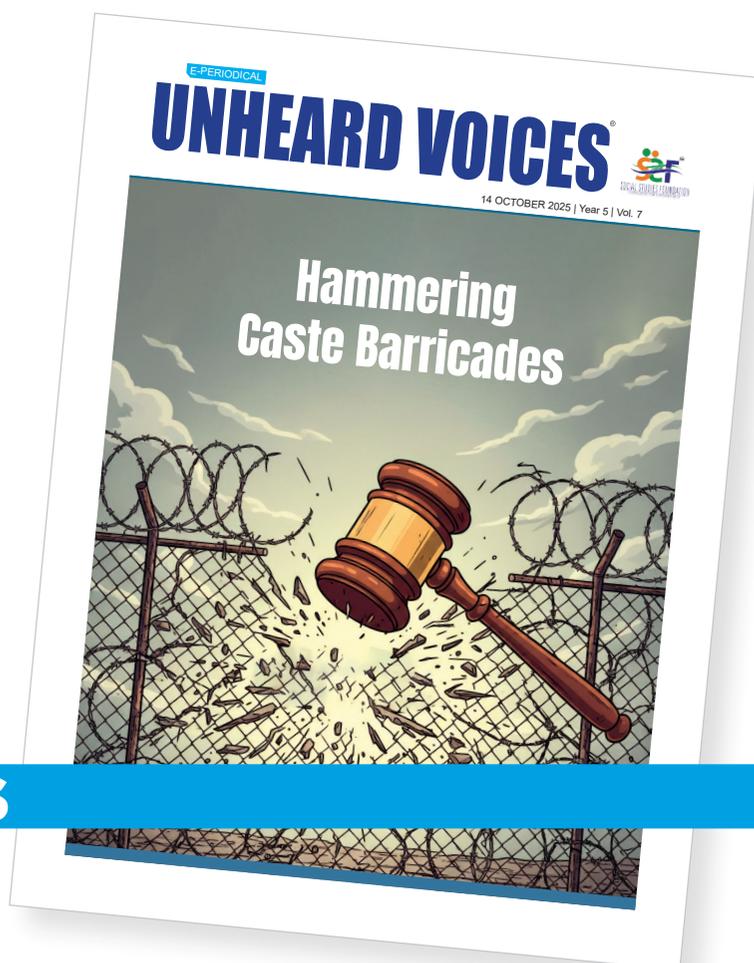


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Hammering Caste Barricades





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UP Government's decision

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EDITORIAL

UP Shows The Way

The Uttar Pradesh government's recent decision to remove caste identifiers from police records and to ban caste-based rallies marks a watershed moment in India's ongoing journey towards social equality and national integration. Acting on the directive of the Allahabad High Court, the state has chosen to strike at the very roots of caste-consciousness in public administration and politics — a consciousness that has divided Indian society for centuries and distorted governance even in independent India.

This is not merely a bureaucratic reform. It is a courageous socio-political statement — that the government machinery will now see a citizen first, not his caste label. For decades, caste identifiers in First Information Reports (FIRs), arrest memos, and police files have subtly perpetuated bias. The very presence of caste in such documents often influences investigation priorities, witness treatment, and even media narratives. The High Court rightly observed that there is no rational justification for recording caste in routine police procedures. The judiciary's moral reasoning is simple but profound: glorifying caste contradicts the spirit of the Constitution, which seeks to create an egalitarian society. The Uttar Pradesh government deserves credit for translating this constitutional morality into concrete action. It is the first state in India to make such a bold administrative change — a move that could serve as a model for others.

India's caste structure remains vast and complex. Scholars and census estimates speak of around 3,000 main castes and more than 25,000 sub-castes across the country. Scheduled Castes constitute roughly 16–17% of India's population, Scheduled Tribes about 8–9%, and Other Backward Classes nearly 40–45%. Uttar

Pradesh alone has over 60 Scheduled Castes and numerous OBC groupings, making it one of the most caste-diverse states in the country. Caste consciousness often becomes a political tool rather than a social reality. Instead of working for welfare or justice, many politicians have historically mobilised voters along caste lines, reducing the democratic process to arithmetic of "who belongs to which group." The result has been division, resentment, and even caste-based violence. By erasing caste from the daily lexicon of policing and prohibiting caste-centric public processions, the UP government is daring to reverse this decades-old trend.

The decision to ban caste-based rallies is equally historic. Such rallies, often organised under the pretext of "honouring" a particular community or leader, have in reality become showcases of political muscle. They reinforce boundaries between communities and create competitive victimhood, fuelling social tensions. By prohibiting these public displays, the government is sending a powerful message — that political or social mobilisation must be issue-based, not caste-based. This aligns perfectly with the ideals of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who warned that India could not be a truly united nation unless caste distinctions were dismantled. The government has not stopped anyone from celebrating social reformers or cultural heroes; it has only drawn a line against the misuse of caste as a divisive identity.

Critics argue that removing caste references may affect the implementation of laws like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. But the state's notification has wisely provided exceptions: caste details will still be recorded in cases where such information is essential for justice or welfare benefits. What has been eliminated

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is not the recognition of caste-based injustice but it's unnecessary mention in contexts where it only fuels prejudice. This balance between equality and protection is precisely what modern governance requires. We must continue to protect the vulnerable, but without allowing caste to dominate every sphere of public interaction.

All of us are dreaming for a caste-free public sphere for a long time. This is the right aspiration for a confident, modern nation. Uttar Pradesh, once known for caste violence and political polarisation, has shown the courage to lead this transformation. The decision resonates with the spirit of the constitution as the reform also has a psychological dimension. When a citizen approaches a police station or administrative office, the removal of caste identifiers restores his dignity as an individual, not a member of a birth-based group. Over time, such changes can alter the mindset of officials and citizens alike. Bureaucracy often shapes social behaviour — when the state ceases to recognise caste in its functioning, society too begins to view it as irrelevant.

In the long run, this reform could influence

the tone of political discourse. Parties that thrive on caste-based calculations may find themselves forced to reinvent their strategies and focus on governance, infrastructure, education, and employment — the real issues that affect people's lives. That will be a welcome shift in the political culture of Uttar Pradesh, and indeed, of India. It may take India to inclusive growth beyond sectarian divisions. The UP decision is a natural extension of that philosophy — translating moral intent into administrative reality.

If implemented sincerely and safeguarded against misuse, this policy can become a turning point in India's social evolution. It could pave the way for a generation that identifies itself not by caste but by competence and contribution to the nation. The battle against casteism cannot be fought only in courts or classrooms; it must also be fought in files, forms, and daily governance. Uttar Pradesh has taken the first decisive step. Other states should follow suit — not because the High Court ordered it, but because the time has come to heal India of its oldest social wound. This may unfold a blueprint for a new India — confident, united, and just.

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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

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Uttar Pradesh government decision to remove caste identifiers from police record and to ban caste rallies has generated debate. Decision was actually a judicial initiative but government decision also cannot be neglected. UNHEARD VOICES is presenting both sides of this major step.



Debate over UP Government's decision

K. Prasanna



In the heart of India's ancient social tapestry, where the shadows of caste have long dictated fates, a ray of transformative justice emerges from the hallowed halls of the Allahabad High Court. On September 19, 2025, the court issued a landmark directive to the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) and the state's Home Department, mandating the excision of caste identifiers from First Information Reports (FIRs), arrest memos, and all police documentation.

The Allahabad High Court's recent directive to the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) and the state's Home Department to remove caste identifiers from First Information Reports (FIRs) and police files is a groundbreaking step in the direction of promoting equality and fairness in India's law enforcement system. This decision carries immense importance as it seeks to dismantle one of the most deeply ingrained sources of social discrimination and bias in the criminal justice system—the caste-based categorization of individuals. The court's direction to revise the police manual and frame new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can help further in creating a more just and equitable legal system.

