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Q5(e)

Underline the significance of the first constitutional amendment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Indian Nationalism

Indian Nationalism: Political Strategies of India's Freedom Struggle; Perspectives on Indian National Movement; Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar, and the socialists.

Core demand of the question

- **Answer the following in about 150 words:** Underline the significance of the first constitutional amendment. (10 marks)

Revision summary

The First Amendment, **1951**, answered Champakam and land-reform litigation.

Article 15(4) constitutionalised special provisions for backward classes.

Articles 31A, 31B, and the **Ninth Schedule** protected agrarian reform.

Article 19 restrictions were widened.

It opened the long amendment-and-court history of rights versus Directive Principles.

Introduction

The **Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951**, was the republic's first rewrite of its own bargain. It showed that social-revolution aims would be defended even against early judicial readings of fundamental rights.

Body**Why it was done**

- **State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan (1951)** struck communal quotas in education as violating **Article 29(2)**.
- Zamindari and press cases also pressed the new state. Land reform and public order were the other triggers.
- **Nehru's** government chose amendment, not obedience to a purely formal equality that would freeze upper-caste and landlord advantage.

What it did

- **Article 15(4)** saved special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes and for Scheduled Castes and Tribes.
- **Article 19** was recast with new reasonable restrictions, including public order and relations with foreign states.
- **Articles 31A and 31B** and the **Ninth Schedule** shielded land-reform laws from fundamental-rights attack.

Significance

- It set the pattern of reconciling Parts III and IV by amendment, which later produced **Article 31C**, **Kesavananda**, and **Minerva Mills**.
- Affirmative action gained an express constitutional home, the ancestor of **Mandal**.
- **Austin's** social-revolution strand won an early round against a court-centred reading of rights.
- **Significance is founding, not minor**: the Constitution proved it could be used as an instrument of equalisation, at the cost of opening the amendment-versus-court cycle.

Flow diagram

Champakam 1951 -> First Amendment
First Amendment -> Article 15 4
First Amendment -> Ninth Schedule 31A 31B
First Amendment -> Later 31C Minerva

Conclusion

The First Amendment's significance is that it saved reservation and land reform by rewriting rights and creating the **Ninth Schedule**. Champakam is the immediate cause. The later FR-DPSP story begins here.

Facts & figures

Champakam Dorairajan, 1951

Struck caste quotas in professional education; the immediate spur to **Article 15(4)**.

Ninth Schedule

Inserted by the First Amendment to immunise listed statutes from Part III challenge.

Article 15(4)

Enables special provision for backward classes, SCs, and STs.

1951

Year of the first amendment, still in **Nehru's** first Parliament.