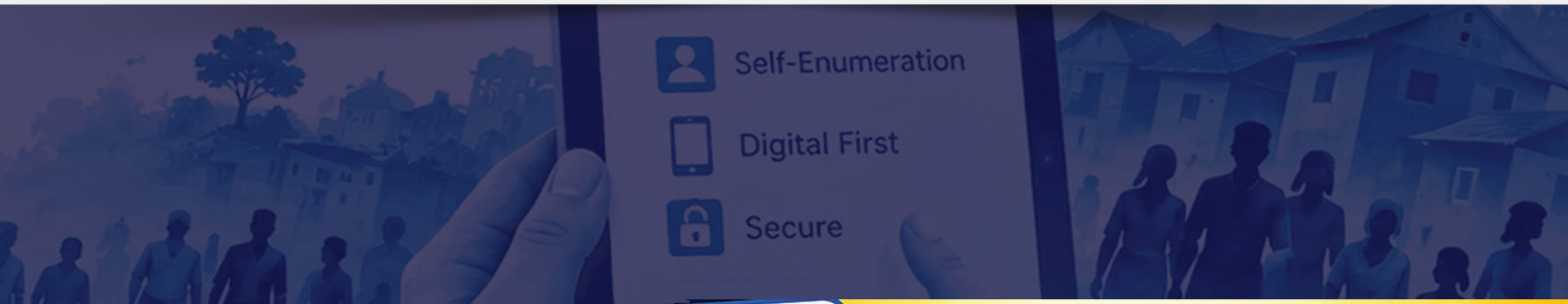
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THE HINDU

7 JULY 2026

Form used in Census second phase rehearsal has 'open column' for caste

Vijaita Singh
Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The questionnaire used in the rehearsal for the second phase of Census, which started in 16 States and Union Territories on Monday, has an "open column" for respondents to record their castes, several officials involved in the exercise told *The Hindu*.

Though this gives an indication of how caste is likely to be enumerated in the country as part of the Population Census 2027, officials said that this was just a "pre-test" and the final methodology will be prepared based on the feedback received during the exercise, which concludes on July 20.

The castes of all residents will be recorded in the second phase of the Census, named Population Enumeration (PE).

The 2027 Census is the first digital Census and the first to enumerate caste in Independent India.

Until now, only the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were enumerated during the Census exercise.

The PE phase will be conducted in February 2027 across the country but in Ladakh and snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, it may be concluded by September 30. The final questionnaire will be known by September.

Debate continues

The discourse on the methodology of caste enumeration has largely swung between either leaving an open column for caste – as in the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) – or preparing a list of castes for people to pick from, as the Bihar government did in its 2022-23 caste-based survey.

Interestingly, the open column methodology had resulted in the 2011 SECC returning over 46 lakh different "caste names", largely owing to the difference in what people understand by caste. Significantly, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government has consistently maintained over the last decade that the 2011 SECC's caste data were unreliable because of "errors" in data collection.



An enumerator takes notes during a door-to-door survey for the Census in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

CENSUS 2027

"OPEN COLUMN FOR CASTE"

FORM USED IN SECOND PHASE REHEARSAL

- Second phase rehearsal started in 16 States & UTs
- Questionnaire has open column for caste
- Final methodology to be decided after feedback
- Caste enumeration in all residents in Census 2027



"An open caste column may create confusion; a coded caste list will *create clarity*. The success of the caste census lies not merely in counting people, but in *counting them correctly*."

ACCURACY MATTERS MORE THAN ENUMERATION

August 7 OBC Reservation Day | Caste Census Open Column | VBSA against Federalism | Women's Reservation Bill | Pension is a Right

15th STATE CONFERENCE OF UNION BANK OF INDIA BACKWARD CLASSES EMPLOYEES WELFARE ASSOCIATION, TAMIL NADU – TIRUNELVELI – 11.07.2026



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Editor:
G.Karunanidhi

Editorial Board:
Vaeyuru Tholibangan
Dr. Arvind Kumar
Ravindra Ram
T.Ravikumar
K.Chandran
G.Malarkodi

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Email:
empower.socialjustice@gmail.com

Website:
empowertrust.org

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Private Sector Entry into Top PSB Posts: A Threat to Social Justice and Institutional Growth

The Union Government's decision to open one Managing Director post in the State Bank of India (SBI) and one Executive Director post in large Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to candidates from the private sector has raised serious concerns among employees and social justice advocates. The information, revealed in the Lok Sabha on 20 July 2026 in reply to a question raised by Hon'ble MP Dr. Kalanidhi Veerasamy, confirms that revised guidelines issued by the Department of Financial Services now permit private sector candidates to compete for these top positions.

This move bears a striking resemblance to the controversial "lateral entry" recruitment introduced for Joint Secretary and Director-level posts in Central Government departments. That policy faced widespread opposition because it bypassed the constitutional reservation framework for SC, ST and OBC communities. Following strong protests from political parties, social justice organisations and even some NDA allies, the Government was compelled to withdraw the recruitment process. The fundamental objection was simple: appointments outside the regular recruitment system deny representation to historically disadvantaged communities and weaken the principle of social justice.

The same concerns arise in the banking sector today. Public Sector Banks possess a vast pool of highly qualified and experienced officers who have devoted two to three decades of service to the institution. These officers understand the unique social and developmental role of PSBs, including priority sector lending, financial inclusion, rural banking, welfare schemes and public accountability. Ignoring this experienced talent pool in favour of outsiders sends a discouraging message to thousands of officers who have patiently built their careers through merit, performance and dedication.

Public Sector Banks are not private corporations. They are institutions created with public money and entrusted with national development responsibilities. Leadership positions in such institutions must reflect not only professional competence but also commitment to public service values. Importing executives from the private sector risks introducing a purely profit-oriented approach that may undermine the social objectives of banking.

Equally important is the question of reservation and representation. If these appointments are made outside the established promotion framework, the hard-won gains of SC, ST and OBC communities in public employment could be diluted. Social justice cannot be selectively applied at lower levels while being ignored in top management positions.

We strongly oppose this policy and urge the Union Government to withdraw the provision allowing private sector entry into MD and ED positions in PSBs. Strengthening Public Sector Banks requires empowering experienced internal officers, ensuring transparent promotions, and safeguarding the constitutional principles of equality and social justice. The future leadership of India's public banking system must emerge from within the system—not from policies that resemble backdoor privatisation. ■

ஆகஸ்ட் 7 – ஓபிசி இடஒதுக்கீடு நாள்

மண்டல் புரட்சி: இந்தியாவின் சமூக மற்றும் அரசியல் வரலாற்றை மாற்றிய ஓபிசி இடஒதுக்கீடு



7TH AUGUST – OBC RESERVATION

THE MANDAL REVOLUTION: HOW OBC RESERVATION CHANGED INDIA FOREVER



க.சரஸ்வதி

G.SARASWATHI

மண்டல் கமிஷனின் வரலாறு என்பது வெறும் சட்ட அல்லது நிர்வாக வரலாறு மட்டுமல்ல; அது நவீன இந்திய ஜனநாயகத்தின் முக்கியமான திருப்புமுனையாகும். ஒரே கட்சியின் ஆதிக்க அரசியலிலிருந்து, பிராந்திய சக்திகள், கூட்டணி அரசுகள் மற்றும் பிற்படுத்தப்பட்ட சமூகங்களின் அரசியல் எழுச்சியை மையமாகக் கொண்ட புதிய அரசியல் யுகத்திற்கு இந்தியாவை இட்டுச் சென்ற வரலாற்றுச் சம்பவமாக அது அமைந்தது.

மண்டல் கமிஷன்

1978 டிசம்பரில் பிரதமர் மொரார்ஜி தேசாய், சமூக மற்றும் கல்வி ரீதியாகப் பிற்படுத்தப்பட்ட வகுப்பினரை அடையாளம் கண்டு அவர்களின் முன்னேற்றத்திற்கான பரிந்துரைகளை வழங்கும் நோக்கில் பிற்படுத்தப்பட்டோர் ஆணையத்தை அமைத்தார். அதன் தலைவராக பிந்தேஷ்வரி பிரசாத் மண்டல் நியமிக்கப்பட்டார்.

