

CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEW

It's all in the mind 4-5

CIVIL SERVICE

Top babus in a bind 7-11

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

60% of Bihar reeling under drought 13-14

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Inequitable development 16-18

ENVIRONMENT

World Bank to the aid of world's largest forest 20-21 mangrove

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Failure of the Left 23-26

PUBLIC POLICY

Signalling a shift to universal PDS 28-31

RESERVATION

Govt to correct Uttarakhand quota error 33-34

Cast them aside 35-36

WOMEN

Women officers to get permanent commission in
Army, govt tells SC 38-39

Women & prejudice 40-43

BOOK REVIEW

It's all in the mind

Snigdha Jain

How to Become a Mental Millionaire

Author: J Martin Kohe and Judith Williamson

Publisher: Sterling

Price:295

Napoleon Hill, the author of *Think and Grow Rich*, has pioneered the idea that successful individuals share certain qualities, and that examining and emulating these qualities can guide you to extraordinary achievements. Forwarding this idea, J Martin Kohe and Judith Williamson write this book.

Having read numerous books on the subject of psychologically training the mind to obtain wealth, this book comes as no surprise to me. However, the ideas explored here shed new light on a few things that had previously baffled me. Twenty concise, detailed and extraordinary lessons form a complete guide to one's life, if one chooses to apply the principles stated.

The authors have deliberately chosen clear-cut examples to showcase the power of right thinking applied constructively through the training of the subconscious mind. From the beginning, this book lays emphasis on "the power to choose" — a longstanding adage that had been lost but is increasingly re-emerging out of the shadowy depths of time.

Scepticism is an inherent part of human nature, so in order to dispel all notions of this book being "too good to be true" it is vital to note that all the examples given are true stories; all the facts stated are scientifically tested. It is hard to let go of habitual patterns of thinking and accept new ideas, but stepping out of one's comfort zone is what makes people true "mental millionaires".

This is what Kohe and Williamson repeatedly contend for — that embracing new concepts and understanding the intricacies of how they work are the first step towards gaining more knowledge. The more knowledge we have about something, the easier it becomes for us to accept new ideas and validate them through continual use and practice.

How to Become a Mental Millionaire is more practical than theoretical. It explains how one can use the information given to obtain the best possible results. Many critics might argue that this is just another one of those ‘self-help’ books, but it’s far from truth.

The chapter, ‘Power of the Imagination,’ is so rich in content and quality that one cannot help but feel exuberant as one leafs through the pages. The extraordinary power of the human mind to project one’s life into existence stems from the imagination itself.

Impossible? No, not if you pay heed to the expert counsel provided by Kohe and Williamson.

In the final analysis, it is suffice to say that the simplicity of the language intensifies the impact of the words impressed upon the reader. The message contained is so obvious that it makes us wonder why we didn’t think of this before!

CIVIL SERVICE

PIONEER 1.8.10 CIVIL SERVICE

Top babus in a bind

Hari Shankar Vyas

There is discontent among senior officers of the Central Government. If things were in their hands, they would have revolted. Anyone can understand their displeasure. Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi are taking a great risk even after sensing the discontent of officers. In the coming months, the officer community could shake up the UPA Government.

The reason: The Prime Minister has punctured the expectations of senior officers. The decision is very small, but officers cannot digest it. The PM himself was a bureaucrat and he knows how an officer feels when his chances of promotion are dead. Despite this, his Cabinet has fixed the tenure of a cabinet secretary for four years. Due to this decision, secretary level IAS officers from 1971, '72 and '73 batches are disappointed. Expectations as well as rights of an experienced and qualified officer like Ashok Chawla have been taken away. After this well-thought strategy, K M Chandra Shekhar would continue on his post till June 2011.

Before that Pulak Chatterjee will return to India after completing his tenure with World Bank as executive director. He was earlier the private secretary of Sonia Gandhi. Next year, as soon as he returns to Delhi, he would be appointed cabinet secretary. Though he will retire in August 2011, it is almost certain that he would be the cabinet secretary when Chandra Shekhar retires. Once Pulak Chatterjee gets the post, he will continue for four years, i.e. till June 2015.

