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Q6(c)

## **Trace the history and describe the methods of formulating the lists of OBCs, both at the State and National levels**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

### **Core demand of the question**

- Trace the history of OBC lists from Kalelkar to the 105th Amendment
- Describe methods at the Union and in the states
- Include **Mandal**, Indra Sawhney, NCBC, **creamy layer** and Rohini
- Keep the method (how a list is made) at the centre

### **Revision summary**

Kalelkar listed; **Mandal** implemented 27 percent with social-educational-economic tests.

Indra Sawhney added **creamy layer** and a 50 percent ceiling.

102nd Amendment constitutionalised NCBC; 105th restored state lists after the Maratha judgment.

Rohini tries to sub-categorise Central OBCs; Ram Singh required data for Jat inclusion.

Centre and states maintain separate lists; method is gazette politics under judicial review.

### **Introduction**

Other Backward Classes are **not in the original caste-schedule sense of SC/ST**. They are a **developmental-political list** of socially and educationally backward groups, built by commissions, gazettes and courts. History and method are one story.

### **Body**

#### **National history**

**Kaka Kalelkar Commission** (1953) first listed backward classes for the Union; **Nehru's** government did not implement a national quota from it, partly because the list looked like a caste census. **Mandal Commission** (1979, report 1980, implemented 1990) used **social, educational and economic indicators**, 1931 census proxies, and arrived at about **52 percent** of the population as OBC, recommending **27 percent** jobs. **Indra Sawhney** (1992) upheld 27 percent, barred reservation in **promotions** for OBCs (as then argued), imposed **creamy layer**, and set a **50 percent** ceiling except in extraordinary situations.

**NCBC** began as a statutory body (1993) and became **constitutional by the 102nd Amendment (2018)**. **Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil** (Maratha, 2021) read 102nd as giving the **President (Union)** the exclusive power to notify SEBCs for the purpose of **Article 342A**,

unsettling state lists. The **105th Amendment (2021)** restored **states' power** to make their own OBC lists. **Rohini Commission** (sub-categorisation of Central OBCs) tried to split a lumped list so that a few dominant OBCs do not take most posts; its politics remain unfinished.

**Janhit Abhiyan** (2022) upheld **EWS** 10 percent, showing another backwardness track beside OBC.

### State methods

States had backward-class commissions and lists **before Mandal** (Tamil Nadu's long quota history, Karnataka, Bihar). **Methods: public notification, representations, socio-economic surveys, public hearings, and a gazette.** Some states use **occupation plus caste**; some notify **Muslim occupational groups** as OBC. **Quantifiable data** after Indra Sawhney and later Ram Singh (Jat, 2015) is the judicial test: a state cannot notify a dominant agrarian caste as OBC on assertion alone.

Inclusion and exclusion petitions go to the **state commission**, then to the **government**, then often to the High Court. Central list for **Union jobs and UPSC** is separate from the state list for **state services**. A community can be OBC in one and not the other.

### What "method" means

It is **not anthropometry**. It is **indicators, politics, gazette and judicial review**. Anthropology's caste ethnography (dominant caste, Sanskritisation) explains why some powerful jatis still reach the list. The honest method would be a **caste census with deprivation scores and sub-quotas**. India has pieces of that (Bihar survey, Rohini) without a settled national instrument.

### Flow diagram

Kalelkar -> Mandal 27 percent  
Mandal 27 percent -> Indra Sawhney  
Indra Sawhney -> NCBC 102 105  
State commissions -> Two lists Centre / state

### Conclusion

OBC lists grew from Kalelkar's unused catalogue to **Mandal's** 27 percent, Indra Sawhney's rules, a constitutional NCBC, a shock after the 102nd Amendment, and restoration by the 105th. States and the Union keep separate gazettes. The method is commission plus data plus court, not a blood test.

### Facts & figures

#### Mandal Commission

Identified OBCs through indicators and recommended 27 percent reservation in Central jobs, implemented in 1990.

#### 105th Amendment 2021

Restored the power of state governments to identify and list socially and educationally backward classes.

**Creamy layer**

Income and status filter from Indra Sawhney so that the most advanced OBC families do not take the whole quota.

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