

# UNHEARD VOICES®

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**No SC/ST Protection To Converts  
Under Current Framework**



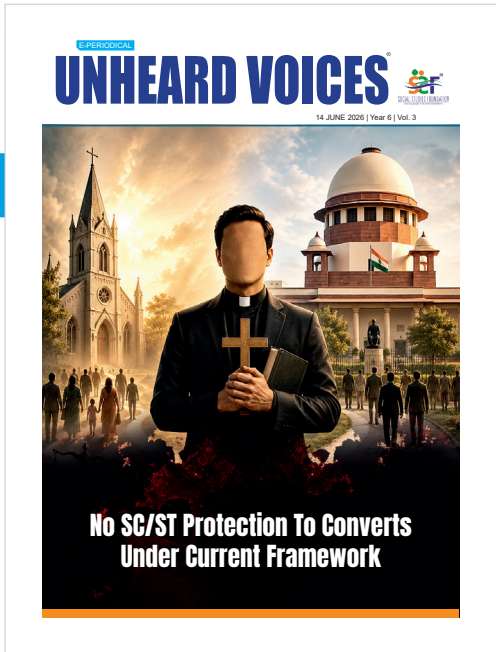
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## EDITORIAL

# Modi @ 12: Challenges Lie In Social Transformation

As Narendra Modi completes twelve consecutive years as Prime Minister and becomes the longest-serving Prime Minister in India's history, the occasion offers an opportunity not merely to celebrate a political milestone but also to reflect on the larger transformation that has unfolded during his tenure. Few leaders in independent India have left such a deep imprint on the country's political discourse, governance framework, and national psyche.

The Modi years have been marked by significant changes across economic, political, and social spheres. Large-scale infrastructure development, expansion of welfare delivery systems, digitisation of governance, financial inclusion initiatives, and efforts to position India as a major global player have become defining features of this period. Equally important has been the shift in the ideological direction of public policy and political debate. Questions of civilisational identity, cultural confidence, and national self-esteem have acquired a central place in public discourse.

The political consequences of these changes are increasingly visible. Several political observers argue that traditional electoral equations are undergoing a gradual transformation. While caste continues to remain an important factor in Indian politics, its influence appears less dominant than it was in previous decades. The emergence of a new beneficiary class, created through welfare schemes and direct benefit transfers, is often cited as one of the reasons behind this shift.

Programmes related to housing, sanitation, cooking gas connections, healthcare, and

financial inclusion have reached millions of households. The emphasis on efficient implementation and direct delivery has strengthened the relationship between the state and the citizen. For many beneficiaries, governance is no longer an abstract concept but a visible reality that affects daily life. This has altered political behaviour in important ways.

While these achievements deserve recognition, the next phase of India's journey requires equal attention to the social sector. As Prime Minister Modi frequently speaks about building a developed India by 2047, the centenary year of Independence, the vision cannot remain confined to economic growth, infrastructure expansion, or geopolitical influence alone. Sustainable national progress must also be measured by the quality of social justice, opportunity, and human dignity available to every citizen.

India's social landscape continues to present complex challenges. Despite decades of development, many deprived and marginalised communities continue to face barriers that limit their access to education, employment, and social mobility. Economic growth undoubtedly creates opportunities, but growth by itself cannot eliminate every form of social disadvantage. Policy interventions must therefore remain sensitive to the realities faced by vulnerable sections of society.

One area that may require a fresh policy review is the scholarship ecosystem. Educational support has played a crucial role in helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds

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pursue higher studies and improve their life prospects. However, changing educational patterns, technological advancements, and emerging skill requirements call for a reassessment of existing frameworks. "Not Found Suitable (NFS) is another major problem, which is alienating deprived communities from the system, particularly from the government. New approaches and targeted reforms may be necessary to ensure that support mechanisms remain relevant and effective.

Similarly, issues surrounding the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act continue to generate debate and concern. The objective of protecting vulnerable communities from discrimination and violence remains unquestionable. At the same time, concerns regarding implementation, misuse allegations, legal complexities, and social tensions require thoughtful attention. A mature democracy must constantly evaluate how laws are functioning on the ground while preserving their original purpose of justice and protection.

Another emerging challenge that deserves immediate attention is the growing influence of artificial intelligence and automation. The technological revolution promises enormous benefits in productivity, governance, healthcare, and education. However, it also raises concerns regarding employment, skill displacement, and widening inequalities. These concerns are particularly relevant for economically and socially disadvantaged communities that may not possess the

resources required to adapt quickly to technological change.

The transition towards an AI-driven economy must therefore be accompanied by strong investments in skill development, digital literacy, and social protection mechanisms. If technology becomes a tool that benefits only a limited segment of society, existing disparities could deepen. On the other hand, if managed carefully, technology can become a powerful instrument of social empowerment and inclusion.

The coming years may well determine how history assesses Narendra Modi's long tenure. His government has already succeeded in reshaping many aspects of governance and politics. The challenge now is to ensure that the benefits of transformation reach every section of society in a meaningful manner.

Economic strength and political stability are essential pillars of national development, but true progress acquires lasting legitimacy only when it carries a human face. The aspirations of deprived communities, the pursuit of social harmony, the expansion of educational opportunities, and the protection of dignity and justice must become central components of the India@2047 vision.

If the next phase of governance succeeds in combining economic ambition with deeper social reform, it will not merely create a stronger India. It will create a more inclusive and humane India—one where development is measured not only by growth statistics but also by the lives it transforms.

## Appeal for financial assistance

**S**ocial Studies Foundation (SSF) is working with the prime objective of conducting social studies and research of the society in a multi-disciplinary fashion. SSF focus, however, is on those people, who have been facing discrimination and are deprived of benefits of the development and democratic process. SSF logo, thus says, "Knowledge for Empowerment".

"UNHEARD VOICES" is a small step in this direction. It provides a platform to all those

people, who have to be listened to by the Indian citizens to make this country united and integral. We will raise the voice of these people fearlessly. Social Studies Foundation has currently a small set-up to carry out its objectives. We, however, need financial support from our well-wishers, who agree with our objectives. We appeal to the readers and well-wishers to donate generously to the foundation.

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## SC says No Protection to Converted Under SC/ST Framework


Ipshita



Despite the settled legal position, the subject remains a matter of public and academic discussion. Some scholars argue that social discrimination based on caste may continue even after conversion and that legal safeguards should reflect this social reality. Others contend that the constitutional framework intentionally links Scheduled Caste recognition with specific religious traditions because the historical practice of untouchability developed within those social structures.