சமூக மற்றும் கல்வி ரீதியாகப் பிற்படுத்தப்பட்டோர் ஆணையம் (SEBC) என அதிகாரப்பூர்வமாக அழைக்கப்பட்ட இந்த ஆணையம், பொதுவாக **மண்டல் கமிஷன்** என அறியப்பட்டது. ஜாதி அமைப்பு சமூக, பொருளாதார மற்றும் கல்வி ஏற்றத்தாழ்வுகளை எவ்வாறு நிலைநிறுத்துகிறது என்பதை ஆழமாக ஆய்வு செய்த இந்த ஆணையம், பிற்படுத்தப்பட்ட வகுப்பினரின் முன்னேற்றத்திற்காக இடஒதுக்கீடு உள்ளிட்ட பல முக்கிய பரிந்துரைகளை முன்வைத்தது.

1980ஆம் ஆண்டு தனது அறிக்கையை சமர்ப்பித்த மண்டல் குழு, இந்திய மக்கள்தொகையில் சுமார் **52 சதவீதம் பேர் இதர பிற்படுத்தப்பட்ட வகுப்பினரை** (OBC) சேர்ந்தவர்கள் என கண்டறிந்தது. சமூக, பொருளாதார மற்றும் கல்வி சார்ந்த 11 குறியீடுகளை அடிப்படையாகக்

The story of the Mandal Commission is not just a legal or administrative timeline—it is the turning point of modern Indian democracy. It fundamentally shifted Indian politics from a single-party dominant system to an era defined by regional assertion, coalition governments, and the vocal political empowerment of lower and middle castes.

The Mandal Commission

In December 1978, Prime Minister Morarji Desai appointed Mandal as chairman of the Backward Classes Commission.

The commission is known as the ***Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (SEBC)****—popularly known as the* ***Mandal Commission,*** *was chaired by B.P. Mandal, a parliamentarian and social reformer tasked with identifying the socially and educationally backward classes and recommending measures for their advancement.* The commission recommended reservation for the other backward classes (OBCs) as part of the affirmative action programme for their betterment. It presented a comprehensive analysis of the caste system and its role in reinforcing economic and educational disparities.

When the Commission submitted its report in 1980, its findings were striking. Using a complex matrix of eleven social, economic, and educational indicators, the Commission concluded that approximately 52% of India's population belonged to these backward classes. The recommendation was to reserve 27% of government jobs and seats in higher education for them. The report concluded that the OBCs—groups that were neither part of the traditional upper castes nor the marginalized Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes—constituted a significant portion of the Indian population yet remained severely underrepresented in public institutions.

கொண்டு மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்ட இந்த ஆய்வின் அடிப்படையில், மத்திய அரசு வேலைகள் மற்றும் உயர்கல்வி நிறுவனங்களில் **27 சதவீத இடஒதுக்கீடு** வழங்க பரிந்துரைத்தது.

பாரம்பரிய உயர்சாதியினருக்கும், பட்டியலினத்தவர் மற்றும் பழங்குடியினருக்கும் இடையில் உள்ள இந்தப் பெரும் சமூகக் குழுக்கள், நாட்டின் மக்கள்தொகையில் குறிப்பிடத்தக்க பங்கை வகித்தபோதும், அரசு அமைப்புகள் மற்றும் கல்வி நிறுவனங்களில் மிகவும் குறைவாகவே பிரதிநிதித்துவம் பெற்றிருந்தனர் என்பதை அறிக்கை வெளிப்படுத்தியது.

வரலாற்று சிறப்புமிக்க ஆகஸ்ட் 7, 1990

மண்டல் கமிஷன் அறிக்கை கிட்டத்தட்ட ஒரு தசாப்த காலம் அமல்படுத்தப்படாமல் இருந்தது. இறுதியாக, 1990 ஆகஸ்ட் 7ஆம் தேதி, சமூக நீதி காவலர் பிரதமர் **வி.பி. சிங்**, தனது தேசிய முன்னணி அரசின் சார்பில், மத்திய அரசு பணிகளில் ஓபிசி மக்களுக்கு 27 சதவீத இடஒதுக்கீடு வழங்கும் முடிவை நாடாளுமன்றத்தில் அறிவித்தார்.

வி.பி. சிங்கின் வரலாற்றுப் பாராட்டு

அந்த அறிவிப்பின் முக்கியத்துவத்தை விளக்கிய வி.பி. சிங்,

“இது உண்மையில் பாரத ரத்னா டாக்டர் பி.ஆர். அம்பேத்கர், மாபெரும் தந்தை பெரியார் ஈ.வே. ராமசாமி மற்றும் டாக்டர் ராம் மனோகர் லோகியா ஆகியோரின் கனவை நனவாக்கும் நிகழ்வாகும்”

என்று பெருமிதத்துடன் குறிப்பிட்டார்.

காலவரிசை

1979: சமூக மற்றும் கல்வி ரீதியாகப் பிற்படுத்தப்பட்ட வகுப்பினரை அடையாளம் காணவும், அவர்களின் முன்னேற்றத்திற்கான பரிந்துரைகளை வழங்கவும் பி.பி. மண்டல் தலைமையில் ஆணையம் அமைக்கப்பட்டது.



For nearly a decade, the report remained largely untouched. A historic breakthrough came on 7th August 1990 when Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced in Parliament that his National Front Government had decided to implement 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Central Government services.

Historic Tribute by V.P. Singh

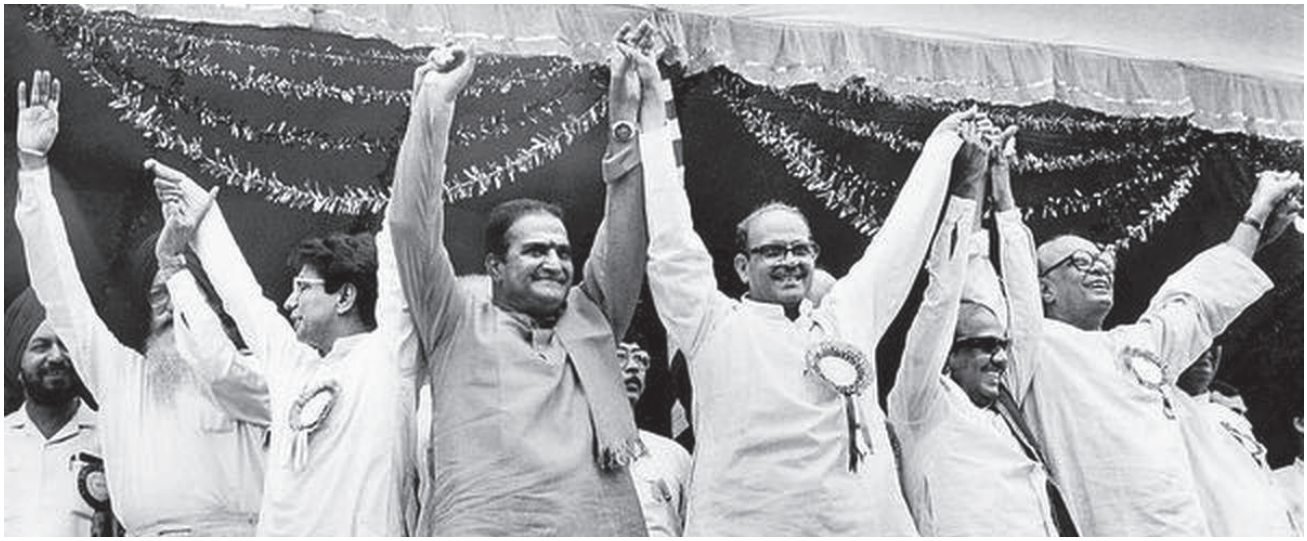
Describing the significance of the decision, V.P. Singh declared: **“In fact, this is the realisation of the dream of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the great Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia.”** He formally issued the Office Memorandum on 13th August 1990, ushering in a new era of social justice and political empowerment for millions of OBCs across India.

Timeline:

1979: The establishment of a backward class commission led by BP Mandal to identify socially and educationally backward classes in India and recommend measures for their progress.

1980: The commission's report revealed that approximately 52% of India's population belonged to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and proposed a 27% reservation for them in government job opportunities.

1980-1989: The government that came into power in 1980 was reluctant to implement the commission's recommendations.



1980: இந்திய மக்கள்தொகையில் சுமார் 52% பேர் ஓபிசி சமூகங்களைச் சேர்ந்தவர்கள் என அறிக்கை தெரிவித்தது. அரசு வேலைகளில் 27% இடஒதுக்கீடு வழங்க பரிந்துரைக்கப்பட்டது.

1980–1989: ஆட்சிக்கு வந்த அரசுகள் மண்டல் கமிஷன் பரிந்துரைகளை அமல்படுத்த தயக்கம் காட்டின.

1990: ஆகஸ்ட் 7ஆம் தேதி வி.பி. சிங் நாடாளுமன்றத்தில் வரலாற்றுச் சிறப்புமிக்க அறிவிப்பை வெளியிட்டார். மத்திய அரசு அலுவலக ஆணையை ஆகஸ்ட் 13ஆம் தேதி பிறப்பித்து, மத்திய அரசு பணிகளில் ஓபிசிகளுக்கு 27% இடஒதுக்கீட்டை நடைமுறைப்படுத்தியது. சுதந்திர தின உரையிலும் வி.பி. சிங் இந்த முடிவை சமூக நீதிக்கான முக்கிய முன்னேற்றமாக விளக்கினார். எனினும், இந்த நடவடிக்கைக்கு எதிராக நாட்டின் பல பகுதிகளில் கடும் எதிர்ப்புப் போராட்டங்கள் நடைபெற்றன. சில மாணவர்கள் தற்கொலை முயற்சிகளிலும் ஈடுபட்டனர்.

1992: *இந்திரா சாஹ்னி எதிர் இந்திய ஒன்றியம்* (Indra Sawhney vs Union of India) வழக்கில் உச்சநீதிமன்றம், சில நிபந்தனைகளுடன் ஓபிசிகளுக்கான 27% இடஒதுக்கீட்டின் அரசியலமைப்புச் செல்லுபடியாக்கத்தை உறுதி செய்தது.

மண்டல் எதிர்ப்பு போராட்டங்கள்

1990ஆம் ஆண்டு நடைபெற்ற மண்டல் எதிர்ப்பு போராட்டங்கள் இந்திய அரசியலில் பெரும் மாற்றத்தை ஏற்படுத்தின. குறிப்பாக டெல்லி தேஷ்பந்து கல்லூரி மாணவர் ராஜீவ் கோஸ்வாமியின் தற்கொலை முயற்சி நாடு முழுவதும் அதிர்வலைகளை ஏற்படுத்தியது. வரலாற்றாசிரியர் ராமச்சந்திர குஹா குறிப்பிடுவதன்படி, அக்காலகட்டத்தில் சுமார் 200 தற்கொலை முயற்சிகள் நடைபெற்றன; அவற்றில் 60க்கும் மேற்பட்டோர் உயிரிழந்தனர்.

இந்த "மண்டல் தருணம்" வட இந்திய அரசியலை சாதி அடிப்படையில் மறுவடிவமைத்தது. இதன் மூலம் லாலு பிரசாத் யாதவ், முலாயம் சிங் யாதவ் போன்ற சமூகநீதித் தலைவர்கள் அரசியலில் முக்கிய இடத்தைப் பெற்றனர். அதேபோல், 1995ஆம் ஆண்டு உத்தரப் பிரதேசத்தின் முதலாவது தலித் பெண் முதலமைச்சராக மாயாவதி பதவியேற்கும் பாதையும் இதன் மூலம் உருவானது.

தொடரும் சமூக நீதிப் பயணம்

மண்டல் கமிஷன் என்பது வெறும் இடஒதுக்கீட்டு கொள்கை அல்ல; இந்தியா சமூக நீதியை அணுகும் முறையில் ஏற்பட்ட அடிப்படை

1990: Following Prime Minister V.P. Singh's historic announcement in Parliament on 7th August 1990, the Government of India issued the Office Memorandum on 13th August to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendation of 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Central Government services. V.P. Singh reiterated and defended the decision in his Independence Day address, describing it as a major step towards social justice. The move, however, triggered widespread protests in several parts of the country, including incidents of self-immolation by students opposing the implementation of the reservation policy.

1992: The implementation of the reservation policy was challenged in court, and in the case of Indra Sawhney v. Union of India, the court upheld the constitutional validity of the 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to certain conditions.

The Mandal Commission Agitation (1990)

The anti-Mandal commission protests of 1990 marked a seismic shift in contemporary Indian politics, fundamentally altering the national electoral landscape. The movement's escalation in September 1990—highlighted by the tragic self-immolation of Desh Bandhu College student Rajeev Goswami—brought the intensity of the agitation to the national forefront. According to historian Ramachandra Guha, the period saw approximately 200 such attempts, with over 60 fatalities.

This "Mandal moment" decisively fragmented the North Indian electorate along caste lines, paving the way for the rise of influential, caste-based regional parties. Two figures who emerged as major beneficiaries of this shift were Lalu Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav; both had long positioned themselves as socialist champions, deeply rooted in the ideology of Ram Manohar Lohia.

Beyond the Yadavs, this era of identity politics also cleared a path for leaders like Mayawati. In 1995, her victory in Uttar Pradesh made her India's first female Scheduled Caste Chief Minister, signalling a major breakthrough for the Dalit political voice.

Ultimately, the story of the Mandal Commission is the story of India's ongoing attempt to bridge the gap between its democratic ideals and its social reality. It was never intended to be a quick fix for historical inequality, but rather a structural intervention designed to break the cycle of exclusion that had defined the country for centuries.

Looking Ahead: The Continuing Journey

In summary, the Mandal Commission was more than just a policy change; it was a fundamental shift in how India pursues social justice. While the debate surrounding reservations continues to

மாற்றமாகும். 1990களில் தெருக்களில் நடைபெற்ற போராட்டங்களிலிருந்து இன்று நீதிமன்றங்களிலும் சமூக ஊடகங்களிலும் தொடரும் விவாதங்கள் வரை, அதன் தாக்கம் இன்னும் உயிர்ப்புடன் உள்ளது.

மண்டல் கமிஷன் இந்திய அரசியலின் மையத்தை மாற்றியது. பல நூற்றாண்டுகளாக ஒதுக்கப்பட்டிருந்த மக்களின் குரலை தேசிய அரசியலின் தவிர்க்க முடியாத சக்தியாக மாற்றியது. இன்று அதன் வெற்றி அரசு வேலைகளில் கிடைத்த இடங்களால் மட்டுமல்ல; இந்திய அரசியல் மற்றும் சமூக சிந்தனையில் ஏற்படுத்திய நிரந்தர மாற்றத்தாலும் அளவிடப்படுகிறது.

ஒரு ஜனநாயகம் உண்மையிலேயே வெற்றி பெற வேண்டுமெனில், வரலாற்றாக புறக்கணிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களை தொடர்ந்து உள்ளடக்கிக் கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்பதை மண்டல் கமிஷன் நமக்கு நினைவூட்டுகிறது.

"ஆகஸ்ட் 7 – ஓபிசி இடஒதுக்கீட்டு நாள் மட்டுமல்ல; நூற்றாண்டுகளாக ஒடுக்கப்பட்டிருந்த நாட்டின் பெரும்பான்மை மக்களின் உரிமை அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்ட வரலாற்றுச் சிறப்புமிக்க நாள்."

