

Historic Lok Sabha



**AGENDA: DISCUSSING THE MANDAL
COMMISSION REPORT**

FREEZE DATE - 1ST AUGUST 1990

HISTORIC LOK SABHA BACKGROUND GUIDE

Letter from the executive board :

Welcome to the Historic Lok Sabha - a committee where history meets politics, politics meets passion and passion sometimes meets chaos (though we promise to keep it parliamentary).

We are gathered here to revisit one of the most defining, controversial and nation-shaping debates of India's political journey. The Mandal Commission and its implementation, With a freeze date of 1st August 1990, you our esteemed legislators of this grand simulation, stand on the brink of the moment that reshaped caste, representation and democracy in India forever.

But let us be very clear: this committee isn't just about shouting slogans or quoting articles (though both are welcome if done with style). We expect every delegate to arrive well-researched with facts, figures and arguments both *before* the freeze date (for authenticity) and *after* it (for perspective). This dual knowledge will help you enhance the richness of debate. We look forward to delegates to maintain a balance between substantive debate and legal backing , remember Lok Sabha is not a tea shop conversation; it is where laws, motions and destiny were decided. Above all, enjoy the Historic Lok Sabha as it is meant to be experienced. Argue, laugh, persuade and recreate the heat of 1990 without forgetting that this is still Model UN.

We assure you that the dais is prepared to witness all shades of leadership from the “thundering orator” who quotes legal precedents to the “silent strategist” who moves amendments at the right moment. In the end, what matters is that you leave this committee not just with awards, but with an experience of what it meant to be in the Indian Parliament at its most turbulent time.

Committee Description

Lok Sabha being the heartbeat of Indian Democracy, where chaos coexists with headlines that will shape the nation. From the banging of tables to walkouts the committee has it all. In this Historic session, the delegates will relive something that's keeping India's population intact and tight in today's world.

The Historic Lok Sabha, a simulation that uses a set freeze date to take participants to a particular point in India's political history, is how we at SJBHS MUN bring this institution to life. Delegates represent their actual party lines, ideologies and constituencies by assuming the roles of actual members of parliament from that era.

By forcing delegates to immerse themselves in historical developments, political pressures and constitutional challenges of the chosen era, the freeze guarantees that the debates stay true to the context of that time.

The Historic Lok Sabha thrives on heated deliberations, cross-party negotiations, procedural maneuvering and dynamic crisis situations. Governments may rise or fall, bills can be passed or defeated and alliances can

shift within moments. Every word that is said matters because it can change the path of history.

There was a sense of excitement in Parliament in 1990. This session, frozen in time, forces us to confront questions that pierce through caste, class and privilege. It is not merely about policy, but about power who holds it, who shares it and who has long been denied it.

Rules of Procedure

We will be following the basic procedures of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha commences only after the National Anthem is played and this is followed by the Roll Call.

Roll Call

Roll call is a procedure whereby the members have to notify their presence to the House when their respective name is called out by the Speaker. The member may notify their presence by answering present, present and voting or answer in the language of their portfolio.
(example: Uddhav Thackeray may answer present either by saying it or saying 'Jai Maharashtra')

Discussion Hours (Moderated Caucus)

A public session (mod cauc) refers to speech made to cover a sub-topic of the agenda. It requires a majority of committee votes to pass. It requires specific verbatim to make it valid. For example :-
“The delegate of XYZ would like to motion for a public session on the topic XYZ for a total time period of X providing X to each speaker.

Unmoderated Caucus

During this session, delegates are free to lobby, discuss future moderated caucuses, make allies, working papers etc. it is often referred to as informal debate.

Motions

In parliamentary procedure, a motion is a formal proposal by a member of a deliberative assembly that the assembly take a particular action. These may include legislative motions, budgetary motions, supplementary budgetary motions, and petitionary motions.

Few Important Motions

1. Adjournment Motion

This motion is raised by a Member of Parliament, to set aside the present motion or proceedings of the Parliament and to take up a matter of National importance or urgency.

Voting

The members are required to vote for the motion for it be passed or elapsed. The members may vote either 'aye' or 'nay' for the motion when asked by the Speaker. It will be a verbal voting.

Contention

A member if dissatisfied by the Speakers' decision to either pass or elapse the motion may raise a contention. Raising a contention means that there will be a re-voting by the same procedure and this time the vote will be final. In case, the voices of 'ayes' and 'nays' are parallel a placard raising vote will be done, but this is a measure of last resort.

Question Hour

Question Hour is the first hour of a sitting of a Lok Sabha devoted to questions that the Members of Parliament raise about any aspect of administrative activity. The concerned minister is obliged to answer to the Parliament, either orally or in writing, depending on the question raised.

Types of Questions

Types of question

There are four types of questions - starred, non-starred, short notice questions and questions to private members.

1) Starred Questions are those for which an oral answer is expected. The member is allowed to ask after the reply is obtained from the Minister concerned. Answers to such questions may be followed by supplementary questions by members.

These questions are printed and are marked with asterisk sign '*', in order to distinguish them from other questions.

2) Non-starred questions are those for which a written reply is expected. After the reply has been provided, no supplementary question can be asked. A notice period is to be given to the minister to reply to a question.

These questions are printed and not more than 230 questions can be listed for a day in the Lok Sabha.