Batchmates of Pulak Chatterjee can't compete because they don't fit in any lobby. The dreams of senior IAS officers from 1975, '76 and '77 batches to become cabinet secretary would be shelved. In effect, the PM has shattered the dreams of IAS officers from six batches. From 2015 onwards, the names of cabinet secretaries will be almost final. Javed Usmani of 1978 batch, who worked with PMO, would be cabinet secretary after Chatterjee. If Javed continues for four years, there would be no

chance for other officers for nine years from now. The hands of officers are tied because the appointment in Delhi is on deputation basis. The IAS association can't afford to go to CAT or oppose the move because a serving officer is its secretary. The PM's decision can't be challenged. So IAS officers can't do anything except mumble or keep mum.

Seating problems

Lalu Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan are playing hide and seek with each other. Both seem to be together, but each is trying to get stronger. They are also worried about post-election politics. Both expect that after the polls, the RJD, LJP and Congress would form an alliance to grab power. If this happens, Lalu would lead the alliance only when RJD gets more seats than the combined seats of LJP and Congress. If the Congress and LJP get more seats than RJD, then the Congress may promote Paswan. That is why Lalu is trying to contest on at least 180 seats. He doesn't want to give more than 60 seats to Paswan.

In the last elections, Paswan won 11 seats and on 17 seats his candidates were on second position. Lalu thinks that Paswan's total strength is around 30 so he can be given 60 seats to fight on. But Paswan's argument is that earlier Lalu used to spare 70 seats for Congress and Left, so he must give 70 seats to LJP apart from those 30 on which LJP has performed well in the last elections. In this way, the LJP is claiming at least 100 seats. Four meetings have already been held on the seat sharing issue, but nothing has been finalised. Fearing Paswan's political ambitions, Lalu announced that Rabri is not ready to become CM this time. Lalu has made himself a candidate for the CM's post as Rabri would not be able to win with Paswan.

Righting wrongs

The controversy over the Bhopal gas tragedy will rise again soon. Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan told the Assembly that the decision to shelve the N K Singh committee, which was looking into the Bhopal Gas

tragedy, had been taken by the CCPA in Delhi. In his note sheet, the then principal secretary KCS Acharya said, the CCPA advised the termination of the committee, but nothing would be given in writing to the State Government. Acharya had noted that the CM was well aware of the background. This note sheet exposes the Centre's role in Bhopal controversy. On the other hand, in reply to an RTI, the PMO has made it clear that there is no record of calls made between Rajiv Gandhi, Arjun Singh and the US officials. According to Chauhan, there is a big question why Central and State Governments finished the investigations into the tragedy within a year, and this creates doubts. The CM feels something is wrong. Now the BJP Government is setting up a new committee. Chauhan has already announced this in the Assembly. It is definite that there would be more political furore over this issue.

Conspiracy theory

Kerala's Communist Chief Minister V S Achutanandan speaks almost like VHP's Praveen Togadia. That is why a controversy has crept in over his statement. In Kerala's Assembly, leaders of Congress and the Muslim League asked him to take back his statement, but Achutanandan was adamant. He quoted pamphlets of the ultra Muslim organisation Popular Front of India in the Assembly that Islam and democracy can't go hand in hand. Then he asked the Assembly why the Muslim League and the Congress are blatantly favouring such an organisation.

The Kerala Police is keeping a tight vigil over the Popular Front of India members. The workers of this organisation chopped off hands of a professor because he allegedly insulted Islam. Last week, Achutanandan disclosed in Delhi that the Popular Front wanted to convert Kerala into a Muslim State in the next 20 years. The Popular Front wants to fulfill its dream through money and marriage; the front has prepared a strategy to start a marriage campaign of Muslim girls to boys from other religions. It also wants to convert people to Islam with money so that Muslim population grows fast. When the CM returned to Kerala from Delhi, he told the Assembly that his stand was clear. The Congress is playing with

fire by supporting such an organisation. Congress leaders have alleged that now the Left is playing the Hindu card.

Booked for attack

Last Sunday, Prakash Karat, Sitaram Yechury and SR Pillai were in Kolkata to attend Pradesh Committee meetings. When they read the newspaper, they saw Somnath Chatterjee's attack on Karat. Pillai then decided that Somnath must get an answer on the same day. But leaders of West Bengal didn't agree. So, there was no reaction from CPM over Somnath's allegations.

