Value Addition NOTES

Anthropology

UNIT 7.1: Other Backward Classes

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Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are socially and educationally disadvantaged castes in India that do not fall under the SC or ST categories but face systemic deprivation and require affirmative action.

❖ **Gadgil (1971):** Described OBCs as "communities that are economically weak and educationally backward, often suffering from social exclusion due to caste hierarchy."

❖ **M.N. Srinivas:** Argued that many OBCs occupy a liminal position—"dominant castes" economically but backward educationally (e.g., Yadavs, Kurmis, Gujjars).

Criteria for Identifying OBCs

As laid down by the **Mandal Commission (1980)**:

Criterion	Description
Social	Castes with low status in the traditional caste hierarchy, facing untouchability, lack of representation
Educational	Low literacy rates, high dropout rates
Economic	Lack of land ownership, dependence on wage labor, and low per capita income
Others	Inadequate representation in government jobs and the public sector

The **"Creamy Layer"** refers to the **economically advanced and socially better-off members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** who are **excluded from reservation benefits** in jobs and education.

Parameter	Value
Annual Family Income	₹8 lakh
Beyond this limit	OBC individuals are considered the **creamy layer** and are **not eligible** for reservation benefits

Problems Faced by Other Backward Classes

1. **Social Discrimination and Stigma**
   ➢ **Nature of Problem:**
   ✓ OBCs often face **ritual impurity**, **limited social mobility**, and **caste-based stereotypes**.
   ✓ Despite upward mobility, **social acceptance** remains elusive.
   ➢ **Example – Yadavs in Uttar Pradesh & Bihar:**
   ✓ M.N. Srinivas' concept of **"Sanskritization"** applies here—Yadavs adopted upper-caste practices to gain prestige.
   ✓ Yet, **ritual equality** was denied. They faced resistance in temple entry and performing priestly roles.

2. **Educational Backwardness**
   ➢ **Nature of Problem:**
   ✓ Historically deprived of access to **formal education**.
   ✓ High **drop-out rates**, poor performance in competitive exams.
   ➢ **Example – Pasmanda Muslims (OBC Muslims):**
   ✓ Despite being part of the Muslim community, **Pasmandas** (like Ansaris, Qureshis) face backwardness similar to Hindu OBCs.
   ✓ Low representation in higher education and civil services.

3. Economic Deprivation

- **Nature of Problem:**
  - ✓ Most OBCs are **small/marginal farmers**, **landless laborers**, or in **informal sectors**.
  - ✓ No access to capital, land, or secure employment.
- **Example – Koeris in Bihar:**
  - ✓ Despite being an agrarian caste, Koeris lacked land ownership and were dependent on the dominant caste landlords.
  - ✓ Their **agricultural knowledge** was not monetized due to structural inequalities.
- **Case Study – South India (Kurubas in Karnataka):**
  - ✓ Kurubas, a shepherd caste, still face **poverty and job insecurity**, even after economic liberalization.
  - ✓ Demand for ST status due to relative deprivation.

4. Political Marginalization

- **Nature of Problem:**
  - ✓ OBCs often lack **adequate representation** in decision-making institutions, despite numerical strength.
  - ✓ Political leaders from OBC backgrounds often represent **dominant sub-castes**.
- **Example – Gujarat:**
  - ✓ Patels dominate politics; OBCs like Kolis, Gadhvis have **token representation**.
  - ✓ Dominant castes have **better access to power networks**.

5. Cultural Marginalization

- **Nature of Problem:**
  - ✓ Folk traditions of OBCs are considered **inferior or non-classical**.
  - ✓ Their languages/dialects, dress, and rituals are often **ridiculed**.
- **Example – Madigas of Andhra Pradesh:**
  - ✓ Their **folk songs and oral traditions** were excluded from mainstream Telugu literature.
  - ✓ Cultural alienation persisted despite political assertion.

6. Intra-OBC Inequality & the "Creamy Layer" Problem

- **Nature of Problem:**
  - ✓ Dominant OBCs (like Yadavs, Kurmis, Patels) have cornered benefits.
  - ✓ **Extremely backward castes (EBCs)** remain deprived within the OBC umbrella.
- **Example – Nishads (Boatmen) in Uttar Pradesh:**
  - ✓ Low literacy, informal occupation, and poor political representation.
  - ✓ Despite being OBC, they often get excluded due to lack of **political patronage**.

7. Legal and Policy Exclusion

- **Nature of Problem:**
  - ✓ Many OBC groups still lack **recognition at the state or central level**.
  - ✓ Legal battles and a lack of caste census data delay justice.
- **Example – Teli caste in Odisha:**
  - ✓ Included in OBC in some states but denied in others.
  - ✓ Lack of uniform criteria leads to **interstate inconsistencies** in benefits.

Recommendations from Government Reports on OBCs

1. **Mandal Commission Report (1980)**

   Officially known as the Second Backward Classes Commission, chaired by B.P. Mandal.

   Key Recommendations:
   - 27% reservation in central government jobs and educational institutions for OBCs.
   - Identify backwardness using social, educational, and economic indicators.
   - Exclude the "creamy layer" (economically advanced OBCs) from reservation benefits.
   - Establish a permanent Backward Classes Commission to regularly review the status of OBCs.
   - Use caste-wise census data to track backwardness and representation.

2. **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) Reports**

   Set up in **1993**, became a **constitutional body in 2018** via the 102nd Amendment.

   Key Recommendations:
   - Regular **revision of the OBC list** to add or remove communities based on current backwardness.
   - Clear and updated definition of the **creamy layer**, including non-income criteria like social and occupational status.
   - Conduct a **nationwide socio-economic caste census (SECC)** to gather accurate data.
   - Recommend **state-level sub-categorization** of OBCs to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits.
   - Monitor the **implementation of OBC welfare schemes** and assess outcomes.

3. **Rohini Commission Report (2017–Ongoing)**

   Officially called the **Commission to Examine Sub-Categorization of OBCs** (chaired by **Justice G. Rohini**).

   Key Objectives:
   - Identify the **dominant OBC castes** monopolizing benefits.
   - Create **sub-categories within OBCs** to ensure equitable distribution of the 27% reservation.
   - Use government employment and educational data to analyze benefit distribution.

4. **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

   Relevant Recommendations:
   - Focus on **inclusive education** for marginalized groups, including OBCs.
   - Set up **gender inclusion and equity funds** targeting SCs, STs, and OBCs.
   - Promote **scholarships**, **hostels**, and **mentorship** programs for OBC students.
   - Strengthen **school infrastructure in backward regions** predominantly inhabited by OBCs.

5. **Sachar Committee Report (2006)**

   Although focused on Muslims, it includes **Pasmanda Muslims (OBC Muslims)** and is relevant for inclusive OBC policy.

   Key Recommendations:
   - Extend **OBC recognition** and benefits to **Pasmanda Muslims**.
   - Ensure better **representation of OBC Muslims** in public employment.
   - Provide targeted **scholarships, credit support**, and **skill development**.

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