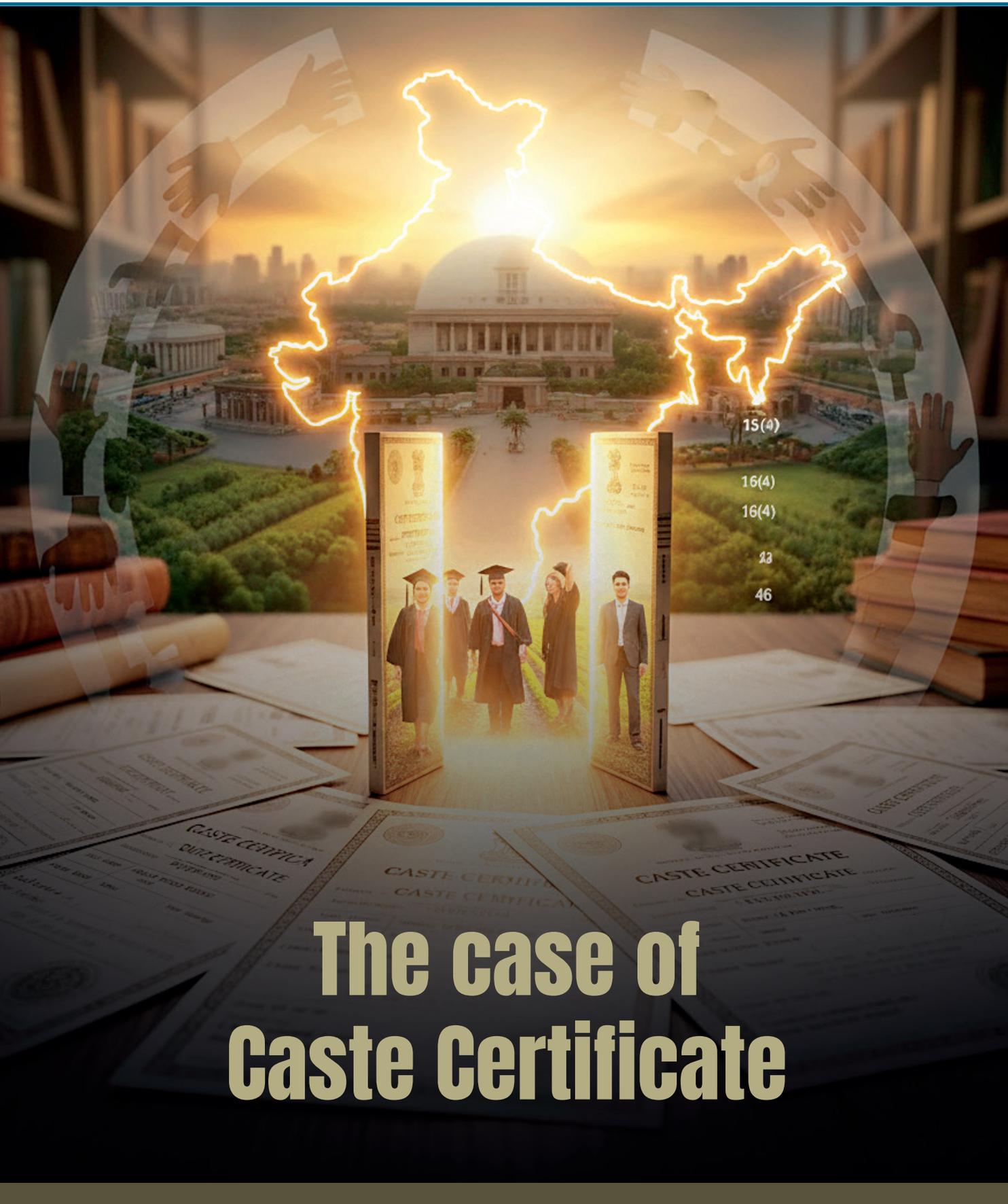


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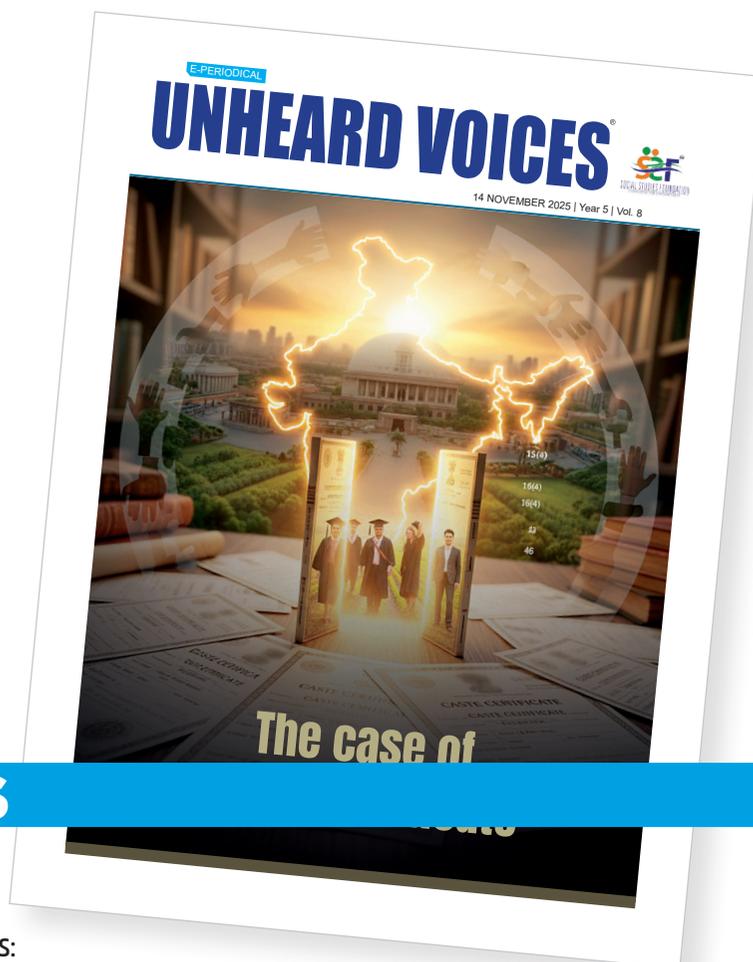


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The case of Caste Certificate



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EDITORIAL

Caste Certificate - A Bridge of Justice, Not a Barrier of Bureaucracy

More than seven decades after Independence, the caste certificate remains one of the most powerful instruments of social justice in India. Conceived as a gateway to equality, it has allowed millions from historically oppressed communities to access opportunities once denied to them. However, the journey of this document has not been without struggle. What began as a moral commitment to correct deep-rooted injustice has, over the years, been entangled in bureaucracy, delay, and political misuse — problems that should not overshadow its historic and continuing relevance.

The caste certificate is not just another administrative paper; it is a symbol of India's constitutional conscience. Guided by Articles 15(4), 16(4) and 46, the State took upon itself the duty to ensure that the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and later, the Other Backward Classes, receive fair access to education, employment, and representation. Far from being an act of favour, this was a moral duty — an attempt to restore dignity to communities that had endured exclusion for centuries.

In the decades immediately after Independence, this provision transformed lives. It produced a generation of educated Dalit, Tribal and backward-class professionals, who became the first in their families to enter universities, offices, and legislatures. They did not merely rise individually; they became symbols of collective hope, challenging hierarchies that had persisted for millennia. The caste certificate was the key that unlocked the closed doors of opportunity and restored faith in the promise of democracy. Even today, its necessity cannot

be overstated. From school admissions and public sector jobs to scholarships, hostels and reserved constituencies, the caste certificate ensures that affirmative action reaches its intended beneficiaries. Recent digitization drives — Aadhaar-linked verification, online applications and centralized databases — have made the process more transparent and efficient. For millions in rural India, this has replaced humiliation and red tape with dignity and accessibility. These are quiet revolutions that rarely make headlines.

However, the system is far from perfect with many faults crippling in the course of time. For many genuine applicants, obtaining a caste certificate still feels like an endless battle with bureaucracy. Files move slowly, local officers often demand unnecessary proof, and minor discrepancies can delay justice for months. These procedural irritants defeat the very spirit of the welfare framework. The State's moral responsibility does not end with announcing policies — it extends to ensuring that they are implemented with empathy and efficiency.

The misuse of the system, though limited in proportion, has damaged trust. Instances of individuals producing fake caste certificates to secure reserved seats or jobs are betrayals not of the State, but of society's conscience. Such cases must be dealt with firmly, without weakening the foundation of reservation itself. The answer lies in tighter scrutiny, stronger digital verification and time-bound grievance redressal — not in questioning the legitimacy of affirmative action.

Politics, too, has sometimes complicated the

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picture. The competition among communities for inclusion in the reserved category often reflects political mobilization more than genuine backwardness. Yet, the blame does not lie with the idea of reservation; it lies with the failure to address social and economic inequality at the ground level. If development and dignity reach every household, the politics of caste will gradually lose its manipulative appeal.

Another area demanding attention is inter-state inconsistency. A community recognized as OBC in one state may not have the same status in another, creating hardship for families who migrate for work or education. A uniform national database, with state-specific flexibility, can ease this confusion and ensure fairer, faster recognition. The purpose of the caste certificate is not merely to distribute benefits, but to empower citizens so that future generations will not need such documents to claim equality. Technology can accelerate this transition — through integrated databases, real-time verification and public accountability dashboards that ensure transparency without

harassment.

But technology alone cannot fulfil the moral purpose of social justice. What is needed is administrative sensitivity — a recognition that every caste certificate represents a human story of struggle, aspiration, and hope. When an officer issues it promptly and respectfully, the State affirms the dignity of its citizens. When the process is delayed or mishandled, it weakens the moral architecture of the Constitution itself.

The day may come when India no longer needs caste-based identification to deliver justice. But until that ideal society arrives, the caste certificate remains an indispensable bridge — connecting historical pain with constitutional promise, and turning moral intent into measurable opportunity.

Rather than questioning its necessity, the task before India is to perfect its delivery. Justice must not be delayed by files and signatures. Every genuine applicant who receives a caste certificate on time is not just a beneficiary of a scheme — they are proof that democracy still listens to its most silent citizens.

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"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.

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This article examines the legal, procedural, and institutional mechanisms related to the issuance of caste certificates in India, the problems and malpractices associated with the system, and explores judicial interventions and remedial policy actions undertaken by the government. The analysis is grounded in directives issued by the Government of India, particularly the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), as well as key Supreme Court judgments that have shaped the framework for social justice.

Issue of Caste Certificates: Challenges & Legal Framework

Damodhar



Historical and Legal Background

The foundation of caste-based affirmative action in India lies in Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Indian Constitution, which empower the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders of 1950 and 1951, issued under Articles 341 and 342, officially listed the castes and tribes eligible for reservation benefits in each State and

Union Territory.

These orders form the legal bedrock for identifying beneficiaries of affirmative action. However, to operationalize these provisions, the government required individuals to produce documentary proof of their caste or tribe status. Hence, the system of caste certification emerged as an administrative necessity to ensure targeted implementation. Initially, the issuance of caste certificates was governed by state-level administrative procedures, leading to a lack of uniformity



across India. To address inconsistencies, the Government of India, through the Ministry of Home Affairs (later the DoPT), issued a series of circulars beginning in the 1970s to standardize procedures and formats for SC/ST/OBC certificates.

Notable among these are:

- The DoPT Office Memorandum dated 2nd April 2015, outlining verification guidelines;
- The DoPT OM dated 29th March 2023, emphasizing the responsibility of district authorities in scrutiny and verification; and
- The DoPT OM dated 21st May 2021, concerning the validity of caste certificates and inter-state recognition.

These instruments collectively form the administrative backbone of India's caste certification system.

Issuing Authority and Process

The issuance of a caste certificate typically begins at the Tehsil or Taluka level, where the applicant submits documentary evidence proving their caste or community. Verification often involves checking the applicant's lineage, place of residence, and family records. The competent authority—usually the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO), Tehsildar, or District Magistrate (DM)—is responsible for issuing the certificate after proper verification.

The process generally follows these steps:

1. Application Submission: Applicants fill out prescribed forms available online or at revenue offices.
2. Document Verification: Supporting documents include family caste certificates, school records, voter ID, or ration card.
3. Local Inquiry: Verification by local revenue officials or police to confirm community status.
4. Approval and Issuance: The competent authority approves the certificate, often with a digital signature.
5. Record Maintenance: Issued certificates are recorded in district databases for future reference and authentication.

With the advent of Digital India initiatives, many states have introduced online platforms such as e-District, MeeSeva, and Seva Sindhu, allowing electronic issuance and verification of caste certificates. Despite these technological advancements, inconsistencies in verification practices and administrative delays persist in several regions.

Challenges and Malpractices

The caste certification process, though well-intentioned, faces numerous practical challenges that undermine its credibility and effectiveness.

1. Fraudulent Certificates

One of the gravest issues is the proliferation of fake caste certificates, often used by individuals not belonging to reserved categories to unlawfully avail reservation benefits. Numerous high-profile cases have emerged across states where individuals from forward communities obtained SC/ST certificates through falsified documents or political influence. Such cases not only violate the law but also deprive genuine candidates of their rightful opportunities.

- (a) "Caste Certificate" means the certificate issued by the Competent Authority to an applicant indicating therein the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Class, as the case may be, to which such applicant belongs;
- (b) "Competent Authority" means an officer or authority authorized by the Government, by notification in the *Official Gazette*, to issue a Caste Certificate, for such area and for such purpose as may be specified in the said notification;
- (c) "Educational Institution" means any School, Degree College, College of Education, Polytechnic, Industrial Training Institute, College of Fine Arts and Architecture, College of Music and Dance, Engineering College, Agricultural College, Veterinary College, Medical College, Dental College, Ayurvedic College, Homoeopathic College, Unani College, Nurses Training School, Health Visitors Training School, Vocational Training Institution, Deemed University, Open University and various colleges under the control of any University established by or under an Act of the Central or State Legislature and such other Institution, by whatever name called, which is carrying on (either exclusively or among other activities) the activity of imparting education;

2. Administrative Inefficiency

Cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, lack of trained verification staff, and poor inter-departmental coordination delay the issuance process. In some states, the absence of centralized databases has led to duplication and manipulation of records.

3. Inter-State and Inter-Caste Discrepancies

A major issue arises when individuals migrate from one state to another. Since the 1950 Presidential Orders specify caste eligibility on a state-specific basis, a person recognized as SC/ST in one state may not be



eligible in another. This has led to confusion and litigation, particularly for government employees transferred across states.

4. Political and Social Pressure

Local authorities often face pressure from politicians or community leaders to approve questionable applications, especially during elections or recruitment drives. Such interference weakens administrative integrity.

5. Lack of Public Awareness

Many genuine beneficiaries remain unaware of the procedures for obtaining or renewing caste certificates. Limited access to digital services in rural and tribal areas further exacerbates exclusion.