The next day, Politburo members discussed the matter in Delhi. Karat's lobby was in an aggressive mood. In the evening Biman Bose gave the reaction. The Central leadership had to work hard to persuade the Bengal Party. Many State leaders want Somnath to be given a chance to come back into the party fold. The issue would have risen at the Party Congress scheduled on August 7 at Vijayawada. But Somnath's book has now twisted the issue.

Now, nobody from the party would be speaking in his favour. Bose sharply reacted to Somnath's allegations. In his book Somnath has called Karat an intolerant egoist. Bose has alleged that Somnath misused Jyoti Basu's name. Obviously, Bose's reaction is a big jolt to Somnath. That is why he commented that Bose should have reacted after going through the entire book. Now, when the PM launches Somnath's book, there will be few Marxists among its readers.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

TIMES OF INDIA 2.8.10 DISASTER MANAGEMENT

60% of Bihar reeling under drought

IANIS

PATNA: With more than 60% of Bihar reeling under drought-like conditions and the state recording 20% rainfall deficit, the government is set to declare over two dozen districts drought-hit, officials said on Monday.

"The state cabinet in its meeting Tuesday will formally declare more than

two dozen districts drought hit," said an official of the state disaster management department.

Vayasji, principal secretary of disaster management department, told IANS that the drought situation was alarming with the rainfall deficit badly affecting paddy sowing and transplantation.

According to sources in Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's office, a high level meeting of top state administration officials chaired by Chief Secretary Anup Mukharjee was held here Sunday to decide the steps to be taken to deal with the crisis.

"The meeting mainly discussed the drought like situation on the basis of reports sent by district magistrates and the future course of action to tackle the situation," an official said.

Last week, the government had asked all district magistrates to submit reports on the drought.

A state agriculture department official said 32 of 38 districts were reeling under drought like conditions due to scanty rains. Officials say paddy transplantation is badly hit in the districts of Gaya, Aurangabad, Jehanabad, Arwal and Nawada, which had been declared drought hit last year too following a 29% rainfall deficit.

The state government is likely to demand Rs.15,000 crore from the central government to tide over the problem.

"After the cabinet declares number of districts drought hit, the state government will seek financial help from central government to tackle drought," an official said.

Farmers are also complaining that there is no water in the canals for irrigation. A large part of central Bihar is irrigated by water from the Sone river and regulated through canals.

Last year, the government declared 26 of 37 districts drought-hit following poor rains.

So far paddy transplantation has been completed in 13 lakh hectares against a targeted 35 lakh hectares, officials said. "By the end of July, paddy transplantation would have been completed, but scanty rains have forced farmers to stay away from the field."

"Poor rains coupled with non-availability of groundwater have already delayed paddy transplantation in large parts of the state and in some districts paddy sowing has been badly hit," an agriculture department official said.

Monsoon normally hits the state between June 12 to June 14. While the rains have begun, they have been scanty.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES 1.7.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Inequitable development

Tina Edwin

The tragedy about data collection in India is that by the time primary data is converted into useable information, it may be too late to aid policy intervention. This is true of data collected by not just government agencies such as the National Sample Survey Organisation but also think tanks such as National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER).

One of the criticisms of Human Development in India: Challenges for a Society in Transition — a report put together by NCAER and Institute of Maryland, US — is that it is based on data collected in 2004-05, and it does not capture the impact of the changes of the past few years when the economy grew at more than 8% on an average every year.

That, however, should not mean that the report should be dismissed. It brings out various dimensions of human development to understand social inequalities, based on survey of 41,554 households in 1,503 villages and 971 urban blocks across 33 states and Union territories. Many of its findings are an eye-opener, while some others a reaffirmation of conclusion of other independent studies.

Consider social inequities and income disparity. Conventional belief holds that growth has percolated to the lowest denominator. But this was not so, at least five years ago, when the survey was conducted. The disadvantaged continued to suffer. This was seen in the disparities based on caste, ethnicity and religion. It was found that Dalits and adivasis continued to be at the bottom of most indicators of well being, Muslims and other backward classes (OBCs) in the middle, and forward caste Hindus and other minority religions at the top.