3) Short notice questions are those which are asked on matters of urgent public importance and thus, can be asked on a shorter notice i.e. less than 10 days. These questions can be answered orally and supplementary questions can be asked.

4) Questions to private members are those which are asked to members who are not ministers. These questions are related to private member's bills, parliamentary committees, and private member resolutions.

However, if a Member seeks to ask a question urgently and cannot wait for the duration of the notice period, then the member can do so provided it is accepted by the Speaker. Such questions are called supplementary questions.

Zero Hour

The Zero Hour commences immediately after the Question Hour. The members can, without prior notice to the Speaker, raise questions or issues of importance. The members may speak without the speakers' permission and address the concerned Minister and ask their questions.

Interpellation

It is a formal parliamentary procedure through which members of parliament request that the government explain, clarify, or justify its policies, actions, or decisions. Typically presented in written or oral form, this process mandates that the government respond within a specified timeframe and may lead to subsequent debates or even votes of no confidence.

What is mandal commission

The Mandal Commission or the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (SEBC), was established in India in 1979 by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward classes" of India. It was headed by B.P. Mandal, an Indian member of parliament, to consider the question of reservations for people to address caste discrimination, and to use eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness. In 1980, based on its rationale that OBCs ("Other Backward Classes") identified on the basis of caste, social, economic indicators made up 52% of India's population, the commission's report recommended that members of Other Backward Classes (OBC) be granted reservations to 27% (but at that time SC and ST had only 22.5% of the reservations, 15 to SC and remaining 7.5 to the ST's) of jobs under the central government and public sector undertakings and seats in the higher education institutions, thus making the total number of reservations for SC, ST and OBC to 49.5%.

Though the report had been completed in 1980, the V.P. Singh's government declared its intent to implement the report in August 1990, leading to widespread student protests. As per the Constitution of India, Article 15 (4) states, " Nothing in this Article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any provision for the advancement of any socially or educationally backward classes of citizens or for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes". The Mandal Commission had therefore created a report using the data of the 1931 census, the last caste-aware census, extrapolated with some sample studies.

The Mandal Commission (the Second Backward Classes Commission) was established on 1 January 1979 by the Morarji Desai (Janata) government under Article 340 of the Constitution, tasked with identifying “socially and educationally backward classes” (SEBCs) and suggesting steps to improve their condition. Chaired by Bihar politician B.P. Mandal, the six-member commission conducted an extensive survey (covering 4,05 districts, villages and urban areas) using 11 social, economic and educational indicators. Its 1980 report identified 3,743 castes as SEBCs (beyond already-reserved SC/ST) and estimated they formed roughly 52% of India’s population (OBCs among Hindus ~44%, plus minorities ~8%).

- **Key recommendation:** Reserve 27% of jobs and college seats for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at the central level. Added to the existing 22.5% for SC/ST, this would raise total reservation to about 49.5% (under the 50% ceiling later affirmed by the Supreme Court).
- **Constitutional basis:** The Commission operated under Article 340 (presidential order to investigate backward classes) and Article 16(4) (state may reserve posts for backward classes). Its mandate was part of the constitutional scheme of “social justice” for disadvantaged groups.
- **Classification criteria:** Mandal used factors like social position, education, land ownership, employment, and economic status to determine backwardness. It also noted that many poor and rural residents (small farmers, artisans, laborers) belonged to SC/ST/OBC and stressed that reservation alone was a “palliative” without deeper reforms (like radical land redistribution).

V. P. Singh was accused of using the Mandal Report despite it having previously been ignored by the Congress government. With almost 75% of the Indian population receiving preferential treatment in government employment, up from 25%, it caused social unrest. Earlier 25% population of India which is Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes, was covered and now, more than 25% of Other Backward Class came under reservation. The decision of V.P Singh government led to 1990 Mandal Commission protest. The upper caste youth went for massive protest in large numbers in the nation's campuses, resulting in self immolations by a student.

Mandal Commission recommendations

The Commission reported that 52% of the country's population was OBCs, initially, the commission argued that the percentage of reservation in government service should match this percentage. However, this would have gone against an earlier Supreme Court ruling which had laid down the extent of the reservation to under 50%. There was already a 22.5% reservation for SCs and STs. Therefore, the figure of reservation for OBCs was capped at **27%** which when added to the already existing reservation would be below the 50% mark. The Commission also identified backward classes among non-Hindus.

The recommendations are briefly mentioned below:

1. Reservation of 27% public sector and government jobs for OBCs for those who do not qualify on merit.
2. Reservation of 27% for promotions at all levels for OBCs in public service.
3. The reserved quota, if unfilled, should be carried forward for a period of 3 years and deserved after that.
4. Age relaxation for OBCs to be the same as that for SCs and STs.
5. A roster system should be prepared for the backward classes on the pattern of that for the SCs and STs.
6. Reservations to be made in PSUs, banks, private sector undertakings receiving government grants, colleges and universities.
7. The government to make the necessary legal provisions to implement these recommendations.

Implementation

Prior to the establishment of the Mandal Commission in India, the state of India faced caste discrimination in terms of social, economic, and political context. Living standards, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and OBC households were viewed to be significantly lower than in the mainstream population, comprising Hindu forward castes and other religious groups. In December 1980, the Mandal Commission submitted its Report which described the criteria it used to indicate backwardness, and stated its recommendations in light of its observations and findings. By then, the Janata government had fallen. The following Congress governments under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were not willing to act on the Report due to its politically contentious nature. After being neglected for 10 years, the Report was accepted by the National Front government led by V.P. Singh. On 7 August 1990, the National Front government declared that it would provide 27 per cent reservations to "socially and educationally backward classes" for jobs in central services and public undertaking. Having released the Government Order on 13 August, V.P. Singh announced its legal implementation in his Independence Day speech two days later.