India's constitutional framework for reservation and protective legislation is founded upon the principles of social justice and substantive equality. The system of affirmative action was designed to remedy centuries of discrimination, exclusion, and untouchability suffered by certain communities within the Indian social structure. However, a recurring constitutional question has been whether a person born into a Scheduled Caste (SC) community continues to enjoy these benefits after converting to another religion.

The Supreme Court, in *Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh & Others* (2026 INSC 283), reaffirmed the settled legal position that a person who has converted to Christianity and openly professes that faith cannot claim Scheduled Caste status or invoke the protections available under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The judgment is not an isolated pronouncement but is rooted in constitutional provisions, the Constituent Assembly Debates, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, and a long line of judicial precedents. This article examines the constitutional philosophy behind the decision and the legal principles



governing the relationship between religious conversion and Scheduled Caste status.

### **Constitutional Framework**

The Constitution of India guarantees equality before the law under Article 14 and prohibits discrimination under Articles 15 and 16. At the same time, Articles 15(4) and 16(4) permit the State to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 17 abolishes untouchability, while Article 46 directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Most importantly, Article 341 empowers the President of India to specify which castes shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes for the purposes of the Constitution. Parliament alone has the authority to modify this list. Consequently, Scheduled Caste status is not merely a matter of ancestry but a constitutional classification governed by law.

### **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly Debates**

The Constituent Assembly Debates provide valuable insight into the rationale behind caste-based safeguards. During the debates held on April 4, 1949, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized that the disabilities suffered by Scheduled Castes originated from the caste hierarchy and the practice of untouchability embedded in the traditional Hindu social order. The constitutional safeguards were therefore conceived as remedial measures to address those historical injustices.

The underlying reasoning was that the system of caste discrimination was linked to a particular social and religious framework. If an individual voluntarily embraced a religion that did not legally recognize the caste system, the constitutional basis for claiming those specific safeguards became a matter of legal reconsideration. This understanding significantly influenced the later development of the constitutional and statutory framework governing Scheduled Caste status.

### **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950**

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, popularly known as the Presidential Order, is the principal legal instrument governing Scheduled Caste recognition. Clause 3 of the Order originally provided that no person professing a religion different from Hinduism could be deemed a member of a Scheduled Caste. Parliament subsequently extended this benefit to Sikhs through the 1956 amendment

and to Buddhists through the 1990 amendment. However, persons professing Christianity or Islam were not included within the scope of the Order. As a result, the law presently recognizes Scheduled Caste status only for persons professing Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism. A person, who converts to Christianity or Islam falls outside the constitutional definition and consequently loses the statutory benefits attached to that status.

### **Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh**

The Supreme Court's decision in *Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh & Others* (Criminal Appeal No. 1580 of 2026, decided on 24 March 2026) has become an important role reaffirmation of this constitutional principle. The appellant was born into the Madiga community, a recognized Scheduled Caste, but had converted to Christianity and had been serving as a Christian pastor for more than a decade. He alleged that he had been assaulted and subjected to caste-based abuse

The Supreme Court's judgment in *Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh* is a reaffirmation of established constitutional principles governing Scheduled Caste recognition. The decision rests upon Article 341 of the Constitution, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, the Constituent Assembly Debates, and decades of judicial precedent.

and sought prosecution of the accused under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court quashed the criminal proceedings, holding that a person openly professing Christianity and functioning as a pastor could not claim protection under the SC/ST Act. The Supreme Court upheld the High Court's decision. The Court observed that Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 clearly limits Scheduled Caste recognition to persons professing Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism. Since the appellant had voluntarily embraced Christianity and had continuously professed that faith, he was not entitled to claim Scheduled Caste status or the statutory protections flowing from it. The Court further



observed that constitutional benefits and statutory protections cannot be extended beyond the categories recognized under Article 341 and the Presidential Order.

### **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Its Applicability**

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was enacted to prevent atrocities, humiliation, and violence directed against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Act does not create an independent category of beneficiaries. Instead, its operation depends upon the constitutional recognition of a person's Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe status.

Therefore, if an individual is not recognized as a Scheduled Caste under Article 341 and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, that individual ordinarily cannot invoke the special protections provided under the Act. The Supreme Court in *Chinthada Anand* reaffirmed that reservation benefits and statutory safeguards are inseparable from constitutional recognition.

#### **Judicial Precedents**

The decision in *Chinthada Anand* is consistent with earlier judicial pronouncements. In *Soosai v Union of India* (1985), the Supreme Court examined the constitutional validity of excluding Christian converts from Scheduled Caste benefits and upheld the existing legal

framework. Similarly, in *Valsamma Paul v. Cochin University* (1996), the Court reiterated that affirmative action benefits are intended to remedy historical social disadvantages and cannot automatically be acquired or retained outside the constitutional scheme.

In *K.P. Manu v. Chairman, Scrutiny Committee for Verification of Community Certificate* (2015), the Supreme Court held that a person who reconverts to a religion recognized under the Presidential Order may, subject to proof of reconversion and acceptance by the original community, seek restoration of Scheduled Caste status. These decisions demonstrate the judiciary's consistent view that Scheduled Caste status is governed by constitutional provisions rather than by individual preference alone.

#### **Freedom of Religion and Reservation: A Constitutional Balance**

The issue also involves balancing two important constitutional values. Article 25 guarantees every citizen the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion. Religious conversion is therefore protected as an aspect of personal liberty. At the same time, reservations and special protections are not general welfare measures but targeted constitutional

remedies for historically recognized social disabilities. Their availability is determined by the constitutional framework established under Article 341. The Supreme Court's approach seeks to preserve both principles by protecting the individual's freedom to choose a religion while maintaining the integrity of the constitutional scheme governing affirmative action.

#### **The Continuing Debate**

Despite the settled legal position, the subject remains a matter of public and academic discussion. Some scholars argue that social discrimination based on caste may continue even after conversion and that legal safeguards should reflect this social reality. Others contend that the constitutional framework intentionally links Scheduled Caste recognition with specific religious traditions because the historical practice of untouchability developed within those social structures. Various commissions and committees have examined this issue over the years. Nevertheless, the judiciary has consistently maintained that any expansion of Scheduled Caste status must come through legislative or constitutional amendment and not through judicial interpretation.

The Supreme Court's judgment in *Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh* is a reaffirmation of established constitutional principles governing Scheduled Caste recognition. The decision rests upon Article 341 of the Constitution, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, the Constituent Assembly Debates, and decades of judicial precedent. It clarifies that a person who converts to Christianity or Islam and openly professes that faith ceases to enjoy the constitutional status of a Scheduled Caste and therefore cannot claim reservation benefits or statutory protections under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The judgment also highlights the distinction between the fundamental right to religious freedom and the constitutional scheme of affirmative action. While every individual is free to adopt a religion of choice, the entitlement to caste-based reservations and statutory safeguards is governed by the legal framework established by the Constitution and Parliament.

Until the constitutional or legislative position is altered, the law remains that Scheduled Caste status, along with the reservations and protections attached to it, is available only to those who satisfy the requirements laid down under the Constitution and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.

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## Reservation for Dalit Converts: A Debate Reaching Its Crucial Stage

The issue of reservation for Dalits who have converted to Islam or Christianity has once again taken centre stage in India's national discourse. What was once a subdued demand having, in recent years, become increasingly vocal and assertive, drawing attention from policymakers, academics, and social activists alike. The matter is currently pending before the Supreme Court, where the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL) has filed a petition seeking Scheduled Caste (SC) status for Dalit converts. In response, the Union government has filed an affidavit opposing the extension of reservation benefits to former Dalits who now belong to either Islam or Christianity.

To examine this contentious issue, the government set up a commission in October 2022 under the leadership of former Chief Justice of India, K.G. Balakrishnan. The commission was tasked with studying the sociological, political, economic, constitutional, and national integration aspects of granting SC status to Dalit converts. After nearly four years of deliberation, the commission is now preparing to submit its report very soon, a development that could significantly influence the Supreme Court's final decision and the future of reservation policies in India. The Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but it also prohibits conversion through fraud, force, inducement, or allurement. Poverty, lack of education, and social vulnerability have historically been cited as reasons for conversion. Yet, conversion to Abrahamic religions—Islam and Christianity—has often been viewed with suspicion, unlike conversion to Buddhism or Sikhism, which are considered religions of Indian soil.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's own choice of Buddhism in 1956 is frequently invoked in this debate. Dr. Ambedkar, despite invitations from leaders of Islam and Christianity, chose Buddhism because he believed conversion to Abrahamic religions would "denationalize" the Depressed Classes. He feared that mass conversion to Islam would alter demographic balances and raise concerns of domination, while conversion to Christianity could strengthen foreign influence in India.

Dr. Ambedkar's reasoning was rooted in both philosophical differences and concerns about national integration.

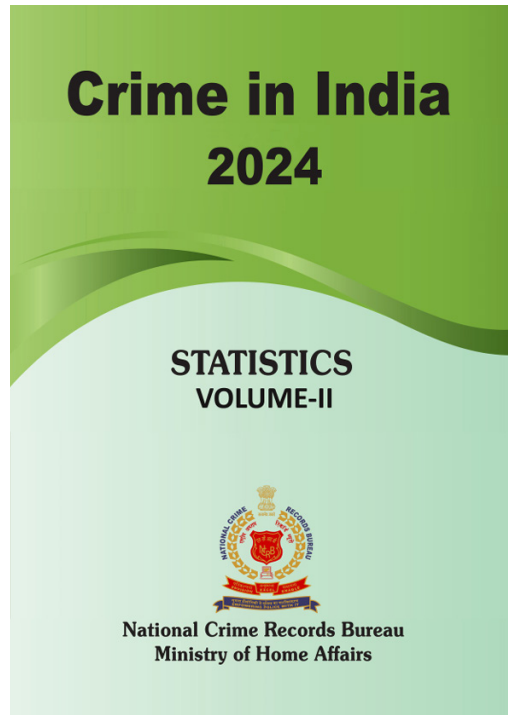
Opponents of extending SC status to Dalit converts argue that reservation has no place in the Constitution for those who leave Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism. They contend that discrimination within Islam or Christianity cannot be attributed to Hindus, and therefore, the logic of continuing caste-based benefits after conversion is flawed. Furthermore, they warn that granting SC status to converts could dilute the benefits meant for genuine Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, creating new tensions and disturbing social equilibrium.

On the other hand, proponents of the demand argue that caste stigma does not vanish with conversion. Dalit Christians and Muslims often continue to face social exclusion, economic marginalization, and discrimination in subtle forms. Denying them SC status, they claim, perpetuates inequality and undermines the constitutional promise of justice.

As the Balakrishnan Commission prepares to submit its report, the nation awaits clarity on one of the most complex questions of social justice in modern India. The findings will not only influence judicial and legislative decisions but also test India's ability to balance religious freedom with the fight against caste oppression. Whether the recommendations favor inclusion or uphold the current framework, the outcome will have far-reaching consequences for national unity, constitutional philosophy, and the lived realities of millions of Dalit converts.

The debate underscores a deeper truth: caste and reservation remain deeply political issues, often used by parties to advance narrow agendas. Unless political actors collectively move beyond caste as an electoral card, the controversy is unlikely to fade. Yet, with the commission's report due soon, India stands at a crossroads—between preserving the existing framework and reimagining it to address persistent inequalities across faiths.

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## Analysis of NCRB data: Atrocities Against SCs & STs

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) annually publishes the crime report, which constitutes one of the most authoritative repositories of official crime statistics in the country. Beyond its utility as a measure of law and order, this dataset offers a diagnostic window into the deeper structural fault lines of Indian society, encompassing gender-based violence, crimes against children, and, crucially, atrocities against historically marginalised communities.

Tanishka



Crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) occupy a unique analytical category within this framework. Unlike common criminal offences, these crimes are frequently not spontaneous acts of individual aggression but rather institutionalised expressions of social hierarchy, rooted in centuries of casteism, land dispossession, ritual exclusion, and the systematic denial of political agency. Their study, therefore, is as much an exercise in social cartography as in criminology.

The NCRB's Crime in India, 2024 report records a decline in registered crimes against both communities- 3.6 percent for SCs and 23.1 percent for STs compared to 2023. On first reading, this might appear reassuring. However, single-year comparisons, particularly when they follow years of consistently escalating numbers, can be profoundly misleading. Context, trajectory, and mechanism all matter deeply when interpreting crime data involving marginalised groups.



