



## VARIOUS GOVERNMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME FOR SOCIO ECONOMIC WELFARE FOR BACKWARD CLASS

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Caste is a form of social stratification characterized by endogamy, non-commensality and hereditary occupations. A paradigmatic, ethnographic example is the division of Indian society into social groups. Historically, the caste system in India has consisted of thousands of endogamous groups called Jatis or Quoms and Biradaris (among Muslims). The caste system in India is a system of social stratification which has pre-modern origins, was transformed by the British Raj, and is today the basis of reservation in India. It consists of two different concepts, *varna* and *j ti*, which may be regarded as different levels of analysis of this system. *Varna* may be translated as "class," and refers to the four social classes which existed in the Vedic society, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Certain groups, now known as Dalits, were historically excluded from the varna system altogether, and are still ostracised as untouchables.

*J ti* may be translated as *caste*, and refers to *birth*. The names of *j tis* are usually derived from occupations, and considered to be hereditary and endogamous, but this may not always have been the case. The *j tis* developed in post-Vedic times, possibly from crystallisation of guilds during its feudal era. The *j tis* are often thought of as belonging to one of the four *varnas*.

**Other Backward Class (OBC)** is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes which are socially and educationally disadvantaged. It is one of several official classifications of the population of India, along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs). The OBCs were found to comprise 52% of the country's population by the Mandal Commission report of 1980, a figure which had shrunk to 41% by 2006 when the National Sample Survey Organisation took place.

In the Indian Constitution, OBCs are described as "socially and educationally backward classes", and the Government of India is enjoined to ensure their social and educational development — for example, the OBCs are entitled to 27% reservations in public sector employment and higher education. The list of OBCs maintained by the Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is dynamic, with castes and communities being added or removed depending on social, educational and economic factors.

Until 1985, the affairs of the Backward Classes were looked after by the Backward Classes Cell in the Ministry of Home Affairs. A separate Ministry of Welfare was established in 1985 (renamed in 1998 to the Ministry of Social and Empowerment) to attend to matters relating to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs. The Backward Classes Division of the Ministry looks after the policy, planning and implementation of programmes relating to social and economic empowerment of OBCs, and matters relating to two institutions set up for the welfare of OBCs, the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation and the National Commission for Backward Classes.

Under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, it is obligatory for the government to promote the welfare of the OBCs. The president may by order appoint a commission, consisting of such persons as he thinks, fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the union or any state to remove such difficulties and as to improve their condition and as to the grants that should be made, and the order appointing such commission shall define the procedure to be followed by the commission. A commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the president a report setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper.

In 1992 a decision of the Supreme Court of India resulted in a requirement that 27% of civil service positions be reserved for members of OBCs. In August 2010 the *Times of India* reported that at most 7% of eligible positions had been filled by OBCs, in spite of the 27% reservation. This difference between proportion of different communities in higher educational institutions is mainly because of difference in primary school enrollment. Political parties in India have attempted to use these communities as vote banks.

On 29 March 2007, the Supreme Court of India, as an interim measure, stayed the law providing for 27 percent reservation for Other Backward Classes in educational institutions like IITs and IIMs. This was done in response to a public interest



litigation — Ashoka Kumar Thakur vs. Union of India. The Court held that the 1931 census could not be a determinative factor for identifying the OBCs for the purpose of providing reservation. The court also observed, "Reservation cannot be permanent and appear to perpetuate backwardness".

On 10 April 2008 the Supreme Court of India upheld the government's initiative of 27% OBC quotas in government-funded institutions. The Court has categorically reiterated its prior stand that those considered part of the "Creamy layer" should be excluded by government-funded institutions and by private institutions from the scope of the reservation policy. The verdict produced mixed reactions from supporting and opposing quarters.

### **Problems of “Other Backward Classes” of India**

On the basis of certain elements of backwardness such as illiteracy and lack of education poverty, exploitation of labour, non-representation in services and untouchability, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are listed in the Constitution while the third group i.e. Other Backward Class is unlisted. Instead it is loosely defined. As a result of the absence of clear definition, the problem of Other Backward classes is very complicated and very difficult to deal with.

While the term ‘backward classes’ has not been defined by the Indian Constitution, the characteristics of backwardness are described here and there and also sometimes the categories are mentioned. Article 15(4) speaks of the socially and educationally backward class.

Article 16 (4) uses the term ‘backward class’ and speaks of inadequate representation in services. Article 46 mentions the weaker sections of the people and includes in that expression the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Article 340 empowers the State to investigate the conditions of the backward class and to help them by grants.

Recognising that Indian society is made up hundreds of millions of citizens who are utterly poor, illiterate and live in small, closed tribal and village societies the Constitution has laid stress on the social, economic and political justice along ‘with equality of status.

