

UNHEARD VOICES

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Caste Census?



Reservation in minority educational institutions

Madras High Court's recent decision on reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in minority educational institutions has once again generated debate over a sensitive issue, involving minority communities and reservation. Madras High Court bench, comprising Chief Justice S V Gangapurwala and Justice P D Audikesavalu has ruled that SC and ST reservation would not apply to minority institutions. The ruling came in a case of a college, which was denied extension of religious minority status in 2021 on the ground that the college granted admissions to more than 50 percent Muslim students in the year 2018-19 and 2019-20. The decision was challenged by the college in the High Court, which made some observations on SC/ST reservation in minority educational institutions.

High Court observation is significant as a public interest litigation (PIL) is already pending before the Supreme Court on reservation for those converted people, who previously belong to SC communities. Various organizations, including political party like AIMIM, have demanded reservation for 'Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians' in education and jobs.

Madras High Court decision needs to be viewed against the backdrop of bigger social realities in the country. Reservation for converted people, who previously belong to SC communities is strongly opposed on the ground that two Abrahamic religions – Islam and Christianity do not believe in caste system and untouchability. Therefore, question for their reservations does not arise. It is also argued that Muslim and Christians were already getting benefits because of their minority status and their inclusion in SC reservation was illogical. It is further argued that Muslims and Christians would be getting 'double benefit' if reservation was granted to them from SC quota.

Madras High Court's observation is likely to be cited by those, who are active to get reservation for converted Muslims and Christians. However, its observation needs to be examined not merely within legal framework but also social realities and

other prisms. The entire issue has another aspect, which needs to be highlighted. For example, as many as 13,555 educational institutions have been granted minority status till 2019. These institutions have around 26.45 lakh students, belonging to minority communities. According to existing law, minority education institutions cannot enrol more than 50 percent students belonging to minority community. In other words, 50 percent students of majority community (Hindu) can get admission in such institutions. However, the real catch is that established law of reservation is not applicable for the students of majority community in such educational institutions. If minority educational institutions have 26.45 lakh minority students, they have to have equal number of students belonging to majority community. In other words, thousands of students belonging to SC/ST category are denied reservation in such educational institutions. Madras High Court observed that Article 15(5) of the Constitution does not empower the State to compel a minority educational institution to admit students from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes of citizens. This is more serious as clause 5 of Article 15 was never part of original constitution. It came into existence through an amendment in 2006. The High Court observed that the minority educational institutions were consciously excluded from the operation of Article 15(5) of the Constitution of India. This 'exclusion' needs to be challenged in the first place. Was this exclusion on the basis of any genuine merit or some other compulsions?

It is ironical that PIL before Supreme Court strongly maintains that exclusion of converted SC communities from reservation is against article 15, which is against the religious discrimination. But how will one explain exclusion of minority education institutions from article 15 (5) Is it not a fit case of religious discrimination? The attitude of getting benefits from all the possible ways is not good for larger social wellbeing. The motives of such elements also need to be checked.

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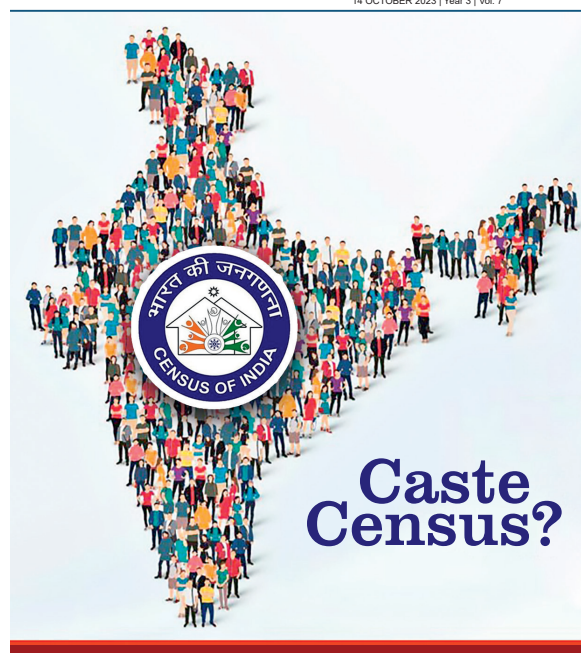
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E-PERIODICAL

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Appeal for financial assistance



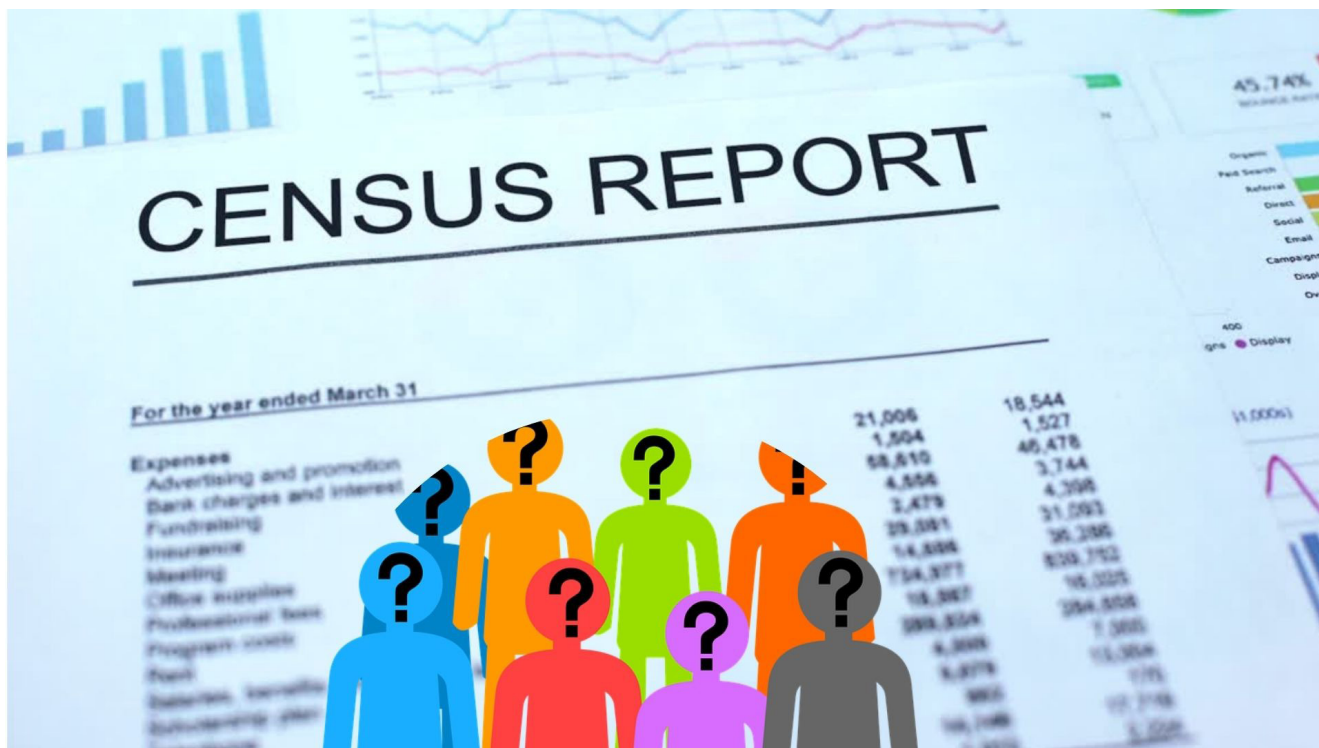
Social Studies Foundation (SSF) is working with the prime objective of conducting social studies and research of the society in a multi-disciplinary fashion. SSF focus, however, is on those people, who have been facing discrimination and are deprived of benefits of the development and democratic process. SSF logo, thus says, "Knowledge for Empowerment".