This article undertakes a five-year longitudinal analysis of NCRB data (2020–2024), examines state-level concentration patterns, interrogates the probable explanations for the 2024 decline, and situates the findings within a broader sociological and policy framework. The aim is not merely to describe numerical trends but to critically interrogate what those numbers tell us, and, equally importantly, what they conceal.

## 2. Five-Year Trend Analysis

### 2.1 Overview of Data (2020–2024)

The table below presents the annual registered cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from 2020 to 2024, along with year-on-year percentage changes:

Year	SC Cases	SC % Change	ST Cases	ST % Change
2020	50,291	+9.4%	8,272	+9.3%
2021	50,900	+1.2%	8,802	+6.4%
2022	57,582	+13.1%	10,064	+14.3%
2023	57,789	+0.4%	12,960	+28.8%
2024	55,698	-3.6%	9,966	-23.1%

Table 1: Crimes Against SCs and STs, India (2020–2024) | Source: NCRB, Crime in India Reports

### 2.2 Crimes Against Scheduled Castes

The five-year trajectory for Scheduled Castes reveals a pattern of sustained increase followed by a recent, but modest, correction. Between 2020 and 2023, registered cases rose from 50,291 to 57,789, an increase of approximately 14.9 percent. The single most significant annual jump occurred in 2022, when cases increased by 13.1 percent, the largest year-on-year rise in the period under review.

The near-plateau in 2023 (+0.4%) suggested a possible stabilisation, but not an actual reduction. The 2024 figure of 55,698 represents a decline of 3.6 percent, the first downward movement in five years. While this is noteworthy, it must be contextualised: the 2024 figure remains approximately 10.8 percent higher than the 2020 baseline. Any narrative of meaningful improvement must account for this structural elevation in crime levels.

Furthermore, the composition of crimes registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act deserves attention. Atrocities range from physical violence, sexual assault, and murder to social boycotts, denial of water access, and forced displacement. A numerical decline does not tell us whether less grievous or more grievous offences are driving that change.

### 2.3 Crimes Against Scheduled Tribes

The trend for Scheduled Tribes is more dramatic and analytically striking. Cases rose from 8,272 in 2020 to 12,960 in 2023, a cumulative increase of approximately 56.7 percent over three years. This trajectory is far steeper than that observed for SCs and warrants serious sociological attention.

Particularly significant is the 28.8 percent surge recorded in 2023 alone. This sharp increase corresponds with a period of intensified contestation over forest and land rights following amendments to forest governance frameworks, expanded mining and infrastructure projects in tribal belts, and reported increases in displacement from scheduled areas. To treat this spike as a statistical anomaly without attending to its material causes would be analytically irresponsible.

The 23.1 percent decline in 2024 is the largest year-on-year reduction in the five-year dataset. Yet even with this correction, registered ST atrocities in 2024 (9,966 cases) remain 20.5 percent higher than in 2020. The dramatic swing, from a near 29 percent increase in

Dr B.R. Ambedkar’s foundational sociological insight that caste is not merely a division of labour but a division of labourers, organised by graded inequality and enforced by social stigma, remains the essential starting point for any analysis of caste violence. The NCRB data captures only those moments when this system’s enforcement becomes violent enough to enter the legal record.

2023 to a 23- percent decrease in 2024, raises important questions about the reliability and consistency of registration practices across states, which will be discussed further below.

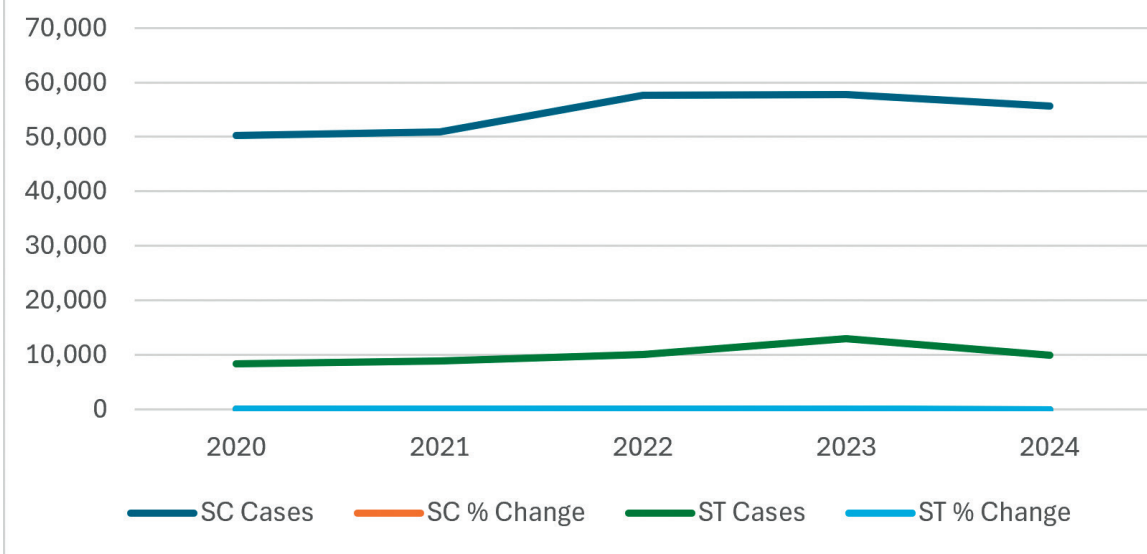
### 3. State-Wise Analysis: Where Are Atrocities Concentrated?

National-level data invariably obscures significant regional variation. The NCRB’s state-wise breakdowns reveal that atrocities against SCs and STs are disproportionately concentrated in a small number of states, and this concentration has been remarkably consistent over the five- year period.

For Scheduled Castes, Uttar Pradesh,



## Cases Crime/Atrocities against Scheduled Caste(s) - 2020-2024



Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra collectively account for the majority of registered cases. For Scheduled Tribes, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Maharashtra are consistently among the highest-reporting states.

#### 4. Why Did Cases Decline in 2024?

The 2024 decline demands critical interrogation. Four possible explanations merit consideration, and the empirical reality is likely a combination of all four.

##### A. Genuine Reduction in Victimization

It is possible that targeted policy interventions have begun to yield results. Strengthened enforcement of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, expanded legal aid programmes, livelihood schemes reducing economic dependence on dominant-caste employers, and increased awareness campaigns could plausibly have contributed to a reduction in incidents.

