



Ranganath Report and Quota for Dalit Converts

For Prelims: [Criterion for SC Status](#), Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950, [Registrar General of India](#).

For Mains: Criterion for SC Status and Arguments for and against the Inclusion of Dalit Christians and Muslims.

Why in News?

Recently, the [Supreme Court](#) revisited a **2007 report by the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities**, which recommended [Scheduled Caste \(SC\) reservation for Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam](#).

- The Centre had **discredited the report**, but the apex court believes it contains valuable information that could help determine if excluding Dalit converts from the SC category is unconstitutional **according to the [Constitution Order of 1950](#)**.

Note

- Rejecting the Mishra report, the government had recently constituted a new Commission headed by a **former CJI K.G. Balakrishnan**, giving it two years to prepare a report on the question of granting SC status to **“new persons who have historically belonged to the Scheduled Castes but have converted to religions other than Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism”**.
- For rejecting the report, the Centre has argued that “Dalits who converted to Christianity or Islam to overcome the burdens of caste cannot **claim reservation benefits** enjoyed by those who chose to stay back in the Hindu religious system”.

What are the Key Highlights of the Ranganath Report?

- The recommendation of Scheduled Caste reservation for Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam was made in the 2007 report of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities.
- Dalit Christians and Muslims **face discrimination not only from upper-caste members** of their own religion but also from the **broader Hindu-dominated society**.
- The exclusion of Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam from the SC category **violates the constitutional guarantee of equality and is against the basic tenets of these religions, which reject caste discrimination**.
- The **denial of SC status to Dalit converts** to Christianity and Islam has **led to their socio-economic and educational backwardness** and has deprived them of **access to reservations in education and employment opportunities** (as provided under [article 16](#)).

Who is Included in the Constitution Order of 1950?

- When enacted, the [Constitution \(Scheduled Castes\) Order of 1950](#), initially provided for recognizing **only Hindus as SCs**, to address the social disability arising out of the practice of untouchability. *However, the order also provided that every member of Ramdasi, Kabirpanthi, Mazhabi, or Sikligar caste resident in Punjab or the Patiala and East Punjab, be **deemed to be a member of the Scheduled Castes whether he professes the Hindu or Sikh religion.***
- The Order was amended in 1956 to include **Dalits who had converted to Sikhism (in entirety)** and once more in 1990 to include **Dalits who had converted to Buddhism.**
 - Both amendments were aided by the reports of the [Kaka Kalelkar Commission in 1955](#) and the High-Powered Panel (HPP) on Minorities, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes in 1983 respectively.
- The **1950 Order (post amendments in 1956 and 1990)**, mandates that **anybody who is not a Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist cannot be granted SC status.**

Why are Dalit Christians and Muslims Excluded?

- **Avoid Surge in SC Population:** The Office of the [Registrar General of India \(RGI\)](#) had cautioned the government that SC status is meant for communities **suffering from social disabilities arising out of the practice of untouchability, which it noted was prevalent in Hindu and Sikh communities.**
 - It also noted that such a move would significantly swell the population of SCs across the country.
- **Diverse Ethnic Groups who Converted:** In 2001, **RGI stated that Dalits who converted to Islam or Christianity are not a single ethnic group** as they belong to different caste groups.
 - Therefore, they cannot be included in the **list of Scheduled Castes (SC) as per Clause (2) of Article 341, which requires a single ethnic group for inclusion.**
- **Untouchability not Prevalent in Other Religions:** The RGI further opined that since the practice of **“untouchability” was a feature of the Hindu religion and its branches**, allowing the inclusion of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians as SCs could **result in being “misunderstood internationally”** as India trying to **“impose its caste system”** upon Christians and Muslims.
 - The 2001 note also stated that **Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin had lost their caste identity by way of their conversion** and that in their new religious community, the practice of untouchability is not prevalent.

What is the Registrar General of India?

- The **Registrar General of India was founded in 1961** by the Government of India under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
 - It arranges, conducts, and **analyses the results of the demographic surveys** of India including the [Census of India](#) and [Linguistic Survey of India.](#)
- The **position of Registrar is usually held by a civil servant** holding the rank of **Joint Secretary.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. In 2001, RGI stated that Dalits who converted to Islam or Christianity are not a single ethnic group as they belong to different caste groups. Therefore, they cannot be included in the list of Scheduled Castes (SC) as per Clause (2) of Article 341, which requires a single ethnic group for inclusion. **(2014)**

Q. Whether the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) can enforce the implementation of constitutional reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the religious minority institutions? Examine. **(2018)**

[Source: TH](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/ranganath-report-and-quota-for-dalit-converts>

