



Telangana First to Implement SC Sub-Categorisation

For Prelims: [Scheduled Castes](#), [Scheduled Tribes](#), [President](#), [Sub-categorization](#)

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

[Source:TH](#)

Why in News?

Telangana notified the implementation of the **Telangana Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act, 2025**, becoming the first state in India to operationalise [sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#).

- This follows the 2024 [Supreme Court](#) judgment in the case [State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh](#), which upheld the constitutionality of sub-classifying SCs and [Scheduled Tribes \(STs\)](#).

What is Sub-Categorisation Within Castes?

Click here to Read: [Sub-Categorisation Within Castes](#)

What is the Telangana Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act, 2025?

- **Purpose:** The Act restructures SC reservations in Telangana by sub-categorizing based on socio-economic and educational backwardness.
 - The **Shamim Akhtar Commission** examined over 8,600 representations from SC communities, considering factors like **population, literacy, employment, education access, financial aid, and political participation**.
- **Categorisation Details:** The SCs in Telangana are categorised into three groups, with this sub-categorisation falling within the existing 15% SC reservation quota in the state.

Group	No. of Sub-Castes	% of SC Population	Reservation (%)	Category Description
Group I	15	3.288%	1%	Most socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged.
Group II	18	62.748%	9%	Moderately benefitted SC communities.
Group III	26	33.963%	5%	Significantly

				benefitted SC communities.
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Note: Reservation for SCs in Telangana is based on the **2011 Census**, but with the SC population now at **17.5%**, the government plans to consider increasing it once the next Census data is available

What are the Constitutional and Legal Aspects of SC Sub-Categorisation?

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 14:** Permits reasonable classification to achieve substantive equality. Sub-classification is permissible if based on **intelligible differentia** (a clear and understandable basis for distinguishing one group from another) and a **rational nexus** (a logical connection between the classification and the goal it aims to achieve).
 - **Article 15(4) and 15(5):** Empower the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, including SCs and STs, in education and institutions.
 - **Article 16(4):** Permits reservation in **public employment** for any backward class of citizens that is not adequately represented in services.
 - **Article 341(1):** Provides for the identification of SC by the **President** in consultation with the **Governor**.
 - **Article 341(2):** Parliament may by law include or exclude any caste, race, or tribe from the list of SCs by passing a law.
- **Key Judicial Interpretations:**
 - **E.V. Chinnaiah v. State of Andhra Pradesh (2004):** Supreme Court ruled that the SCs form a **homogeneous class** and any **sub-classification** within SCs would amount to **tinkering with the Presidential List** under Article 341.
 - As only Parliament can amend the list, the Court declared sub-classification by states as **unconstitutional**.
 - **State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh (2024):** A seven-judge Constitution bench overruled **Chinnaiah verdict** and has upheld that **states can sub-classify SCs and STs within the reservation quota based on varying levels of backwardness**, using empirical data and historical evidence.
 - Such sub-classification must avoid political motives and is subject to judicial review.

What are the Arguments For and Against Sub-Categorisation?

Aspect	Arguments For Sub-Categorisation	Arguments Against Sub-Categorisation
Targeted Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps ensure the most disadvantaged among SCs/STs (who haven't benefited from reservations yet) receive due support. ▪ Nearly over a decade after the Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011, a significant portion of its data remains unreleased. The Telangana sub-categorisation, based on empirical data, effectively addresses this gap and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sub-Categorisation overlooks that all SCs face the stigma of untouchability, regardless of economic progress. ▪ It may become a tool for political appeasement and deepen caste divisions rather than promote equity.

	<p>ensures a fairer distribution of reservations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents "creamy layer" groups within SCs/STs from monopolising benefits meant for the most backward sections. 	
Addressing Internal Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises the heterogeneity within SCs/STs and addresses dominance of certain sub-groups (e.g., Mahars, Meenas). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks further fragmenting already marginalised communities and weakening their collective political voice.
Constitutional Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Constitution allows special measures for upliftment; sub-categorisation can be one such tool if backed by data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks diluting the broader social justice agenda by focusing on internal divides rather than dismantling caste/class hierarchies at large.

Conclusion

Sub-categorisation aims to address deep-rooted inequalities by focusing on the most disadvantaged, but it risks fragmenting the unity that has historically strengthened **Dalit movements**. Genuine social justice transcends policy frameworks, tackling the root of systemic oppression. The challenge lies in ensuring these **reforms uplift the truly marginalized without weakening the collective power** needed to confront the persistent caste hierarchy.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the significance of sub-categorisation of SCs. How does this move align with the principles of social justice in India?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Prelims

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)

Mains:

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs). **(2017)**

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