

Ahwan Reprint Series—2

# Reservation

## Support, Opposition and Our Position

Editorial Board  
**Ahwan Campus Times**

Translated from Hindi  
**Shivani**



Rahul Foundation  
**Lucknow**

**ISBN 978-81-906235-7-5**

**Price: Rs. 10.00**

**First Edition:** January, 2008

Published by: **Rahul Foundation**  
69, Baba ka Purwa, Paper Mill Road,  
Nishatgunj, Lucknow-226006

Cover Design: **Rambabu**

Laser Typesetting: Computer Division, Rahul Foundation

Printed by: Creative Printers, 628/S-28, Shaktinagar, Lucknow

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**Reservation: Support, Opposition And Our Position**  
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No sooner had the Human Resource Development minister Mr. Arjun Singh made the declaration regarding twenty-seven percent reservation for the backward castes in all higher educational institutions including Medical, Engineering and Management, than the youth of this country got divided, to a large extent, into two mutually antagonistic camps. All the fundamental issues such as inflation, unemployment, constant snatching of the rights of common toiling masses, the incessantly increasing gulf between the rich and the poor, the ever growing indigenous as well as foreign plunder and pillaging that are becoming more and more striking, have once again been relegated to the margins. The common masses and their sons and daughters in particular, who have the historical responsibility of initiating a decisive struggle against imperialism and capitalism, and implementing the new project for people's liberation resting on their shoulders, have been divided amongst themselves on casteist line.

Undoubtedly, the question of caste-based oppression and discrimination is one of the most fundamental and important questions of Indian society. The centuries old casteist prejudices and segregation are even today deeply rooted in the customs and rituals of most of the common Indian citizens. The only difference being that somewhere its naked—unrestrained expression is to be seen whereas elsewhere its “subtle” and more “skillful” aspect is visible. Also, without a shadow of a doubt it can be claimed that besides caste-based humiliation and oppression, the “dalits” and other backward castes, compared to their proportion in the population, are much behind the upper castes in terms of socio-economic status even today. Some of the backward castes, in the years after

independence have consolidated their position as capitalist farmers-landowners and kulaks in villages; and in bourgeois electoral politics too, their participation has strengthened, but as far as urban occupations and independent intellectual professions are concerned they are way behind even today. The all-consuming death blow of capital has pushed even a sizeable population of upper castes into the ranks of proletariat, semi-proletariat and much distressed and afflicted common lower middle class; but a look at the other facet of the picture also reveals that those “dalits” and backward castes that were being ground down in form of the lowest strata in the semi-feudal social formation until the colonial period, most amongst them are still ranked lowest even in today’s capitalist hierarchical order. The various governmental initiatives undertaken for their “upliftment” have provided facilities to an exceedingly small portion of “dalit” population and instead has added fuel to the fire of casteist prejudice, strife and hatred, already existing amongst common poor and middle class upper caste population towards the majority of “dalit” population living infernal lives of wage slavery in villages and cities.

The condition of the backward castes is slightly different. After independence, along with the bourgeoisification of Indian agriculture, that class of farmers which after assuming the ownership of land and having started producing for the market evolved in form of capitalist farmers-landowners-kulaks; casting a glance at their caste background, it becomes known that it (that class) comprised mostly the cultivators belonging to the backward castes such as “Jat”, “Maratha”, “Reddy”, “Kamma”, “Kurmi”, “Sainthwar”, “Koiri”, “Yadav” etc. Proportionately, with their growing economic might, the influential people from these castes increased their participation in bourgeois electoral politics too; in several states even displaced the rich and the moneyed of higher castes from power to different extents and thus emerged as the new oppressor of “dalits” (amongst whom most are agricultural labourers) in the new rural scenario. But the essential reality behind this apparently visible reality is often

glossed over, that is to say in India amongst thousands of backward castes hardly bar a dozen, the condition of the rest is almost same as that of “dalits” or slightly better in terms of socio-economic status. And those backward castes which have quite a number amongst the capitalist farmers-landowners-kulaks, 70-80 percent of even their population is spending their lives as lower middle class peasants, rural and urban middle class and proletariat-semi proletariat even today. The incessantly increasing blows of capital, having uprooted them from their lands is forcing upon them to seek jobs and employment opportunities in villages and more than that in cities. And all this is happening in that phase of globalisation when everywhere there is an overbearing sway of “job-less development”. Employment opportunities are continuously shrinking whereas unemployment is constantly swelling up.