Significance of Decision

Caste-based discrimination remains one of the most pervasive forms of inequality in India. Despite the legal framework prohibiting caste-based discrimination under the Indian Constitution, the ground realities for many individuals, particularly those from the



Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), are far from equal. The caste system continues to influence various aspects of life, including education, employment, and access to justice. The inclusion of caste identifiers in police records and FIRs has exacerbated this issue, often perpetuating a cycle of bias and prejudice within the justice system.

The Allahabad High Court's directive comes as a critical move to de-link caste from police investigations and FIRs. The inclusion of caste in police files and investigations has led to severe consequences that undermine the core principles of justice, such as equality before the law and non-discrimination. Removing caste-based categorization will contribute significantly to eradicating such biases from the criminal justice system, ensuring a more transparent and impartial approach to law enforcement.

Ending Caste-Based Bias in Law Enforcement

One of the key issues that the court addresses is the use of caste-based classifications in FIRs and police files. This practice has long perpetuated the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups in society. By recording the caste of individuals involved in criminal activities—whether as victims, accused, or witnesses—there has been an inherent risk of reinforcing prejudices that limit fair judgment and equal treatment.

For example, when caste-based identifiers are included in police files, it often leads to an implicit bias within law enforcement. Officers may unconsciously or consciously give different levels of importance to cases depending on the caste background of those involved. This not only affects the speed and quality of investigations but also taints the broader perception of justice in society, particularly for those from marginalized communities. By removing caste from police documentation, the court is promoting the notion that criminal activity should be treated uniformly, regardless of the social background of individuals involved.

Moreover, caste identifiers have historically been used to discriminate against Dalits and other marginalized groups in India. In many instances, this has led to the reluctance to report crimes committed against these communities, or worse, biased investigations where the police fail to provide fair treatment due to societal prejudices. By eliminating caste-related references, the police and judicial systems are encouraged to focus solely

on the facts of the case and not on the social identity of the individuals involved.

Promoting Equality Before Law

A key pillar of the Indian Constitution is the principle of equality before the law. Article 14 guarantees that no individual shall be discriminated against on the grounds of caste, creed, gender, or religion. However, the continued inclusion of caste in police records undermines this fundamental right by perpetuating a system where the caste background of an individual influences how they are treated under the law.

By removing caste identifiers from FIRs and police files, the Allahabad High Court is taking a step toward realizing the true meaning of equality before the law. This decision sends a powerful message that an individual's caste background should not determine how they are perceived by the criminal justice system. Whether someone is an accused, a victim, or a witness, their caste should not play a role in

The police will no longer have the opportunity to make biased judgments based on the caste of the individuals involved in a crime. This will help in ensuring that all citizens are treated equally and justly, irrespective of their background. Moreover, the new SOPs proposed by the court will likely promote better investigation procedures that are free from caste-based prejudices, which will go a long way in improving the overall functioning of the law enforcement system.

shaping the investigation or legal proceedings that follow.

Furthermore, eliminating caste references will help in making law enforcement agencies more accountable. As the court pointed out, such practices may influence the psyche of law enforcement officials, shaping their perceptions of individuals based on their caste. This ingrained bias affects police officers' behaviour and decision-making, leading to an unequal distribution of justice. When caste is removed from police records, officers will be better positioned to treat each case purely



on its merit, without the influence of societal biases.

Strengthening Accountability and Transparency

One of the primary functions of the police is to investigate crimes impartially and transparently. However, caste identifiers in police records have created a situation where transparency and fairness are often compromised. In some cases, caste-based biases influence how police handle certain investigations or how cases are presented in court. This lack of objectivity in the handling of criminal cases weakens public trust in the justice system.

By removing caste from police records, the Allahabad High Court's decision will enhance accountability and transparency. The police will no longer have the opportunity to make



biased judgments based on the caste of the individuals involved in a crime. This will help in ensuring that all citizens are treated equally and justly, irrespective of their background. Moreover, the new SOPs proposed by the court will likely promote better investigation procedures that are free from caste-based prejudices, which will go a long way in improving the overall functioning of the law enforcement system.

Shaping a More Progressive and Inclusive Society

The decision to eliminate caste from police records has far-reaching implications for social cohesion in India. For decades, the caste system has been a major source of division in Indian society, affecting the way people view and interact with one another. By addressing this issue in the criminal justice system, the

Allahabad High Court is contributing to the broader goal of fostering a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

This move aligns with the broader vision of making India a more progressive nation, where individuals are recognized and treated based on their abilities and character, rather than their social identity. The court's ruling emphasizes that the criminal justice system must reflect the core values of fairness and equality that are enshrined in the Constitution. By removing caste from police files, it helps shift the focus from divisive factors to what truly matters—ensuring justice is served to all individuals, irrespective of their social or economic background.

Tackling Deep-Rooted Social Inequality

India's social structure is deeply rooted in its caste system, which continues to affect individuals from marginalized communities even in modern times. The fact that caste identifiers are still present in police files perpetuates this systemic inequality, as it often leads to differential treatment for people based on their caste. This problem is particularly acute for individuals from Dalit, Adivasi, and OBC communities, who continue to experience discrimination in various forms, including in the criminal justice system. The court's directive to remove caste identifiers is an attempt to break this cycle of inequality. By ensuring that caste is no longer a factor in the handling of criminal cases, the judicial system is taking an active role in dismantling caste-based biases. Over time, this decision will contribute to changing the societal perception of marginalized communities, helping reduce caste-based discrimination in everyday life.

Conclusion

The Allahabad High Court's decision to remove caste identifiers from FIRs and police files is a crucial step in creating a more just and equitable criminal justice system in India. By addressing the deeply rooted issue of caste-based discrimination within law enforcement, this ruling promotes fairness, transparency, and equality before the law. It is a decision that has the potential to transform how marginalized groups experience justice and legal processes, contributing to a more inclusive and progressive society. Moving forward, the implementation of new SOPs and the de-casteification of police records will help ensure that India's criminal justice system is truly blind to caste, creating a fairer and more equal society for all.

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Allahabad HC decision on caste: A judicial overreach



Chandrashekhar



Allahabad High Court's directive, while born of good intentions, is a judicial overreach that prioritizes performative neutrality over substantive justice. It perpetuates the very inequalities it seeks to end by blinding the law to caste's weaponization.

We must urge the Supreme Court to take Suo motu cognizance.

In a landmark ruling, which took many people in the country aback, the Allahabad High Court on September 21, directed the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) and the state Home Department to remove all references to caste from First Information Reports (FIRs), police files, and related documentation. The court has further mandated the framing of a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to institutionalize this erasure, ostensibly to foster impartiality & to 'curb discrimination' in law enforcement. On the surface, this appears as a noble quest for colour-blind justice—a rejection of identity politics in the machinery of the state. But dig deeper, and this decision reveals itself as a profoundly misguided, even perilous, intervention that undermines the very foundations of equitable policing, data-driven policy, and historical accountability in a nation scarred by caste-based atrocities.

As someone who has spent years dissecting the intersections of law, society, and identity in India, I must oppose this directive unequivocally. Far from promoting neutrality, it risks sanitizing systemic biases, obscuring patterns of caste violence, and rendering marginalized communities invisible in



the eyes of the law. In a country where caste remains a lived reality for over a billion people — shaping everything from access to education and jobs to the brutalities of everyday life — this move is not progressive; it is regressive. It echoes the ostrich-like denialism of those, who once argued against affirmative action by claiming merit alone suffices, ignoring centuries of engineered inequality.

