



SCAM!
Alert!

Goa's decent social indicators and liberal appearance—compared to much of India—actually hide a huge social scam: the widespread failure to implement caste-based reservations across government bodies and educational institutions. According to a petition

submitted on 10/06/2016 to the Governor, and signed by more than 50 citizens (including this writer), the government of Goa is 'blatantly, callously and illegally not implementing important provisions [of the law] which ensure inclusion of marginalized sections of the population in public sector education and employment'.

The scam operates in many ways. One is the failure to maintain proper rosters. Every department and educational institution is supposed to maintain post-based reservation rosters. Each roster contains a list of all posts in a particular cadre (e.g. Assistant Professors), together with the category of the post (whether reserved or not). The percentage of reservations decides which post will be reserved: i.e. the reservation for STs is currently 12%, which means that there must be 12 ST posts in a 100, or 1 in every 8.5 posts. The Goa University roster for Assistant Professors addresses this by marking Post no 9 as the first post reserved for STs, Post no 17 as the second post, and so on. The roster also shows the names of the people who occupy each post, and whether they are reserved category candidates or not. The reserved posts filled by non-reserved category candidates are thus clearly visible.

Each roster ends with a summary of the total number of seats reserved in each category and the number filled by appropriate candidates; the difference between the two is the backlog which is required to be filled as a priority during the next recruitment. Thus in one single place, you have the complete picture of reservations filled and unfilled, in that cadre, and also a clear guideline for future recruitment advertisements.

The problem is that all the rosters checked by the petitioners were either incorrect or incomplete. Either the lists are initiated at a date much later than mandated (they are

supposed to start in 1997), or they don't show all the people recruited, or they provide other wrong information. An example is the Goa University's roster of Assistant Professors, available on the University website. This roster shockingly states that the reservation for OBCs is 19.5%, when it is actually 27%. It also seems to omit the names of many assistant professors listed in the University's own Annual Report of 1997-98. It is worthwhile to note that this roster with its mistakes bears the signatures of University officials as well as the Government's Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare Directorates.

It is also found that many institutions employing staff on a contractual or hourly-rate basis (like colleges which employ teachers on lecture-hour basis) do not bother about reservations at all, even though the rules are clear that any post or position that is over 45 days length has to follow the provisions of reservation.

Similarly, when it comes to reservations for students, although all University-recognised educational courses must clearly display the number of reserved seats of each category in each subject, many of them, especially the self-financed courses, do not implement reservations at all. And since most self-financed courses are professional in nature and directly connected to paying jobs, ignoring reservations here amounts to not just breaking the law but also a denial of job opportunities to marginalised communities.

There are some blunders that regularly take place during the interview and selection process. One example is of 'Own Merit' candidates. Own Merit candidates are those belonging to the SC, ST and OBC communities whose qualifications are above the cut-off limits for the unreserved (or 'general') category. Such candidates are required to be selected under the unreserved category; they cannot take up reserved seats. However, this rule was ignored in the interviews for the B.Ed course held this month by the Department of Higher Education; the Director of DHE himself admitted that such students were 'given a choice' of applying in either category.

Another required recruitment procedure is proper advertisement. Advertisements for jobs must show the number of reserved positions available in each category, the posts they belong to, and also the relaxation in age, qualifications and experience. Further, reservation

candidates are supposed to be interviewed separately from non-reservation ones, to ensure relaxation of qualification norms; the selection panels are also required to include representatives of reserved category communities. Finally, the backlog of unfilled reserved posts is supposed to be the priority in any recruitment. But these rules are routinely ignored in practice, as seen in the University of Goa recruitments of 2013-14.

The authorities would have us believe that all these anomalies are mistakes resulting from ignorance of the rules. But ignorance is not an excuse. Also, how is it that the result of all these different mistakes is invariably the same: a reduction in the number of reserved positions? It is clear that these mistakes are not mistakes at all, but deliberate steps to undermine caste-based reservations and continue the domination of the privileged castes over government, jobs, and education.

(With thanks to Alito Siqueira for many details; to be continued...)

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