Similarly, greater political representation of SC and ST communities in local governance structures may have altered power dynamics in some regions. This explanation is hopeful, and not implausible, but it must be treated as a hypothesis requiring corroboration from ground-level research, not as a conclusion to be read directly from the crime figures.

##### B. Under-Reporting and Structural Barriers to Justice

This is arguably the most significant interpretive concern. The sociology of reporting behaviour in caste-based atrocity cases is well-established: victims face layered deterrents including fear of retaliation from socially and economically dominant accused, social pressure from community members and panchayat structures to settle disputes informally, economic vulnerability arising from labour or tenancy relations with the accused or the accused's community, and documented instances of police discouraging or delaying registration of complaints.

##### C. Administrative and Institutional Factors

Crime statistics are not merely recordings of social reality; they are administrative products. Changes in how cases are classified, whether complaints under the Atrocities Act are registered as such or under other provisions of the Indian Penal Code/Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, shifts in police leadership and institutional priorities, delays in data entry, and variations in how different states report to the NCRB can all produce year-on-year fluctuations that have no correspondence to actual changes in victimisation.

#### 5. Sociological Interpretation: Looking Beyond Crime Statistics

From a sociological standpoint, caste-based atrocities cannot be adequately understood through crime statistics alone. Numbers are



representations of reported events; they are not transparent windows onto social reality. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is instructive here. Symbolic violence refers to forms of domination that are so deeply internalised and normalised that they are often not recognised as violence at all, neither by the perpetrator nor by the victim. Much of everyday caste discrimination, the refusal to share a meal, the enforcement of spatial segregation, the withholding of a dignified form of address, the silencing of political voice, operates precisely through this invisible register. Such experiences never appear in NCRB data, yet they constitute the structural context within which more visible physical atrocities occur.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar's foundational sociological insight that caste is not merely a division of labour but a division of labourers, organised by graded inequality and enforced by social stigma, remains the essential starting point for any analysis of caste violence. The NCRB data captures only those moments when this system's enforcement becomes violent enough to enter the legal record.

Moreover, theories of structural conflict in the tradition of Ralf Dahrendorf and more recent post-colonial scholars suggest that atrocities often intensify precisely when marginalised groups begin to assert their rights. Upward mobility, access to education, assertion of land rights, or participation in electoral politics by SC and ST communities can provoke violent backlash from groups whose social privilege is threatened. Rising crime numbers may therefore, paradoxically, indicate social progress as much as social failure.

## 6. Policy Recommendations

**The five-year analysis yields a clear conclusion:** legislative frameworks, while necessary, are insufficient on their own. The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act represents a robust legal commitment, but its implementation remains deeply uneven. The following policy directions are indicated by the evidence:

- **Strengthen complaint registration infrastructure:** Independent complaint receipt mechanisms, accessible to victims without passing through the same police station where social pressure may be applied, are essential to addressing under-reporting.

- **Shift evaluative focus to conviction rates and case disposal:** The number of registered cases is a weak indicator of systemic performance. Conviction rates under the Atrocities Act, average time to trial, and rates of acquittal due to procedural failures are far

more meaningful metrics for assessing the functioning of the justice system.

- **Strengthen victim and witness protection:** Fear of retaliation is among the most significant barriers to reporting. Operationalising the victim protection provisions of the Atrocities Act in a systematic way, including relocation support, compensation, and legal accompaniment, is essential.

- **Invest in regular independent socio-legal surveys:** NCRB data should be supplemented by independently conducted prevalence surveys in high-concentration districts to estimate the dark figure of unreported crimes.

The Crime in India 2024 report presents a decline in registered atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 3.6 percent and 23.1 percent respectively, that is, on its face, encouraging. A five-year analysis, however, demands a more cautious and critical reading. Both SC and ST atrocity figures in 2024 remain substantially above 2020 levels. The period 2020–2023 witnessed cumulative increases of approximately 15 percent for SCs and nearly 57 percent for STs, increases that cannot be attributed to a single cause and are unlikely to have been reversed by a single year's reduction. The 2024 decline, while real in statistical terms, may reflect a combination of genuine improvements, changes in reporting behaviour, administrative factors, and cyclical normalisation.

The central methodological lesson is that crime statistics are social artefacts. They record what is reported and registered; they do not transparently represent what has occurred. For communities that have historically faced institutional indifference, active discouragement of complaint registration, and social reprisals for seeking legal redress, the gap between recorded and actual victimisation is likely to be significant and structurally reproduced. Sustainable and meaningful progress against caste-based violence requires not only stronger enforcement of existing law but a deeper social transformation that dismantles the material conditions, land inequality, economic dependence, educational exclusion, that reproduce caste hierarchy across generations. Only when crime statistics are accompanied by improving indicators of social equity, political inclusion, and access to justice can they be interpreted, with confidence, as genuine markers of progress toward a more equal society.

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# Remembering Jyotiba Phule



**One of India's greatest social reformer Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, his vision of equality, education, and justice transformed the nation's conscience. Two centuries later, Phule's revolutionary ideas continue to inspire movements against caste, gender, and economic oppression, reminding us that his mission remains unfinished.**

## Diksha


The year 2027 will be a significant milestone as we celebrate the bicentenary of Jyotirao Phule, one of India's most remarkable social reformers and thinkers. Even after two centuries, his great ideas continue to resonate with those, who strive for equality and justice. Mahatma Phule dedicated his life fighting caste discrimination, social inequality, and the oppression faced by women and many other marginalized communities. In a time when society was sharply divided by caste and gender; he spoke out for those who were not given respect, education, and even basic human rights.

Today, as India is still struggling with issues like caste discrimination, unequal access to education, and violence against women, Phule's work and words remains extremely relevant.

His bicentenary serves not just as a moment to honour his achievements but also as a chance to explore his revolutionary ideas and keep the fight for social justice alive.

Born on April 11, 1827, in Pune, Maharashtra, Jyotiba Phule came from a Mali family, which was considered a lower caste in the severe social hierarchy of his time. Back then, Indian society was governed by strict caste norms, where upper castes enjoyed privileges while lower castes faced unfair treatment and were often denied opportunities. Marginalized communities were barred from schools, temples, and public spaces, expected to remain poor, uneducated, and submissive.

Phule experienced caste discrimination firsthand from a young age, and he chose not to accept this injustice quietly; instead, he



decided to fight against it. He believed that education was the most powerful weapon for social change. He also realised knowledge and awareness were essential for people to fight against the cruel oppression. In the 19th century, education was largely reserved for upper-caste men, while women and lower-caste individuals were consistently excluded from learning, as the upper-caste society feared that educated people would question the systems built by them.