Judicial Interventions

The judiciary has played a vital role in shaping the legal contours of caste certificate verification and misuse.

1. Kumari Madhuri Patil v. Addl. Commissioner (1994)

This landmark Supreme Court judgment laid down comprehensive guidelines for the issuance and verification of caste certificates. The Court mandated the establishment of Caste Scrutiny Committees in every state to verify certificates before appointments or admissions.

It also empowered these committees to cancel fraudulent certificates and recommended disciplinary and criminal proceedings against offenders.

2. State of Maharashtra v. Milind (2001)

The Court reiterated that only those castes specifically listed in the Presidential Orders qualify for reservation benefits, rejecting the inclusion of synonyms or sub-castes without constitutional amendment.

3. Director of Tribal Welfare v. Laveti Giri (1995)

This case emphasized that caste certificates issued by unauthorized persons are void ab initio, and benefits availed through such certificates must be withdrawn immediately.

Through these and subsequent judgments, the judiciary has consistently stressed the importance of transparency, accountability, and procedural uniformity in caste certification.

Government Reforms and Digital Initiatives

Recognizing persistent challenges, the Government of India and state administrations have initiated several reforms:

1. Digital Authentication Systems:

Platforms like e-Kalyan (Jharkhand), Mahadbt (Maharashtra), and e-District portals

facilitate online applications and verifications, reducing human interference and document forgery.

2. Centralized Databases:

Efforts are being made to integrate state-level databases with the National Family Database (NFD) and the National Population Register (NPR) to ensure cross-verification.

3. Inter-Departmental Coordination:

Ministries such as Social Justice & Empowerment, Tribal Affairs, and Personnel & Training are collaborating to develop standardized formats and verification protocols.

One of the gravest issues is the proliferation of fake caste certificates, often used by individuals not belonging to reserved categories to unlawfully avail reservation benefits. Numerous high-profile cases have emerged across states where individuals from forward communities obtained SC/ST certificates through falsified documents or political influence. Such cases not only violate the law but also deprive genuine candidates of their rightful opportunities.

4. Awareness and Training:

District Collectors and Revenue Officers are being trained on caste verification procedures, while awareness campaigns are conducted to help genuine applicants understand the process.

Despite these advances, the challenge of authenticating legacy records, particularly in remote and tribal regions, continues to hinder full transparency.

Ethical and Social Implications

The misuse of caste certificates has far-reaching consequences. It not only erodes trust in the reservation system but also deepens social divisions by creating resentment among genuine beneficiaries. The issue has also sparked debates on merit versus affirmative action, with critics arguing that fraudulent claims dilute the moral legitimacy of reservations.

Conversely, genuine claimants—often from rural, illiterate, or impoverished backgrounds—struggle with procedural

complexities and delayed justice. The ethical responsibility of the State thus extends beyond detection of fraud to ensuring fair, accessible, and transparent certification mechanisms that truly empower marginalized communities.

Conclusion and Remedial Actions

The caste certificate system in India is integral to the country's social justice framework. However, the system's credibility is undermined by administrative lapses, legal ambiguities, and unethical practices. To strengthen the framework, a series of remedial actions are essential.

Benefits Of A Caste Certificate



1. Legal and Policy Reforms

- **Uniform Central Guidelines:** The DoPT, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Justice and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, should issue a unified national framework outlining eligibility, documentation, and verification norms applicable to all states.
- **Legislative Backing:** Enacting a comprehensive Caste Certification Act could provide legal enforceability and penal provisions for misuse.

2. Institutional Strengthening

- **Dedicated Verification Cells:** Every district should establish a Caste Verification Cell with digital access to national databases and trained staff.

- **Periodic Audits:** Annual audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) or National Commission for SCs/STs should review the issuance and verification process.

3. Technological Integration

- **Blockchain-Based Verification:** Implementing blockchain systems could create tamper-proof records of caste certificates.
- **Interoperability Across States:** Linking state databases through the National Digital Stack would ensure certificate validity across jurisdictions.

4. Accountability and Penalties

- **Strict penalties for forgery or misrepresentation,** including disqualification from benefits and criminal prosecution under IPC Sections 420 and 468.
- **Disciplinary action against public officials found complicit in fraudulent certification.**

5. Awareness and Inclusion

- **Community-level awareness campaigns** to educate marginalized groups about their rights and procedures.
- **Establishing mobile verification units** in tribal and remote regions to ensure access for all.

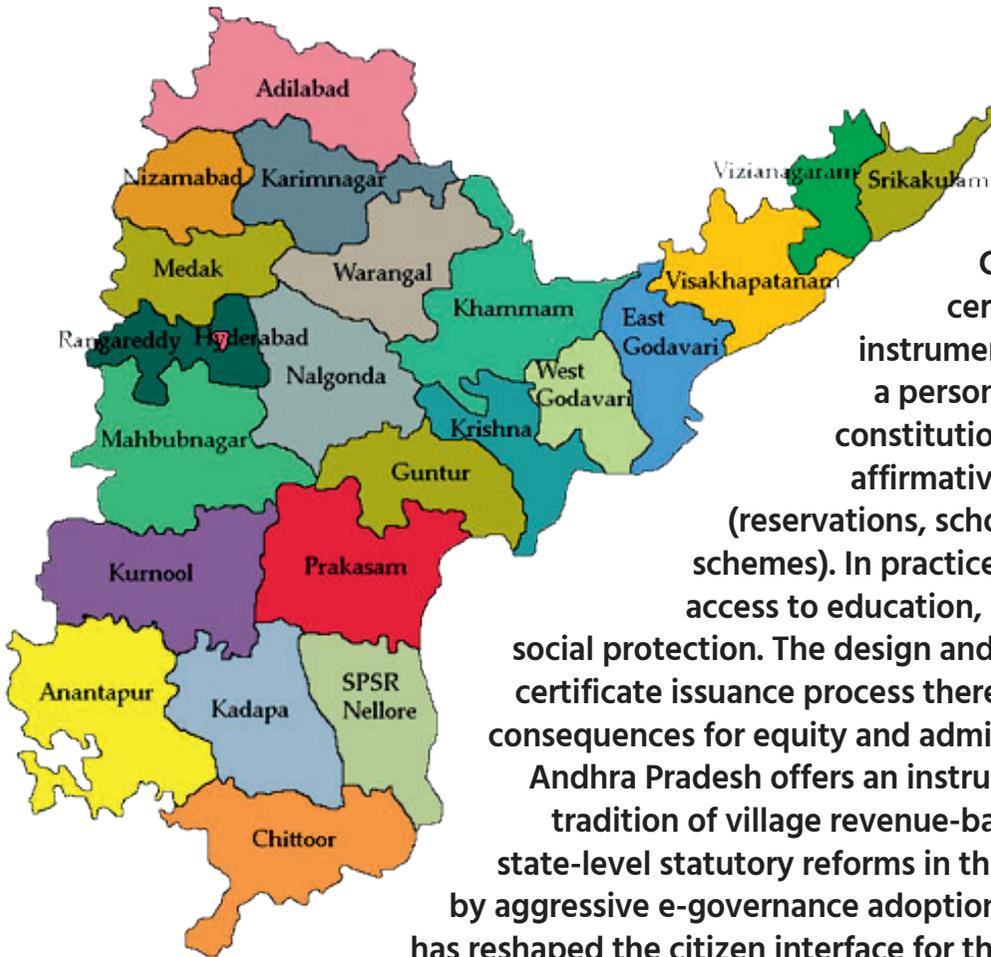
6. Strengthening Judicial Oversight

- **Fast-track tribunals** for caste certificate disputes to ensure timely justice.
- **Mandatory reporting of verification statistics** to the Supreme Court-monitored commissions.

Final Observations

Caste certificates, though administrative in nature, represent a profound moral commitment of the Indian State to correct centuries of inequality. Ensuring their authenticity and accessibility is not merely a bureaucratic obligation—it is a constitutional responsibility grounded in the principles of equality and justice. To maintain the sanctity of the reservation system, India must move toward a digitally transparent, legally uniform, and ethically grounded certification framework that empowers the deserving and penalizes the deceitful. Only through such comprehensive reform can the vision of social justice envisaged by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the framers of the Constitution truly be realized.

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Caste/community certificates are legal instruments that establish a person’s entitlement to constitutionally guaranteed affirmative-action benefits (reservations, scholarships, welfare schemes). In practice, they determine access to education, employment and social protection. The design and operation of the certificate issuance process therefore, have direct consequences for equity and administrative justice. Andhra Pradesh offers an instructive case: a long tradition of village revenue-based attestations, state-level statutory reforms in the 1990s, followed by aggressive e-governance adoption (Mee Seva) that has reshaped the citizen interface for these services. This paper reconstructs that evolution, documents the current administrative process, and proposes targeted reforms.

A Look at Andhra Pradesh

Senior Prof. MVR Raju



To understand the issue we need to find out answers to following questions:

- How has the statutory and administrative process for issuing SC certificates in Andhra Pradesh changed since independence?
- What legal instruments (Acts, Rules, GOs) and technology interventions shaped those changes?
- What are the main operational steps today (typical district pattern)?
- What gaps remain and what reforms are viable?

This article uses primary legal documents and official government portals as the anchor evidence:

1. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, defines which communities are SCs in each state and underpins all certificate regimes.
2. The Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes) Regulation of Issue of Community Certificates Act, 1993 (Act No.16 of 1993) and associated Rules (1997) -state statutory framework for issuance and



- verification.
3. Mee Seva / AP e-governance materials and the Mee Seva application forms/ portal (authoritative source on the digital delivery platform).
 4. Representative district government portals (sampled: NTR, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Krishna) showing the “Integrated Certificate” model and published document checklists, used as evidence of modern standard operating procedure.
 5. Recent Andhra Pradesh High Court reporting (illustrative of judicial interventions on conversion and certificate status) as evidence of ongoing legal contestation.

Constitutional & statutory foundations:

Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950

Article 341 of the Constitution empowers the President to specify, through public notification, the castes or communities deemed Scheduled Castes (SCs) for each state or union territory. The Constitution

(Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, along with its subsequent amendments, provides the authoritative national list; state-issued SC certificates must strictly correspond to the communities enumerated for Andhra Pradesh. This Order remains the foundational definitional instrument for eligibility.

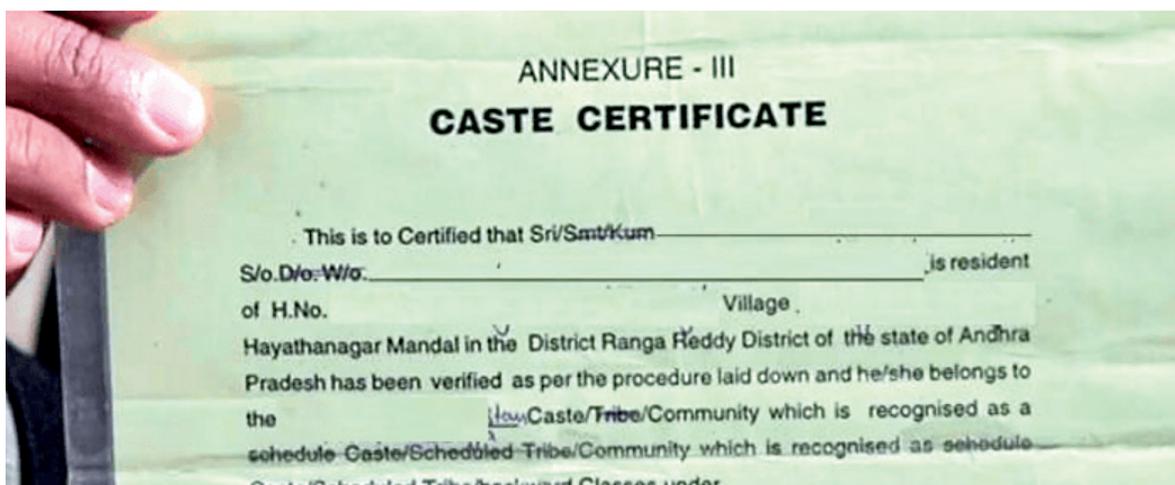
The Andhra Pradesh Regulation of Issue of Community Certificates Act, 1993 (Act 16 of 1993) and Rules (1997)

By the early 1990s, states across India recognised recurring problems of fraudulent certificates, inconsistent procedures, and arbitrary local practices. Andhra Pradesh adopted a statutory solution: Act 16 of 1993 (and the Rules that followed, notified in 1997) sets out competent authorities, the forms and proformas to be used (Proformas I–IV), procedures for enquiry and verification, penalties for producing false certificates, and delegated powers for revenue officers and collectors. The Act’s purpose is explicitly regulatory: to standardise issuance and deter fraudulent claims.

3.2 Administrative practice : Historical are

Phase	Period	Key Characteristics	Mechanism & Challenges
Immediate Post Independence	1947-1970s	Village-level attestations & revenue records	Issued by Karanams / Patwaris, later Village Revenue Officers (VROs) - Based on personal knowledge, local registers, school entries, revenue documents - Paper-based, place-bound, informal - High reliance on local social knowledge
Standardisation & Legalisation	1980-1990s	Statutory intervention	AP Act No. 16 of 1993 (enacted 1993, implemented via Rules 1997 – G.O. Ms. No. 58) - Introduced formal proformas (I–IV), competent authority hierarchy, verification protocols, appeal mechanisms - Transformed process into quasi-judicial & time-bound
Digital Transformation	2010-present	Mee Seva & Integrated Certificates	Mee Seva rollout (2010–2011): Citizen service kiosks + online portal - Single-window delivery of income, caste, nativity, DOB certificates - Integrated Certificate (Caste–Nativity–DOB) standardized across districts - Features: Online application, document upload, status tracking, downloadable certificates

The contemporary administrative process: what an applicant typically faces Across sampled district portals and Mee Seva documentation, the operational sequence for applying/getting a caste (integrated) certificate is fairly consistent. Below is a consolidated, typical workflow followed in many districts (variants and local G.O.s apply).



4.1 Typical Steps

1. Application submission: Applicant submits the Integrated Certificate application through a Mee Seva centre, online Mee Seva portal, or directly at the Tahsildar/Revenue office. Required forms are standardized (state proforma or Mee Seva form).
2. Document upload/submission: Supporting documents usually include family caste certificate (if available), SSC marks memo/school transfer certificate (for DOB), 1–10 study certificates, Aadhaar/EPIC/ration card (ID and nativity proofs). District pages list similar checklists.
3. Local verification: The revenue or village official (e.g., Mandal Revenue Officer, Tahsildar) conducts a verification—

consulting local records, school registers and sometimes local enquiries or Proformas (I–IV) for doubtful cases per the 1993 Act & 1997 Rules.

4. Issue / Rejection / Appeal: If verification is positive, the certificate is issued (printable/downloadable from Mee Seva or delivered by the office). If rejected, the Act provides appeal routes (to the Collector/Competent Authority) and penalties for false certificates

District-level procedure:

Below is a short, representative table summarising how four sample districts present the Integrated Certificate process on their official portals (document checklist and Mee Seva integration).