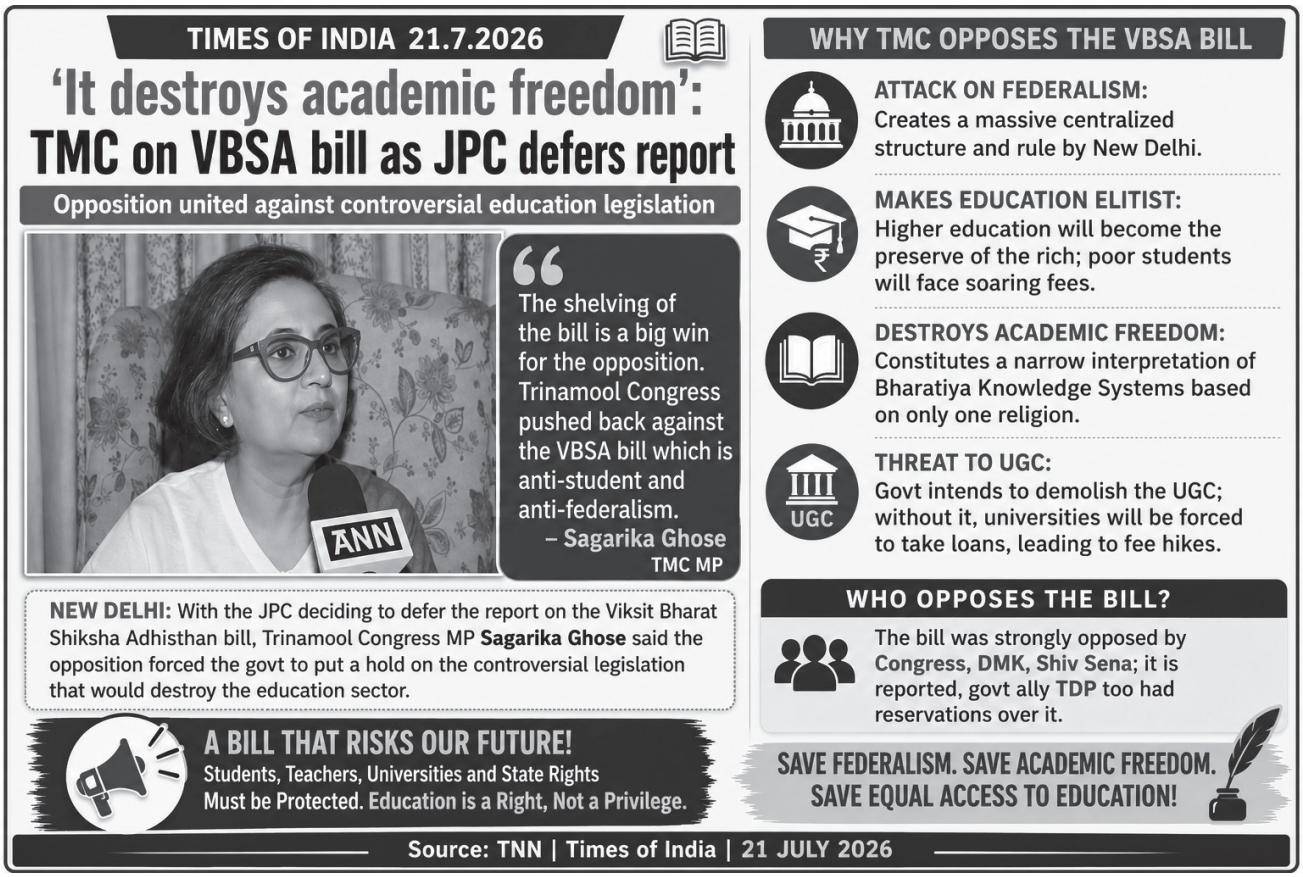
(எழுத்தாளர் க. சரஸ்வதி, பொருளாளர், யூனியன் வங்கி பிற்படுத்தப்பட்டோர் பணியாளர் நல சங்கம் – தமிழ்நாடு)



evolve—moving from the streets of the 1990s to the courtrooms and social media platforms of today—the core legacy remains clear. The commission succeeded in shifting the centre of gravity in Indian politics, making the voices of the marginalized an essential component of the national conversation. Today, the true measure of its impact is not just in the number of government positions held, but in the permanent transformation of India's political consciousness. Ultimately, it remains a powerful reminder that for a democracy to be truly successful, it must constantly work to include those who have historically been left behind.

August 7 is not merely OBC Reservation Day; it is the historic day when the rights of the nation's long-excluded majority were finally recognized and affirmed.

(The writer G.Saraswathi is Treasurer, Union Bank of India Backward Classes Employees Welfare Association, Tamil Nadu)





VIKSIT BHARAT SHIKSHA ADHISHTHAN (VBSA) BILL, 2025:

A THREAT TO FEDERALISM, AUTONOMY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The proposed **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025,** which seeks to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) with a single apex body, has attracted widespread opposition from State Governments, Central Universities, IITs, IIMs, IISERs, and other Institutions of National Importance. Their objections reinforce the concerns already raised by social justice organisations, academic bodies, and our Association.

1. Excessive Centralisation of Power

The Bill concentrates unprecedented powers in a single authority controlled by the Union Government. Several universities and State Governments have warned that this would weaken India's federal structure and diminish the constitutional role of States in higher education. Clauses empowering the Centre to issue binding policy directions, supersede the regulatory body, and determine academic governance could effectively convert an independent regulator into an arm of the executive.

2. Erosion of Institutional Autonomy

Leading institutions such as IITs, IIMs, IISERs and Central Universities have expressed concern that the Bill undermines their academic, administrative, and research autonomy. Institutions established through separate Acts of Parliament fear that the proposed framework would override their existing statutory powers and subject them to excessive bureaucratic control. Academic freedom, innovation, curriculum development, and institutional governance could be adversely affected.

3. Threat to Federal Principles

Even several NDA-ruled States, including Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya, have formally objected to provisions that permit central authorities to bypass State Governments in crucial matters relating to higher education. The Bill dilutes cooperative federalism by reducing State participation in decision-making while expanding the authority of centrally appointed bodies.

4. Concentration of Regulatory, Accreditation and Funding Powers

The proposed merger of multiple regulatory bodies into a single institution creates a dangerous concentration of authority. Regulatory oversight, accreditation, standards, recognition, and policy implementation would all rest with one apex body, reducing institutional checks and balances. Such centralisation increases the risk of arbitrary decision-making and weakens accountability.



NDA-ruled States, universities object to centralisation provisions in VBSA

Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya among States to raise concerns over the Centre's powers; universities seek safeguards, parliamentary monitoring; BHU warns that Bill could turn an independent regulator into arm of the Union govt.

Sobhana K. Nair
Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Panel flags autonomy risks under VBSA Bill

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 will lead to the concentration

IITs, IIMs, Central varsities push back against VBSA norms

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The Bill seeks to repeal statutory Acts governing the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE , and replace them with a single apex body. FILE PHOTO

5. Harsh and Disproportionate Penalty Provisions

The Bill proposes graded penalties, including heavy fines and even closure of institutions. Universities have warned that such punitive measures may disproportionately affect institutions functioning in socially and economically disadvantaged regions. Educational deficiencies arising from inadequate funding, faculty shortages, or structural constraints should not be treated as regulatory violations warranting severe penalties.

6. Implications for Social Justice and Reservation Policies

The history of higher education regulation in India demonstrates that representation and affirmative action protections require constant vigilance. Any restructuring of regulatory institutions must explicitly safeguard constitutional provisions relating to reservation, social justice, diversity, and inclusion. The Bill, in its present form, fails to provide adequate assurances on these critical concerns.

7. Need for Wider Consultation

A reform of this magnitude cannot be undertaken without extensive consultation with State Governments, universities, faculty organisations, student bodies, social justice movements, and other stakeholders. The overwhelming objections from institutions across ideological and political lines indicate that the Bill lacks broad consensus.

Our Demand

We urge the Government of India and the Joint Parliamentary Committee to:

1. **Withdraw the VBSA Bill, 2025 in its present form.**
2. **Protect the autonomy of universities and Institutions of National Importance.**
3. **Preserve the federal character of higher education governance.**
4. **Ensure statutory safeguards for social justice, reservation, and representation of OBC, SC, ST and other marginalized communities.**
5. **Undertake comprehensive stakeholder consultations before introducing any new regulatory framework.**

Conclusion

The future of higher education in India cannot be built on excessive centralisation and bureaucratic control. True educational progress requires **academic freedom, institutional autonomy, federal cooperation, democratic accountability, and unwavering commitment to social justice.** The VBSA Bill, 2025, in its current form, falls short of these principles and therefore deserves to be reconsidered and withdrawn.

"Education must empower institutions, not subordinate them; strengthen federalism, not weaken it; and advance social justice, not endanger it." ■

CENSUS 2027: COUNTING CASTES CORRECTLY IS THE KEY TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

WHY INDIA MUST ADOPT A SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY FOR CASTE ENUMERATION



G.KARUNANIDHI

The Government of India's decision to undertake caste-wise enumeration as part of **Census 2027** marks a historic milestone in the pursuit of social justice and evidence-based policymaking. For the first time after Independence, comprehensive caste data is expected to be collected across the country, providing an opportunity to understand the demographic, educational, social and economic realities of various communities.