While Article 14 and 15 (1) and (2) emphasise equality of all citizens before law and prohibit discrimination on grounds of caste, creed, birth etc., Article 15 (4) asserts that these Constitutional provisions do not prevent the State from making special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Thus, the Constitution has recognised that it is necessary to take special steps to help the socially and economically backward classes.

The Backward Class Commission was appointed in 1953 with Kaka Kalelkar as the Chairman according to the Article 340 of the Constitution. The Commission was asked to determine the criteria to be adopted to provide concessions to “socially and educationally backward classes” besides The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The Commission was also asked to prepare a list of such classes. The Commission prepared a list of about 2400 castes. The words specifically used are classes and sections and not castes and yet, as explained in the body of the report the words ‘sections and classes’ mean nothing but castes and no other interpretation is feasible. List prepared for backward classes deemed to have been made in terms of castes and the term ‘backward classes’ has been used to describe and include “backward castes”. But the Constitution does not recognise caste, except the scheduled castes.

It must be recognised that the term ‘class’ is associated with economic category and indicates an ‘open’ status group. By contrast, the backward classes in India form an aggregate of ‘closed’ status groups; they belong to these groups by birth, not because of their individual economic characteristics.

Backward status is ascribed on the basis of birth to certain castes. Hence, for all practical purposes the term backward class is used for backward castes, while the Constitution recognises special provisions for advancement of any socially and economically backward class.

Mandal Commission’s recommendation for reservation of 27 per cent Government jobs for backward classes has also been accepted by the Supreme Court of India and caste has been accepted as the basis for identifying the beneficiaries of reservation. Of course Supreme Court has ordered that the creamy layer has to be excluded from reservation.



## **Welfare of Other Backward Classes - Schemes / Programmes**

### **a. Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students
- Rates and Eligibility.
- State and UT-wise Committed Liability for each year of XII Plan.
- State and UT-wise Financial and Physical Achievement in last five year upto 2014-15.

### **b. Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students (as revised in 2011-12)
- Rates and Eligibility.
- State and UT-wise Committed Liability for each year of XII Plan.
- State and UT-wise Financial and Physical Achievement in last five year upto 2014-15.

### **c. Construction of Hostels for OBC Boys and Girls**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of Construction of Hostels for OBC Boys and Girls (as revised in 2014-15)

### **d. Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for OBC**

- Guidelines Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for OBC.

### **e. National Fellowship for OBC Students (NF-OBC)**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of National Fellowship for OBC Students (launched in 2014-15)

### **f. Assistance to Voluntary Organisations working for the Welfare of OBCs**

- Minutes of the Screening Committee meeting for new proposals held on 05.05.2015.
- Guidelines of the Scheme of Assistance to VOs working for the welfare of OBCs (as revised in 2014-15)

### **g. Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs (as amended upto April 2015)

### **h. Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls**

- Guidelines of the Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostel for DNT Boys and Girls (launched in 2014-15)

### **i. Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for EBCs**

- Guidelines Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for EBCs.

### **j. Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for EBCs**

- Guidelines of the Scheme of Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for EBCs (launched in 2014-15)

### **k. State Wise Sanction Letters**

- State-wise Sanction Letters issued in 2015-16
- State-wise Sanction Letters issued in 2014-15

### **l. Professional Courses**

- Professional Courses Covered under BC Scholarship Schemes

## **Conclusion**

Under the Backward Classes Bureau, the Ministry is mandated to look after the welfare of Backward Classes, by implementing the schemes for Backward Classes. The Ministry also deals with the National Backward Classes Commission (NCBC) which was set up in 1993. The Commission tenders advice to the Ministry in respect of castes, sub-castes, synonyms and communities for inclusion in/from the central list of Other Backward Classes.

Backward Classes means such backward classes of citizens other than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as may be specified by the Central Government in the lists prepared by the Government of India from time to time for purposes of making provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of backward classes of citizens which, in the opinion of that Government, are not adequately represented in the services under the Government of India and any local or other authority within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India. The affairs of Backward Classes were looked after by the Backward Classes Cell (BCC) in the Ministry of Home Affairs prior to 1985. With the creation of a separate Ministry of Welfare in 1985 (renamed as Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 25.5.1998), the matters relating to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Minorities were transferred to the new Ministry. Consequent upon the creation of two separate ministries for Scheduled Tribes and Minorities, the subject matter pertaining to these two categories were transferred to the respective Ministries. The Backward Classes Division in the Ministry looks after the policy, planning and implementation of programmes relating to social and economic empowerment of OBCs. It also looks after matters relating to two institutions set up for the welfare of OBCs namely, the National



Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

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