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# Panchamasalis' demand on quota stirs up a hornet's nest

Community to hold convention today to seek reclassification under 2A of OBC list

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The Panchamasali Lingayat community's demand to be included in category 2A (15%) of the other backward classes (OBC) reservation matrix has stirred up a hornet's nest with many questions being raised on its implications for the 102 communities already in this bracket.

The community, which is set to hold a mega convention in support of its demand in Bengaluru on Sunday, is currently included under 3B (5%).

While categories 2A and 2B are categorised as 'more backward', 3A and 3B are categorised as 'backward'. Essentially, Panchamasalis, a peasant community among Veerashaiva-Lingayats have argued that their community has been denied benefits of reservation under 3B as the "dominant" subcastes among the Veerashaiva-Lingayats have cornered most benefits. They argue that they are in reality "more backward".

#### Other issues

However, multiple past chairmen of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes argue that inclusion of Panchamasalis under category 2A can potentially lead to other issues.

"Category 2A has 102 communities, all of which are traditionally landless artisan communities. Catego-

OBC category	Classification	Reservation	Communities included
1	Most backward	4%	Uppara, Golla, and several nomadic communities
2A	More backward	15%	Kuruba, Idiga, and 100 other communities, including Vishwakarma, Kumbara, Devanga, Nekara, Madiwala, Agasa, Tigala, Pattegar, and Buddhist
2B		4%	Muslims
3A	Backward	4%	12 communities, including Vokkaliga, Reddy, Balija, Bunts, and Kodavas
3B		5%	Veerashaiva-Lingayat and 42 subcastes, Jains and Christians

ries 3A and 3B include landowning agricultural communities, including Panchamasalis," pointed out the former chairman of the commission C.S. Dwarkanath. He argued that clubbing a land-owning community with the artisan communities could end up with the latter losing out their fair share. "Already Kurubas and Idigas have cornered much of the benefits in 2A, depriving several of the remaining 100 communities of fair chance," he said. He contended that a solution

could be internal reservation within the 3B category.

"Social justice and reservation matrix cannot be held hostage to any community's bargaining powers," said another past chairman Ravivarma Kumar. He pointed out that Veerashaiva-Lingayats were given OBC reservation in 1986 contrary to the findings of Havanur Commission, Venkataswamy Commission, and Chinappa Reddy Commission, all of which found the community to be "forward". In fact, category 3B includes 23

landless, artisan subcastes among Veerashaiva-Lingayats, who are relatively more backward and deserve to be moved to 2A, he argued.

Prof. Kumar said that Karnataka legislature passed a Bill increasing the reservation in the State to 73% in 1994, which has been stayed by the Supreme Court citing lack of empirical data for the quantum of reservation. "The Socio-Economic Survey conducted by the commission in 2015 presents the empirical basis for increasing reservation beyond the 50% cap. This is the need of the hour. Quantum of reservation for 3B can also be expanded if this happens, taking care of the Panchamasali community's demand," he said. The community should ask the State government to accept the Socio-Economic Survey, he added.

K. Jayaprakash Hegde, chairman of the commission, tasked by the State government to submit a report on the feasibility of the Panchamasali demand, said the commission would hold a meeting with the community shortly, where they would be asked to make their case and submit documents. "We will then take up a study, criteria for which is yet to be decided," he said. The commission would also hear objections from communities already included in category 2A.