Uttar Pradesh, with its history of caste clashes from the 1980s anti-reservation riots to the recent Hathras horror, cannot afford such amnesia. This article argues why this judicial fiat must be challenged, reconsidered and ultimately reversed. To grasp the folly, consider the core rationale peddled by the court: that mentioning caste in FIRs fosters prejudice and hamper's 'objective' investigations. The bench, led by Justice Vinod Diwakar invoked the spirit of the Indian Penal Code and CrPC, insisting that caste details are extraneous unless directly relevant to the offense.

They pointed to a case involving a Dalit survivor of assault where the FIR's caste notation allegedly biased the probe. Fair enough—sloppy policing that weaponizes identity against victims is abhorrent. But the solution cannot be a blanket prohibition. This is akin to banning mentions of gender in rape cases to avoid sexism or race in hate crime reports in the U.S. to sidestep racism. Absurd? Precisely. Such overcorrections don't eliminate bias; they blind us to it. Caste in India is not a mere social construct to be wished away; it is a constitutional imperative. Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of caste, while Articles 16 and 46 mandate reservations and protections for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These are not feel-good add-ons; they stem from the horrors documented by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly debates—horrors that continue today. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2024 data, crimes against SCs rose by 13.1% in Uttar Pradesh alone, with over 12,000 cases registered. These figures are not pulled from thin air; they rely on caste notations in FIRs to classify atrocities under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Strip that away, and how do we track whether a Dalit farmer's land dispute or a Yadav strongman's turf war is fuelled by caste vendettas? We don't. We get a homogenized crime ledger where upper-caste impunity masquerades as universal justice.

This erasure is not neutral—it is a gift to the powerful. In UP, where the BJP governance has been accused by activists of diluting atrocity laws (recall the 2018 amendments struck down by the Supreme Court), removing caste from records could neuter prosecutions. Imagine a Hathras-like incident: a 19-year-old Dalit woman allegedly gang-raped and murdered in 2020. The FIR's explicit caste mention galvanized national outrage, leading to Supreme Court intervention and policy scrutiny. Without it, the narrative shrinks to a woman killed — tragic, yes, but devoid of the structural rage that demands caste-specific safeguards. Perpetrators from dominant castes evade the enhanced penalties of the Atrocities Act, and the state shrugs off its duty under Article 21's right to life with dignity. Data from the Centre for Equity Studies shows that 70% of atrocity cases in UP involve upper-caste accused against lower-caste victims. Hide the caste, and you hide the pattern. Policy-makers, starved of granular stats, will chase ghosts: rising rural crime instead of escalating Brahmin-Thakur dominance in village panchayats. Critics might counter, but what of privacy? Caste disclosure stigmatizes victims. Valid concern, but the court's SOP could address this surgically—redact caste in public summaries while retaining it in internal files for statistical and prosecutorial use. The EU's GDPR allows similar balancing acts for sensitive data like ethnicity in hate crime tracking. India's own Aadhaar system anonymizes biometrics without discarding them. Why not a tiered FIR: victim details blinded for media, but preserved for the Director of Prosecutions? Blanket removal is lazy jurisprudence, ignoring tech solutions like encrypted metadata or AI-flagged classifications. Moreover, victims often insist on caste notation; it's their shield under law, not a scarlet letter. In a 2023 PIL before the Supreme Court, Dalit groups argued that anonymizing caste in records correlates with a 20% drop in conviction rates, as evidence of intent to humiliate evaporates.

Let's confront the politically uncomfortable truth: caste awareness in policing is not the problem; caste ignorance is. UP police force, 90% upper-caste per a 2022 Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative report, already skews investigations against the marginalized. In 2024, the UP-Human Rights Commission logged 1,500 complaints of caste-based custodial bias. Teaching officers to note caste objectively—via mandatory training under the Police Act—builds accountability, not

prejudice. The court's fear of psychology of the enforcer presumes cops are bigots awaiting a trigger; better to assume competence and equip them with tools. Without caste data, how do we audit? The UP government's own 2025 caste census pilot (delayed but underway) relies on disaggregated crime stats to allocate reservation quotas. Erase them, and we are back to the 1950s Mandal-era blind spots, where OBC underrepresentation festered unchecked.

Globally, this defies best practices. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program mandates race/ethnicity in U.S. hate crimes, enabling the DOJ to target Klan remnants or anti-

material facts. In a state with 80% rural illiteracy and 200 dialects, omitting caste—who the victim is in their community's eyes—distorts narratives. A 2021 study by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences found that 65% of rural UP crimes involve inter-caste motives, from honour killings to water disputes. Investigators, already overburdened (UP has one cop per 800 citizens, per BPRD 2024), will fumble without context. *Défense* lawyers will pounce: No caste mentioned? No prima-facie atrocity! Convictions plummet; trust erodes. And for what? A utopian fiction of impartiality in a society where 52% of households report caste discrimination (Pew 2023 India survey). The human cost is starkest for the voiceless. A 14-year-old Valmiki girl in Saharanpur, thrashed for drawing water from an upper-caste well. Her FIR's caste tag invokes the Atrocities Act's fast track courts and witness protection. Scrub it, and she is just another assault victim, lost in the queue. This is not abstract; it is the story of Laxmi Agarwal (not the acid attack one, but a composite of thousands). Activists like Bezwada Wilson of Safai Karam Chari Angolan decry this as digital untouchability — erasing Dalit suffering from state memory. UP's 2025 budget allocates ₹5,000 crore for SC welfare; without crime data, it's guesswork, not targeted aid.

In conclusion, the Allahabad High Court's directive, while born of good intentions, is a judicial overreach that prioritizes performative neutrality over substantive justice. It perpetuates the very inequalities it seeks to end by blinding the law to caste's weaponization. We must urge the Supreme Court to take *Suo motu* cognizance, as it did in the Bulandshahar violence case, and strike this down. Simultaneously, the UP government should pilot a smart redaction SOP: retain data internally, anonymize externally, and train forces rigorously. Civil society—from the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights to bar associations—must mobilize petitions and amicus briefs.

Caste is not the enemy; unaddressed casteism is. By forcing the state to confront it head-on, not hide from it, we honour Ambedkar's vision: not a casteless society tomorrow, but a just one today. Only then can UP's police files tell the full story—not a sanitized tale, but a mirror to our fractured soul. Let us not erase the ink of history; let us write the future with it.

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Asian spikes post-COVID. The UK's College of Policing requires protected characteristics, logging under the Equality Act 2010, which exposed disproportionate Black incarceration and spurred reforms. Even in caste-riven South Africa, post-apartheid Truth Commissions documented ethnic identities to heal divides, not heal them away. India's Supreme Court, in its 2022 Patel vs. State judgment, upheld caste as a relevant factor in sentencing for atrocities, precisely to deter recurrence. The Allahabad bench's unilateralism flouts this precedent, risking a federal patchwork where UP's caste-free files clash with Bihar's or Tamil Nadu's robust tracking.

Practically, this SOP is a nightmare. FIRs, under Section 154 CrPC, must capture all

Post Matric Scholarship scheme for SCs: Need for Better Execution



Once a great man wisely said – ‘Education is not just literacy; it is the development of character’. Education is one of the most essential components of human development, which enables one to achieve other development goals across the spectrum. The UNO included education as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recognized it as a fundamental right of every person.

Niharika

The need to include it in the SDGs arises out of the lack of easy access to education among masses all over the world due to various reasons, one of which include being economically weak and a victim of social discrimination. This is evident in the case of the scheduled castes. They have been deprived of primary and higher education for decades now. To redress the imbalance, the government of India introduced the “post-matric scholarship” scheme in 1944. It was last revised in 2021 by its implementer, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, extending the period through to 2025-26.