District	Service Name on Portal	Key Required Documents	Mee Seva Integration / Status Check
NTR	Caste Certificate / Integrated Certificate	Application form - Family caste certificate - SSC marks memo - Study certificates - Aadhaar / EPIC / Ration card - Schedule I–IV references	Apply via Mee Seva Status via Mee Seva portal
Visakhapatnam	Integrated Certificate (Caste Nativity–DOB)	Application form - Family caste certificate - SSC marks memo - 10 study certificates - Ration card / Aadhaar / EPIC	Explicit Mee Seva linkage SMS & portal status tracking
East Godavari	Integrated Certificate	Application form - Family certificate - SSC memo / DOB extract / Transfer certificate - Study certificates - Ration card / Aadhaar	Mee Seva centres Local kiosk submission & tracking



Case law and public controversies:

Judicial interventions shape certificate practice in several ways: interpretation of who qualifies as SC (e.g., effects of religious conversion), evidentiary standards for certificate admissibility in criminal or civil suits, and the legitimacy of provisional/temporary certificates. A recent cluster of reporting (2024–2025) in Andhra Pradesh highlights the courts' engagement with conversion and SC status—notably, High Court rulings indicating that conversion to Christianity may affect a person's entitlement to SC protective statutes and that courts scrutinize the timing and validity of caste certificates used as evidence in prosecutions under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. These developments reveal the continuing legal significance of accurate and timely certification.

Empirical gaps and challenges (evidence-based- analysis)

Documentary poverty—primary barrier
Many marginalised applicants lack older documentary records (parents' caste certificates, school records). Although the Mee Seva model allows for standardised submission, if the basic historic documents are missing, the verification often requires local enquiries that slow the process or lead to rejection, a theme documented repeatedly in field reports and complaint narratives. The 1993 Act and 1997 Rules permit enquiries (Proforma I–IV) for doubtful cases, but the implementation burden falls on revenue staff and applicants.

Discretion, delay and local variation

Despite statutory standardisation, large discretionary space remains for local officers: the power of Tahsildars or Revenue Inspectors to order local enquiries or insist on Proforma documentation implies potential for both necessary verification and arbitrary refusals. The official Act provides appeal routes, but appeals impose time and resource costs on claimants.

Mobility and portability problems for migrants

While central circulars and internal state guidance urge portability and recognition of migrant certificates, practice remains mixed. Migrants often face re-verification when they move to new districts/states—especially if their older certificates are absent or if the certificate types do not follow a uniform integrated format. Digital records (Mee Seva) mitigate this when properly linked, but full portability requires inter-state recognition arrangements and data-sharing protocols.

Fraud-control vs access trade-off

Stricter verification rules (a legitimate policy goal) can slow or deter genuine applicants lacking documentation. Balancing fraud prevention against access is an unresolved administrative tension in state practice reflected in continued amendments, G.O.s, and occasional litigation.

Emerging National Developments:

On April 30, 2025, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in India's next national census, slated for 2027—the first comprehensive caste count since the 1931 British colonial exercise. This decision follows persistent demands from opposition parties and state governments, which revealed higher-than-expected populations among backward castes, fuelling calls for expanded reservations.

Recommendations

Proactive documentary rescue & field verification teams
Deploy mobile verification teams (Revenue + Education records + Mee Seva clerks) to districts with high “document poverty” to capture school records, scan and attach them to applicant files. This reduces repeated rejections. (Derived from district portal practices and common failure points.)

National / Inter-state portability protocol
Create a standard API / data-sharing MoU between Andhra Pradesh's Mee Seva and other states' e-governance systems so valid certificates are machine-verifiable across state lines (fast-track recognition for migrants). This would reduce re-verification delays. (Rationale: Mee Seva already centralises records; extending secure inter-state access is a systems upgrade.)

Tiered verification for documentary gaps
Introduce a guided, tiered process for applicants who lack parental or ancestral certificates: (a) provisional admission with interim benefits (limited duration), (b) parallel field verification, (c) finalised certificate once verification completes. This balances access and fraud-control.

Publish clear timelines per district and an online dashboard (Mee Seva integration) for backlogs and average processing times; improve accountability and reduce discretionary delay.

Capacity building at MeeSeva kiosks and revenue offices

Train kiosk operators and Tahsildar staff on helping illiterate applicants, scanning/ attaching documents, and explaining appeal options reducing rejections (Continued on 20)



Kerala Overview

A caste certificate (sometimes called a community certificate) is an official document verifying that a person belongs to a particular caste/community (for example Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), etc.). In Kerala, obtaining such a certificate is important for accessing certain educational, employment, welfare and reservation benefits. For example, the website of the Department of Land Revenue, Kerala states that the application for a caste certificate may be submitted in the prescribed form to the village officer or through the e-District portal.



Dr. Divya



The relevant rules include the Kerala (Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes) Regulation of Issue of Community Certificates Rules, 2002 which governs how community certificates are issued in the case of SC/ST.

Procedure & How to Apply

Below is the step-by-step procedure as follows in Kerala (for both offline and online options and relevant documents etc).

Eligibility

- You must belong to a community recognised as SC, ST or OBC etc under the Kerala government's list.
- For children, the parent's status/community is relevant in many cases.
- For SC/ST certificates (in particular), there

are special rules about children of inter-caste marriages etc.

Documents Required

Commonly required documents include:

- Proof of caste/community (for self) or certificate of the father/mother
- Address proof (ration card, electricity/water bill etc) and identity proof (Aadhaar, voter ID).
- Age proof (birth certificate, school certificate) if required.
- School leaving certificate or educational certificate may be needed.
- For conversion (if one converts religion/caste), additional conversion certificate or Gazette notification may be required.

Application Process

Offline method:

- Visit your local village office (Village Officer) or the office of the Tahsildar (depending on the caste category). Submit the prescribed application form, attach required documents, pay fee if applicable.
- The competent authority will conduct local enquiry/verification, and then issue the certificate. According to rules, in SC/ST cases the certificate must be issued within seven days after enquiry if satisfied.

Online method (via e-District portal / Akshaya centres):

- Go to the official portal (e.g., e District Kerala portal: <https://edistrict.kerala.gov.in>) and register (with Aadhaar/mobile etc).
- Choose the service “Community Certificate” or “Caste Certificate”. Fill in the application form, upload required documents (PDFs), select purpose, pay fee.
- After submission, you’ll get an application number. You can check status. Once approved, the certificate can be downloaded/printed, or picked up at an Akshaya centre.
- For example: The “Community Certificate” service via Akshaya centre states time frame of 5 days from date of application and validity three years.

Fees and Validity

- As per one source: For online application through e-District, fee around Rs. 15 in Kerala. For application through Akshaya centre: service charge Rs. 18 + govt service charge Rs. 7 + Rs. 3 per page printing/scanning. For SC/ST families, lower fee (e.g., Rs. 10 + Rs.2 per page) etc.
- Validity: The community certificate is valid for 3 years in many cases.

Major Issues and Challenges

Despite improvements, some practical and systemic challenges persist:

- Verification Delays – Local verification may take longer than expected due to workload or incomplete documents.
- Document Gaps – Many families lack older caste certificates or official records needed to prove lineage.
- Inter-Caste Marriage and Conversion Complications – Determining eligibility for children of inter-caste couples or converts can lead to delays or inconsistent decisions.
- Awareness Barriers – Not all citizens, especially in remote areas, are familiar with online procedures or digital

document formats.

- Validity Confusion – Although caste status is permanent, many institutions demand “recent” certificates, leading to repetitive re-applications.
- Technical Issues – Limited internet connectivity, file-size upload errors, or system downtime can hinder smooth online submission.
- Social Sensitivity – The process must balance administrative verification with respect for personal dignity and privacy in caste identification.

Benefits of the Application System

The key advantages lie not in the caste classification itself, but in the modernised, citizen-friendly application system introduced by the Kerala government.

- Digital Accessibility – Citizens can apply online from anywhere, reducing the need for physical visits.
- Transparency and Tracking – Each application is assigned a unique number that allows real-time tracking of status, reducing scope for delays or corruption.
- Time Efficiency – Certificates are typically issued within a few days, especially through Akshaya centres.
- Document Security – Uploaded documents are stored digitally, reducing loss or damage to physical records.
- Inclusivity – Akshaya centres provide assisted online services for people in rural areas or with limited digital access.
- Standardised Verification – Automated records and village-level digital verifications help reduce manual errors.
- Integration with Other Schemes – Once issued, the certificate can be reused digitally for education, employment, or welfare applications, improving administrative efficiency.

Conclusion

Kerala’s digital caste certificate system is a significant step towards transparent, citizen-friendly governance. The e-District and Akshaya platforms make the process faster, more accountable, and accessible across urban and rural regions. However, ensuring timely verification, uniform rules for inter-caste and conversion cases, and better public awareness remain ongoing priorities. Strengthening local digital infrastructure and simplifying renewal requirements will further enhance trust and efficiency in the system.

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The history of the caste certificate in Maharashtra begins in the moral imagination of India's Constitution. A caste certificate today may be seen as mere piece of proof, a paper certifying one's belonging to a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, or Other Backward Class. But behind that piece of paper there is a deep idea that the modern state has both the authority and the moral responsibility to recognize the inequalities produced by history. In the Maharashtra's context, this recognition has been remained central to the state's commitment to social justice since its formation.

The Evolution of Caste Certificate Governance in Maharashtra

Chandrashekhar



The caste certificate represents the State's acknowledgment that caste-based hierarchies in past have denied generations their rightful opportunities. It is not an endorsement of caste; it is an act of restitution. It symbolizes the Indian state's ethical duty to correct the historical imbalance that still shapes access to education, jobs, and dignity. To many of us, it appears bureaucratic, but philosophically, it is an attempt to translate morality into governance.

The paradox at the heart of the caste certificate lies in its dual nature where it recognizes inequality in order to create equality. As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar argued, treating unequal's equals perpetuates injustice which is again

repeated by B.P. Mandal as "There can be equality among equals to equate unequal's is to perpetuate inequality." Therefore, the state, to achieve real equality, must first admit the existence of inherited inequality. The caste certificate is an expression of that philosophy. It is a document through which the state acknowledges social hierarchy to dismantle it through compensatory justice.

Evolution:

Maharashtra has been one of the earliest and most active states to institutionalize this philosophy into a structured process. The roots of aforesaid lie in the constitutional provisions from Articles 14 to 17 upholding equality and

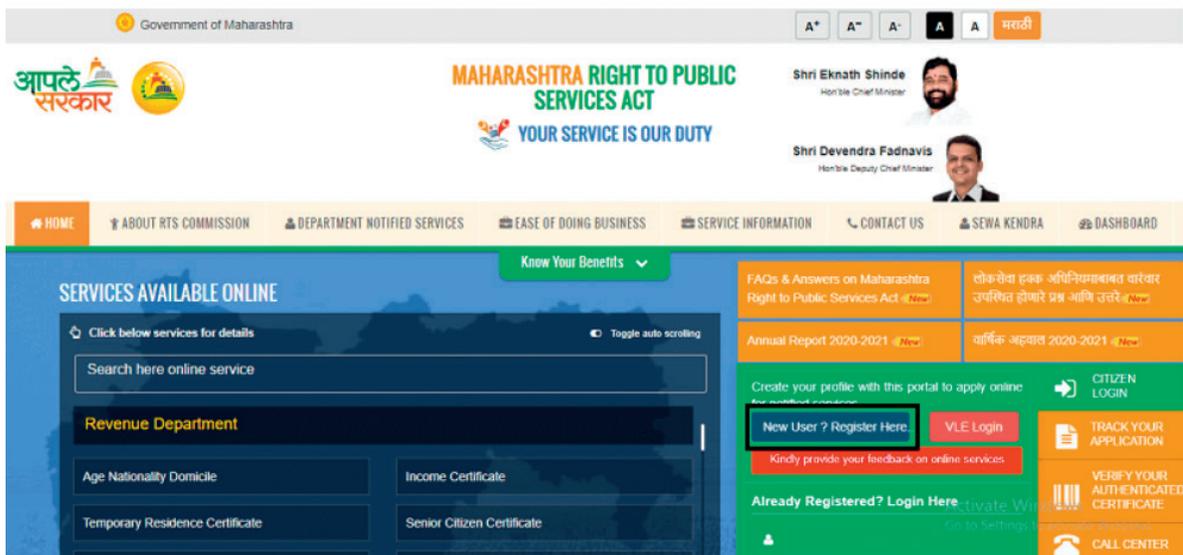
abolishing untouchability, Articles 46 and 338 to 342 focusing on protection and advancement of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 provided the foundation for identifying communities eligible for affirmative action.

But, by the late 20th century, the process of issuing caste certificates began facing serious challenges such as fraudulent claims, false documents, and misuse of benefits. These challenges struck at the basic structure of social justice, injuring to genuine claimants. It was the landmark Supreme Court judgment in *Kumari Madhuri Patil v. Additional Commissioner, Tribal Development* (1994) that laid down detailed guidelines for verification of caste claims, keeping central the need for vigilance, scrutiny, and ethical accountability. This case transformed what had been a loosely governed process into a quasi-judicial process grounded in the rule of law. In Maharashtra, the response was swift and systematic. To execute apex courts judgement the state legislated and enacted The Maharashtra Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, De-notified Tribes (Vimukta Jatis), Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Special Backward Category (Regulation of Issuance and Verification of) Caste Certificate Act, 2000, which came into force in 2001.

This law formalized the verification process, creating Caste Scrutiny Committees with legal authority to examine and validate claims. The Maharashtra Caste Certificate Rules, 2003 further operationalized the process, defining procedures, time limits, and documentation. The 2000 Act and subsequent reforms turned

Maharashtra into a model of legal precision in this domain. The state's approach reproduced Ambedkar's view that social justice is not about punishment or charity rather it is about restoring human dignity through recognition and giving opportunity. In this light, the caste certificate becomes an ethical instrument of governance. It expresses the idea that the privileged have inherited advantages from a system of historic inequality, and the state must act as a moral agent to redress those inherited wrongs. Thus, every certificate issued is not merely a right granted but a wrong acknowledged.

Over time, however, new challenges emerged such as the need for efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Paper-based verification often given rise to delays, corruption, and hardship, especially for poor and rural section of population. Recognizing exact this, Maharashtra initiated a major transforming revolution through digital governance. The Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI) took a leading role in modernizing verification processes. Its Caste Certificate Verification Information System (CCVIS) became a technological bridge between justice and administration. This digital system enabled applicants to track their verification status online, reduced the discretion of officials (human interference), and ensured that caste validity certificates were verifiable and tamper-proof. The digitization effort was not just technical innovation; it represented the moral continuation of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision that justice must be made practical, not symbolic. By integrating technology with ethics, Maharashtra turned caste verification into an instrument of empowerment and justice. But





the caste certificate also creates a philosophical dilemma. Critics argue that Caste certificate reinforces caste consciousness by continually invoking caste identity. But as Ambedkar made us think of fact that caste cannot be destroyed by pretending it does not exist. The path to annihilation of caste passes through recognition, confrontation, and rectification.

