

In response to “Business and Caste in India with Reservations,” from the Oct 4, 2007, print edition of *The Economist*

It is absolutely right that the government of India makes companies hire more low-caste workers. There is strong evidence, brought about by a number of cases, showing companies, universities, and the government discriminate against low-caste students and job applicants. It is true, though hard to digest, by so-called upper-caste Hindus.

In a real sense, those making up the upper castes can be ruthless, cruel, and opportunistic. They practice nepotism and, more important, they practice daily inequality and injustice. The mentality of upper-caste Indians has been shown to be so low at times, it goes beyond human imagination. Consider how they force Dalits (untouchables) to eat human excrement and parade Dalit women naked, raping them and putting chili power in their vaginas. They have even killed Dalit children attempting to enter Hindu temples. There are more than 25,000 registered atrocities committed toward Dalits every year, even now in 21st Century India.

Your article states: “Yet this at least partly reflects the fact that low-caste Hindus tend also to be low class; and in India, as in many countries, class prejudice is profound.” This misconception is not surprising, considering the media is controlled by mostly upper-caste Hindus and the developed world knows very little about Dalit history or the atrocities committed against them.

Dalits who have had a chance to earn an education and the good fortune to get a job often fare better and show more class than upper-caste Hindus. Unfortunately, the idea of people being born into a social position and accepting that position without question has been spread by the powerful. **Consider what Gandhi, the so-called father of India, said: “I believe in Varnashrama (caste system), which is the law of life. The law of Varna (color and/or caste) is nothing but the law of conservation of energy. Why should my son not be a scavenger if I am one?”** (*Harijan*, 3-6-1947). **Gandhi said, “I would resist with my life the separation of untouchables from the caste Hindus. The problems of the untouchable community are of comparatively little importance.”** (*London Round Table Conference, 1931*). What can you expect from a nation, or the world, when the revered Gandhi had such a view?

This is the reason one cannot find a Dalit industrialist. Upper-caste Hindus, with the blessing of the Indian government, have created hurdles for Dalits from birth to death. Even after death, a Dalit cannot find a burial plot in a Hindu cemetery.

There are millions of educated and highly skilled Dalits in India. Their job applications are rejected and the jobs filled by unqualified upper-caste Hindus. Caste practice is hard-wired in Hindu minds. To change the caste system, one would have to destroy the Hindu religion. The only other alternative is to remove the upper-caste Hindus (15% of the population) from the top positions, of which they fill 70%-80%.

The Mayawati government in Uttar Pradesh is using social engineering to tackle the complex problem of caste and has produced encouraging results. The reservation system has produced results, thanks to Dr. Ambedkar, father of modern India and architect of the Indian constitution, who put such laws and provisions in place. Hiring quotas would greatly help lower-caste Indians, as well as enhance India's business.