This scheme aims to supplement financial assistance to SC students to help them complete education beyond matriculation and enhance the General Enrolment Ratio (GER) among the students. Scheme Design and Features Students

of Indian nationality from the SC communities whose annual parental income is under 2.5 lakhs are the target beneficiaries of the PMS-SC scheme. The assistance provided by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and the respective state governments include maintenance allowance ranging from ₹2,300 to ₹12,000 annually for day scholars and hostellers, depending on the type of course. Along with this, these typing/printing charges for Research Scholars up to Rs.1600, study tour charges up to Rs.1600 and special assistance for students with disabilities constitutes as a component of this scheme.

The funding pattern under this scheme was changed in 2021-22 to a 60:40 Centre-State sharing formula (90:10 for NE states). Responsibilities such as announcing the scheme, verifying the applications and transferring funds

is vested with state government and the Union Territories.

Institutions like government private colleges, vocational training institutes recognized by the government assist these students in the enrolment and documentation process. The funds are directly transferred to the student's Aadhaar-linked bank account through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) after their eligibility and details are verified on the National Scholarship Portal (NSP). The Public Financial Management System (PFMS) portal allows students to track the status of their payments. Quarterly progress reports are sent to the ministry once the scheme is brought into action.

Financial Analysis

It was initially decided to make changes in the scholarship amount according to the requirement which was to be assessed state wise. Notwithstanding this, the budgeting for this scheme is often criticised to be ad-hoc. For example, in Jharkhand, the annual allocations of these funds were made by simply increasing the previous year's figures by 10% instead of it being assessed with appropriate and required methodology. This resulted in underutilisation of funds as a part of it was not required. Savings rose from 12% in 2017-18 to 22% in 2020-21.

In Kerala, despite central assistance, utilisation was weak in initial years: only 26% of allocated funds were spent in 2017-18. Lack of reconciliation between state accounts and Accountant General records further raised risks of misclassification or misuse. At the national level, CAG reported that ₹2,533 crores in scholarships remained unreleased or

delayed during 2012-17, highlighting systemic inefficiencies.

Delays in release of funds from central government has also been reported in several instances. A report published by the Comptroller and Audit General of India (CAG) stated that the state of Punjab has not received funds by the central government since 2017. Table 4 provided in the CAG report that explains the short comings made by the state governments in delay in payment of scholarship.

Outcomes and Achievements

Even with all these challenges, the Post Matric Scholarship scheme has had a positive impact in helping the students gain higher education.

The mere knowledge of the existence of Post Matric Scholarship scheme enabled parents to take the decision to continue their ward's post matric education. In another study conducted by the CAG, it has been reported that around 87% of the parents think that the Post-Matric Scholarship received by their wards has greatly reduced their financial burden. The overall finding in this matter signifies that the PMS scheme has stimulated the demand for post-matric level of education. Along with the parents, the students also felt that they would have left schooling and education if it was not for the PMS scheme. This indicates the positive outcomes and impact of the PMS scheme on the retention of students in schools and other courses.

If we talk about the number of beneficiaries in the PMS scheme of 5 states, namely – Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra,

Table-4: Details of delay in payment of scholarship

Name of State	Total number of applications received	Number of applications delayed	Year	Remarks
Maharashtra	23.06 lakh	1.67 lakh	2012-17	The department attributed the delays to reasons such as late submission of application by students, shortcomings noticed in application, etc. (Year-wise details in Annexe-4)
Punjab	9.41 lakh	9.41 lakh	2012-16	The department attributed the delay to late/non-release of funds by the Ministry/State Government during the year
	3.21 lakh	3.21 lakh	2016-17	No scholarship has been disbursed in respect of 2016-17 as of November 2017.
Tamil Nadu	1.51 lakh	21,706	2012-17	The students in seven ¹ out of eight selected districts were sanctioned scholarships after the close of the academic year.
Uttar Pradesh	41.19 lakh	4.07 lakh	2014-17	The applications were initially categorized as 'suspect' ² and were yet to be verified by respective DSWOs.
Total	78.38 lakh	18.58 lakh		



Karnataka and Punjab in the period 2012-17, It is notable that except the state of Karnataka and Maharashtra, the rest of states have shown an increase in number of beneficiaries availing this scheme. Along with this, the General Enrolment Ratio (GER) has also increase from 16% in 2012-13 to 21.8% in 2017-18. The decreasing trend for Maharashtra and Karnataka can be attributed to the challenges faced and incompetency showed by the respective state governments in making this scheme accessible to those targeted.

Challenges in Implementation

The state and central governments have faced several challenges in implementing this scheme smoothly in their respective states. Following are some of the challenges that can be traced in the reports provided by the Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment and the Comptroller and Audit General of India.

i. It has been reported earlier that several beneficiaries have encountered problems in arranging the documents required in the application process and pay bribes to avail the Post-Matric Scholarship.

ii. Around 70% of the beneficiaries think that the school/institution is not well equipped with the information to make them aware of various aspects of the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme.

iii. Lengthy application form is considered an issue by around one-third of the beneficiaries of the Post-Matric Scholarship.

iv. Around 29% of beneficiaries have language problem in filling up the scholarship application form.

v. 50% limit of aggregate marks is perceiving a major limitation of the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme by around 56% of the beneficiaries; they want it to be lower.

vi. The requirements of renewing the Post-Matric Scholarship every year and submitting the required application and documents are considered a limitation of the scholarship scheme by 72% of the beneficiaries.

vii. 92% of the beneficiaries consider the Post-Matric Scholarship rates/amount too inadequate to meet the basic cost of their post-matric level of education in a given year.

Broader impact on the lives of students and families

Except for statistics, the Post-Matric Scholarship scheme has been instrumental in influencing the lives of the families of the beneficiaries. The scholarships have reduced the financial burden on the families as after availing the benefits, as it has decreased their dependency on loans and wages to fund their child's education. The students also reported

improved academic performance and a sense of confidence.

Nevertheless, the scholarship amount is considered too small to cover the real expenses surrounding the education costs, especially with rising fees in private institutions where over 60% students are enrolled. However, the recent GST reforms that include 0% taxes on education related products are expected to bring a relief to the families that are experiencing these hurdles. It is said to equip them to save or spend on other requirements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students is one of the largest anti-discriminatory led measures in the Indian education. While it has made contributions beyond doubt in reducing dropouts and expanding higher education access, inefficiencies in planning, fund management, and monitoring weaken its impact.

Key recommendations include:

I. Awareness of the scheme should be improved and enhanced by adopting several measures like publishing in newspapers in the local language, announcements to be made on the website, publicizing it through school notice boards etc.

II. Schools and teachers must be provided with accurate information regarding the guidelines, eligibility, selection and application process, transfer of funds, etc., considering them to be the primary mediator between the citizens and the government.

III. The application process must be simplified and be made less complicated by minimizing document verification and providing forms in local languages to overcome language barriers as well.

IV. Automatic renewal of scholarships within an education cycle is recommended, alongside greater reliance on digital platforms for application submission and direct fund transfer to beneficiaries to reduce harassment.

V. To conclude with, the state and central government must ensure timely disbursement of the scholarship fees as it is the most crucial part in supporting the poor households, as delays in payments cause financial hardships and directly impact the enrolment ratio of the students.

To conclude, the responsible authorities must improve grass root level implementation of the post-matric Scholarship to stimulate demand for higher education.

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Mohanlal: Socially committed legendary actor



Those who enter the film industry through hardship and a genuine passion for art, often carry with them a deep sense of social responsibility to both art itself and the society that sustains it. Among such artists, Mohanlal stands out as a peerless figure. His exceptional versatility in portraying multifaceted characters, his emotional depth, natural comedic timing, and remarkable ability to internalize scripts have allowed him to master roles across genres ranging from drama and action to thrillers. At the same time, his commitment to social causes makes him a true example of an artist who never forgets his duty to society.