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Do we need caste census?

Kiran Kumar



The Bihar caste survey has generated a serious intellectual debate. Some have asked propriety behind such a type of survey with the fear that it would further strengthen caste sentiments, others argue that it was necessary to draft policies for the government. They believe that caste survey should be merely seen as empirical data while others fear that it would be a potential political issue like reservation. We put both the views.

The recent release of the Caste Survey conducted by the Bihar State Government has illuminated some unexpected insights. Surprisingly, the population figures for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) have witnessed an increase when compared to the data from the 1931 Caste Census. Presently, OBCs constitute a substantial 63% of the total population, marking a significant rise. Within the Backward Castes category, Extreme Backward Castes account for about 36%, while OBCs make up approximately 27% of the entire population. There are nearly 19.7% of Scheduled Castes and 1.7% of Scheduled Tribes in the state. So, nearly 85% of the population are from the SC, ST and OBC communities.

This survey report not only furnishes comprehensive numerical data for each Jati but also bears immense significance for sociologists, economists, and political scientists. Their primary interest centres on dissecting the broader social, political, and economic implications of these demographic shifts, with a focus on comprehending the underlying factors and their impact on the state's social fabric and political landscape.

Following the Bihar Caste Survey, numerous states are gearing up to announce caste data, akin to Karnataka and Odisha, or contemplate conducting fresh caste censuses within their states, such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In states



like Telangana, OBC organizations and associations are actively pushing for the release of caste data collected through various surveys. The Caste Census issue has also assumed political significance, with vocal support from figures like Rahul Gandhi.

A Caste Census transcends mere enumeration, with its primary aim being to furnish a holistic socio-economic and educational profile for each caste. This approach enables us to comprehend the advantages and disadvantages faced by different groups, facilitating informed comparisons among them. These insights, in turn, inform targeted policies and affirmative actions, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of a more equitable society for all.

Why do we need Caste Census?

The Caste Census holds immense potential for both Union and State Governments to implement a range of empowering initiatives for marginalized sections. Here is how the data collected in the Caste Census can drive positive change:

1. **Informed Policy Making:** The comprehensive social, educational, and economic data from the Caste Census will furnish a valuable and comparable matrix that delineates the privileges and disadvantages experienced by various castes. This data will serve as a vital resource for crafting evidence-based policies aimed at advancing social welfare. It offers the means to tailor interventions to address specific needs within different caste groups.

2. **Caste Inclusion and Exclusion:** With requests from both dominant communities seeking OBC status and certain castes pressing for SC and ST recognition, the Caste Census becomes an indispensable tool. It enables the Government to gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic realities of these communities and make well-informed decisions regarding their inclusion or exclusion from particular categories.

3. **Supports Sub-Categorization:** Committees, like the Rohini Committee, tasked with sub-categorizing OBCs, often faced challenges due to the scarcity of quality data related to caste representation. The Caste Census addresses this issue by providing valuable and reliable data. This empowers such committees to carry out their responsibilities more effectively, ensuring equitable representation and justice for various castes within the OBC category.

4. **Targeted Poverty Alleviation:** The data collected can be instrumental in designing targeted policies to uplift castes that are in dire economic straits, such as denotified tribes (DNT). By using the Caste Census data, governments can develop strategies and allocate resources to help these marginalized groups escape poverty, fostering social and economic equity.

5. **Academic and Research Advancements:** Beyond governance, the Caste Census data is a valuable resource for researchers and academicians. It opens up opportunities for in-depth research on various social and economic issues, enabling a deeper understanding of the challenges and prospects

faced by different caste communities. This, in turn, contributes to the growth of knowledge and informed discourse on these important subjects.

The Caste Census not only offers the potential to drive transformative policy changes but also paves the way for a more nuanced understanding of the diverse socio-economic landscape within India's caste system. It empowers governments, researchers, and policymakers to make data-driven decisions that can have a profound and positive impact on marginalized communities.

However, there are contrasting views and criticisms regarding the Caste Census. Some argue that it may further divide society along caste and Jati lines, while others express concerns about the potential stigmatization of certain castes. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that caste is a tangible reality, not a myth, and caste-based discrimination and atrocities continue to plague the country. The Caste Census stands as a means to provide accurate data and information, helping to alleviate inequalities and empower marginalized and economically disadvantaged castes to break the cycle of poverty. Policies targeted at reducing inequalities based on caste data can help eradicate various detrimental effects of the caste system, paving the way for a more just society.

In 2018, the Union Government announced its intention to conduct an OBC census during the 2021 Census. Prior to this announcement, many OBC BJP MPs had strongly advocated for a Caste Census even before the 2011 Census. Various civil society organizations and OBC associations had been demanding a Caste Census for several years. Interestingly, opposition parties had not orchestrated a widespread movement to demand a Caste Census until the approaching elections spurred them to do so.

This presents a golden opportunity for the Modi Government to initiate the Caste Census, providing them with vital information to support their case for expanded OBC reservations and to engage effectively with the OBC community. Failure to conduct the Caste Census could potentially expose the party to significant public backlash.

The Caste Census is a tool, one that can be used positively to address deep-rooted disparities. It stands as an opportunity to bring about social justice and empower marginalized and economically disadvantaged castes to rise above poverty. By targeting policies based on caste data, we can endeavor to eliminate the detrimental effects of the caste system and work towards a more inclusive and just society where every individual has an equal opportunity to thrive.

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Caste census likely to deepen fault lines

The societal challenges which have far reaching consequences for the whole nation.

Caste based census may accentuate caste-based discrimination and violence. The caste-based census could inadvertently reinforce and solidify caste identities, contrary to the goal of moving towards a more caste-neutral society.

Ekta



Nowadays, the word “caste census” has become the most debatable term in political arena and intelligence of India because of the recent release of caste census data by the government of Bihar which reveals that total population of stands at a little over 13.07 crore, up from 10 odd crore in the 2011 census.

The survey reveals Bihar's Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) constitute more than 63 per cent of the population of Bihar which is 10 per cent more than the estimates based on the last caste census done in 1931. The EBCs makeup 36.01 per cent of this and OBCs an additional 27.13 per cent. The EBCs are a group of 130-odd castes that occupy the lower rungs of the OBC spectrum that is dominated by Yadavs and Kurmis. Among the EBCs are Mallah, Nai, Nonia, Dhanuk, Kahars etc. The Dalits or Scheduled castes (SCs) account for 19,65 per

cent higher than expected, while the Scheduled tribe (STs) comprise 1.68 per cent. Those belonging to the ‘unreserved’ category or the upper caste comprise 15.52 per cent of the total population. The census survey also found that Yadavs (the main vote base of RJD) are the largest group, accounting for 14.27 per cent of the total population. The Muslims, the second leg of the RJD’s M-Y plank, comprise 17.70 per cent of the population.

Before heading forward, we need to understand the nitty gritty of some terms like caste and census. A caste is a fixed social group into which an individual is born within a particular system of social stratification. However, caste is a Portuguese name used mostly in Spanish America in the 17th and 18th centuries to denote all mixed-race persons in post-conquest period. The Census is one of the most credible



sources of information on demography, economic activity, literacy and education, housing & household amenities, urbanization, fertility, and mortality, language, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes etc. It helped in framing new policies, government programs to uplift areas of improvement in the community.