Procedure:

In Maharashtra, the system of caste documentation operates through two distinct but linked processes which are the issuance of the caste certificate and the granting of the caste validity certificate. Both are essential, the former establishes identity, while the latter authenticates it. The first step begins at the citizen level through the Aaple Sarkar online portal, Maharashtra's official e-governance platform. Here, an applicant belonging to a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Denotified Tribe (Vimukta Jati), Nomadic Tribe, Other Backward Class, or Special Backward Category submits an application for a caste certificate. The process requires uploading proof of residence, birth, and family linkage, along with documentary evidence such as old school records, revenue records, or existing certificates of close relatives. Once the application is submitted online, it is sent to the Tehsildar or Sub-Divisional Officer (depending on the category) for local verification. These officers check the claim with the help of village records, old registers, and field reports. After the due process of scrutiny, a Caste Certificate is issued under the name of the applicant. This certificate serves as primary proof of belonging to a recognized community, enabling access to education, employment, and welfare schemes. However, for official use in government recruitment, education admissions, or public service promotions, the caste certificate alone is not sufficient. To ensure authenticity and prevent fraudulent claims, requires a Caste Validity Certificate, which is a second, more rigorous level of verification. The applicant must submit the earlier caste certificate along with supporting documents to the District Caste Verification Committee.

The work of these committees is guided by the aforesaid Act of 2000 and its Rules of 2003, and the process is technically supported by BARTI through the Caste Certificate Verification Information System (CCVIS) portal. These committees examine the genealogical, documentary, and anthropological evidence of the applicant's caste claim. They often cross-check school and birth records of parents and grandparents, inspect revenue or land

documents, and may conduct interviews or field inquiries if doubt arises. The process make sure that only genuine members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes receive the legal rights of reservation. Once satisfied, the committee issues a Caste Validity Certificate, which carries 3 years validity and legal weight under the Act of 2000. In this way, Maharashtra's two-step system, Aaple Sarkar for issuing certificates and BARTI with Caste Scrutiny Committees for validation materialise both administrative efficiency and moral integrity.

Substance over procedure:

But in reality, there are clear government timelines for both certificates, the caste certificate usually takes about 21 days, while the caste validity certificate can take up to three months. But some opportunities dose not wait for official deadlines. Sometimes, a student gets an admission letter or someone gets a job offer and needs the validity certificate urgently. In such cases, it's not enough to just wait and hope. In such times you can personally visit the Social Welfare Department in your district, where the Caste Validity Scrutiny Committee works, and explain your situation. If you carry proof of urgency like your admission allotment or joining letter and give a short-written request, the officers often try to help. There are even executive orders that allow them to issue certificates earlier in genuine urgent cases.

From my own experience, when you approach them politely and with complete documents, the system listens behind all the paperwork, there are real people, who understand what's at stake or your future.

The Maharashtra's long experiment with this system indicates as a steady moral evolution. From the 1950s constitutional recognition to the 1990s judicial reforms, and from the 2000 Act to today's digital transparency, each and every stage reflects the continuous effort to align governance with ethical responsibility. The caste certificate, once a local administrative proof, has become a symbol of India's ongoing attempt to reconcile its democratic ideals with its social realities.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar once said that "Democracy in India is only a top dressing on Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic." But today, through systems like the caste certificate and caste validity process, that thought is quietly being readdressed by strengthening underprivileged.

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Caste Certificate in Himachal Pradesh

In the diverse socio-cultural landscape of India, caste certificates play a pivotal role in promoting equity and inclusion for marginalized communities. In Himachal Pradesh, a state nestled in the Himalayas with a significant population of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), these certificates are more than mere documents—they are instruments of social justice. They provide official recognition of an individual's caste or tribal identity, unlocking access to reservations in education, employment, and various welfare schemes. This article delves into the intricacies of caste certificates in Himachal Pradesh, exploring their legal foundations, application processes, eligibility criteria, and the persistent challenges of misuse and administrative inefficiencies. Drawing from official government guidelines, the e-District portal, and recent policy reforms under the Himachal Pradesh Public Service Guarantee Act, we examine how digitization has enhanced transparency while highlighting the need for robust verification to prevent fraud and ensure benefits reach genuine beneficiaries.

Sapna Deepak

Understanding the Caste Certificate

At its core, a caste certificate is an official government-issued document that verifies an individual's affiliation with a specific caste or tribe category, such as SC, ST, or OBC. In Himachal Pradesh, these certificates are essential for availing affirmative action benefits enshrined in the Indian Constitution. For SC and ST categories, the certificate acts as proof to claim reservations in educational institutions, government jobs, and special welfare programs aimed at uplifting historically disadvantaged groups. For instance, SC and ST

individuals in the state can access quotas in higher education admissions, scholarships, and employment opportunities in public sector undertakings.

The significance of these certificates cannot be overstated in a state like Himachal Pradesh, where tribal communities in regions like Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti, and SC populations in districts such as Shimla and Solan, face unique socio-economic challenges. The certificate ensures that these groups receive targeted support, from fee waivers in schools to priority in land allocations under tribal



welfare schemes. However, unlike SC/ST certificates, OBC certificates in Himachal Pradesh are handled at the district level, with slightly different procedures, though the primary focus remains on SC/ST due to their constitutional protections.

Legal and Administrative Framework

The issuance of caste certificates in Himachal Pradesh is governed by a well-defined legal and administrative structure, primarily managed by the Revenue Department. The process is streamlined through the e-District Himachal Pradesh portal, an online platform designed to facilitate citizen-centric services. Applicants can specifically apply for the Caste (SC/ST) Certificate via this portal, which integrates digital tools to reduce paperwork and expedite processing.

A key legislative backbone is the Himachal Pradesh Public Service Guarantee Act, which mandates timely delivery of public services, including caste certificate issuance. Under this Act, the government guarantees processing within stipulated timelines—typically 15-30 days—failing which officials can face penalties. The fee structure is transparent and affordable: a base application fee of Rs 20, supplemented by processing or user charges of around ₹10. Payments can be made online, via challan, or revenue stamps, making the system accessible even in remote hilly areas.

This framework aligns with national directives under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, tailored to Himachal Pradesh's notified lists of SC and ST communities. Recent policy reforms emphasize digitization, such as mandatory Aadhaar linkage and online verification, to enhance accountability. These measures aim to curb delays and errors, fostering a more efficient administrative ecosystem.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for a caste certificate in Himachal Pradesh hinges on the applicant's genuine membership in a recognized SC or ST community, as per the state's notified schedules. The Constitution lists specific castes and tribes applicable to Himachal Pradesh, ensuring that only those from historically marginalized groups qualify. For OBCs, eligibility is determined by creamy layer exclusions and income criteria, but SC/ST certificates do not impose such income-based restrictions.

A notable aspect is the parental basis for certification, particularly for SC/ST categories. This means the certificate often references the

father's or mother's caste status, especially in cases involving minors or dependents. For married women, it may consider the husband's caste if applicable, but the emphasis remains on parental lineage to maintain authenticity. Certificates are mandatory when claiming benefits like educational quotas—such as reserved seats in medical or engineering colleges—or employment reservations in state services. Without this document, individuals risk exclusion from schemes like the Post-Matric Scholarship for SC/ST students or tribal development programs.

In practice, eligibility verification involves cross-checking with community records, patwari reports on family genealogy, and sometimes endorsements from local panchayats or employers. This multi-layered approach ensures that only bona fide applicants receive certification, though it can sometimes lead to procedural complexities.

Application Process and Required Documents

Applying for a caste certificate in Himachal Pradesh is a structured, user-friendly process, largely digitized to minimize physical visits to government offices. The journey begins on the e-District portal, where applicants must register or log in using their credentials. The step-by-step procedure includes:

1. Selection of Service: Navigate to the Application for Caste (SC/ST) Certificate option.
2. Filling Details: Provide personal information, including the applicant's name, father's or husband's name, permanent address, and parental/maternal details. This ensures comprehensive family linkage for verification.
3. Document Upload: Essential documents must be scanned and uploaded.

These typically include:

- Proof of residence (e.g., ration card, electricity bill).
 - Photo identity proof (e.g., Aadhaar card, voter ID).
 - Certificate from an employer or community group verifying caste affiliation.
 - Patwari report detailing land holdings and income, along with a genealogical table tracing family caste history.
4. Payment: Submit the required fees through available modes.
 5. Submission and Verification: Once submitted, the application is forwarded to the Tehsildar or Naib Tehsildar for field verification.



This involves on-site checks and community consultations to confirm eligibility.

Upon approval, the certificate is issued digitally or in print, valid for life unless revoked due to discrepancies. This process, while efficient, underscores the importance of accurate documentation to avoid rejections.

Instances of Misuse and Governance Gaps

Despite safeguards, misuse of caste certificates remains a pressing issue in Himachal Pradesh, undermining the integrity of affirmative action. Notable cases include a man from Nerwa tehsil in Shimla district who used a forged SC certificate to secure employment for years before detection. Such frauds often involve fabricated documents or collusion with officials.

A larger scandal was the 2013-2017 scholarship fraud, where fake caste and income certificates enabled ghost students to siphon funds, prompting a CBI investigation. This exposed systemic vulnerabilities in verification. In response, the state mandates FIRs against erring officers and applicants involved in forgery. Additionally, a nine per cent rise in SC/ST atrocity cases in 2023 highlights ongoing caste-based discrimination, exacerbating the need for stringent checks. These incidents reveal ethical concerns, such as lax oversight and corruption, which dilute benefits for

genuine claimants. Governance gaps, including inadequate training for verifying officers, contribute to these problems.

Challenges and the Path Forward

Himachal Pradesh faces several challenges in managing caste certificates. Verification remains a bottleneck, with documentation errors leading to rejections or delays, despite guaranteed timelines under the Public Service Guarantee Act. Awareness gaps among rural populations hinder access, while misuse erodes public trust. To address these, the state has introduced digitization and accountability measures, like real-time tracking on the e-District portal. However, stronger enforcement—such as biometric integration and regular audits—is essential. Ultimately, balancing inclusivity for true beneficiaries with safeguards against fraud is crucial for upholding affirmative action's ethos.

In conclusion, caste certificates in Himachal Pradesh embody the state's commitment to social equity. By refining processes and tackling misuse, the administration can ensure these documents truly empower marginalized communities, fostering a more just society.

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A Look at Andhra Pradesh

(Continued from 12) due to technical errors. District portals indicate this is a central point of citizen contact and therefore strategic for intervention.

Limitations of this study and directions for further research

This article synthesises statutes, official portals and recent media/court reporting it is not an original field survey. Crucial empirical elements are missing: (a) number of certificates issued per year by district; (b) rejection and appeal rates; (c) time-to-issue statistics pre- and post-Mee Seva; (d) user-experience data from applicants (ethnographic). A full empirical study should combine Right to Information (RTI)/official data requests, field interviews with applicants and revenue officers, and a technical audit of Mee Seva's data flows and inter-state interoperability.

Conclusion

From village-level attestations in the decades after independence to state statutory standardisation (1993 Act and 1997 Rules) and a subsequent technological leap to Mee Sev

and integrated certificates, Andhra Pradesh's SC certificate regime shows clear institutional modernization. The statutory instruments created a stronger legal scaffolding; Mee Seva increased transparency and reach; district portals standardised document checklists and the Integrated Certificate model. Yet, operational frictions — documentary poverty, discretionary verification, migrant portability and the fraud-control/access trade-off — persist. Addressing them requires a mix of administrative reforms (field verification teams, capacity building), technical upgrades (inter-state data sharing), and procedural innovation (tiered provisional certification). The documents cited here (Constitution order, Act & Rules, Mee Seva portal and district pages) provide the primary anchors for these findings.

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Education in India has long been envisioned as a force of emancipation — a tool to dismantle social hierarchies and promote equality. Yet, paradoxically, several institutions of higher learning have become microcosms of the very inequalities they were meant to overcome. Caste-based discrimination continues to haunt Indian campuses, often manifesting in both overt hostility and subtle prejudice.

A UGC Report on Caste Discrimination

Ipshita

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela.

Yet, in India, education — meant to liberate sometimes becomes a site of exclusion and prejudice.

Despite constitutional guarantees under Articles 14, 15, and 21, students from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and other marginalized communities routinely report experiences of exclusion, humiliation, and institutional apathy. Tragic incidents, most notably the deaths of Rohith Vemula (University of Hyderabad, 2016) and Dr. Payal Tadvi (TN Topiwala National Medical College, 2019), have painfully underscored how entrenched caste hierarchies can destroy lives even within spaces of learning.

In response to continuing complaints and public outcry, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has been directed by the Supreme

Court of India (SC) to file a comprehensive status report on caste discrimination in universities and to frame stricter, time-bound anti-discrimination norms. The Court’s recent intervention in September 2025 marks a pivotal moment in redefining campus equality as a matter of constitutional urgency rather than administrative formality.

This article explores how caste discrimination manifests in educational settings, how institutions deal with such cases, the measures taken by the UGC, and why the Supreme Court has intervened with renewed urgency and expectations.

How Caste Discrimination Happens in Campuses?

Caste discrimination on campuses operates in both visible and invisible forms. In its explicit form, it can involve verbal abuse, public humiliation, or differential treatment by peers and faculty members. In its subtle form, it



manifests as social exclusion, where students from marginalized communities are deliberately kept out of study groups, hostel rooms, or social circles.

Faculty bias can also play a role — whether in assessment, research supervision, or classroom participation. Students from SC/ST backgrounds are often stereotyped as “quota candidates” or “less meritorious,” creating a sense of inferiority. Many such students report being denied equal mentorship opportunities or being unfairly evaluated. These repeated experiences can lead to psychological distress, low confidence, and alienation. Some students internalize this discrimination, while others protest and face backlash. The consequences can be devastating — from academic setbacks to suicides.

“Discrimination is not always shouted; sometimes, it’s whispered into the way a student is made to feel unseen.” The problem persists partly because victims often hesitate to complain, fearing retaliation or disbelief. In such an environment, silence becomes survival.

How Colleges and Universities Deal with These Issues The response of educational institutions to caste discrimination has been inconsistent.

Following UGC directives, universities are supposed to set up specific institutional mechanisms such as:

- Equal Opportunity Cells (EOC),
- SC/ST Cells,
- Grievance Redressal Committees, and
- Appointment of a Liaison Officer or Anti-Discrimination Officer.

These bodies are tasked with ensuring fair treatment, creating awareness, and handling complaints promptly. Some institutions — such as JNU, TISS, and Delhi University — have made notable efforts by conducting workshops and public consultations on inclusion.

