



My last column was on how the system of caste-based reservations, which is supposed to ensure representation of all communities in government and education, is consistently subverted in Goa. This is commonly done by fudging the reservation rosters (which contain each department's record of implementation, on a post by post basis), or by not following the proper procedures in recruitment, admissions, advertisement, etc, or by simply acting as if reservations don't apply.

Examples include the improper reservation rosters of Goa University, and improper admission procedures to the B.Ed course by the Directorate of Higher Education. For improper advertisements, one need only open any newspaper: almost all government departments and colleges, along with the University, ignore the rules regarding announcement of reserved posts/seats, viz. clear mention of the number and location of the reserved posts/seats, the method of application, the relaxation in qualifications, etc. And those who simply and illegally ignore reservations include many schools, private colleges, self-financed courses, as also contract and hourly-basis employment everywhere.

Such is the ongoing subversion of the rules. In this article, I want to discuss the implications of this subversion, and also how some of the rules themselves are a problem.

According to the Goa government's employee record (of 1/1/2015), while 41% of posts are reserved for SC, ST and OBC communities, only 23.4% are reserved posts actually occupied by reserved category recruits. 43% of the reserved posts are thus held by others. But the law says that no reserved post can, after 1997, be allotted to an unreserved (UR) candidate. This means that the post-1997 appointees in this 43%—numbering into the thousands—are illegitimate occupants of these posts and should immediately vacate them. Their ignorance of the scam is not an excuse. If you buy a stolen car in ignorance, are you allowed to keep it? No. Similarly if you accept a stolen job, you can't keep it.

And even this figure of 23.4% is probably inflated. One recalls the roster examined in the last article (of Assistant Professors at Goa University), where various 'mistakes' conveniently resulted in a higher percentage of filled reservations. Only an examination of all the government's reservation rosters will reveal the true situation.

The Goa's Government's demarking of a total of only 41% posts for caste-based reservation is also questionable, given that the Supreme Court has allowed caste-based reservations up to 50%, and that SC, ST and OBC communities are over 50% of Goa's total population.

There are also problems in the roster lists. Non-caste reservations like Physically Disabled (PD) and Children of Freedom Fighters (CFF) are not supposed to be listed like caste-based ones, for they cut across caste. E.g. a PD recruit would also be UR, SC, ST or OBC. So the proper way of maintaining the reservation roster is having the 3% PD recruits occupy UR, SC, ST, OBC positions, as the case may be, and by selecting one PD candidate in every 33 recruitments. Goa however chooses to fix separate posts for these.

How are all these posts fixed? According to the system in central organisations, if the reservation for ST is 7%, i.e. 7 in a 100 employees or one in every 14, the first ST post is No. 14, the second No. 28, and so on. Now this is only for central government where the cadre strength is generally large and the smallest reservation is 7%. State governments are supposed to work out norms that fit their situation.

In Goa, the smallest caste-based reservation is SC at 2%, i.e. one in 50 employees. Applying the above rule places the first SC post at No. 50 on the roster. This means that it will take forever for the first SC recruitment, especially with many small departments/cadres. E.g. in a cadre of 10, the SC appointment will happen only after the retirement/dismissal/death of not just all the first 10 recruits, but also their successors, the successors of their successors, and so on, till the 5th generation, i.e. after perhaps a hundred years. This obviously defeats the purpose of reservations. If one really wanted to achieve representation of all communities in a tiny cadre, one would put the first SC, ST, OBC posts at Nos. 1, 2, and 3 on the roster.

Goa's government however applies this central rule, but with casteist modifications. The lowest reservation percentages in Goa are SC at 2%, CFF at 2%, and PD at 3%. With CFF and PD listed on Goa's rosters just like castes, the first CFF post should be No. 50 (like SC), and the first PD No. 33. But Goa has instead put the first PD at No. 1, and the first CFF at No. 10, while the first SC is far away at No. 49. Thus, there will be PD and CFF recruits even in small cadres, but not SCs. Why this discrimination? Obviously, it's because PD and CFF recruits can be UR, and usually are.

Thus there are innumerable ways in which caste-based reservations get subverted in Goa. And changing this looks difficult, given the brahmanical tendencies of all our political parties. But an attempt is on. Following many complaints by individuals from the marginalised communities, members of Goa's Social Justice Action Committee (sjac@gmail.com) are conducting workshops to create awareness on the issue. And the group 'We for Reservations' (v4reservations@gmail.com) has announced a conference on reservations in Ponda, on August 28.

Bahujan Goa is fighting back.

(With thanks to the 'Discrimination in Reservations' workshop conducted by Yugandraj Redkar and Prof. Alito Siqueira.)

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