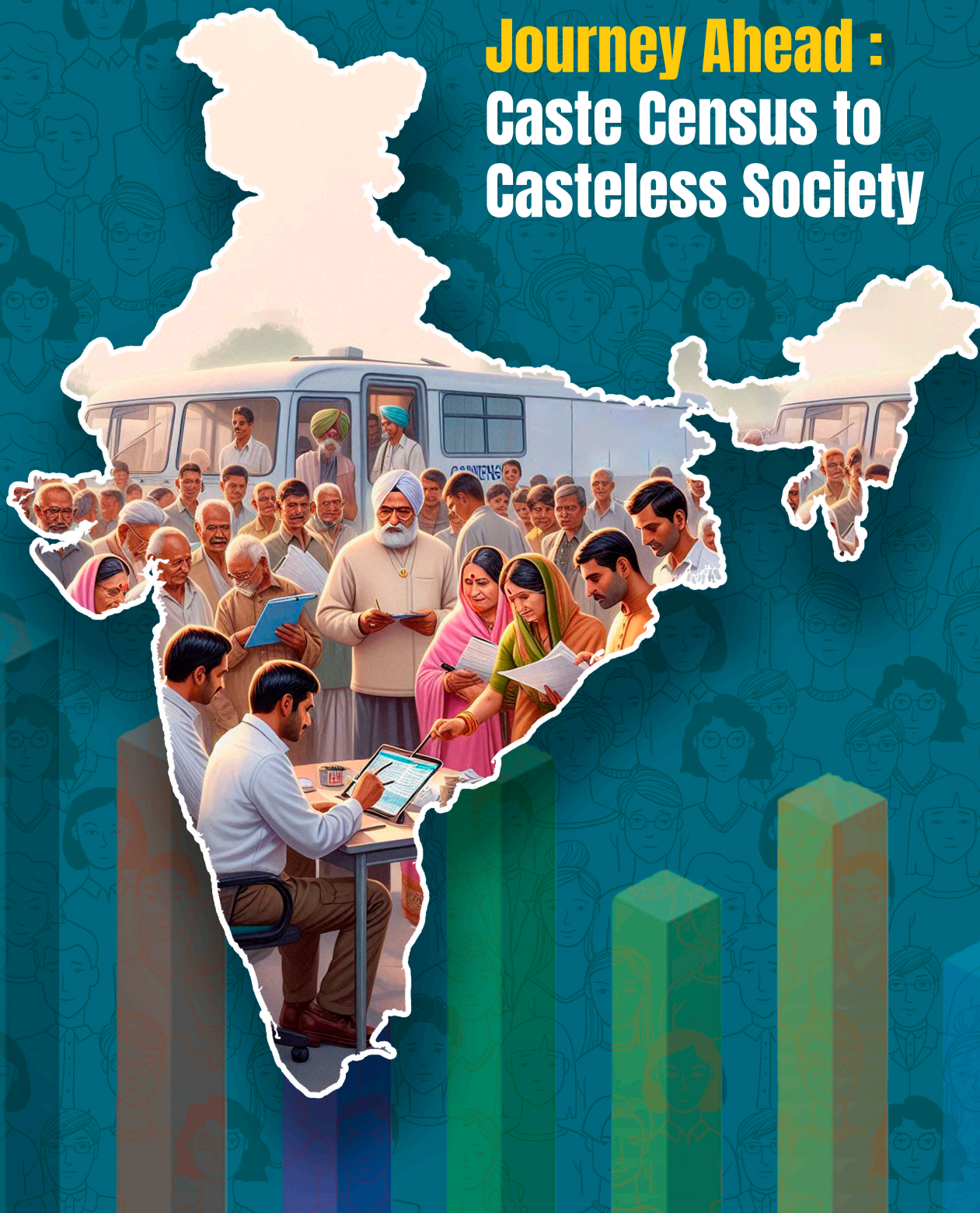


UNHEARD VOICES[®]

14 MAY 2025 | Year 5 | Vol. 2

Journey Ahead : Caste Census to Casteless Society

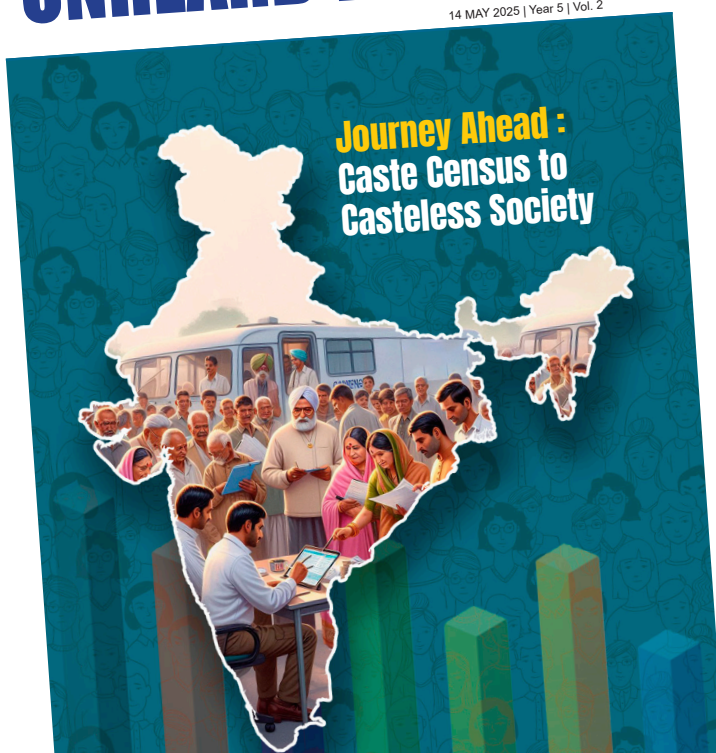




E-PERIODICAL UNHEARD VOICES®



14 MAY 2025 | Year 5 | Vol. 2



CONTENTS

05 Caste Census: A Historic Step Towards OBC Empowerment

07 Caste Census: Opening Pandora's Box?

09 Recognizing De-notified Tribes Through Caste Census

11 Potential Effect of Caste Census on Policy Making

13 First case of sub-categorization

19 'No benefits & protection in case of conversion'

20 Indus River System Through Dr Ambedkar's Lens

23 Dr Ambedkar, Savarkar & Congress

25 Dr Ambedkar's Legacy Turns Global Beacon For Equality

28 Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai

31 Empowerment through Education



EDITORIAL

Remember: Journey is from caste census to casteless society

The Union Government's recent decision to conduct a nationwide caste census has caught many by surprise. For a long time, the ruling party showed reluctance on the issue, while several non-BJP parties consistently pushed for it. Both positions are valid in a democratic setup, where all political stakeholders have the right to hold and voice their perspectives. Ultimately, the government has exercised its authority to make a final decision, signaling a potential shift in the way socio-economic policies may be shaped in the future.

Though caste is often a dominant force in political mobilization and electoral strategies, it is important that we view the caste census from a more constructive, non-political angle. The process must rise above partisan interests and be seen as a crucial tool for improving governance, formulating inclusive policies, and accelerating social development. If used honestly and objectively, the caste census could be an important step toward realizing the concept of Antyodaya—uplifting the last person in society.

More than just a political decision, the caste census is a societal responsibility. While the government may take the lead in executing the process, it is equally vital for opposition parties, civil society, and citizens at large to engage with it constructively. It must be approached with the larger goal of creating a casteless society, where every individual is treated equally regardless of her/his background. We should remind ourselves that our vision for the future is

one of equality, where caste no longer determines opportunity or dignity.

Historically, caste enumeration is not new to India. Until 1931, every census under British rule included caste data. However, this practice was discontinued in postindependence India. The motives behind the colonial era censuses were very different, as they served the interests of a foreign administration. In contrast, a caste census conducted today under an independent, democratic system would aim to address long-standing socio-economic disparities and inform policy decisions that reflect India's constitutional values. Though the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) did gather some caste-related data, it was never officially released due to inconsistencies and administrative concerns.

A well-executed caste census could significantly enhance evidence based policymaking. To ensure targeted delivery of welfare schemes and extend affirmative action to genuinely marginalized communities, empirical data is essential. Unfortunately, collecting such data has often been a cumbersome, politically sensitive task, sometimes worsening social tensions. A transparent and comprehensive caste census would minimize speculation and reliance on outdated or anecdotal data, helping governments better identify gaps in access to education, healthcare, employment, and income.

However, undertaking a caste census is not without serious administrative and logistical challenges. One of the critical

For feedback please click the below link : <https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>

'Unheard Voices' monthly publication is owned by Social Studies Foundation, Printed and Published by Hari Sowani, Printed at Sanwad Trade Prints, Gowaikar Bldg, 595, Shaniwar Peth, Pune- 411030 and Published at 1196, Sadashiv Peth, Pune- 411030.

Editor : Vijendra Sonawane

Advisory Editorial Board : Dr Aditi Narayani Paswan, Edward Mendhe, Prakash Raj

Disclaimer : The views expressed in the periodical are personal views of the author.

The editor & publisher may not agree to it.

issues is how to account for sub-castes. Almost every caste in India has multiple sub-castes with differing social and economic status. These distinctions often go unnoticed in policy design, but they are crucial in understanding ground realities. For a caste census to be meaningful, the government will need to take formal decisions about the recognition and categorization of sub-castes.

Another sensitive but necessary issue involves the presence of caste-like structures within Abrahamic religions, particularly Islam and Christianity. Though these religions traditionally do not endorse caste, various groups within them especially converts from Scheduled Caste backgrounds have demanded inclusion in reservation policies. Addressing this question will be vital, as it impacts both social equity and communal harmony. These debates are likely to gain prominence as the caste census process moves forward.

Moreover, the results of a caste census have the potential to dispel long-standing sociological myths shaped by political narratives. The recent caste-based survey in Bihar, for instance, brought to light a striking demographic reality: 63% of the state's population belongs to the Other Backward

Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), with OBCs alone making up over 36%. Such data challenges existing assumptions and could have significant ramifications for social policy and political discourse.

There are understandable concerns that a caste census might reignite caste divisions and sensitivities.

These fears are not unfounded, given India's history of identity Based politics. However, ignoring caste realities won't make them disappear. Instead, a caste census can serve as a diagnostic tool—an essential first step toward addressing systemic inequality. If interpreted and utilized responsibly, it can reduce disparities rather than exacerbate them, ultimately leading to a more cohesive society.

In this context, the caste census is far more than a statistical exercise. It is a mirror reflecting the layered structure of Indian society—its inequalities, its complexities, and its potential for transformation. Used wisely, it can become a powerful instrument for envisioning a more just and inclusive nation. It offers us a chance to confront uncomfortable truths, but also to forge a future rooted in equality, dignity, and justice for all.

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".

"UNHEARD VOICES" is a small step in this direction. It provides a platform to all those people, who have to be listened to by the Indian citizens to make this country united and integral. We will raise the voice of these people fearlessly. Social Studies Foundation has currently a small set-up to carry out its objectives. We, however, need financial support from our well-wishers, who agree with our objectives. We appeal to the readers and well-wishers to donate generously to the foundation.

CIT EXEMPTION, PUNE/80G/2020-21/A/10158

Please contact : 9699644930, (020)29526979
or mail us to : uv@unheardvoices.co.in

For feedback please click the below link :
<https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>



Caste Census: A Historic Step Towards OBC Empowerment

Caste Census has been a matter of debate for a long time. Sociologists, academicians, politicians, policy makers and social workers have been putting forward their views, which is absolutely understandable. Both the thoughts came up with merits and demerits of caste census, which helped people to enlighten themselves. Government has finally decided to conduct a caste-census but discussion may continue. This debate needs to be keeping aside narrow political considerations, to achieve its objective in true spirit. Here we put forth both the sides of the issue.

Gowd Kiran Kumar

The Union Government's decision to conduct a nationwide Caste Census marks a pivotal moment in India's journey toward social justice and inclusive governance. For decades, the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have remained underrepresented and underserved due to the absence of accurate caste-wise data. This census is not merely a statistical exercise; it is a transformative tool for the social, educational, economic, and political empowerment of OBCs and other marginalized communities across the country.


Since the last comprehensive caste enumeration in 1931, India has lacked updated data on the socio-economic conditions of various caste groups, particularly the OBCs. This gap has hindered the effective implementation of affirmative action policies and welfare schemes. The upcoming caste census aims to provide precise demographic and socio-economic data, enabling evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

In the educational sector, the caste census will help identify educationally and socially backward sub-castes within the OBC category.

This will facilitate sub-categorization and ensure that the benefits of reservations, scholarships, fellowships, and hostels reach the most deprived groups. It will also guide the allocation of resources for building higher education infrastructure and increasing representation in institutions of excellence.