Dr. Muralimohan K. V.



Mohanlal, better known as The Complete Actor, started out playing villains, but his acting chops quickly got him leading roles. His eminence as an icon and one of India's top performers was solidified in no time. Kireedam, Bharatham, Padamudra, Thanmathra, Keerthichakra, Kaalapaani, Pranayam, and Pulimurugan are just a few of the critically acclaimed and award-winning films in which he has excelled. In 2025, he was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest accolade in Indian cinema, as a result of his remarkable journey.

Mohanlal has acted in many films with significant social impact, with some notable examples including Doore doore oru koodu koottaam, a feature film successfully denouncing the teaching practice by securing duplicate training certificates from outside the state and entering teaching profession by paying capitation fund illegally.

T.P. Balagopalan MA, which depicted the struggles of educated but unemployed youth. This film starred Mohanlal as an unemployed young man burdened by family responsibilities. It was a notable social satire that highlighted the challenges faced by educated unemployed Malayali youth in the Eighties. Many of his character is presented as a saviour of the people of Kerala, battling both political and social corruptions practiced by politicians. At the peak of his fame, he acted in a Sanskrit play,

demonstrating his loyalty and commitment to Indian culture and Sanskrit language.

Beyond entertainment, Mohanlal's body of work reflects a strong social conscience. His films often carry messages that resonate with the public. For instance, Doore Doore Oru Koodu Koottam exposed the malpractice of teachers acquiring fake training certificates through bribery. Some of his characters, who fight for social good in their fictional worlds and his real-world charitable work, establish his public image as a benevolent individual who is concerned with social welfare. As mentioned above he got many chances to perform as characters who stand as protectors of ordinary people, taking on political and social corruption.

These roles, combined with his real-world philanthropic work, reinforce his public image as a compassionate and socially committed individual. Mohanlal has also given life to iconic soldier and freedom fighter roles. In Keerthichakra, he played Major Mahadevan, leading counter-terrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir. This was followed by Kurukshetra, based on the 1999 Kargil War, and Kandahar, which depicted the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814. 1971: Beyond Borders explored the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. All these films, directed by Major Ravi, carried the authenticity of a soldier's perspective, given the director's own military background. It was Mohanlal's artistic devotion that gave these



characters such lasting depth and resonance.

His contribution to historical action cinema is equally notable. In *Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea*, Mohanlal portrayed the legendary Kunjali Marakkar, the 16th-century naval commander of the Zamorin of Calicut, who resisted Portuguese invasion. In *Kaalapaani*, directed by Priyadarshan, he brought to life the harrowing story of Indian freedom fighters imprisoned in the Andaman Islands, playing a doctor wrongfully sentenced to incarceration.

Off-screen, Mohanlal's philanthropic efforts are just as significant as his artistic achievements. Through the ViswaSanthi Foundation, he has spearheaded numerous initiatives in healthcare, education, and community development. The foundation provides critical medical equipment, supports free surgeries for disadvantaged children, runs mentorship and skill development programs, and extends disaster relief across Kerala and beyond.

It was heartwarming news for the art world as he announced on his 65th birthday, a new initiative to provide liver transplant surgeries at subsidized rates for underprivileged children, in collaboration with Baby Memorial Hospital. Similarly, the foundation set up an automated drinking water plant in the Kuttanad region to provide safe drinking water to approximately 1,000 people, in partnership with EY Global Delivery Services (EY GDS).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation donated hundreds of oxygen-supported beds, ICU ventilators, PPE kits, and even installed oxygen pipelines and clean drinking water plants. It has also partnered with institutions such as Amrita Hospital to offer free heart surgeries for underprivileged children, while healthcare camps in tribal regions like Attappady have provided much-needed medical access. His services in Dharavi, Mumbai was remarkable during COVID pandemic era by arranging more than two thousand PPE kits is the best example of his philanthropic mind irrespective of language or territory.

The foundation's educational initiatives include the Vintage program, which nurtures talented students from marginalized backgrounds from middle school onwards, providing not only academic mentorship but also leadership training and social values. Similarly, Village Knowledge Centres offer digital literacy and vocational skills, empowering communities at the grassroots.

Mohanlal's decisions to become the goodwill ambassador for 'Mritasanjeevani' the Kerala government's organ transplant program, volunteering his support for the humanitarian cause, caught the world's attention.

ViswaSanthi's disaster relief work has been equally impactful, including pledging ₹3 crore for victims of the Wayanad landslide and committing to rebuild schools and other essential infrastructure in affected areas. Its projects are marked by a holistic approach, collaborative partnerships, focused initiatives, and rapid responses to crises.

Considering all his versatile legendary acting skill, India Government has honoured him with the most popular award for Indian film Industry, Dada Saheb Phalke award 2025. The award recognizes Mohanlal's contributions to Indian cinema, his artistic talent, and his remarkable career spanning various languages. This most prestigious award was presented by honourable President Droupadi Murmu at the 71st National

Award functions at New Delhi. His name now appeared in the list of prominent Indian film legends. Mohanlal has also received the most significant recognition for his contributions to cinema, including Padmasree and Padmabhooshan awards, India's highest civilian awards. Mohanlal has received the Kerala State Film Award for Best Actor six times.

He has won five National Film Awards, including two Bharath awards for Best Actor. He has received honorary doctorates from two universities: the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit in 2010 and the University of Calicut in 2018.

Indian military has honoured by granting him as honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army's Territorial Army in 2008. This honour was conferred upon him in recognition of his contributions to Indian cinema and his support for the armed forces. The honorary rank is typically awarded to individuals, who have made significant contributions to society and have a strong public presence, thereby helping to strengthen the relationship between the military and civilian communities.

Mohanlal's appointment was a way to acknowledge his status as a cultural icon in India, particularly in the Malayalam film industry, and to utilize his influence to promote the values of the armed forces. As an artist, Mohanlal remains fully devoted to his craft, bringing authenticity and life to every role. As a humanitarian, his charitable activities stand as a lasting establishment in themselves. Together, these two dimensions make him not only a legendary actor but also a complete socio-artist, the one, whose influence transcends cinema and touches the very fabric of society.

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Overseas Higher Education Scholarship & Schemes

In September 2025, Social Studies Foundation (SSF) spearheaded two transformative one-day workshops, aimed at empowering students from diverse backgrounds with knowledge about international educational opportunities. Held on September 7 at Tilak Mahavidyalaya in Auraiya, U.P., in collaboration with the Saint Ravidas Evam Dr. Ambedkar (SREA) Dharamshala Committee, and on September 8 at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University in Bareilly, U.P., These workshops addressed critical challenges faced by students, particularly those from marginalized communities, in accessing higher education abroad.

Empowerment through Education

Dr Shashi



With India's complex socio-economic landscape, characterized by diverse cultures, castes, and economic disparities, education remains a pivotal tool for fostering inclusion and economic upliftment. However, students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other vulnerable groups often encounter barriers such as financial constraints, lack of awareness, and language challenges. Through expertly curated sessions on study abroad opportunities, national and international scholarships, and life skills, the SSF workshops sought to bridge these gaps, equipping students with the knowledge and resources to pursue advanced studies globally. By fostering awareness and providing practical guidance, these initiatives aimed to transform aspirations into reality, enabling students to access better learning

environments and contribute meaningfully to society.

The first workshop, held on September 7, 2025, was jointly organized by Tilak Mahavidyalaya in Auraiya, U.P., in collaboration with the Saint Ravidas Evam Dr. Ambedkar (SREA) Dharamshala Committee and SSF. The workshop was inaugurated by Prof. Ravi Kumar, the Principal of Tilak Mahavidyalaya, along with other faculty members, including Prof. Siya Ram (IQAC Coordinator), Prof. Arvind Singh (Convenor), Dr. Anupam Birla (Co-convenor), and SREA Dharamshala Committee members: Mr. N.R. Chaudhary (President), Mr. P.N. Dohare (Deputy President), and Mr. Santosh Kumar (Secretary).