For decades, policymakers, social justice advocates, researchers and backward class organizations have emphasized the need for authentic caste data to assess the effectiveness of reservation policies and welfare programmes. The forthcoming census therefore carries immense significance, particularly for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other socially disadvantaged communities.

However, the success of this historic exercise will depend not merely on conducting a caste census, but on **how the census is conducted.**

Recent media reports regarding the rehearsal of Census 2027 have indicated that the population enumeration schedule contains an **"open column"** where respondents may write their caste names. While this may appear to be a simple administrative arrangement, India's past experience demonstrates that such a methodology can create serious challenges in data collection, classification and analysis.

Lessons from the SECC 2011 Experience

India has already witnessed the limitations of an open-ended caste recording system during the **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011.** The exercise reportedly generated more than **46 lakh different caste entries**, creating enormous difficulties in verification, standardization and meaningful analysis.

This happened because the same caste was recorded in different spellings and forms across regions. In many cases, surnames, titles, clan names, local identities and sub-castes were entered as separate castes. Linguistic differences across States further complicated the process. As a result, the data became fragmented and difficult to classify scientifically.

The experience of SECC 2011 clearly demonstrates that an open-ended approach may produce millions of caste descriptions rather than an accurate caste database. If the same methodology is repeated in Census 2027, the country risks recreating the very problems that prevented the effective utilization of caste data in the past.

A Practical and Scientific Alternative

Fortunately, India already possesses a tested and successful model for caste identification. For decades, the Census has accurately enumerated **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** using officially notified caste and tribe lists along with corresponding codes.

A similar system can be adopted for all communities.

Under such a methodology:

- The Census Commission can prepare and digitize official caste lists recognized by the Central and State Governments.
- During population enumeration, the relevant caste list applicable to the State may be shown to the respondent.
- The respondent can identify his or her caste from the notified list.
- The Enumerator can record both the caste name and the corresponding caste code.
- Separate supervisory mechanisms may be created to verify and classify genuinely unlisted or rare cases.

Form used in Census second phase rehearsal has 'open column' for caste

Vijaita Singh
Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The questionnaire used in the rehearsal for the second phase of Census, which started in 16 States and Union Territories on Monday, has an "open column" for respondents to record their castes, several officials involved in the exercise told *The Hindu*.

Though this gives an indication of how caste is likely to be enumerated in the country as part of the Population Census 2027, officials said that this was just a "pre-test" and the final methodology will be prepared based on the feedback received during the exercise, which concludes on July 20.

The castes of all residents will be recorded in the second phase of the Census, named Population Enumeration (PE).

The 2027 Census is the first digital Census and the first to enumerate caste in Independent India.

Until now, only the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were enumerated during the Census exercise.

The PE phase will be conducted in February 2027 across the country but in Ladakh and snowbound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, it will be concluded by September 30. The final questionnaire will be known by September.

Debate continues

The discourse on the methodology of caste enumeration has largely swung between either leaving an open column for caste – as in the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) – or preparing a list of castes for people to pick from, as the Bihar government did in its 2022-23 caste-based survey.



An enumerator takes notes during a door-to-door survey for the Census in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Interestingly, the open column methodology had resulted in the 2011 SECC returning over 46 lakh different "caste names", largely owing to the difference in what people understand by caste.

Significantly, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government has consistently maintained over the last decade that the 2011 SECC's caste data were unreliable because of "errors" in data collection.

The total number of castes enumerated by the Census exercise held in 1931 was 4,147.

Meanwhile, the pre-test exercise under way also allowed self-enumeration, and the portal had been accessible from July 1 to 5 only in the specific areas where the rehearsal is being conducted.

In Faridabad, Haryana, the exercise is being conducted in 17 enumeration blocks.

Each block typically has 150 to 180 residential units with a population of 650 to 800 people.

"To evaluate field procedures, digital applications, and operational arrangements ahead of the nationwide population enumeration, a pre-test will be conducted in Ward No. 24 – comprising 17 enumeration blocks – from July 1 to July 20," the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Faridabad said.

The PE phase in 2011 Census had 29 questions covering demographic, cultural and economic parameters, as well as literacy, migration, marital status, travel to place of work, and fertility.

An official said, "While SC and ST communities will be enumerated as they have always been, with codes for communities in the SC and ST lists, other people will have an open column to fill in their caste and enumerators will enter whatever a resident says their caste is."

This comes even as scholars and experts have been speculating how the government will decide to enumerate castes in India ever since the Union Cabinet approved it in 2025.

Such a procedure would ensure uniformity, accuracy and consistency across the country while minimizing administrative complications.

Why a Coded Caste Enumeration System is Essential

A standardized caste coding system offers several important advantages:

- Ensures uniform recording of caste names throughout India.
- Eliminates duplication arising from spelling variations and regional differences.
- Prevents surnames, titles, clan names and sub-castes from being counted as separate castes.
- Reduces post-enumeration verification and classification work.
- Improves the credibility and reliability of census data.
- Facilitates scientific analysis for policymaking and welfare planning.
- Creates an authentic database for social justice measures and targeted development programmes.

Most importantly, it ensures that the census captures actual caste populations rather than an unmanageable collection of caste descriptions.

Representation Submitted to the Government

Recognizing the importance of adopting a scientific methodology, a detailed representation has been submitted to **Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Home Minister**, and to the **Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India.**

The representation welcomes the Government's decision to conduct caste-wise enumeration and emphasizes that the objective of the exercise can be fulfilled only if the methodology guarantees accuracy, consistency and credibility. It urges the Government to avoid repeating the mistakes experienced during SECC 2011 and to adopt a standardized caste coding system based on officially notified caste lists.

The representation points out that the nation is not merely seeking caste data; it is seeking **reliable caste data** that can guide future policy decisions relating to education, employment, representation and welfare.

The Road Ahead

Caste-wise enumeration has the potential to become one of the most significant exercises in independent India's social justice journey. Accurate data will help governments design better policies, assess representation gaps and allocate resources more effectively.

The question before the nation today is not whether caste enumeration should be conducted. That decision has already been taken. The real question is whether India wants scientifically validated caste data or millions of unverified caste descriptions.

If Census 2027 is to become a meaningful instrument of social transformation, its methodology must be robust, transparent and standardized.

An open caste column may create confusion; a coded caste list will create clarity. The success of the caste census lies not merely in counting people, but in counting them correctly. ■

(The writer is the General Secretary, AIOBC Employees Federation)

WOMEN'S RESERVATION MUST INCLUDE OBC WOMEN: THE MISSING DIMENSION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

IMPLEMENT 33% RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT AND STATE ASSEMBLIES WITHOUT DELAY AND ENSURE INTERNAL RESERVATION FOR OBC WOMEN

The demand for the immediate implementation of 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies has once again come to the forefront of national debate. According to a report published in *The Times of India* (11 July 2026), women's organizations under the banner of the National Coalition for Women's Reservation have demanded that the reservation be implemented immediately at the existing strength of Parliament and Assemblies without waiting for Census and delimitation exercises.

The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 was hailed as a landmark step towards women's political empowerment. However, by linking its implementation to Census and delimitation, the benefits of the legislation have remained postponed. Women's organizations have rightly argued that the constitutional promise of political representation cannot be indefinitely delayed due to unrelated political and administrative processes.

Today, women constitute less than 14% of the Lok Sabha and barely around 10% in many State Assemblies. Such low representation is inconsistent

'Don't use women for political agenda'

Activists slam Centre, ask for 33% quota immediately

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A coalition of women's organisations on Friday put the Modi government on notice over the 33% women's quota bill, vowing to sit on protest here during the entire Monsoon Session of Parliament demanding that it be implemented immediately by delinking it from delimitation and census.

The National Coalition for Women's Reservation released a statement signed by 1,472 activists, writers and academicians, accusing the Modi government of using women's reservation as a "front to push its political agenda" of delimitation and increasing the number of Lok Sabha seats.

The activists wanted the 33% women's quota across the existing strength of Parliament and Assemblies from the next round of elections. A Constitutional amendment bill should be tabled in the upcoming Monsoon Session to delink women's quota from the census and delimitation, the statement said.