Economically, the caste census will bring visibility to the occupational and income patterns of OBCs across rural and urban India. Such data is critical for crafting inclusive economic policies—whether it is support for traditional artisans, access to credit, entrepreneurship promotion, or skilling and employment schemes. It will empower OBC families to overcome historical disadvantages and move toward economic self-reliance.

Politically, the census will provide a mirror to the nation's representative structures. It will help us understand the extent of OBC underrepresentation in Parliament, State Assemblies, and bureaucratic institutions. This data will strengthen the case for enhanced political representation through legal and constitutional mechanisms, including



reservation in legislatures and proportionate appointments in key positions.

Contrary to the misconception that a caste census could fragment Hindu society, it will in fact fortify it by acknowledging and addressing internal disparities. The majority of OBCs belong to the Hindu religion, yet for centuries, systemic inequalities have limited their access to resources, representation, and dignity within the larger Hindu fold. A caste census will expose these structural imbalances and enable corrective action—thus fostering a more just

and inclusive religious community. True unity cannot be built on silence or suppression; it must be rooted in fairness and equality. Empowering OBCs through data-driven policies will only enhance the moral foundation of Hinduism by aligning it with the principles of justice, compassion, and social harmony embedded in its core philosophy.

Another frequently cited misconception is that conducting a caste census is unfeasible due to the complexity of caste classifications across states—where a particular caste may fall under different categories such as OBC, SC, or ST depending on the region. For instance, the Boya Valmiki community is listed as OBC in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, while in Karnataka, they are classified as ST.

However, this argument does not hold ground. India already conducts comprehensive data collection on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, despite their state-wise variations. Similarly, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) maintains an official and detailed state-wise list of OBCs. The census machinery is fully capable of gathering caste-specific data based on each state's officially notified list. The diversity of classifications is not a limitation—it is a reflection of India's federal structure, and it can be accommodated through the same administrative mechanisms already in use for SC/ST enumeration. With proper planning and coordination, collecting accurate OBC data at the state level is both technically and legally achievable.

The caste census will play a crucial role in the effective implementation of reservations in local bodies such as Panchayats, Municipalities, and Corporations. Accurate and up-to-date caste-wise data will enable the government to ensure proportional representation of OBCs and other marginalized communities in grassroots democratic institutions, in line with the constitutional vision of social justice. Beyond reservations, the data generated through the caste census will serve as a foundational

tool for crafting inclusive and evidence-based public policies. It will help identify gaps in access to healthcare, education, housing, and livelihood opportunities, allowing targeted interventions that address the specific needs of disadvantaged groups. In this way, the caste census will not only strengthen affirmative action but also enhance the overall quality and equity of governance.

Some term the caste census as an X-ray of society, while others call it an MRI. But I believe the caste census is more than just a diagnostic tool—it is a comprehensive health report of our social fabric. It will reveal the symptoms of deep-rooted inequalities and structural injustices, and more importantly, it will suggest the necessary medication or vaccinations to heal the ills of our caste-stratified society.

Those who oppose the census often argue that it may cause division. But the truth is, we are already divided—by caste, class, and privilege. Caste census won't create a problem; it will show us how to solve it. It will shine a light on uncomfortable realities we have long ignored and help us chart a path forward rooted in transparency, justice, and democratic accountability.

Constitutional Mandate and Legal Framework

The caste census aligns with the constitutional mandate to promote the welfare of the weaker sections of society. Article 46 of the Indian Constitution directs the state to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Accurate data from the caste census will enable the state to fulfill this directive more effectively.

Conducting a caste census is not without challenges. Ensuring accuracy in data collection, managing political sensitivities, and addressing concerns about privacy are significant hurdles. However, with meticulous planning, transparency, and the use of technology, these challenges can be overcome. The success of the caste census will depend on the collective will of the government, civil society, and the citizens.

In a true democracy, data is power. The caste census will empower the OBCs and other marginalized sections with the visibility, voice, and rightful share they deserve in India's progress. It is time to count everyone—so that everyone counts.

*Author is a National President,
All India OBC Students Association
(AIOBCSA)
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Caste Census: Opening Pandora's Box?

India is a diverse nation with a complex social fabric, where caste has historically played a significant role in shaping identities, opportunities, and socio-economic conditions. The debate over conducting a caste-based census has been a contentious issue in Indian politics and society. While the decennial census in India collects data on various demographic and socio-economic indicators, it has not included a comprehensive caste-wise enumeration since 1931, except for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The demand for a caste census has gained momentum in recent years, with proponents arguing that it is essential for equitable policy-making, while opponents warn of potential social divisions and political manipulation. This article examines the implications of a caste-based census in India, analyzing its challenges, and broader socio-political consequences.


Ekta

A caste census, which seeks to enumerate and categorize India's population based on caste. While proponents argue that it is necessary for social justice and equitable distribution of resources, critics highlight its potential to deepen social divisions, reinforce caste identities, and create political instability. Historically, caste-based enumeration has had mixed consequences, and examples from other countries show how identity-based censuses can exacerbate societal fractures.

One of the most significant criticisms of a caste census is that it reinforces caste identities rather than weakening them. India has struggled for decades to move beyond the rigid caste system, with constitutional provisions and affirmative action policies aiming to reduce caste-based discrimination. However, a caste census risks institutionalizing caste divisions by officially recognizing and documenting

them. During British rule in India, the colonial administration conducted caste-based surveys to categorize and control the population.

The 1871-72 Census was the first systematic attempt to classify castes, which later became a tool for divide-and-rule policies. By rigidly defining caste hierarchies, the British entrenched social divisions that persist today. A modern caste census could similarly solidify caste identities rather than erasing them. We should learn from the history where humanity saw large scale destruction in which Rwanda's tragic history of Tutsi's genocide in 1994, during civil war where the Belgian colonial rulers classified the population into Hutus and Tutsis in identity cards. This categorization deepened ethnic divisions and was later exploited to fuel mass violence. While caste in India is not identical to ethnicity, the lesson is clear that formalizing identity divisions can have



disastrous consequences in Indian societies, which demonstrates the dangers of identity-based enumeration. There can be various problems with the caste census in India where caste plays an important role in the socio-economic manifestation of society.

Caste has long been a history of tools for political mobilization in India. Political parties like Samajwadi Party (SP), Rastriya Janata Dal (RJD), Apna Dal, Lok Jan shakti Party (LJP), Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) and other regional caste based political parties exploit caste identities to secure their caste's votes, leading to fragmented and divisive politics. A caste census would provide exact demographic data, enabling politicians to further polarize society along caste lines for electoral gains.

The Mandal Commission (1980) recommended reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) based on caste data. While intended to uplift marginalized groups, its implementation in 1990 led to violent protests, self-immolations, and deep social unrest. A new caste census could reignite similar tensions, as various groups may demand greater reservations or protest against perceived injustices. If we see from global history like the proposed caste census in India, Lebanon's census of 1932 was based on religious sects, which later became the foundation for its power-sharing system. However, this institutionalized sectarianism contributed to the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). When governance is structured around identity-based quotas, it can lead to perpetual conflict rather than harmony. Therefore, caste-based census could lead the similar consequences in India. Caste-based data collection can inadvertently stigmatize certain groups, reinforcing stereotypes rather than uplifting them. Lower castes may face renewed discrimination if their population numbers are highlighted in official records. In historical 1939 census which identified Jews, Romani people, and other minorities, which were later used for persecution.

This extreme case shows how demographic data in the wrong hands can be weaponized. In India, caste data could be misused to target or marginalize certain communities. Every day, we can see or read about caste-based violence in the newspaper or society despite stringent laws like the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, which shows that the caste census may not necessarily reduce discrimination but could instead provide a tool for further exclusion.

Another problem related with caste census would be related with an enormous

administrative exercise, which requires vast resources. India's complex and fluid caste system with thousands of sub-castes the data collection process could be error-prone and lead to disputes over classification. The SECC 2011 attempted to collect caste data alongside economic indicators, but the results were never fully released due to inconsistencies and controversies. Many communities demanded reclassification, leading to legal battles. A full-fledged caste census could face similar challenges, wasting time and resources without clear benefits. Affirmative action policies of Malaysia which favour the Bumiputera (ethnic Malays) over Chinese and Indian minorities, however intended to reduce inequality, the policy has led to resentment, brain drain, and economic inefficiencies. A caste census in India could similarly lead to demands for new quotas, distorting meritocracy and economic growth.

Instead of focusing on caste, India's policies should prioritize universal access to education, healthcare, and employment. Caste-based reservations were meant to be temporary measures, but a caste census could make them permanent, diverting attention from broader developmental challenges. This problem we have already seen in the affirmative action by the U.S government where the U.S. Census collects racial data, which has led to debates over affirmative action. While intended to address historical injustices, it has also perpetuated racial divisions. Similarly, India must ask whether caste enumeration will truly uplift the poor or merely entrench identity politics.

While the intention behind a caste census may be to ensure equitable representation and welfare, the potential negative consequences outweigh the benefits. Historical and global examples demonstrate that identity-based enumeration can deepen divisions, fuel political manipulation, and create administrative chaos. Instead of reinforcing caste identities, India should focus on class-based economic policies that uplift all disadvantaged groups, regardless of caste. A caste census risks reopening old wounds and institutionalizing divisions that India has been trying to overcome. The goal should be a casteless society, not one where caste is further entrenched in the national consciousness. Policymakers must carefully consider whether a caste census will unite or further divide the nation.

*Author is an Assistant Professor in
Department of Geography at Dr Ambedkar
College, University of Delhi.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Recognizing De-notified Tribes Through Caste Census

The Government of India's decision to conduct a caste-based census marks a pivotal step toward achieving social justice and inclusive governance. Among the most critical beneficiaries of this move are the De-notified Tribes (DNTs)—communities historically criminalized and marginalized under colonial rule and still largely excluded from mainstream development. A caste census offers the chance to gather accurate, comprehensive data on these overlooked populations.

Edward

The recent announcement by the Government of India to conduct a caste-based census marks a historic moment in our country's journey toward achieving social justice and constitutional equity. This decision has the potential to become a transformative milestone — one that can help ensure that the most marginalized communities in Indian society, especially the De-notified Tribes (DNTs), are finally given the recognition and support they have long been denied.

Welcoming the decision, it must be emphasized that the caste census is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a vital democratic process. It will generate a scientific, data-driven understanding of the actual population size and socio-economic conditions of each section of Indian society. Without such a dataset, it would be impossible to truly fulfil Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's vision of a just society as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

A caste-based survey is uniquely critical for the De-notified Tribes, arguably among the most deprived communities in India today. These are groups that have historically been stigmatized, criminalized, and excluded from mainstream development.


Who Are De-notified Tribes?

De-notified Tribes (DNTs) are communities that were branded as "criminal tribes" under the British colonial regime's Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. This Act labelled over 200 communities as "habitually criminal," subjecting them to severe restrictions, surveillance, and discrimination. After independence, the Act was repealed in 1952, and these communities were "de-notified". However, the stigma continued, with many being reclassified under the Habitual Offenders Act, effectively perpetuating their social exclusion.

Even today, DNTs remain on the fringes of society. Unlike Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), or Other Backward Classes (OBC), many DNT communities have not been formally recognized across all states, limiting their access to affirmative action policies and welfare schemes. Despite being free citizens of independent India, they often live with the legacy of being treated as second-class citizens.

Why Caste Census Matters for DNTs ?

Across the political spectrum, there has been considerable discussion about the pros and cons of a caste survey—especially with regard to already identified categories such



as SCs, STs, and OBCs. Yet, the DNTs seldom find mention in these conversations. The caste census gives us an unprecedented opportunity to correct this historical oversight. It can finally provide hard numbers and verifiable data on these communities—their population size, socio-economic conditions, geographical spread, and access to basic rights and services.

This is not merely about enumeration. It is about justice. It is about acknowledging a grave historical wrong that began under colonial rule and continues, in different forms, even after 76 years of independence. Till now, De-notified Tribes have been included under different categories like SC, ST, or OBC, varying from state to state. However, they have never been recognized as a distinct category at the national level. This lack of consistent classification has significantly hampered targeted development. Recognition as a separate category in the caste census would ensure that DNTs are identified uniformly across states, receive dedicated funding similar to SCs, STs, or OBCs, and benefit from development schemes tailored specifically to their unique socio-economic needs and historical deprivations.