The second workshop took place on September 8, 2025, at Mahatma Jyotiba



Phule Rohilkhand University in Bareilly, U.P. This workshop was organized under the chairmanship of Prof. K. P. Singh, the Vice-Chancellor of the university and coordinated by Prof. Sushma Goriyal (Bareilly College, Bareilly), Mr. Akash Puskar, and Mr. Ram Prasad Agarwal.

Both workshops were divided into four sessions: Session 1 focused on Study Abroad, presented by Prof. Chandra Sekhar Malvi; Session 2 covered National Overseas Scholarships, led by Dr. Shashi Bala; Session 3 discussed Other International Scholarships, presented by Mr. Edward Mende; and Session 4 addressed Life Skills, delivered by Prof. Ravi Kumar. The workshops provided valuable insights into overseas scholarships and funding schemes available for higher education at the Master's, PhD, and Post-Doctoral levels. These schemes may be offered by the Government of India, private sectors, or social and welfare organizations such as NGOs.

As a developing country, India faces numerous challenges, including food security, safety, hygiene, socio-economic equality, and education. Among these, education is one of the most significant challenges, particularly in a nation characterized by its diverse cultures, castes, religions, heritage, and beliefs. Education is a vital tool for improving the economic conditions of society, promoting social awareness, and fostering inclusion. However, providing equal educational opportunities for all these diverse groups remains a distant goal.

Students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other vulnerable groups may not have equal access to the educational facilities provided by the Government of India. This inequality can stem from social, economic, geographical, or cultural factors. Consequently, it becomes evident that studying abroad poses a considerable challenge for students from marginalized backgrounds. Although the overall number of students studying abroad has increased in recent years, the proportion of socially marginalized students remains lower than expected due to economic constraints, lack of awareness about government opportunities, or both.

The aim of the workshops was not only to inform students about various scholarships and funding opportunities offered by different organizations but also to encourage them to leverage these resources for a brighter future. Studying abroad can provide students with

global exposure, improve their economic conditions, and immerse them in better learning environments, ultimately enriching their thought processes and mindsets. At the workshop, held at Tilak Mahavidyalaya, a total of 252 students registered, with 54 participating physically from a range of subjects, including Humanities, Science, and Commerce. Additionally, 187 out of 241 students participated in the workshop organized at Bareilly University.

Students at these workshops showed great enthusiasm and curiosity regarding funding opportunities; however, those from rural backgrounds often face additional challenges, particularly concerning language barriers. The SSF is dedicated to assisting students throughout the funding process, which is essential for achieving their higher education aspirations. Keeping this in mind, the workshops also covered the preparation of necessary certificates and documents required for fellowships and university admissions.

The SSF's workshops on September 7 and 8, 2025, marked a significant step toward democratizing access to global education for Indian students, particularly those from marginalized and rural backgrounds. With 252 students registered at Tilak Mahavidyalaya and 187 participating at Bareilly University, the enthusiastic response underscored the urgent need for such initiatives. These workshops not only illuminated pathways to prestigious scholarships and funding schemes but also addressed practical challenges, such as language barriers and documentation, empowering students to navigate the complexities of international education. By fostering global exposure, the SSF is helping to reshape mindsets, enhance economic prospects, and promote inclusivity. As India continues to grapple with educational inequalities, such efforts are crucial in ensuring that every student, regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, has the opportunity to dream big and achieve academic excellence on a global stage. The SSF's commitment to supporting students throughout the funding and admission process promises to pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future, where education becomes a true catalyst for social change.

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Brainstorming on Urban Sanitation

Urban sanitation in India is not just about pipes and tanks—it is about human dignity, public health, and social justice. Thousands of sanitation workers continue to clean septic tanks under hazardous conditions, and despite initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission, manual cleaning remains widespread.

Machine-based septic tank cleaning is no longer optional—it is urgent and transformative. It saves lives, safeguards health, and restores dignity. Yet, challenges persist: lack of awareness, trained operators, safety equipment, and policy support.

This subject needs to be introduced into the industrial sector, emphasizing entrepreneurship development, expansion of research and development, and enabling commerce students to apply sanitation systems in effective management and cost-revenue models. To explore these issues and generate effective solutions, the seminar was organized to foster deeper engagement and thoughtful deliberation.

Baby



Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce (BMCC), in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI), and Social Studies Foundation (SSF), successfully hosted the “Innovating Urban Sanitation: National Seminar on Machine-Based Septic Tank Cleaning Solutions” on 10 September 2025 at Tata Hall, BMCC, Pune. Over 700 participants—395 in-person and 311 online—joined the seminar, creating a lively platform to discuss safe and modern sanitation solutions.

The event was inaugurated by Dr. Parag Kalkar, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Savitribai Phule Pune University, and attended by dignitaries including Mr.



Sunil Ware (BARTI), Mr. Prasenjit Fadnavis, Dr. Deepak Poudel, and Dr. Prashant Sathe. The seminar featured five engaging sessions covering urban sanitation challenges, innovative technologies, entrepreneurship, skill development, and voices of sanitation workers. Thirty research papers were presented, with three recognized for excellence.

The valedictory session, graced by Mr. Nawal Kishore Ram (IAS) and MLA Mr. Sunil Kamble, focused on government policies, funding, and the roadmap to “Zero Manual Sanitation.” The seminar highlighted collaboration, innovation, and skill development, paving the way for safer, cleaner, and dignified cities, while empowering sanitation workers.

Dr. Prashant Sathe, Project Co-Director, BMCC Pune, highlighted the empowerment of sanitation workers and their integration into formal systems. He linked the discussion to SDGs and NEP 2023, emphasizing dignity, safety, and research. The seminar promoted multidisciplinary learning, technology use, equity, and inclusion, while fostering collaboration between government, academia, industry, and planners. Dr. Sathe also stressed educating participants on machine-based cleaning, maintenance, and sanitation worker welfare, and encouraged research on their health, rights, and economic issues.

At the national seminar, Dr. Prasenjit Fadnavis highlighted the gap between rural and urban sanitation systems and the continued risks faced by sanitation workers. He stressed the need for effective government schemes, safety training, and technology use to ensure safer, equitable, and more efficient sanitation practices for all.

Prof. (Dr.) Parag Kalkar, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Savitribai Phule Pune University, inaugurated the seminar, urging greater public awareness of sanitation workers and their challenges. He emphasized dignity, health, technology, and social justice, and called for research-driven collaboration between universities and industry to achieve full mechanization and meaningful impact in urban sanitation.

Mr. Sunil Baburao Ware (IRAS), Director General of BARTI Pune, highlighted that the foundation of a “Developed India” lies in cleanliness. He stressed the urgent need to modernize sanitation, uplift sanitation workers, and adopt a holistic approach to cleanliness encompassing health, dignity, and cultural values.

Dr. Deepak U. Poudel, Principal of BMCC, emphasized that with India’s rapid urbanization, sanitation challenges will grow significantly. He called for expanded mechanized sewage systems, technological progress, and the protection of sanitation workers to reduce hazardous manual work and fatalities, urging collective action to meet these goals.