The Census was first started under British Viceroy Lord Mayo in 1872. There can be a debate over the concept of caste in India but it is the fact that Starting with the 1901 Census of India led by colonial administrator Herbert Hope Risley, all the Jati's were grouped under the theoretical varnas categories. According to political scientist Lloyd Rudolph, Risley believed that varna, however ancient, could be applied to all the modern castes found in India, and "[he] meant to identify and place several hundred million Indians within it". The terms varna (conceptual classification based on occupation) and Jati (groups) are two distinct concepts: while varna is a theoretical four-part division, Jati (community) refers to the thousands of actual endogamous social groups prevalent across the subcontinent. From all

Different Castes and Communities (Bihar)	Percentage Population
Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs)	36.01%
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	27.12%
Scheduled Castes	19.65%
Scheduled Tribes	1.68%
Buddhist, Christians, Sikhs and Jains	< 1%
Total Population (Bihar)	13.07 Crore

these it can be understood that the caste census means measuring the number of castes and how many people belong to a particular caste.

The findings of Bihar caste survey are supposed to have wider connotations in the State and upcoming elections of 2024. The supporters of the caste census are saying that it is much needed and overlong due exercise for the state policy. The headcounts of the specific caste will help the government to reach out its policies and programme to the actual destitute of the society which leads to equitable distribution of the state resources and making equal development of all. On the other hand, it has also been said that the timing and intention of publishing this report is politically motivated and it leads to the similar wider political churning of the 1990s with the implementation of the Mandal commission report.

Implementation of caste census policy can be beneficial for these political parties for the short term but it will hurt India. History of Caste Census in India traces the history of the census long back from

the time of its colonial past, where it was a tool to strengthen British control and create division in the society in the name of caste. At the same time, they aimed to strengthen their system of governance and divide Hindu society. It will open the gate for divide and rule politics just like colonisers did it previously.

Britishers first started the caste census in 1872 and it was continued from 1881 to 1941 in a gap of ten years. After independence, from 1951 to 2011, only scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population data are published. Only in 2011, the caste data was collected but not published due to various reasons. In today's political scenario, India's biggest opposition party has echoed the release of data but earlier many big bastions of its party have opposed the idea of caste census. Even the then late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that the caste census is going to break India.

Implementation of the caste census has many challenges which can be categorised into: judicial, technical Societal and political. Bihar has done caste census in its state however the Census Act of 1948 only empowered the Central government to conduct the Census exercise and the issue of the privacy of that is the other concern which has been challenged on legal and constitutional basis but the Bihar Govt. dogged the first one merely by changing the name from census to survey. In this context, we have to be clear about what is the difference between census and survey. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai had said that the Union of India after Independence, decided as a matter of policy not to enumerate caste-wise population other than SCs and STs. Second challenge is that there is a Central list of OBCs and a State-specific list of OBCs. Some States do not have a list of OBCs; some States have a list of OBCs and a sub-set called Most Backward Classes.

The Registrar General has also pointed out that there are certain open-ended categories in the lists such as orphans and destitute children. Names of some castes are found in both the list of Scheduled Castes and the list of OBCs. Scheduled Castes converted to Christianity or Islam are also treated differently in different States. The status of a migrant from one State to another and the status of children of inter-caste marriage, in terms of caste classification, are some technical questions which has been discussed before the implementation of the Caste census. India's caste system is incredibly intricate and multifaceted, with thousands of distinct caste groups. Creating an exhaustive and accurate list of these caste groups is a herculean task, considering the vast diversity and fluidity of the caste system.

Third one is the societal challenges which have far reaching consequences for the whole nation. Caste based census may accentuate caste-based discrimination and violence. The caste-based census could inadvertently reinforce and solidify caste identities, contrary to the goal of moving



towards a more caste-neutral society. This could have lasting social implications, hindering efforts for social integration and equality. There is a concern that a caste-based census might exacerbate caste divisions and mobilization, potentially leading to caste-based fragmentations and conflicts within society. Caste-based census data may also influence resource allocation and affirmative action policies of the government. The fear is that this could either concentrate resources excessively in certain regions or castes, or that it may not reach those groups who have in small numbers. And the fourth one is that the caste census can be manipulated for political gains, either by using the data to strategically target specific caste groups for electoral purposes or by exploiting the caste-based statistics to create divisive narratives within the population.

During the days after the implementation of the Mandal commission report how can caste polarisation leads to the deepening of Faultline in society, where one community (a group of castes) becomes against other community or Jati. Repercussion of these has been seen in our recent history were slogan like “BHURABAL saf karo” and “Tilak tarazu aur talwar” has been surfaced. All political parties’ field their candidates with proper equation caste on that constituencies without minding candidate’s education and knowledge to give justice to its masses. The height of identity politics has been seen as reservation agitation by the Jat’s in Haryana, Patels in Gujarat, Kapu in Andhra Pradesh etc where these groups mobilise their population especially before near elections and pressurised their respective governments to mould policies in their favour.

Recent reports of Bihar government and other political parties’ jibe during their election campaign main aim seems to increase the OBCS quota, redrawing of 50 per cent reservation ceiling and by doing all this so gain power in politics and be relevant in between their castes just like RJD and SP for Yadavas, JDU for Kurmis of Bihar and many others. Mandal parties like SP, RLD, RJD, JDU, TMC etc. and Congress formed an alliance named I.N.D.I.A. are propagating that if they come in power after election will implement the caste census in India similar to the Bihar caste census. And the slogan of the “Jitni Abadi Utna Haq” has been frequent in the political rallies as well as the media and social media.

Before going to call for proportional representation we should learn some lessons from history and how it will be resulted. The best example of this type of politics and social stratification is the country of Lebanon. Lebanon is a very diverse country with multiple religions and sects – in function, different ethnicities. To preserve stability, the Lebanese government opted for confessionalism, a complex set of sectarian representations sharing power between communities based on population. For example: -The President is assigned as a Maronite

Christian, PM is Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of Parliament is Shia Muslim, etc. Sectarian quotas in parliament based on religious community populations -Confessionalism further extends to many other sectors of government & even laws for marriage, inheritance, etc.

This system has resulted in political paralysis and eventual economic malaise as the government just cannot function up to par. In addition, the demographic aspect of quotas means a vicious competition for resources and zero-sum thinking. So much so that Sunni Muslims encouraged Sunni Palestinians to settle in Lebanon to tip the balance in their favour. Lebanon experienced a civil war from 1975-1990. Some Christian groups ally with Israel while others sought the import of Palestinian Christians. Overall, the system has led to a decaying of Lebanon’s potential and has resulted in today for its disassembly as the experiment has gone on long and violently enough. This is Jitni Abadi Utna Haq at its end.

Consigning India to a permanent caste war with each group at each other’s necks. The opposition wants this as India’s destiny. Everything is proportional. No room for market dynamics, excellence, or innovation. Rather a morass of stagnancy and rotting crabs in a bucket. A total marginalization of micro-minorities as larger groups crushes them with impunity. A death of not just individual merit & efficiency, but also of India’s imminent rise as a world power. Jitni Abadi Utna Haq will be the Lebanonization of India & death of the Indian Dream.

Conclusion:

The equal distribution of government welfare policies and schemes can be achieved without doing this tirade but it only can be achieved without any ill-intention. These are some examples like before 2013, there was only 38 per cent of the population having toilet facilities and today almost every household has this. And only 44 percent people have a bank account and after the implementation of ‘Jan Dhan scheme’ this is more than 80 percent of people in 2018. This has been achieved without doing caste census. Similarly, it can be said for the LPG connection scheme, Aawas yojana, Ayushman Yojana, Har Ghar Jal scheme etc; which gives more benefits to these reserve groups than others. If people in governance and politics have good intentions to welfare its population, there is no need for the caste headcount which only will tear apart India because there are already many fault lines created by colonisers. The time is to break the wall of caste and make India Vishwa Guru, not dividing people on the line of caste. Caste-based census is against the idea of a casteless society envisaged by leaders like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the Constitution and will weaken ongoing efforts to create social harmony.