Steps Taken So Far—and Their Limits

Several steps have been taken by the Government of India over the decades to identify and support DNTs, but the impact has remained limited. The first Backward Classes Commission led by Kaka Kalelkar in 1953 acknowledged the backwardness of these communities but did not offer a concrete development roadmap. The Lokur Committee in 1965, while reviewing the SC and ST lists, did not focus on the DNTs as a separate group. The Renke Commission, constituted in 2008, identified around 1,500 DNT communities and recommended legal safeguards, reservations, and dedicated welfare programmes. However, its recommendations were never fully implemented. In 2015, the Idate Commission was formed under NITI Aayog and submitted its report in 2018, advocating for urgent policy interventions, including a dedicated welfare board and tailored education and housing schemes. Acting on this, the government established the Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDC) in 2019 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. While this was a step forward, the board's efforts have been severely constrained by the lack of credible population data and limited financial and administrative support.

Population Without a Voice

According to various government sources,

the estimated population of De-notified Tribes is between 10 to 11 crores (100–110 million). This makes them one of the largest unrecognized and underserved sections of Indian society. Yet, they have never been included as a distinct category in the Census of India. This invisibility in official data has significantly obstructed the formulation and execution of policies tailored to their needs.

The lack of a dedicated sub-column or code for DNTs in census forms means that enumerators often categorize them under different caste, tribe, or community labels depending on the state, resulting in fragmented data and diluted policy focus.

Forgotten Warrior Tribes

Many of the DNT communities were once valiant warrior clans, known for their martial prowess and vibrant cultures. Over time, the colonial administration's criminalization policies broke their social structure, pushed them to the margins, and deprived them of land, education, and dignity. Despite the country's progress, they remain caught in a cycle of poverty, exclusion, and mistrust. While the current government's initiatives—such as the Idate Commission and the DWBDNC—must be acknowledged, their effectiveness remains questionable in the absence of reliable demographic data and dedicated outreach. The caste census, implemented sincerely, offers an unparalleled opportunity to fill this critical data gap.

Way Forward

To truly make this census a tool of justice and not just enumeration, the government must ensure the following:

- Inclusion of a dedicated sub-column for De-notified Tribes in the census questionnaire.
- Training and sensitization of enumerators to identify and record DNTs correctly.
- Collaboration with state governments and civil society organizations working with DNT communities.
- Post-census policy design based on the data to implement targeted welfare schemes.

Technical processes aside, this caste census is a monumental opportunity to recognize India's forgotten warrior tribes. It is a chance to give voice to a population that has remained silent for generations—not by choice but by systemic neglect.

If we are serious about building a just and inclusive India, then recognizing and uplifting the De-notified Tribes must be a national priority. Let this caste census not only count people but also count justice, equity, and human dignity. Only then can we truly say that no Indian is left behind.

*Author is a UK based Research Scholar
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Potential Effect of Caste Census on Policy Making

The recent decision by the Central government to include caste in the upcoming national census has reignited a longstanding debate in India. Proponents argue that caste-based enumeration is essential for effective policy making, especially in a country where caste continues to shape access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility. A caste census holds promise for deepening our understanding of social inequalities and improving the reach and impact of government programs. It is a step toward a more informed, equitable, and responsive welfare system.

Kiran


The recent announcement by the Central government for the inclusion of caste in the next census enumeration has, as expected, led to considerable debate. Among those who support caste census, many assume, without questioning, that having formal measurement of caste populations will help policymaking. The typical analogy invoked is from business management or medical science – that to deal with something, it needs to be measured first.

It is not the case that policymaking in India has been caste blind. But as of now, caste enters the policymaking in the form of caste categories, like Scheduled castes (SC) or Other Backward Castes (OBC). The current policymaking around caste categories has two important drawbacks: lack of formal measurement of caste and caste categories, for example proportion of OBCs in population, and systematic evidence of

within caste category inequalities. The lack of measurement of population of various caste groups harms policymaking in two ways. It reduces the accountability of welfare policies, and it bases the debate around reservations on unfounded assumptions or privately held information.

The broad measure of accountability, at caste category level, hides the differing trajectory of various caste groups. Without hard numbers, better-off groups within categories have been able to maintain their advantages unchallenged for decades. As a result, the impact of caste-oriented welfare policies, whenever they are implemented efficiently, remains limited to smaller, politically aware groups and lack of data helps perpetuate this situation.

Other effect of lack of measurement is lack of basis to debate around reservation. Caste



survey in Bihar shows the SC account for 19% of the state population and backward castes (BC and EBC) account for 63% of the state population.

It was one of the first incidents of formal measurement of the OBC (BC and EBC) population, even at the state level. The estimates, since it is a survey, are on a higher side than what is popularly imagined. The nationwide situation is unlikely to be different, at a caste category level. But there might be surprises at the specific caste level.

The immediate impact of caste census will be political, triggering the demand for adjusting the scope and focus of reservations. Policy changes will follow only if welfare benefits shift from broad categories to specific castes. Caste census can help reduce the inequality within these broader caste categories and it will be its biggest effect on policy making. In some sense, this process has already begun with some states exploring sub-quotas within the SC category.

If the caste census leads to welfare programs targeted at specific castes rather than broad categories, the government can better support social mobility. The government plays a vital role in helping people—and especially their children—move up the social ladder, by ensuring access to education and employment (to some extent) for disadvantaged groups. Currently, the relatively better-off members within each category often capture most benefits because we can't identify the most disadvantaged sub-groups. If the census confirms the suspected inequality within SC or OBC groups, and policies adapt accordingly, government welfare programs could become more effective by reaching castes currently overshadowed by dominant groups within their category.

Polymakers struggle to match the intended benefits from policy to most deserving recipients. With current caste-based welfare programs, the more informed and less disadvantaged members likely receive most benefits. We currently lack solid evidence to justify policies targeting individual castes. Caste census could provide this evidence. Additionally, knowing caste distribution at the local level could help municipal governments and village councils create more effective programs, provided they are empowered to do so.

The census offers a snapshot of the lives of Indians, revealing the fault-lines of segregations and inequality. A caste census would give policymakers the required justification and the data needed for more precisely targeted welfare programs. For instance, it could reveal which specific caste groups have higher school

dropout rates in each district, allowing for targeted educational interventions. Similarly, if certain castes show higher rates of low-skill, low-wage employment, the government could create tailored skill development programs for these communities. Caste census can provide a baseline understanding of caste and socioeconomic outcomes against which effectiveness of policies can be measured.

There are two dimensions on which caste operates in our lives. Caste often correlates with socioeconomic disadvantages, mainly through access to resources and social capital. The second dimension is social marginalization independent of economic status, for example, housing segregation. Today, with Aadhaar identification and its links to PAN cards and other documents, the government can more easily verify economic status directly. But identifying social marginalization requires caste specific measures.

The evidence that already exists, even at caste category level, is concerning enough. Caste census can provide more nuanced understanding of the same. The understanding might not have immediate policy impact. But it can ignite the required social debate that can have eventual effect on policy making.

Though the potential of caste census in improving targeting of policies is evident, a word of caution is in order. The transition from caste category to caste-based targeting requires daft handling. It is likely to generate new forms of exclusion like documentation barriers and expose the state to an intricate structure of caste identities than a broad and simplistic one that state is used to. The social and political fallouts require state as well as social action, two forces through which caste inequalities are addressed.

Better availability of data helps both the forces. Two examples where state and social action has been helped by better availability of data are domains of gender and people with disabilities. In both cases, better availability of data, through census and other modes, have aided state and social actors to tailor their actions more effectively.

The balm of compassion and fraternity needs to know where it is most needed, a partially blind application helps little. Caste census will help better application of the balm, and though pains might take some time to subside, we might be closer to a better late than before.

*Author is Independent Researcher consulting with various development sector organizations.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



First case of sub-categorization

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have become the first states to go for sub-categorization, which is bound to change fabric of the reservation in these two states. Decision comes after the Supreme Court ruling few months back. If followed by other states, sub-categorization will have major impact.

Andhra Pradesh

In a landmark move aimed at enhancing social justice and equitable distribution of reservation benefits, the Andhra Pradesh cabinet recently approved the recommendations of a one-member commission on the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs). This decision revives and builds upon a long-standing demand that dates back over three decades, seeking to ensure that the most marginalized among SCs are not left behind in the race for affirmative action benefits in education, employment, and other social welfare programs.

What is Sub-Categorization?

Sub-categorization refers to dividing the broad Scheduled Caste category into smaller sub-groups or sub-castes, with the aim of ensuring fairer and more equitable access to reservation benefits. Over time, it has been observed that certain dominant sub-castes within the SC category have disproportionately benefited from reservations, while others, often more backward and marginalized, remain underrepresented.

By implementing sub-categorization, states can create internal quotas within the SC category, enabling a more just allocation of opportunities among historically oppressed

groups. This approach aligns with the principle of substantive equality — treating unequal's unequally to achieve real, not just formal, equality.

Historical Context: The idea of sub-categorization is not new. As early as 1975, the Punjab government issued a notification giving first preference in SC reservations to the Balmiki and Mazhabi Sikh communities, two of the most backward SC groups in the state. However, the concept hit a constitutional roadblock in 2004 with the E.V. Chinnaiah judgment, in which the Supreme Court struck down a similar attempt by the Andhra Pradesh government.



In the E.V. Chinnaiah case, the Court ruled that once a caste or community is included in the Presidential list of Scheduled Castes under Article 341 of the Constitution, it becomes part of an indivisible class. As such, no sub-classification could be made within this list by individual states. This decision effectively froze efforts to introduce targeted benefits within the SC category.

A Shift in Judicial Thinking

In 2020, the Supreme Court revisited the E.V. Chinnaiah judgment and acknowledged that the idea of SCs being a single homogenous category was problematic. It noted that 'unequal within the list of SCs exist', and pointed to the emergence of the 'creamy layer' concept among SCs as outlined in the 2018 Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta ruling. This signaled a willingness to consider differential treatment within backward classes to achieve true social equity.

Finally, in 2024, the Supreme Court gave a decisive ruling that allowed sub-categorization of SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs), provided that it is executed with stringent safeguards and based on verifiable data. Importantly, the Court clarified that Article 341 of the Constitution — which deals with the Presidential list of SCs — does not prohibit sub categorization; it merely

limits the President's role to notifying which communities are included or excluded.

Andhra Pradesh Commission's Role

The current decision by the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet builds on these legal foundations. The commission, appointed to study disparities within the SC population, examined socio-economic indicators, education levels, and employment statistics across various SC sub-groups. By recommending sub-categorization, the commission aims to ensure that benefits of affirmative action are not monopolized by a few relatively better-off sub-castes, but are more widely and fairly distributed. This decision is not Andhra Pradesh's first attempt at sub-categorization. The Justice Ramachandra Rao Commission in 1996 had already explored similar lines, but legal hurdles and lack of political will delayed implementation.

Understanding the Sub-Classification

Under the new framework, the SC community will be divided into three categories based on varying levels of social and economic backwardness:

- **Group I: 12 castes in total, which will receive 1% out of the total 15% SC reservation quota.**

Group I			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Bavuri	7	Godagali, Godagula
2	Chachati	8	Mehtar
3	Chandala	9	Paky, Moti, Thoti
4	Dandasi	10	Pamidi
5	Dom, Dombara, Paidi, Pano	11	Relli
6	"Ghasi, Haddi, Relli-Chachandi"	12	Sapru

- **Group II: 18 castes in total, which will receive 6.5% out of the total 15% SC reservation quota.**

Group II			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Arundhatiya	10	Jambuvuhi



2	Bindla	11	Kolupulavandlu, Pambada, Pambanda, Pambala
3	Chamar, Mochi, Munchi, Chamar-Ravidas, Chamar-Rohidas	12	Madiga
4	Chambhar	13	MadigaDasu, Mashteen
5	Dakkal, Dokkalwar	14	Mang
6	Dhor	15	MangGarodi
7	Godari	16	Matangi
8	Gosangi	17	Samagara
9	Jaggali	18	Sindhollu, Chindolhu

- **Group III: 29 castes in total, which will receive 7.5% out of the total 15% SC reservation quota.**

Group III			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Adidravida	16	Mala Hanai
2	Anamik	17	Malajangam
3	Aray Mala	18	Mala Masti
4	Arwa Mala	19	Mala Sale, Netkani
5	Bariki	20	Mala Sanyasi
6	Bygara, Byagari	21	Manne
7	Chalavadi	22	Mundala
8	Ellamalawar, Yellammalawandhi	23	Samban
9	Holeya	24	Yatala
10	HoleyaDasari	25	Valluvan
11	Madasikuruva, Madarikuruva	26	Adi Andhra
12	Mahar	27	Mashti
13	Mala, Mala Ayawaru	28	MithaAyyalvar

14	Mala Dasari	29	Panchama, Pariah
15	Mala Dasu		

Arguments in Favour of Sub-Categorization

Proponents of sub-categorization make several compelling arguments:

1. **Intra-Group Inequality:** Not all Scheduled Castes have progressed equally. Certain groups continue to face extreme deprivation and lack of access, despite decades of reservation.
2. **Data-Driven Policy:** Sub-categorization based on socio-economic data allows the state to fine-tune policies and ensure that the most disadvantaged truly benefit.
3. **Constitutional Backing:** Article 14 (Right to Equality) supports the idea of reasonable classification and differential treatment to promote substantive equality.
4. **Efficient Use of Quotas:** Without sub-categorization, dominant sub-castes continue to corner benefits, rendering affirmative action ineffective for the most oppressed.
5. **Caste Census Potential:** Implementing sub-categorization may pave the way for a much-needed caste census, which can serve as a basis for re-evaluating reservation policies across India.

