



Telangana's Muslim Reservation Bill

Why in news?

\n\n

The recent bill passed by the TRS government in Telangana that increased the quota for OBC (Pasmanda) Muslims and STs needs critical evaluation.

\n\n

What is the background of the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Indian Muslims are differentiated into various caste groups.

\n

- Historically, **the high caste Ashrafs**, once the ruling class, conceived Muslims as a “nation” and mobilised for self-determination through the Muslim League.

\n

- The 1946 elections, dubbed as the consensus on Pakistan, in which the Muslim League won handsomely, was marked by a restricted electorate and nearly 85% of the population was excluded.

\n

- Mostly, propertied and educated Muslims, the high caste ashraf, voted for Pakistan, the vote of subordinated Muslim caste groups wasn't even put to test.

\n

- In fact, lower caste Muslim organisations like the **Momin Conference** were actively contesting the two-nation theory.

\n

- It is due to the tragedy of the Partition that Muslims lost reservations in independent India that they enjoyed pre-1947.

\n

- Experience of being a ruling class and the fact of being higher caste and adequate representation in public employment made ashrafs not to qualify as

a socially backward class entitled to reservations under **articles 16 (4) and 15 (4) of the Constitution.**

\n

- This position is affirmed by the Mandal (Indra Sawney) judgment (1992) and also by various government reports including the Sachar Committee Report (2006).

\n

- But ideologues of the **Pasmanda movement** — a social movement of backward, Dalit and Adivasi Muslims consistently challenged reservations for Muslims and preferred that similarly placed lower caste groups across religious communities be clubbed together.

\n

- For instance, in Bihar, the OBC list is subdivided into Annexure I (Most Backward Classes) and Annexure II (Backward Classes) with most subordinated caste Muslims recognised in the MBC category with other Hindu castes.

\n

- The Bihar formula works well, without triggering communal polarisation.

\n

\n\n

Why Telangana bill is a cause for concern?

\n\n

\n

- In Telangana, while OBC-A and OBC-B included Muslim scavengers (mehtars) and cotton carders (dudekula) with other Hindu backward castes, **the OBC-E exclusively recognised 14 Muslim caste groups.**

\n

- In OBC-E, except for the ambiguity of sheikhs, most forward ashraf castes were appropriately excluded.

\n

- What the recent bill has done is to increase the OBC-E quota from 4% to 12% and the ST quota from 6% to 10%, thereby taking **the quantum of reservations in the state to 62%.**

\n

- The revised quota will be struck down since it exceeds the Supreme Court ceiling of 50% for reservations.

\n

- **The bill can also not be placed within the Ninth Schedule** of the Constitution due to an unfavourable government at the Centre.

\n

- Also, the OBC-E group includes around a 6% Muslim population segment.

\n

- In that case the existing 4% quota for OBC-E was reasonable.
\n
- Many experts fear that the bill will again feed into the hegemonic secular-communal or majority-minority duopolies.
\n
- This situation could have been avoided had the Andhra Pradesh government followed the Bihar formula in 2004, when it first introduced the OBC-E category exclusively for Muslim caste groups.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative