



By AMITA KANEKAR

The Benefits of having an IITian CM

Parrikar used to be a popular politician in Goa, and the thing people seemed to like most about him was his IIT background. Of course, there were also those who liked him for belonging to the RSS or to the Saraswat community. But there is little doubt that his IIT degree was his biggest credential, which worked even among those who would otherwise never dream of voting for either the RSS or Saraswats.

Now, however, Parrikar's personal popularity has taken a beating, thanks not just to all the failures, u-turns, and power-hungriness that his government is known for, but also for the destructive corporate-driven 'development' that it is fostering all across Goa. What with the coal corridor choking Vasco city; the PDAs, RP21 and now the proposed modified CRZ which seek to uproot Goan forests and communities for the benefit of the real estate and tourism lobbies; the avalanche of plastic garbage blocking gutters and creeks; the ever-proliferating casinos and other anti-social forms of tourism, including the drug racket in which BJP members are directly implicated... you name it, Goa has become a government-made disaster zone for ordinary Goans. The latest is of course the discovery that there are deliberately-added carcinogens in fish, the staple diet of Goans.

The venal nature of Parrikar's government was on show in this latest scam. It took days of lies, half-truths and wishy-washy reassurances before a ban was declared on fish imported from outside Goa. Even so, imported fish apparently found its way to the Mapusa market the very next day. Nor has anybody been arrested so far, nor any government officer even suspended. Instead the government is acting as if the 15-day ban is a solution. They clearly hope that Goans will forget the issue by then, which, given the rate at which new disasters crop up, may well happen.

How does all this tally with the CM being an IITian? Social media are awash with jokes about how Parrikar gives the IITs a bad name. But is there really a dissonance in the CM's qualifications and his performance? No. The truth is that Parrikar's corporate-driven governance, and his consistent lack of support to demands for social justice, is one with his IIT upbringing.



The IITs are over-exalted in India as institutions of excellence, primarily as a result of the good jobs that their graduates land in the global corporate world, but also for their teaching and infrastructure, better than any private engineering college. It is noteworthy that they were set up, and continue to be run, by the Indian government – the same which commonly provides primary level education in dilapidated buildings (in Goa too), often leaking and stinking, sometimes without basic facilities like blackboards, toilets, or teachers. Criticism in India of the condition of government schools usually earns the riposte: what do you expect, they are government schools! But why are the government-run IITs (as also the Kendriya Vidyalayas) so different? The answer is obvious: Brahmanism. The latter were set up for the upper castes, and the government schools in villages, towns and municipalities for the bahunians.

This is something that bahunian students have themselves discovered, after overcoming the most difficult circumstances to make it to the IITs. They are consistently made to feel unwelcome, via low grades, taunts from teachers (almost all of them upper caste), and regular humiliation of all kinds, e.g. even with food, for brahmanical diets are upheld in IIT campuses. The IITs are supposed to implement caste-based reservations for admissions, but it appears that some implement these more for expulsion – like the Kanpur IIT which was reported to be expelling students of only certain communities, i.e. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). The same IIT had increased its faculty strength from 348 (2012-13) to 394 (2015-16), but the number of SC teachers remained at either 2 or 3, while the number of ST and OBC teachers remained at zero.

The Delhi IIT even organised student-teacher protests in 2008 against a government order to implement reservations in faculty recruitment. It was the same year when 22 SC students, expelled from Delhi IIT after failing one or two papers, approached the Supreme Court, won the case, and had their expulsion cancelled. And when it comes to student suicides, although SC student population in IITs is only 10% of the total, they account for 70% of the suicides.

Goa under Parrikar is consistent with this attitude, with reservations not even being implemented in many places where they are mandated by the Constitution, and the government ignoring public demands for the same. Nor has his government done anything to

improve the quality of primary education or government schools.



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The casteist practices in the IITs stems from the Brahmanical belief in upper caste 'merit', and that high marks/grades are a proof of this 'merit'. This ignores the centuries of discrimination – that continues today – that ensure that some communities are born to high grades while others have to struggle to achieve them. It is not that IIT undergraduates have no exposure to subjects like sociology and history, or that issues like caste or social discrimination are not discussed on campus (though it is true that politics in general is discouraged). It is that all this happens in ivory tower environments, with the focus not on changing society but on academic success. The aim is to create technocrats ready with 'smart' solutions, and arrogant about their own merit.

Parrikar was touted by his fans as a good administrator. And he is – but in the IIT tradition which means, not administering Goa for the ordinary Goan, but administering it for the benefit of the corporate world, whether via new casinos, nationalised rivers, expanded (and polluting) ports, continued (and illegal) mining, huge but unnecessary bridges, village-destroying but state-of-the-art golf courses and marinas, or CCTVs for a drowning Panjim.

So, the real benefit of having an IITian CM is that you get to realise, at first-hand, how hollow are the claims to excellence of these agharams.

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