In Session II on Innovation and Inclusive Growth, Mr. Prabakaran Subramanian highlighted India’s sanitation challenges, including substandard septic tank design and ongoing manual scavenging. He presented technological solutions like suction and jetting machines to ensure safe, efficient cleaning, and emphasized worker safety, behavioural change, and household-level innovation. Sharing success stories from Chhatrapati

Workers are entitled to equipment, insurance, ESI cards, health facilities, and robot-assisted cleaning support through DICCI, though awareness remains low. Mr. Dhanraj Birda emphasized empowering workers, addressing illiteracy, and ensuring employment under schemes like the “Namaste Scheme.” Historical challenges, including the long-standing inability of workers to voice concerns and legal recognition under the 2013 Manual Scavenging Act, were discussed.

Sambhajinagar, Pimpri- Chinchwad, and Sangli, he stressed the need for an inclusive ecosystem that empowers sanitation workers while modernizing India’s sanitation sector.

Padmashri Milind Kamble called sanitation India’s hidden engine of dignity, justice, and opportunity. Through DICCI, he pioneered machine-based septic tank cleaning, cutting worker deaths to zero in Hyderabad, Delhi, and Chennai. Over 550 sanitation workers, including women, now run their own enterprises, earning ₹25,000–30,000 monthly. Kamble highlighted sanitation as a \$60 billion sector, brimming with innovation—from mechanized cleaning to water treatment. He urged society to see sanitation workers as “Sanitation Soldiers”, combining technology, policy, and empowerment to build safer,



cleaner, and dignified cities. His message: sanitation is not a burden—it’s a vast opportunity to transform lives.

Dr. Umrani, Member of Deccan Education Society, praised the seminar for linking higher education with real-world social needs. She highlighted the vast employment potential in India’s sanitation sector and stressed the importance of empowering workers with technology and dignity. The event, he noted, blends knowledge with action and inspires future entrepreneurs.

Session III: Universities & Innovation – Shaping the Future of Sanitation

Dr. Pravin Kumar Kaire and Mr. Jaidip Jagtap from WASH Institute, Delhi, showcased India’s faecal sludge management journey and the evolution of septic tank cleaning under the Swachh Bharat Mission. They introduced the Mobile Septage Treatment Unit (MSTU), an innovative system that treats nearly 90% of water on-site, reducing transport costs and safeguarding sanitation workers. Each unit can clean 2–3 septic tanks daily. Their presentation highlighted how technology and innovation can make sanitation more efficient, cost-effective, and safe, combining research, practical solutions, and sustainability for a cleaner urban future.

In the third session, Mr. Rajendrakumar Saraf highlighted the importance of greywater management in India, emphasizing both traditional and indigenous methods. He shared insights from recent research and offered practical guidance on how innovative solutions, training, and technology can be effectively applied in urban sanitation.

The fourth session, titled ‘Sanitation Worker Social Welfare,’ brought together sanitation workers, research students, contractors, and entrepreneurs. Inaugurated by Mr. Avinash Mulye, Director- Social Studies Foundation, the session highlighted schemes, benefits, and challenges for workers, while providing guidance on scholarships, fellowships, and foreign education for SC students. Practical demonstrations on using robots in septic tank cleaning were shared, emphasizing worker empowerment, technology adoption, and awareness of emerging opportunities in the sector. Mr. Nilesh Gadre, working for social harmony, shared that 28 sanitation workers had tragically lost their lives last year, prompting the government to provide ₹10 lakh financial support to each affected family. The session highlighted issues such as the lack of caste certificates for long-standing sanitation workers in Pandharpur and the

distribution of 650 sq. ft. houses under the Chief Minister’s initiative. Workers were also given a platform to voice their concerns and challenges. Assistant Commissioner Mr. Vishal Londhe explained that sanitation worker issues are managed under the Social Welfare Deputy Commissioner, with support from a committee under the District Collector. Workers are entitled to equipment, insurance, ESI cards, health facilities, and robot-assisted cleaning support through DICCI, though awareness remains low. Mr. Dhanraj Birda emphasized empowering workers, addressing illiteracy, and ensuring employment under schemes like the “Namaste Scheme.” Historical challenges, including the long-standing inability of workers to voice concerns and legal recognition under the 2013 Manual Scavenging Act, were discussed.

The session concluded with guidance from Mr. Londhe and Mr. Avinash Mulye to mentor students and promote sanitation worker welfare. In the fourth session, two technical sessions ran simultaneously, catering to both online and offline participants. These sessions provided a platform for researchers to present their work, and around 30 research papers were showcased. The parallel format allowed wider participation, encouraged knowledge sharing, and facilitated interactive discussions on innovative solutions in urban sanitation.

In the final session, Prof. Sathe presented a detailed summary of the seminar and announced that Mr. Sunil Kamble and the Commissioner of Pune Municipal Corporation had been invited for the concluding decision-making process. The awards for best research paper presentations were conferred upon from MMCC Fergusson College, and BMCC.

Mr. Naval Kishore Ram appreciated the seminar discussion and highlighted major challenges in waste management. He recalled that Mahatma Phule once served as mayor and contractor, contrasting today’s complex sanitation landscape. During the Swachh Bharat Mission, he emphasized the need for machine-based cleaning, with operators trained at least once every three months. Referring to the strict 2013 Manual Scavenging Act, he noted that while many local bodies claim 100% mechanization, actual implementation is far from complete due to high costs. In Pune, some areas have 100% drainage coverage via suction, jetting, and grabbing machines, yet 23 villages and many public and community toilets remain underserved. He stressed monitoring



infrastructure, considering private sector participation, and addressing sanitation challenges in a city that has grown into a global IT hub with nearly six lakh jobs.

Mr. Ram further mentioned that although Pune has achieved 100% manual waste segregation and received awards, citizen behaviour, caste-based practices, and delays in salaries for around 6,000 workers continue to hinder progress. Sanitation is everyone's responsibility, not just PMCs, and Article 14 guarantees the right to life and dignity, highlighting the need to eliminate manual scavenging. PMC spends nearly ₹60 crores annually, yet outcomes are limited. He assured that within six months, major reforms will tackle nearly 25 lakh tonnes of legacy waste, improve infrastructure, processes, transportation, and ensure efficient, safe, and inclusive waste management citywide.

Sunil Kamble shared insights from his 20 years as a corporator, highlighting his close engagement with sanitation workers' challenges. He noted that many long-serving workers suffer from illnesses like tuberculosis, and while permanent employees receive benefits, those working under contractors are often excluded. He also emphasized the harmful impact of dust inhaled during road-cleaning tasks, underlining the need for better health and safety measures.

Kamble further stressed the importance

of introducing advanced and efficient machinery to support Pune's large sanitation workforce. He pointed out that post-COVID-19, protective equipment for workers has decreased, requiring urgent attention. Positive changes in waste collection, including proper covering of garbage during transport, were acknowledged.

Finally, Bebi Kamble expressed her heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to and supported the seminar. The national seminar on "Innovating Urban Sanitation: Machine- Based Septic Tank Cleaning Solutions" was made successful by the active participation of the chief guests, session heads, speakers, researchers, students, and industry representatives. Special appreciation was extended to the sanitation workers, organizations, and volunteers whose continuous efforts were invaluable. The guidance and support from the organizing institutions and the sponsor, ICSSR, New Delhi, played a crucial role in the seminar's success. She noted that the presence and enthusiasm of all participants would surely inspire and encourage future research in urban sanitation and related management studies.

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New Technology, Old Bias

Artificial intelligence is changing the way we live, learn, and work, but in India, it also brings a new set of challenges and dangers for Dalit communities who have long faced exclusion and discrimination. The promise of AI can only be truly fulfilled if all communities, including Dalits, are represented and included. Unfortunately, there are very real risks that new technologies will simply reinforce old inequalities, making life even harder for those already disadvantaged.

