



Vokkaligas, Lingayats share in Reservation

Prelims: Socio-cultural Reform Movements, Vokkaligas, Lingayats, OBC.

Mains: Vokkaligas and Lingayats Communities.

Why in News?

Recently, Karnataka has categorized the two dominant communities, **Vokkaligas and Lingayats**, as **“moderately backward”** from the **“backward”** category in a move that could increase their share in reservation for [Other Backward Classes \(OBC\)](#).

What are the Key Points of the Move?

- Karnataka currently has **32% quota for OBC, and 17% and 7% quota for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, respectively, taking the **total to 56%**.
- The **Panchamasali sub-sect of Veerashaiva Lingayats** has demanded inclusion in the 2A category which has 15% quota from their current 3B category which has 5% quota.
- The Cabinet’s decision is based on the **recommendations of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes**.
- The Vokkaliga community, which is currently in the 3A category, will be moved to a **newly-created 2C category with 4% reservation**. And the Lingayat community, which is in the 3B category, will now be in **a new 2D category with 5% reservation**.
- The Cabinet decision ensures that there is no sub-categorisation of the Lingayat community.
- The Lingayats are a **dominant community who make up nearly 17% of Karnataka’s six crore population**- followed by Vokkaligas. The new categories will not affect the existing reservation provided to other communities.
- The reservation will be applicable only in education and jobs, and “not political reservation.

Who are Lingayats?

- **About:**
 - The term **Lingayat denotes a person who wears a personal linga, an iconic form of god Shiva**, on the body which is **received during the initiation ceremony**.
 - Lingayats are the followers of the **12th-century social reformer-philosopher poet, Basaveshwara**.
 - Basaveshwara was **against the caste system and Vedic rituals**.
 - The Lingayats are **strict monotheists**. They enjoy the worship of only one God, **namely, Linga (Shiva)**.
 - Lingayats had been classified as a **Hindu subcaste called “Veerashaiva Lingayats”** and they are considered to be Shaivites.
- **Separate Religion for Lingayats:**
 - Lingayats had distanced themselves **from Hindu Veerashaivas because the latter followed the Vedas** and supported the caste system, to which Basaveshwara was against.

- Veerashaivas are the **followers of the five peethas (religious centers)**, called Pancha Peethas. These peethas are set up on similar lines to the four peethas set up by Adi Shankara.

Who are Vokkaligas?

- It is even believed that the **Rashtrakutas and Western Gangas were of Vokkaliga origin.**
- Vokkaliga is a category defined in **terms of occupation, and to that extent could be an ethnic category; these are largely farmers by origin.**
- The Vokkaliga caste originates in the Indian state of Karnataka. In the former princely state of Mysore, the Vokkaligas were the largest community.
- As a community of warriors and cultivators, they have historically wielded **tremendous demographic, political, and economic dominance in Old Mysore.**

How has the Status of OBC Reservation Emerged Over Time?

- The **Kalelkar Commission, set up in 1953**, was the **first to identify backward classes other than the [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#)** and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at the national level.
- The **Mandal Commission Report, 1980** estimated the **OBC population at 52% and classified 1,257 communities** as backward.
 - It recommended increasing the existing quotas, which were only for SC/ST, from 22.5% to 49.5% to include the OBCs.
- **The central government reserved 27%** of seats in union civil posts and services for OBCs [Article 16(4)]. The quotas were subsequently enforced in central government educational institutions [Article 15 (4)].
 - In 2008, the **Supreme Court** directed the central government to **exclude the creamy layer (advanced sections) among the OBCs.**
- The **102nd Constitution Amendment Act, 2018** provided constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), which was previously a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Do government's schemes for up-lifting vulnerable and backward communities by protecting required social resources for them, lead to their exclusion in establishing businesses in urban economies? **(2014)**

Q. Discuss the role of the National Commission for Backward Classes in the wake of its transformation from a statutory body to a constitutional body. **(2022)**

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