was being understood. In the zero hour of the Parliament session there was a discussion about it. But for this only different political parties were given unanimous proposal, then the Prime-Minister would look into the matter.

Not only in Odisha, but also in many parts of India due to the Mandal Commission Report its impact was so acute. When in Northern India was the protest against it then in Southern India there was the arrangement of festivals in support of it. In the Northern India, the Capital of India New Delhi became the pivot of agitation and violence. Many political leaders of different parties had discussed a lot with the Prime-minister about the present situation. But the Prime-Minister was unmoved.

In Odisha many colleges were closed. Utkal University was closed for fifteen days. Demonstrations and violence in many parts of Odisha created serious problems in day today life. There was paucity of petrol, diesel and other essential commodities. Buses, trains became unmoved nearly. People suffered a lot. Regarding the present situation the Chief-Minister of Odisha requested the Prime-minister to make some good changes. Whatever the case may be violence did not stop. The first line Ministers of the Biju Pattanaik Government Sri Bijay Kumar Mahapatra, Sri Nalinikanta Mohanty and Sri Ranendra Pratap Swain along with great police officers studied the situation and requested politely the people for the end of the violence to realize the situation. But no good result came out. Demonstration and violence continued. The +2 supplementary examinations was postponed. At Cuttack the curfew was imposed at night time. An effort was started to combat the situation which was due to political encouragement. In centre the State-Minister Sri Srikantha Jena that during...
the anti reservation movement in Odisha for occurrence of the violence, the former Chief Minister Sri J . B. Pattanaik and his supporters were responsible for the occurrence of violence. He repeatedly appealed to the students, the young masses not to be biased by the corrupted Congress(i) leaders.

On 2nd September 1990 at Nirakarpur and Balugan of the Puri district five were shot-dead by the police firing when the protesters indulged in violence. As a result of which till 3rd September 1990 due to violence for the anti reservation movement the total death toll reached to no six. Out of 13 districts in 10 the situation was grim. In Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar and Berhampur all the Government and the private high schools were closed for next 15th September 1990. It had been directed to vacate the hostels. The colleges were closed before. Other areas like Paradeep, Dhamnagar, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrk, Chandabali, Charampa etc. there were tough tension. Students including violent mob had destroyed many valuable assets to high light the movement. Property of nearly 4 crores was destroyed due to violence and 6 persons died including 197 persons injured. Till 3rd September 1990 due to violence the total no of persons who arrested were 355. Fifteen passenger buses, one truck, 29 cars, jeep and 17 other light vehicles were also burnt down. At Nirakarpur the mob destroyed the diesel railway engine which had the cost more than one crore and also se fired the railway compartment. Protesters set fire 11 Government offices and 19 offices were broken. The Government sources said that at Nirakarpur out of 30 GRP forces 20 were injured.

At the police station of Jankia, the protesters uprooted the eye of an officer. At the Balugan police station an officer’s hand was also cut-off as a result of which he was seriously injured. Trains were disrupted On 5th September 1990 at Gunupur, Bisam–katak, Nabarangpur, Gumuda, Jayapur and Rayagada etc. The protest against the reservation system observed. At Sambalpur, Debgargh, Kuchinda, Balangir, Titilagada, Ganjam, Berhampur, Sundergarh, Baripada, Bhanjanagar, Dhenkanal, Jaleswar, Brajarajnagar, and Padmapur etc. The ‘Bandh’ was observed. Rupees one lakh each would be provided to the family of shot-dead students. The Chief-Minister of Odisha declared on 4th September 1990 to pay the said amount to the shot-dead students’ family. In the last week the shot-dead four students’ family would be given twenty five thousand rupees each also. The State Government sources also declared that those were injured students they would be given three thousand rupees each.

