



After India's independence in 1947, there were some major initiatives in favour of the Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs) that were aimed at their social uplift. A common form of caste discrimination in India was the practice of untouchability. The SCs were the primary targets of the practice, which was outlawed by the new Constitution of India. In his book, *Annihilation of Caste*, B.R. Ambedkar criticised the Hindu religion, its caste system and its religious texts. He argued that inter-caste marriage is not sufficient to annihilate the caste system but "the real method of breaking up the caste system was... to destroy the religious notions upon which caste is founded."

Reservation in Indian education system

In 1954, the Ministry of Education suggested that 20% of the seats should be reserved for the SCs and STs in educational institutions with a provision to relax minimum qualifying marks for admission by 5% wherever required. In India, reservation is allotted to the ST, SC and OBC candidates in all the prestigious institutions across the country. This reservation policy has been debated over in recent times. The top educational institutions in India like the IITs, AIIMS and IIMs are highly admired. The decision of the government to execute the policy of reservation in central institutions is because of the inequality in terms of lack of access to quality education for students from these backward categories. The reservation policy is executed as to balance the inequalities faced by the SC, ST, and OBC communities.

Naveen Gurappu, 25, is an electrical engineer and doctoral student at the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai. He informed, "My father enrolled me in St. Martin's School in Hyderabad, a good school, because he wanted me to study well." Gurappu who hails from a backward community called the Malas also informed, "The State Bank of India pitched in with a yearly fellowship of ₹500 for stationery. We could not afford extra tuition or the internet at home, even though I badly needed help." The family took a bank loan which they are still repaying to finance Gurappu's studies at IIT, which charges

An analysis of reservation policy in Indian education system

■ *Aritra Mitra*

SC and ST about ₹60,000 per annum (this is much higher for non-reserved categories) for the engineering programme and PhD. In his first year at IIT, Gurappu struggled to grasp lessons, unlike his upper-caste peers. He said, "Still, I was better off than other disadvantaged caste students because I came from a city."

Reservation affects quality of education?

India is a secular country and equality is essential for secularism. Thus, the division of the population on the basis of castes and religions can never be any good. As per the quota system, SCs, STs and OBCs are the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policy. Their respective quotas in the education system are 15%, 7.5% and 27%.

The real solution to the reservation tangle is to increase the number of reputed institutions like the IITs and IIMs with merit as only the selection criterion.

Students who put in their best to make it to the merit list of reputable institutes are disheartened if they fail to get an admission. They get discouraged and depressed and such situations lead to frustration. They often criticise the reservation policy.

An Indian English daily, *The Hindu*, recently conducted a survey among the students of reputable institutions. Most of the students believe that the reservation policy of the government is affecting the quality of education. According to S. Selvakumar, I.B.E (EEE), Hindusthan College of Engineering and Technology, "Though caste-based reservation will help the economically backward students to get equal opportunities, reservation in higher educational institutions will affect not only the quality of the education but the standard of the institutions and the overall development of the

country as well. Caste-based reservation only helps politicians to create vote banks. The real solution to the reservation tangle is to increase the number of reputed institutions like the IITs and IIMs with merit as only the selection criterion." When good students do not find admissions in good colleges and good jobs due to the reservation policy, they prefer to relocate themselves to other countries with better opportunities.

Solution for reservation

Reservation should be purely made on the basis of the economical conditions of the applicant. The kind of reservation policy that the government currently follows cannot be sustained. Even the framers of our constitution did not envision it as a long-term policy measure. In 2011, when the government introduced 27.5% reservation for OBCs in centrally funded educational institutes including IIMs and IITs, a petition was moved to the President and the Prime Minister stating that such a reservation will take India backward.

Instead, the government should look at providing universal free education till the age of 15 (as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education promise) and also look to enhance the ambit of the governmental educational system in the primary and secondary levels. Reservations on the basis of caste and

not on the basis of economic condition hasn't yielded desired results and has become a fodder of vote-bank politics.

Not an anti-poverty plan

Reservation is not intended to be an anti-poverty programme. The government has many programmes, which are aimed at poverty alleviation. Reservation is policy that aims at social inclusion and at enhancing the capabilities of the socially marginalised and cannot be equated with a poverty alleviation programme. It is a governmental response to the fact the right education, the right to own land, the right to conduct business or to pursue a well-remunerated occupation has been reserved for men from high caste backgrounds for generations. It is a policy through which the government aims to correct unequal distribution of rights.

Reservation is a policy tool that has been widely used in many countries. In several countries, reservation or other types of affirmative action are used to overcome human prejudice based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, caste or any other group identity and to encourage representation of participation by groups which have been traditionally excluded and discriminated against. At the same time, the reservation policy in India needs serious introspection so as to be more effective in ensuring social and economic inclusion. ■

SENTRUM OFFICE BLOCK

AMENITIES:

- 100% round-the-clock power support
- Provision for automatic fire alarm & fire-fighting systems
- Ample car parking space
- 24x7 security services

Ready-to-move-in
OFFICE SPACES
(starting from
750 sq.ft)



Address: Office No.: 101 & 102, 1st Floor, Sentrum Office Block, Shristinagar, Sen Raleigh Road, Asansol – 713305.

Shristinagar

Asansol

The first integrated green township

BOOK YOUR
SPACE TODAY



9051604441

www.bengalshristi.com