Indicators used to measure development were household incomes and poverty rates, land ownership and agriculture incomes, health and education. In terms of household incomes, adivasis and Dalits were the worst off with annual incomes of Rs 20,000 and Rs 22,800 respectively. OBCs and Muslim households were slightly better off, while forward castes and other minorities (Jains, Sikhs and Christians) had median incomes of Rs 48,000 and Rs 52,000, respectively.

Disparities between social groups can be attributed mostly to historical reasons, as also to difference in access to livelihood. Salaried jobs traditionally pay better than casual labour or farming. But permanent jobs

elude the disadvantaged classes for reasons ranging from living in rural areas, lower education and fewer connections for job search.

Affirmative actions such as reservation in colleges have not helped the disadvantaged to join the mainstream due to inequities at the primary school level.

So, it is not surprising that forward castes dominate salaried jobs. The report illustrates this: more than three out of 10 men from forward caste and minority religions (other than Muslims) have salaried jobs against about two out of 10 Muslims, OBCs and Dalit men. The disadvantages classes — Dalits, adivasis and Muslims — have fewer social network ties, and this gets translated into lower access to education and jobs.

Efforts at inclusive growth had not really paid off, seen from the continuing regional and gender inequalities. Women earned less than men for the same job, and the inequality was more accentuated in rural areas. For instance, a woman in rural areas earned 54 paise for every rupee earned by a man and in urban areas, a woman earned 68 paise.

Many indicators would have improved by now, particularly as GDP and per-capita income have almost doubled since the survey. But disparity is unlikely to have narrowed much. Policymakers could draw inference from the findings to improve targeting of programmes aimed at inclusive growth.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDU 2.8.10 ENVIRONMENT

World Bank to the aid of world's largest mangrove forest

The World Bank (WB) is helping Bangladesh carry out a series of studies to develop a program for sustainable development of the Sundarbans, the world's single largest mangrove forest in the country's south-western part. A comprehensive plan based on these studies would be developed to integrate prioritized interventions to address the region's main conservation and development challenges.

The studies will be drawn upon the main challenges of poverty reduction, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation in the Sundarbans, a WB release was quoted as saying by national news agency BSS on Sunday.

The studies, expected to be completed by September 2011, will take full account of the distinction between protected areas (where resource extraction is not allowed) and surrounding inhabited areas for assessing the development challenges of the Sundarbans, and identifying alternative interventions to address them. Bangladesh and India share the world's largest mangrove forest Sundarbans and 62 percent of the Sundarbans falls in Bangladesh.

Due to its rich biodiversity and unique ecosystem, the ecological importance of Sundarban Reserve Forest is immense.

The Sundarbans is home to an estimated 425 species of wildlife, including 300 species of birds and 42 species of mammals, as well as the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Over 3.5 million people live in the Sundarbans Ecologically Critical Area, with no permanent settlement within the Sundarban Reserve Forest. Among them, about 1.2 million people directly depend on Sundarbans for their livelihoods.

The study will integrate the ecological dimension and importance of the Sundarbans' biodiversity while maintaining a careful distinction between protected and inhabited areas to ensure that conservation of the protected areas can be upheld. — Xinhua

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

DECCAN HERALD 5.8.10 POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Failure of the Left

Kuldip Nayar

One reason why the Left parties are not selling any more is that their ideologies have become jaded and they have nothing new to offer.

One interpretation of the Cultural Revolution in China that happened four decades ago, evokes some justification for it. Mao Tse-tung wanted his partymen and bureaucrats to go to the villages and stay there. His intention was that they should imbibe the rigours of living in the countryside so that they would not be complacent when they returned to their chair.

The communists' rout in Kolkata's recent civic elections should renew Mao's thoughts. CPI leader A B Bardhan has attacked the communist government in West Bengal for becoming 'swollen headed' because of its distance from the ground realities and people's aspirations.

Indeed, a government which has ruled for 33 years and had all the time to experiment with the communist way of administration, is either inept or incapable to rule. The growing conviction is that a communist state

does not fit into today's world of free thinking and pragmatic working.

The communists in Bengal did not do badly and remained popular, particularly in rural areas, as long as they were effecting agrarian reforms, transferring power to the panchayats and making the countryside feel that it was the master of its destiny. Both the communist cadres and those in power then sat back as if they had nothing more to do. They became slaves to their chairs.