In such a scenario, when the ruling class hurls the bait of reservation in employment or higher education, the students and unemployed youth belonging to middle class and upper castes, who are already dependent on jobs for their livelihood think that the “dalits” and backward castes are now even robbing them off their remaining opportunities of employment with the aid of the crutches of reservation. They are unable to perceive this ground reality that in fact **the opportunities for employment have dwindled away so much that even if the reservation is completely brought to an end, not all the unemployed from the upper castes will get employment. Similarly the youth belonging to “dalits” and backward castes fail to realise that if the percentage of reservation is raised a little more and if it is implemented in an honest and effective manner, even then not even fifty percent of unemployed youth from “dalit” and the backward castes will obtain employment. Whatever meagre opportunities for employment will be available to them, even their benefits will primarily be reaped by an exceedingly small population of “dalits” who have turned middle class and people belonging to economically, socially and politically**

**influential backward castes; and the vast majority of population living their lives as proletariat-semi proletariat will obtain almost nothing from it.**

What is needed is that instead of falling prey to the centuries-old casteist prejudices and the perverse conspiracies of the ruling classes, the youth community of this country should think over such fundamental questions as to what should be the project for purging from the very roots of the Indian society the 'venom of caste' so deeply entrenched, for completely putting an end to casteist separation and for the final emancipation of "dalits" and various backward castes from the barbaric casteist oppression and terrible casteist humiliation? The dire necessity is to deliberate upon this question as to how should the question of caste-based discrimination and separation be made a fundamental and inseparable component of the historical revolutionary project for the liberation of Indian masses and creation of an egalitarian society? In view of these fundamental questions, we want to frankly say some plain truths to all those rational, honest and sensitive students-youths who have been divided in favour of and in opposite camps on the issue of reservation.

### ***To the opponents of Reservation***

When the proposal for twenty-seven percent reservation for the backward castes in all higher educational institutions was put forward, the foremost argument given against it was that this will result in the decline of the standard of health services in India; that this will be, in a way, playing with the lives of common people; that this will have an adverse effect on the standard of scientific research and as a consequence the progress of the country will be affected... so on and so forth. However, tell only this much that the "concern" due to which you are fabricating the argument of merit and competence, based on that very "concern" you should have also opposed the decision of admission to the Medical and Engineering colleges under N.R.I. quota and on the basis of capitation fees

which was implemented years ago. But alas! not a word was uttered on this issue. Are all the progenies of non-resident Indians and indigenous moneyed class, who are capable of paying capitation fees worth lacs of rupees, always born bright and brilliant? The class of rich and wealthy spend lacs of rupees on the coaching of their “worthy heirs” so as to gain admission to these institutions. If you are fair and just and really concerned about the merit and competence then why did you never demand from the government that either it impose ban on such private coaching institutes and enforce an equal provision of free or inexpensive coaching for all aspiring students or else separately make provision of free coaching for “dalits,” other backward castes and deprived sections so that no deserving individual is denied access to these institutions simply because of economic-social reasons. If you are really troubled by the apprehension of declining standard of engineering, medical and scientific research and incompetent people gaining access to these fields, then why is it that you never raised your voice against the rising wave of privatisation owing to which education has simply been reduced to a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder! No matter how much capability one has, even the remaining possibilities of advancement are constantly shrinking for the want of money and reach. Have you ever joined hands to resist this?

All right, so you are worried about the development of the country! **However, tell only this much, every year thousands of doctors, engineers and scientists, after having obtained degrees at the expense of the hard-earned resources of common masses, take the road to America and Europe to mint more and more money! Have you ever opposed this tendency and the government policies that encourage it? You must be knowing that despite paying capitation fee and expensive fee worth lacs of rupees, more than eighty percent of the expenditure in producing a single doctor, engineer and scientist is public or is borne by the government which comes from the amount collected in form of indirect taxes**

**from the common masses! Then do you consider such people “traitor” or “anti-people” who having acquired specialisation on the strength of common masses, themselves run away to foreign lands to amass dollars and pounds and who use their training and abilities to serve the very imperialists who annually take away thousands of millions rupees as spoils from our country in form of profits, royalties and interest. This, you will say, happens because of the dearth of employment opportunities and as nobody cares for merit in this country! But then why do not you oppose the policies of government that are constantly encouraging “job-less development”? If you are justice-loving then why do not you stand up against that social-political structure in which despite the need for the extensive expansion of developmental work and health services and the presence of all kinds of natural resources and competent people, even the doctors, engineers and scientists do not get employment?**

If you are distressed by the apprehension of the declining standard of health services, then why do not you ever raise your voice against the fact that the government hospitals have turned into hot-beds of corruption and touting; that most of the government doctors appointed at primary health centres, instead of going there, churn out hoards of money through private practice and receive salaries also without being due; that institutes and medical colleges like AIIMS primarily serve VIP’s and the affluent. Instead of improving the decrepit system, the government is undertaking reckless privatisation of the health services. The common people who are incapable of receiving treatment from private institutes and nursing homes, die from common diseases or have no option except going to quacks. Multinational pharmaceutical companies use people as guinea pigs and doctors as their agents and the profit they make is no less than outrageous loot and plunder. Had you been so anxious about the health of the masses, you should have at least raised your voice on this issue! Leaving the instance of

countries like Cuba aside, even then there are many countries in the world, much backward than India, where the condition of health services is manifold better than ours! Have you ever thought over this question? It seems to you that with reservation coming into force, incompetent people will become doctors and the standard of health services will decline! But in Tamilnadu, reservation for “dalits” and backward castes in Medical education has been in force for a long time and there the human health index is much better than most of the other states! What do you have to say about this?