Arguments Against Sub-categorization

However, not everyone supports the move.

Critics voice several concerns:

1. **Political Manipulation:** Sub-categorization may be used by political parties to appease particular caste groups, undermining the objectivity of the process.
2. **Violation of Article 341:** Some argue that any form of sub-classification tampers with the Presidential list of SCs, which only Parliament has the authority to amend.
3. **Fragmentation of Unity:** There's a fear that sub-categorization could lead to further fragmentation among Dalit communities, weakening their collective bargaining power.
4. **Administrative Complexity:** Creating sub-quotas within already existing quotas could complicate implementation and may result in legal and bureaucratic challenges.

Way Forward: Striking a Balance

The Andhra Pradesh government's move, while legally sound under the 2024 Supreme Court ruling, must tread carefully. The key to success lies in transparency, data-backed policymaking, and strict judicial oversight. Sub-categorization should not be a political tool,

but a well-reasoned, socially beneficial reform aimed at deepening the impact of affirmative action.

To that end, any sub-categorization must be rooted in quantifiable and demonstrable data. It should involve thorough socio-economic surveys, public consultations, and a robust review mechanism.

Moreover, the concept of excluding the ‘creamy layer’ within SC/ST communities — wealthier and better-placed members who may no longer require state support — must be implemented to ensure that benefits reach the truly marginalized.

In parallel, a caste census would offer invaluable insights into how different communities have progressed or lagged behind, enabling more targeted and effective policies.

Conclusion

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet’s approval of SC sub-categorization marks a significant step toward realizing the promise of social justice embedded in the Indian Constitution. While reservations have played a vital role in uplifting marginalized communities, they must evolve with time to reflect ground realities. Sub-categorization, if done with fairness and integrity, could ensure that the most disadvantaged within the disadvantaged finally receive their due. The journey ahead requires thoughtful policymaking, judicial guidance, and above all, a commitment to equity — not just equality. The Andhra Pradesh model could very well become a blueprint for other states, setting the stage for a more inclusive and just India.

Telangana

Telangana’s Bold Step Toward Fairer Reservations: Sub-Classifying the Scheduled Castes In a landmark development for Indian social justice, the Telangana government has taken a historic leap by passing the Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act, 2025, which officially sub-classifies Scheduled Castes (SCs) for the purpose of reservation benefits. This progressive move aims to ensure that the advantages of affirmative action are more equitably distributed among the most disadvantaged groups within the SC community.

This decision comes on the heels of a pivotal Supreme Court ruling in 2024, where a seven-judge Constitution Bench led by the then Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, upheld the constitutional validity of sub-categorization within the SCs. Overruling its earlier decision in E.V. Chinnaiah (2004), the court recognized

that the SC community is not homogenous and allowed states the flexibility to structure their reservation policies based on empirical evidence of backwardness. With this judicial green light, Telangana has become the first state in the country to implement internal quotas within the SC category — a transformative moment in the Indian reservation system.

Understanding Telangana’s Sub-Categorization Framework

Under the new system, Telangana has divided the SCs into three sub-groups, based on their relative levels of social, educational, and economic backwardness:

- **Group I: 15 castes in total, which will receive 1% out of the total 15% SC reservation quota**

Group I			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Bavuri	9	Manne
2	Beda (Budga) Jangam	10	Mashti
3	Chachati	11	Matangi
4	Dakkal, Dakkalwar	12	Mehtar
5	Jaggali	13	Mundala
6	Kolupulvandlu, Pambada, Pambanda, Pambala	14	Samban
7	Mang	15	Sapru
8	Mang Garodi		

- **Group II: Includes 18 castes, which are allotted 9% of the quota.**

Group II			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Arundhatiya	10	Jambuvulu
2	Bindala	11	Madiga
3	Chamar, Mochi, Munchi, Chamar-Ravidas, Chamar-Rohidas	12	Madiga Dasu, Mashteen



4	Chambhar	13	Pamidi
5	Chandala	14	Panchama, Pariah
6	Dandasi	15	Samagara
7	Dom, Dombara, Paidi, Panno	16	Sindhollu, Chindolhu
8	Ellamalawar, Yellammalawandhlu	17	Yatala
9	Godari	18	Valluvan

- **Group III: Comprising 26 castes, which will share the remaining 5% of the SC reservation.**

Group III			
Sr no	Names	Sr no	Names
1	Adi Andhra	14	Madasi Kuruva, Madari Kuruva
2	Adi Dravida	15	Mahar
3	Anamuk	16	Mala, Mala Ayawaru
4	Aray Mala	17	Mala Dasari
5	Arwa Mala	18	Mala Dasu
6	Bariki	19	Mala Hannai
7	Byagara, Byagari	20	Malajangam
8	Chalavadi	21	Mala Masti
9	Dhor	22	Mala Sale, Netkani
10	Ghasi, Haddi, Relli, Chanchandi	23	Mala Sanyasi
11	Gosangi	24	Mita Ayyalvar
12	Holeya	25	Paky, Moti, Thoti
13	Holeya Dasari	26	Relli

This restructured quota system is not just administrative in nature, but rooted in a vision of substantive equality — a principle that seeks to recognize and respond to the unequal

conditions within disadvantaged communities.

The Historical Demand for Sub-Categorization

The need for sub-classification within SCs is not new. For decades, various sections of the SC community — particularly the Madiga community — have expressed concerns that the existing reservation system disproportionately benefits the more dominant Mala community. Despite both being listed under the Scheduled Castes, the Malas have historically been in a better position to access education, employment, and political representation due to relatively better social mobility.


This perceived imbalance gave rise to a persistent demand for a more nuanced distribution of reservation benefits. Movements like the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) highlighted the growing frustration of communities that felt left out of the benefits intended for their upliftment. In the early 1990s, the Justice Ramachandra Rao Commission was constituted to study these disparities and recommended dividing SCs into four sub-categories. Although its recommendations were briefly implemented, the Supreme Court's 1999 decision striking them down brought reform efforts to a standstill — until the 2024 judgment revived the debate.



Legal Turnaround: A Game-Changer

The turning point came with the 2024 Supreme Court verdict that explicitly recognized that all SCs do not suffer the same degree of disadvantage. Drawing upon the principle of substantive equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution, the Court held that states are within their rights to make internal distinctions within the SC category, provided such distinctions are backed by quantifiable data.

Importantly, the Court clarified that Article 341 — which empowers the President to notify Scheduled Castes — does not preclude states from sub-categorizing these castes for fairer



distribution of benefits. This decision has now empowered states to address internal disparities and reimagine affirmative action as a more targeted and effective tool for social justice.

A Step Toward Real Equity

Telangana's implementation of this reform is groundbreaking not only in its intent but in its structure. By allocating different portions of the reservation quota based on the degree of backwardness, the state is acknowledging a critical truth — that inequality exists even within marginalized groups. This is a major step forward from the traditional “one-size-fits-all” reservation policy, which often allowed relatively better-off SCs to dominate access to resources, leaving the most vulnerable behind.

The state government has emphasized that the new law is backed by extensive data and consultations and is designed to ensure that reservation truly serves those in most need. The move also reinforces the idea that social justice should be both legally sound and practically effective. Potential for Nationwide Impact Telangana's bold decision is likely to have ripple effects across the country. Other states, particularly those with significant SC populations like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, may be inspired to review their own reservation frameworks. Andhra Pradesh, for instance, has already passed an ordinance introducing similar sub-classification, indicating a growing trend.

Furthermore, this reform could catalyze a broader national conversation about the need for a caste census, which would provide critical data to assess how benefits of affirmative action have been distributed so far. A comprehensive caste census could become the bedrock for more evidence-based policymaking in the future.

Addressing the Concerns

While the reform has been widely welcomed, it is not without its critics. Some have raised concerns that sub-categorization could further divide an already marginalized community,

weakening collective political strength. Others fear that it may lead to political manipulation of caste identities, especially in the run-up to elections.

Legal experts have also cautioned that administrative complexity could arise from managing multiple sub-quotas within a single reservation category. To ensure success, the state must design a robust implementation and monitoring framework. This includes:

- Transparent data collection
- Regular impact assessments
- Community feedback mechanisms
- Judicial oversight to prevent misuse

Additionally, it is essential that the “creamy layer” — the relatively well-off individuals within SC groups — be excluded from reservation benefits. This would further ensure that the most deprived sections truly benefit from affirmative action.

Conclusion: A Milestone in Social Reform

Telangana's sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes stands as a milestone in India's evolving social justice landscape. By acknowledging the layered realities within marginalized communities, the state has shown a willingness to go beyond symbolic reforms and take concrete steps toward equitable empowerment.

This is not just a legal or administrative victory — it is a moral affirmation of the principle that affirmative action must serve its intended purpose: to uplift the most disadvantaged. The move also sets a precedent for other states and invites a rethinking of how reservation policies can be made more effective, inclusive, and just.

As this new system unfolds, all eyes will be on its implementation. Its success will depend on sustained political will, administrative diligence, and community engagement. If executed with fairness and transparency, Telangana's model could well become the gold standard for reservations in the 21st century — one that ensures no group is left behind in the pursuit of social equity.

Team UV

uv@unheardvoices.co.in



Revanth Reddy
Telangana CM



N. Chandrababu Naidu
Andhra Pradesh CM



'No benefits & protection in case of conversion'

Prajvalant

In a recent judgment on May 2, 2025, the Andhra Pradesh High Court made it clear that anyone who converts out of Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism loses their Scheduled Caste (SC) status and the legal protections that come with it under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The case involved Pastor Chintada Anand of Guntur district, who had filed a caste-harassment complaint despite serving as a Christian minister for over ten years. The court found that once Anand became a Christian, he no longer qualified as an SC under the 1950 Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, and dismissed his complaint against the accused.

The bench, led by Justice Harinath, pointed out that the 1950 Order explicitly restricts SC status to followers of Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism. It noted that Christianity, by its teachings, rejects caste hierarchies, so caste-based protections simply do not apply once someone joins that faith. The court also criticized local police for registering the case without first verifying Anand's current religious affiliation, which allowed the misuse of a law meant to protect genuine victims of caste discrimination.

This decision echoes a landmark Supreme Court ruling from November 26, 2024, which held that converting to another religion purely to gain reservation benefits—but without sincerely believing in that faith—is “a fraud on the Constitution.” In the C. Selvarani case, the court found that Selvarani, born into a Christian family,

had regularly practiced Christianity yet later claimed to be Hindu just to obtain an SC certificate and secure a government job. The Supreme Court affirmed that such insincere conversions undermine both religious freedom (Article 25) and equality (Article 15).

The Supreme Court's judgment stressed that genuine conversion involves heartfelt acceptance of new beliefs, rituals, and community life. While courts cannot peer into anyone's innermost beliefs, they can look at solid evidence—such as baptism records, church attendance, and participation in religious rites—to decide whether a conversion is bona fide or merely tactical.

Together, these two rulings send a strong message: religious conversion cannot be used as a shortcut to claim caste-based benefits or protections. Reservation policies are designed to help communities historically subjected to caste oppression. Allowing strategic, insincere faith changes would strip reservation of its purpose and unfairly disadvantage true beneficiaries.

In the broader context, these judgments uphold the balance between two fundamental rights—freedom of religion and the right to equality. They ensure that conversions remain a matter of genuine personal faith and that reservation remains a targeted tool for social justice. By insisting on sincerity of belief, India's courts reinforce the Constitution's promise of an equitable society where rights and remedies serve their true purpose.



Indus River System Through Dr Ambedkar's Lens

Most of the Indus River System was included in the territory of Pakistan when India was partitioned in 1947. Sindhu Jhelum and Chenab Rivers were included in the territory of newly carved out Pakistan, while Raavi, Beas, and Sutlej (Satluj) remained in Indian Territory. This was the advent of the water crisis that was to be faced in the future. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar foresaw the crisis and sounded the alarm about it.