People were exasperated over the status quo and expressed their resentment by defeating communist candidates in byelections. Still, the communists did not get the message. The people became more expressive when they voted against the communists in the last Lok Sabha election and reduced the Left's strength in the country from 59 to 24.

The party's politburo considered the defeat an aberration and did not anticipate the mood of the people when chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya announced that the industrial development had to have priority if economic conditions were to improve in the state. He said that falling living standards and growing youth unemployment could not be tackled without industrialisation. This was a departure from the communist policy which was primarily based on agrarian reforms. Most ministers, much less the cadre, did not understand or appreciate the new policy.

Even the calculation of the top communist leaders was wrong. How could West Bengal attract industrialists when their cadre had driven them out two decades ago, after humiliating them? The communist cadres had organised hartals and committed daylight crimes which went unpunished because of an indulgent police. Big industrial houses which had their headquarters in Kolkata eventually moved out.

Force on farmers

And when Buddhadev wanted to bring back the industry and began with the Tata's Nano car plant at Singur through land acquisition, he failed because he had not prepared the ground. When the communist cadres, with the help of the police, tried to fight the farmers who were not willing to give their land for industry, they became oppressors. The West Bengal government committed atrocities to the horror of liberals and failed to make any headway.

The Left did not understand — and it does not do so even now — that the support won through the betterment of villages could not be diverted to the industry in which farmers would have no equity. Farmers could not be expected to hand over their land for cash which would not last them for life.

The government should have realised that the land acquired for an industry did not come under the purview of 'public interest.' How could the Left create something akin to special economic zone when it had vehemently opposed to the Union government's decision to have such exclusive estates?

The reason why the Indian Maoists have spread to nearly 200 districts is not because they use force but because they pay special attention to the development of the countryside where the tribals and the marginalised live. They have not made industry their priority and have apparently stayed with the agrarian needs.

The administration in Kolkata appears at the beck and call of the communist leaders who throw their weight around for personal ends. The Left should also try to find out why they are not selling as they did in the past. One reason, of course, is the lessening of liberal appeal in the glittering world of consumerism. But another reason is that the communist ideology has got jaded.

The 21st century has different challenges, different calls and different compulsions. What strings different endeavours together is the fight against bigotry on the one hand and vested interests on the other. The

Left should understand that this battle cannot be won until the people's say is strengthened. Any kind of dictatorship, either of the proletariat or of others, is bound to fail. The communist ideology has to be reinterpreted.

When West Bengal is introspecting over the causes of its unpopularity in the state, it should be considering how to build an agrarian society which can increase the output, enhance farmers' income and bring about egalitarianism. This cannot be done through the steps where the land is acquired in 'public interest' to benefit a few industrialists. The communist ideology should be radiating with fresh thinking for retrieving idealism which is receding into the shadows.

PUBLIC POLICY

HINDU 3.8.10 PUBLIC POLICY

Signalling a shift to universal PDS

Gargi Parsai

The NAC's recommendations on food security measures take heed of the fact that PDS reform is dependent on the availability of enough foodgrains.

Three major elements of the United Progressive Alliance government's commitment to provide food security to the people are reforming the public distribution system (PDS), raising foodgrain productivity and production, and creating a decentralised, modern warehousing system.

Ideally, the reforms in the PDS should have come first for the availability and delivery of subsidised foodgrains to become meaningful and comprehensive. Be that as it may, the recommendation of the National Advisory Council (NAC) to launch universal PDS in one-fourth of all districts or blocks for a start should be seen as a paradigm shift towards universalisation. This move reveals that the all-powerful NAC headed by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi has realised that the ability to deliver cheap foodgrains will be contingent on availability — availability that is home-grown, not based on imports.

In order to make a serious effort to meet the provisions of the proposed food security Bill, it is essential to enhance the production of wheat, rice, pulses, oilseeds and millets. This, in turn, needs a policy review in favour of land reforms, securing fertile agricultural land for foodgrain production rather than allowing the indiscriminate setting up of special

economic zones (SEZs), mega-food parks and builders' colonies on farmers' fields.

By all indications, the 150 districts from where universal PDS would commence will be in the rural poverty-belt in Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Assam, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Recent events have shown that there is a certain urgency about reaching out to the poor and the marginalised people in this belt.