**You must have understood our basic intention behind raising all these questions by now. The truth is that behind the current wave of opposition to reservation (like earlier instances), essentially and principally, there is not any concern about competence, justice and national interest but rather an important role is played by the centuries-old deep rooted “anti-dalits” and anti-backward castes casteist prejudices, hatred and reactionary customs and rituals. The educated middle class of upper castes thinks that because of reservation, “dalits” and backward castes will now be on a par with them and the privileges available to them (upper castes) will thus be apportioned. This never crosses through their minds that in a just democratic system every one has the fundamental right to education, health and employment and the struggle should be for the building of such a system. Instead, the moment government lets off the squib of reservation, they think that the already shrinking opportunities of education and employment will now become all the more sparse because of these “dalits” and backward castes; and instead of a sustained preparation for a decisive struggle on the issue of the universal right for equal and free education and equal opportunities for employment to all, they start opposing the move for reservation. No matter how many arguments of justice and national interest are fabricated in support of this, it is in fact the deep-rooted “anti-dalits” and anti-**

backward castes malevolent, reactionary sentiments and centuries-old casteist, reactionary customs and rituals that are working behind this. If it were not so, then in the protest rallies organised under the banner of “Youth For Equality”, the banners like “Kshatriya Swabhiman Manch”, “Savarn Adhikar Morcha”, “Brahmin Adhikar Manch” and “Manuvadi Morcha” etc. would not have been visible. These banners clearly state that the leading current opposing reservation wants to safeguard its privileges by standing on the ground of “savarnata” and “dvijta” (belonging to upper castes). **Owing to this, even amongst the common people within “dalits” and backward castes, naturally a reaction is generated on casteist basis and instead of delving deep into the problem and instead of deliberating upon some revolutionary, radical project for a decisive and final solution to caste-question, they blindly stand in support of reservation. Consequently, the casteist separation and malice of common population once again deepens, and thus again gets a new revitaliser. Once again the subterfuge of the ruling classes manages to gain its ends and once again all the efforts to unite all the exploited-oppressed against the imperialist-capitalist plunder and outrage suffer a major setback.**

Now, we also want to have a frank talk with the supporters of reservation on this question.

### ***To the supporters of Reservation***

Despite numerous social-political changes and capitalist economic development, even after nearly six decades of political independence the venom of caste is deeply entrenched in every joint of the social fabric of our country. Not only are the “dalit” castes victim of humiliating social segregation and barbaric social oppression, but economically also nearly ninety percent of “dalit” population are standing in the ranks of wage labourers—the “new slaves” of capitalist society. The condition of the backward castes is somewhat different from theirs and in several parts of the country, a section

within them having become wealthy capitalist farmers, have affiliated themselves with the class of exploiters-rulers at the village level, has emerged as the new oppressor of “dalit” castes and moreover, from villages to states and central political system of the country, its participation has strengthened, very much in conformity with its class status but as far as education, urban employment, administration, and independent occupations are concerned, its participation is still proportionally very low and its base has chiefly been the agricultural economy. But more importantly, barring a small section within some of the backward castes, a major portion amongst them and most of the other backward castes are either equivalent to “dalits” or slightly better than them in terms of social-economic status; and economically also their condition is nowhere ahead of proletariat, semi-proletariat or lower middle class. That section within them which has affiliated itself with the profiteering class in the rural society, that too in the course of time, after acquiring higher education and employment, will become either a constituent (or equivalent) of the urban elite society with the might of money, but the majority of poor, poverty-stricken population of the backward castes will incessantly lag behind in the unequal competition of a capitalist society.

In view of this naked, cruel and abominable reality of Indian society, if one thinks about this with an emotional view, then the formula for reservation in education and employment for “dalits” and backward castes seems just. But the moment one delves deep into the matter, it becomes clearly evident that no fundamental change can be brought about by reservation or for that matter by any other provision of this kind in the actual social-economic condition of “dalits” and backward castes within the framework of the existing capitalist system. **The principal design of reservation is solely to douse the raging flames of wrath and resentment among people, deprived and oppressed for centuries, and thus to contain it from flaring up further. The manoeuvre of reservation acts as a safety valve mechanism so as to prevent**

**the discontent and anger among the exploited-oppressed “dalits” and backward castes from exploding against the system.**

