



## Readers' Forum



### Logic of Reservation

I study Mathematics, and know of many cases where women have faced biases. Recently I had an argument with a colleague of mine concerning reservation of seats. My colleague was of the opinion (the usual one) that reservation of seats compromises quality. I have given some thought to that argument, and have come up with a couple of logical counter arguments:

- There is no proof that reservation of seats, when appended with a working, healthy support system has failed. To the contrary, the epitome of excellence (in the field of Mathematics at least) have been places like Harvard, which have historically practised reservation of all seats (which automatically provides the required support system) for white men (a very small percentage of the available talented people) for years and years. This proves that reservation of seats for any fixed community, coupled with a working support system, contributes to the quality of a department.

- The department where I completed my Ph.D. offers a separate fellowship for the “best” candidate interested in the field of Logic. That “best” candidate is not necessarily the “best” amongst all students, but is chosen amongst those who are interested in the field of Logic – the idea being to encourage more students in Logic without fearing the possible compromise in quality. I suggest similar kinds of fellowships to encourage candidates from underrepresented communities.

Uma Iyer, Allahabad

### New Perspectives

I got a copy of the recent collection of essays from MANUSHI, entitled *Off the Beaten Track*. I started flipping through the pages of the book and the issues you have raised made me interested enough

to read it fully. Soon, I realised that like most other men, I too was caught up in stereotyped thinking on gender issues, and many of the points you raised, especially on dowry and the Sita image, set me thinking. There is little I disagree with in your book which on the whole turned out to be quite educative. Hopefully next time I write on such issues, I will look at them with a new perspective. I particularly endorse your point about not depending on the government for anything and everything, and the futility of asking for legislation that is not going to be implemented.

T.R. Gopalakrishnan, *The Week*, Cochin

### Ode to Our Politicians

*They sleep on double padded mattresses—  
our overworked leaders. With burdens of  
war, fought not by them, they dream in  
oblivion, ignorance their guiding strength.*

*Their power bows down to cheap promises and  
liquor, as they develop colourful vocabulary  
each passing year. Grey hair and **pan** stained  
teeth portray years of experience, manipulation*

*of lost souls... their words capture them in  
complete control, guilt has lost all meaning.  
I salute our leaders... year after year they  
still stand tall, with full stomachs and*

*no sign of exhaustion from their  
fulfilling lives. They still sleep choosing  
to ignore rising infanticide rates, burning  
brides, and a country that seems to be losing*

*all pride. They sleep dreaming of more Kargil  
medals which adorn their proud chests. They  
dream of India in the far future, hoping, praying  
it stands how it does today, with no sleep lost.*

Shikha Sawhney, New Delhi □