

Statement

Defend Reservation as a Democratic Right

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Oppose and Defeat the Anti-Reservation Stir of Upper-caste Forces

The weeks long agitation launched by medical students and doctors belonging to the upper castes supported by the Savarna lobby and ruling classes against the extension of 27% reservation for OBCs to central universities, private medical colleges and other higher professional institutions like IIMs and IITs is most reprehensible. The way the so-called 'Knowledge Commission' led by Sam Pitroda and chairman of Asian Development Bank like imperialists are supporting this reactionary sectarian agitation sharply exposes its class character.

The Ninety-third Constitutional Amendment was adopted earlier by the parliament to extend reservation to private educational institutions also after the Supreme Court struck down government quotas and reservation in private unaided institutions. In 1999 August rulings the Supreme Court had denied reservation in promotions to SCs/STs and in selection to super-speciality courses, stating that Article 16 is not a fundamental right. Efficiency in administration, merit and quality were put forward as criteria without taking in to consideration the socio-economic realities of Indian society. This ruling had inspired the savarna lobby and monopoly media to repeat the usual arguments against reservation and to launch an anti-reservation campaign then. That this calculated move was taking place when existing reservation was being made meaningless under the globalisation-privatisation drive, should be noted.

The 22% reservation to SCs/STs was adopted in the face of stiff opposition from savarna lobby and vested interests. Even after six decades there are states where there quotas are not fully implemented in all sectors and at all levels. When, even after three decades of Congress raj other backward sections had also become poorer, the Mandal Commission was appointed by the Janata Party government to recommend relief to them. Though the commission report was submitted to the government in 1980, it was suppressed by Congress governments. In 1990 the VP Singh government released the report and announced that it will be implemented only because of agitations by the democratic sections and because of revolt from within by BJP raising Ayodhya question. A heinous agitation was launched against the order by the savarna lobby with the support of Congress, BJP and practically all ruling class parties and sections. Monopoly media and state machinery aided and abetted it. The Supreme Court also came to their assistance by staying implementation. When Narasimha Rao government took over in 1991, in response to Supreme Court's opinion it declared 27% reservation to OBCs constituting 53% of the population and 10% reservation to economically backward sections of upper caste who constitute only 15% of the population. That it is the upper caste who corner most of the remaining seats including the unfulfilled reservation quotas was not considered. The Supreme Court adopted 27% reservation for OBCs, but asked for appointing a commission to find the 'creamy layer' among SCs, STs and OBCs so as to remove them from the purview of reservation. 10% economic reservation was also rejected. Consequences of this Supreme Court ruling is that many of the states have not yet implemented the 27% quota. The 1999 ruling of the Supreme Court mentioned earlier made the situation more confusing providing anti-reservation forces in power at centre and states enough opportunity to postpone the implementation of the provisions of Mandal Commission Report.

It is in this background the present agitation of the anti-reservation forces should be viewed. The savarna lobby with the support of imperialist ideologues, ruling classes, monopoly media and all vested interests has dared to paralyse hospitals and punish the people to arrogantly deny even the tickling down of any rights and benefits to the downtrodden sections. It exposes how the monstrosity of the caste system has increased in the decades after 'independence'. Adhering to Chaturvarna, it is arrogantly declared that only upper caste have merit. Equality of opportunity is defined to only attack reservation, while its denial in all fields of life is conveniently side tracked. That the 22% reservation to SCs/STs and 27% reservation to OBCs are not effectively implemented is not even mentioned. The due to privatisation, reservation benefits are drastically cut down is also not mentioned. Reflecting the aggressive offensive of capital in this globalisation period, the upper castes who are also upper class, the ruling class, is exposing its excessive greed and inhuman possessive character to corner everything in the society for itself under the banner of 'meritocracy'. What they expose is their hypersensitivity to their 'right' to possess everything, is their hyper-insensitivity to the duties to the society they live in. Besides, in this country of enormous socio-economic disparities, total lack of equal opportunity, and inequality it is totally unjust and misleading to define merit as the Manuvadis do.

The response of the leaderships of the various political parties including even the 'social justice' ones and the social democrats to this arrogant anti-people agitation shows their servitude to the upper caste mafia forces. With money power, muscle and backing of all elite sections they are trying to terrorise everybody to submission. The UPA government has started vacillating even in implementing this democratic right under pressure from all vested interests. Once again the upper castes with the support of all power centres is succeeding to dilute even a democratic right like reservation to the downtrodden sections.

Implementation of reservation based on caste as a democratic right is a must till all social inequalities are abolished. We severely condemn the anti-reservation agitation of the upper-caste students supported by all vested interests. Meritocracy is a weapon of the ruling classes to perpetuate their class rule by denying even access to education like fields to socially and economically deprived sections. We appeal to all progressive, democratic forces to unitedly oppose the heinous agitation of the elite students and their patrons. It should be resisted and defeated.

We demand the full and effective implementation of 22% reservation to SCs/STs and 27% reservation to OBCs in all fields and at all levels. We demand the extension of reservation to private sector and co-operative sector also. Reservation should be fully implemented in all higher institutions, private medical colleges and all institutions of higher learning. We appeal to all democratic forces to rally with dalits, adivasis, other backward classes/sections, minorities, dalit Christians and dalit Muslims for implementation of reservation as a democratic right.