The reservation for “dalits” implemented in the fields of education and employment for two decades has made barely this much difference that it has produced an exceedingly small, smug, complacent, comfort-loving hedonist middle class amongst them that has entirely dissociated itself from those “dalits” in villages and cities who spend their lives as wage slaves of the inferior-most degree. Because even they have to suffer perceptible as well as imperceptible social humiliation among co-professionals of higher castes in various different ways, therefore they, very enthusiastically, with great vigour and spirit take upon themselves to play the role of the advocate, spokesperson and theoretician of that “dalitist” politics, whose character despite various fiery words, is absolutely reformist and which exclusively works to consolidate its vote bank by cashing in on the sentiments of extensive “dalit” population. From Republican Party to BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) and Udit Raj’s Justice Party, and not merely this, but also from various small radical “dalit” outfits to majority of “dalitist” intellectuals—all fight only for some reforms within the framework of capitalist system, no matter however passionate and penetrating their stance seems. The naked truth is that as long as capitalism thrives and flourishes in India, there will remain wage slavery and till then the majority of “dalits” (and backward castes) will be included in the ranks of these wage slaves. The foundation of segregation and exploitation-oppression established on casteist basis was earlier feudalism and in the present times, it is capitalism. There is no other fundamental corrective measure other than anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle to put an end to this system. Obviously we are not talking about economic-political struggle alone. This anti-establishment revolutionary struggle will be incomplete and will never be productive without a radical socio-cultural movement which will give precedence to the question of casteist discrimination on its agenda, which will be constantly

active amongst the masses so as to wipe out the discrimination and differences established on casteist basis. **The truth is that the venom of caste has penetrated so deep into the Indian society, that even after any socio-political revolution also, there will be a need for a whole series of incessant cultural revolutions for its complete extermination.**

Had only reservation been the solution to the problem, then out of 37 percent reserved jobs in Punjab 30,000, out of 47 percent reserved jobs in Haryana 10,000, out of 47 percent reserved jobs in Himachal Pradesh 6,000, out of 50 percent reserved jobs in Bihar 62,500, out of 49 percent reserved jobs in Rajasthan 41,565 and out of 50 percent reserved jobs in Madhya Pradesh 11,500 would not have been vacant. The situation in other states is not in the least better than this. Approximately there are about one lac such government jobs in the country which are lying vacant under quota. The truth is that the majority of common population amongst the scheduled castes-tribes and other backward castes do not have such economic-academic status so as to apply for these jobs. The reserved seats that get filled, are grabbed by those who have already become a constituent of the middle class. The pace of change in the educational status is this that even after 59 years of independence, 79.88 percent students from scheduled castes drop out midway through their school education. The 50 percent of reserved seats for scheduled castes and tribes in higher education remain unfilled and 25 percent of students who seek admission under reservation leave their education in the middle. The situation will be no different even after reservation is implemented in higher education for the backward castes too. The youth from the poor families, will either be unable to seek admission despite reservation because of economic factors or else they will be forced to leave their education in the middle. Only those few families amongst backward castes will be benefited by reservation, whose economic status is that of the rich middle class peasantry or else those who with the aid and support of profit acquired in agriculture have already

joined the ranks of urban middle class.

On the basis of these aforementioned figures, the supporters of reservation will argue that precisely because of these reasons reservation should be kept in force for some time and its scope should also be expanded. But our argument is that if reservation is going to exert its influence with such a slow pace, then there will be no remarkable change in the situation even after a century. And more importantly, in this phase of liberalisation-privatisation, when “job-less development” is the catch-phrase, when jobs in government and public sector are continuously shrinking (and in private sector, in proportion to the development of production and expansion of service sector put together, the employment opportunities being generated are not many compared to before) then in such a scenario, even if the percentage of reserved jobs is raised a wee bit it is not going to make much of a difference to the living conditions of common “dalits” and backward castes. If a bowl of rice has to be distributed among hundred hungry people and even if a portion of rice is reserved for some percentage of more famished, no difference will be made to the condition of a single person and forget satisfying all, it will not even be able to alleviate the hunger of a single person since the quantity of rice itself is very less compared to the number of people who are hungry! Today, therefore if the percentage of reservation is increased further and even if it gets implemented effectually, there will be no significant change in the social condition of common “dalit” and backward caste population. The capitalist development is causing the polarisation of entire population with an unprecedented speed and this is a characteristic of capitalism that those who are already deprived and oppressed are the ones who are forced into the ranks of proletariat-semi-proletariat foremost. The children of slaves-serfs and displaced tenants are the first ones to become the industrial proletariat. Exactly the same happened with “dalits” and majority of backward castes in India. In the course of time, with conscious efforts, the bourgeois state has produced even an exceedingly small

middle class group amongst them, that is outspoken and loquacious, that speaks no end on casteist oppression, but besides this has entirely dissociated itself from the common “dalit” and backward caste population, his is a defeated soul, relatively privileged, complacent, comfort-loving and antagonistic to every kind of revolutionary change and excessively reformist. In guise of the representation of common “dalit” population, it wants to safeguard its comforts and privileges for successive generations and is a blind supporter of capitalist mode of development. This very middle class population among “dalit” and backward castes is the one that speaks of reservation as the only solution to the problem so that its position remains safe and secure and the common deprived “dalit” and backward castes do nothing in the hope of a fanciful solution to their woes or else will go a begging and therefore continue existing as mere pawns in the bourgeois politics of vote bank.