The rough calculation is that universalisation will begin in some 1,500 blocks (an average of 10 in each of the 150 districts) where more than 95 per cent of the population is poor. The criterion that is being worked out will exclude those who are in salaried or government jobs, are income tax payees, have a four-wheeler or own a plot or a house with a plinth area of over 500 square feet. Using these criteria, it is estimated that about five per cent of the population would be out of the scheme in these districts. This will be crucial because the identification of beneficiaries and implementation of the scheme will be done by the State governments.

It has also been decided to subsume the “poorest of the poor” — the Antyodaya Anna Yojna beneficiary families now numbering 2.5 crore of the 6.5 crore Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. The AAY beneficiaries buy PDS foodgrains at Rs.2 a kg. They will have to pay Re.1 more for grain under the universal PDS, which will provide 35 kg wheat or rice at Rs.3 a kg per family to all the identified beneficiaries, including those in the Above Poverty Line (APL) category, in the identified districts. For the rest of the 490-odd districts where targeted PDS will continue for now, the Tendulkar Committee's poverty estimate of 8.07 core families will hold. Hence, for the APL population that is brought in or kept out of the PDS depending on grain availability, it will be status quo for the time being. The APL families will gradually (possibly over five years) be assured of a minimum of 25 kg per family at prices that will be worked out by the government. The subsidy burden

will depend on the estimated offtake and the cost will be worked out by the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution.

Welfare measures including mid-day meal programmes, the integrated child development scheme and calamity relief programmes will continue. The inclusion of the destitute, migrants, the old, the infirm and the urban poor will be worked out after the Hashim Committee report on urban poverty is received. For now, pulses and edible oils will not be included in the food basket under the proposed National Food Security Act as the acute shortfall in the production of these commodities is met by large-scale imports. Broadly, there will be an enhanced outgo of about 20 million tonnes on account of providing 35 kg (up from the present 12 kg) to the APL population at Rs.3 a kg in the 150 districts in addition to the BPL outgo. In a bad year, this may come from cutting APL or Open Market Sale Scheme allocations. It is clear by now that the key to universalisation is the availability of foodgrains. For this reason, even the activists working under the banner of the Right to Food Campaign have accepted “phased” universalisation. The Food Ministry's cautious estimate is that the average annual availability for the PDS is about 43 million tonnes. The NAC seems to have gone by the Planning Commission estimate of availability of about 50 to 55 million tonnes to ensure the supply of cheap foodgrains in 150 districts besides fulfilling regular commitments of buffer and welfare schemes.

It is obvious that the UPA's seeming benevolence on the food security front is not going to be entirely without strings. The underlying principle is that the subsidy accruing from providing foodgrains at cheap rates will come from withdrawal of subsidies on petrol, diesel and, gradually, kerosene, and other unforeseen measures.

Besides ensuring minimum foodgrain entitlements at a discount, the draft of the National Food Security Act will indicate enabling clauses with regard to enhancing foodgrain production, public distribution reforms and improvement in drinking water, sanitation, health and hygiene for better intake and absorption of food by the poor.

In other words, the proposed Bill will provide for food security but call for nutrition security.

RESERVATION

Govt to correct Uttarakhand quota error

Subodh Ghildiyal

NEW DELHI: The National Commission for Backward Classes has stepped in to remove a major anomaly by which no backward caste from Uttarakhand has been able to avail reservation in central employment and education since the state came into being eight years ago. The reason: Uttarakhand had not notified its central list of OBCs after it was carved out of Uttar Pradesh in 2002.

In a key ruling, NCBC said the central list of OBCs for UP would be treated as the central list for Uttarakhand. The commission has asked Union social justice ministry to ask the state to implement the decision.

Uttarakhand's failure to notify its list of OBCs for 27% quota for central jobs and education for eight years led to a major anomaly in backward reservation. It meant while OBCs were eligible for quota in state jobs and educational bodies, they were ineligible for central reservation.

As a result, OBCs from the hill state were not able to tap quota benefits for elite jobs of UPSC as well as the various middle rung and lower rung jobs in central ministries and PSUs. At the same time, central educational institutions offering professional courses were out of the ambit of backwards from the state.

Abdul Azizi, member, NCBC, said, "The state's failure to notify the list has deprived OBCs living in Uttarakhand of their legitimate rights to have the advantage and facilities in central government jobs and admissions in institutions under the control of central government. The delay in notifying the central list of OBCs should not affect the public interest adversely. So, we have stepped in."

Newly-appointed NCBC chairman M N Rao, after taking over last month, moved to plug this gap. In a meeting on July 6, the commission decided to adopt the central list of the parent state for Uttarakhand.

Cast them aside

The latest chapter of the Indian reservation saga involves the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), under the Union commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma, telling the corporate sector that companies benefiting from various government incentives may be asked to reserve about 5% of employment needs for the SCs and STs. This development has to be seen in continuity with the common minimum programme announced by UPA-1, wherein “a national dialogue with all political parties, industry and other organisations” was promised to figure out how affirmative action should be handled. Even at that time, the industry chambers—the Confederation of Indian Industry, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Associated Chambers of Commerce—expressed scepticism about quota legislation. And the pattern is being repeated in the present moment, where the chambers are once again arguing that reservations in the private sector will adversely affect merit and efficiency. Overall, this argument goes, India’s comparative advantage will take a hit if reservations become de rigueur. We must note that the objecting parties are not against affirmative action per se. The question is whether transmission losses between theory and practice are worth the gains. There is evidence suggesting that such gains will not really outweigh the pains.

Given India’s demographic prospects and growth ambitions, we know that that urbanisation, development and skills enhancement are going to have explosive significance. We also know that these prospects and ambitions are being addressed via public policy. But public policy must consider the efficiency principle as seriously as it likes to address the equity principle. Evidence from a range of sources points to the inefficiency of reservations from education to the labour markets. It isn’t just about standards being lowered. There is the issue of creamy layer cornering all available benefits, and then there is the question of whether

the resulting ghettoisation is actually a desirable goal for a modernising nation. Does it merely reinforce caste categories instead of mitigating them? Should the government not focus on addressing the inequalities in opportunity that arise out of a moribund education system, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels? The problem of differential access to education and skills cuts across caste barriers. Reforming that system is a lot harder than attempting populist gimmicks like job reservations. Overall, the proposal for caste-based reservation in the private sector appears extremely suspect

WOMEN

TIMES OF INDIA 2.8.10 WOMEN

Women officers to get permanent commission in Army, govt tells SC

TNN

Serving women army officers won their first round of legal battle with the Government today assuring the Supreme Court that it will consider giving them permanent commission in legal and educational branches.

However, these officers demanding permanent commission in combat, infantry and other wings of the army will have to wait for a longer period to get this recognition.

Seven years after the protracted legal battle, Government, which was at the receiving end in the apex court, gave an undertaking that women serving officers of Short Service Commission will be considered for permanent commission in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) and educational branches of army.

The undertaking in this regard, which stated that the exercise will be completed within two months, was submitted by Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam before a Bench comprising Justices J M Panchal and Gyan Sudha Mishra.

The Bench recorded the undertaking which said, "The Solicitor General on instruction states that women short service commission officers in service shall be considered for permanent commission in JAG and educational branch of Army."

The court also recorded the undertaking that the case of Major Lina Gurung, a short service commission officer, who is retiring in August will be considered on priority subject to the requirements.

After the SG gave the undertaking, the Bench stayed contempt proceedings against army till further orders for not complying with the Delhi High Court directions to grant permanent commission to women serving in the armed forces.

"In view of the statements made at Bar by the Solicitor General, the

contempt proceeding is stayed till further order," the Bench said.

In all there are 2,200 women officers including 1,200 in army, 750 in airforce and 250 in navy, according to Defence Ministry figures.

The Bench asked the government to file an additional affidavit elaborating the nature of duty assigned to the officers getting permanent commission.

The court said after receiving the details from the Army, it will further examine the issue of permanent commission for women Army officers.

ASIAN AGE 2.8.10 WOMEN

Women & prejudice

Jayanthi Natarajan

In the last week of July the Supreme Court delivered an important judgment with farreaching consequences for the women of this country. Unfortunately, the din and ruckus of day-to-day politics in our society

prevented a full appreciation of the ramifications of this judgment. Women's rights activists have long agitated about the status and condition of women in India. The very same women who had fought shoulder to shoulder with men to obtain freedom from colonial rule and who played in equal measure a part in drafting the Indian Constitution, which guarantees to all citizens that there will be no discrimination on the grounds, inter alia, of gender, now find that they have been left far behind in the paradigm of development of this country.