The process of Mandalisation was initiated ceremoniously with the formation of the Mandal Commission on December 20 1978, during the Janata Party regime. This was the second Backward Classes Commission; the first Backward Classes Commission was the Kaka Kalekar Commission set up in 1953. It recognised 2399 castes as backward, but its report was rejected in 1956, because the then govt did not want to promote casteism. The second Commission, headed by Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, belonging to the Yadav community

and the former Chief Minister of Bihar, "estimated the population of OBC's to be around 52 per cent and recommended a reservation of 27 per cent" (Hasan, 2009, p. 87). The report submitted in 1980 declared 3743 different castes of different religions including Muslims, and other different sects, constituting 52% of the country's population, but it saw the light of day only in 1990 when it was implemented. "The Mandal era can be said to have begun with a government of India notification of August 1990, providing for 27 per cent reservation in central government jobs for the other backward classes, as per the nearly decade-old recommendations of the Mandal commission, if this decision changed the course of history, it was not by providing more jobs to the OBCs. The order applied only to a small number of central government jobs. Many state governments followed it up by preparing official lists of the OBCs and implementing reservations for the first time. But only the educated could take advantage of these policies. They were mainly from relatively well-off families or upper castes within the OBCs. Besides, this was an era of privatization, when government jobs were declining in number and prestige. A national sample survey conducted in 1999 found that the OBCs were closer to the dalits and adivasis than to the forward castes in their educational attainments and economic conditions" (Yadav, 2001).

Implementation:

1. **Protests and Controversies:** The implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations in 1990 sparked widespread protests, particularly in urban areas. Critics argued that the move would lead to reverse discrimination and questioned the criteria used to identify backward classes. Additionally, it ignited political turmoil, leading to a clash between caste-based politics and Hindu unity. The event reshaped the Indian political landscape, affecting various social groups and parties.
2. **Impact on Society:** The implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations significantly altered the landscape of government job reservations and affirmative action policies in India. It aimed at providing opportunities to historically marginalized communities.
3. **Political Ramifications:** The decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations had political consequences, contributing to the fragmentation of the Janata Dal party and influencing subsequent electoral politics in the country.

Part 1: The Mandal Crisis - After 1 August 1990

On 7 August 1990, PM V.P. Singh (Janata Dal) announced in Parliament that his government would implement the Mandal recommendations, reserving 27% of central government jobs for OBC. These overtures immediately unleashed a political firestorm.

- **Political reactions:**
- The announcement split the ruling coalition. The BJP (then external supporter of VP Singh's National Front) was upset at being kept in the dark and sensed division of Hindu society.
- RSS-affiliated editors had long attacked caste quotas as undermining merit, calling for "brain drain" and warning of a "Shudra revolution".
- Congress opposition was emphatic: Rajiv Gandhi and other Congress leaders denounced Mandal; Congress MPs privately called it "divisive".
- Within the BJP, leaders debated whether to oppose Mandal outright or reframe the debate. Ultimately BJP's top brass decided to sidestep a caste vs. caste battle and instead resurface the Ram Janmabhoomi issue.
- In mid-September 1990 the BJP launched L.K. Advani's Ram Rath Yatra (Somnath to Ayodhya) to shift voters' focus from caste to religion.
- Congress remained against Mandal (as it had been since the 1980s), while V.P. Singh's Janata Dal pressed ahead.
- **Public protests:** Within weeks anti-reservation agitations erupted across North India. Upper-caste students and others staged hartals, roadblocks and rallies. Most dramatically, on 19–20 September 1990, Delhi University student Rajiv Goswami set himself on fire in protest. His act triggered a series of student self-immolations (e.g. in Haryana, Punjab) and mass demonstrations. According to contemporaneous reports, about 159 people attempted suicide in anti-Mandal protests, 63 dying of injuries. Cities like Delhi, Lucknow, Chandigarh and Patna saw regular rallies and candlelight vigils by anti-Mandal groups. (Pro-Mandal rallies by backward-class youth also began to emerge, but the initial wave was led by general-category students demanding rollback.)
- **Parliament and legislation:** V.P. Singh's announcement on 7 August was formalized by an Office Memorandum of 13 August 1990 implementing the Mandal report. The move was quickly challenged in the Supreme Court (Indra Sawhney case). In the Lok Sabha, heated debates ensued but Mandal passed largely because Janata Dal and Left MPs voted for it, while BJP mostly abstained to avoid direct blame. (No constitutional amendment was immediately sought; legal issues were left to the courts.)
- **Governmental change:** As protests intensified, BJP gradually withdrew support from the VP Singh government. By late October 1990, tensions over Mandal and Advani's Rath Yatra caused the BJP to quit the coalition. VP Singh lost a confidence motion in November 1990 and resigned. Janata Dal split: VP Singh left office, while Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar broke away. (Notably,

no Congress MPs defected to support VP Singh as he had expected.) This collapse gave way to a short-lived Chandra Shekhar govt (Nov 1990–June 1991), followed by Congress's return in mid-1991.