The helmsmen of capitalist system wish for the same but there is also a contradictory internal motion within the capitalism itself. Whereas on one hand the majority of “dalit” (and a sufficiently large section of backward castes) is included in the proletariat-semi-proletariat population of villages and cities on a country-wide scale, on the other, the blow of capital is pushing a massive population of upper caste and even a sizeable section of farmers among backward castes, having dispossessed them of their lands, jobs and property, into the ranks of proletariat. The contradictory reality of society is that whereas on one hand there are forces which are active in maintaining as well as perpetuating the inequity and discrimination established on casteist basis, on the other an opposite motion is laying the groundwork for an objective foundation of uniting the continuously increasing population of wage slaves (primarily industrial proletariat) spending infernal lives by breaking the barriers of caste-based segregations, and which is increasingly becoming a condition for their existence because it is impossible to survive for them unless they struggle unitedly against the all-consuming death-blow of capital. It is obvious that the hirelings of capitalist system

will instigate the subjective forces that strengthen the casteist discrimination among common toiling masses whereas the responsibility of the anti-capitalist revolutionary current should be to reinforce the subjective forces which are resolved to wipe out discrimination established on casteist basis among toiling masses and render ineffective every conspiracy to perpetuate them. The capitalism is continuously pushing forward the process of urbanisation and industrialisation in India with an unprecedented rapid motion and along with this, the process of proletarianisation and the contradiction between capital and labour is also gaining pace. It is relatively easy to consolidate this new proletariat population on class basis after effacing all casteist discrimination and this should be our prime objective, because only then we will advance in the direction of decisive struggle to build a society which will embark upon a path of destroying class inequality and along with it all other inequities such as caste inequality and gender inequality. It is not co-incidental that the debate over reservation generates the utmost heat and passion among middle class population, and specifically amongst urban middle class, and not urban proletariat. The “dalits” and poor backward castes in villages either remain to be the pawn in the politics of vote bank while undergoing barbaric social oppression besides economic exploitation, or else they unite and fight in a revolutionary manner and consequently, often acquire the right to live with self-respect and honour to an extent. It becomes clear that whereas on one hand to organize struggle on class basis, constant efforts need to be made to wipe out every single trace of casteist mentality and culture penetrated deep into social psyche; on the other hand, the success of peoples’ struggle organised on class basis can only be the first guarantee of decisive uprooting of casteist discrimination. Only after grasping this historical-scientific formula can the question of reservation be understood accurately and thus an authentic position can be adopted.

Had the demand for reservation been a demand for reform as as a part of the sustained process of revolutionary struggle, certainly

we would not have questioned it. Before the decisive phase of the struggle for 100 pence, there are also such phases when having won the struggle for 10 pence, the acquisition is seized and then preparations are made for the future. But the idea of acquiring 100 pence by begging and collecting pennies is a reformist mentality and instead of weakening the current system, strengthens it, creates cracks in the ranks of the masses. The demand for reservation is only such a dangerous illusory reformist demand. This is a common issue on the charters of all those streams within the “dalitist” politics which wish for the solution to the caste question within the bounds of this system of capitalistic loot and plunder. If a change could have been brought about in the actual condition of the majority of common “dalits” and backward caste population through reservation, then accepting this demand would have been the most appropriate step in moving forward in the direction of struggle for a new social order. But the reality is complete opposite to it. Reservation is not a demand for reform but rather a reformist demand. It makes loud proclamations in the name of welfare of common masses of the oppressed castes and turns an exceedingly small (almost negligible) section within them faithful servants and sycophants of power by luring them with lollipops and candy floss, whereas on the other hand divides the toiling population and common middle class population on casteist basis and conceals the root causes and fundamental solution of the problem. Instead of taking forward the journey undertaken in the direction of decisive solution of caste question, it confuses and deviates it from its course. Therefore, despite their casteist prejudices, all bourgeois ideologues, political and electoral parties speak as one on the issue of reservation. The moment the squib of reservation is let off by the media which is controlled by the hegemony of higher caste psyche and the educated middle class start indulging in hurling virulent utterances against “dalits” and backward castes, it is as if the casteist discrimination and separation receives a new impetus in the entire society. The politics of vindication of and opposition to reservation basically serves

the same purpose. They beget an illusory and spurious hope; weaken and nullify all the initiatives undertaken to create class-based unity among common masses, having first strengthened the centuries-old casteist division among them. Therefore, simply compelled by reaction and completely overlooking the facts, the supporters of reservation will have to think and rethink what they are going to get in reality by supporting a demand such as reservation.