Calling it a "shame" that India ranks 151 among 185 countries in terms of women's representation in national parliaments, it said Indian women have been denied their rightful share of political power and participation so far, and this "historic injustice must end now".

PARL RESERVATION

- The activists want 33% women's quota from the next round of elections
- They plan to protest at Jantar Mantar from July 20, the first day of the Monsoon Session
- A protest meet will be held in Karnataka on July 14

The government is "only paying lip service" to 'Nari Shakti' (women's power), it said, adding that the prolonged delay exposes a "deep-seated patriarchal reality that systematically stalls" women's political empowerment.

The coalition plans to hold protests and rallies across India, with the activists announcing that they would be sitting at Jantar Mantar from July 20, the first day of the Monsoon Session.

"We want 33% reservation for women, and we want it now," the statement said.

Addressing a press conference, Anjali Bharadwaj of Satark Nagrik Sangathan said the Centre was using women's reservation as a means to push through the politically contentious delimitation exercise. "We oppose the delimitation that benefits the north at the cost of the South. Don't use women to get delimitation passed," she said.

A protest meet will be held in Karnataka on July 14, while numerous programmes will be held across the country from July 20.

DECCAN HERALD 11.7.2026

with the democratic principle that women, who constitute nearly half of India's population, should have an equitable voice in governance and law-making.

While welcoming the demand for immediate implementation of women's reservation, the AIOBC Employees Federation has consistently emphasized that the reservation framework must also reflect the realities of India's social structure. Merely reserving seats for women, without addressing the historical exclusion of women belonging to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), may result in unequal access to the benefits of political representation.

The Federation has therefore strongly demanded that the 33% Women's Reservation should contain a separate internal quota for OBC Women, similar to the reservations already provided for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Such an arrangement alone would ensure that women from socially and educationally backward communities receive fair and proportionate representation in Parliament and State Legislatures.

The demand is rooted in the principles of social justice enshrined in the Constitution and in the recommendations of several commissions that have recognized the under-representation of OBC communities in decision-making institutions. OBC women face a double disadvantage arising from both social backwardness and gender discrimination. Without a dedicated internal quota, the benefits of women's reservation may not adequately reach this large section of Indian women.

The All India OBC Employees Federation, at its Central Executive Committee meeting held in Chennai on 25 April 2026, adopted a resolution demanding that the Women's Reservation law should provide an internal reservation for OBC women within the 33% quota, thereby ensuring equitable representation for all sections of women. This demand has also been consistently raised before the Government of India and various political parties.

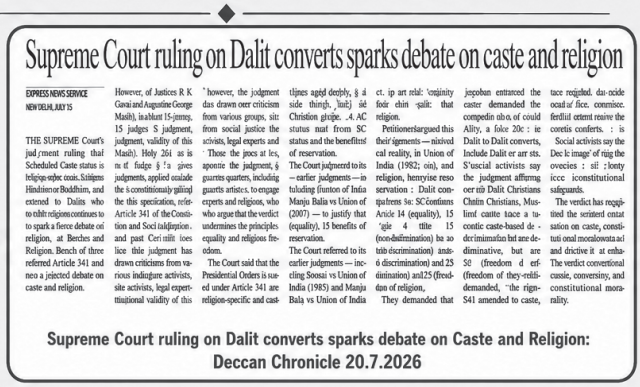
The struggle for women's representation and the struggle for social justice are not separate movements. True empowerment can be achieved only when women from all social backgrounds, including OBC, SC and ST communities, are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in legislative institutions.

As Parliament moves towards implementing the Women's Reservation Act, it must ensure that the benefits are shared fairly among all sections of women. Immediate implementation of the 33% reservation and provision of an internal quota for OBC women are both essential to achieve substantive equality and inclusive democracy.

"Women's Reservation must not be delayed. Equally, it must not exclude OBC women. Social Justice demands both implementation and inclusion." ■

SUPREME COURT RULING ON DALIT CONVERTS: SPARKS DEBATE ON CASTE AND RELIGION

1. The Supreme Court upheld that Scheduled Caste status is religion-specific, not based on caste alone.
2. Dalits who convert to religions other than Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism lose SC reservation benefits.
3. The judgment is based on Article 341 of the Constitution and Presidential Orders.
4. Court relied on past rulings (e.g., Soosai vs Union of India, 1985) to maintain consistency in law.
5. The verdict has sparked criticism from social justice groups and Dalit rights activists.
6. Activists argue it violates equality, dignity and the right to freedom of religion under Articles 14, 15, 25.
7. Demand is rising to amend Article 341 to include Dalit converts for true social justice.
8. The ruling raises serious questions on intersection of caste, religion and constitutional morality.
9. It may impact lakhs of Dalit Christians, Muslims and others denied rightful opportunities and protection.
10. The debate continues: Is social justice defined by caste oppression or religious identity?



Supreme Court ruling on Dalit converts sparks debate on caste and religion

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 15

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Supreme Court ruling on Dalit converts sparks debate on Caste and Religion: Deccan Chronicle 20.7.2026

OUR STAND

Social justice must be based on caste oppression, not religion. It is time to ensure equality, dignity and constitutional rights for all, without discrimination.



PENSION IS A RIGHT, NOT A CHARITY

SUPREME COURT REAFFIRMS PENSION RIGHTS OF TEMPORARY STATUS CASUAL LABOURERS

(Bhikhani Devi & Others vs Union of India, 2026 INSC 612, Judgment dated 1 June 2026 - Bench: JJ. Sanjay Karol & A.G. Masih)

The Supreme Court's landmark judgment in **Bhikhani Devi & Others vs Union of India** is a significant victory for thousands of casual labourers and temporary status employees who devoted decades of service to the Government but were denied pension solely because they were never formally regularised. The judgment not only settles a long-standing legal controversy but also reinforces an important constitutional principle: **pension is a right earned through service and not a discretionary benefit dependent upon the goodwill of the employer.**

The case arose from the claims of casual labourers who had been granted "temporary status" under the **Casual Labourers (Grant of Temporary Status and Regularisation) Scheme, 1991**. Although they worked for decades and were accorded benefits similar to temporary Group 'D' employees, the Government denied them pension after retirement on the ground that they had never been formally regularised. The Central Administrative Tribunal ruled in their favour, but the Patna High Court reversed that decision. The matter eventually reached the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court emphatically rejected the narrow interpretation adopted by the High Court. The Court observed that once temporary status employees completed three years of continuous service and became entitled to benefits admissible to temporary Group 'D' employees, they could not be selectively denied pensionary benefits while enjoying all other service benefits. The Court held that parity under the Scheme meant parity in service benefits and not merely symbolic recognition.

A crucial aspect of the judgment is the Court's interpretation of the **CCS (Temporary Service)**

Rules, 1965. Rule 10(1-B) specifically provides pension and gratuity to temporary Government servants who have rendered at least ten years of qualifying service. The Court noted that the statutory framework itself recognises pension rights for temporary employees and does not restrict such benefits only to permanent or regular employees.

The Government argued that the employees were originally engaged as casual labourers paid out of contingencies and therefore fell outside the scope of pension rules. Rejecting this contention, the Court held that once the employees were granted temporary status and subsequently extended benefits available to temporary Group 'D' employees—including pay parity, increments, leave, and GPF facilities—the Government could not selectively rely upon the original mode of engagement to deny pension. Such an approach, the Court observed, would defeat the very object of the Scheme.

Most significantly, the Court reaffirmed that **pension is not a matter of grace**. Referring to earlier constitutional jurisprudence, it held that pension is a deferred wage earned by an employee through long years of service and constitutes a property right protected under **Article 300A of the Constitution**. Therefore, pension cannot be denied on the plea of administrative convenience or financial burden.

The Court then delivered its most important finding:

"A temporary status casual labourer would be entitled to pensionary benefits on superannuation even in the absence of regularisation."

This declaration marks a major shift in service jurisprudence. It establishes that entitlement to pension flows from the nature and duration of service and from statutory rules, not from the issuance of a formal regularisation order. Administrative failure to regularise an employee cannot extinguish vested rights accrued through decades of service.

