

## 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

