

Classifying Denotified Tribes: Impact on Reservation and Welfare Policies

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Denotified Tribes Latest News

- After three years of research, the **Anthropological Survey of India** (AnSI) and **Tribal Research Institutes** (TRIs) have for the first time systematically categorized 268 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes across India.
- Out of these, 179 communities are now recommended for inclusion in the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) lists.
- This historic effort aims to rectify long-standing classification gaps and ensure these communities receive rightful benefits.

Historical Background and the Need for Classification

- **Denotified tribes** were once labeled as “criminal” under the **Criminal Tribes Act of 1924**, which was repealed in 1949.
- However, since then, various commissions—including the **Kaka Kalelkar Commission** (1955), the **Mandal Commission** (1980), the **Renke Commission** (2008), and the Idate Commission (2017)—have attempted but failed to fully classify these communities.
- The Idate Commission’s 2017 report identified 1,200 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes and highlighted 267 unclassified communities.
- This led the Indian government to form a Special Committee under the NITI Aayog in 2019, which assigned AnSI and TRIs the task of ethnographic classification.

Key Findings of the Study

- **268 communities classified:** For the first time, these tribes have been systematically documented.
- **179 communities recommended for SC/ST/OBC inclusion:** This inclusion aims to provide reservation benefits.
- **63 communities found untraceable:** These groups may have merged with other communities, changed names, or migrated.
- **Political and legal implications:** The classification has sparked debates on reservations and special status.

Impact on Reservation and Welfare Policies

- With this classification, denotified tribes could access government welfare schemes reserved for SCs, STs, and OBCs, including education and employment opportunities. However, this move has also raised political concerns.
- There are two competing views within the **Development and Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities**:
- **Support for Inclusion in SC/ST/OBC Lists**
 - Ensures access to education, jobs, and social welfare schemes.
 - Provides legal recognition and identity to these communities.
- **Demand for a Separate Reservation Category**
- Advocates argue that denotified tribes should have their own classification, similar to SCs and STs, rather than being merged into existing categories.
- Some fear that merging them into SC/ST/OBC groups might dilute reservation benefits for other communities.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Political Controversies:** Activists in states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat are questioning the basis of classification, fearing it may impact existing reservation structures.
- **Delays in Implementation:** Despite multiple commissions advocating for classification, government action has been slow, delaying welfare benefits.
- **Historical Misclassification:** Earlier census data mistakenly categorized some tribes as castes, creating confusion over their identity and legal status.

Way Forward

- The AnSI and TRIs have submitted their final report to the Special Committee under the NITI Aayog. Currently, the committee is reviewing recommendations before preparing a final report for the government.
- If the recommendations are accepted:
 - State governments will have an easier pathway to include these tribes in reservation lists.
 - New welfare policies could be introduced to address socio-economic inequalities faced by these communities.
 - The debate on creating a separate category for denotified tribes may gain momentum.

Conclusion

- The classification of denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes is a crucial step toward rectifying historical injustices and ensuring their access to government welfare schemes.
- However, the implementation process remains complex, with political and legal challenges ahead.
- The government's final decision on this matter will shape the socio-political landscape of reservation policies in India.

Denotified Tribes Classification FAQs

Q1. What is the significance of classifying denotified tribes?

Ans. It allows these communities to access reservation benefits and social welfare schemes.

Q2. How many communities have been newly classified?

Ans. A total of 268 communities have been classified, with 179 recommended for inclusion in SC/ST/OBC lists.

Q3. Why are some activists opposing this classification?

Ans. Some activists argue that these tribes should have a separate reservation category instead of being included in SC/ST/OBC lists.

Q4. What challenges does this classification face?

Ans. Political debates, delays in implementation, and historical misclassification of tribes pose significant challenges.

Q5. What happens next in this classification process?

Ans. The NITI Aayog's Special Committee is reviewing recommendations before the government takes a final decision.

Source: TH

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