- **Rise of caste-based parties:** Mandal's upheaval reshaped politics. OBC and Dalit voters began abandoning Congress; new regional parties emerged to champion their interests. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, SP, BSP and RJD coalesced as "OBC-Dalit" fronts, severely denting Congress's base. (India Today notes backward and Dalit votes "went en masse" to SP/BSP/RJD, while upper-caste support shifted toward the BJP.) Indeed, for a time an OBC–Dalit alliance dominated Hindi heartland politics. By contrast, BJP's strategy paid off electorally: advancing the Ram temple issue drew many Hindu caste groups (including some OBCs) into its fold, creating the broad Hindutva coalition that propelled the party in the 1990s.

Alternative paths: Historians note that Mandal could have been implemented more gradually or consensually. Some argue V.P. Singh's decision was driven by short-term electoral calculations (undercutting rival leader Devi Lal). A more measured approach might have involved wider consultation or phased implementation. However, political pressures and caste equations in 1990 left few other choices: the OBC demand was real and simmering, and Singh's coalition needed a defining agenda. Whatever the alternatives, Mandal's enactment irrevocably changed the political landscape.

Part 2: Long-Term Effects and Contemporary Debates

The Mandal episode had enduring consequences on India's legal framework and politics:

- **Legal rulings and reservation law:** The *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992) Supreme Court case upheld the 1990 OBC reservations but imposed key limits. A nine-judge bench ruled that caste-based affirmative action is constitutional but must respect a 50% ceiling on reservations and exclude the "creamy layer" of socially advanced OBCs. In other words, the wealthiest/elite among OBCs (e.g. high-ranking service officers) cannot claim OBC quotas. The Court also mandated periodic review of OBC lists and barred reservation in promotions (except by later amendment). In 1993 the Congress government issued orders defining the creamy layer and began phased implementation of 27% OBC quotas. (Educational quotas for OBCs at

universities took longer: they were broadly in place only by mid-2000s)

- **Reservation ceiling and expansion:** For decades a 50% reservation ceiling stood (Mandal's 49.5% plus a 0.5% fudge). The Mandal Commission recognised 3,743 castes as OBC's, constituting 52% of the population then, hence the 27% reservation. However, in 2019 the BJP-led government enacted a 10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the unreserved category via the 103rd Amendment. In 2022 the Supreme Court upheld this, allowing total reservations to exceed 50%. Critics point out the irony: EWS mainly benefits upper-caste poor, and it effectively violates Mandal-era limits. As one Odisha leader noted, "the Supreme Court had refused to increase reservation for OBCs as it had crossed the 50% cap. But now it allows the 50% cap to be crossed upper-caste people [~6% of Odisha's population] will enjoy 10% reservation. What an irony".
- **Political realignments:** Mandal reshaped parties' caste strategies. Congress lost its monopoly over backward-class votes, often paying an electoral price thereafter. BJP, long an ideological opponent of caste quotas, paradoxically *embraced* OBC outreach: under Modi it even emphasized his own OBC roots and promoted OBC leaders. For example, BJP's 2021 cabinet reshuffle boasted an unprecedented number of SC/ST/OBC ministers. BJP now vigorously courts "non-Yadav OBCs" in states like Uttar Pradesh, fragmenting the old OBC vote. Upper-caste leaders have diminished presence, reflecting an OBC "social engineering" strategy (e.g. in UP's candidate lists, BJP favored Kurmis and smaller OBC groups over Yadavs).
- **Caste census and data:** Debates over Mandal's unfinished business surface today. The Congress has made a nationwide caste census a rallying cry (promised by Rahul Gandhi, citing Mandal's estimated 52% OBC population). In 2024 the BJP government agreed to count caste in the next Census, a move that some see as validating Mandal-era demands. Rahul Gandhi even invoked Mandal's logic to demand lifting the 50% cap. Caste data controversies (caste surveys in states like Telangana/Bihar) continue to evoke Mandal's legacy.
- **Inconsistencies and narratives:** Party positions have often shifted. The BJP, which *opposed* Mandal vehemently in 1990, now touts itself as pro-poor and has implemented caste-based schemes (including EWS quotas). Congress, which blocked Mandal in the 1980s, has recast itself as champion of OBC and Dalit interests today. This political pivoting has drawn charges of hypocrisy. As a Samajwadi Party leader observed in 2022, "the BJP was the first party to oppose reservation in 1990. [Now this] is only vote-bank politics". Similarly, some activists note that Mandal's social justice goals (like reducing inequality) remain only partially fulfilled, as true remedial measures (land reform, education aid, poverty reduction) were not implemented, and only a small fraction of OBCs have benefited in national jobs.

- **Legacy:** Mandal's objectives—to increase backward-classes' share of power and opportunity—have seen mixed results. OBC representation in government has risen from a few percent to over a quarter (central services), but far short of the commission's dream that the 52% OBC population have proportional presence. Caste-based parties (SP, BSP, RJD, etc.) now play major roles, illustrating Mandal's political legacy. Today's caste debates (ranging from EWS to reservation in private institutions) trace their lineage to Mandal's fault lines. As observers note, Mandal "changed the tone and texture" of Indian politics by making caste counts – a transformation still evolving 30+ years later.

Phase 3: Political and Social Impact of the Mandal Commission

- **Empowerment of OBCs:** The 1990 Mandal decision gave long-marginalized OBC communities a far greater share of state power. By the mid-1990s a new generation of leaders from backward castes emerged at the national level. The Mandal implementation "reshaped Indian politics by empowering OBC communities and paving the way for a new generation of political leaders". In practice this shifted politics away from Congress's old upper-caste core. Across the Hindi heartland, leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav and others mobilised caste identities to build winning coalitions. As one observer notes, post-Mandal "OBCs [became] a potent electoral bloc and sparked the rise of regional parties" (e.g. Bihar's Janata Dal (United) and RJD), fundamentally changing politics in that "heartland".
- **Rise of regional caste parties:** The Mandal wave triggered a flowering of caste-based parties. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, Mandal energized the Samajwadi Party (SP) under Mulayam Singh and eventually the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) under Mayawati, each rooted in specific caste coalitions. The Hindustan Times notes that Mandal's legacy in UP included leaders who "shifted U.P. politics from Congress's dominance to caste-based coalitions, leveraging Mandal's framework of social justice to assert OBC influence". In Bihar, Mandal-era politics "coalesced OBCs into a potent electoral bloc and sparked the rise" of regional parties such as the RJD and JD(U), altering the state's traditional caste hierarchy.
- Leaders like Kanshi Ram and Mayawati (BSP) framed Mandal as part of a broader Bahujan agenda. And even in states like Tamil Nadu, where Dravidian parties had

long championed affirmative action, Mandal reinforced the rhetoric of social justice. Indeed, DMK leader M.K. Stalin observed that his father M. Karunanidhi “played a vital role in the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendation on 27 % reservation for OBCs”, underscoring the continuity of anti–upper-caste mobilisation. Although Tamil Nadu already had high quotas, Mandal’s nationwide validation of OBC reservation further legitimised caste-based redistribution as a pan-Indian norm.

- **Cultural and ideological shift:** Opposition to quota policies (e.g. student protests in 1990) also became mainstream political flashpoints. In short, Mandal “changed the face of heartland politics” by making caste an explicit axis of competition. Over the following decades the idea of “social justice” as state policy deepened — even politicians who once called caste a divisive issue found themselves addressing OBC and Dalit concerns, lest they be seen as ignoring the demands unleashed by Mandal.

Phase 4: Party and Famous Leaders’ Responses to Mandal Politics

- **Congress:** Congress’s response evolved over time. Initially (1989–90) the party was in opposition and uneasy about Mandal’s fallout. After returning to power in 1991, Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao quietly absorbed the Mandal legacy. By September 1993, after the Supreme Court had upheld the quotas, Rao “announced widespread implementation” of the Mandal recommendations. In effect, Congress shifted from resistance to acceptance of OBC reservation once it became a fait accompli. In recent years (under Rahul Gandhi), Congress has again courted backward-caste voters by promising reforms – for example, Rahul Gandhi vowed to remove the 50 % cap on quotas if Congress won power. (This proposal was criticized as “unworkable,” but indicates Congress’s tactical turn toward *social justice* rhetoric.) Throughout, Congress’s official line has been a mix of reaffirming its secular/socialist principles while staking out a place in OBC-led coalitions (as in recent INDIA bloc politics).
- **Samajwadi Party (SP):** The SP was founded (1992) precisely to champion OBC castes in UP. It owes its genesis to the Mandal upheaval: Mulayam Singh Yadav broke from the Janata Dal and “claimed the legacy” of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia by concentrating on caste-based democracy. Political analysts observe that the Mandal implementation “created polarisation in all socialist parties on caste lines,” ultimately benefiting Mulayam Singh’s SP. The SP consolidated Yadavs and other backward castes under its banner. In 1993 SP even allied with Kanshi Ram’s BSP to win the UP Assembly, reflecting a caste-coalition strategy. Although the SP has at times fallen out of power, it continues to wield caste as its core appeal (e.g. Akhilesh Yadav’s current

alliance with Congress emphasizes quotas and caste census issues).

- **Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP):** Kanshi Ram's BSP similarly tapped Mandal-era sentiments, albeit with a Dalit focus. Formed in 1984, the BSP used the Mandal moment to strengthen Dalit claims and to ally with OBCs when expedient. It famously partnered with the SP in 1993, and later broke that alliance to govern UP on its own. BSP leader Mayawati has accused rivals (including Congress and Rahul Gandhi) of hypocrisy on quotas, stressing that parties opposed or stalled OBC reservation. In practice, the BSP's "Bahujan" platform has sometimes extended to other backward groups beyond Dalits, evidencing how Mandal politics blurred pure Dalit vs OBC lines. Overall, Mandal expanded the BSP's leverage in UP's multi-caste competitions.
- **Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and JD(U) – Bihar:** In Bihar, Mandal's effects were immediate. Chief ministers Lalu Prasad Yadav (RJD) and Nitish Kumar (JD(U)) explicitly built on Karpooori Thakur's legacy of OBC uplift. After 1990 these parties mobilized Yadavs, Kurmis and other backward castes into winning blocs. The Hindustan Times notes that Bihar's ruling RJD and JD(U) "have sought to consolidate their position" on the Mandal legacy, most recently using the 2023 caste-survey data to demand higher quotas. Both parties have flirted with caste census proposals and routinely invoke Mandal politics to threaten rivals. In elections they often frame themselves as defenders of backward-majority interests, pushing Congress and BJP to respond on caste questions.
- **DMK (Tamil Nadu):** The Dravidian DMK has long championed OBC and anti-Brahmin policies, so Mandal was largely congruent with its ideology. DMK leaders openly supported Mandal's aims – e.g. DMK chief M.K. Stalin reminded audiences that his father Karunanidhi had helped secure 27% OBC reservation in central government jobs. In Tamil Nadu itself, Mandal's 27% quota was moot because the state already had a 50% OBC reservation law since the 1980s. But Mandal strengthened the normative appeal of caste-based justice. In practice, Tamil politicians have focused more on intra-backward caste politics than on Mandal per se. Notably, Tamil parties uniformly opposed the BJP's later push for an "upper-caste poor" quota (EWS), defending the principle that reservation must rest on historical social disadvantage.