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Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was enacted almost three decades back. However, it is handicapped with some major handicaps because of which expected effect is yet to be achieved. For example, each state has a different list of people belonging to SC and ST category. Person born as SC or ST may not be the same in other states. Union list of SCs and STs is needed for effective implementation of the act.

Handicaps of Atrocities Act: Union list needed

Indu Priyadarshini



Do you know why the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, of 1989 was enacted? Who is covered under this act? Is it equally applicable to all the SC and STs all over India and can be used in the same power all across the sub-continent, including Jammu and Kashmir? Can an aggrieved party claim justice in a state that is not his home state or where he is not recognized as SC or ST? What if the person (of SC or ST) gets atrocities by another person (of non-SC and ST) in the state where he was not listed under SC and ST? Can he use the defence of the Prevention of Atrocities Act?

Acts like the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and SC and ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 were enacted for the prevention of atrocities against the members of SC and ST, to provide for Special Courts for the trials of such offenses as well as relief and rehabilitation of the victims of atrocities. The twin objectives of both acts are the abolition of untouchability and the empowerment of the members of SC and ST communities in the country to eradicate discriminatory practices against Dalits as a whole.

As no central law existed on the subject in the wake of the Constitutional provision under Article 17 abolishing untouchability, a law had to be enacted by the Parliament as required by Article 35 (a) (ii) of

the Indian Constitution. The Parliament passed the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, the improved version of the Untouchability Order, 1950, to give effect to Article 17 of the Constitution. Although it had a monumental effect on the process of eradication of untouchability, it was felt that there was still more room for improvement and a need to amend it. After appointing a committee to study the untouchability, economic, and educational development of the SCs, and based on the report, the Government of India introduced a Bill known as the Untouchability (Offences) and Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 1972. The Parliament amended the Act of 1955 in November 1976, renaming it the Protection of Civil Rights, 1955, which came into force in 1976.

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, of 1955 seeks to demolish the age-old, biased social attitude towards these castes treating them as untouchables. As a social legislation, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, of 1955 partially succeeded in creating awareness and in the eradication of socio-economic disabilities imposed through various forms of practices of untouchability in a traditional society.

However, the PCR Act, 1955 in particular couldn't reach the expectations despite listing various untouchability practices constituting crime under



the law of the land. There were legal loopholes in the Act. The levels of punishments were less severe as compared to those of IPC, etc. These were the major reasons why the need for a more comprehensive Act was required to be enacted to protect the members of SCs and STs from atrocities and prevent atrocity on them through the SCs and STs Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989.

The Act defines “atrocities” as an offense punishable under sec 3 (1) and (2) of the Act and lists 22 offenses relating to various patterns of behaviours inflicting criminal offenses for shattering the self-respect and esteem of the persons belonging to SCs and STs, denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process, etc. Apart from penal measures, the act also endeavors to ensure the prevention of atrocities and seeks to provide legally justiciable rights to the victims of atrocities by way of well scheduled scale of graded financial assistance to the victims of atrocities and provisions of relief and rehabilitation under Rule 12(4) of the SC and STs (POA) Rules, 1995.

Problems faced by Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes even after the implementation of the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 are:

1. Recognition of SC and ST differently in different states. Each state has different sets of people recognized as SC /ST/OBC in them. This is because, for example, the group of people who satisfy the criteria of ST, i.e., primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness, social, educational, and economic backwardness might not be geographically isolated in another state. Hence, they aren’t regarded as ST in that state. For instance, Rajput’s are considered to be ST in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as they are geographically isolated from other groups of people, and have been recognized as socially, economically, and educationally backward compared to others whereas on the other hand, they are considered as people of upper caste in the states of Rajasthan, Bihar, etc. and are considered under Nomadic Tribes in Maharashtra.

Because of this, a Telugu native ST person (Rajput) cannot claim justice under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in the states of Bihar, Rajasthan if he undergoes atrocity, as he was not recognized as ST in those states.

On December 13, 2022 Bombay High Court had witnessed the hearing of an issue related to the same. The wife belongs to a Scheduled Tribe from Uttarakhand and got married in February 2020. In November 2020, she alleged cruelty under section 498A of IPC and in January 2021 and April 2022, invoked the Atrocities Act. The husband’s counsel, Abhinav Chandrachud had used the defence by saying that she is recognized as ST only in Uttarakhand. He also added that since the alleged incident happened outside Uttarakhand and abroad, the Atrocities Act was not applicable. Meanwhile, the wife’s counsel said that the Atrocities Act is aimed at protecting the

dignity of a member of the reserved community and thus “when an accused commits any of the offenses mentioned under the Act with full knowledge and to humiliate or cause harm to the person.... then the provisions of the Act as far as commission of offenses are concerned are directly attracted”.

In one a single judge bench of Gujarat High Court had held that due to migration, people do not lose their identity as belonging to SC/ST and provisions of the Atrocities Act can be applied. Recently Bombay High Court stated that “Persons on SC/ST list in one state protected in all” on 2nd September, 2023.

2. Filing FIR in itself is a task as mostly the complaints of those from SC and ST are neglected.

3. Lack of adequate Special Courts.

4. Vigilance Committee meetings are held.

5. False cases against Dalits and Tribals

6. Failure to identify atrocity-prone areas in states.

CONCLUSION:

To overcome the problem of the unavailability of the Atrocities Act to the people, who aren’t SC or ST in the state where they underwent the atrocity, might be 2 possible ways:

1. Make a Union List: Instead of different State governments identifying different types of groups of people under SC or ST, the Union Government makes an SC and ST list by identifying the groups that fulfil the necessary criteria to fit. In this way, a person SC or ST in one state will be SC or ST in the other states too, and can use the Prevention of Atrocities Act as the defence whenever he/she needs it.

2. Make a provision in the list: The central government had to make a provision and add it into the Act saying that if a person is SC or ST in one state and not in the state, where he is aggrieved, can still use the Act to claim justice, provided they have to prove it beyond reasonable doubt. Mere complaint against a person cannot attract the Atrocities Act unless there was an intention to humiliate a person using his/her caste status and at the same time just because the aggrieved party is not recognized under SC or ST in that state, do not mean he didn’t undergo atrocity on the name of caste.

3. Recognition of migrants under SC or ST: The people, who are SC or ST in a state and migrate to another state in the search of employment should be recognized under SC or ST, though they aren’t in that state if they satisfy certain criteria like gaining domicile of that migrated state, or residing in that state for more than a certain period of time but still undergoing atrocity on the name of caste.

These are some of the possible ways through which the Atrocities Act can be used to reach the maximum population who are in need of it. Let us see what the Indian Government comes up with to solve this issue.

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Moving towards gender equality

A 2003 study about the effect of reservation for women in panchayats showed that women elected under the reservation policy invest more in the public goods closely linked to women’s concerns. The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (2009) had noted that reservation of seats for women in local bodies has enabled them to make meaningful contributions.

Vineeta



Women’s participation in Parliament has increased significantly since the first Lok Sabha (5%) but is still far lower than in many countries. There are 82 women members of Parliaments in Lok Sabha (15.2%) and 31 women in Rajya Sabha (13%). In a response to a Parliamentary question last year, the government had said that the average number of women MLAs in Assemblies across the nation accounts for only 8 %. Even Bangladesh (21%) and Pakistan (20%) are ahead of India in case of female representation.

India has seen 16 women Chief ministers since 1963 out of which only Bahujan Samaj Party chief Kumari Mayawati belongs to Scheduled Caste. Similarly, it is only in the year 2022 when Draupadi Murmu becomes the first woman from a Scheduled tribe to serve as President of India. This symbolizes the poor participation and representation of marginalized communities’ women in Parliament.