Broader Implications for Workers

Broader Implications for Workers

This landmark judgment benefits not only the appellants but also thousands of temporary and casual workers in Government departments, PSUs, and autonomous bodies who have been denied



pension despite long years of service. The Supreme Court clarified that welfare laws must advance justice and cannot be defeated by technicalities. If employees are granted benefits equivalent to temporary Government servants, pension cannot be selectively denied.

The Court also held that pension is a continuing right and cannot be rejected merely due to delay in approaching the courts, though arrears may be restricted. Accordingly, the Government was directed to release pensionary benefits within three months, failing which interest at 6% per annum would apply.

Conclusion

The decision in **Bhikhani Devi vs Union of India** is a milestone in Indian service law. It upholds the dignity of labour, prevents exploitation through prolonged temporary employment, and protects workers from being deprived of retirement security due to administrative inaction.

The judgment sends a clear message: **the State cannot take decades of service from an employee and then deny pension by citing the absence of a formal regularisation order. Pension is an earned right, a constitutional entitlement, and an essential component of social justice.**

For employees, trade unions, and welfare organisations, this judgment stands as a reminder that constitutional rights do not vanish because of bureaucratic delays. For the Government, it is a call to ensure that service benefits promised under welfare schemes are implemented in both letter and spirit.

When service has been rendered faithfully for decades, justice demands that retirement be accompanied by dignity—and pension remains the cornerstone of that dignity.

- G.Karunanidhi, Editor, OBC VOICE



THOUGHTS OF PERIYAR: RATIONALISM CAUSED REFORMATION

पेरियार के विचार: तर्कवाद (रैशनलिज़्म) से सामाजिक सुधार हुआ

Dharmapuri is one of the prominent cities in Tamil Nadu. At a vantage point here Periyar's statue was erected at 7 P.M. on **24th May, 1969.** It was the maiden installation. The bronze statue depicted full image of Periyar. It was unveiled by Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, who was then the Chief Minister of the state.

The grand event concluded with a speech by Periyar, explaining the objective behind the erection of his statue. The content of his speech is as follows in a nutshell:

My dear friends, followers, and comrades,

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for gathering here and for the affection and respect you have shown by erecting this statue. Many speakers have praised me generously. While criticism never troubles me, excessive praise makes me uncomfortable. Nevertheless, I accept your affection with humility and assure you that I shall continue to strive to deserve your confidence.

Some may wonder about the nature of our movement. I have often described it as a "destructive movement." This does not mean destruction in a negative sense. We seek to destroy blind faith, superstition, caste oppression, social inequality, and all forms of injustice that degrade human beings. We aim to eradicate ignorance and irrational customs that have kept our people in chains for centuries. Only by removing these obstacles can society progress towards equality, dignity, and self-respect.

The statue erected here is not meant for worship. It is not intended to become another object of ritual or devotion. It represents an individual who spent his life questioning established beliefs and encouraging people to think rationally. If this statue serves any purpose, it should remind people to question superstition, reject social injustice, and use reason as their guide.

धर्मपुरी तमिलनाडु के प्रमुख शहरों में से एक है। यहीं एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थान पर 24 मई 1969 को शाम 7 बजे पेरियार की प्रतिमा स्थापित की गई। यह उनकी पहली प्रतिमा थी। यह कांसे से बनी पेरियार की पूर्ण आकार की प्रतिमा थी। उस समय तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री रहे कलैग्नार एम. करुणानिधि ने इसका अनावरण किया। इस भव्य कार्यक्रम का समापन पेरियार के भाषण से हुआ, जिसमें उन्होंने अपनी प्रतिमा लगाने का उद्देश्य बतायाँ। उनके भाषण का सार इस प्रकार है:-

मेरे प्रिय मित्रों, अनुयायियों और साथियों,

मैं आप सभी का दिल से धन्यवाद करता हूँ कि आप यहाँ आए और इस प्रतिमा को स्थापित करके मेरे प्रति अपना स्नेह और सम्मान व्यक्त किया। कई वक्ताओं ने मेरी बहुत प्रशंसा की। आलोचना मुझे कभी परेशान नहीं करती, लेकिन ज़रूरत से ज़्यादा प्रशंसा मुझे असहज कर देती है। फिर भी, मैं आपके प्रेम को विनम्रता से स्वीकार करता हूँ और आपको विश्वास दिलाता हूँ कि मैं हमेशा आपके भरोसे के योग्य बनने का प्रयास करता रहूँगा।

कुछ लोगों को हमारे आंदोलन की प्रकृति के बारे में जान कर अचरज हो सकता है। मैंने अक्सर इसे "विनाशकारी आंदोलन" कहा है। इसका अर्थ बुरे अर्थों में विनाश नहीं है। हम अंधविश्वास, अंधी आस्था, जातिगत उत्पीड़न, सामाजिक असमानता और हर उस अन्याय को समाप्त करना चाहते हैं जो इंसानों को नीचा दिखाता है। हम उस अज्ञानता और उन तर्कहीन परंपराओं को मिटाना चाहते हैं जिन्होंने सदियों से हमारे लोगों को जकड़ कर रखा है। इन बाधाओं को हटाकर ही समाज समानता, गरिमा और आत्मसम्मान की ओर बढ़ सकता है।

यहाँ स्थापित यह प्रतिमा पूजा के लिए नहीं है। इसे किसी धार्मिक पूजा या आस्था का नया प्रतीक बनाने का उद्देश्य नहीं है। यह उस व्यक्ति का प्रतीक है जिसने अपना पूरा जीवन पुरानी मान्यताओं पर सवाल उठाने और लोगों को तर्क से सोचने के लिए प्रेरित करने में बिताया। यदि इस प्रतिमा का कोई उद्देश्य है, तो वह लोगों को अंधविश्वास पर सवाल उठाने, सामाजिक अन्याय का विरोध करने और तर्क को अपना मार्गदर्शक बनाने की याद दिलाना है।

For generations, society has been burdened by outdated customs, mythical stories, and rigid social codes. These have prevented people from thinking independently and have kept them trapped in ignorance. Rationalism alone can liberate people from such darkness and bring about genuine social reform. Therefore, when we speak of destroying old beliefs, it is only to create a more enlightened and humane society.

The people of Tamil Nadu placed their trust in leaders who openly opposed caste discrimination, religious orthodoxy, and irrational customs. They supported those who promised social reform and equality. This mandate was not obtained through deception but through the confidence people reposed in progressive ideals.

Our beloved leader Anna was a fearless rationalist. He challenged social and religious orthodoxy throughout his life and advocated self-respect and equality. Even those who disagreed with his views could not deny his honesty, courage, and dedication to public welfare. The immense outpouring of grief at the time of his death demonstrated the affection people had for him despite knowing his rationalist convictions.

Anna's government introduced historic reforms. The legal recognition of Self-Respect Marriages was one such milestone. It established that marriage need not depend upon caste, religion, rituals, or priestly intervention. Mutual consent, equality, and commitment between two individuals were considered sufficient. Such reforms reflected a new social vision rooted in dignity and human equality.

The struggle against caste oppression has been central to our movement. For centuries, social and educational opportunities were monopolized by a privileged few, while the vast majority remained excluded. Through relentless struggle, we challenged this domination and opened doors for the oppressed and marginalized sections of society. People from socially disadvantaged backgrounds were able to rise to positions of authority and leadership because of these efforts.

Untouchability remains one of the greatest evils in our society. It cannot be eliminated merely through speeches or symbolic gestures. As long as social structures based on caste superiority and inferiority continue to exist, true equality cannot be achieved. Many claim that untouchability has disappeared, but the reality proves otherwise. Our struggle against discrimination must therefore continue until every individual enjoys equal dignity and respect.

The movement also played a significant role in social reform beyond Tamil Nadu. In Kerala, we fought for the rights of oppressed communities to use public roads and access temple surroundings. These struggles faced fierce resistance, yet they succeeded in challenging centuries of discrimination and helped pave the way for greater social equality.

