



Sub-Categorisation Within Castes

For Prelims: [Sub-categorization, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Backward Classes \(NCBC\), Scheduled Tribes](#)

For Mains: Sub-categorisation of Castes, Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies Constituted for Protection & Betterment of Vulnerable Sections.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

The issue of [sub-categorization within Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#) has recently gained attention, with the Prime Minister of India expressing a commitment to identifying and assisting the most backward communities within the SCs.

- This move has sparked discussions on the legality, challenges, and potential impact of sub-categorization.

What is Sub-Categorisation Within Castes?

▪ About:

- Sub-categorisation within castes refers to the process of **creating sub-groups within the existing categories of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** for reservation and affirmative action.
- Sub-categorisation aims to address the **intra-category inequalities** and ensure a **more equitable distribution of benefits** and opportunities among the most deprived and marginalized sections of society.

▪ Legality of Sub-Categorisation:

- **Historical Attempts:**
 - States like Punjab, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu have attempted sub-categorization, facing legal challenges that have reached the Supreme Court.
- **Constitutional Dilemma:**
 - The [Supreme Court of India](#), in the case of **E.V.Chinnaiah vs State Of Andhra Pradesh And Ors, 2004**, asserted that **only Parliament has the authority to create** and notify SC and Scheduled Tribes (STs) lists.
 - However, in another case of **State of Punjab and Others versus Davinder Singh and Others, 2020** judgment, a five-judge Bench ruled that **States could decide on the quantum of benefits in the lists of SCs/STs** already notified without "tinkering" with them.
 - The contradiction between the 2004 and 2020 judgments has led to the 2020 judgment being referred to a larger Bench.
- There is a constitutional mandate and a judicial endorsement for sub-categorisation within castes, as [Article 16 \(4\) of the Constitution](#) empowers that the State can make any provision for **reservation in matters of promotion in favour of the SCs and STs** if

they are not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Why is Sub-Categorisation within Castes Needed?

- There is a significant **diversity and heterogeneity within the SC, ST, and OBC** categories, based on factors such as occupation, education, income, social status, and regional variations.
 - There is evidence of disproportionate and skewed representation of certain dominant and influential sub-groups within the SC, ST, and OBC categories, who have cornered the lion's share of the reservation benefits, leaving behind the weaker and more backward sub-groups.
- There is a demand from various sub-groups within the SC, ST, and OBC categories, such as the **Madigas in Telangana**, the Paswans in Bihar, and the Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh, for sub-categorisation and separate quotas to ensure fair and adequate representation.

What are the Challenges of Sub-Categorisation within Castes?

- There is a **lack of reliable and updated data** on the population and socio-economic status of various sub-groups within the SC, ST, and OBC categories, which hampers the objective and scientific basis for sub-categorisation.
- There is a possibility of **legal and political backlash** from the dominant and influential sub-groups within the SC, ST, and OBC categories, who may resist and oppose the sub-categorisation and the reduction of their share of reservation benefits.
- There is a risk of further fragmentation and division within the SC, ST, and OBC categories, which may **weaken their collective identity** and solidarity and undermine their political and social empowerment.

Way Forward

- Establish a **systematic and updated data collection** process on the population and socio-economic status of sub-groups within SCs, STs, and OBCs.
 - Conduct a thorough caste census to provide a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-making.
- There is a need to balance the sub-categorisation within castes with the broader goals of social justice and national integration, and to ensure that the **sub-categorisation does not violate the constitutional principles of equality** and non-discrimination.
- Develop communication strategies to articulate the rationale behind sub-categorisation, emphasizing its role in **promoting social justice and equitable distribution of benefits**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Q. Consider the following organizations/bodies in India: (2023)

1. The National Commission for Backward Classes
2. The National Human Rights Commission
3. The National Law Commission
4. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

How many of the above constitutional bodies?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Ans: (a)

