

Reservations against Reservation



The Dr B R Ambedkar birthday lecture is an important event on the NAL annual calendar. This year's Dr B R Ambedkar birthday lecture (the tenth in the series) was delivered by Dr H S Rana of the National Textile Corporation Limited to a packed audience at the S R Valluri Auditorium on 24 April 2003. Dr Rana spoke on Reservations against Reservation.

In his lecture, delivered with flair and aplomb, Dr Rana sought to dispel some common misconceptions about the country's reservation policy, e.g. what exactly is meant by "de-servation" (Dr Rana explained that on no account can a reserved post be "de-reserved" at the recruitment stage) or what happens when there is a single vacancy ("if there is only a single vacancy then the post cannot be reserved in view of the Supreme Court directive that reservation can in no case or situation exceed 50 per cent"). Dr Rana explained why relaxation in the eligibility criteria for SC/ST candidates during assessment is required to continue.

Dr Rana impressed the audience with his firm grasp of the legal implication of every ruling and his lucid articulation of the scope and spirit of reservation. The narrative was laced with real case histories -- for example, the re-instatement of Karnataka's DGP.

Indeed on more than one occasion Dr Rana expressed his appreciation at how the reservation policy has been implemented in Karnataka; the speaker suggested that this strong tradition of supporting the depressed classes in Karnataka could be attributed to the vision and social consciousness of the Maharajas of Mysore. There were other interesting observations too; e.g. how the scheduled tribe population in Karnataka has dropped alarmingly because of the Veerappan menace.

Dr B R Pai, Director, welcomed Dr Rana and other distinguished guests. In his opening remarks, Dr Pai paid a very handsome and well-articulated tribute to Dr B R Ambedkar ("he was a national hero, social reformer, champion of the under-privileged, inspiration to the suffering masses and a valiant crusader who restored the dignity of India's depressed classes"). As always, students of the SC/ST community from Karnataka, and children of NAL's own SC/ST colleagues, who scored the highest marks in science subjects in the SSLC examinations received special cash prizes of Rs 3000 each (Mr S V Samuel, NAL's Sr COA read out their names and citations). The function featured the ritual of lighting the lamp in front of Dr Ambedkar's portrait and a detailed report on the many welfare measures initiated by NAL for members of the SC/ST community. Other highlights of the function included the soulful rendering of the invocation by Ms Shashikala, the vote of thanks by Mr I P Venkataramanappa and Mr M R Narasimha Swamy's evergreen wit as the day's compere.