The Women’s Reservation Bill, 2023 (128th Constitutional Amendment Bill), named the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam’, was passed in Parliament on the last day of the special session to ensure greater participation and representation of women in the political process. The bill has its roots in the recommendations of various committees and commissions, including the National Commission for Women and the United Nations, which have advocated for increased women’s participation in politics. Bills amending the Constitution to reserve

seats for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies have been introduced in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2008. The first three Bills lapsed with dissolution of their respective Lok Sabha.

The 2008 Bill was introduced in and passed by Rajya Sabha but it also lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha. The 1996 Bill had been examined by a Joint Committee of Parliament, while the 2008 Bill was examined by the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice. Both Committees agreed with the proposal to reserve seats for women.

Key features of the Bill:

The Bill reserves one-third of all seats in Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, for women. This will also apply to the seats reserved for SCs (Scheduled Castes) and STs (Scheduled Tribes) in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures.

Thus, reservation for SC/ST women can be applied horizontally for all the reserved seats. Commencement of reservation:

The reservation will be effective after the census conducted after the commencement of the Bill has been published. Based on the census, delimitation will be undertaken to reserve seats for women. The reservation will be provided for a period of 15 years. However, it shall continue until such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.

Rotation of seats:

Seats reserved for women will be rotated after each delimitation, as determined by a law made by Parliament. The Bill itself says that the census as well as the delimitation exercise will have to take place before the reservation can be implemented. Union Home Minister Amit Shah in his speech in Lok Sabha clarified that the reservation will not be implemented in the upcoming 2024 elections. According to him, the next government will conduct the census and the delimitation exercise after the Lok Sabha elections to set in motion the process to make reservations for women in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.

Women representation in politics is a vital step towards gender equality. It will help address gender disparities in political representation and empower women to actively participate in policy formulation and decision-making.

A 2003 study about the effect of reservation for women in panchayats showed that women elected under the reservation policy invest more in the public goods closely linked to women's concerns. The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (2009) had noted that reservation of seats for women in local bodies has enabled them to make meaningful contributions. Also, the bill gives women active in politics at panchayat level an opportunity to come to politics at national level as the various surveys do indicate that women representatives from Panchayati Raj have worked commendable in the development and overall well-being of society in villages and many of them would definitely want to work on the larger scale. Increased representation of women in legislatures ensures that women's voices are heard on critical issues, including those related to women's rights, education, health, and safety. It can lead to policies and legislation that address gender-based discrimination and violence.

The reservation shall come into effect only after delimitation is undertaken and delimitation will be undertaken only after the relevant figures of the next census, which was due in 2021, will be published. The date of the next census is entirely undetermined. So, the delimitation is doubly indeterminate. It doesn't specify the cycle of elections from which women will get their due share. The Delimitation is in itself a lengthy process. The 2002 Delimitation Commission had taken about five years to complete the exercise, based on the 2001 Census report. Legal experts have, however, questioned why the Census and delimitation exercise were included as a pre-condition in the Bill before implementing reservations for women.

The current Bill does not provide women's reservation in the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils. The Rajya Sabha currently has lower representation of women than the Lok Sabha.

Representation is an ideal that must be reflected in both the Lower and Upper Houses. The women's reservation bill, which reserves 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies,

does not include a quota for women from the OBCs. Geeta Mukherjee Committee (1996) recommended extending women reservation to OBCs. With the rising demand of Caste Census in India, Opposition parties are demanding for a separate OBC sub-quota within the reserved quota for women. The bill also comes with a fear that it should not end up disproportionately privileging upper-caste urban women.

There are cases in the Supreme Court which challenged the validity of SC/ST reservations. If any judgement comes regarding the issue of validity of the constitution (104th) Amendment Act 2019, which extended the political reservations for SC/STs by another ten years, then how it will impact the reservation provided to the women within the existing SC and ST reservations has to be considered.

The government needs to Establish an independent monitoring system or committees that explicitly prohibits family members from influencing the decision-making process of women representatives as we have seen at the Panchayati level in the form of Sarpanch Patis. The government will work toward increasing awareness and education among women about their rights and the importance of their participation in politics. Educational programs and awareness campaigns can help to increase women's political participation. Gender-based violence and harassment are major obstacles to women's participation in politics. Addressing these issues through policy and legal measures can create a safer and more supportive environment for women in politics. These are only a few approaches to increase the number of women in Indian politics. To effect long-lasting change, a multifaceted strategy addressing multiple challenges are required.

While the reservation bill seems to be an election stunt for gaining women voters in the coming Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Mizoram and Telangana, in addition to 2024 General Elections, its better and timely implementation can prove to be beneficial for the nation ensuring at least one-third participation of women in parliament and state Legislative Assemblies which has not been achieved till date. The bill provides opportunities to the women from deprived sections to rise from the level of Panchayats to the level of state and national politics and to actively participate in policy formulation and decision-making while bringing perspectives from their point of view. One can say that the women's reservation bill has been passed in Parliament but it still has a long way to go. Reservation policies may be a starting point, but achieving lasting change in gender equality requires addressing systemic issues beyond political representation.

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Remembering Deekshabhoomi

Dr. Sudhir

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his wife took the Oath of Three Jewels and Five Precepts from the Burmese monk Mahasthavir Chandramani from Kushinagar. It was followed by thousands of followers of Dr Ambedkar. The historic event took place on October 14, 1956. My father Sadanand Fulzele was the then Deputy Mayor of Nagpur Municipal Corporation. Therefore, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar asked him with the task of finding a place for the ceremony and making all arrangements at the venue. Wamanrao Godbole, Pandit Revaram Kawade were senior leaders of Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha. They accepted this responsibility and the task of making all other arrangements was undertaken by my father. Ever since, he remained associated with the Deeksha Bhoomi. He passed away about a year and a half back. He had dedicated his entire life for the Deeksha Bhoomi.

Param Poojya Dr. Ambedkar Smarak Samiti was established with the aim of a grand memorial of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. It was registered as a society in 1957 and later converted as a registered trust in 1964. First Chairman of the trust was Karmaveer Dadasaheb Gaikwad. He, along with Bhaiyyasaheb Ambedkar, my father, W K Ganar, R S Gawai were the other trustees. With the vision that only education can uplift the entire society. Dadasaheb Gaikwad founded Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar College at Deeksha Bhoomi in 1964. In the beginning, it imparted education only in Arts and Commerce streams. Gradually, Science stream was introduced. Junior College started later on. Subsequently law and management were also introduced. Now Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar College and Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Management Studies and Research are being run at the Deekshabhoomi, where nearly 10,000 students are taking serious efforts to change their lives.

Main objectives of Param poojya Dr. Ambedkar Smarak Samiti have been to spread awareness about 'Dhamma' (the religion) and impart education. Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan was invited there from Sri Lanka and provided accommodation at the Bhikkhu Niwas (accommodation for monks) there so that he can spread awareness about 'Dhamma' (the religion). However, owing to some differences, Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan set up his own Buddhabhoomi but the work of spreading religious awareness remained uninterrupted.

People belonging to Dalit communities were unable to get admissions to any educational institution and they continued to be backward educationally. It was because of this reason that Dadasaheb set up this educational institution,

opening the doors for Dalit boys and girls for education. They were admitted to this educational institute and they either got the jobs or started their own businesses. Gradually, they made their progress.

Education not merely changed their financial condition but was instrumental in changing their thought process. It changed their attitude towards society. Even though Nagpur region has social unity, attempts were being made to divide the society. In this situation, many people came forward to adopt the path of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Various agitations were launched in Nagpur and other parts of Vidarbha. All the participants and leaders of these agitations were directly or indirectly associated with Deeksha Bhoomi. It has emerged as a guiding light without having any political affiliations.