The reasons for the comparative lack of development of women in almost all sectors, including life expectancy, health, nutrition, education, employment, decision-making and a hundred other areas, are complex and diverse. However, the simplest and most profound explanation is rooted in the patriarchal, social and family hierarchy of our society. If women were to attain true equality in all fields, especially for example in decision-making and employment, the social and family hierarchy of our society which is overwhelmingly male-dominated will become completely destabilised. And a male-dominated society can never deal with that. This is the reason why as long as the struggle was against the alien colonial force women found space in the ranks of the freedom fighters but the moment Independence was achieved traditional male-dominated family and social structures swung back into place.

Women all over the world of all classes have been traditionally responsible for housework, cooking, cleaning, fetching fuel and drinking water, other household chores and child rearing. In low-income and middle-income families, therefore, women have always filled both roles, as wage-earners as well as of home-makers and child rearers. However, women's rights activists have always questioned the fact that the arduous and daily drudgery involved in fetching fuel, drinking water, cooking, cleaning and child rearing has not only been the woman's lot but is rarely appreciated by the men in the family or by society at large. Thus it is that a woman spends approximately one-third of her lifespan cooking and producing food for the consumption of her family. She does this with love, and that too everyday without a break, without a holiday on Saturday or Sunday, without salary or provident fund, without retirement benefits and often without even a word of gratitude from the

members of her family.

However, the moment the chore of cooking which women do for their family goes out of the domestic and into the public arena, as for example, making vadas or tea in a tea shop, it becomes economically remunerative and men come into the picture. You don't see women but men in tea shops and dhabas cooking parathas and vadas and making tea and getting paid handsomely for their pains. In five-star hotels the most highly paid chefs are men. And yet the moment all these men step back into their own homes, it is the unpaid and under-appreciated women of their households who will have to hand them their tea and tiffin.

In agriculture and in construction sites the women do the most strenuous work. It is the women who carry bricks on their head and trudge up steep ladders to hand it to the mason who simply slaps on the cement. Also, women do the backbreaking work of sowing paddy. And yet, their work and contribution are not taken seriously by the society at large.

I once saw a TV documentary where men belonging to various professions were interviewed. Each one was asked what work he did. They answered that they were doctors, lawyers, clerks, engineers etc. Then they were asked what their wives did. Every single one of them said "Oh, she is a housewife, she does not do anything". Then the camera panned to their wives who were shown cooking, washing clothes, fetching cooking fuel, looking after children, toiling without break from dawn until night. The point of the documentary was that the work done by women at home is very important and productive work and should be considered as a major contribution to the national economy and the gross domestic product. In fact, it is estimated that the unaccounted world domestic output of work done by women could be in the region of \$18 trillion. Yet despite hundreds of petitions from the women's movement, governments remained stubbornly blind to this problem and have refused to classify women's domestic work as "productive labour" in terms of national economies. In fact, under the Indian Census rules the domestic work done by women is not only "not" considered "productive labour or work", but is also placed in the category of beggars and prisoners. There can be no greater insult to the women of India and that this insult exists in the Census rules framed by

the government itself only highlights the level of prejudice under which women live in this country.

In this background, the judgment of the Supreme Court in CA 5843/2010 is a significant and heartwarming recognition of the contribution of women and their work. In this landmark decision, the Supreme Court disapproved of Clause 6 of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, which divided persons into the category of non-earning persons and spouse and as far as the spouse is concerned, the income of the injured in both fatal and non fatal accidents has been categorised as one-third of the income of the earning and surviving spouse.

In other words, the spouse (normally the woman home-maker) who does not earn is computed at a value of 1/3 the value of the earning person. The court held that this was a gender bias, in clear violation of the Constitution and was demeaning and insulting to women and tremendous work rendered by them in terms of domestic work within their own homes. The court directed that the Motor Vehicles Act should be suitably amended to remove this gender bias. It is the demand of every right-thinking citizen that the government should not only suitably amend the MV Act, but also ensure that the Census gives due credit to domestic work done by women and that this is duly reflected in the GDP.

Jayanthi Natarajan is a Congress MP in the Rajya Sabha and AICC spokesperson.