However, in many colleges, these committees exist only on paper. Complaints often remain unaddressed, inquiries are delayed, or panels lack representation from marginalized groups.

The lack of faculty sensitisation further compounds the problem. In smaller towns or private universities, students are often unaware of whom to approach or fear social ostracism. Hence, the gap between institutional promise and campus reality remains wide. This lack of accountability prompted the Supreme Court to direct the UGC to monitor and report the actual functioning of these mechanisms.

UGC Guidelines and Measures

The University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012 marked the first

structured attempt to address campus

discrimination. These regulations mandated that: Institutions must prohibit discrimination based on caste, creed, gender, or social origin; They must establish Equal Opportunity Cells and Grievance Committees; Anti-discrimination notices must be displayed publicly in colleges and hostels; Reports of complaints and redressal must be submitted to the UGC periodically.

Over the years, the UGC has reinforced these directives through repeated circulars (2016, 2020, 2023) urging compliance. In 2024–25, following the Supreme Court’s direction, the UGC began preparing a comprehensive status report on caste discrimination across universities. It has also drafted new and stricter regulations that include:

- Time-bound disposal of complaints;
- Possible penalties or derecognition for non-compliant institutions;
- Mandatory annual publication of complaint data;
- Regular sensitisation and anti-bias training for faculty and administrators.

“Universities must not merely be spaces of intellectual pursuit but of social justice.” – UGC Circular (2024). These measures aim to move beyond symbolic gestures toward real accountability and transparency.

Why the Supreme Court Is Paying Attention?

The Supreme Court of India has increasingly intervened to ensure that constitutional values of equality, dignity, and non-discrimination are upheld within educational spaces. The Court’s attention intensified after recurring reports of caste harassment and institutional neglect.

In hearings during 2024–2025, the Court observed that despite existing UGC regulations, many universities had failed to implement them effectively. Several institutions had not submitted the mandatory reports or had set up non-functional grievance cells. The Court, taking serious note, directed the UGC to:

- File a detailed status report on caste discrimination complaints in all universities
- Frame fresh regulations ensuring transparency and accountability;
- Consider establishing a ten-point national framework to prevent all forms of discrimination — caste, gender, or disability-related.

The Supreme Court emphasized that universities must actively uphold-

- Article 14 (Right to Equality);
- Article 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex

SUPREME COURT DIRECTS UGC ON CASTE DISCRIMINATION REGULATIONS



evaluation systems or lack of representation in decision-making bodies — persists subtly but powerfully.

A 2024 UGC survey reportedly found that fewer than 60% of universities had functioning SC/ST Cells, and only 35% maintained records of discrimination complaints. These figures highlight how much remains to be done beyond legal compliance.

“The true test of education lies not in degrees but in the dignity, it accords to every student.”

Way Forward and Conclusion

Eradicating caste discrimination from campuses requires a multi-layered approach. Legal frameworks and regulations must be backed by social awareness, empathy, and education.

The way forward includes:

- Strict UGC monitoring and penalties for non-compliance;
- Transparent publication of discrimination data by institutions;
- Mandatory sensitisation workshops for students, faculty, and administrators;
- Establishing independent grievance bodies with student representation;
- Counselling and mentorship programs to support affected students;
- Promotion of diversity in leadership positions within universities.

The Supreme Court’s active oversight and the UGC’s upcoming reforms signal a decisive step toward inclusive education. However, genuine change will depend on whether universities internalise these principles in spirit, not just in form.

As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once said, “Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence.”

For this cultivation to be meaningful, campuses must become free of fear, bias, and hierarchy. Only then can education serve its true purpose — to liberate, not to label. Caste discrimination on campuses is not just a legal violation; it is a moral failure that undermines the foundations of equality and justice. The combined efforts of the judiciary, the UGC, and educational institutions can transform campuses into the safe, inclusive spaces that the Constitution envisioned — places where every student, regardless of caste, can learn, grow, and dream freely. Only then can Indian universities embody the democratic promise of education.

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or place of birth);

- Article 21 (Right to Life with Dignity).

“Universities are not just educational spaces; they are constitutional spaces. Any form of discrimination here strikes at the heart of our democracy.” – Observation by the Supreme Court Bench (2025)

This strong judicial stance underscores the expectation that both the UGC and individual universities must act not merely as administrators but as guardians of equality and The Court’s involvement has thus transformed the issue from an administrative concern into a matter of constitutional importance.

Current Status and Remaining Challenges

Despite growing awareness and new regulations, caste discrimination continues to be under-reported and under-addressed. Many institutions submit incomplete data or fail to acknowledge cases altogether. Students often distrust internal committees, believing them to be biased or ineffective.

In private universities, where administrative control is tighter, students fear academic consequences for speaking up. Furthermore, institutional discrimination — such as biased



In the sun-baked fields of Muzaffarpur, where the scent of ripening paddy mingles with the dust kicked up by campaign jeeps, Ramu Paswan wipes sweat from his brow and pauses his sickle. At 52, he's a Dusadh farmer, one of Bihar's many Dalit voices, whose family has tilled this land for generations. "My grandfather voted for whoever promised water in our fields" he says, his voice roughened by years of toil. "Now, I vote for who remembers us when the monsoons fail. Caste? It's like the roots under the soil—hidden, but it decides if the plant stands or falls.

Battle of Bihar & Caste

Vijendra



As Bihar hurtles toward its 2025 Assembly elections on November 6 and 11, with results might have out, Ramu's words capture the quiet human pulse beneath the frenzy. Here, in the land of ancient empires and modern migrations, caste is not just arithmetic; it's the story of survival, betrayal, and flickering hope.

Bihar's electoral saga has long been scripted by caste, that intricate web of identities forged in the fires of history and inequality. The 2023 caste survey, a seismic revelation from the Nitish Kumar government, laid bare the numbers: Yadavs at 14%, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at 27%, Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) at 36%, Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 19.65%, and upper castes a mere 15%. These are not mere statistics; they are lifelines. For families like Ramu's, where 40% of youth migrate to Delhi's construction sites or Mumbai's factories, the ballot is a plea for dignity beyond daily wages of ₹300.

In the rally at Samastipur, where Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's helicopter touches down amid cheering crowds, blades whirring like the heartbeat of his Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) base. Nitish stepping out, flanked by Kurmi supporters waving saffron flags—evokes

a man clinging to legacy. At 74, Nitish, the engineer-turned-socialist, has sworn in nine times, his alliances as fluid as the Ganges. His NDA coalition with the BJP banks on upper castes (Bhumihars, Rajputs, Brahmins) and his core Kurmi-Koeri bloc, now bolstered by EBC outreach. 'Sushasan babu' they call him, crediting his prohibition and cycle schemes for women's mobility. But whispers persist: Is the 'Paltu Ram' fading?

Recent roadshows in Darbhanga and Madhubani, forced by bad weather when helicopters grounded, saw Nitish walking among voters, his frail frame a symbol of endurance. Yet, for EBCs like the Telis or Mallahs—small castes that form the survey's 36% bulk—his promises feel like echoes. 'He gave us reservations', says Sita Devi, a 45-year-old Mallah fisherwoman from Patna's fringes, but my sons still row boats at dawn. Where are the jobs?

Across the divide, in the Yadav heartlands of Madhepura, Tejashwi Yadav rallies under RJD banners, his voice booming over microphones: 'Laddu se ladai tak!'. From cricket pitches to political pitches, the 36-year-old scion of Lalu Prasad invokes 'MY Family'—Muslims and



Yadavs, the unbreakable 25% MY bloc. But Tejashwi's 2025 playbook is broader, laced with human stories of aspiration. At a recent padyatra in Vaishali, he stops to chat with a group of young EBC graduates, their faces etched with the exhaustion of jobless degrees. 'Bihar's youth are not beggars', he tells them, promising 10 lakh government jobs and skill centres.

It's a nod to the migration crisis: Over 2 crore Biharis work outside, sending remittances that prop up 30% of rural households. For Dalits like Ramu, Tejashwi's appeal tugs at old loyalties—Lalu's era of 'social justice' empowered SCs—but sub-caste fractures loom. Paswans (5.3%) lean toward Chirag Paswan's LJP(RV), while Dusadhs (5.3%) waver. 'Tejashwi speaks our pain' Ramu admits, but will he share power, or just seats?

Caste in Bihar is not monolithic; it's a mosaic of sub-castes, each with its own scars and ambitions. The EBCs, that umbrella of over 100 small communities—from Kanus to Nonias—hold the swing. Born from Karpoori Thakur's 1970s backward caste quotas, they have risen from political invisibility (just 17 MLAs in 2010) to kingmakers. In 2025, parties scramble: JD(U) fields more EBC candidates, RJD appoints Mangani Lal Mandal, a Dhanuk leader, as state president, and even Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj woos them with caste-neutral talk. Prashant Kishor, the poll strategist turned disruptor, pads through villages in Bhojpur, his Jan Suraj padyatra a two-year odyssey of chai-side chats. 'Caste has chained Bihar' he declares at a Bhagalpur meet, vowing education loans and anti-corruption drives. His gamble? Transcend the Yadavs-Kurmis duopoly, targeting the 40% youth bulge frustrated by unemployment (Bihar's rate hovers at 7.6%, double the national average). In a state where 68% of Seemanchal's voters are Muslim-Yadav, and Dalits fragment across 23 sub-groups, Kishor's pitch resonates with urban migrants returning via apps, not bullock carts. Yet, Caste dynamics are not boardroom deals; they are family feuds played out in village chaurahais.

In Purne's Muslim-majority pockets (44% population), where floods devour homes yearly, the 18% Muslim vote—RJD's bedrock—feels the squeeze. Amina Khaton, a 38-year-old weaver, veils her face as she recounts the 2023 survey's promise of 75% reservation. 'We got numbers on paper', she says, her loom silent since power cuts, but factories? Schools? My daughters dream of teachers, not tailoring.

The INDIA bloc—RJD, Congress, Left—courts this bloc with Rahul Gandhi's nyay yatras but

BJP counters with welfare: Ujjwala gas and PM Awas Yojana, subtly threading Hindutva. In reserved SC seats (38 of 243), Dalit assertion peaks. Chirag Paswan, the Oxford-educated heir to Ram Vilas, eyes 30 seats for LJP(RV), his Paswan base (9%) a bulwark against upper-caste dominance. Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM woos Musahars (3%), p the rat-eaters still scavenging at society's edges.

Dalits built Bihar's railways, Manjhi thunders at a Sitamarhi rally, but ride them as laborers, not leaders; As helicopters dot the sky—Modi's 10 rallies, Nitish's four daily—the NDA paints a double-engine; dream: Defence corridors, district factories. But ground realities bite.

In Kosi's floodplains, Koeri farmer Rajendra Kushwaha, 48, eyes his waterlogged fields. 'Nitish gave cycles to my daughters' he says, pride flickering but without irrigation, they are pedalling to poverty. Kushwaha's Koeri kin (4%) back JD(U), but EBC cousins flirt with RJD's Tejashwi, drawn by caste census echoes of Karpoori Thakur. Upper castes, the BJP's 15% anchor, grumble at Nitish's invisibility—Kharage's barb at Modi's Patna roadshow, where Nitish was sidelined. 'We are the old guard' sighs a Bhumihar landlord in Begusarai, but without EBCs, we are footnotes.' Women, often the unsung caste navigators, add nuance. Nitish's 50% panchayat quotas empowered 1.4 lakh sarpanchs, many EBC widows like Lakshmi from Gaya, who now leads self-help groups. Caste divides men' she laughs over tea, but loans unite us.

Yet, rising crimes—despite zero tolerance vows—haunt: 2024 saw 1,200 Dalit atrocity cases. Tejashwi's Mahila Haat markets promise economic wings, but voters like Lakshmi weigh safety against subsidies. As November dawns, Bihar's 7.4 crore voters—up 20% since 2020, thanks to Aadhaar-linked rolls—face a crossroads.

Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj, contesting 200 seats, polls 8-10%, siphoning EBC youth. AIMIM eyes Seemanchal's 5 seats from 2020 gains. Digital twists abound: E-voting trials in municipal polls hint at tech-savvy shifts, but rural 70% literacy lags. Back in Muzaffarpur, Ramu Paswan folds his newspaper—the Dainik Bhaskar with Nitish's chopper silhouette. 'Caste got us here,' he muses, but jobs will take us forward. In this human tapestry, where a Kurmi's pride clashes with a Mallah's plea, Bihar's 2025 vote is not math—it's memory. Will it entrench divides, or seed equity? As ballots seal fates on November 14, one thing endures: In Bihar, every caste carries a story, and every story votes.

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What parties say about deprived communities?

As Bihar gears up for the 2025 Assembly elections, major political parties have released their manifestos, thick with promises, slogans, and social welfare agendas. But behind the campaign noise lies a crucial question: what do these promises actually mean for Bihar’s marginalized communities, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), who make up nearly one-fifth of the state’s population?

Bihar’s 2023 caste survey revealed that SCs constitute 19.65% and STs 1.68% of the population. Together, they represent over 2.7 crore citizens. Yet, despite decades of schemes and reservations, Bihar continues to rank low in social mobility and education outcomes for these groups. This election season, parties have tried to address this gap, though in different ways.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the BJP and JD(U), has focused its 2025 manifesto, the “Sankalp Patra” on youth, education, and inclusion. For marginalized groups, it promises both direct financial aid and structural welfare schemes.

In the education sector, the NDA pledges to establish residential schools for SC/ST students in every division, ₹2,000 monthly support for students pursuing higher education, and up to ₹10 lakh assistance for those from Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) who wish to study further. The manifesto also mentions enhanced skill training and job-linked courses under the “Bihar Skill Mission,” with special inclusion for SC, ST, and women trainees.

The alliance has also promised financial and skill support for gig workers and auto drivers, a category that includes a large number of Dalit youth. On welfare and livelihood, the NDA says it will expand

housing schemes, improve irrigation, and attract investment to make Bihar a “global workplace within five years.”

While these promises signal attention to education and employment, the real challenge lies in reaching the most excluded, those without access to schools, hostels, or technology. The NDA’s long record in Bihar gives voters a basis for comparison: its future credibility will depend on how efficiently these schemes are implemented at the local level.

The Mahagathbandhan (MGB), led by Tejashwi Yadav’s RJD, has built its manifesto around the theme of “Nyay aur Rozgar” (Justice and Employment). The coalition promises one government job for every family and the regularisation of contractual workers, positioning itself as a champion for unemployed youth, particularly those from marginalized castes who remain dependent on informal and unstable work.

In its education promises, the MGB has proposed upgrading madrasas, establishing women’s colleges in every district, and expanding SC/ST reservation in higher education and employment. It also mentions starting food processing facilities in every district and reviving sugar mills to generate rural jobs, particularly in Dalit-majority areas.

The RJD’s manifesto takes a sharper tone on caste justice than the NDA’s developmental language. It pledges to strengthen implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, provide legal aid for victims of caste-based violence, and prioritize land redistribution to the landless. These promises connect with RJD’s long-standing identity politics, but their success depends on consistent policy delivery rather than campaign rhetoric.