Buddhism has many schools such as Mahayana, Hinayana or the recent Theravada. However, the Dhamma that Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced was neither Mahayana, Hinayana nor Theravada. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar had understood the reasons for backwardness of the Shudras. Karmakandas (rituals or ritualism) in Hindu religion. These rituals burdened them mentally and financially. Therefore, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced the Dhamma which has no any rituals. Gradually rituals are being introduced in Bauddha religion as well. This is a matter of concern. However, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar took oath of only Trisharan (Three Jewels) and Panchsheel (Five Precepts) saying that mere Vandana by an individual (worship) and Prarthana (prayer) were enough. He stressed that that the religion was his personal affair of an individual.

Deeksha Bhoomi too has followed the same line and propagated Dhamma without any rituals. Deeksha Bhoomi played vital role in promotion of practicing certain ceremonies like marriage and shradha without any rituals. Some overenthusiastic, intellectual and educated people are now citing scriptures, principles of the Bauddha religion which were in practice 500, 1000 or 1500 years ago. These principles were not necessarily preached by Bhagvan Gautam Buddha because his principle too was simple Panchasheel that you should not beg, you should enhance your capabilities so that you would not need help of others or 'Be Your Own Light'. This is how Deeksha Bhoomi looks at the Dhamma. This view has been accepted by people.

At the same time, Deeksha Bhoomi is perceived as the place of biggest non-violent revolution at international level. It was not a mere religious conversion. Basically, it was a social change.

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The year 1954 was a significant one for the followers of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Savita, aka Mai Ambedkar from Rangoon, brought the statue of Buddha. That year, at Dehu Road near Pune, Dr. Ambedkar took a monumental step to emphasize the importance of Buddhism in social reform by installing a statue of Buddha. This event laid the foundation for his more significant act two years later when he led a mass conversion to Buddhism in Nagpur in 1956.

Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha statue at Dehu road in 1954

Vijendra



In the annals of Indian history, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar stands out not only as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution but also as an unyielding crusader for social justice and reform. His leadership and advocacy for marginalized communities, especially the Scheduled Castes, make him one of the most revered figures in India. In his quest for equality and rights for the oppressed, Dr. Ambedkar saw Buddhism as a beacon of hope and a tool for societal transformation.

On October 13, 1935, Dr. Ambedkar publicly announced converting his religion in the coming time: "I was born in Hinduism, but I will not die as a Hindu," at the provincial conference of the depressed classes held in Nasik District. Dr. Ambedkar thoroughly studied all religions, including Christianity, Islam and Sikh. However, Dr. Ambedkar adopted Buddhism, which teaches liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The year 1954 was a significant one for the followers of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar and Dr.

Savita, aka Mai Ambedkar from Rangoon brought the statue of Buddha. That year, at Dehu Road near Pune, Dr. Ambedkar took a monumental step to emphasize the importance of Buddhism in social reform by installing a statue of Buddha. This event laid the foundation for his more significant act two years later when he led a mass conversion to Buddhism in Nagpur in 1956. Before 1954, the Buddha statue was installed by King Harshvardhana. So, the installation of the Buddha statue has many aspects.

The Significance of the Buddha Statue

The installation of the Buddha statue was not just an act of religious reverence but carried profound symbolism. Dr. Ambedkar wanted to convey that the Buddha's teachings were a way out of the oppressive caste system that had subjugated millions for centuries. Buddhism's core tenets of equality, compassion, and rationality resonated with his vision of a casteless society.

Dehu Road, a bustling area in Pune, was chosen for



its strategic significance. The location ensured that the statue and its underlying message would gain visibility, sparking curiosity and discussions about Buddhism and its relevance in contemporary India.

The Reaction to the Installation

While the majority hailed Dr. Ambedkar's move as a symbol of empowerment, it was met with mixed reactions. Many conservative sections of society saw it as a challenge to the established norms. However, for the marginalized, the statue was a beacon of hope and a promise of a brighter future. The event also increased interest in Buddhism among several sections of society. People began to explore the teachings of the Buddha and their relevance in the context of modern India's social challenges.

Legacy of the Dehu Road Buddha Statue

The Buddha statue at Dehu Road stands as a symbol of a religion and a testament to Dr. Ambedkar's vision of an equitable and compassionate society. It serves as a reminder of the continuous struggle for social justice and the transformative power of change. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's focus on Buddhism and its significance for India's marginalized community is a well-known chapter in Indian history. Dr. Ambedkar installed a statue of Buddha at Dehu Road in 1954; its relevance to the mass conversion in 1956 can be examined from multiple angles.

1. Precursor to the Larger Movement: The installation of the Buddha statue at Dehu Road in 1954 could be seen as a precursor to the grander and more transformative event of 1956. By erecting the statue two years before the mass conversion, Dr. Ambedkar might have been subtly signalling his inclinations towards Buddhism and the potential path he saw for the marginalized communities to escape the shackles of the caste system.

2. Symbolism and Assertion: Installing a Buddha statue by someone of Dr. Ambedkar's stature would inherently carry strong symbolism. In the context of the socio-political environment of the 1950, this

act would have been a declaration of faith and an assertion of an identity distinct from the caste-bound Hindu identity, paving the way for mass conversion.

3. Public Awareness and Engagement: The statue would have generated discussions and curiosity about Buddhism. Such a gesture would have primed the marginalized community and the broader public, making them more receptive and curious about Buddhism's tenets, laying the groundwork for the mass conversion event.

4. Buddhism as a medium for Social Change: By 1954, Dr. Ambedkar had already expressed his disillusionment with the Hindu caste system and the plight of the marginalized communities within it. The statue can be interpreted as Dr. Ambedkar's way of highlighting Buddhism as an alternative path, emphasizing equality and social justice, ideas he would elaborate upon during the 1956 conversion.

5. Building Solidarity and Cohesion: Erecting a Buddha statue at a prominent location would have been a rallying point for like-minded individuals and groups. Such symbols play a crucial role in community-building, creating a sense of solidarity and cohesion, essential elements leading up to the significant event 1956.

In summary, Dr. Ambedkar had installed a Buddha statue at Dehu Road in 1954, it would have been a strategic and symbolic move, laying the groundwork and setting the tone for the mass conversion in 1956. It was a clear message about Buddhism's potential role in redefining India's marginalized community's identity and status. The installation of the Buddha statue by Dr. Ambedkar at Dehu Road in 1954 was not just an event but a turning point in India's socio-cultural landscape. It set the stage for a more significant movement that continues to inspire and guide generations in their quest for social justice and equality.

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The Enduring Relevance of "The Problem of Rupee"

In academia, some works are more than just scholarly pursuits; they transcend their time and context to become a beacon of knowledge and inspiration for future generations. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's master's thesis, "The Problem of Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution," is one such remarkable work. As we celebrate the centenary of this pivotal academic endeavour in 2023, we are presented with an opportunity to explore its historical significance and, more broadly, to reflect on the enduring importance of academic scholarship in driving social change.

Born in 1891 into a society deeply entrenched in inequalities and discrimination, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar defied the odds to become a symbol of knowledge, education, and social justice. His journey from the fringes of society to the pinnacle of the academic world serves as an enduring testament to the



transformative power of education. His master's thesis, submitted in 1923 at the London School of Economics, marked the beginning of his illustrious career as a scholar and social reformer.