**Let us suppose you are standing at a bus station and after many crowded busses have passed, you cling on to some bus or set your foot in a bus after thrusting yourself in, then usually your anger is directed against your fellow passengers and those who are already sitting, even their behaviour is one that of extreme indifference and disregard. Our anger should be aimed against the ineffectivity of the transportation system and shortage of buses and you should endeavour to take along your co-passengers in the struggle but usually this never gets translated in practice. Often the same happens in the case of a political-social order and the same thing is happening on the question of reservation in education and employment.** The struggle should be for such a system where there is “equal and free education to all and equal opportunities of employment for all”. The economic analysis clearly points out that if production is not centered around profit for few but rather social utility then this is possible. Although the initial editions of Socialist Revolutions in twentieth century have been unsuccessful, but they made it all possible. Today despite the unprecedented growth of productive forces, the devastation capitalism is causing to common people, looking at it, once again the new editions of proletarian revolution appear inevitable. When these new revolutions will establish the control of the toiling masses on production, state power and the entire structure of the society and the power of decision making will be in their hands, only then equal and free education will be available to all and employment will be available to all those willing to work. Had the demand for reservation been a link in the

struggle for “equal and free education to all and employment to all” and would have been helpful in taking it forward, then certainly this demand for reservation could have been supported. But since the common “dalits” and backward caste population hardly gets anything out of it and secondly it divides on casteist basis the ranks of youth which may otherwise align with the ultimate struggle for resolution of the basic problems of our society. In this way, thus raising the slogan of social justice, the issue of reservation strengthens the roots of that capitalist system, whose existence will never make the elimination of caste discrimination and inequality possible.

Arguing, in favour of reservation, dalit leader, Udit Raj writes: *"The parents of children studying in ordinary schools who are illiterate and the child lends a helping hand in household chores after school hours, if such children want concession of some marks, then what is wrong in it? The standard that is being fixed for “dalits” and backward castes, if the same is applied by Europe and America for India then would they ever allow us to make use of their discoveries, inventions and technology? Which original discovery or invention has taken place in India, of which one can be proud of at international level? Altogether this is purely a matter of self-interest where only a few people of elite class want to take advantage of these institutions and the poor or common higher castes is not influenced by it”* (Jansatta, June 2, 2006). By examining the argumentative method of Udit Raj, the class character of the politics of reservation can be easily understood. First of all, only an exceedingly small part of concession obtained in name of reservation reaches the children of illiterate parents who help their parents in domestic chores after the school hours. Secondly, even if the benefit of relaxation under reservation entirely reaches such children, the quantity of this concession will be exceedingly less in the proportion to the number of children. Thirdly, when Udit Raj himself accepts that the poor and common of higher caste people are deprived of the benefits of jobs and other privileges, in that case is not the slogan of reservation

effecting the distancing of these poor people from the poor of “dalits” and backward castes? Do they have any programme for taking along the poor of higher castes? Can anyone say that its remedy is to provide reservation on economic basis? All of us know this full well that any influential person will be able to get a false income certificate of low income made from government offices but very few common poor people will succeed in benefiting from it. And again the same question arises that when there are hardly any opportunities for employment left, what purpose will be achieved by an income certificate? And when the economic condition of the majority of poor compels them to leave their education halfway, then how much will the reservation implemented in the field of education be useful, is a question worth asking, particularly at that times when the process of privatisation is incessantly being carried out in the field of education from primary to higher level and education is increasingly becoming a saleable commodity?

Udit Raj has compared (or analogically represented) the caste system to the world capitalist system and has given the argument that the way in which countries like U.S.A. treat India with “magnanimity” by allowing it to make use of their discoveries, inventions and technologies, the same “generosity” should be demonstrated by the higher caste towards the “dalit” society on the issue of reservation. This comparison is a living proof of class perspective of Udit Raj. First of all, the imperialist countries do not provide their discoveries and technologies to poor nations for nothing but rather thoroughly extract its entire value in terms of royalty and arbitrary terms and conditions as plunder and loot (Besides, it should be borne in mind that the spoils from colonies played a major role in their discoveries and technological advancement!) Secondly, despite this “generosity” on part of the imperialist countries, the termination of difference and unequal relations between countries like America and countries like India is not possible as long as the existing world order thrives and flourishes. The question, therefore, is not to acquire concessions from imperialist powers but rather that of a radical

rapture with world capitalist system and then of complete annihilation of this world order. Similarly, with reference to the caste system, the question is not to get few concessions but rather to bring about the end of the caste system and the demand for reservation is in no way of any assistance to this but rather plays a hostile role.

Yet another celebrated and self proclaimed “dalit” thinker is Chandrabhan Prasad who is a frantic supporter of American pattern of capitalist social system and looks for the solution to the “dalit” question within that framework. There is no dearth of such Indian intellectuals who completely overlooking the unlimited, all pervasive plunder by America, the internal crisis of American society and deep seated inequality, oppression and despotism permeating every sphere of its social fabric, presents it as the model of a prosperous and happy society. Such intellectuals have been begotten in “dalit” society too and Chandrabhan Prasad is leading amongst them. The likes of Chandrabhan Prasad have come forth with a unique idea of “dalit capitalism”. They believe that by promoting “caste diversity” in the industries of private sector and higher educational institutions (most of these, they believe, should be in private sector) a bourgeoisie and together with bureaucracy and intelligentsia, various sub-strata of middle class will evolve and in this way, the caste-question will be resolved. The Chandrabhan Prasad brand of “dalit” thinkers regard that the end of public sector and the wave of privatisation-liberalisation is essential and there is plenty of scope for making it fair and equitable. These advocates of neo-liberalisation believe that like the “affirmative action” implemented in America in 1965 for Blacks, in India too if reservation is made mandatory for “dalits” in higher educational institutions of private sector and establishments of industrial-financial and service sector, then a wealthy middle class and an industrialist class will be born out of “dalits” and hence will terminate their social segregation, humiliation and oppression. Strictly speaking nothing could have been more reactionary and “anti-dalit” than this belief.