Reactions from Famous Leaders

- **V.P. Singh:** He championed the Mandal Commission and implemented it. Singh himself wished to move forward nationally on social-justice related issues. He saw extreme political risk [especially from Devi Lal (his deputy PM) and from Chandra Shekhar (his party rival)] and partly acted out of pressure from leaders like Lalu

Prasad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, Sharad Yadav. He wanted to neutralise the charge of being anti-backward.

- **Rajiv Gandhi:** He vehemently opposed the Mandal Commission and its implementation. The report was buried deep in the archives during his tenure. The same happened even during Indira Gandhi's tenure. They simply did not want the implementation as they felt it was "a mechanism of casteism". "The fact is that you need a comprehensive plan. You need a comprehensive vision, you cannot look at these things in an isolated manner. We, the Congress, are in favour of a comprehensive action plan, an affirmative action plan for the backward communities. We need that. The problem cannot be solved by playing politics or by limited politically motivated manipulation." - were his exact words about the commission.
- **LK Advani:** He was part of the coalition government with VP Singh. He played neutral by not advocating hate or support towards it. But, in fear of losing his Hindutva bank vote due to the Mandal Commission implementation and the image of casteism coming from his side of the government made him take one of the most important decisions that re-shaped the Indian future. He commenced the Ram Rath Yatra on 25th September 1990. This act of his proved extremely favourable to the BJP as the discussion of Ram Rath Yatra displaced the Mandal Commission from the lime-light.
- **Devi Lal:** Initially he was uneasy. Because as Deputy PM and strong Jat leader, he risked losing support among his base if Mandal excluded them. But under pressure, he had to endorse the Mandal.
- **Chandra Shekhar:** He was supportive of the Mandal Commission. His support was influenced by his socialist ideology and his commitment to social justice. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of social justice and believed that reservations were a legitimate means to uplift backward communities. During his tenure as the PM in 1990-91, he advocated support to the Mandal Commission and believed that implementing the Mandal report was necessary for social justice and to address inequalities faced by the backward classes.
- **Other Leaders:** **Ram Vilas Paswan** staged a sit-in at Jantar Mantar in support of the Mandal Commission. He publicly defended this commission. As a dalit leader, Paswan stood out for the backward classes and advocated for their rights. **Lalu Prasad Yadav** claims that he was the integral part for the commission to be implemented, he stated in his memoir that he was the one who urged VP Singh to implement the commission to deflect the intra-part rising tensions. He also held a rally in Patna supporting this. **Mulayam Singh Yadav** held a rally in Lucknow. He publicly supported the backward classes and used the Mandal card in Uttar Pradesh. His Samajwadi Party placed themselves as the defender of the poor and backward. (Samajwadi does not exist as

per freeze date).

Sharad Yadav pushed for quick implementation of the commission. He, along with Paswan, knew in advance about the move. He called the act of implementation an act of ‘Social Revolution’.

Phase 5: The BJP and Mandal Politics - Ideology and Strategy

- **1990s - Open Opposition:** The BJP’s immediate reaction to the Mandal implementation was negative. Though the BJP had lent outside support to V.P. Singh’s government withdrew support once Singh announced the OBC quotas. Sangh and BJP leaders painted Mandal as divisive. They launched the Ayodhya “Rath Yatra” in late 1990 (led by L.K. Advani) as a counter-narrative, urging Hindu unity under the Ram temple banner. In Odisha and other regions, BJP-affiliated leaders explicitly criticised Mandal, one veteran BJP politician wrote in 1990, “If the lot of backward classes has not improved despite reservations in the past so many years, they would be no better in the next generations too,” echoing general upper-caste skepticism. Thus initially the BJP framed itself as the protector of a unified Hindu identity, implicitly allying with anti-quota sentiment (often upper-caste) and downplaying caste divisions.
- **Hindutva Pivot & OBC Inclusion:** After the 1990s, however, the BJP quietly recalibrated. Recognising Mandal’s enduring appeal, the party began practising *social engineering* – mixing caste identities into its Hindutva narrative. As one analyst observes, post-Mandal BJP “slowly but silently adjusted” by elevating Other Backward Classes within its ranks. This strategy brought several OBC leaders to prominence: for example, Kalyan Singh (a Lodhi OBC) led the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and wove caste appeals into his Hindutva plank. Narendra Modi himself (a member of the OBC Ghanchi community) and leaders like Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh personify the party’s broadened base. In short, the BJP blended Mandal and Hindutva by invoking shared Hindu culture *and* by co-opting backward-caste figures. In 2013 the BJP even set up commissions (e.g. the Rohini Commission) to examine sub-categories within OBCs, signalling an active push into Mandal-style politics.
- **Recent Policy Moves:** In the 21st century the BJP has combined its Hindu-nationalist agenda with selective caste-based policies. In 2019 the Modi government pushed through a constitutional amendment creating a 10% quota for economically weaker sections (EWS) among upper castes. This was the first nationwide reservation explicitly for the general (non-SC/ST/OBC) communities. The BJP justified EWS as a social-justice measure for poor Hindus, effectively raising the total reservation ceiling to 60% (after Supreme Court approval). More recently, BJP leaders have embraced caste enumeration. In 2024–25 the party announced a caste census (often called “Mandal 2.0”) under the banner of Hindutva renewal. India Today reports that BJP strategists now describe the caste-survey push as part of a new “Hindutva 2.0”