An academic thesis on the monetary system might seem disconnected from Dr. Ambedkar's later activism and his struggle to combat caste-based discrimination in India. However, "The Problem of Rupee" is more than just an academic exercise; it is a testament to Dr. Ambedkar's unrelenting pursuit of knowledge and ability to engage with multifaceted issues.

The thesis is divided into four parts, delving deep into the intricacies of the Indian currency system, its historical evolution, the influence of British colonial policies, and the monetary fluctuations affecting the Indian economy. Dr. Ambedkar's meticulous analysis and well-researched arguments revealed India's monetary exploitation and economic subjugation under British rule. His thesis, at its core, was an early critique of the financial exploitation of a colonized nation.

Dr. Ambedkar's thesis holds significant historical relevance for several reasons: His work underscored the critical importance of economic independence for a society's overall progress. He argued that India's economic subjugation was intrinsically tied to its political and social subjugation. Dr. Ambedkar demonstrated exceptional intellectual prowess

in dissecting complex economic issues despite daunting societal obstacles. His thesis revealed that rigorous academic work transcended his personal circumstances. "The Problem of Rupee" remains relevant today as it offers insights into the long-term consequences of economic policies. Understanding the historical context of monetary decisions can inform contemporary financial strategies.

Dr. Ambedkar's transition from academic scholarship to social reform underscores the relationship between education and social change. His scholarly work laid the foundation for his later activism, as he leveraged the knowledge he acquired to challenge the oppressive systems perpetuating social injustices.

Academic scholarship, with its potential to foster critical thinking, research, and analysis, often acts as the crucible for ideas that drive social change. It equips individuals with the tools to question the status quo, challenge prevailing beliefs, and formulate solutions to pressing societal issues.

In today's digital age, where information is readily accessible, Dr. Ambedkar's commitment to lifelong learning and the pursuit of knowledge serves as a poignant reminder. The internet, online courses, e-books, and vast resources make learning more accessible. Dr. Ambedkar's example encourages us to embrace the potential for continuous self-improvement in the digital age.

Moreover, the digital age calls us to consume information and contribute to the pool of knowledge. Writing, researching, and sharing insights can have a transformative impact on our society. Dr. Ambedkar's journey from a student submitting his master's thesis to becoming the chief architect of India's Constitution stands as a testament to the power of continual.

As we commemorate the centenary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's master's thesis, "The Problem of Rupee," we honor his intellectual legacy and the enduring importance of academic scholarship in social movements. Dr. Ambedkar's work emphasizes that education is not just a personal pursuit but a potent tool for societal transformation.

His journey from a young scholar in London to the champion of social justice in India exemplifies the transformative potential of education. Dr. Ambedkar's life and work remind us that, in the digital age, the pursuit of knowledge remains as vital as ever, and the ability to contribute to academia is a path toward individual growth and societal progress.

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Government Ensures SC, ST, OBC Quota in Temporary Jobs

The Indian government has assured the Supreme Court that it will uphold reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) in temporary appointments lasting 45 days or more. This response comes in light of a petition seeking the court's intervention to guarantee these reservations for these marginalized groups in temporary jobs.

The government referenced Office Memorandum issued in 1968 and 2018, highlighting that reservations were to be provided in all temporary appointments except those lasting less than 45 days. The Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of SCs and STs noted that these instructions were not consistently followed and directed that they be reiterated to all government departments.

Consequently, on November 21, 2022, the government issued a new Office Memorandum to all ministries and departments, reiterating the need to ensure reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs in temporary appointments lasting 45 days or more. A mechanism has also been established to address cases of non-compliance with these instructions.

Madras HC - Reservation not applicable to minority institutions

Madras HC ruled that the concept of communal reservation, specifically the reservation for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and other Backward Classes (OBC), does not apply to minority institutions. The first bench, comprising Chief Justice S V Gangapurwala and Justice P D Audikesavalu, issued this ruling while partially allowing an appeal and petition from Justice Basheer Ahmed Syed College for Women (Autonomous). The college had challenged a November 2021 order that rejected the extension of religious minority status to the institution.

In its ruling, the court noted that while reservation was applied to socially and educationally Backward Classes, as well as SCs and STs for admissions to educational institutions, minority educational institutions were intentionally excluded from the operation of Article 15(5) of the Constitution of India. The court pointed out that Article 15(5) of the Constitution does not empower the state to compel

a minority educational institution to admit students from SCs, STs, or OBCs.

Minority institutions are allowed to admit 50% of students from the minority community and the remaining 50% from other communities.

The court also emphasized that minority status is not temporary and that the competent authority may adopt regulatory and supervisory measures to monitor the institution's adherence to these rules.

California Governor Vetoes Anti-Caste Discrimination Bill

California Governor Gavin Newsom has vetoed the recently passed anti-caste discrimination bill, stating that existing laws already prohibit caste-based discrimination in the state. The bill, known as SB403, which was passed with a significant majority by both the House of Representatives and Senate of the California State Assembly, aimed to include caste within the definition of ancestry for legal purposes.

Governor Newsom's decision to veto the bill has been welcomed by a portion of the Indian-American community who opposed the legislation, asserting that the bill could target the South Asian community and Hindus. Several organizations and activists had lobbied for the bill's passage, but the veto signifies that it will not become law in California.

The Foundation for Human Horizon, representing the Ambedkarite community, noted that while Governor Newsom ideologically supported the bill, he expressed concerns over the potential divisive

impact of the legislation and the involvement of certain groups with vested interests. The vetoed bill has sparked mixed reactions from various groups and individuals advocating for or against its passage, highlighting the complex nature of the issue of caste discrimination within the Indian-American community.

'Chaitya Bhoomi', set for international screening at LSE

Director Somnath Waghmare's documentary film, Chaitya Bhoomi is poised for its first international screening at the prestigious London School of Economics, where Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar once studied. The screening is scheduled for October 24, 2023, at 6:30 pm at the Media and Communication Department of the London School of Economics. Chaitya Bhoomi is directed by Somnath Waghmare and produced by Tamil filmmaker Pa. Ranjith's Neelam Productions, is a musical film that beautifully portrays the historical and cultural significance of Chaitya Bhoomi in Mumbai. It is the sacred site where Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was cremated on December 6, 1956, and holds immense importance in the Dalit movement in India. The film explores the unique and profound connection between Chaitya Bhoomi and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Mahaparinirvana, shedding light on its cultural and historical significance.

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Ahilyadevi established values of social justice and democracy

Ahilyadevi did not sit on the throne. Instead, she placed the idol of Lord Shiva on the throne and served as its devotee, governing for 28 years. As she herself dispensed justice, it was easy for people to approach her court with grievances. People would frequently visit her seeking justice. For the sake of ensuring justice for aggrieved individuals from remote areas, she issued directives to local kotwals (policemen) and kamavisdars (revenue officials) to adjudicate matters. For this purpose, she framed laws and implemented them promptly. Her priority was to deliver justice without delay and to ensure that no one faced difficulties in seeking justice.

Rambhau Lande



By embracing the dynamism of new creations, discarding outdated practices, Ahilyadevi emphasized their significance to society, making them a norm in the contemporary world. This progressive approach of Ahilyadevi was deeply influenced by the values and education imparted by her family and in-laws. Her decision to encourage statecraft enabled Ahilyadevi to establish new traditions that had a positive impact on the entire social system. Having pride in her Hindu religion and its glorious traditions, Ahilyadevi embarked on the restoration of new and dilapidated temples across the country. She rejuvenated religious traditions in a new and grand way, providing them with financial support and protection, which in turn instilled confidence within the society.