In 1848, Jyotiba Phule and his wife, Savitribai Phule, took a revolutionary step by establishing the very first school for girls in Pune. This was a groundbreaking moment because, back then, education for girls was seen as completely unacceptable and unnatural. Many people were against their efforts. They shouted insults at the couple, threw stones and mud at Savitribai when she went out to teach, and even socially



ostracized them. But the Phule's didn't let that discourage them. Savitribai Phule became India's first female teacher, and together, they worked tirelessly to bring education to girls, Dalits, and other marginalized groups. They believed that education will empower people, give them confidence, self-respect, and independence. They taught subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies, that opened the doors for students that society had kept shut for centuries.

Phule's advocacy for women was also groundbreaking. In nineteenth-century India, women faced harsh discrimination. Child marriage was widespread, widows were treated cruelly, and women had little to no freedom in their personal lives. Widows had to endure lonely and painful existences, suffering in silence as society unfairly blamed them for

situations they couldn't control.

Phule stood against this oppression and also worked for widow remarriage and against practices that caused injustice to women. He and Savitribai opened a refuge for pregnant widows and deserted women. It was at a time when pregnant widows were severely assaulted by their relatives and were ostracized by the community. Many of them had to kill their children or commit suicide to escape the fear and humiliation imposed by the society.

The refuge set up by Phule's provided them protection and care. Through this activity, Phule was demonstrating that he understood the intersection between caste oppression and gender oppression and knew that society reform cannot truly exist unless women and lower castes were also given equal respect.

Jyotiba Phule was a writer and thinker along with being a social reformer. His writing criticized the caste system and religion and the social practices of society in order to establish gender equality. His most famous book was *Gulamgiri* which was published in 1873. In this book Phule compares the conditions of the lower castes in India with those of the slaves in America and the Blacks that was prevalent in America at the time. This was very daring in those times because it was comparing two totally different cultures and the castes in India with slavery in America.

According to Phule, casteism is a form of slavery. They did not have liberty, equal rights and dignity therefore, these cannot be considered as a form of slavery. He was challenging the superior authority of the higher castes and also questioning religious practices which had justification for such practices. His works considered him as an 'unfriendly' person to the orthodox and theists in society and his thinking considered him as revolutionary. He advocated that religion should be a tool to support humanity not discrimination. He believed there cannot be high and low in human beings and thus equal respect should be provided to human beings regardless of caste, religion, gender and origin. In 1873, Phule founded *Satyashodhak Samaj* which means society of truth seekers to protest against the exploitation and discrimination faced by the lower castes.

There was a fundamental difference between the *Satyashodhak Samaj* and several of the other reform movements that existed in that era. The *Satyashodhak Samaj* directly represented the oppressed sections of society. Many reform movements were started and led by the elite of upper-castes and aimed



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at carrying out reforms in society without disturbing the system of castes completely. Phule believed that the society needs radical change.

The Satyashodhak Samaj helped in organizing simple marriage ceremonies without the involvement of Brahmin priests and focused on spreading awareness and knowledge. It also focused on education and also conducted public meetings in which people were encouraged to talk about oppression and demand respect and dignity.

Phule was deeply concerned about farmers and labourers. Under British rule, the farmers suffered immensely due to heavy taxes, starvation and exploitation by landlords and money lenders. He made the world aware of the pain of peasants and blamed the system which was keeping them poor and dependent.

He understood that social justice can only be achieved when economic justice is also attained. He was convinced that it was impossible to create an equal society as long as the farmers and labourers were exploited and left hungry. Concern for the poor and the common man of the country was a major driving force in making him a very early pioneer of social and economic equality in India.

The most outstanding quality of Jyotiba Phule was his boldness and courage. He faced criticism from a number of people. There were some social and conservative organizations which were disturbed and attacked him on grounds that his ideologies questioned their rights and privileges and interests in the society. But, despite of all insults and isolation by society Phule never let down his commitment towards advocating for the masses.

Jyotiba Phule was not the only one, but also had an exceptional partner, Savitribai Phule. Together, they initiated a movement that showed mercy and care for the needy. Phule's ideas shaped the work of leaders like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar looked up to Phule's fight against caste oppression and carried on the fight for equality into the twentieth century. Movements for Dalit rights, women's rights, and

social justice in India all trace their roots back to Phule's efforts.

Remembering Jyotiba Phule in his bicentenary matters so much. His story pushes us to face the truth: we won't see real progress without equality and justice. He insisted education should be everyone's right, not just something for a privileged handful. And he showed, over and over, how social change needs willpower and stubborn courage. Phule wanted a society grounded in dignity and simple humanity. He pictured an India where your caste or gender didn't decide your life, where everyone gets a fair chance. He fought not just discrimination, but ignorance, fear, and the silence that lets injustice born.

These days, a lot of universities and social groups highlight Phule's impact. Students, activists, and scholars study his work and ideas. Young people in particular can take real lessons from Phule's life. He showed how one person's courage can make a big change. Even when society pushed back hard, he stubbornly kept working for what was right. His example urges people to challenge unfair systems, and to stand up for those who are knocked down unfairly.

During 200th birth anniversary celebration of Jyotiba Phule's birth, we should not just remember him as a reformer, we should also think of him as someone who reimagined society from the ground up. He fought for education, women's rights, dignity for lower castes, and justice for workers and farmers. His ideas were far ahead of his era, and they're still lighting the way for struggles toward equality today.

Two hundred years later, Jyotiba Phule's message remains powerful and necessary. His unfinished dream of an equal and humane society still calls upon us to build a better future, a future where every person, regardless of caste, gender, or background, can live with dignity, freedom, and respect.

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# Overseas Higher Education Scholarship & Schemes

In March and April 2026, two significant academic initiatives unfolded in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, underscoring the growing importance of overseas higher education opportunities for Indian students. Organized in collaboration with the University of Mumbai and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, these workshops brought together eminent academicians, institutional leaders, and enthusiastic students to explore pathways to global learning through scholarships and structured schemes. Till date, we have successfully organized 12 such workshops across Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Gujarat, strengthening awareness and access to international education opportunities for aspiring students from diverse backgrounds.