strategy, aimed at courting non-dominant OBC and Dalit voters. These moves (EWS, sub-quotas, census) show the BJP mining Mandal-era issues for political gain.

- **Consistency vs. Opportunism:** On one hand, the BJP maintains that Hindu unity transcends caste and thus resists any move that appears to favour one caste group over another (for example, it frames 10% EWS as *not* breaking the earlier 50% cap because “the poor are in all castes”). On the other hand, critics point out that BJP’s realignment reflects simple arithmetic: winning an OBC-majority electorate requires giving back some Mandal-era gains. In practice, the BJP’s stance has shifted with circumstances: it initially opposed caste quotas in, later embraced Hindutva plus OBC leadership, and more recently instituted reservation for poor upper castes and pursued caste data. This pattern suggests a pragmatic turn rather than a purely ideological consistency. In sum, the BJP’s Mandal-era journey has been one of oppositional posturing giving way to strategic engagement with caste - a development observers generally view as electoral opportunism couched in broader Hindutva rhetoric.

Part 6: Case Study

LEGAL CASES

State of Madras vs Champak Dorairajan (1951)

Background

The Madras Presidency executed the Communal Government Order (G.O.) as its first reservation system in 1927 for educational institutions to distribute seats based on caste and religious lines. Through this order the authorities wanted to champion educational interests for communities in need but its outcome blocked entrance based on caste identity. The Champakam Dorairajan case summary revolves around this order which was later challenged for its constitutional validity.

Petition and Claims

The medical college in Madras refused entry to top-performing Brahmin student Champakam Dorairajan during 1950. The allocation rules under the Communal G.O revealed the reason that prevented Brahmins from filling the seats in the medical college. She filed a petition under Article 226 of the Indian Constitution, claiming that the reservation system violated her fundamental rights under Articles 15(1) and 29(2). The legal battle is also known as the Champak Rajan case or Champakam Dorairajan case (1951).

Supreme Court’s Response

The State of Madras vs Champakam Dorairajan case was appealed to the Supreme Court after the Madras High Court stated in favour of the petitioner. The Champakam Dorairajan case judgement became a precedent in determining the extent to which directive principles can influence fundamental rights.

The petitioner took the following stand in this case.

Violation of Fundamental Rights: The petitioner argued that the reservation system discriminated against her based on caste, violating Article 15(1), which prohibits discrimination by the State.

Denial of Educational Opportunity: As per her argument the system barred her from receiving admission because of caste reservations which violated her right under Article 29(2) to enter State-run educational institutions on equal basis.

The respondent took the following stand in this case

Social Justice : The State of Madras defended the reservation system citing Article 46, which directs the State to promote the welfare of weaker sections, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Directive Principles as a Guiding Force: The State argued that the reservation policy was in line with the broader social objectives of reducing educational disparity and achieving social justice.

State of Madras vs Champakam Dorairajan Judgment

The Champakam Dorairajan case verdict delivered by Justice S.R. Das upheld the decision of Madras High Court declaring the Communal G.O. unconstitutional. The ruling emphasized: **Fundamental Rights Take Precedence:** The Supreme Court ruled that the reservation policy violated Articles 15(1) and 29(2).

Directive Principles Cannot Override Fundamental Rights: The Court clarified that Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) cannot supersede Fundamental Rights. The Champakam Dorairajan case in 1951 ruling led to significant constitutional amendments. Following the decision the Indian government utilized the First Amendment to establish Article 15(4) in 1951 for making special arrangements benefiting classes which are socially and educationally backward classes, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Article 15(4) within the First Amendment established a framework for the contemporary reservation system used in Indian education and employment practices.

The case set a precedent for later judicial interpretations on affirmative action and social justice policies. It also laid the foundation for India's contemporary reservation system, reinforcing the state's commitment to uplifting marginalized communities while balancing fundamental rights and social equity.

Mr. Balaji vs State of Mysore

On July 26, 1958, the State Government of Mysore issued an order categorizing all communities except the Brahmin community as educationally and socially backward classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. This order reserved 75% of seats in educational institutions for these communities. Various subsequent orders with similar schemes but different reservation percentages were issued over the following years, but all were challenged and subsequently set aside.

The 1962 Reservation Order

In 1962, the Mysore Government issued a new order, replacing all previous orders concerning the reservation of seats under Article 15(4) of the Indian Constitution. This order classified backward classes into two categories: backward classes and more backward classes. It reserved 68% of seats in State Engineering and Medical Colleges for socially and educationally backward classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, leaving only 32% for the merit pool.