In Malwa, there was a stigma attached to the Bhil community as bandits. Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar made efforts to change their mindset and rehabilitated them as guards, thereby eliminating this stigma. She ensured the safety of the dense jungle paths through the hands of the Bhils. Ahilyadevi

abolished the tradition in Malwa of seizing the property of widowed women and reinstated their right to adopt. She honoured women's power. In the Holkar dynasty, women were given the opportunity to work as undercover agents, boosting their self-confidence. They were provided with the necessary training to function as undercover agents. Recognizing the challenges these agents frequently faced, Ahilyadevi established a specialized military unit that included women. By forming an independent unit of female soldiers, she successfully thwarted the campaign of Raghoba Dada.

Subhedar Malharrao Holkar removed gender discrimination and, recognizing the patience and valour in Ahilyadevi, prepared her to lead the Holkar dynasty. He imparted lessons on overcoming all the challenges that come with state governance and confidently embarked on campaigns. The trust Malharrao placed in Ahilyadevi was upheld by her throughout her life. She honoured the warriors, who fought for bread, making them stakeholders in power. This can be considered as decentralization of power. No one used to intervene in the matters of the warriors; they were merely used for warfare, and if they performed well in battle, there was a tradition



of gifting them wealth by the chief. Ahilyadevi abolished this practice. She set rules on how and where the warrior class should be deployed, whose army should be utilized, and regulated the warriors sent on campaigns. She also put an end to the looting that used to take place under the guise of the warriors.

Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar initiated the tradition of transforming the rule of the Holkar dynasty into a democracy. Despite having all the power in her hands and being the head of the Holkar royal family, she did not sit on the throne. Instead, she placed the idol of Lord Shiva on the throne and served as its devotee, governing for 28 years. As she herself dispensed justice, it was easy for people to approach her court with grievances. People would frequently visit her seeking justice. For the sake of ensuring justice for aggrieved individuals from remote areas, she issued directives to local kotwals (policemen) and kamavisdars (revenue officials) to adjudicate matters. For this purpose, she framed laws and implemented them promptly. Her priority was to deliver justice without delay and to ensure that no one faced difficulties in seeking justice.

Ahilyadevi honoured Sharif Bhai with a place in the communal dining. Shivaji Gopal, Sharif Bhai, Makaji Gite, Parashar Dada, Bharmal Dada and all the other chief officers, along with Ahilyadevi, Ambadas Puranic, and Ramaji Yadav, used to dine together. The respect and recognition that these officers, who diligently and earnestly discharged their duties with good intent, received from Ahilyadevi is unparalleled. Maheshwar, an ancient city and pilgrimage site, was also a village covered by dense forests along the banks of the Narmada River. There is a religious tale associated with Maheshwar about Sahasrarjun and a cow named Kapila. Ahilyadevi Holkar began her rule on 10th December 1767 in Maheshwar, which had this religious significance. Leaving behind the grandeur of Indore, she permanently settled in the common town of Maheshwar. She constructed the Holkar mansion, renovated the existing fort, and after creating strong embankments, she built expansive ghats on the southern banks of the Narmada. She also constructed a new temple for Kashi Vishwanath. Below that, in memory of Thorale Bajirao, the Peshwe Ghat was built. Later, many last rites were performed on this ghat. With the capital of the Holkar's moving from Indore to Maheshwar, there was an establishment of military camps, administrative councils, servants, employees, elephant stables, and landholding sardars in the vicinity of the fort. The palaces of Mavashibai, Daughter Muktabai, and Bule Sarkar were built to the west of the fort. After the demise of Malharrao, the Holkar royal family expanded to two locations: Tukojirao's second wife, Yamunabai, and their two sons settled in Wafgaon, while Rakhmabai remained in Indore.

There is a popular folklore in Maheshwar that Ahilyadevi inaugurated the ghats (riverfront steps) of Maheshwar with the hands of a widow. While

developing Maheshwar as a town, a new market and residential area were established near the base of the fort, with the intent to bring different communities together to live harmoniously and joyfully.

After Ahilyadevi permanently settled in Maheshwar, the relatives and close associates moved to various other places. Since Tukojirao was always on campaigns, he never stayed in one place for long. Throughout his life, he was accompanied by a military camp. On the route to Mammleshwar, Malharrao had private farms, and a new mansion for sheep was established there.

Ahilyadevi began overseeing the administration of Malwa by assembling all these elements together. After coming to Maheshwar, she initiated several new traditions. She started a practice of giving a coarse cloth (Korada Shida) to pilgrims performing the Narmada Parikrama (circumambulation). She also began the tradition of feeding pilgrims, austere devotees, and ascetics through community meals. After the construction of the new ghat, Ahilyadevi inaugurated it with a widow performing the rituals. The mason who constructed the robust ghat was the husband of this widow, but he tragically died in an accident towards the end of the construction. Ahilyadevi provided the widow with a saree, blouse, bangles, and also endowed her with a land grant for her sustenance. Inaugurating a new structure with a widow's hand was an unthinkable event for that time, but Ahilyadevi, basing her decision on the scriptures, introduced this new tradition. The ghat soon became a bustling marketplace. Tribal women, men, and traders began bringing novel items to trade there. Consequently, Ahilyadevi established a protected marketplace below the ghat and created a residential area for artisans nearby.

To establish Maheshwar not just as a religious and political city but also as a hub for economic prosperity, Ahilyadevi initiated this new experiment. To provide economic stability to the local residents, she set up a market that accommodated people who followed Marathi, Hindi, Tribal, and Nimadi traditions under one roof. People from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds started gathering, unified by the chant of Har Har Mahadev. The impact of Ahilyadevi's decision was profound on society. Inspired by her initiative, similar practices began in various pilgrimage sites across the country, and people started settling near these holy places. In many of these religious sites, like the twelve Jyotirlingas, Saptapuri, and the four Dharmas, there were no Hindu rulers. In many places, Muslim rulers were in power. To reinforce Hindu religious foundations in these areas, Ahilyadevi sent people to these locations for various responsibilities, to begin worship, offerings, and festivals in honor of the deities. To protect these traditions, she permanently settled some traders in these areas, built new settlements, and instilled faith in people's hearts.

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DIN VISHESH

Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din



24th October
Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din

"Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din" can be translated as "The Day of Turning the Dhamma Wheel." It commemorates the day when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a prominent Indian jurist, political leader, philosopher, and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, embraced Buddhism along with thousands of his followers.

This day commemorates the event that took place on 14th October 1956, when Dr. Ambedkar and about 600,000 of his followers converted to Buddhism in Nagpur, India. This was a significant moment in Indian history, marking a collective assertion against the oppressive caste system.

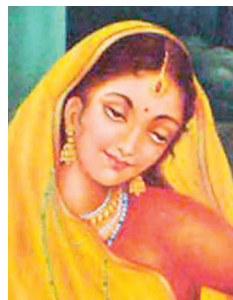
Dr. Ambedkar chose to convert to Buddhism after deeply studying various religions. He felt that Buddhism was the most rational and humane religion that offered equality and justice. His conversion was also a form of protest against the caste discrimination practiced in Hinduism, especially against the lower castes.

The conversion event led by Dr. Ambedkar was one of the largest mass conversions in modern India. It was a profound act of social and religious assertion by Dalits, who had been marginalized and discriminated against for centuries under the caste system.

On Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din, millions of people visit the Deeksha Bhoomi in Nagpur, where the original conversion took place. The place has a stupa and is considered a pilgrimage site for Buddhists, especially those from the scheduled castes community in India. People offer prayers, listen to Dhamma talks, and participate in various religious activities.



27th October
Maharshi Valmiki
Birth Anniversary



27th October
Sant Meerabi
Birth Anniversary



28th October
Bhagini Nivedita
Birth Anniversary



12th November
Madan Mohan Malaviya
Death Anniversary



14th November
Lahuji Salve
Death Anniversary

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