Recalibrating Power: China's New Plan to Shape a New Global Order

Prakash Raj



For over seven decades, China's five-year plans have guided its national development by blending broad economic, political, social, and military objectives with a long-term strategic vision. This framework serves as a roadmap for investment, industrial policy, and social priorities, enabling the country to coordinate resources effectively over time; it's a feat few nations have managed to sustain. The Communist Party of China's (CPC) 20th Central Committee convened its Fourth Plenary Session in Beijing from October 20 to 23, 2025.

For the drafting process, the CPC Central Committee deployed six research teams across 12 provincial-level regions, commissioned 35 major studies by Party and government institutions, convened several symposiums, and conducted an online consultation campaign that garnered over three million public submissions. The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee adopted the "Proposals of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for National Economic and Social Development." This meeting reviews the past five years and outlines a strategic roadmap for the next "critical five," marking a decisive phase in China's pursuit of national rejuvenation and socialist

modernisation through stronger planning and institutional support.

Strategic-High Quality Development

The CCP remains steadfast in advancing high-quality development by modernising traditional industries and fostering emerging sectors. It aims to deepen investment in advanced semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and quantum research, while accelerating the integration of renewable energy and the development of carbon-neutral infrastructure.

The plenary communique underscores two central themes: optimism in turning crises into opportunities over the next five years, and the pursuit of basic modernisation by 2035, with per capita GDP reaching



mid-developed nation levels. To this end, policymakers outlined twelve key tasks. They prioritised three core goals:

building a modern industrial system anchored in the real economy, strengthening scientific and technological self-reliance through innovation in core technologies, and expanding domestic demand to elevate living standards and consumption. Associate Professor Gu Qingyang of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, noted that the plan pivots on two core strategies: first, advancing industrial development through technological self-reliance to counter U.S. pressures and revitalise declining traditional sectors; and second, expanding domestic demand by “investing in the people” through enhanced social security and improved livelihoods to stimulate consumption.

Shen Hong, Director of the Department of Domestic Development Cooperation at the Institute of New Structural Economics, Peking University, stated that prioritising high-quality development in the 15th Five-Year Plan reflects two main objectives: countering the U.S. technology blockade and reducing regional disparities to enhance living standards. He further noted that achieving technological parity with the U.S. would not only strengthen China’s security but could also transform the bilateral relationship from one of confrontation to “cooperative competition.” Takehiko Nakao, former President of the Asian Development Bank, observed that China is emerging as a global leader in technological innovation, particularly in fields such as artificial intelligence, with its emphasis on developing new, quality productive forces serving as a cornerstone of its growth model. He underscored that China’s progress has been deeply rooted in globalisation and open trade, emphasising that maintaining “friendship and cooperation” with other countries remains essential.

Socialist Modernisation Drive

The 15th Five-Year Plan marks a new phase in advancing Chinese modernisation. Aimed at building a modern socialist nation and achieving the Second Centenary Goal, it emphasises six core commitments: Party leadership, people-centred governance, high-quality growth, deepened reform, synergy between market and government, and balanced development and security. These principles draw on experience to guide future strategy, emphasising autonomy, security, and sustainable progress in a complex global context.

The communique described the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) as a pivotal phase

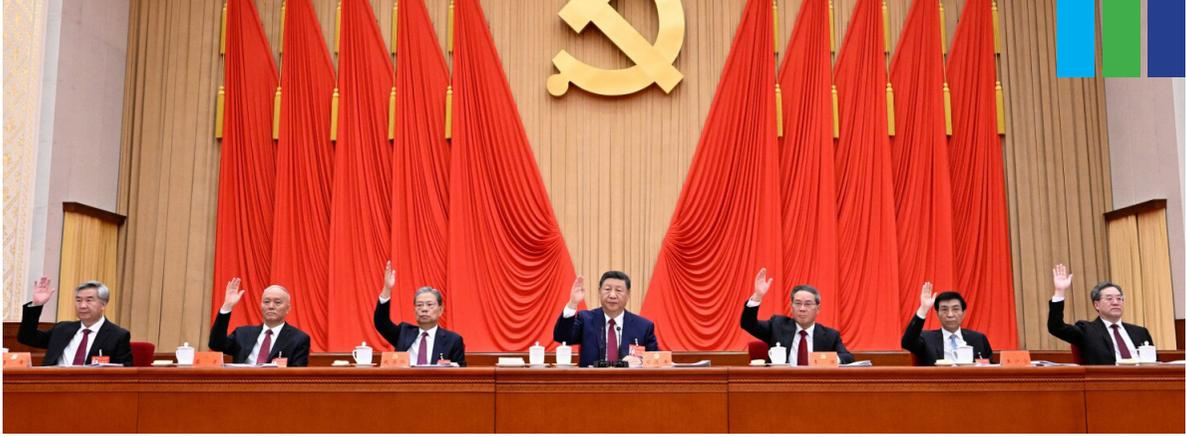
in China’s development and the 15th plan (2026–2030) as crucial for achieving socialist modernisation by 2035. President Xi said that only through a historical process of gradual and continuous development can socialist modernisation be realised, and it demands the unremitting hard work of successive generations. The session reaffirmed Xi Jinping’s core leadership and the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought, emphasising the “two affirmations” and “two safeguards” as key institutional pillars for ensuring the Party’s unified authority. This reaffirmation strengthens Xi’s central role in the Party-led governance system, connecting the idea of “self-revolution,” which is embodied in anti-corruption efforts, discipline, and unity, to the broader goal of advancing national modernisation.

Shared Development Community

In the coming five years, China will “fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts” and “seek to share opportunities and pursue common development with the rest of the world.” The concept of shared growth forms a core element of this philosophy, serving both as a guiding principle for China’s domestic progress and as a framework for reducing global development disparities. Within this broader vision, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) remains the most visible manifestation of China’s commitment to shared development. By expanding investments and infrastructure connectivity across Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, the BRI seeks to bridge the developmental divide through transport corridors, energy grids, and digital networks that foster trade and regional integration.

Beijing presents this initiative as an inclusive platform for mutual benefit, positioning it as an alternative to Western-centric development paradigms. The 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) reinforces this global outreach by aligning domestic innovation strategies with the international goals of the BRI. China’s emphasis on green infrastructure, digital finance, and cross-border logistics aims to create a virtuous cycle where domestic innovation fuels global partnerships. Yet, scholarly debates highlight the dual nature of this project. While proponents argue that the BRI promotes connectivity and industrialisation across the Global South, critics caution that it extends China’s geopolitical leverage and deepens dependency structures. Nevertheless,

Beijing’s approach reflects a strategic synthesis—linking technological advancement, social equity, and global engagement under the rubric of shared prosperity, thereby recasting



development as both a national imperative and an instrument of international influence.

Impact on the Global Stage

The world is witnessing unprecedented changes, with rising unilateralism and protectionism undermining the multilateral trading system. Geopolitical tensions, persistent conflicts, and intertwined security threats are intensifying. Meanwhile, the global recovery remains fragile, and urgent challenges such as climate change, health crises, and energy and food insecurity persist, proving difficult to resolve amid weak international cooperation and consensus. Eric Olander, Director of the China-Global South Project, observed that this shift poses challenges for lower- and middle-income countries aspiring to emulate China's development model, which will become increasingly difficult "as long as China continues producing toasters and sneakers alongside semiconductors and drones." His remark underscores the paradox of China's economic structure—its simultaneous dominance in both labour-intensive manufacturing and high-tech production—positioning it uniquely between industrial and post-industrial economies. Within this global context, China's forthcoming 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) is expected to consolidate its technological ascendancy while deepening global interdependence on Chinese supply chains. The plan will likely emphasise innovation-driven growth, digital transformation, and strategic autonomy in critical technologies, reinforcing Beijing's ambition to achieve self-reliance amid Western efforts to "de-risk" from Chinese production networks.

As China moves further up the value chain, it will reshape global competition and complicate development pathways for the Global South, which may find fewer opportunities to industrialise through traditional export-led models. At the same time, the plan's focus on green energy, digital connectivity, and advanced infrastructure will revitalise the Belt and Road Initiative, extending China's influence through sustainable and digital corridors across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These engagements

could stitch new economic partnerships while intensifying rivalries with the United States, Japan, and India over technological standards, maritime routes, and geopolitical influence. Globally, the outcomes of China's 15th Five-Year Plan will reverberate across trade, finance, and security. It will likely redefine global production hierarchies, challenge Western economic norms, and shape the contours of a multipolar order where Beijing's model—simultaneously developmental and strategic—becomes a powerful alternative in the evolving world system.

Conclusion

China, the world's leading manufacturer for 15 consecutive years, with roughly 30 per cent of global output, is now advancing toward a modernised industrial system centred on smart, green, and integrated development—leveraging digital technologies to boost efficiency and shift from labour-intensive to technology-intensive production. China's development trajectory reflects its capacity for effective resource mobilisation to achieve national objectives. The 15th Five-Year Plan serves as a pivotal instrument in advancing the second centenary goal of building a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful modern socialist nation by 2049.

With firm resolve and a broad strategic vision, China continues to advance its modernisation through five-year plans, signalling confidence in its ability to contribute stability and positive energy to the world through effective governance and a mature economy. The Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee marks a decisive step toward building a modern socialist nation. A more efficient, stable, and dynamic China aims to engage the world with openness and cooperation—promoting an open global economy, fairness, shared human values, and collective efforts to tackle global challenges for a better common future.

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Bhupen Hazarika: Songs for Humanity and Social Awakening

The cultural identity of Bhupen Hazarika is multifaceted, encompassing his roles as a public intellectual, singer, activist, and academic. Hazarika was born in Sadiya, Assam, in 1926. He received his education in India and the US and was involved in the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) environment. He returned to India believing that music could be used to change society. His songs, which are mainly written in Assamese but are also translated and performed in Bengali, Hindi, and other languages, speak to important societal issues such as community harmony, ecological interdependence, class inequity, the dignity of labour, linguistic identity, and humanistic solidarity. Songs like "Bistirno Dupare" (On the Wide Shore) and "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" (For Human Beings Are for Each Other) became almost anthems throughout Assam and beyond, and they inspired social justice and regional rights campaigns (Patajiri; "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" coverage).



Professor Anup Kumar

Humanism and Moral Pedagogy: "Manuhe Manuhor Babe"

Hazarika's ethical humanism is possibly best expressed in the 1956 composition "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" (For Human Beings Are for Each Other). Its repeated command, "Manuhe manuhor babe", is a moral precept: people are for one another. The song, which is straightforward in its structure and rhetoric, employs repetition to establish ethical weight. Its melodic accessibility made it simple to learn and sing in a group setting, and it was used in cultural programs that promoted pluralism, language-movement events, and public protests (Patajiri; Times of India). Scholars contend that the song's international appeal stems from its translation into Bengali, "Manush Manusher Jonno", which gained widespread recognition in both Bangladesh and India, illustrating Hazarika's capacity to transcend linguistic boundaries.

The song poses this query at the outset:

Manuhe manuhor babe, Jodihe okonu nabhabe, Akonu xebe noxoy, Akonu xebe noxoy, He bhakat bhakat xur.

(If man does not think for man, Then of what use is this life?)

Using the conditional formulation "if man

does not think for man", Hazarika highlights an ethical premise: dependency is essential to human existence. The song starts out as an inquiry rather than a compliment, which creates moral ambiguity. The phrase "is not" is used often to emphasize negation: human existence is rendered meaningless when one does not care for others. The song begins as a moral syllogism in this sense: compassion is necessary for the value of life.

The argument is expanded in the second stanza, which contrasts humanity's shortcomings with its potential:

Manuh bujile manuhor dukha, Etiya bujile manuhor mukh.

(When man understands another's sorrow, Then he truly knows the face of man.)

In this instance, Hazarika links empathy and recognition through the metaphorical juxtaposition of dukh (sorrow) and mukh (face). A moral awakening occurs when one is able to "see the face" of another; one finds oneself in the pain of another. Hazarika uses indigenous language to express the ethics of recognition, which is similar to Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the "face of the Other" (International Journal Corner).



The social dimension is introduced explicitly in the third stanza: Manuh bujile manuhor kosol, Koru bohu kotha bhaal.

(When man knows the worth of man, The world will fill with goodness.)

At this point, the focus moves from self-reflection to societal projection. A rejection of the caste, class, and community structures that separated Assamese society in the 1950s, the “worth of man” (kosol) implies equality. Through the association of comprehension with social flourishing (“the world will fill with goodness”), Hazarika envisions empathy as a socially renewing force. His tone is instructive without being overbearing, and the cyclic recurrence of the music makes moral education engaging.

The lyrics attain a visionary perspective in the final stanza: Jodi manuhor babe manuh bujibo pare, Etiya hobo xukh-dokh bhora bhum.

(If man truly understands man, This world will be a land of peace and happiness.)

The song is bound in a loop of moral reasoning when the conditional “if” returns. Instead of being naïve romanticism, the utopian vision of a “land of peace and happiness” is a metaphor for civic ethics. As xukh-dokh (pleasure and grief) are intertwined in Assamese folk idiom, Hazarika imagines harmony via acknowledgment of shared vulnerability.

In addition to the slow, ascending melody, harmonium and tabla are frequently included in traditional versions of this stanza. The musical heaviness reflects the serious ethical content of the text. According to Patgiri, Hazarika’s humanism “is not abstract philosophy but a pedagogy of empathy performed through song.”

“Manuhe Manuhor Babe” became a civil hymn in Assam, where it is performed at protests, schools, and cultural events. Hazarika’s universal humanism that cuts across linguistic boundaries is reflected in its translation into Bengali (“Manush Manusher Jonno”) and its widespread appeal in Bangladesh after 1971 (Quest Journals).

Thus, stanza upon stanza, the song engages in ethical pedagogy, beginning with introspection, progressing to empathy, social reciprocity, and finally universal harmony. It effectively puts Hazarika’s belief that humanity is the highest religion into practice. From a sociological perspective, the song demonstrated what Durkheim refers to as collective effervescence, which is public emotion that fosters social cohesion. Joining in on a song became a moral act.

As a result, Hazarika turned Assamese folk music into a democratic, humanitarian ritual. Th Brahmaputra as Moral Witness: “Bistirno

Dupare” Hazarika’s frequent invocation of the Brahmaputra (Burha Luit) is both literal and figurative. Rivers in his work represent life-sustaining fecundity and nature’s uncaring flows, in contrast to human misery. One of Hazarika’s most politically significant songs is “Bistirno Dupare”, or “On the Wide Shores”, which was written in 1969. It has an explicit lineage to the African- American spiritual “Ol’ Man River” popularized by Paul Robeson, but the feeling is localized to Assam’s Brahmaputra. As Manash Goswami remarks, “Hazarika localized the universal lament of labour into the voice of the Brahmaputra” (Goswami). The song’s elegiac tone criticizes socioeconomic inequity - suffering workers and dispossessed communities - as the river bears testimony to their toil.