Issues Raised in Mr Balaji vs State of Mysore

The Supreme Court was called upon to address several issues in the Mr Balaji vs State of Mysore case, which had significant implications for the interpretation and application of reservation policies under the Indian Constitution. The key issues raised were:

Validity Under Articles 15(1) and 29(2)

The primary issue was whether the impugned order violated the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 15(1) and 29(2) of the Indian Constitution, rendering the order void and unenforceable against the petitioners. Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, while Article 29(2) ensures that no citizen shall be denied admission to educational institutions maintained by the State on these grounds.

Colourable Exercise of State Power

The second issue questioned whether the reservation order represented a colourable exercise of the State's power, effectively amounting to a fraud on the Constitution. This implies that the order was issued under the guise of legitimate authority but with an ulterior motive that undermines constitutional provisions.

Irrational Classification and Fraud on Article 15(4)

Another significant issue was whether the classification of backward classes made by the impugned order was irrational, and if the reservation of 68% constituted a fraud on Article 15(4). Article 15(4) permits the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, but the legitimacy of the classification and the extent of the reservation were called into question.

Excessive Reservation under Article 16(4)

The case also explored whether reservations made under Article 16(4), which allows for reservation in public employment, could be challenged as a fraud on the Constitution if they exceeded permissible and legitimate limits. Though primarily concerning educational

reservations, the principles could extend to employment reservations.

Conclusion

The ruling in Mr Balaji vs State of Mysore case have shaped educational policies, judicial interpretations, and governmental approaches to social justice. It highlighted the necessity of precise and scientifically sound criteria for classifying backward classes and underscored the importance of not letting affirmative action become a tool for reverse discrimination. This case remains a reference point in discussions about the permissible extent of reservations, serving as a reminder of the delicate balancing act required to achieve true equality in a diverse society.

The Supreme Court's judgment not only capped the extent of reservations to ensure fairness and meritocracy but also set forth guidelines for the classification of backward classes, balancing the need for social upliftment with constitutional principles of equality. The decision also clarified the enabling nature of Articles 15(4) and 16(4), guiding future policies on reservations and setting a cap to prevent excessive reservations.

Indra Sawhney Vs Union of India

Indra Sawhney v Union of India, also known as the Mandal verdict, was a landmark public interest litigation case. It was delivered by a 9-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court of India in 1992. The case challenged the government's decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. It recommended a 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in central government jobs.

Background of the Indra Sawhney Case

In 1979, the Janata Party government appointed the Mandal Commission. This was to identify and classify socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs) in India. The Commission submitted its report in 1980. It recommended 27% reservation for SEBCs in central government jobs.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations was met with protests. Upper-caste groups argued that it would lead to reverse discrimination. In 1991, a group of petitioners, led by Indra Sawhney, filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court of India. They challenged the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations.

The PIL argued that the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations was unconstitutional. It was violative of the fundamental right to equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution of India. The Supreme Court heard the PIL for over a year and delivered its verdict in 1992.

Evaluations of the case

In 1979, the Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission) was created. It was tasked to determine the criteria for classifying the socially and educationally backward

classes. The case began with a two-judge bench and progressed to a three-judge bench, a five-judge bench, a seven-judge bench, and eventually a nine-judge bench, which issued the judgement with a 6 to 3-vote majority.

According to the Mandal report, 52% of the population was classed as “Socially and Economically Backward Classes” at the time (SEBCs). As a result, it suggested a 27 percent reserve for SEBCs. This was in addition to the 22.5 percent reserve for SC/STs that had previously existed. The Mandal commission recommendations were to be implemented by the administration led by V P Singh in 1990. This was challenged in court amid significant opposition to the action.

The case was heard by a nine-judge Bench, and a 6:3 result was handed in 1992, generally known as the Indra Sawhney Judgement.

The petitioners made the following specific arguments:

- Reservation based on caste is not a permissible ground for reservation under the Constitution.
- The Mandal Commission's recommendations were not based on any objective criteria. They were arbitrary and discriminatory.
- Implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendations would lead to reverse discrimination against merit.
- It would undermine the efficiency of the administration.

The respondents made the following specific arguments:

- Reservation is a valid instrument for achieving social justice. Addressing the social and educational backwardness of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is necessary.
- The Mandal Commission's recommendations were based on extensive research.
- They were necessary to identify and classify OBCs in India.
- Implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendations would not lead to reverse discrimination against merit. It would not undermine the efficiency of the administration.

Judgement of Indra Sawhney Case

By a 6-3 majority, the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench of nine judges issued the following decisions:

- In Article 16(4), the backward class of people can be determined based on the caste system rather than only on economic grounds
- Article 16(4) is not an exception to the rule (1). It exemplifies the categorisation. Article 16 allows for reservations (1).
- Backward classes under Article 16(4) were not the same as socially and educationally backward classes in Article 15(1). (4).
- Creamy layers must be kept out of the lower classes.

- Article 16(4) allows for dividing backward classes into backward and more backward classes.
- A backward class of citizens cannot be established based on economic grounds.
- Reservations should not exceed 50%.
- The 'Executive Order' can be used to make a reservation.
- There is no reservation in promotion.
- Permanent statutory body tasked with investigating allegations of over-inclusion and under-inclusion.
- The majority believed that there was no need to give a judgment on the propriety or appropriateness of the Mandal Commission's exercise.
- Disputes over new criteria can only be brought before the Supreme Court.