Today, computer literacy among Scheduled Castes in India is just 13.5%, far below that of more privileged groups. This digital divide is just one barrier keeping Dalits out of the AI revolution. When AI models like chatbots or hiring tools are built using data from the internet or government records, they end up learning the same prejudices and stereotypes that exist in society. A report published in Telangana today, A Dalit university graduate, applied for jobs



where automated software scanned resumes. When she compared her applications with those of friends from upper castes, she found that the software filtered her out even when her qualifications were comparable. She later learned that the system's recommendation AI relied on historical hiring data, which had always favoured upper-caste applicants and penalized surnames common in Dalit communities—thus keeping the cycle of exclusion going.

In another case, predictive policing programs in Indian states intended to use AI to reduce crime, but because the training data was based on old police records, Dalit neighbourhoods were flagged as "high risk" more often, leading to more intense surveillance and policing in those areas. This happened even when actual crime rates were no higher than other, more privileged neighbourhoods. The program's designers later admitted they had not included any Dalit voices in the design or oversight of the AI system, a decision that turned technology into another tool for oppression.

Problems like this start long before computers are even switched on. Most teams that build and test AI in India come from better-off backgrounds. Few have studied at colleges or universities that teach anti-caste thought

or encourage diverse student intakes. This means the biases are not just in the data—the people designing the systems often cannot see the world from a Dalit point of view, so their products cannot meet Dalit needs.

But it does not have to be this way. In some districts of Maharashtra, Dalit women's collectives have worked with local NGOs and technologists to build community databases for health and education services. By having Dalit women themselves in charge of collecting and labelling the data, the AI tools used to diagnose malnutrition and monitor school attendance have been fairer and more accurate. These tools are trusted by the community because decision-making power lies with those who best understand their own lives. Simple steps can make a big difference. Scholarship programs for studying computer science, dedicated training hubs in Dalit-majority villages, and targeted internships can help bring Dalit students into the AI workforce. Tech companies can set diversity targets in their hiring processes, not to tick boxes, but to ensure that future AI tools are designed by people from every background.

Transparency is essential. AI systems should be tested for caste bias before being used in things like job screening, loan approvals, or policing, with the results shared publicly. In Hyderabad, after media coverage of biased facial recognition tech, the city's public transport system changed its vendor and now invites community watchdogs, including Dalit organizations, to observe and report on the performance of these systems.

Technology should not be a new gatekeeper. Schools and colleges can help by revising what they teach—adding writings and stories from Dalit thinkers and including lessons about how technology can reflect, or resist, social injustice. And governments must work closely with organizations representing Dalit groups when making tech policy, to turn these communities from passive recipients into active partners.

Finally, it is crucial that Dalits are able to lead some of these new projects themselves, whether as researchers, engineers, or entrepreneurs. This is not just about fairness—it is about building better, more reliable, and more ethical technology for all. Only by acting together, across sectors and communities, can India ensure that the fruits of AI are not just enjoyed by the privileged few, but shared by every part of its diverse society.

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UP bans caste mention in police records, vehicles and public signboards

The Uttar Pradesh government has ordered the removal of caste references from police records, vehicles, and public signboards, following a directive from the Allahabad High Court to curb caste-based discrimination.

According to the order issued by Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar, the caste of the accused will no longer be recorded in FIRs, arrest memos, or other police documents; instead, parental names will be used for identification. Police stations have been instructed to erase caste symbols, slogans, and references from noticeboards and vehicles.

Caste-based rallies have also been banned, with strict monitoring of social media to prevent violations. The government clarified that the rule will not apply to cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, where caste identification is legally required. The state home



department and DGP have been directed to amend police manuals and standard operating procedures to ensure compliance with the court's order.

Equality in worship is non-negotiable: Madras High Court

The Madras High Court reaffirmed that equality in worship is “non-negotiable,” declaring that no individual or group can deny temple entry on caste grounds. Justice B. Pugalendhi made the observation while hearing two petitions concerning the Mariamman Temple at Chinna Dharapuram in Karur district — one denying caste discrimination and another alleging that Scheduled Caste devotees were being barred from entry.

Recalling historic temple entry movements such as the Vaikom and Guruvayur Satyagraha's and the 1939 Meenakshi Amman Temple entry in Madurai, the court said these struggles symbolised India's

moral awakening against caste barriers. Justice Pugalendhi noted that it was “deeply distressing” that caste-based exclusion persists in 2025, despite the constitutional and spiritual

triumphs of the past. The court emphasised that the law must speak “firmly and clearly” to ensure such discrimination never recurs in places of worship.

Andhra Pradesh Assembly Approves Bill to Sub-Classify SC for Fairer Reservation Access

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly has passed a Bill introducing sub-classification among the State's 59 Scheduled Castes to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits in education and public employment. The legislation formalises the Governor's 2025 ordinance and aligns with a recent Supreme Court ruling upholding sub-classification within Scheduled Castes.

Social Welfare Minister Dola Sree Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy said the Bill seeks to promote fairness and equal access to opportunities for all SC groups. Under the new system, Group I – Most Backward (12 castes) will receive 6.5% of the 15% total reservation, Group II – Backward (18 castes) will receive 7.5%, and Group III (29 castes) will receive 1%.

The move follows recommendations from a One-Man Commission led by IAS officer (Retd.) Rajiv Ranjan Mishra and aims to implement the Supreme Court's 2024 directive affirming states' power to create equitable sub-groups within Scheduled Castes.

NCSC Issues Checklist to Filter Complaints, Cites High Pendency

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has introduced new “checklists” allowing officials to reject or close complaints that are unsigned, anonymous, or lack proof of the complainant's Scheduled Caste status. The move, aimed at reducing high case pendency, applies to all three wings — Service Safeguard, Economic and Social Development, and Atrocities and Protection of Civil Rights.

Complaints already decided by courts, unrelated to caste discrimination, or involving general administrative grievances may now be dismissed without hearing. Officials said the step will prevent misuse of the platform by non-SC individuals and streamline genuine cases. Critics, however, warned that the directive could limit access to justice. The guidelines also require specific, evidence-backed grievances and allow case closure when petitioners withdraw or express satisfaction with the action taken. The Commission clarified that the new system is meant to standardise processing, not arbitrarily reject complaints.

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DIN VISHESH

Remembering Namdev Maharaj

12th November
Sant Namdev Maharaj Birth Anniversary



12th November
Pandit Madam Mohan Malviya
Death Anniversary

Sant Namdev, a 13th-century Bhakti saint from Maharashtra, India, was a pivotal figure in promoting equality through his spiritual teachings and poetry. Born into a low-caste Shudra family, traditionally tailors, Namdev faced societal discrimination but rose above it, advocating for a casteless, egalitarian society through devotion to God. His life and work, deeply rooted in the Bhakti movement, emphasized universal love, devotion, and the rejection of caste and class distinctions.

Namdev's devotional poetry, known as abhangs, was composed in simple Marathi, making spiritual wisdom accessible to the masses, regardless of social status. His verses celebrated the oneness of humanity, asserting that true devotion transcends caste, creed, or wealth. He believed that God, whom he called Vitthal, resided in every heart, making all equal in the divine's eyes. This challenged the rigid caste hierarchy of his time, which marginalized lower castes and women.

Namdev's interactions with other saints, like Dnyaneshwar, and his travels across India, including Punjab, helped spread his message of equality. His compositions, some of which are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, reflect his conviction that devotion and humility unite all people. He often used metaphors from his tailoring trade to convey spiritual truths, making his teachings relatable to common folk.

By emphasizing personal devotion over ritualistic practices dominated by the elite, Namdev empowered the marginalized to seek spiritual liberation. His legacy inspired social reformers and continues to resonate in modern India, where his teachings fuel movements against caste oppression. Through his life and poetry, Sant Namdev championed equality, fostering a vision of a society where devotion to God unites all, irrespective of social barriers.

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