The reforms undertaken by progressive governments in Tamil Nadu have contributed significantly to

पीढ़ियों से समाज पुरानी परंपराओं, काल्पनिक कहानियों और कठोर सामाजिक नियमों के बोझ तले दबा रहा है। इन कारणों से लोग स्वतंत्र रूप से सोच नहीं पाए और अज्ञानता में फँसे रहे। केवल तर्कवाद (रैशनलिज़्म) ही लोगों को इस अंधकार से बाहर निकाल सकता है और वास्तविक सामाजिक सुधार ला सकता है। इसलिए जब हम पुरानी मान्यताओं को समाप्त करने की बात करते हैं, तो हमारा उद्देश्य एक अधिक जागरूक और मानवीय समाज बनाना होता है।

तमिलनाडु के लोगों ने उन नेताओं पर भरोसा किया जिन्होंने खुलकर जातिगत भेदभाव, धार्मिक कट्टरता और तर्कहीन परंपराओं का विरोध किया। उन्होंने उन लोगों का समर्थन किया जिन्होंने सामाजिक सुधार और समानता का वादा किया। यह जनसमर्थन किसी धोखे से नहीं, बल्कि प्रगतिशील विचारों पर लोगों के विश्वास से मिला था।

हमारे प्रिय नेता अन्ना एक निडर तर्कवादी थे। उन्होंने जीवन भर सामाजिक और धार्मिक रूढ़ियों को चुनौती दी और आत्मसम्मान तथा समानता का समर्थन किया। जो लोग उनसे असहमत थे, वे भी उनकी ईमानदारी, साहस और जनता की भलाई के प्रति समर्पण को नकार नहीं सके। उनकी मृत्यु पर लोगों का अपार दुख इस बात का प्रमाण था कि लोग उनके तर्कवादी विचारों को जानते हुए भी उनसे बहुत प्रेम करते थे।

अन्ना की सरकार ने कई ऐतिहासिक सुधार किए। आत्मसम्मान (सेल्फ-रिस्पेक्ट) विवाहों को कानूनी मान्यता देना उनमें से एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम था। इससे यह सिद्ध हुआ कि विवाह के लिए जाति, धर्म, धार्मिक रीति-रिवाज या पुजारी की आवश्यकता नहीं है। दो व्यक्तियों की आपसी सहमति, समानता और एक-दूसरे के प्रति प्रतिबद्धता ही पर्याप्त मानी गई। ऐसे सुधार सम्मान और मानव समानता पर आधारित नए समाज की सोच को दर्शाते थे।

जातिगत उत्पीड़न के खिलाफ संघर्ष हमारे आंदोलन का मुख्य उद्देश्य रहा है। सदियों तक शिक्षा और सामाजिक अवसर कुछ विशेष लोगों के कब्ज़े में रहे, जबकि अधिकांश लोग उनसे वंचित रहे। लगातार संघर्ष के माध्यम से हमने इस प्रभुत्व को चुनौती दी और वंचित तथा शोषित वर्गों के लिए नए अवसर खोले। इन्हीं प्रयासों के कारण सामाजिक रूप से पिछड़े वर्गों के लोग भी उच्च पदों और नेतृत्व तक पहुँच सके।

अस्पृश्यता आज भी हमारे समाज की सबसे बड़ी बुराइयों में से एक है। इसे केवल भाषणों या प्रतीकात्मक कार्यक्रमों से समाप्त नहीं किया जा सकता। जब तक जाति पर आधारित ऊँच-नीच की व्यवस्था बनी रहेगी, तब तक वास्तविक समानता संभव नहीं है। बहुत से लोग कहते हैं कि अस्पृश्यता खत्म हो गई है, लेकिन सच्चाई कुछ और है। इसलिए हमारा भेदभाव के खिलाफ संघर्ष तब तक जारी रहना चाहिए, जब तक हर व्यक्ति को समान सम्मान और गरिमा न मिले।

हमारे आंदोलन ने तमिलनाडु के बाहर भी सामाजिक सुधार में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। केरल में हमने शोषित समुदायों के सार्वजनिक सड़कों पर चलने और मंदिरों के आसपास जाने के अधिकार के लिए संघर्ष किया। इन आंदोलनों का कड़ा विरोध हुआ, लेकिन उन्होंने सदियों पुराने भेदभाव को चुनौती दी और सामाजिक समानता का रास्ता खोला।

तमिलनाडु की प्रगतिशील सरकारों द्वारा किए गए सुधारों ने सामाजिक असमानता कम करने में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया। शिक्षा, सरकारी नौकरियों, प्रशासन और न्यायपालिका में अधिक अवसर मिलने से समाज के अधिक लोगों को

reducing social inequalities. Greater opportunities in education, public employment, administration, and the judiciary have enabled broader sections of society to participate in governance. Free and accessible education has empowered countless young people from ordinary families to aspire for a better future.

The progress achieved so far should not make us complacent. There are still forces that oppose social justice and seek to preserve outdated privileges. Therefore, those who believe in equality, rationalism, and social reform must remain vigilant and united. Progressive governments and social movements require continued public support if they are to withstand such challenges and advance further reforms.

One of the most encouraging changes in society is the growing aspiration among the younger generation. Our children no longer accept a future limited by caste or inherited occupations. They seek education, knowledge, and meaningful employment. This transformation is the result of sustained social reform and must be strengthened further.

The statues, memorials, and monuments erected by our movement are not intended to promote personality worship. Their purpose is to preserve and propagate ideas. When future generations see these symbols, they should remember the principles for which we struggled—rationalism, self-respect, social justice, equality, and human dignity.

If, one day, someone points to this statue and says, "This is the statue of a man who challenged superstition and fought for social justice," that alone will be a sufficient tribute. Individuals may pass away, but ideas can continue to inspire generations.

My gratitude to all of you for your affection, support, and good wishes. Let us continue the journey towards a society based on reason, equality, and self-respect.

(Courtesy: Viduthalai - Abridged version of Thanthai Periyar's speech)

शासन में भाग लेने का मौका मिला। मुफ्त और सुलभ शिक्षा ने सामान्य परिवारों के अनगिनत युवाओं को बेहतर भविष्य का सपना देखने की शक्ति दी।

अब तक हुई प्रगति से हमें संतुष्ट होकर रुकना नहीं चाहिए। आज भी कुछ शक्तियाँ सामाजिक न्याय का विरोध करती हैं और पुराने विशेष अधिकारों को बनाए रखना चाहती हैं। इसलिए समानता, तर्कवाद और सामाजिक सुधार में विश्वास रखने वाले लोगों को हमेशा सतर्क और एकजुट रहना चाहिए। यदि प्रगतिशील सरकारों और सामाजिक आंदोलनों को आगे बढ़ना है, तो उन्हें जनता का लगातार समर्थन मिलते रहना चाहिए।

समाज में सबसे उत्साहजनक बदलावों में से एक युवाओं की बढ़ती आकांक्षाएँ हैं। आज के बच्चे अपना भविष्य जाति या पारंपरिक पेशों तक सीमित नहीं मानते। वे शिक्षा, ज्ञान और अच्छे रोजगार की इच्छा रखते हैं। यह परिवर्तन लगातार हुए सामाजिक सुधारों का परिणाम है और इसे आगे भी मजबूत करना चाहिए।

हमारे आंदोलन द्वारा बनाई गई प्रतिमाएँ, स्मारक और यादगार स्थान किसी व्यक्ति की पूजा कराने के लिए नहीं हैं। उनका उद्देश्य हमारे विचारों को सुरक्षित रखना और आगे पहुँचाना है। जब आने वाली पीढ़ियाँ इन प्रतीकों को देखें, तो उन्हें हमारे संघर्ष के सिद्धांत याद आने चाहिए– तर्कवाद, आत्मसम्मान, सामाजिक न्याय, समानता और मानव गरिमा।

यदि एक दिन कोई इस प्रतिमा की ओर इशारा करके कहे, "यह उस व्यक्ति की प्रतिमा है जिसने अंधविश्वास को चुनौती दी और सामाजिक न्याय के लिए संघर्ष किया," तो यही मेरे लिए सबसे बड़ा सम्मान होगा। व्यक्ति एक दिन इस दुनिया से चला जाता है, लेकिन उसके विचार आने वाली पीढ़ियों को प्रेरित करते रहते हैं।

आप सभी के प्रेम, सहयोग और शुभकामनाओं के लिए मैं हृदय से धन्यवाद देता हूँ। आइए, हम सब मिलकर तर्क, समानता और आत्मसम्मान पर आधारित समाज बनाने की इस यात्रा को आगे बढ़ाएँ।

(स्रोत: विदुथलाई - थंथाई पेरियार के भाषण का संक्षिप्त रूप)

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