With a direct apostrophe to the river, the first stanza opens: Bistirno dupare, O Bistirno dupare, Bistirno dupare, O Burha Luit toi, Bole ne kiyoy?

(O wide shores, O old Luit (Brahmaputra), Do you not speak?)

The song begins as a conversation between the river and the poet-singer. Hazarika combines environmental consciousness with ethical investigation by addressing the Brahmaputra as a sentient being. The river’s silence becomes an indictment; it is both a confessor and a witness. “Bistirno dupare” is repeated, serving as both a lament and an invocation.

The river’s role as a witness is expanded in the second stanza: Dekhaile bohu bohu din, Bohu bohu manuhor akash-bhumi, Tumi dekhaile kot dinot, Manuhor dhulite ghor-bhui.

(You have seen so many days, So many human skies and lands, You have seen how many times Man built his home on your dust.)

The Brahmaputra is placed in deep time in this stanza, which observes cycles of civilization and decay. The lyric invokes temporality: the river outlasts human ambition, but the tone is not fatalistic but rather inquires, “Why does human suffering persist if nature continues indifferently?” In this interplay of endurance and mortality, the river becomes a mirror for human history, echoing Robeson’s “Ol’ Man River, he just keeps rollin’ along”.

In the third stanza, Hazarika turns Robeson’s stoic endurance into a moral challenge: Tumi bhaxar nai, Kintu tumi sakhi, Kotha kobo nai?

(You have no speech, But you are a witness; Will you not speak?)

The poet gives the river moral agency, claiming that its “witnesses” injustice despite its silence. The rhetorical question “Will you not speak?” is self-reflective: if even the river can speak, why should humans remain silent in the



face of oppression? The Times of India notes that in these lines, “the river becomes conscience itself, questioning our indifference”.

(“Timeless Message”)

In the fourth stanza, the river’s memory is archived: Tumi sakhi kotok manuhor, Bidhatir bisare xwoapon bhanga, Bhulile ne tumi se phoolor mukh, Jibone jetia hopun bhanga?

(You are witness to so many broken dreams, Have you forgotten those faces Whose lives broke like dreams?)

In this stanza, moral abstraction is brought into human texture with the use of “faces”, “dreams”, and “flowers”, which shift from cosmic to intimate language. Fragility in diction (dreams shattering, flowers withering) intensifies sorrow while criticizing structural inequity.

In Assam’s contemporary history, the river’s memory stands for collective suffering, including colonial exploitation, flooding, starvation, and displacement.

The river’s unending flow and the fleeting existence upon its banks are contrasted in the penultimate stanza: Toi bohicho aru bohijabo, Dukh-sukh bujhibo naparibo.

(You flow on and on, You cannot know joy or sorrow.)

Hazarika explains the conundrum of nature’s neutrality in this stanza. The moral void of natural indifference is revealed by the river’s boundlessness in contrast to human misery. This contradiction, however, becomes a call to action: people must develop empathy if nature is emotionless. Natural determinism is transformed into moral agency by Hazarika.

The discussion is resolved in self-realization in the final stanza: Tumi nohoi xil, Ami nohoi pani, Kintu kio ei niskrio nishabda bhabani?

(You are not stone, We are not water, Then why this motionless silence?)

The final rhetorical query returns accountability to humanity. The public’s indifference to pain is referred to as “motionless silence” (nishabda bhabani). Hazarika attains catharsis through this dialectic closure: the flow of the river becomes a symbol for moral continuity, but humans must regain the ability to speak and act. As Goswami writes, “Hazarika localized the universal lament of labour into the voice of the Brahmaputra.” (Assam Tribune)

This symbolism is expanded upon in each stanza. The river watches as civilizations build and fall in cycles, workers suffer, and the privileged remain silent. Nature is transformed into conscience by the refrain “Tumi bhaxar nai, kintu tumi sakhi” (“You have no speech, but you are witness”).

A cross-cultural act that connects the

misery of Assamese laborers to the struggle of African Americans, Hazarika’s rendition of Robeson’s song is a solidarity translation. The river’s movement is evoked by the rhythmic flow and mournful melody, which represent the continuation of life despite hardship.

From a philosophical standpoint, “Bistirno Dupare” combines moral activism with environmental ethics. It calls for compassion for both people and the riverine environment.

Hazarika “humanized ecology” by elevating the preservation of nature to a moral obligation, as The Sentinel points out.

Hazarika’s involvement with the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA), gave his work a political bent. His songs called for harmony in multilingual Assam, praised labour, and criticized injustice. He transformed creative talent into social power by reaching audiences from various socioeconomic backgrounds through public performances and cinema music, exemplifying what Bourdieu refers to as cultural capital.

Singing in Bengali, Hindi, and Assamese, his linguistic cosmopolitanism promoted intercultural dialogue and harmony. His worldview was grounded on anti-colonial and anti-racist solidarity because of his affiliation with Paul Robeson. Hazarika’s influence therefore resides in fusing moral universalism with traditional aesthetics. His melodies, which were performed by both bureaucrats and boatmen, created what Raymond Williams would refer to as a “structure of feeling” - common emotional principles that uphold social existence.

“Manuhe Manuhor Babe” and “Bistirno Dupare” represent Hazarika’s dual societal vision: ethical humanism and moral action. The first song advocated for compassion as a principle, while the second depicted the repercussions of its lack. Their structural and thematic symmetry - one opening with “If man does not think for man”, and the other ending with “Why this silence?” - frames Hazarika’s work as a moral discussion about empathy and responsibility.

The Quest Journals article concludes that “Hazarika’s river and his man both seek voice – the voice of conscience that can heal divided humanity” (“Expression of Humanitarian Consciousness”). The two songs, which were sung together at several concerts, evolved into complementary texts of Assamese and Indian ethical imagination.

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Zubeen Garg: Spiritual Modernity & Cultural Hybridity

Zubeen Garg is the post-globalization voice of India's youth - restless, multilingual, and spiritually yearning. His work, as shown in the document "Philosophy, Spirituality, and Sonic Architecture", combines pop, folk, and religious idioms to express what could be called existential spirituality.

Professor Anup Kumar



Zubeen Garg holds a unique place in contemporary Indian musical culture: he is both an Assamese regional icon and a globally recognized performer through film playback. Critics, journalists, and fans have all commented on his compositions' emotional intensity and lyrical diversity, which ranges from romantic ballads to folk-inflected anthems and devotional pieces. Since the release of his first Assamese album, *Anamika*, in the early 1990s, he went on to record thousands of songs in other languages and performed extensively at Assamese cultural festivals, particularly the Bihu celebrations.

Through opportunities for film playback and popular songs that were listened to nationwide (most notably the Bollywood movie song "Ya Ali", which brought his voice to a pan-Indian market), his popularity grew beyond Assamese audiences. He has been characterized over the years as a multi-instrumentalist, a prolific writer and performer, and someone who engages in social activism and acting in addition to his musical endeavours.

The death of Zubeen Garg and the public sorrow have made his art almost inextricably linked to discussions about grief, memory, and spiritual connection. Songs that were formerly thought to be purely romantic or regional are

increasingly being used in funerary processions, memorial gatherings, and public ceremonies. "Mayabini Raatir Bukut", for example, has become an anthem of grief in Assam. (Wikipedia) Understanding how such songs are structurally and philosophically meaningful necessitates not just lyrical reading but also consideration of musical form, melody, rhythm, and reception.

"Mayabini Raatir Bukut": Longing, Illusion, and Mortality

Since Garg declared it his funeral song, "Mayabini Raatir Bukut" (In the Bosom of the Magical Night), written for the 2001 movie *Daag*, has evolved into a collective elegy. The lyrics - "Nijanor gaan mor xekh hobo bhobo tumar bukut" (My song of loneliness will end in your bosom) - turn romantic yearning into metaphysical reflection. The *mayabini* (illusion) symbolizes both beauty and impermanence. As the article notes, "recognition of illusion intensifies longing"

In Indic traditions, the word *maya* (illusion) has philosophical connotations, but in everyday speech it also conjures up images of fleeting love, desire, and the false appearances of worldly ties. Garg's lyrics and delivery in *Mayabini Raatir Bukut* ("Mayabini's Night Heart," often known as just "Mayabini") combine to make *maya* a key

motif for existential longing.

One frequently quoted couplet: Nijanor gaan mor Xekh hobo bhabo tumar bukut

Rough translation: My song of loneliness I believe, will end in your bosom.

Here, "nijanor gaan mor" (literally, "my own song", or "song of (my) being / loneliness") alludes to a personal, interior song, while "tumar bukut" (literally, "in your breast / heart") alludes to intimacy, safety, and the ultimate resting place. The song is infused with a belief in the restorative or securing power of another person's embrace, whether it is literal or metaphorical. The phrase "Mayabini ratir bukut" (meaning "In the bosom of magical night") is another sentence (rephrased from reporting) that serves as a metaphor: darkness serves as both a hiding place and a place to relax, making night an all-encompassing mystery.

Vedantic maya, the fleeting realm of attachment, is evoked by the images of twilight and embrace. Garg, however, aestheticizes desire into elegy rather than giving it up. The song becomes meditative due to the melody's sluggish speed and long vowels, which suspend time. Mayabini reconciles death with desire, eros and thanatos, in his philosophy. It represents the attainment of the infinite by human passion, or what Rabindranath Tagore referred to as "the religion of love".

The song's imagery, which includes mist, twilight, riverine longing, and fleeting beauty, all allude to impermanence. The term "maya" is used in ancient Advaita or devotional literatures to denote the illusory world as a distraction from the ultimate. However, in Garg's "Mayabini", the term is repurposed to refer to affective ambivalence, where the speaker acknowledges transience yet is unable to separate desire from it. This results in a melancholy philosophy where attachment is not diminished by realizing that the universe is illusory; rather, acceptance of illusion heightens desire.

Garg himself has made it clear that he identifies with the song's tonal world. In a widely shared interview, he said that "Mayabini" is the music he would want played at his funeral, sparking fans' mortuary imaginations. Media representations of public mourning and memorial events often frame "Mayabini" as a collective elegy where individual yearning turns into a collective lament.

Interpreting "Mayabini" in conjunction with Indic ideas of Maya reveals two things: philosophical concepts may be incorporated into vernacular affect through popular music and vernacular affect can re-signify those terms. Instead of just restating an abstract metaphysical

notion, Garg's "Mayabini" dramatizes the existential dilemma of desire in a contemporary, media-mediated society: how can we live happily knowing that the world is fleeting? In response, the song aestheticizes attachment into elegy, emphasizing attentive recollection rather than rejection.

"Jajabor": Ethics of Wandering and Belonging

In "Jajabor" (Wanderer), Garg creates the mindset of the contemporary pilgrim. The wanderer moves while remembering the rivers and hills of his native land, and the lyrics honor journey, remembrance, and rootedness. It evolved into a "youth anthem" conveying both freedom and nostalgia, as media retrospectives point out. Jajabor's theme is in line with Indian spiritual traditions of parivrajya, the itinerant ascetic who uses movement to find truth. Garg's wanderer, however, is secular and represents ethical mobility - attachment via memory. This dichotomy is reflected musically in the folk-pop fusion: rock rhythms denote modernity, while acoustic instruments suggest place. The end effect is a musical allegory for cultural fusion. From a sociological perspective, "Jajabor" describes a regional modernity in which belonging and mobility coexist.

Mon Jai ("Heart Goes"): Collective Hope and Ethical Imagination

In this composition, though dreams are triggered by the lover, the search route continues. Asymmetry exists: in many verses, longing is more genuine than fulfilment. The structure begins with a repetitive refrain ("Mon Jai Muru Mon Jai") that creates a mantra-like effect by repeatedly calling forth the motion of the heart.

Tumak dekha pale, xopun jagi uthe Buku-khoni hoi Taj Mahal

Translation: When I see you, dreams awaken My heart becomes the Taj Mahal.

Here, the beloved evokes grandeur and dreams. A structure of love that is timeless and a symbol of remembrance is invoked by comparison to the Taj Mahal.

Another excerpt: Mur khujor baatot saya name Tumi puhor diya haah nu barhe

Translation: In the path of my searching your shadow descends Your light-hearted laughter does not ascend.

This implies an introspective self, a yearning for presence, but only finding shadows; the beloved's laughter is far away, not there - again evoking absence, longing.

Devotional Renditions: "Mahadev" and "Jibonor Aai Baat"

Garg directly enters the devotional idiom



in songs such as “Mahadev” and “Jibonor Aai Baat”. The former invokes Shiva’s cosmic dance to symbolize ego disintegration, while the later transforms prayer into intimate interaction. The bhakti and sant traditions, which emphasize dialogical rather than hierarchical devotion, are echoed in these works. According to Zubeen

Garg.docx, “Vernacular devotional tracks underscore popular religion’s pragmatics—songs become vehicles for communal consolation and moral instruction.” By doing so, Garg places spirituality into the realm of common emotion, confirming India’s long-held belief that the sacred is found in the mundane.

Common Philosophical Motifs

Despite coming from separate generations, Zubeen Garg and Bhupen Hazarika both possess thematic continuities that embody Indian philosophical tradition. Hazarika’s song “Manuhe Manuhor Babe” promotes humanism and compassion by arguing that empathy and understanding amongst people are essential for human survival. In a similar vein, Garg’s “Jibonor Aai Baat” expresses concern and emotional solidarity in a more personal way by personalizing compassion through the tone of prayer.

Hazarika’s “Bistirno Dupare” employs the river as a moral witness in relation to nature and transience, signifying the eternal passage of time and the moral contemplation it evokes. In contrast, Garg uses the imagery of night and illusion in “Mayabini” as metaphors for the fleeting nature of existence and the impermanence of life.

Although it is expressed differently, spiritual longing is equally embodied in their music. Garg’s music expresses a desire for metaphysical union - a spiritual bond beyond the corporeal world - while Hazarika’s songs express a desire for human harmony and communal peace.

Both artists have the capacity to combine many traditions in terms of cultural syncretism. While Garg blends folk, pop, Bollywood, and devotional forms, illustrating the cultural hybridity of modern India, Hazarika incorporates folk elements, political messages, and classical idioms into his songs.

Their combined artistic conceptions, with their universal messages of compassion, unity, and interconnectedness, exemplify the Upanishadic notion of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which holds that the entire universe is one family.

Sociological Underpinnings

Whereas Garg’s music developed in a liberalized, media-rich India, Hazarika’s music sprang out of mid-century efforts for linguistic identity and equality. However, they both employed song as a social tool.

Turner’s idea of liminality - using performance to break down hierarchies - and Goffman’s performative self are in line with Garg’s celebrity mediation, while Hazarika’s collective pedagogy is in line with Durkheim’s concept of moral community. The multilingualism of both artists (Hindi, Bengali, and Assamese) represents cultural negotiation in a multilingual country. Their writings, which question “centre -periphery” structures, are prime examples of how regional voices influence national identity.