Bhimrao



Though we recall Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar as an icon of social revolution and human rights, he was not only a social reformer. He was also a great leader, who planned the natural resources available to India and drafted India's water policy. He did not perceive water merely as a natural resource. He perceived water as an essential basis for building the nation. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar envisaged the Sindhu River, which developed one of the most ancient cultures of the world called the Indus Civilization, as the basis of the making of modern India. He had foreseen possibilities of building a prosperous, self-reliant and powerful India using the water of the Sindhu River. Today, at a time when India has reclaimed her water resources by abeyance of the historic Indus Water Treaty, the futuristic thoughts of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar gain even more significance.

This article tracks the changes in the situation from the days of Sindhu Valley Development Project till the year 2025 in the

light of the water policy as envisaged by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and revival of India's original water policy. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was handling the charge of the Water Resources Department too. At the same time, he was Labour Minister in the Executive Council of the erstwhile British Viceroyalty between 1942 and 1946. During his tenure as the in-charge of the Water Resources Department, he chalked out a comprehensive multi-purpose scheme for the development of the Sindhu River system that was named the Sindhu Ghati Vikas Yojana (Indus Valley Development Scheme). Flood control, enhancement of irrigation facilities, production of hydroelectricity, agricultural development, and rural revival were the main objectives of the scheme. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar firmly believed that dry areas like Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Rajasthan can be turned into green lands through controlled and planned development of a grand River like Sindhu. He believed that the key to India's financial self-reliance was in the scientific use





of water resources.

India's partition and adumbration of water crisis

Most of the Indus River System was included in the territory of Pakistan when India was partitioned in 1947. Sindhu Jhelum and Chenab Rivers were included in the territory of newly carved out Pakistan, while Raavi, Beas, and Sutlej (Satluj) remained in Indian Territory. This was the advent of the water crisis that was to be faced in the future. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar foresaw the crisis and sounded the alarm about it. He thought that India should assert its sovereign and full rights over the water resources available.

Instead of adopting a water policy based merely on technical details, it should adopt a point of view focused on the sovereignty of the nation and food security. Thanks to the warnings given by him and the thoughts on what should be the policy of India, India showed a willingness to execute the Indus Water Treaty in 1960. Accordingly, the agreement was signed by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the then President of Pakistan, Mohammed Ayub Khan, at the instance of mediation by the World Bank. The treaty asserted India's right on the Raavi, Beas, and Satluj River, while permitting Pakistan to establish its right on the Sindhu, Jhelum, and Chenab Rivers.

Redevelopment of Sindhu river as a national heritage

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar did not look at the Sindhu River merely as a geographical feature. He envisaged it as a national heritage. In his view, she was India's lifeline. He thought that the development of water schemes was an integral part of building any nation. Water resource development is not merely a technological challenge. It is the pillar supporting agriculture, industrial development, and social justice. He developed a balance model for developing hydroelectricity projects, enhancing irrigation systems, and doing flood control by controlling the flow of the Sindhu River water. He recommended the formation of autonomous water resources development establishments in India on the lines of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which, he envisaged, to be supervised by technological experts and remain free from politics. Building a network of dams, reservoirs and canals on Sindhu and her tributaries, installing check dams for flood control, building facilities to supply safe water to rural as well as urban areas, enhancing the irrigation infrastructure for increasing agricultural production and

producing hydroelectricity by setting up hydroelectricity projects were key features of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's Sindhu Ghati Vikas Yojana (Indus Valley Development Scheme). Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar firmly believed that careful development of water resources would not only strengthen the agriculture sector, but also speed up industrialization and reduce unemployment.

Relevance of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's point of view


At a time when India is facing a water crisis and issues like floods and inequality in irrigation, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's Sindhu Ghati Vikas Yojana (Indus Valley Development Scheme) can prove to be a source of inspiration. He firmly believed that a nation's food safety can be guaranteed by maintaining proper audits of water, and scientific views, social justice, and national integrity must be included in the water policy for this purpose. The Sindhu Ghati Vikas Yojana (Indus Valley Development Scheme) proposed by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar stands as a testimony to his technological and scientific approach. The scheme could have proved a sound foundation to endeavours to improve the standard of life of Indian farmers, achieving rural development and building a strong nation. Although the government in rule at that time did not accept his proposal in entirety, his vision later proved to be a guiding light for several important projects and schemes such as Bhakra-Nangal, Damodar Valley Development, and Narmada Valley Development.

Relevance of Indus water treaty in present day context

Abeyance of the Indus Water Treaty by the Government of India in April 2025 has given rise to a fresh discussion on whether India should fully utilize the water of the Sindhu River. From a technological point of view, presently, India does not possess the capability required to block the Sindhu River water immediately because it needs a huge water storage capacity and base infrastructure. However, India can attain water security and achieve self-reliance in agriculture and power sectors by maximum utilization of the Sindhu River water by implementing schemes in phases, as envisaged by Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar in his Sindhu Ghati Vikas Yojana (Indus Valley Development Scheme).

India's new Sindhu river policy

The Indus Water Treaty was considered one of the most successful water treaties in the world till 1960. However, the circumstances have undergone a sea change in 2025. India, in 2025, has decided to keep the Indus Water



Treaty in abeyance. Far-reaching consequences of the decision are slated to affect the entire South Asia. As per the terms and conditions of the original treaty:

- India has full control over the Raavi Beas and Sutlej (Satluj) Rivers, which flow towards the East.
- Pakistan has major control over the Sindhu, Jhelum, and Chenab Rivers, which flow towards the West.
- India has limited permission to utilize the water of the rivers flowing towards the West without causing any major obstruction to the flow of water.

This arrangement gave direct access to Pakistan to approximately 80% water in the Sindhu River system. India was forced to adopt a strict view and reconsider its policies due to the brutal terror attack that took place at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir in April 2025. Therefore, citing national security as a reason, India decided to keep in abeyance the Indus Water Treaty. Consequently, the supply of the data concerning water flow and reservoirs to Pakistan was stopped, and India made a declaration announcing a review of its rights over the rivers.

India's decision is not merely a formal announcement. It is an indication of India's changing geopolitical policies and her firm resolve to re-establish its rights on the resources in its possession. India has launched several projects to fully utilize its share of water resources over the last few years. These projects and their present status are as follows:

- Shahpurkandi Dam project located on the Raavi River in Pathankot district, Punjab: Completed in the year 2024
- Seepi River (tributary of Jhelum River) Dam project: - Construction has commenced
- Raavi-Beas Link project for integrated water management: Under construction

These projects are slated to help India enhance its agricultural irrigation and hydroelectric generation capacity as well as to do effective flood control.

However, we are still facing some challenges. India does not possess adequate base infrastructure required to utilize the water of the rivers flowing towards the west. Therefore, building new dams, canal systems, and increasing water storage capacity rapidly is essential.

Threat to Pakistan

The Sindhu River system is the lifeline of Pakistan. Her agriculture, power generation, and water supply depend on the Sindhu River system. If water flow changes without prior

intimation, Pakistan will be forced to face either devastating floods or an acute water shortage. If India gains control over the water flow gradually, Pakistan may face the following crises immediately: -

- The collapse of the flood alert system due to the non-availability of water flow data.
- Damage to crops in Punjab and Sindh provinces due to water shortage.
- A decrease in electricity generation as major dams like Mangla and Tarbela will be affected.

Besides, Pakistan may face the following crises in the long term:

- Acute shortage of fresh water as the Sindhu River system is the source of 90 per cent of Pakistan's fresh water.
- Reduction in agricultural production resulting in a food-grain price hike, and causing an acute food shortage
- Economic recession, especially centred around the agricultural economy.
- Social unrest and conflicts over water in rural areas are causing insecurity.
- Endangerment to national security, an increase in internal clashes, and tension among provinces.

Thus, it is clear that the abeyance of the Indus Water Treaty is not merely a diplomatic blow.

It may endanger the very existence of Pakistan. India's capabilities to make this happen are as follows:

- Major projects like Baglihar Dam on Chenab River and Kishanganga Project on Jhelum River already exist.
- Several minor and major projects which are underway presently.

However, to gain full control over the water in the Sindhu River system, India will have to complete the construction of dams and canal projects, which are already underway at the earliest. She will have to give top priority to the new projects and manage technological, financial, and political resources available to her effectively. Sindhu is no more a mere river. She is a focal point of strategic control and regional stability. India has adopted an aggressive water policy, leaving Pakistan confused. The victory depends on who implements water policy rapidly. War for water has begun, and every drop of water has its price.

The original Marathi article was published in Marathi daily 'Samrat'.

*Author is an retired senior public sector official and a scholar of the Ambedkarite and Periyar movements.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Dr Ambedkar, Savarkar & Congress

Surprising it may seem in the present-day context, but Swatantryaveer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar were good friends. Moreover, there was a striking similarity in the thoughts of Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar. Read on....

Munish Kumar



The Congress Party ensured that Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar did not win any Lok Sabha Election. He was forced to face defeat at the hands of Congress candidates, not only before the independence but also in 1952 and the byelections for the Bhandara constituency in 1954. However, he made his way to the Rajya Sabha in 1952.


Swatantryaveer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Dr Ambedkar were good friends. Both had the same opinion on the entry of Dalits inside temples and other issues concerning reforms. On an occasion, Swatantryaveer Savarkar invited Dr Ambedkar to install an idol at a temple. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Lokmanya Tilak and Savarkar are revered in Maharashtra even today. Savarkar is one of the few leaders who were the first ones to undertake major reformatory and progressive initiatives aimed at uplifting the untouchables.

When he reached Ratnagiri after his release in January 1924, he said he was going to run a sustained campaign for uplifting the untouchables from there. He organized several major programs aimed at the entry of untouchables inside the Hanuman temple and the untouchables and upper caste people having lunches together. He constructed the Patit Pawan Temple for Dalits. In those days, before Swatantryaveer Savarkar launched his initiatives, only Maharshi Dayanand was undertaking such campaigns.

Similarly, Dr Ambedkar was the first leader to launch a campaign to ensure that the rights of the untouchables are respected by staging a satyagraha and drinking water from the Chavdar Tale tank situated at Mahad in Raigad district on 20th March 1927. Hundreds of untouchable people too drank the water of Chavdar Tale, notwithstanding that the people who participated in the 'Satyagrah' led by Dr Ambedkar were attacked.

Dr Ambedkar had differences with the leftists. He considered the Aryas to be aboriginal Indians. He has stated this in his book 'Who Were the Shudras'. Thus, his ideology differs from the ideologies propagated by the so-called pro-Dalit and leftists today. Dr Ambedkar was also a supporter of Sanskrit, a fact mentioned by noted biographer-historian Dhyananjay Keer in his celebrated book 'Babasaheb: Life and Mission'. Dr Ambedkar expressed his respect for Sanskrit by calling it an 'ancient language and language of knowledge'.

Although the so-called Pro-Dalits, Seculars, and Leftists of the present day go to all lengths to project Swatantryaveer Savarkar as a coward and communal, the fact is Swatantryaveer Savarkar is probably the only leader striving for independence of India, who was sentenced to the harshest imaginable punishment of life imprisonment for two lifetimes. He played the main role in the assassination of ATM Jackson, the Collector and District Magistrate of Nashik.



Madan Lal Dhingra, the Indian revolutionary freedom fighter and Indian student at the University College of London, who assassinated Sir William Hutt Curzon Wyllie, the political aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India, in London, was a disciple of Swatantryaveer Savarkar.

Surprising it may seem in the present-day context, but there was a striking similarity in the thoughts of Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar. A detailed study of the lives of both national heroes reveals striking similarities in the thoughts of both legendary leaders. Both leaders worked from Maharashtra. Both had pursued their higher education in Britain. While Dr Ambedkar was an opponent of the Muslim League and Barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Savarkar was an icon of the opponents of the Muslim League and Barrister Jinnah.

On the Muslim League's demand for the creation of Pakistan, Dr Ambedkar's opinion was that the issue be resolved permanently. He believed that a permanent resolution to the issue could be found by ensuring that people of only one faith lived in both Bharat and Pakistan at the time of the partition of the country. Therefore, he repeatedly voiced his demand for the exchange of population. This has been stated in elaborate detail in his book 'Thoughts on Pakistan'. However, his demand was totally neglected.

Similarly, Swatantryaveer Savarkar was opposed to the partition. He advocated more powers to Hindus in unified India. He emphasized on militarization of Hindus for this purpose. Noticing the failure of attempts to overcome the terrorizing communalism, it can be said, both Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar advocated two-nation theory.

Both Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar had differences of opinion with Mahatma Gandhi. Both Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar had publicly denounced Mahatma Gandhi's policy of Muslim appeasement. Dr Ambedkar openly opposed Mahatma Gandhi when the latter linked the non-cooperation movement with the Khilafat movement. Swatantryaveer Savarkar too opposed the decision of Mahatma Gandhi when he was released from jail later on.

Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar were great writers. Dr Ambedkar authored more than a dozen books including 'Thoughts on Pakistan' and 'Who Were the Shudras' to spread public awareness. Swatantryaveer Savarkar, to his credit, too authored over a dozen books including 'The Indian War of Independence of 1857', 'Gomantak', 'Moplyanche Banda: Arthat

Mala Kay Tyache?' and 'Hindutva' and led hundreds of Indian youths to armed revolution. His books became a clear voice against the policy of Muslim appeasement adopted by Congress. Swatantryaveer Savarkar's 'The Indian War of Independence of 1857' proved to be the first and only book that was banned by two countries even before it was published. Somehow, its manuscript was smuggled to India through boats and the revolutionaries published them surreptitiously. The book reached several Indian youths inside the country and abroad. The book led to the making of many Indian revolutionaries. The volume authored by Swatantryaveer Savarkar became a guiding light akin to Bhagvad Geeta for the revolutionaries. Swatantryaveer Savarkar was the first one to emphasize that the rebellion of 1857 was India's first war of independence. Had it not been for the history volume, the British government succeeded in suppressing this angle and imbibing in the minds that it was a mutiny.

Dr Ambedkar's views on the Aryas were exactly opposite of the views expressed by the self-styled pro-Dalits. He stated that the Aryas were natives of India. Both Dr Ambedkar and Swatantryaveer Savarkar were opponents of Communism in India.

It was the pettiness of some organizations, political parties and individuals that they underestimated the legendary social reformer Dr Ambedkar and projected him merely as a Dalit reformist and a Dalit thinker. He was an extremely knowledgeable person with majestic qualities. Probably, he was the most learned man of his time. No other person living in contemporary India possessed high qualifications as Dr Ambedkar possessed. Still, attempts to restrict his legacy were made out of ignorance and mal-intentions.

Though Dr Ambedkar entered politics of elections, he never minced words while stating what was the truth. That is why he had to face defeat in elections before Independence and even after India attained her freedom. He never allowed political interests to overcome his reformist views. He constantly opposed the fundamentalist approach adopted by the Muslim League. He always opposed the Muslim appeasement policy of Congress.

Unfortunately, the self-proclaimed Ambedkarites and his critics failed to understand Dr Ambedkar and to evaluate him appropriately.

*Author is a renowned journalist, historian
and writer
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

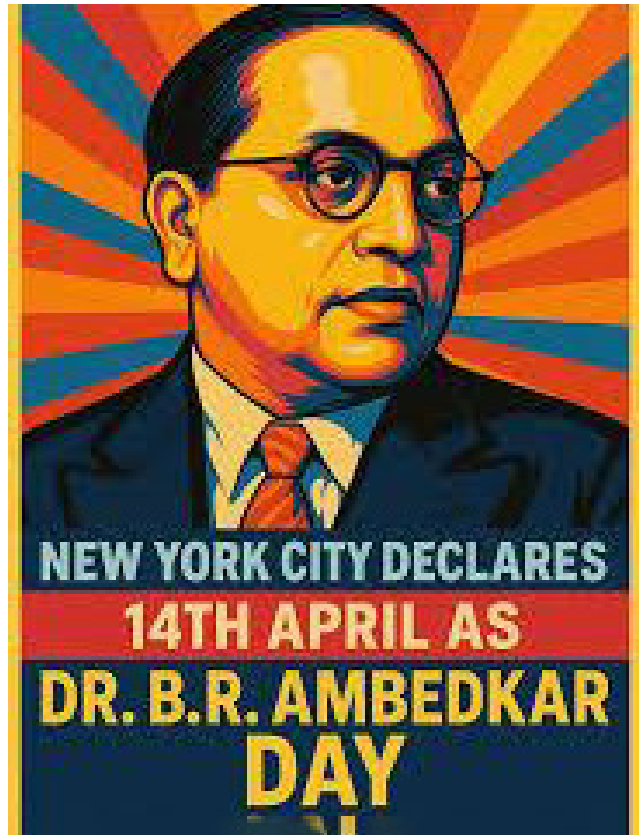


Dr Ambedkar's Legacy Turns Global Beacon For Equality

Dr Chandrashekhar




Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is increasingly being recognized as a global icon of equality. His vision and relentless fight against social discrimination resonate strongly in today's world, where inequality persists on various fronts. Interpreted through diverse perspectives, Ambedkar's philosophy offers powerful tools for challenging injustice. At the heart of his thoughts lies the principle of equality, which continues to inspire movements across the globe, encouraging societies to strive for dignity, justice, and equal rights for all individuals.



A New York Spring Day: When Ambedkar's dream lit up the United Nations on a crisp April morning in 2025, New York City Mayor Eric Adams stood before a diverse crowd at the United Nations headquarters, holding a proclamation that would etch Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's name into the city's multicultural tapestry.

"Today, we declare April 14 as Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Day," Adams announced, his voice echoing through the chamber. Behind him, a portrait of Ambedkar—scholar, jurist, and liberator of millions—gazed solemnly at the audience. Among the attendees was Deelip Mhaske, a Mumbai-born activist who had spent over a decade lobbying for this moment. "This isn't just a piece of paper," Mhaske later remarked. "It's a bridge between Ambedkar's India and our fight for justice in America."

The proclamation was more than symbolic. It marked the culmination of a global movement, one that began in the 1920s when Ambedkar himself walked the halls of Columbia University, drafting ideas



that would later dismantle caste apartheid in India. Now, a century later, his teachings are igniting revolutions from Silicon Valley to London.

Global Proclamations: A Timeline of Ambedkar's Institutional Legacy Since 2020, cities and nations worldwide have institutionalized Ambedkar's birth anniversary as a day of reflection and action:

North America

1. Burnaby, Canada (2020–2024)

- Declaration: April 14 as “Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Day of Equality.”
- Story Behind the Scenes: The Chetna Association of Canada, led by Jai Birdi, partnered with Dalit artists like Simran Kranti to turn academic symposiums into cultural celebrations at Simon Fraser University. “We wanted Ambedkar’s message to resonate beyond textbooks,” Birdi told The Voice Online in 2023.

2. California, USA (2021)

- Declaration: “Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Equality Day.”
- Key Players: The Foundation for Human Horizon (FHH) mobilized over 10,000 signatures in a petition drive, citing Ambedkar’s 1923 slogan, “Educate, Agitate, Organize”.

3. New York City, USA (2024)

- Landmark: Co-naming of East 63rd Street as “Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Way.”
- Quote: “This street is where marginalized voices reclaim history,” said Mhaske, whose FHH organized youth-led walks to the site.

4. Michigan, USA (2024)

- Declaration: April 9–15 as “Social Equity Week.”
- Collaboration: Partnered with the Ambedkar Association of North America (AANA) to host workshops on caste and race intersectionality. A keynote by Dr. Suraj Yengde drew parallels between Ambedkar’s Annihilation of Caste and Martin Luther King Jr.’s Letter from Birmingham Jail.

5. Toronto, Canada (2023)

- Parliamentary Motion: Recognized Ambedkar’s contributions to human rights, led by MP Jagmeet Singh, who cited Ambedkar’s influence on his advocacy for Sikh and Dalit rights.

Europe

1. London, UK (Annual since 2015)

- Event: The Ambedkar Memorial Park hosts thousands for parades blending Punjabi drumbeats with readings of Annihilation of

Caste.

- Cultural Fusion: In 2023, British-Indian rapper Heems performed “Dalit Panthers,” a track sampling Ambedkar’s speech.

2. Berlin, Germany (2022)

- Initiative: The Ambedkarite International Coordination Society launched “Caste-Free Campus” workshops, inspired by Harvard’s anti-discrimination policies.

3. Amsterdam, Netherlands (2024)

- Declaration: April 14 as “Day Against Caste Discrimination.”
- Art Installation: A mural of Ambedkar and Dutch anti-colonial hero Anton de Kom was unveiled, symbolizing solidarity between marginalized communities.

Asia-Pacific

1. Melbourne, Australia (2023)

- Declaration: April as “Dalit History Month.”
- Event: A photography exhibit titled “Unseen Chains” showcased Dalit labour in Indian brick kilns juxtaposed with Aboriginal land rights struggles.

2. Kathmandu, Nepal (2024)

- Declaration: April 14 as “Social Justice Day.”
- Collaboration: Nepali Dalit activists partnered with FHH to screen “Jai Bhim,” a Tamil film on caste violence.

The Architects of Change

Behind every proclamation are grassroots organizations blending activism with artistry. Here are the unsung heroes:

1. Foundation for Human Horizon (FHH)

- Founder: Deelip Mhaske, who fled caste-based discrimination in Maharashtra’s Vidarbha region in 2005.
- Mission: “To make Ambedkar’s Constitution a living document,” says Mhaske.
- Tactics: In 2023, FHH collaborated with Columbia University to host “Ambedkar and Dewey:

Reimagining Democracy,” a symposium linking Ambedkar’s Columbia education to his constitutional vision.

- Youth Programs: The “Ambedkar Youth Fellows” initiative mentors second-generation Dalit-Americans to lead community workshops on caste equity.

2. Equality Labs

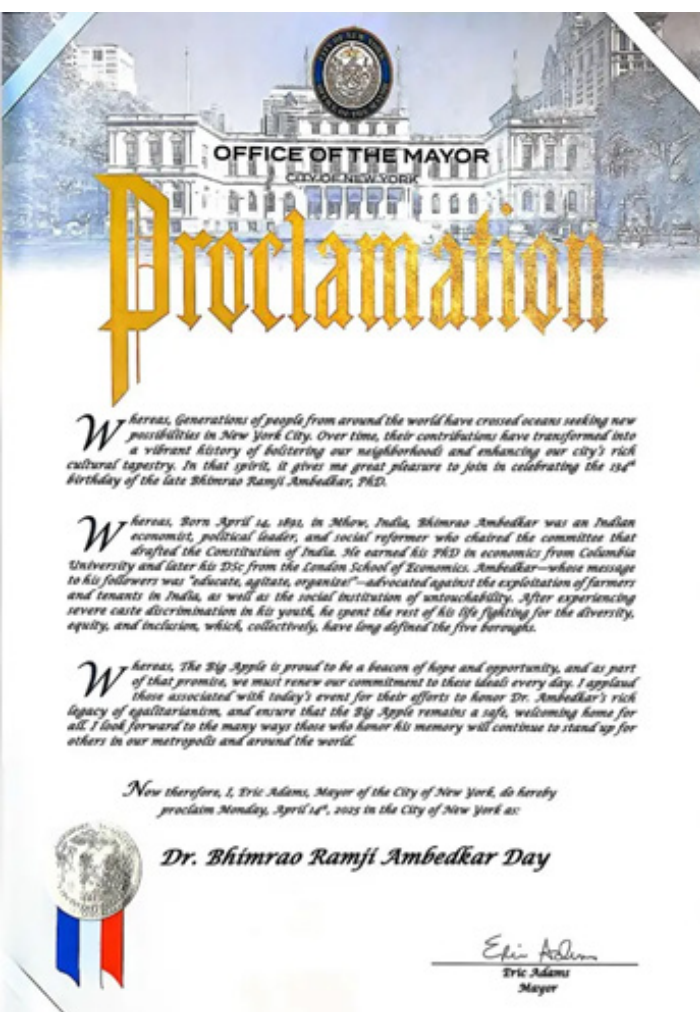
- Founder: Thenmozhi Soundararajan, a Dalit feminist and daughter of Tamil Nadu migrants.
- Impact: Their 2018 survey revealed that 1 in 4 Dalits in the U.S. face caste discrimination, a statistic cited in California’s 2021 proclamation.



- Artistic Edge: In 2024, they partnered with filmmaker Ava DuVernay on “Caste: The Unseen Chains,” a documentary juxtaposing Dalit and Black American struggles.

3. Ambedkar Association of North America (AANA)

- Origin: Formed in the 2000s by IT workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Cultural Revival: Their annual “Ambedkar Jayanti Dinners” in New Jersey feature Dalit cuisine like sabudana khichdi—a dish once deemed “low-caste” in India.



- Tech Advocacy: In 2022, AANA pressured Silicon Valley firms like Google to add caste to employee diversity trainings, citing Ambedkar's emphasis on “dignity of labour”.

4. Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organizations UK (FABO UK)

- Founding: Established in 1990 by Punjabi Ravidassia migrants in London.
- Milestone: In 2024, FABO UK secured funding for the “Ambedkar-Mandela Dialogue

Series,” exploring parallels between anti-apartheid and anti-caste movements.