## Empowerment through Education

Team UV



### **Mumbai Workshop – University of Mumbai, 21st March 2026**

The One-Day Workshop on Overseas Higher Education Scholarships & Schemes was hosted at the University of Mumbai on 21st March 2026, in collaboration with SSF and key national institutions including the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Research Centre, University of Mumbai, the Dr. Ambedkar Chair (GOI), and the Dr. Ambedkar Centre of Excellence (GOI).

The inaugural session was graced by Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, Vice Chancellor of the University of Mumbai, whose presence lent academic gravitas to the proceedings. He emphasized the need for Indian students to embrace international education as a means of broadening intellectual horizons and

contributing to nation- building.

The program was coordinated by Dr. Manisha Karne, Director (I/C) of the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Research Centre and Dr. Ambedkar Chair (GOI), along with Prof. Santosh Rathod, Director (I/C) of the Dr. Ambedkar Centre of Excellence (Under DAF, MOSJE, GOI). Their meticulous planning ensured that the sessions were both informative and interactive, offering students practical insights into scholarship opportunities abroad.

Mr. Hari Sowani, Chairman of SSF, also addressed the gathering, reiterating the Foundation's commitment to educational empowerment and inclusivity. His remarks highlighted the role of institutional collaborations in bridging the gap between aspirations and opportunities.



## **Ahmedabad Workshop – Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University**

Less than a month later, on 18th April 2026, the initiative continued at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (BAOU), Ahmedabad, again in collaboration with SSF. This workshop drew a larger audience, reflecting the growing interest in overseas education among students in Gujarat.

The inaugural session was graced by Mr. Bhavin Trivedi, I/C Registrar of BAOU, alongside Mr. Pramod Gosavi, Director of SSF, Dr. Vijay Jhala, MD, Social Activist, and Dr. Ankit Parmar, Assistant Professor of English at BAOU. Their collective presence underscored the institutional commitment to fostering global education pathways.

The valedictory session was chaired by Dr. Ami Upadhyay, Vice Chancellor of BAOU, who delivered an inspiring address. She emphasized the transformative potential of overseas education, urging students to pursue higher learning abroad not merely as a personal achievement but as a means of contributing to social progress and national development.

This workshop witnessed actively participating students, a testament to the growing enthusiasm for international opportunities. The sessions covered a wide range of topics, including scholarship eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and strategies for navigating competitive application processes. The larger scale of participation created a vibrant atmosphere of collective learning, with students exchanging ideas and experiences.

At the Mumbai workshop, Session 1 focused on Studies Abroad, presented by Prof. Chandra Shekhar Malvi, Professor & Head, Madhav Institute of Technology & Science, Gwalior, Session 2 covered National Overseas Scholarships, led by Dr. Shashi Bala, Assistant Professor, Ramjas College, New Delhi, Session 3 discussed the Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj Foreign Scholarship, a flagship initiative of the Government of Maharashtra, presented by Mr. Edward Mende, Research Scholar, Session 4 focused on Overseas Fellowship for Indian Students, delivered by Dr. Anoop Kumar Tiwari, Assistant Professor, Central University of Haryana, Mahendragarh, Haryana.

At the Ahmedabad workshop, Session 1 on Life Skills was conducted by Mr. Pramod Gosavi, Director, Social Studies Foundation, Session 2 covered National Overseas Scholarships, led by Dr. Shashi Bala, Session 3 explained the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Loan Scheme for Higher Study in Foreign Countries for Scheduled Caste

Students, presented by Mr. Edward Mende, Session 4 focused on Overseas Fellowship for Indian Students, delivered by Dr. Anoop Kumar Tiwari.

At both workshops, the Social Studies Foundation (SSF) conducted a Capacity Building Activity for participants, which included psychometric evaluation to assess their skills, aptitudes, and readiness for overseas education opportunities. The workshops provided valuable insights into overseas scholarships and funding schemes available for higher education at the Master's, PhD, and Post Doctoral levels. These schemes may be offered by the Government of India, private sectors, or social and welfare organizations such as NGO or private organisations.

### **Shared Vision and Impact**

Both workshops exemplified the Social Studies Foundation's mission of promoting educational empowerment and inclusivity. By collaborating with premier institutions such as the University of Mumbai and BAOU, SSF ensured that students from diverse backgrounds could access vital information about overseas scholarships and schemes.


The presence of distinguished academicians—Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni in Mumbai and Dr. Ami Upadhyay in Ahmedabad—added credibility and inspiration to the events. Their addresses highlighted the broader vision of global education as a tool for social transformation.

The workshops also demonstrated the value of student engagement. The sessions catered to both intimate and large-scale audiences. In each case, students were provided with practical guidance on overseas scholarship opportunities, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to pursue higher education abroad.

### **Conclusion**

The workshops held in March and April 2026 mark a significant step in India's educational journey toward global integration. By bringing together universities, research centres, and foundations, these initiatives created a platform for students to explore international opportunities with clarity and confidence. As India continues to emphasize educational empowerment and inclusivity, such workshops will play a crucial role in guiding students toward global education pathways. They not only open doors to international opportunities but also reaffirm the belief that education is the most powerful tool for social transformation.

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# Dr. Ambedkar's Journey From Scholar to Statesman

June holds extraordinary significance in the life of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, marking several turning points in his pursuit of knowledge, justice, and equality. Across decades, this month witnessed milestones that transformed a young scholar from Maharashtra into one of the world's most influential thinkers and social reformers. Each June, from 1913 to 1935, reflects a chapter of his relentless commitment to education and empowerment.

In June 1913, Dr. Ambedkar embarked on a journey that would redefine his destiny. Awarded the Baroda State Scholarship by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, he left India for the United States to pursue higher studies at Columbia University, New York. This was not merely a voyage across continents but a symbolic crossing of barriers—of caste, privilege, and opportunity. At a time when few Indians,



especially from marginalized communities, could dream of foreign education, Dr. Ambedkar's departure represented courage and aspiration. His arrival at Columbia marked the beginning of a lifelong engagement with global ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Two years later, in June 1915, Dr. Ambedkar completed his Master of Arts (M.A.) degree at Columbia University. His major was Economics, with minors in Sociology, History, Philosophy, and Anthropology—a combination that reflected his multidisciplinary curiosity. His thesis, "Ancient Indian Commerce," explored the economic foundations of India's past, challenging colonial narratives that dismissed indigenous systems of trade and governance. This academic achievement was not just personal triumph; it was a statement that intellectual excellence could emerge from the most oppressed sections of society.