First of all, we will have to consider the difference made to

economic and social condition of Blacks through the implementation of “affirmative action” since 1965 in America. Undoubtedly, during the past four decades the participation of Black people has increased in the clique of high officials of corporate world, bureaucrats, bourgeois diplomats and journalists, academicians etc. and a fairly good size of middle class has come into existence (Although, apart from a few petty entrepreneurs and merchants, no such thing as “Black capitalism” has come into existence even in America). But this Black middle class is an exceedingly small section of the entire Black population. Majority of Blacks spend their lives as the wage labour of the most inferior degree and are the inhabitants of the slums and filthy settlements, “the pits of darkness”, surrounding the metropolitan America, the “island of prosperity and affluence”. The workers of Mulatto and Chicano origin, the non-resident workers from the countries of Latin America and Asia living in America and the American Black workers not only to undergo barbaric exploitation and insecurity in American society but also have to face social segregation and humiliation. The only difference that has been made is that the increasing polarisation of rich and poor in American society has transformed a sizeable section of white population into wage slaves and has thus placed them on par with this “accursed” multitude. Discrimination on the basis of colour and race still exists in American society, only there has been a slight alteration in its form. Even today more than seventy-five percent of prisoners in American jails are either Blacks or of Latin American or Asian origin. This same population is the one engaged in most low-paying and involving hard labour jobs. If today the Blacks have to suffer less of humiliation and apartheid discrimination compared to what they underwent four decades ago, then neither the “affirmative action” nor the prosperity and affluence of a few Blacks is the reason behind it but rather this has been made possible as a result of the militant movements of Blacks, American Civil Rights movement and American Workers’ movement with strong participation of the Blacks. In any society when a small section

that arises from the vast majority of deprived-oppressed and affiliates itself with the prosperous, propertied class, no difference is made to the actual condition of deprived-oppressed population and what happens instead is that it shrouds that condition to an extent. The advocates of “dalit capitalism” that call for the “affirmative action” based on American pattern are in fact the renegades of inferior most degree of the “dalit” population, reactionaries of foremost degree and the most brazen-faced parasites of neo-liberal capitalism, who present a very rosy picture of American society in front of the “dalits” in India by hiding the facts and want to equip them for providing services to indigenous capitalism and the entire imperialist world order. In doing so, people like Chandrabhan Prasad completely disregard the fact that white American bourgeoisie, in the wake of escalating pressure in its own country, can grant to an extent some facilities, concessions and rights to Blacks and other deprived sections, in order to safeguard its paradise from the heat and fire of class struggle, on the strength of the super-profits extorted from the entire world but the Indian bourgeoisie is not in a position to do so. It is not without reason that representatives of Indian bourgeoisie like Rahul Bajaj on one hand talk of accepting American pattern of “affirmative action” and on the other want it to be entirely voluntary whereas in America the “affirmative action” was made legally mandatory by the Civil Rights Law of 1964 and executive directive no. 11246.

If the creation of a few capitalists and high officials had been the solution to the “dalit” question then during the past five decades, with the genesis of many “dalit” politicians, collectors and other government officials and also with the creation of a small “dalit” middle class, at least some difference would have been made to the living condition of common “dalit” population! Certainly, there must be some who will argue that there has been a change. Well, the natural evolutionary motion of development of society does cause this much of quantitative change. If this is going to be the pace of transformation, then one will have to wait for centuries in hope and

expectation. No just and self respecting individual can think on these lines. Together with the fatalistic cowardice, this will be a mentality of accepting the status quo. **The comfort loving, complacent middle class that has been created within the “dalits” does want to rid itself from the social humiliation and casteist segregation but at the same time is afraid lest the winds of revolutionary change of any kind will snatch all its comforts and social security. Owing to this cowardice, despite his fiery words, he endeavours to acquire whatever is possible within the bounds of this system! Besides this he speaks on the behalf of the entire dalit population, but in reality has completely dissociated itself from common “dalits” and even on the incidents of most barbaric “dalit” oppression, instead of militant participation in the movement on streets, he merely indulges in issuing fiery statements.** Those people who have risen from the ranks of deprived-oppressed and have joined the class of “white collared” are more competent in matters of cowardice, sordidness and reactionary mentality compared to traditional white collar workers. Chandrabhan Prasad is anxious about “dalit capitalism”; he is not concerned about the plight of the majority of that “dalit” population which completely burns and wears itself out as the wage slaves in the mills and factories of “dalit” capitalists as well as other capitalists.