The Diaspora's Journey: From Indian Villages to American Suburbs Migration Waves: A Statistical Snapshot

- 1965–1990s: After the U.S. Immigration Act, 1–2% of Indian migrants were Dalits, many from Maharashtra's Nagpur district (Ambedkar's birthplace).
- 1990s–2000s: The IT boom drew 20,000–40,000 Dalits to Silicon Valley, per Equality Labs.
- 2020s: Activists like Suraj Yengde (Harvard) migrated to “amplify caste in the race discourse,” as he wrote in Caste Matters (2019).

Regional Roots

- Punjab: Ravidassia Sikhs, who revere Guru Ravidas, a 15th-century Dalit saint, dominate diaspora communities in Brampton, Canada.
- Tamil Nadu: Dalit Christians, descendants of 19th-century convert, lead interfaith dialogues in Chicago churches. There is one Patel family, who migrated from Gujarat's Mehsana district to California in 1998. “In India, we were ‘untouchables,’ but here, we're ‘Patels’—a name that hides our caste,” says Ramesh Patel, a software engineer, his daughter Priya, co-founded a Stanford student group called “Dalit Women Rise,” blending Ambedkarite philosophy with #MeToo activism. “Ambedkar taught us to fight invisibility,” she says.

Ambedkar in 2025: A Living Legacy

At the University of Michigan's 2025 “Social Equity Week,” students screened “Jai Bhim”—a Tamil film on caste injustice—followed by a panel with Black Lives Matter organizers. “Ambedkar and Malcolm X shared a language of resistance,” argued panellist Dr. Cornel West.

Meanwhile, in London, the Ambedkar Memorial Committee unveiled a statue of Ambedkar clutching the Indian Constitution, its pages inscribed with Article 15: “No discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.”

In India, the movement has come full circle. The UN's 2025 proposal to adopt April 14 as “International Equality Day”—first suggested by India in 2016—gained traction after New York's proclamation. “Ambedkar's light guides us,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. “Let's ensure it shines for generations.”

Author is a Professor and Dean of Mechanical Engineering Department in Madhav Institute of Technical and Science, Gwalior, MP
uv@unheardvoices.co.in

Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai



Bhushan Gavai is the new Chief Justice of India. We have 51 Chief Justices till the date and Bhushan Gavai is the second justice with Scheduled Caste background. Earlier, this post was held by K G Balkrishnan. This is a great moment for all of us that justice with a deprived background is holding the top most post in judiciary. In the last few years, such welcome signs are seen, which are indicative of changing social dynamics. This needs to be welcomed.

Adv. Ritik

On May 14, 2025, Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai will take oath as the 52nd Chief Justice of India, becoming only the second person from a Scheduled Caste background to occupy the country's highest judicial office, after Justice K.G. Balakrishnan. In a legal system historically dominated by upper-caste privilege, his elevation marks more than a ceremonial transition, it is a landmark moment in the pursuit of representation, equity, and constitutional justice.

Justice Gavai's journey is one of resilience, public service, and a lifelong commitment to the ideals of social justice. Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Maharashtra, he is the son of R.S. Gavai, a respected Ambedkarite leader,

parliamentarian and former governor.

Raised in a home steeped in the principles of equality and justice, Gavai began his legal career in 1985 at the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court, specializing in constitutional and administrative law. His consistent diligence led to his appointment as a judge of the Bombay High Court in 2003, elevation to the Supreme Court in 2019, and now, to the apex of the judiciary.

While Justice Gavai's career is commendable in its own right, the symbolic significance of his appointment cannot be overstated. In a democracy where justice must not only be done but also be seen to be done, his presence on the bench is a long overdue reflection of India's



diversity. It is a rare instance where someone from a background historically excluded from power has made it to the top despite, not because of, the system. The context surrounding his elevation paints a troubling picture of caste-based exclusion in India's judiciary. Despite Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and minorities making up over 80% of India's population, 77% of High Court judges appointed since 2018 have been from upper-caste communities, as per data released by the Union Law Ministry in March 2025. Among the 715 judges appointed during this period, only 22 were SCs, 16 STs, 89 OBCs, and 37 from minority communities.

This is not an isolated phenomenon, it reflects a broader pattern of systemic exclusion. In India's Group A services, SCs comprise just 11.1%, STs 4.6%, and OBCs 12%, while a small upper-caste elite, just 18% of the population, controls over 70% of top government jobs. These numbers expose how "merit" is frequently a stand-in for inherited privilege, with access to opportunity unequally distributed from the very beginning. The roots of this imbalance lie in a long history of caste-based discrimination that begins not in courtrooms or offices, but in classrooms. Over the past few years, scholarship programs for marginalized communities have been systematically defunded. Pre-matric scholarships for SC students have been cut by 57%, for OBCs by 77%, and for minorities by a staggering 94%. These cuts are not just fiscal decisions, they are barriers that lock generations of students out of higher education and professional careers, including law and the judiciary.

Adding to this inequity is the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, which introduced a 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among upper castes. Unlike reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs—grounded in historical and structural disadvantage, EWS is based solely on income, ignoring the deep-seated social discrimination that affirmative action was designed to address. Ironically, families earning up to ₹8 lakh per year are eligible for EWS benefits, while many Dalit and tribal students are denied basic support.

These disparities have real consequences for access to justice. India has only 20 judges per million people, far short of the 50 per million recommended by the Law Commission. More than 5 crore cases are pending across the country, and over 5,000 judicial positions remain vacant, especially at the district and subordinate court levels, where the judiciary is most accessible to ordinary citizens. For

marginalized communities, courtrooms often become sites of secondary victimization: the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is frequently under-enforced, with victims facing police indifference, intimidation, and protracted delays.

It is in this grim landscape that Justice Gavai's rise offers a rare glimmer of hope. His judicial record is marked by consistency and constitutional fidelity. He has been part of significant benches, including the verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370, the Prashant Bhushan contempt case dealing with free speech and judicial dignity, and the 2023 demonetization ruling. While some of these decisions have sparked debate, his jurisprudence has consistently reflected seriousness, balance, and institutional integrity.

Yet his most powerful contribution may not lie in any single judgment, but in what his very presence on the bench represents. It disrupts the entrenched notion that leadership in the judiciary is reserved for the privileged. It challenges the insularity of a system that has long operated as a closed network. And it offers a vision of a more democratic judiciary, one where justice is not only dispensed but also lived, embodied, and reimagined.

His appointment also revives urgent conversations around judicial reform, particularly the establishment of the long-proposed All India Judicial Services (AIJS). Modelled on the civil services, the AIJS could create a transparent, merit-based recruitment process that prioritizes diversity and representation. It would help fill judicial vacancies efficiently, reduce arbitrariness in appointments, and ensure that the judiciary better reflects India's vast and varied population.

As Justice Gavai assumes the office of Chief Justice, he carries with him not just the responsibilities of upholding the Constitution, but also the aspirations of millions who have long stood at the margins of institutional power. His leadership will be judged not only by the verdicts he delivers, but by the inclusive, accountable, and courageous institution he helps shape.

In the words of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "Caste is a monster... You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster." Justice Gavai's rise does not kill the monster, but it confronts it. And in doing so, he reminds us that a truly just India is still possible, if we have the courage to build it.

*Author is practicing Lawyer at Bombay High Court Nagpur Bench.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

Key judgments of Justice Gavai

Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai has been a part of several significant Supreme Court judgments. Here are some notable cases where he served as a bench member:

1. **Vivek Narayan Sharma v. Union of India (2023) – Demonetization Verdict**

Justice Gavai authored the majority opinion upholding the Union Government's 2016 demonetization scheme. The Court held that the decision was legally valid, proportionate to its objectives, and implemented with adequate consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.

2. **Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2024) – Electoral Bonds Scheme**

Justice Gavai was part of the Constitution Bench that struck down the 2018 Electoral Bonds Scheme. The Court found that the scheme infringed upon citizens' right to information and compromised transparency in political funding, thus violating the core tenets of electoral democracy.



3. **In Re: Article 370 of the Constitution – Abrogation of Article 370**

Justice Gavai was part of the five-judge bench that unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370, which revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The judgment affirmed the Parliament's authority to alter the state's constitutional relationship with the Union.

4. **State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh (2024) – Sub-classification within Scheduled Castes**

In this case, the seven-judge Constitution Bench, including Justice Gavai, held that sub-classification of Scheduled Castes among reserved categories is permissible for granting separate quotas for more backward groups within the SC categories.

5. **Directions in the matter of demolition**

of structures, In Re (2024) – Bulldozer Demolitions Case

Justice Gavai, along with Justice K.V. Viswanathan, held that demolishing the homes of accused individuals without due legal process was unconstitutional. The bench criticized arbitrary state action and underscored the need for procedural safeguards.

6. **Common Cause v. Union of India (2021) – Extension of Tenure of Enforcement Directorate Director**

Justice Gavai was part of the bench that upheld the Central Government's order extending the tenure of the incumbent Director of Enforcement beyond two years. The Court held that there is no fetter on the power of the Central Government in appointing the Director of Enforcement beyond a period of two years.

7. **Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings LLC v. Future Retail Ltd. (2022) – Enforceability of Emergency Arbitrator's Award**

Justice Gavai, along with Justice R.F. Nariman, ruled that an award passed by an Emergency Arbitrator is enforceable under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. This judgment was significant in the context of the Future-Amazon dispute.

8. **Neeraj Dutta v. State (Govt of NCT of Delhi) – Validity of Circumstantial Evidence in Bribery Cases**

Justice Gavai was part of the bench that dealt with the admissibility and sufficiency of circumstantial evidence in bribery cases, emphasizing the need for a complete chain of evidence to establish guilt.

9. **Kaushal Kishore v. State of Uttar Pradesh – Freedom of Speech and Expression**

In this case, Justice Gavai was part of the bench that examined the scope of freedom of speech and expression, particularly in the context of statements made by public functionaries.

10. **In Re: Prashant Bhushan & Anr – Contempt Petition Against Prashant Bhushan**

Justice Gavai was part of the bench that heard the contempt proceedings against senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, addressing issues concerning free speech and judicial accountability.

These judgments reflect Justice Gavai's involvement in significant constitutional and legal matters, showcasing his contributions to Indian jurisprudence.



Overseas Higher Education Scholarship & Schemes

Empowerment through Education

The Social Studies Foundation (SSF), established in 2019, serves as a beacon of hope for Scheduled Caste (SC) students, helping them overcome the barriers that often hinder their participation in global research and higher education. Recognized as a Research Institute under the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, SSF has a mission: to empower SC students to rise above socio-economic challenges and achieve academic excellence on a global scale. Despite their dedication and academic prowess, many SC students face systemic challenges that prevent them from accessing opportunities that could propel them to the world stage. Issues such as insufficient access to information, financial constraints, and limited guidance are common hurdles that SSF seeks to address.

Dr Shashi



Struggles of SC Students in Higher Education

Historically, the Scheduled Castes have faced systemic discrimination and social exclusion, which has left them grappling with numerous obstacles in their pursuit of higher education. These barriers often manifest in several ways—be it in the form of financial constraints, lack of guidance, or the challenges that come with cultural and institutional biases. For SC students, accessing the full spectrum of opportunities available in the academic world remains a daunting task.

Among the challenges they face, one of the most significant is the lack of awareness regarding scholarships and schemes, particularly those aimed at supporting overseas education. While the Government of India, along with various state governments and private entities, offer a plethora of scholarships to encourage SC students to pursue higher education abroad, these schemes often remain out of reach for many due to insufficient information, complicated application processes, and the lack of



institutional support.

This gap in awareness and access contributes to the feelings of inferiority and apprehension that many SC students experience when considering higher education abroad. The perception that they are not welcome or supported in international academic circles only adds to their anxiety. The Social Studies Foundation's efforts, therefore, have been pivotal in bridging this gap and offering practical solutions to overcome these challenges.

2022 Conferences: A Platform for Discussion

In 2022, SSF organized a series of five conferences across key cities in India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Lucknow, under the theme "Scheduled Castes in Independent India: Present & Future." These conferences were a vital platform for exploring the current status of SC community and brought together Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors from various universities to discuss the strengths, challenges, as a community member our role to resolve the challenges and SC activities across the different universities by SC communities today.

One of the central themes that emerged from these discussions was the limited access of SC students to Overseas Higher Education Scholarships, which are offered by both the Central and State Governments.

Despite the availability of such scholarships, many eligible students remain unaware of them or face significant hurdles in accessing them. These scholarships, which could greatly alleviate financial burdens and open doors to global academic opportunities, often remain out of reach due to procedural difficulties, lack of proper guidance, and the overwhelming complexity of the application processes.

The conferences served as a critical space for competent authorities, educators, researchers to discuss these issues. By providing insights into the challenges faced by SC students, the conferences not only helped raise awareness about the barriers to accessing higher education abroad but also catalyzed dialogue on how to rectify these problems.