Spiritual Philosophy and Indian Thought

Spirituality is immanent rather than transcendent in both oeuvres. Hazarika finds divinity in humanity, whereas Garg discovers it in passion. They reaffirm the Bhakti insight that love is worship, as well as the Advaitic truth that the self and other are one. For Hazarika, the river (Burha Luit) represents samsara - the flow of existence; for Garg, Mayabini’s night represents maya - the illusory but meaningful reality. Both seek release by recognition, rather than renunciation. Thus, their songs are vernacular Upanishads that use music to teach compassion, impermanence, and unity.

Despite coming from separate eras, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg are similar in their understanding of contemporary Indian music. Their work creates a continuum from the moral humanism of the 1950s to the existential spirituality of the 2000s by combining folk feeling, social consciousness, and spiritual inquiry. Hazarika’s songs teach civic virtue via compassion, while Garg’s songs offer spiritual knowledge through longing. When combined, they serve as a reminder to India that popular culture may be the most profound source of ethical and philosophical contemplation. Their music uses melody, rhythm, and human voice to continue whispering the Upanishadic truth – “Tat Tvam Asi”, or “Thou art that” - in a fragmented society.

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Overseas Higher Education Scholarship & Schemes

Empowerment through Education

In a major initiative to democratise access to international education, the Social Studies Foundation (SSF) collaborated with two premier Haryana universities to organise back-to-back one-day workshops titled “Overseas Higher Education Scholarships & Schemes” on October 13 and 14, 2025. Held first at Central University of Haryana (CUH), Mahendergarh, and subsequently at Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology (GJUST), Hisar, the workshops drew over 210 Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, offering them critical insights, mentorship, and actionable strategies to pursue higher education abroad.

Dr Anoop Kumar

The twin events addressed long-standing barriers faced by marginalised students—limited awareness of scholarship avenues, financial constraints, inadequate mentorship, and apprehensions about cultural adaptation in foreign academic ecosystems. By combining institutional support with expert guidance, SSF reaffirmed its commitment to social transformation and holistic development of SC/ST communities.

Inaugural Ceremonies: Setting an inspirational tone for both the venues. The workshop at CUH commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp by Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) Tankeshwar Kumar, alongside SSF Directors Shri Avinash Muley and Shri Hari Sowani. The ceremony featured the CUH Kulgeet, Maa Saraswati

Vandana, and the National Anthem, infusing the gathering with cultural reverence and patriotic fervour. At GJUST the following day, Registrar Dr. Vijay Kumar joined the SSF directors for the lamp-lighting ritual, followed by the university anthem and devotional renditions. Both inaugurals highlighted SSF’s journey since its inception in 2019 and its pan-India mission to bridge information asymmetry for SC/ST students seeking overseas fellowships. Shri Avinash Muley articulated SSF’s vision of fostering social harmony while empowering marginalised youth through education. Shri Hari Sowani outlined the day’s agenda, emphasising practical outcomes. The chief guests—Prof. Tankeshwar Kumar and Dr. Vijay Kumar—stressed the transformative potential of global



exposure. Both suggested institutionalising follow-up sessions on fellowships offered by foreign universities operating campuses in India, signalling a roadmap for sustained collaboration.

Technical Sessions: From Policy to Practice

The core of both workshops comprised four expertly curated technical sessions that blended theoretical knowledge with lived experiences. Remarkably, the speaker lineup remained consistent across venues, ensuring uniform quality and depth. Dr. Shashi Bala, Assistant Professor at Ramjas College, University of Delhi, and a 2013 National Overseas Scholarship (NOS) awardee (UK), delivered a comprehensive primer on the flagship NOS scheme. Covering eligibility criteria, documentation protocols, seat distribution across states, and common pitfalls, she demystified the application maze. Drawing from her own journey, Dr. Bala offered postgraduate and postdoctoral aspirants invaluable troubleshooting tips. Dr. Chandrashekar Malvi, Professor and Head of Mechanical Engineering at MITS Gwalior, and fellow 2013 NOS beneficiary, presented data-driven insights into global education planning. Highlighting ten affordable yet high-impact study destinations, he compared tuition fees, employability indices, and post-study salary trajectories. Using infographics and historical trends of Indian scholars abroad, Dr. Malvi concluded each session with a stirring tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's indefatigable pursuit of knowledge—an anecdote that resonated deeply with participants. Dr. Aditi Narayani, Assistant Professor at Laxmibai College, University of Delhi, conducted hands-on training on scholarship applications. Through case studies and mock exercises, she coached students on crafting compelling research proposals, mastering interview etiquette, and projecting confidence in multicultural settings. Her emphasis on personality development and communication nuance proved particularly popular among first-generation learners. Rounding off the expert quartet, Dr. Anoop Kumar Tiwari, Assistant Professor at CUH, illuminated the landscape of private and international fellowships. Categorising opportunities by academic level (UG, PG, PhD, post-doc) and funding agency—private foundations, foreign governments, multilateral bodies—he detailed coverage spans across STEM, humanities, law, management, agriculture, and biosciences. Dr. Tiwari also spotlighted short-duration skill-focused fellowships, broadening participants' horizons beyond traditional degree pathways.

A recurring theme across all sessions was the non-negotiable role of English proficiency and standardised tests. Experts provided free resources and preparation roadmaps, ensuring accessibility for economically constrained students. Interactive Engagement and Skill Assessment Both workshops transcended monologue formats through vibrant Q&A segments and group activities. Approximately 128 students attended CUH, while 84 participated at GJUST, collectively generating hundreds of queries ranging from visa intricacies to cultural shock mitigation. Innovative ice-break and role-play exercises evaluated participants' soft skills—adaptability, teamwork, and cross-cultural communication—mirroring real-world challenges in international academia.

Feedback forms revealed overwhelming appreciation for the personalised mentorship, with many describing the experience as “life-changing.”

Outcomes and Road Ahead

By juxtaposing government schemes (NOS) with private alternatives, the workshops equipped students with a 360-degree scholarship toolkit. Participants left with digital resource kits, contact details of alumni mentors, and renewed confidence to compete globally. The consecutive organisation in Haryana—covering both a central and a state technological university—demonstrated SSF's scalable model. Future iterations could incorporate virtual components for wider reach and dedicated sessions for ST and OBC students, further amplifying inclusion. As India aspires to become a global knowledge hub, initiatives like these are pivotal. They not only elevate individual trajectories but also contribute to national human capital by producing globally trained scholars from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Social Studies Foundation, through its unwavering focus on actionable empowerment, has set a benchmark for civil society–academia partnerships. As one participant from GJUST poignantly summarised: “For the first time, studying at Oxford or MIT feels within reach—not just a distant dream. “With over 210 direct beneficiaries in just 48 hours and ripple effects likely to touch thousands through peer networks, the October 2025 workshops mark a quiet yet profound revolution in India's higher education equity landscape.

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Technology and Digital Platforms Revolutionized Economic Inclusion

Since India became a republic seven decades ago, economic equality for Dalit and other marginalized communities has remained a significant challenge. However, in recent years, the advent of accessible data, internet, and digital technology has dramatically transformed financial inclusion for these communities. The introduction of BHIM UPI and the rise of fintech, coupled with digital platforms like Zomato and Swiggy, have opened up new avenues for Dalits to participate in mainstream financial transactions and achieve greater economic empowerment.

The spread of affordable internet and smartphones across India has been a game-changer, especially for traditionally deprived groups like Dalits. With rising internet penetration



and easy access to digital payment systems, barriers such as caste, gender, and ethnic identity that once restricted economic participation are beginning to dissolve. The government-supported BHIM app, built on Unified Payment Interface (UPI) technology, plays a central role in this revolution.

UPI enables seamless, instantaneous bank-to-bank money transfers using just a mobile phone, without the need for cash or cards. The BHIM app further simplifies this process by allowing transactions through biometric authentication like thumb impressions linked to Aadhaar. Since its launch, BHIM UPI has brought financial services to millions of unbanked and underbanked individuals, promoting transparency, reducing corruption, and curbing black money circulation.

BHIM UPI is revolutionary because it democratizes access to financial tools irrespective of social factors. Unlike traditional banking, which required physical branch visits and documentation barriers, UPI offers a low-cost, user-friendly way to receive payments, send money, and manage finances digitally—with just a smartphone or a basic mobile device. This technological leap has particularly empowered rural and semi-urban Dalit populations who were previously excluded due to infrastructural and

social constraints.

The simplicity and government backing of BHIM have inspired broader trust in digital payments among marginalized groups. Transactions are real-time, cost-free, and supported in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity. This has helped bring informal sector workers, small businesses, and migrants into the formal economy, enabling financial records that help in accessing loans and government welfare benefits.

Parallel to fintech, the rise of gig and delivery platforms like Zomato and Swiggy has created economic opportunities cutting across caste and community lines. These platforms employ delivery executives from all sections of society, including many Dalits who engage in these roles as part-time work alongside their regular jobs, often during evening hours. Despite issues like underpayment, this flexible work provides additional income streams and financial stability to families that may otherwise have limited sources of livelihood.

These gig economies utilize technology to increase labor market inclusion. Deliveries assigned through apps reduce personal biases by automating job allocation, making it possible for marginalized workers to bypass traditional employment barriers like caste discrimination. For many, this platform-based work is a crucial step towards economic self-sufficiency.

This technological and digital financial revolution marks a profound change in the soul of India. For the first time, economic participation is linked to technological access rather than identity or social status. Barriers erected by seven decades of systemic discrimination are slowly being dismantled by a cashless, digital economy where everyone can transact equally.

The empowerment is not limited by gender, caste, or ethnic identity; digital payments and delivery platforms operate beyond these divides. This fosters greater inclusion and social mobility, as marginalized communities acquire the financial literacy, credit access, and incomes needed to participate fully in India's growth story.

In conclusion, technology-driven fintech innovations like BHIM UPI and internet-based delivery platforms are transforming financial freedom for Dalits and downtrodden communities in India. They dismantle long-standing social and economic barriers by providing easy access to



banking, enabling transparency, and creating new job opportunities. This digital revolution, now seven decades after India's republic inception, is not only advancing financial inclusion but also nurturing the foundational equality that India aspires to achieve.

With continued government support and

increasing digital literacy, this technological empowerment can redefine socio-economic realities and help transform India into a truly inclusive economy where every citizen enjoys equal financial opportunity and dignity.

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If Caste Divisions Persist, Hindus Will Cease to Exist Within a Century and a Half: MP HC

The Madhya Pradesh High Court raised alarm over increasing caste-based violence, warning that unchecked caste divisions could destroy Hindu unity within 150 years. Taking suo motu cognisance of a Damoh incident where an OBC man was humiliated and forced to wash another's feet, the court called the rise in caste intolerance "shocking."

A Bench of Justices Atul Sreedharan and Pradeep Mittal directed authorities to invoke



the National Security Act against those involved, noting that caste pride was fracturing society. The court cited recent caste-related incidents in Madhya Pradesh and other states, observing that the most vulnerable sections continue to suffer. It urged urgent police and administrative action to contain the spread of caste hostility and prevent a breakdown of social order arbitrarily reject complaints.

Centre Extends Panel Examining SC Status for Dalit Muslims and Christians

The Centre has extended for six months the tenure of the K.G. Balakrishnan-led commission studying the inclusion of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste category. This is the panel's second extension since its formation in October 2022. While the Constitution limits Scheduled Caste reservations to Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, earlier committees such as the 2008 National Commission for Minorities panel recommended extending these benefits to Dalit Christians and Muslims. Critics warned that regional inequalities could affect how the

benefits are accessed and distributed.

Boy's Death Sparks Demand to Declare 'Atrocity-Prone Areas' in Himachal

Civil society groups in Himachal Pradesh have demanded that the state identify and declare "atrocity-prone areas" following the suicide of a 12-year-old Hindu Scheduled Caste boy in Rohru, allegedly after being locked in a cowshed and assaulted by an upper-caste family. The People's Campaign for Socio-Economic Equality in the Himalayas urged the government to invoke provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, ensure strict action against the accused, and compensate the victim's family.

Activists and local NGOs said caste-based discrimination remains deeply entrenched and laws are poorly enforced. They called for targeted interventions and awareness drives to build "socially just and safe panchayats." Himachal, which has one of the country's highest Dalit populations, continues to report frequent caste-related crimes despite existing legal safeguards.

Madras HC Orders Temple Car to Pass Through Dalit Streets, Says Faith Transcends Caste

The Madras High Court ruled that a temple car in Puthagaram, Kancheepuram, must be drawn through Scheduled Caste habitations, affirming that "faith cannot be fenced by caste and divinity cannot be confined by human prejudice." Justice P.B. Balaji rejected objections from caste Hindu groups, who opposed altering the decades-old route, saying tradition cannot justify discrimination. The order came on a petition seeking temple access and inclusion of Dalit streets in the car's route. Following a field inspection, officials confirmed the route was feasible with minor road repairs. Directing police to ensure peace, the court said "God does not reside in certain streets alone," and reminded authorities that Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability in both letter and spirit.

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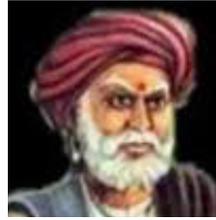
DIN VISHESH

Remembering Subramania Bharati

11th December
Subramania Bharati Birth Anniversary

Subramania Bharati, the revolutionary Tamil poet, journalist, and independence activist, ignited millions with his verses that blended fiery patriotism, gender equality, and social reform. Born in Ettayapuram, he mastered Tamil, Sanskrit, and English by age eleven, earning the title "Bharati" (after the goddess of learning) at fourteen. From 1904, editing journals like Swadesamitran and India, he fearlessly attacked British rule, forcing exile in Pondicherry (1908–1918). There, under French protection, he wrote immortal works: Panchali Sabatham, Kuyil Pattu, and nationalist songs like "Viduthalai! Viduthalai!" and "Aaduvome Pallu Paduvome." His lines, We shall wear the crown we desire and We shall end slavery, became war-cries of the freedom movement. Bharati

shattered orthodoxy: he championed women's education, widow remarriage, and inter-caste unity. His vision of a casteless, gender-just India was decades ahead. Arrested upon return in 1918, he died tragically young at 38 after an elephant attack. Yet his words live—echoed in every Tamil heart, every Republic Day parade, every fight for dignity. Mahatma Gandhi called him a "great patriot-poet." Today, Bharati remains India's eternal flame of liberty, equality, and unquenchable hope



14th November
Lahuji Salve
Birth Anniversary



28th November
Mahatma Phule
Death Anniversary



15th November
Birsa Munda
Birth Anniversary



28th November
Sant Dyaneshwar
Death Anniversary



26th November
Constitution Day



6th December
Dr Ambedkar
Death Anniversary



27th November
Sant Ravidas
Death Anniversary

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