### ***Our position***

We believe that in the course of our argument with the opponents as well as supporters of reservation, we have also clarified our position. In our opinion **whether reservation is implemented or not, it is not going to make any fundamental difference to the living condition of “dalits” and backward castes. This is not even a small step in the direction of solution to the caste-question. By letting off the squib of reservation the ruling classes divide the majority of exploited-deprived-oppressed population on casteist basis and impede the process of**

**organising the struggle which will take forward and thus accomplish the process of resolution of various fundamental questions in addition to the caste-question in our society. The target of reservation is neither relief nor reform, rather it is to throw morsels to divide the masses on the basis of caste in order to keep alive the capitalist system. The supporters and opponents of it both become the victim of this very plot.**

Therefore, our position is that **we neither support nor oppose reservation. We consider the condition of division of masses on this issue a conspiracy and oppose it. There should not be any kind of reservation in education and employment, rather there should be only one central demand of the student-youth movement—‘Equal and free education for everyone and employment for every individual fit to work!’** It is the obligation of the government to provide education and employment and the system in which it is not possible, we consider it is the basic duty of the fearless men and women among the common masses, to destroy it. Obviously, while fighting for this demand, there might be some intermediary stages, when we can fight for the immediate demands of increasing seats, decreasing fees and unemployment allowance, but today reservation cannot be included in this category of partial, immediate or reform demands, especially when we have before us the experience of past half century. Rather than supporting or opposing reservation and getting divided among ourselves, we should analyse the substantial character of the pro-system politics behind the support and opposition of reservation and expose it.

**Besides, it is the obligatory duty of the revolutionary student-youth movement to propagate and campaign against the caste-based discrimination, segregation and dalit oppression. While continuously running the movement against casteism at social and cultural level it should be linked to the question of women's liberation because caste-based**

**segregation and oppression is related to the gender-based discrimination and women oppression. The social liberation of women will also weaken the orthodoxy of marriages fixed within the caste, young women will struggle for the freedom of choice in marriages and in this way the custom of inter-caste, inter-religious marriages will essentially increase. The indication of this tendency were also seen in the life of metro cities, which is now becoming a common tendency along with the capitalistic growth. To destroy walls of caste divisions the student-youth movement should boost this tendency in the form of a social movement.**

The slogan of free and equal education to all and equal opportunities of employment for everyone will put an end to the caste-based division by gathering young men and women among common masses for a militant struggle and apart from that, the student-youth movement will be connected with the stream of anti-imperialist-anti-capitalist struggle of the broad cross-sections of the working class. With this collectivity only, can we move forward in the direction of destruction of the existing system and creation of a new system in which there is a control of the working class on the production, state apparatus and social structure and the power to take decision rests in their hands.

The essential basis of caste divisions, inequality and segregation is the capitalist mode of production in which the descendants of the slaves-serfs-semi slaves of the old age are toiling in the form of today's modern slaves—wage slaves. From among these very descendants, a very small portion has become white-collared and risen in the social ladder, whereas a large portion of the older elites has pauperized to swell the ranks of the massive population of wage slaves. While breaking the chains of this wage slavery we will also have to fight against the caste based segregation and oppression and only after breaking fetters of wage slavery can the question of caste divisions be resolved decisively and for once and for all.

**We can march forward in the direction of decisive and**

**final resolution only after pondering over this question of “dalit” liberation and the whole caste problem with a mentality free from concessionism and patch-work and by going beyond the frontiers of capitalist system. Rather than collecting a few crumbs of relief for the “dalits”, rather than transforming a few into elites and fooling other with false hopes, the need of the hour is to present a layout of a radical project of “dalit” liberation. This radical project can only be a part of a broad revolutionary project of people’s liberation.**

“Dalits”, the victims of most systematic and most barbaric exploitation-oppression for centuries, form nearly thirty percent of the total population of the country and ninety percent of them are in the ranks of rural and urban proletariat-semi proletariat. If we add the poor of the backward castes and tribals it would become more than half of total population. In India the struggle for Socialism can move ahead only when this section of the population accepts the project of establishing the liberation and freedom-equality of the whole people. On the other hand, the whole question of “dalit” liberation and caste division will remain unresolved without being attached to the project of Socialist Revolution and without protracted perpetual Socialist Revolution in every aspect of life, society cannot be elevated to a stage where there would be no caste, religion or gender-based inequality and oppression.

We see the question of reservation within this broad revolutionary perspective of thinking about the caste-problem and dalit question and in our opinion every student and youth striving for change should ponder over this question in this very perspective.

**(June, 2006)**

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Published by: **Rahul Foundation**

Distributed by: **Janchetna, D-68, Nirala Nagar, Lucknow-226020**

Price: Rs. 10