Addressing the Information Gap:

Workshops on Overseas Higher Education Scholarships In response to the concerns raised during the conferences, the SSF took swift and proactive steps to assist SC students in navigating the often-complex landscape of Overseas Higher Education Scholarships. Recognizing that many students lacked the necessary information and support to successfully apply for these scholarships, SSF initiated a series of workshops designed to educate and guide students through

the application process.

These workshops were conducted by a team of distinguished experts, including Dr. Shashi Bala, an Assistant Professor at Ramjas College, New Delhi; Dr. Chandrashekhar Malvi, Professor and Head of the Mechanical Department at MITS Gwalior, both of whom had earned their Ph.Ds. from the UK through the National Overseas Scholarship in 2013; Dr. Anoop Kumar Tiwari, Assistant Professor at the Central University of Haryana; and Dr. Aditi Narayani, Assistant Professor at the University of Delhi. These experienced academics, with their extensive knowledge and personal experience in obtaining overseas scholarships, were instrumental in guiding students through the intricacies of the application process.

The first of these workshops were organized in New Delhi in February 2025, with the help of local NGOs. Held on the 15th and 16th of February, these workshops were attended by 28 and 20 students, respectively. The aim was clear: to demystify the process of applying for Overseas Scholarships and provide students with the tools they needed to succeed. Through expert guidance, participants gained a better understanding of the eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and deadlines for various scholarships. The workshops also allowed students to ask specific questions regarding their applications, such as the importance of Letters of Recommendation (LoRs), personal statements, and other supporting documents.

The success of these initial workshops prompted SSF to expand the initiative to other parts of India. Subsequently, workshops were organized in Nagpur, Gadchiroli, and Delhi, attracting a wider pool of students. The session at the Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology (VNIT) in Nagpur saw 60 bachelor's and master's students participating, while 178 students attended the workshop at Shivaji Mahavidyalaya in Gadchiroli. At Ramjas College, University of Delhi, 35 students were introduced to the nuances of overseas scholarships.

Key Themes and Insights from the Workshops

Throughout the series of workshops, several themes consistently emerged, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities for SC students in accessing scholarships for overseas education. Some of the key takeaways from the workshops include:

1. Awareness and Information Dissemination:

Many students were unaware of the numerous scholarships available to them, both from government and private sources. By directly engaging with students and providing comprehensive information, SSF was able to



bridge this knowledge gap.

2. Documenting the Right Credentials:

A recurring query among students was the documentation required for scholarship applications. Commonly, students faced confusion over the specific documents needed, such as Letters of Recommendation (LoRs) and personal statements. Experts at the workshops helped clarify these requirements and advised students on how to obtain the best recommendations to strengthen their applications.

3. Understanding the Application Process:

The application processes for overseas scholarships often appear daunting to students unfamiliar with international academic norms. The workshops addressed these concerns by breaking down the steps involved in applying for scholarships, from filling out application forms to navigating online portals and deadlines.

4. Encouraging Alumni Involvement:

The workshops featured alumni of the National Overseas Scholarship (NOS) program, who shared their experiences and insights about the challenges and successes they encountered. Their first-hand accounts proved to be invaluable, as they offered a sense of reassurance to students who might have felt overwhelmed by the prospect of studying abroad.

5. Empowerment through Mentorship:

In addition to information dissemination, the workshops emphasized the importance of mentorship. Students were encouraged to seek guidance from faculty, alumni, and experts in their fields of interest to ensure they were prepared for both the application process and the academic rigors of studying abroad.

Future Steps: Ensuring Sustained Support for SC Students

While the workshops have had a positive impact on SC students, the journey does not end here. SSF aims to continue its work of empowering students by creating long-term,

sustainable support structures.

One such initiative could involve the creation of an online portal that aggregates all available scholarships, application guidelines, and success stories, making it easier for students to access information and connect with mentors. Additionally, SSF plans to extend its reach to more cities and universities, ensuring that no student is left behind due to a lack of resources or knowledge. Furthermore, SSF continues to engage with policymakers to advocate for more inclusive scholarship schemes that address the specific needs of SC students. By pushing for greater transparency, simplification of application procedures, and increased funding for SC students, SSF aims to ensure that these students have equal access to the opportunities that can shape their futures.

Conclusion

The Social Studies Foundation's efforts to support SC students in their quest for higher education and research opportunities are crucial in ensuring that these students can break free from the socio-economic constraints that have historically limited their access to global opportunities. Through conferences, workshops, and continued advocacy, SSF is playing an instrumental role in changing then narrative for SC students in India. By providing the necessary resources, information, and guidance, SSF is empowering these students to pursue their dreams, not just in India, but on the global stage. Ultimately, the foundation's work is a testament to the transformative power of education. When barriers to higher education are removed, students from historically marginalized communities can rise to the challenges of the global academic arena, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse world of research and scholarship.

*Author is working as a Assistant Professor
of Chemistry in Ramjas College, University
of Delhi
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*





Why Understanding India's Sociology Matters?

The decision of the Central Government to include caste enumeration in the upcoming Census is a progressive and necessary step toward addressing the deep-rooted social inequalities in India. Caste discrimination, particularly against SC, ST & OBC remains pervasive across both government and private sectors, despite constitutional safeguards and reservation policies. The caste census is not merely a political exercise but a vital sociological tool to understand the complex fabric of Indian society and to pave the way for genuine equality and unity.

Caste discrimination in India is widespread and manifests in various forms—from social exclusion and economic deprivation to denial of opportunities in education and employment. The government sector has implemented reservation policies to uplift SC, ST, OBC, and more recently, the Economically Weaker Sections among upper castes. However, the so-called



"merit" narrative propagated by some upper-caste groups often undermines these efforts by questioning the capabilities of reserved category candidates. In reality, the majority of beneficiaries of reservation come from these marginalized groups, including economically weaker sections of upper castes, which challenges the myth that reservation is a privilege of only a few. The debate surrounding reservation is often misdirected. It is not about opposing affirmative action but about understanding the social realities of India. As Raja Shahu Maharaj famously said, caste discrimination will persist until the caste system itself is dismantled. The caste census will provide empirical data to better understand the socio-economic conditions of various communities, especially in the post-COVID era where migration, job changes, and financial instability have reshaped Indian society. This data will help formulate policies that go beyond mere schemes and address structural inequalities.

Since independence, caste data has been excluded from the national census, with the last comprehensive caste enumeration dating back to 1931. This absence of data has hindered the government's ability to design targeted policies for social justice. While some states have conducted caste surveys, these have lacked

uniformity and transparency. Including caste enumeration in the national census will ensure reliable, standardized data collection, which is crucial for equitable resource distribution, affirmative action monitoring, and understanding the true demographic composition of India.

The caste census will also shed light on urban poverty, wealth disparities, gender issues, class dynamics, and geographic variations, thus offering a holistic socio-economic understanding of India. This comprehensive picture will strengthen the nation's unity in diversity by acknowledging and addressing the challenges faced by different communities.

Contrary to popular belief, caste discrimination is not confined to rural or public sectors. It is prevalent in India's urban private sector as well. Many private employers harbor biases against Dalits and other marginalized castes, often relegating them to low-level positions despite their qualifications. The private sector's refusal to acknowledge caste-based discrimination and the absence of legal protections exacerbate this problem. For example, even highly qualified individuals from Dalit backgrounds face prejudiced remarks such as "You don't sound like a Dalit," revealing deep-seated stereotypes and ignorance about Indian society.

Such discrimination extends beyond India's borders. Among the Indian diaspora, caste biases persist, affecting social interactions and opportunities. Studies in Australia have documented how Dalit children are excluded from social events and face caste-based ostracism. This systemic discrimination is a form of intersectional racial prejudice that continues to affect the lives of Dalits and tribal communities abroad, highlighting the global nature of casteism.

Personal experiences underscore the need for a caste census. As a son of a road sweeper who has achieved a stable career with a degree from a top global university, I have encountered casteist remarks that reveal societal ignorance. These experiences are not isolated but reflect the everyday reality for many from marginalized communities. The caste census will provide the data necessary to dismantle stereotypes and implement policies that promote equality.

The caste census is a step toward fulfilling the constitutional mandate under Article 340, which calls for investigating the conditions of socially backward classes.

The caste census is not merely a count of social groups but a crucial instrument for understanding the socio-economic realities of India. It will



help dismantle caste-based discrimination by informing policies that promote genuine equality and social cohesion. As India navigates the challenges of the post-pandemic world, this data will be indispensable in building a more just and united nation-Bharat that truly reflects its diversity and democratic ideals.

This decision by the Central Government to conduct a caste census is a bold and necessary move to confront the realities of caste discrimination head-on and to create a foundation for inclusive growth and social justice in India.

*Author is Pune based journalist.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

SC/ST Faculty Severely Under-Represented at IIT Delhi, Parliamentary Panel Told

Only 3.1% of faculty at IIT Delhi belong to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category and 1.2% to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category, falling far short of the mandated 15% and 7.5% quotas respectively, data submitted to a parliamentary panel reveals. Out of 642 faculty members, just 20 are SC and eight are ST, leaving a shortfall of 76 SC and 40 ST faculty members. The figures were shared with the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes ahead of its review visit on April 11.

The committee, led by MP Faggan Singh Kulaste, is reviewing the implementation of constitutional safeguards for marginalized communities at premier institutions. During its visit, it held closed-door meetings with SC/ST faculty and students, who raised concerns over exclusion, lack of representation in leadership roles, and institutional apathy toward caste-related research.

According to memoranda submitted by faculty representatives, many departments lack a single SC/ST faculty member. The documents further allege that no SC/ST faculty has been appointed to top administrative roles like Dean or Associate Dean.

Telangana Becomes First State to Implement SC Sub-Categorization

Telangana has become the first state in India to implement the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs), following the Governor's assent to the Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act, 2025. The Government Order (GO) was published in the Telangana Gazette on April 14—coinciding with the birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar.

Under the new law, 59 SC communities have been classified into three groups to ensure equitable distribution of the existing 15% SC reservation in government jobs and education. Group-I, comprising 15 most disadvantaged communities, will receive 1%

reservation; Group-II, with 18 moderately benefited communities, will get 9%; and Group-III, consisting of 26 relatively advanced SC groups, will have a 5% share.

"This is a historic act of social justice" Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said, calling the reform a long-overdue step toward equitable representation. Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy confirmed that the implementation begins immediately, with all future job and education allocations reflecting the new categorization.



SC/ST Act Not Applicable to Converts to Christianity: Andhra Pradesh HC

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has ruled that individuals who convert to Christianity cannot seek protection under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. In a judgment dated April 30, Justice Harinath N stated that a person ceases to be a Scheduled Caste member upon conversion and thus cannot invoke the Act's provisions.

The case involved a pastor who alleged caste-based abuse. However, the Court held that since he had been a practicing Christian for over a decade, he was ineligible for SC/ST Act protections, regardless of whether his caste certificate had been officially cancelled. The Court also dismissed related IPC charges, calling the complaint 'false' and stating that no purpose would be served by subjecting the accused to trial.

*Compiled by Prajvalant.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

DIN VISHESH



Remembering Sant Kabir

11th June Sant Kabir Birth Anniversary

Sant Kabir was a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and social reformer whose teachings and verses had a profound impact on challenging caste discrimination in India. He was born into a low-caste (likely a weaver

community called Julaha), and much of his work was a bold critique of the rigid and oppressive caste hierarchy of his time.

Sant Kabir was a prominent figure in the Bhakti movement, which stressed personal devotion to God without the mediation of priests or rituals. His teachings promoted the idea that God is accessible to all, irrespective of caste or religion, thereby undermining the authority of caste-based religious practices.

One of Sant Kabir's most famous couplets on caste is:

"Jati na puchho sadhu ki, puchh lijiye gyaan,

Mol karo talwaar ka, pada rahne do myaan."

("Don't ask the caste of a saint, ask about their knowledge; Value the sword, not the sheath it comes in.")

This doha highlights his core message: that a person's worth should be judged by their knowledge and character, not by their birth.

Sant Kabir openly criticized the caste system, particularly targeting Brahmanical supremacy. He believed that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God. In many of his dohas (couplets), he questions the logic of caste and emphasizes the inner purity and devotion of a person over birth-based social status.



17th May
Sant Chokhamela
Death Anniversary



22nd May
Raja Ram Mohan Roy
Birth Anniversary



27th May
Ramabai Ambedkar
Death Anniversary



28th May
V.D. Savarkar
Birth Anniversary



31st May
Ahilyabai Holkar
Birth Anniversary

To subscribe us,
simply scan or click
on this QR code and
fill the form.