By June 1916, Dr. Ambedkar had earned his Doctorate in Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Economics from Columbia University. His dissertation, "National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytical Study," examined the economic conditions of colonial India and the distribution

of national wealth. It was a pioneering work that combined rigorous statistical analysis with moral inquiry—asking how a nation's prosperity could coexist with the poverty of its people. This research laid the foundation for his later economic and social critiques, including his advocacy for equitable resource distribution and labour rights.

After returning to India and continuing his studies abroad, Dr. Ambedkar's academic journey reached another milestone in June 1921, when he was awarded a Master of Science (M.S.) degree by Columbia University. This recognition reaffirmed his stature as a scholar of international repute. His exposure to Western liberal thought deepened his understanding of democracy, constitutionalism, and social justice—concepts that would later shape the Indian Constitution.

In June 1924, after completing his legal studies and being called to the Bar, Dr. Ambedkar began practicing law at the Bombay High Court. His entry into the legal profession marked a new phase of activism. He used law not merely as a profession but as a weapon against injustice. Representing marginalized clients, he challenged discriminatory practices and fought for civil rights. His courtroom arguments reflected both intellectual precision and moral conviction, earning him respect even among opponents. This period also saw the formation of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, an organization dedicated to the upliftment of the "depressed classes."

On June 8, 1927, Columbia University conferred upon him another Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), recognizing his continued scholarly contributions. This second doctorate symbolized his enduring relationship with Columbia—a university that had nurtured his ideas and worldview. By this time, Dr. Ambedkar had already emerged as a leading voice for social reform in India, advocating for education, representation, and dignity for the oppressed. His academic laurels strengthened his authority as a thinker who combined scholarship with activism.

The final major June milestone came in 1935, when Dr. Ambedkar assumed charge as Principal of the Government Law College, Bombay, a position he held until 1938. His appointment was historic—it marked the first time a member of a marginalized community led one of India's premier legal institutions. As Principal, he emphasized rigorous legal education and ethical



practice. He mentored students to view law as an instrument of social transformation, not merely a career path. During this tenure, he also began conceptualizing reforms that would later influence the drafting of the Indian Constitution.

Across these years, June became more than a calendar marker—it symbolized Dr. Ambedkar’s evolution from scholar to statesman. Each milestone reflected his belief that education was the ultimate means of liberation. His academic pursuits were never isolated from his social mission; they were steps toward dismantling the structures of inequality that had bound Indian society for centuries.

Dr. Ambedkar’s achievements in June also highlight the global dimension of his thought. His time at Columbia exposed him to thinkers like John Dewey, whose ideas on democracy and pragmatism deeply influenced him. He absorbed lessons from Western institutions but applied them to Indian realities, crafting a vision of justice rooted in both universal principles and local struggles.

The milestones of June remind us that Dr. Ambedkar’s intellectual journey was inseparable from his fight for human rights. His degrees were not mere academic honours—they were tools to

challenge oppression. He transformed education into activism, scholarship into social reform, and personal success into collective empowerment.

By the mid 1930s, Dr. Ambedkar had already become a towering figure in India’s public life. His writings on caste, economics, and law shaped national debates. His leadership in drafting the Constitution later ensured that equality, liberty, and fraternity became the pillars of independent India. Yet, behind these achievements lay the disciplined scholar who, year after year, used June as a stepping stone toward greater purpose.

June stands as a testament to Dr B. R. Ambedkar’s lifelong pursuit of knowledge and justice. From his departure for Columbia in 1913 to his leadership at the Government Law College in 1935, each milestone reflects his unwavering belief that education is the foundation of freedom. His journey through these Junes reminds us that true reform begins with learning—and that learning, when guided by compassion and courage, can reshape a nation’s destiny.

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## West Bengal Orders Re-Verification of 1.69 Crore Caste Certificates

The West Bengal government has directed district authorities to re-verify all 1.69 crore Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) certificates issued since 2011 amid concerns over the authenticity of some documents.

The Backward Classes Welfare Department said the move follows allegations that caste certificates were issued to ineligible persons without proper verification. District magistrates have been asked to instruct certificate-issuing authorities to scrutinise records and verify eligibility.

The order also directs officials to examine caste certificates of individuals whose names were removed from electoral rolls during the recent Special Intensive Revision exercise and take action, including cancellation, if required under the law.

## NCSC Issues Notice to MNLU Nagpur Over PhD Reservation Row

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has issued notices to Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU), Nagpur

over allegations of non-implementation of reservation in admissions to its 2025 PhD programme.

The controversy arose after the university’s provisional admission list showed 22 candidates admitted under the unreserved category against 12 available seats, while no candidates were admitted under SC, ST, SEBC and several other reserved categories. The PhD programme had earmarked five seats for SC candidates and two for ST candidates.



The issue is also before the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court. During proceedings, the university informed the court that it had withdrawn an unnotified 50% benchmark allegedly applied to reserved category candidates and reconsidered the candidature of a reserved-category applicant who challenged the admissions process.

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# DIN VISHESH



## Remembering Swami Vivekanand

**4th July Swami Vivekanand Birth Anniversary**

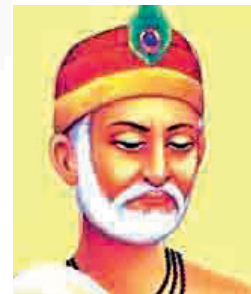
Swami Vivekananda strongly condemned untouchability, calling it a “great national sin,” and insisted that the upliftment of Shudras and marginalized communities through education and empowerment was essential for India’s progress. While he criticized caste-based discrimination, he did not advocate for the complete annihilation of caste, instead distinguishing between the original Varna system and its later degeneration into hereditary caste hierarchy.

Swami Vivekananda’s work against untouchability was rooted in education, empowerment, and service to the poor. He condemned caste-based exclusion and envisioned the rise of marginalized communities as central to India’s revival. However, his approach was spiritual and reformist rather than structural or political.

Swami Vivekananda argued that religion must begin with food and dignity. Preaching salvation to starving or oppressed people was, in his view, hollow. He believed true national strength lay in the common people—peasants, laborers, and marginalized groups. He regarded service to humanity as equal to service to God.



**26th June**  
Chhatrapati  
Shahu Maharaj  
Birth Anniversary



**29th June**  
Sant Kabir Das  
Birth Anniversary



**6th July**  
Babu Jagjivan Ram  
Death Anniversary

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