On 4th September 1990 Sri Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the opposition party in the Loksabha declared in New Delhi that Sri V.P. Singh was opposing the Mandal Commission Report before his mother’s Government. He criticized the steps taken by Sri V.P. Singh in this direction. On this particular day Sri S.R. Bomai attended in an important meeting and declared, “Those who were suffered and tortured for years, for their development the Central Government had taken the good steps. I request to the dear students, the young mass and others to consider the case morally from human point of view.” In Odisha some students burnt their certificates on 5th September 1990 with anger in the Vanivihar campus of the Utkal University protesting the Mandal Commission Report. At athagarh 144 law was implemented for seven days. In various parts of Odisha the ‘Bandh’ was celebrated by the students and the people. Rupees one lakh was declared by the Chief-Minister as compensation to the family of dead Alok Mohapatra, the student leader. Circulation of money was disrupted by the Reserve Bank of India due to the strike and the violence. The opposition parties in the States demanded against the Government that the Mandal Commission Report had been introducing to get votes in the ensuing election.

On this issue Sankaracharya of Puri on 10th September 1990 gave his opinion that the Mandal Commission implementation should be suspended, The Odisha Government tactfully arranged meetings to face the agitators. In many places the protesters and supporters had clashes and more than hundred were injured. To accept the opinion of Sri Biju
Pattanaik more than one thousand letters from the people of Odisha were sent to the Prime-Minister of India. In the supporters rally few people attended. The happenings in New Delhi had a strong repercussion upon Odisha. There some students committed suicide protesting the issue. In a historic way the twenty-nine Parliamentarians from the Janata Dal demanded the resignation of the Prime-Minister on this issue and the situation of the Nation. Before this, Sri Biswendra Singh, MP from Bharatpur of Rajasthan Loksabha Constituency had sent his resignation to the honorable speaker of the Loksabha Sri Ravi Roy protesting this issue. Till 15th October 1990 in entire India one hundred fifty five lives were lost for the reservation issue.

The country was divided into two opposite camps, what was apprehended only due to the release of the Mandal Commission Report. In the states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan etc. There was acute situation for this reason and there was big clash between the police and the agitators. The demonstration by the supporters of the Mandal Commission Report also geared up high. Due to this critical situation the sufferings of the common people increased due to shortage of the daily use commodities and the price hike of the goods seriously affected the society. In the Gulf regions there was the crisis. With the Mandal issue the critical situation were created by the supporters and the protestors by which Country’s eminence sank low. In this juncture moment the political parties for their selfish interest had abused the situation which could be described as that ghee was poured into the fire. The President of the Congress (i) Sri Rajiv Gandhi refused the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. He had opposed the Prime-Minister V.P. Singh and suggested the congress workers to be ready for the Loksabha election. Bharatiya Janata Party though not directly opposed the Mandal Commission Report due to the loss of votes in the election, still its activities really did not support it. The various organizations of the backward classes of the country and some political parties of the National Rastriya Morcha had started demonstrations in support of the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. As a result of which differences, hatred and the dissatisfaction ultimately grew in the country. To stop the violence and inhuman activities, there was yet no effort made for discussion by the all party meeting. When the country was passing through such type of critical situation, the Viswa Hindu Parisad was preparing to lay down the foundation stone at the Ram Janmavumi Babri Masjid ground. As a result of which more violence and hatred type activities might grow in the country.

The Prime-minister Sri V. P. Singh hastily declared the Mandal Commission Report to appease the backward classes which seemed to touch the danger mark. As a result of which in the whole country the educated and the higher class people were highly apprehensive. That’s why his position was in tottering condition as well as his party. With this the racial conflict in the North-West frontier state Jammu and Kashmir worsened day by day. The ‘Khalistan’ claim was also another problem for his Government. Within one year there was no solution to all the problems. What was expected from the very beginning of Sri V.P. Singh Government that did not happen. The congress(i) was very much serious about the downfall of the V.P. Singh Government.

CONCLUSIONS

Certainly this Mandal Commission Report had a great impact on the Indian societies. Till 24th October 1990, it was known that the V.P. Singh government was in crisis. Commonly the Biju Pattanaik Government was also condemned in Odisha. Sri Pattanaik was a very brave and whimsical leader. He told, “The problems would not be solved dismissing Sri V.P. Singh as the Prime-Minister”. It had a serious repercussion in politics and the societies. There was signal of the downfall of the Central Government. Within a very few days the Central Government was collapsed. In Odisha there was a dramatic change occurred when the next Assembly Election held. It happened only due the Mandal Commission Report. It
had far reaching consequences on Odisha’s political, social economical and educational life.

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